



**Celebrating Our 50th Anniversary** *1970–2020* 

# POWER

### democracy is our common cause

This anniversary year is not the one we planned for. COVID-19 is ravaging our communities, families are struggling with the economic fallout, and the rancor and rhetoric in the wake of the election led to a violent assault on our democracy. If one lesson lingers from the past year, it is that we cannot take our democracy for granted. Indeed, the rule of law, our right to vote, our freedom to protest, and other sacred pillars of our democracy are always vulnerable to attack and must always be defended. At no time in our 50-year history has Common Cause's mission been more important.

To mark this milestone, we asked 50 people with a variety of experiences with and perspectives on Common Cause to share their thoughts about where we've been and where we're going. We did not set out to select the 50 "most important" people to Common Cause—such a task would be impossible! Rather, it is our hope that these 50 reflections will offer a window into the many voices and moments that have helped us become the organization we are today.



### "In creating Common Cause, we have done more than create an organization. We've given life to an idea." — COMMON CAUSE FOUNDER JOHN GARDNER

riffry YEARS AGO, John Gardner built a nonpartisan grassroots organization to give voice to the people. His vision for Common Cause was simple: the rich and powerful special interests were organized, but the people were not. The voice of the people was being drowned out by money and influence. That idea blossomed into 50 years of Common Cause fighting to "revitalize our institutions" and ensure that our democracy, at all levels, is a just and equitable one.

We have a remarkable record of success at the national, state, and local levels, winning vital reforms that create transparency and give people access to their government; broaden access to the vote and take on voter suppression; fight racial and partisan gerrymanders; reduce the power and influence of big money; and address needed structural and institutional reforms.

There is another threat to our democracy, older than the republic itself, that motivated a violent attack on Congress and our democracy on January 6, 2021. The threat, white supremacy, is the Big Lie behind America's original sin of slavery and the efforts to suppress, intimidate, or ignore votes in largely Black and Brown communities. For the past six years, we have sought to elevate our commitment to Reflective Democracy and integrate that commitment into programs that address race and equity issues through our democracy lens.

We are breaking down long-standing barriers to civic participation. We are partnering with thousands of organizations across a wide spectrum of approaches and issue arenas, all of which realize that we will not see progress on the pressing issues of our time as long as our democracy is controlled by wealthy interests. The work to ensure that our democracy represents all people, not just the

privileged few, comes with its share of setbacks. But democracy is not a destination—it is a living endeavor. And we have made historic leaps forward, thanks to the hard work and determined efforts of people who believe they must—and can—make a difference.



John Gardner once said,

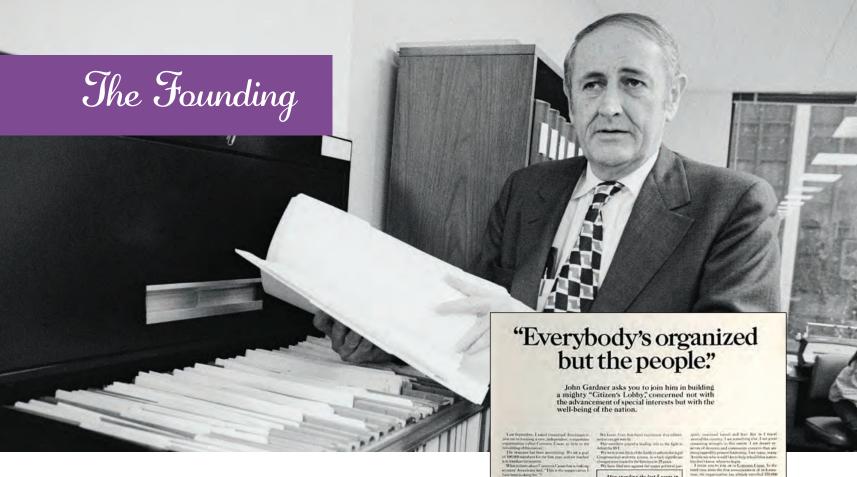
"A great many people don't know the history of citizens' action in America. They don't know that it got women the right to vote, or child labor reform, or got prohibition foisted on us, and then repealed, or that it produced the environmental lobby and the peace lobby." That history of people working together to achieve important reforms continues. Like all living things, democracy requires constant work and vigilance.

