



(News from the front lines)

“If we are to prove our worth as a free and self-governing people, you and I and millions of others must once again believe America is our common cause.”

—Bill Moyers

What we are doing in 2009

- Watchdog the bailout of financial and auto industry, the economic stimulus package so that the public interest is served.
- Work with the Obama Administration and the new Congress to transform the way presidential and congressional campaigns are funded.
- Advocate in our nation's capital and in states to guarantee the right to unfettered participation in fair and secure elections.
- Restore transparency and accountability to the operations of government.
- Push for reforms to ensure the media works for democracy, not just corporate profits.

What we did in 2008

Common Cause **California** led a coalition in passage of a redistricting ballot initiative that will create an independent and open citizen's commission to draw legislative districts, putting an end to political gerrymandering, and putting voters and communities first.

Common Cause played a lead role in successfully championing House legislation that created the first-ever independent ethics enforcement office in Congress. The Office of Congressional Ethics, a bipartisan panel of non-lawmakers, will review and investigate possible ethics violations by House members.

Common Cause ran a high visibility protect-the-vote campaign in nearly a dozen swing states — **Pennsylvania, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, New Mexico, North Carolina** and **Ohio**, with targeted work in **California, Georgia, New York** and **Virginia** — and is part of the reason that voting problems were not as pervasive as they might have been during the high-stakes, high-turnout 2008 presidential election.

Go to our website for the full list of *Top Ten Accomplishments* in 2008.

Photo (on left): Bill Moyers speaking at Common Cause New York's annual *I Love An Ethical New York* event



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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

One day recently, we said goodbye to three young interns who did great work for us through the election season (*see their photo on page 7*) and at the same time a received a call from Edna Warsowe, a charter member of Common Cause and founder of Common Cause Florida. Edna is now 95 years old, and her passion for our issues remains strong. We were reminded that day of the remarkable history of this organization and of the young people who are our future.

When John Gardner founded Common Cause 38 years ago, he said, "Every group must have an overriding interest in the well-being of the whole society. It follows that our agenda must be an agenda for *all* Americans – for the poor, the comfortable and those in between, for old and young, for black and white, for city dwellers and farmers, for men and women." Gardner's statement should be the guiding principle for our nation's leaders as they work to bring the country through a harrowing economic crisis.

It will be the guiding principle of Common Cause as we work to ensure that Congress and the new Administration focus on the public interest as they tackle the daunting economic problems we face and move forward on critical issues like healthcare reform and climate change.

And as state and local governments struggle to balance budgets while maintaining critical services, Common Cause state organizations will be in the state capitol buildings, making certain that the public is represented when the tough decisions are made.

We know that in Washington and in state capitals deeply entrenched special interests are already reasserting their influence, already searching for ways to derail progress on issues like health care and climate change and denying the change the country voted for on Election Day.

We are ready to take on those special interests. The financial meltdown has pushed Common Cause and our partners to look closely at our own operations and budgets to make sure we're making the best use of our resources, keeping our already tight budgets lean. We are focused on our vision of rebuilding our democratic institutions after years of failed and damaging policies. There is a great opportunity for reform now and we intend to make it happen.

Bob Edgar
President & CEO

CHANGING THE WAY AMERICA PAYS FOR CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

The 2008 campaign set the stage for changing how we pay for our federal elections. The Obama campaign's huge success in generating small contributions and the increase of donor activity on the Internet is a model that empowers small donors in every race from the Presidency to Congress and can lead to permanent change in how Washington does business.

The country is anxious to tackle major problems like the economy, health care, and energy. But a bipartisan poll on Election Day showed that 77% of voters are concerned that Congress will be unable to undertake "the important issues facing America today" because of large campaign contributions. And 70% believe that "large campaign contributions from the banking industry to members of Congress have resulted in lax oversight and have been a major factor in causing the current financial crisis on Wall Street."

Voters are concerned that they will not see the change they voted for at the polls. But empowering voters and small donors — an example set in several states that already use public financing for state campaigns — is both critical and politically viable at this historic moment.

Common Cause is working for campaign funding that lets millions of Americans influence the system, not a small group of wealthy donors and fundraisers.

Visit our website for more about our reform plan and how you can help:
www.commoncause.org



PROTECTING THE VOTE

The photos of Common Cause activity during the elections reflect our wide-ranging efforts (clockwise from top right): Stevie Lawrence registering and getting out voters in North Carolina, including some older, first-time voters; Mike Dean of Common Cause Minnesota watchdogged the Al Franken-Norm Coleman US Senate race recount in that state; Rebecca Zeigler, a volunteer in Florida helping voters (photo credit: Suzanne Charle’); Danny Glover, who recorded a set-the-record-straight call to voters in response to a deceptive robo-call urging them to the polls on the wrong date; Susannah Goodman, who directs our election reform team, appearing on CNN.

