



(News from the front lines)

COMMON CAUSE

Renew America's Promise

We The People believe in the Constitution, the rule of law and justice for all. We will not stand by as our democracy suffers at home and our nation's reputation is tarnished abroad.

The American flag has long stood as a symbol of liberty, justice and freedom – a beacon of hope in a troubled world. We pledge to *Recapture the Flag* by demanding a President and Congress that:

- ★ Ends torture, respects human rights, and restores America's reputation in the world.
- ★ Respects the rule of law and fiercely challenges anyone who seeks to undermine the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
- ★ Roots out corruption, special interest abuses and partisan prejudice in the administration of justice.
- ★ Holds to account – without exception – anyone who breaks the law or violates the public trust.
- ★ Protects personal freedom by rejecting warrantless spying, stifling of dissent, and other affronts to individual liberty.

RECAPTURE THE FLAG: A Campaign to Restore the Core Values of American Democracy

The next president of the United States will confront a host of critical issues created by our leaders under the guise of protecting America from terrorists : Iraq, Guantanamo, wiretapping of citizens, and a policy condoning torture, to name only a few.

Our nation in recent years has endured repeated abuses of power by the Executive Branch of our government, and the failure of Congress to stand up for what's right.

As a result, our democracy has suffered at home and our reputation has been tarnished abroad. America is less free and less secure.

Common Cause believes it is time to right our country and reclaim our flag as the symbol of democracy we can all be proud of.

We are launching a major new campaign called *Recapture the Flag* to address the problems and unite the nation around the promise and hope of America.

Please go to our website and sign a petition demanding a government that respects human rights, the rule of law and the Constitution. Once you commit yourself, ask your congressional and presidential candidates to make the same pledge.

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Tell us what you think, report on whether your candidates signed and read more at www.recapturetheflag.com

Former Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman, who participated in Nixon impeachment hearings, speaks at Common Cause's "Abuse of Power" conference on June 10. Seated are John Shattuck, CEO of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation, as well as a Common Cause board member, and Jonathan Turley, a constitutional law professor at George Washington University. View a clip of the conference on YouTube. Search for "Common Cause/ethics."



Power of Advocacy

Through grassroots action and inside lobbying, we are on the front lines pushing back the special interests and winning victories for the public interest.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

This is an exciting and historic election year. While a great strength of Common Cause is its nonpartisanship, we are deeply engaged in this year's campaigns in our roles as watchdog and reformer.

We have helped ensure that there will be much less reliance on faulty electronic voting machines, worked to limit vote suppression measures including unnecessary voter ID laws, and are continuing our efforts to reform the campaign finance system.

While most state legislatures are out of session and Congress is focusing too much on gimmicky election year votes, we are already looking ahead to the new year and a new administration in our nation's capital. Our staff from around the country is meeting in July in Washington, DC to start planning campaigns on a range of issues.

On the front page of this newsletter, we describe a new campaign we're calling *Recapture the Flag*. We share the feelings of many Americans that the last seven years have seen unprecedented abuses by the Executive Branch of our government and the failure of Congress to stand up for what is right. The coming elections hold the promise of great change, and Common Cause will work to unite us around the values that made us a beacon of hope for people around the world—faith in the human spirit, respect for individual liberty and human rights, and government based on the rule of law, not men. Go to our website—www.recapturetheflag.com—to learn more about this new campaign and sign our petition.

We are excited about the future, but I also want you to know what we have accomplished organizationally in the past year. We have strengthened our finances, done some needed reorganization, added new staff and invigorated our national governing board with new members. We have also invested in new technologies—you'll soon see some dramatic improvements to our website and other online tools.

I spend a lot of time traveling—you can see a map of the states I've visited on page 4. The best part of that travel is meeting Common Cause members, so I encourage you to sign up on our website for our Causenet e-mail alerts about meetings near you.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Edgar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Edgar
President & CEO

UPDATE ON OUR ISSUES

National Popular Vote

National Popular Vote (NPV) is a campaign to pass legislation in the states that would guarantee a majority of the Electoral College to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Common Cause worked with its allies to pass National Popular Vote legislation in Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland and New Jersey. Currently, four states representing 50 electoral votes have joined the agreement.