This book honors the passion, inspiration, and work of 50 leaders, activists, and voices for the people—all of whom have played, and many of whom continue to play, a role in that work. The 50 voices we recognize in this book today will be joined by 50 more tomorrow. And 50 more. And so on.

In the same way, I see Common Cause not by looking back at our accomplishments over the past 50 years but by the accomplishments we will achieve in the next 50—accomplishments that will make our democracy stronger and our society a better one.

for Hobert &

Karen Hobert Flynn President, Common Cause



In the summer of 1970, John William Gardner took what he called "the biggest gamble of [his] career" and founded Common Cause, a citizen's advocacy group. Gardner saw that there were a lot of strong special interests but no one pushing for the concerns of average people interested in the greater good. With disenchantment in government growing, by the end of the year 100,000 people had signed on to Common Cause's mission to hold power accountable.





#### JOHN GARDNER Founder, Common Cause

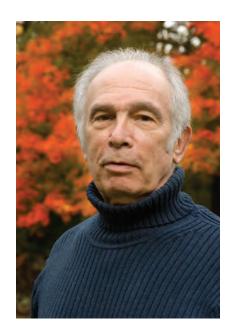
I was a California boy stumbling through life. Succeeding, falling on my face, getting up and plunging ahead, holding to some simple values, trying to live with a civil heart as someone said. Always learning, always trying, always hoping, always wondering. That's the true story.

June 22, 2001, in his final remarks to the Common Cause board and staff

#### **JAMES BANNER**

### Founding Chairman, New Jersey Common Cause, National Governing Board, 1973–79

The ad in *The New York Times* of August 16, 1970, was irresistible. "Everybody's organized but the people," it read. I filled out its coupon and mailed my check the same day. Little did I anticipate that, with some help from Richard Nixon, my next few years would be filled by Common Cause. I was recruited to organize a New Jersey chapter, writing member names on index cards. Soon we were meeting monthly, I became chairman, and then began my six years on the national governing board in 1973. John Gardner was always available in his office, feet up on his desk. Chairing board meetings, he wielded an ashtray as his gavel, "the tangible expression," he joked, "of inner grace." President Jack Conway, David Cohen, Fred Wertheimer, and many other gifted people led the fight. Watergate consumed us all. Then came the Saturday Night Massacre: the board met in emergency session to frame our response in court and on the ground. The rest is history. Never again have I worked with a more dedicated, zestful, focused, intelligent, inventive, skilled, and wise group of people than I did those years in Washington and the Garden State.





### **ROGER CRAVER**First Employee of Common Cause

Money is an essential fuel for the engine of social change. It represents the freedom and ability to set the agenda. At the time of Common Cause's founding, most progressive social and political social change was funded by labor unions, foundations, or wealthy individuals. If an organization or a movement had an agenda that displeased those large funders, it was unlikely to succeed.

We began Common Cause with John Gardner's mandate to "raise \$5 million from a lot of people in small amounts." How to do it was another matter. So Common Cause pioneered the use of mass direct mail and newspaper advertising for social change. We proved—against the gloom-and-doom prognostications of virtually every pundit and "expert"—that hundreds of thousands of citizens and

millions of dollars could be mobilized through gifts of \$10 and \$15, fueling the engine of change.

Today's technology and techniques were unknown back then, so we improvised and invented. We learned the "ins and outs" of direct marketing from experts at Time Inc., the Book of the Month Club, and Madison Avenue advertising wizards. We looked at the types of cars in the parking lots of early organizing meetings (lots of Volvos!) and then rented motor vehicle lists.

This early success of Common Cause and the realization that regular, caring citizens would indeed take action and do their part financially set off an avalanche of progressive organizations that followed our model and techniques—the National Organization for Women, Environmental Defense Fund, Sierra Club, Public Citizen, and ACLU among them.

### Board Leadership

In 1970, one week after John Gardner placed a full-page ad calling on people to organize, 50,000 feminists marched on Fifth Avenue in New York City, marking the 50th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, while the Black women there noted that it took the Voting Rights Act in 1965, a full 45 years later, to secure their right to vote.