“The whole way we finance campaigns is really perpetuating a conflict of interest,” said Sarah Dufendach, vice president for legislative affairs at Common Cause. “We’re not going to get climate change or global warming legislation, health care, education and energy reform as long as the pharmaceuticals, oil companies and the energy industry are the ones paying for Congresses’ ear,” she said.” — *Roll Call newspaper 10/20/2008*

Profile Mike Surrusco



Mike Surrusco’s title is Senior Researcher/Writer. But that hardly describes his invaluable role at Common Cause.

Working with Mary Boyle, our Vice President for Communications, Mike is the hub of our communications, talking to the press, working with our online team and our direct mail operation and playing a key role in how we talk and write about our issues. In his spare time, he produces research and reports on a range of issues.

In the endless meetings that fill our days, Mike is always pushing to stop talking and get things done — and often, he’s the one to do it.

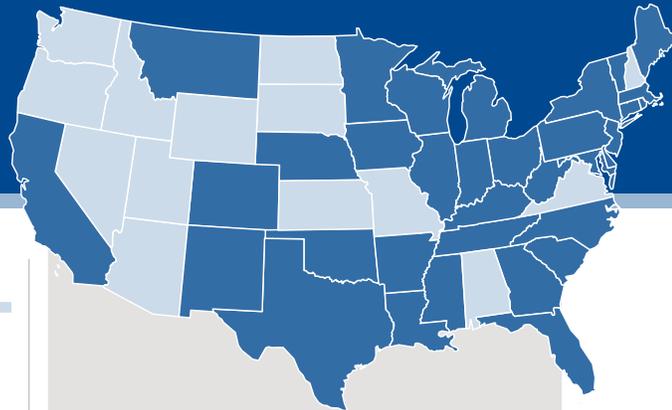
Mike is a two-timer — he worked at Common Cause from 2001 to 2006 in the research department and as director of the ethics campaign before leaving to take a job as Lead Researcher at the American Federation of Labor. He returned to Common Cause in 2008.

Over the years, Mike has worked on a number of issues, including research in 2001 on how campaign contributions played a role in the Enron scandal and heading up our Eye on Iraq campaign in 2003, which focused on oversight of reconstruction efforts. In 2005, Mike was the Ethics Campaign Director during the lobbying scandals surrounding lobbyist Jack Abramoff and former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay.

Mike graduated from the University of Notre Dame and has a master’s degree in international economic development from American University. He is married with a bouncing baby boy and two disobedient dogs. Mike’s wife, Emilie, is the Communications Director for the Alaska Wilderness League.

Power of States

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



WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2008

(see also front page)

Common Cause leads efforts to pass municipal public financing laws in Santa Fe, **New Mexico** and Big Island, **Hawaii** and was involved with a successful campaign to bring public financing to Chapel Hill, **North Carolina**.

In **Connecticut**, Common Cause's efforts to educate candidates, activists and the general public about the state's new voluntary system of public financing for state legislative campaigns results in 75 percent of candidates opting into the new "clean elections" program.

In **New Jersey, Illinois** and **Hawaii**, Common Cause champions passage and enactment of "national popular election of the President" legislation, another step in the National Popular Vote plan that would implement nationwide popular election of the President and get rid of the electoral college. In addition, the proposals passed both legislative chambers in **California, Massachusetts, Rhode Island** and **Vermont**, but were not signed into law by the governor.

In **Maryland**, Common Cause successfully champions the Maryland Accountability and Transparency Act, which will create a citizen-friendly website that opens up all aspects of state spending to the public.

In **North Carolina**, Common Cause helps pass the state's new same-day registration law, allowing more than a quarter of a million people to become new voters by registering to vote during the state's early voting period.

In **Pennsylvania**, Common Cause successfully champions a major overhaul of the state's open records laws, moving Pennsylvania from among the bottom three states in the nation to the top half of states providing citizens access to public records.

Common Cause **Massachusetts** is the leading ethics watchdog in a state that has been wracked this year by a series of scandals involving members of the state legislature. Recently, CC/MA was named to an ethics commission by Governor Deval Patrick, with a mandate to recommend reforms by year's end.

Common Cause's headquarters is in Washington, DC, but we have 35 active state organizations across the country, with staff and volunteers leading the fight for reforms in state capitols and city halls.

"I think that for many reasons, Connecticut has made history this election season. We've had an unprecedented participation rate for the first elections with voluntary public campaign finance, and we've virtually eliminated special-interest money from the elections."
— Beth A. Rotman, Connecticut's director of public financing



Common Cause California volunteer Kathy Armstrong with Daly City middle school students,

who learned about the ills of gerrymandering and displayed their artistic interpretations of gerrymandered districts. In November, Californians voted for historic redistricting reform.