Congressional Ethics Enforcement

Following passage of a sweeping, historic ethics reform bill last year, Common Cause led a successful effort to establish an independent office for ethics enforcement in the US House of Representatives. The independent, bipartisan panel will have the power to initiate and conduct ethics investigations.

Media Ownership

Increasingly concentrated media ownership hurts the quality of news and information Americans receive about the nation, the world and their local communities. Common Cause recently helped push successfully for passage of a resolution in the Senate disapproving new Federal Communication Commission rules that would allow great media consolidation.

Campaign Finance Enforcement

Since late 2007, Common Cause and civil rights groups have been fighting the Bush Administration's attempt to appoint to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) a former Justice Department lawyer known for his partisanship and efforts to undermine voting rights. Recently, our efforts paid off when the White House withdrew the nomination of Hans von Spakovsky. The FEC is the agency charged with enforcement of the nation's campaign finance laws.

PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

It has been a thrilling election year (and more) that has already engaged voters in record numbers and promises record-breaking turnout on Election Day in November. Common Cause is nonpartisan, so we do not support or oppose candidates, make contributions, or engage directly in campaigns. But we will be involved.

Conventions—Because party nominees are now chosen through primaries and caucuses, the conventions no longer play a serious role in the nomination process. They are mainly a televised coronation of the nominee amid celebrations hosted and funded by lobbyists, corporations and other big donors.

But because the conventions are a unique opportunity to get the attention of a huge gathering of elected officials and the media, Common Cause will be at the sites of both party conventions—in Denver and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

In Denver we are collaborating with Google, Daily Kos, and others to host “The Big Tent,” which will be the spot for the bloggers, candidates, and new media to relax, socialize, and report back on the sights and sounds of the Democratic National Convention. We will host a panel discussion there on media and politics. In Minnesota, we will host another panel on money and politics.

Election Season—As part of the Election Protection Coalition, we will provide through a national hotline assistance to voters who are experiencing problems at the polls either on or before Election Day. The number of the hotline is 1-866-OUR-VOTE.

We will be closely monitoring what is going on in the election—whether elections officials are ready for a massive turnout on Election Day, and how money influences this important election. We will follow a major report on voting in 2006 with a report on our nation’s readiness for Election Day 2008, exploring whether our voting systems and procedures have been improved enough since the meltdown of the 2000 election.

We will also be doing reports on the current state of campaign finance, including the ongoing role of big money in politics, as well as the impact of internet fundraising and small donors; the failure of enforcement at the Federal Election Commission; the role of independent groups—527s—to get around the contribution and spending limits; and bringing the presidential public financing system up to date.



The Voters First Pledge

Voters are tired of being shut out by big money in politics. Candidates are tired of the campaign fundraising treadmill. Fair Elections-style public financing is a proven solution to the problem of increasingly expensive races for public office.

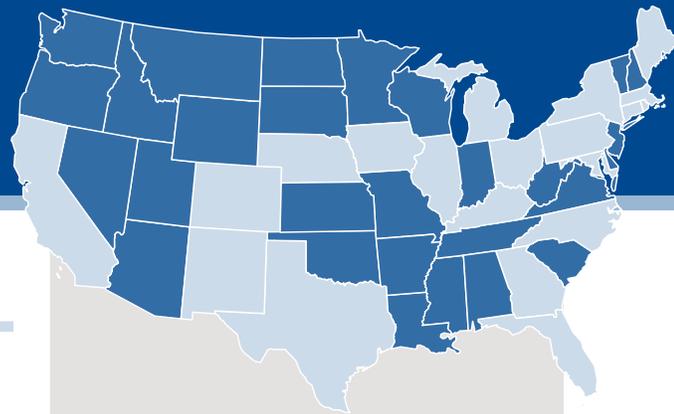
In 2008, American voters are demanding real change that goes beyond empty slogans. To ensure that Congress is accountable to voters, we urge all candidates to sign the Voters First Pledge:

If elected, I pledge to make elections fair by supporting legislation to create a system of public financing for qualified candidates who agree to strict spending limits and to take only small donations.