As Common Cause looks ahead to our next 50 years, we do so for the first time as a woman-led organization. As we lean into our work on reflective democracy, we commit to ensuring that our board, staff, and membership better reflect the changing demographics in the nation to continue removing barriers that for too long gave disproportionate power to too few white men.





### **MARTHA TIERNEY National Governing Board Chair**

Common Cause celebrates 50 years of holding power accountable and protecting constitutional rights for all. Our common cause is to build a democracy that works for each of us, not only for a select few. As a women-led organization in this moment, we are a collaborative leadership team that encourages equality and respect, and appreciates that hard work paves the way to our success. In the words of John Gardner, "History never looks like history when you are living through it." At 50 years, we can look back and see our strong record of advancing a fair and just democracy, and we can look ahead with anticipation that the next 50 years will bring more of the same.

### **NANCY RATZAN**National Governing Board Vice Chair

Common Cause exists to ensure a thriving democracy—one that is driven by a resolute and endless quest for inclusivity, equality, opportunity, and dignity of all. I'm proud to be part of a leadership team that fully embraces these aspirational values as essential to this organization and this nation. We are committed to ensuring that our future leaders, as well as America's, are an even more diverse and reflective composite of this country.





### **OLENA BERG LACY National Governing Board Treasurer**

It is a tribute to John Gardner's vision of an inclusive democracy that Common Cause is now led by women. Let us continue his work toward a more perfect union.

### **OLGA KAUFFMAN National Governing Board Secretary**

Growing up in South Texas along the US-Mexico border, I was educated in a segregated Mexican school—decades after *Brown v. Board of Education*—and lived in a segregated community. I was lucky that my parents made sure all eight of their children went to college, where I became involved in the Chicano Movement and learned about the fight for equal rights led by groups like the NAACP, NCLR, and LULAC. During my freshman year, another organization that worked to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to participate in our democracy was created: Common Cause. Today, I am proud to serve as an officer in this organization, which has done so much to ensure that democracy works for all of us, no matter the color of our skin, gender, or income.





### KAREN HOBERT FLYNN

#### **President, Common Cause**

Democracy is our common cause, and I have been fortunate to spend more than 30 years in the work to make our democracy an equitable and just one.

I "grew up" at Common Cause. Just a year out of college, I joined the national staff and saw first-hand how entrenched incumbents and powerful special interests had been gaming the system for generations. I knew that fighting inequality, unfair privilege, greed, and the powerful stench of government's smoke-filled rooms would be my life's work.

Since then, I have worked at the national, state, and local levels of Common Cause, all while juggling my other life's work—my family, including our four sons.

Every step of the way, I have been inspired by citizens who joined together as we fought for small-donor, citizen-funded elections, ethics reform, voting rights, and greater transparency in government at all levels.

Our democracy is a living, breathing organism. So is Common Cause. Today, I am proud to have the opportunity to lead a brilliant and passionate team of staff and volunteers as we harness rapidly changing technology and respond to a shifting legal landscape, demographic shifts in the population, and ever-evolving areas of need.

While our mission has always been rooted in a commitment to achieving greater racial equity, today we are more intentional and explicit in how we work toward that goal. We hold diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values and have taken important steps to work toward greater equity throughout the organization and in the work we do on a daily basis.

It's critical that we teach our children—the next generation—the importance of being engaged and active in our democracy. We need to remind them, as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote in a 2015 decision that affirmed the right of citizens—not powerful, self-interested politicians—to be involved in the drawing of voting districts:

"The animating principle of our Constitution is that the people themselves are the originating source of all the powers of government."

### State and National Leaders

Common Cause's national team and state organizations work hand in hand to make progress on the most pressing issues facing our democracy.



### ANTHONY GUTIERREZ Common Cause Texas

### **Executive Director**

In Texas, we're leading the charge against voter suppression. Last year, we played a key role in stopping a discriminatory voter roll purge, blocking a secretary of state confirmation and killing some of the worst voter suppression bills we've seen in years. Now we're working to take that momentum and translate it into getting some big provoting reforms passed.