Make sure Common Cause continues to build on its success. Donate today using the envelope attached to this newsletter — or give online at www.commoncause.org.



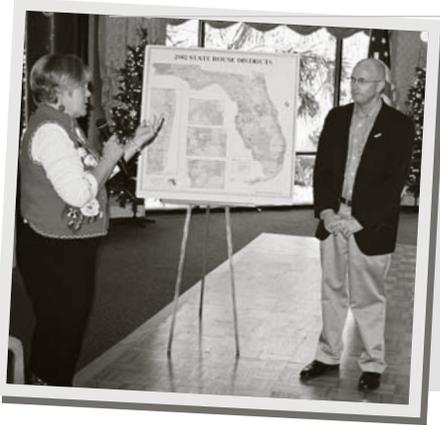
RURAL INTERNET ACCESS

Montana Common Cause and professor Richard Wolff issued a well-received study showing that the state's metro areas have access to online services and information but Montana's vast rural areas are badly underserved, particularly when it comes choice in internet service providers and access to local government services via the Web. *The report is available at www.commoncause.org/montana*

COMMON CAUSE INTERNATIONAL

On Election Day, approximately 100 Members of Parliament from Europe and Central Asia spanned across the US to monitor our historic election. Common Cause continued its assistance of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's election monitoring efforts and briefed a group of officials who were conducting the observation mission in Washington, DC and Virginia.

In partnership with the Mexican based civil society group Alternativas Y Capacidades, Common Cause International Director Lauren Coletta visited Mexico City to conduct an exploratory mission during ten days in November. The purpose of the trip was to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by civil society leaders in Mexico and find ways for Common Cause to partner with groups in the country.



Ben Wilcox, executive director of Common Cause Florida, was the featured speaker at the Christmas luncheon of the Democratic Club of Sarasota. Ben updated the group on the work the CC/FL had done on election protection during the last six months, and reported on the planned redistricting initiative.

"I am so very glad you all are on site finding out what is really going on and letting the rest of us know. Government has become very hard to follow even in Little Rhody." —Common Cause Rhode Island supporter

Profile Jenny Rose Flanagan



Common Cause Colorado was our first state organization and remains one of our most vibrant and successful chapters, in part because of a long history of outstanding executive directors. The latest of those is Jenny Rose Flanagan.

Jenny joined Common Cause in June 2004 after completing a fellowship with the New York State Senate. Prior to serving as executive director Jenny served as the Associate Director of the state organization.

Jenny has directed Common Cause Colorado's election reform work, serves on our national election reform team and is one of the primary founders of Just Vote Colorado (JVC), Colorado's election monitoring program in 2004, 2006 and 2008.

In the fall of 2007, Jenny, representing Common Cause, served on an advisory panel with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, local political parties and other nonprofits set up to advise Denver County on how to conduct the 2008 election.

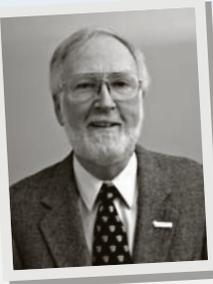
Jenny has appeared on CNN, NPR and in USA Today as well as many media outlets in Colorado, talking about voting issues.

Jenny and her husband Mark have a son, Miles, and own and operate a Red Rocks Cyclery, a bike shop in Morrison Colorado. Jenny, originally from New Jersey, received her BA in Communication from George Washington University in the District of Columbia and a law degree and Master of Social Work from the University of Denver.

You can learn more about Common Cause Colorado at their website: www.commoncause.org/colorado

Power of Our Supporters

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



Profile Jack Taylor

Many members of the Common Cause National Governing Board have contributed their time, talents and money over the years to the success of the organization.

But few have gone above and beyond the call of duty as Jack Taylor did in 2006 when the organization was facing some challenges. After helping mediate some conflicts on the board, Jack offered to temporarily move to Washington DC from New Mexico to assist in a leadership transition and help unravel some problems. His work and his steadying influence during a difficult time is still remembered well by the staff.

Jack first became involved with Common Cause in New Mexico, where he lives. He is now the state board chairman of Common Cause New Mexico and has served on the state board for many years, including lobbying for reform issues in the New Mexico State Legislature.

Jack has a masters degree in engineering from the University of New Mexico, and masters in philosophy and theology from the Aquinas Institute of Theology. He also holds a Doctor of Ministry from the McCormick Theology School.

Retired, Jack works as comptroller consultant to Direct Power and Water Corporation, a solar electric company. Prior to his retirement, he served as president of the Aquinas Institute of Theology and senior vice president of the Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith and Ethics in Chicago.