To learn more and take action, go to www.commoncause.org/votersfirst.

Power of States

In state capitols across the country, Common Cause state organizations are the leaders for reform.



STATE UPDATES

Mississippi—Ethics Reform

Common Cause Mississippi worked to pass major ethics reform, expanding financial disclosure, doubling fines for ethics violation and providing the Ethics Commission with additional authority to enforce the state's open meeting laws.



California—Redistricting

Common Cause California and its allies, AARP, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the League of Women Voters reached a milestone in their campaign to take the power to draw legislative district lines away from incumbent politicians. The state of California certified that the groups had

gathered enough signatures to put on the November ballot an initiative that would set up an independent redistricting commission.

Connecticut—Ethics

Common Cause Connecticut, following on work to pass the best campaign finance law in the nation in 2006, pushed through an ethics bill that the state's Republican governor called the toughest ethics law in the nation.

Maryland—Transparency

Common Cause Maryland successfully worked for passage this spring of the Accountability and Transparency Act of 2008. The bill will create a citizen-friendly online database of state spending. Executive Director Ryan O'Donnell cited the support of legislators from both parties: "Democrats and Republicans both agreed on this one. The appeal of transparency and accountability is more than bipartisan—it's universal."

More than 200 North Carolina Central University students rallied on campus to promote voter participation. The event, called "Step to the Polls," was spearheaded by the Common Cause NCCU student chapter.



Common Cause President Bob Edgar is based in Washington, DC, but spends much of his time traveling around the country, meeting with staff, volunteers, donors, government officials and promoting Common Cause to the media and potential supporters. This past year, Bob has visited all the light-colored states on the map.



VOTING RIGHTS

Most Americans are shocked when told that their fellow citizens who live in the District of Columbia have no voting representation in Congress.

Working with a local advocacy group, DC Vote, Common Cause has been pushing Congress to end this 200-year-old injustice by passing a bill to give DC voting representation in the House. The DC Voting Rights Act provides a unique bipartisan approach to resolving an issue that has been a stain on our democracy for too long.

The bill passed the House and is stalled in the Senate, but we hope to give it a final push over the top later this year.

Make sure Common Cause continues to build on its success. Donate today using the envelope attached to this newsletter.



TENNESSEE SECURES THE BALLOT

Common Cause Tennessee had worked since 2006 with a coalition to convince state officials that electronic voting machines were not secure or reliable. This year the coalition succeeded. "With inside and outside lobbying, assistance in the production and distribution of a movie and a DVD, *'Uncounted – The New Math of American Elections'*, and hundreds of emails, we were able to convince election officials, legislators and interested voters that the [machines] should be replaced," Common Cause Tennessee Chairman Dick Williams said. Legislation requiring a voter-verified paper record passed nearly unanimously in the legislature.

Dick, a veteran lobbyist, led Common Cause Tennessee's effort. He served as the organization's part-time lobbyist and executive secretary beginning in 1974, when he worked, unsuccessfully, against Tennessee's "recission" of its support for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Over many years, Dick has worked to pass campaign finance and ethics laws and to enhance the state's open records laws.



Gov. Phil Bredesen signing the Tennessee Voter Confidence Act with Dick Williams standing behind the governor.

COMMON CAUSE INTERNATIONAL

The dramatic increase in new democracies around the world in recent years offers millions of people opportunities to enjoy unprecedented political freedoms. Yet many of these emerging societies lack civic institutions that involve significant numbers of active citizens, political clout, and the capacity to conduct successful advocacy campaigns. Under the direction of Lauren Coletta, Common Cause International will offer comprehensive training in advocacy and organization building to civil society groups in emerging democracies and opportunities for public diplomacy between American civil society leaders and their counterparts in other countries. Go to www.commoncause.org/international.