#### **PAM WILMOT**

### **Vice President of State Operations**

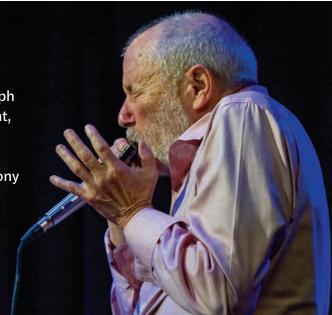
I've been working on National Popular Vote since 2006, leading efforts to pass it in my own state and helping activists, lawmakers, and opinion leaders pass it in 14 other states. I'm delighted that we are now more than 70% of the way to our goal of ensuring that every vote counts equally in every state and that the presidential candidate with the most votes nationwide is elected president.



#### **CORKY SIEGEL**

#### **Common Cause Illinois State Board**

My wife Holly and I were introduced to Bob Edgar by his brother Ralph because he said that Bob's puns were worse than mine. He was right, and we became fast friends. Bob invited me to perform at the 40th anniversary in DC. Inspired, Holly and I took action to reboot CCIL, which celebrates 10 years as an effective force for change, a testimony to the power we each have to bring good into the world. No matter what the state of the union, this nonpartisan force will always be a profound path for putting compassion and wisdom into action.



### **SUSAN LERNER**

### **Common Cause New York Executive Director**

I first got to know Common Cause when I ran a group that supported full public funding of elections in California, and the Common Cause members were our most reliable volunteer partners. Common Cause California and national staff were unflaggingly helpful. So I was thrilled to join Common Cause as the executive director in New York 12 years ago. Helping ensure that New York's congressional district maps are fair and nonpartisan, leading Let NY Vote, and passing Early Voting and preregistration of 16- and 17-year-olds have been high points.





### **VIKI HARRISON**

# **Director of State Operations and Former Executive Director, Common Cause New Mexico**

I started supporting Common Cause as a teenager when I saw an ad in the newspaper. The slogan "holding power accountable" resonated with me, and I promptly sent in some babysitting money! As a staff member, I am really proud of the work I have done to protect our democracy, including rescinding and stopping dangerous calls for an Article V convention.

### YOSEF GETACHEW

### **Media & Democracy Program Director**

My job as the director of the Media and Democracy Program is to ensure that everyone has access to the free flow of information and exchange of ideas necessary to make informed decisions about our democracy. I get to work at the intersection of telecommunications, internet, and media law to advocate for policies that hold media accountable and check the concentration of media ownership in too few hands. Using a variety of tools, including grassroots mobilization, legal action, and stakeholder engagement, I work to derail media mega-mergers and fight for rules and programs to ensure that everyone has critical communications tools to participate in our democracy. Our 21st-century democracy depends on a free, open, and accessible internet; protection of diverse media ownership; and a free and independent press.





# JOANNE ANTOINE Common Cause Maryland Executive Director

We have built a public financing campaign in Maryland that is shifting power to the people one county at a time while setting the stage for statewide public financing. By 2026, more than half of eligible Maryland voters will live in a jurisdiction where we have helped to strengthen the voice of citizens against the growing influence of special interest money.

### **LASHANDA JACKSON Vice President of Development**

It may be cliché, but nevertheless true: we cannot meet our mission without our members. Philanthropy is a marvelous gift to humankind. And I have the privilege of working at the intersection of philanthropy and democracy when the stakes could not be higher. Having a front-row seat to perpetual generosity and acts of kindness is quite an experience. Members of Common Cause embrace the age-old adage: To whom much is given, much will be required. As head of fundraising and membership, I am awed by and grateful for the unwavering dedication of our members to protect our democracy and support the vital work of Common Cause.



### Allies

Great things happen when we're working together. Our achievements over the past 50 years were only possible thanks to the unwavering support of our friends and allies.