GoodSearch & GoodShop

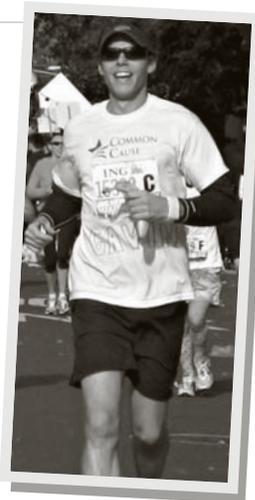
GoodShop.com is a new online shopping site that donates up to 37 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause — Common Cause! Hundreds of stores, including Target, Best Buy, eBay and Macy's, have teamed up with GoodShop so that every time you place an order through the GoodShop website, you'll be supporting Common Cause. Go to www.goodshop.com.

RUNNING FOR COMMON CAUSE

This fall, we received an email from Gavin Lodge:

Hi, there. I'm running the NYC marathon on November 2nd and would like to set up a fund whereby friends can give money to common cause to sponsor my efforts. Do you have an organized way of accomplishing this?

We "organized" to do this and Gavin's effort raised more than a thousand dollars. After the race, he wrote us, "Race was fantastic. I had such a good time. My training buddy and I marveled at how our training really worked! We had our fastest pace, ever, and we weren't in agony, at the end."



"At the heart of sustained morale and motivation lie two ingredients that appear somewhat contradictory: on the one hand, positive attitudes toward the future and toward what one can accomplish through one's own intentional acts, and on the other hand, recognition that life is not easy and that nothing is ever finally safe. What is needed is tough-minded optimism. ...To sustain hope one need not blind oneself to reality. People need to know the worst — about the evils to be remedied, the injustices to be dealt with, the catastrophes to be averted. We need to believe in ourselves and our future but not to believe that life is easy. The first and last task of a leader is to keep hope alive. Never denying the difficulties, they must keep confidence unimpaired."

—John Gardner, *On Leadership*

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.

Watch for our redesigned website, coming soon:
www.commoncause.org



DAVID COHEN

David Cohen was president of Common Cause in the late 1970's. (Cohen is second from right in this photo of the White House signing ceremony for the Ethics in Government Act of 1978.)

Last year, he spoke to Common Cause's current national governing board with some insights about the organization and its future. Recently, he wrote about how Common Cause-supported 1970s reforms in Congress affected some recent events on the Hill:

Henry Waxman's election by the House Democratic Caucus to chair the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee represents a serious advance for major changes on climate policy, a faster shift from our dependence on fossil fuels and that Detroit can no longer block far-reaching advances on fuel efficiency.

Waxman benefitted from critical reforms that House Democratic reformers and Common Cause advanced 34 years ago after the Watergate election of 1974. [Those reforms included changing the tradition of seniority by requiring elections for committee chairs.]

To read more, go to: <http://experienceadvocacy.com/2008/11/21/waxmans-win-downpayment-on-change-in-washington/>



Volunteer Profile Sid Garvais

A lifetime dedicated to government reform

In 2005, when Common Cause Connecticut succeeded in its more than 30-year battle for comprehensive campaign finance reform, there was only one person left from the original coalition to savor the victory: Sid Garvais. Only Sid has been around from the beginning – 1971, the year Common Cause activists decided to form a state organization in Connecticut.

Sid was one of the founding members of Common Cause Connecticut. He helped organize its first fundraisers employing methods that would later be standardized by nearly all nonprofit groups. Sid was one of the advocates that literally pried open the doors of government during a time when much of state government operated in secret. He and other advocates kept track of committee votes, demanded that legislators put up roll call votes, and lobbied for the creation of the State Ethics Commission.

Sid, whose professional career was as an insurance executive, has been the backbone of the state organization, and his work would make Common Cause founder John Gardner proud. His life exemplifies the phrase "one person can make a difference."

INTERNING AT COMMON CAUSE

Each semester and during the summer months, Common Cause offers internships to students from across the country — and around the world. If you are interested in applying for an internship, send a cover letter and resume to internship@commoncause.org.

2008 Fall Interns Alex Retsch-Bogart, Demetra Atsaloglou (Greece), Matthew Bruen





I want to thank all of you for the good work you are doing. We really are taking back our democracy, yes, we really are and it's because of people like you!
 —Carol Wyndham

For the month of January, Ben & Jerry's re-named Butter Pecan in Scoop Shops to "Yes PeCAN!" as a message celebrating the uniting of America as we move forward during difficult times. Ben & Jerry's proceeds from this flavor are being donated to The Common Cause Education Fund.

I was so impressed with all that you are doing to protect the vote. This should all help in future elections too! ... Thank you for doing all this to help the nation and all of us who haven't felt our voices have been heard.
 —Mary Lue Jeffrey



1133 19TH STREET, NW
 9TH FLOOR
 WASHINGTON, DC 20036
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“The first and last task of a leader is to keep hope alive.”

— John Gardner, 2003