In June, Common Cause hosted visitors from Thailand, including a two journalists and a political activist.



Profile Pam Wilmot



Common Cause Massachusetts has been at the center of reform in the Bay State since the organization's early days in the 1970s. No group sustains success for decades without some extraordinary leaders, and one of those is Pam Wilmot, CCMA's executive director.

Pam has been an advocate for government reform and other causes for more than 20 years. An attorney, Pam has been on both the staff and board of Common Cause Massachusetts. She stepped into her current position in 2002, while she was serving on the board. Pam was uniquely qualified, since she had also been the executive director from 1989 to 1993.

In a 2002 Boston Globe profile a state legislator praised Pam's work, saying, "She has a realistic understanding of what it means to reform a political system, that it's not about attacking the people who are in office... She's not the stereotypical over-earnest reformer without a sense of humor." The same article noted that "by the end of her sophomore year [at Brown], she had caught the attention of Ralph Nader, who dispatched her to Wisconsin to establish a consumer group focused on utility issues."

In Pam's first stint as head of Common Cause Massachusetts, she led the effort to pass the Massachusetts Act for Accountable Politics, a sweeping law that lowered campaign contribution limits and increased campaign disclosure.

Pam is a graduate of Brown University and Northeastern University School of Law and lives in Boston with her husband and two children.

To learn more about Common Cause Massachusetts go to www.commoncause.org/massachusetts.

Power of Our Supporters

The resources provided by our donors ensure that we can expand our capacity and reach our goals.



Profile John Shattuck

The Common Cause National Governing Board has many talented and accomplished members.

We will periodically profile board members, starting with John Shattuck.

John is the chief executive officer of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation in Boston, and has had a long leadership career in higher education, international diplomacy, foreign policy and human rights. He recently was a panelist at a Common Cause conference on “abuse of power” and last month received the John Gardner Public Service Award from Common Cause Massachusetts (see photo and article on front page).

In 1993 John was nominated by President Clinton and confirmed by the U.S. Senate as assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor. In that position, he played a key role in efforts to end the war in Bosnia and negotiate the Dayton Peace Agreement. In 1998 John was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

John’s career began at the American Civil Liberties Union, where he was executive director of the ACLU Washington office and national staff counsel from 1971 to 1984. He was involved in major civil rights and civil liberties issues during the Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan administrations, including the defense of federal civil rights legislation, protection of the federal courts against congressional efforts to limit their jurisdiction, and legislative expansion of the rights of women.

NOTE FROM SUSAN SCHREIBER, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR FOUNDATION GRANTS

For nearly 40 years, Common Cause has worked to educate the public, press and policymakers about the issues and solutions for strengthening our democracy. In 2000, the National Governing Board established the Common Cause Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) eligible to apply to foundations for support of our public education and research efforts. Since that time, the Education Fund has received over \$15 million in grant support—funding that has been critical to our success in educating and engaging people across the country about the importance of democratic reform.

Over the past year alone, more than 30 foundations have made over 40 grants to support our work. Some of the larger awards include \$400,000 over two years from the Carnegie Corporation to support public education and research across program areas; \$250,000 from the Ford Foundation and \$250,000 from the Arca Foundation to support the work of the Media and Democracy Coalition; and \$300,000 from the Open Society Institute in support of the national public financing campaign which we co-lead with Public Campaign. Smaller awards we have received for targeted education campaigns and initiatives are just as important, especially in the states.

Susan can be reached at 202 736-5776 or sschreiber@commoncause.org

TESTIMONIAL

“My total donation for 2008 will be the most I have ever felt able to allocate to Common Cause in one year. I do it because Common Cause seems to me more energetic, and likely to become even more effective, than it has been since the John Gardner days. Thanks to you and all the Common Cause staff for your work on behalf of all of us.” –Bob Manning, longtime supporter in New York.

The Common Cause board met in Los Angeles this spring, the first board meeting held outside of Washington, DC. Pictured are board members Julie Fernandes and Margaret Fung.