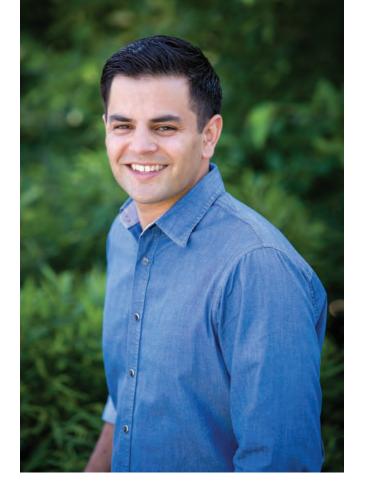
#### ADAM AMBROGI **Democracy Program Director, Democracy Fund**

As someone who has worked both inside and outside of government on behalf of making elections better, I know Common Cause has been a real leader in ensuring that the public and elected representatives knew the importance of free and fair elections. During my time on the Senate Rules Committee, I relied on information and support from Common Cause and its members to better promote election reform legislation on behalf of senators. At Democracy Fund, we've been happy to support the work that Common Cause does on independent redistricting reform and help their important work in growing and diversifying their state leadership. Their ability to provide top-notch legal and advocacy strategies paired with strong grassroots mobilization makes them an essential partner when democracy appears under threat.

### **CHRIS MELODY FIELDS Executive Director, Ballot Initiative Strategy Center (BISC)**

One of the things you quickly learn after working at Common Cause is that you are always a part of the family. Throughout my career, many of my colleagues have been my friends and co-conspirators in our quest to build an inclusive, equitable, and participatory democracy. Whether it was being in the trenches during Election Protection when I was at the Lawyers' Committee, developing voting rights messaging for impacted communities at ReThink Media, or developing strategies to push transformational democracy ballot measures as I lead BISC, Common Cause has been a thought partner that I can turn to. And I know that no matter what, I always have a home and people who believe in my leadership at Common Cause.





### **ESTEVAN MUNOZ-HOWARD Program Officer, Piper Fund**

Common Cause has been a critical partner in efforts to strengthen our democracy, and its affiliate model helps ensure that local infrastructure and momentum are built nationwide. At Piper Fund, we work closely with Common Cause's national staff to align our strategic priorities, while at the same time funding several Common Cause affiliates to advance key money in politics reforms at local and state levels. Common Cause's partnership has been crucial to our collective ability to build a stronger movement for democracy.

#### KRISTEN CLARKE

President, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and nominee to lead the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

These are challenging times for our democracy and, no doubt, the work of civil rights organizations has proven critical in this era. That said, there are few organizations as central to the fight as Common Cause. With its army of organizers and advocates spread across the country and under the strong and steady leadership of Karen Hobert Flynn, Common Cause truly stands at the forefront of some of the most important challenges to democracy that we face today. As an anchor partner in Election Protection, I am proud to stand alongside Karen, working to ensure that all Americans have a voice in our democracy. I am thrilled to celebrate Common Cause as the organization marks five decades of extraordinary work and spirited advocacy.





#### **LISA GILBERT**

#### **Executive Vice President, Public Citizen**

Looking back on the tough fights and big victories of the last decade, Public Citizen and Common Cause are always in the trenches together. I know I can always count on Common Cause staff to get stuff done, work hard, and throw down with me and the rest of the Public Citizen team. One recent shared triumph was our work to create a first-of-its-kind democracy forum in Iowa for presidential candidates. Working closely with Karen, Aaron, Jay, Jesse, and others at Common Cause, we divided up the work of endlessly calling candidate schedulers, creating the materials, renting a venue, prepping the moderators, promoting the event, getting the walk-in music for the candidates (surprisingly difficult), and the thousands of little things it took to make the forum a success. Common Cause staff are the kind of people you can count on, and (with help from other allies!) we pulled off a top-notch event with incredible press coverage and top-tier campaigns on the record in support of fixing our democracy and for H.R. 1. This is just one example of the many I could choose from, and I'm proud and happy to get to work with Common Cause so often.



#### **TANYA CLAY HOUSE**

### **Senior Program Officer for Voting Rights, State Infrastructure**

As someone who has worked with Common Cause on both the national policy and state implementation levels, I believe Common Cause is a vital partner in the effort to remove unnecessary barriers and protect the voting rights of all Americans. It has been a consistent voice nationally and in the states to engage and advocate for proactive policy reforms and to litigate when necessary to prevent voter suppression. Common Cause currently serves as a lead field organization for the Election Protection Coalition, and it serves an important role in the states by being a consistent organization on the ground that engages with election administration officials throughout the year. Without the work of Common Cause, a gap would exist in the voting rights community's effort to ensure a more inclusive democracy.

#### **WENDY FIELDS**

#### **Former Director, Democracy Initiative**

"Delivering on the promise of democracy." That is what I think about when I think about Common Cause. Delivering on a promise and ensuring that it is for all people is the highest form of accountability. I was proud to serve on the staff of Common Cause as they took a bold step not only to link the issue of racial and economic inequality to democracy programs but also to develop program work and communications through that lens. Our Constitution and many democratic norms were designed specifically to ensure that Black and Brown poor and rural communities had no voice or representation. I am so proud to see that out of that intentional focus, the diversity of the staff has increased, the program portfolio now includes felony disenfranchisement and civil rights work, and they are working across silos with issue-based social justice organizations. Much of this is thanks to the leadership of Karen Hobert Flynn, under whose guidance the race, class, and equity commitment has flourished. While it has not been easy to shift an institution, she has never wavered from the commitment; she lives the words. I look forward to the next 50 years and predict increased success!



### **VIRGINIA KASE CEO, League of Women Voters**

For decades, our organizations have partnered nationally, and in communities across the country, in an effort to hold our government and elected leaders accountable to us-the people. Just last year, we came together in the fight for fair maps when our redistricting cases were heard at the Supreme Court. That cold day in March, our members gathered from across the country to rally and have their voices heard, and although our cases were not decided in our favor, we were not deterred, and we have not backed down. The League and Common Cause have launched initiatives across the country, together, for the next redistricting cycle. We've doubled down on our efforts to fight gerrymandering and organized thousands of volunteers to work toward our shared dream of fair maps that truly represent the people of this great nation. This isn't a go-it-alone fight, and I can't think of a better partner to go into battle with for a better democracy. Our country is better and stronger because of your work. Congratulations on this important milestone. I can't wait to see what you accomplish in the next 50 years!

























































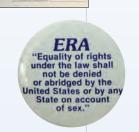
### **Celebrating 50 Years of PEOPLE POWER**

### COMMON CAUSE

• 1970

Common Cause with a historic ad in The New York Times and a direct mail appeal.





John Gardner launches



Common Cause files a lawsuit against the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP), exposing President Nixon's campaign slush funds.

• 1972

The Equal Rights Amendment is passed by the House and Senate, and ratified by 35 of the 38 necessary states, but falters under conservative opposition and is never enacted

The first political contribution limits and the Federal Election Commission are created as part of amendments significantly strengthening the Federal Election Campaign Act.

• 1974

Nixon resigns when impeachment and conviction appear inevitable.



The Ethics in Government Act is passed, requiring mandatory financial disclosures by elected officials and strengthening federal ethics laws.



Congress extends the Voting Rights Act for 25 years and strengthens key provisions to halt discriminatory voter suppression laws.

Sandra Day O'Connor is nominated as the first woman Supreme Court Justice by President Ronald Reagan.



President Reagan's nominee to the Supreme Court, Robert Bork, is rejected by the U.S. Senate, 58-42, in the largest margin of rejection for the role



Common Cause supports the passage of he Americans with Disabilities Act.



Nelson Mandela is released from prison in South Africa and becomes the leader of the ANC. The white supremacist apartheid regime is dismantled.





• 2001

Hanging chads in Florida

selecting George Bush to be

Subsequent recounts of the

president in Bush v. Gore.

ballots would determine

votes in the state.

that Al Gore received more

lead to the SCOTUS

September 11, 2001—Terrorists hijack four airplanes and attack New York City and leading the United States down the path toward war in Afghanistan and Iraq.



2005

Common Cause leads the fight to enact the first small-dollar public financing program Washington, D.C., killing 2,977 people and in Connecticut. The new law transforms the political climate in the state, moving power away from special interests and back to the people.

CLEAN-UP CREW!