Power of Our Voices

Here's what our members, activists, staff and volunteers are saying, in their own words.

We want to hear from you.

Email your thoughts, a one-liner or your own op-ed, to grassroots@commoncause.org.

LOOK FOR US ONLINE!

Join our ongoing discussion on **Common Blog** www.commonblog.org

We're on Facebook! Look for Common Cause, join the group. And join our state groups in Connecticut, Maryland and Colorado.

And watch our YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/user/CommonCauseEthics.

ABUSE OF POWER ON OUR BORDER

John Fanestil is director of the Foundation for Change, which supports emerging leaders and organizations working for progressive social change in the San Diego/Tijuana region. This is a piece he wrote recently about the trampling of "the principle of representative government" as a border fence is being built at the Mexican border near San Diego. The large and elaborate fence is being built by the federal government through state parks, an ecological preserve and other sensitive areas with little apparent oversight or accountability. The full opinion piece is at www.commoncause.org/borderfence.

"At the heart of American democracy lies the notion of representative government.

If an agency of the Federal Government were to trample this most cherished principle in 2008, would anybody notice?

Hardly anyone, it seems, so long as the agency is the Department of Homeland Security and the trampling is done in the name of national security along the U.S.-Mexico border.

...

But for all the reasons to mourn the loss of a treasured piece of San Diego's heritage, none is greater than the price the Bush Administration and its Republican allies in Congress have proven willing to pay to string projects like these across the 1,800 mile U.S.-Mexican border.

That price is nothing less than the principle of representative government.

As I write these words, this principle is being plowed under and paved over. Soon it will have three layers of fencing built across it."

Volunteer Profile Marguerite White and Timmy Napolitano

The Washington Connection is our name for the volunteers who have been coming into Common Cause's national office for many years to help us.

Every Wednesday for 16 years, Timmy and Marguerite have come to our office, making calls to our activists that have made a real difference on issue after issue. They don't just walk in and pick up the phone. First, they ask tough questions—they want to know what we're doing and why we're doing it.

Through many staff changes over the years, they remain an integral part of the Common Cause family, not only in their work, but as friends of the staff. And for Timmy and Marguerite, meeting at Common Cause sparked a 16-year friendship—one of the great side benefits of volunteering in our office.



“We want public officials to have literally millions of American citizens looking over their shoulders at every move they make. We want phones to ring in Washington and state capitols and town halls. We want people watching and influencing every move that government makes.”

- John Gardner, founder of Common Cause



COMMON CAUSE AND DEMOCRACY MATTERS: STUDENTS WORKING TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

As we see an exciting upsurge in youth voting this election year, Common Cause is working to engage young Americans and develop the future leaders of reform.

Democracy Matters (DM), a project of Common Cause, involves college and high school students in our work to strengthen democracy. With chapters in 22 states on a diverse group of campuses, Democracy Matters activists educate teachers, faculty, and fellow students about issues of money and politics.

Each year Democracy Matters selects a class of interns through a national competition, offering paid internships to undergraduates and unpaid internships to high school students. Interns are trained in the skills of grassroots organizing and at their own schools, organize discussions, produce videos, write articles for school and local newspapers, hold "empowerment" training sessions, register their peers to vote, meet with elected representatives, and much more.

Students learn how to link campaign finance reform with issues like global warming, health care, education policy, and participate in an exciting yearly "DM Summit" where they exchange ideas with student activists from across the country.

"DM is the ideal job – working for something you support and love and simultaneously learning how to organize and interest people in it. Even after I graduate I will continue fighting for Clean Elections." Mary Anne Saul, Fresno Pacific University, Fresno CA.

There are still a few internships left for the 2008-9 academic year. Send a resume and cover letter to joanm@democracymatters.org.

Emily Kinkead and Alex Cumana work at a recent Common Cause conference. They are both Democracy Matters campus coordinators and Common Cause interns.



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"If tyranny and oppression come to this land, it will be in the guise of fighting a foreign enemy."

—James Madison