YOU CLEANED UP CORRUPTICUT 3 YEARS AGO NOW IT'S TIME FOR A LITTLE TIDYING UP!

CLEAN ELECTION REFORM WORKS! DON'T LET 'EM NIX IT...FIX IT!



1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020

lancy Pelosi becomes the first woman

President Barack Obama is

sworn in as our first African-

American president. More

than 2 million Americans

He immediately introduces

several economic stimulus

• 2010

Black president.

The rise of the Tea Party in response

health-care reforms makes real the

and formalizes the backlash some

response to the election of our first

conservatives were fomenting in

race and class division in the country

to the economic recovery and

of the banking system.

flood D.C. for his inauguration. packages and leads a cleanup

Donald Trump is elected

president after an election tarnished by campaign finance violations and foreign interference, and launches an assault on the guardrails of democracyattacking the press, undermining the rule of law, and abusing his office to promote his personal

democracy reform legislation to combat gerrymandering, defend voting rights, and limit the influence of money in politics.



George Floyd is killed by

• 2020

Minneapolis police, sparking

demands for police reform.

COVID-19 shuts down the

world. The disproportionate

economic and health impacts

on communities of color make

America's racial disparities

impossible to ignore. As states

to the ballot and mobilizing

volunteers for the largest

effort in history.

the pandemic, Common Cause is

instrumental in expanding access

nonpartisan Election Protection

global anti-racism rallies and

impeached by the House

on two counts, obstruction

of Congress and abuse of

power, for pressuring the

president of Ukraine to

investigate the son of his

military aid.

• 2019

political rival in exchange for

The newly elected majority

in the House passes the For

the People Act, sweeping

**1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980** 

• 1970 First LGBT Pride Marches attract thousands of participants on the first



The Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities hearings reveal that Common Cause and John Gardner were on President Nixon's "Enemies List" as part of its investigation into the break-in at Democratic Party offices in the Watergate Hotel.

Roe v. Wade recognizes the

Constitution and establishes

right to privacy enshrined in the

protections for women's right to



Jimmy Carter, peanut farmer and one-tern

Iowa Caucus and outsider status to win the

presidential campaign—which was entirely

funded by public money and saw the return

of presidential debates, sponsored by the

League of Women Voters, after none were

governor of Georgia, uses little-known



1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988

Walter Mondale selects Geraldine Ferraro as his running mate, the first woman nominated by a major party o run for VP. They lose in a 49-state andslide to Reagan.



Common Cause exposes the ethical lapses of Speaker Jim

resignation.



Wright (D-TX), leading to his



"Gang of Seven" GOP Reps overcome Democratic obstruction to force an investigation into House Banking and Congressional Post Office scandals which leads to Ways and Means Chairman Dan Rostenkowski pleading guilty to criminal charges.

he Berlin Wall is torn down at the end f the Cold War. Pro-democracy protests e place at Tiananmen Square in China



Common Cause exposes violations of

House rules, ultimately forcing Speaker

Newt Gingrich (R-GA) to resign in 1999.

African Americans gather from all over the country in Washington, D.C., for the Million Man March to put issues facing black Americans on the national agenda. Speakers include civil rights icon and founding Common Cause Board Member Dorothy Height.



Broadcasting.



1999 Don Simon, Acting President 2002 Don Simon, Acting President

1999 Derek Bok, Chair

Common Cause helps defeat legislation defunding the Corporation for Public



Office of Congressional Ethics, an

ndependent ethics watchdog, is

In Shelby County v. Holder the

Supreme Court dismantles key provisions of the Voting Rights Act and clears the way for states to dismantle voting rights and close polling locations, largely targeting communities of color.



The Affordable Care Act, the most

significant domestic policy decision

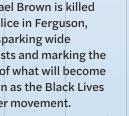
of the past 50 years, goes into effect,

transforming the health-care system

and extending health insurance to

more than 20 million Americans.

Michael Brown is killed





• 2017 Common Cause reaches

1 million members and supporters nationwide.

2013-16 Robert Reich, Chair 2016-present Karen Hobert Flynn, President 2014-16 Miles Rapoport, President

1970-78 John Gardner, Chair

Ray Tomlinson sends the

world's first email—to himself.

1971-75 Jack Conway, President

1975-81 David Cohen, President

held in '64, '68, or '72.

### 1980-92 Archibald Cox, Chair

1978-80 Nan Waterman, Chair 1981-95 Fred Wertheimer, President

1995-99 Ann McBride, President

2003-07 Chellie Pingree, President 1999-2002 Scott Harshbarger, President

2007-13 Robert W. "Bob" Edgar, President 2008 Jim Leach, Chair

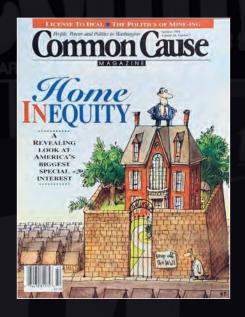
Matter movement.

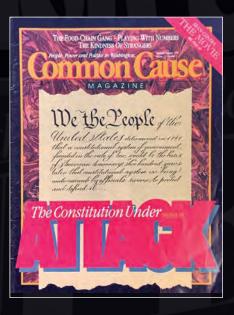
by police in Ferguson, MO, sparking wide protests and marking the start of what will become known as the Black Lives

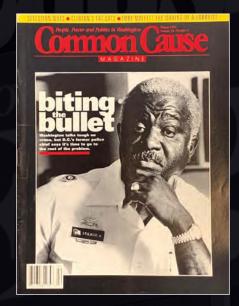


2016-present Martha Tierney, Chair

### The Magazine









### **FLORENCE GRAVES** Founding Editor, Common Cause Magazine

An investigative reporting magazine. That had been my goal after reading the biographies of pioneering journalists Ida Tarbell and Nellie Bly, growing up amid the civil rights and women's rights movements. When I launched Common Cause Magazine in 1980, it had the largest circulation of any political magazine in the country. We broke stories on special interest money influencing public policy, corporate and government malfeasance, and regulatory mismanagement. Our work won dozens of awards and led to significant changes in federal law.

During the magazine's 16-year run, three women served as editor in chief. I passed the baton to Deborah Baldwin, who passed it to Vicky Kemper. "If Common Cause Magazine threw a reunion," Folio, an industry publication, observed, "it would look like a convention of today's top investigative reporters. With a brand of muckraking that belonged more to the era of Ida Tarbell than of Rupert Murdoch, the magazine attracted and nurtured journalists who had a zeal for exposing the abuses of the powerful."

#### PETER OVERBY **Former Power, Money & Influence Correspondent, NPR**

I wrote for Common Cause Magazine in the early '90s, when its money-and-politics reporting was winning journalism awards. In fact, Common Cause helped to set the template for such coverage, not just with the magazine but with its clear-eyed analysis and factchecked data.



## Democracy Fellows

Common Cause launched the Democracy Fellows program to recruit and train students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities to boost civic engagement on their campuses and promote the value of being lifelong participants in democracy. Their passion and commitment inspire us all.



### **JAZMYNE ABNEY NC Central University**

From my HBCU campus to the halls of Congress, I've had unique experiences that continue to influence my professional and personal goals. The HBCU Action Alliance has become more than student-led nonpartisan organizing—we are a unit bound by our dedication to our respective campuses and communities. I am grateful to Common Cause for the endless opportunities to contribute to local and national efforts to protect democracy.



### **JESSICA TROTTER Jackson State University**

Overall, I believe that the work
I have done on my campus has
advanced students' knowledge
about the importance of voting, not
only in Mississippi but as attendees
of a Historically Black College/
University as well.



### **LOVE CAESAR NC A&T State University**

Being a part of Common Cause means that my skills can be channeled in a more beneficial and impactful way for my community. It means that I can make a difference with my voice by being an agent of change wherever I go.



For 50 years, Common Cause has worked to hold power accountable. Common Cause gives me hope that in my lifetime I will see politicians be more authentic and honest in my future.



### **TARAIA LAWERY Coppin State University**

Common Cause gives me the opportunity to voice my concerns about voting and to make sure no one is left out of the process. Common Cause provides resources to educate people about issues that affect their communities, like the Census, redistricting, and funding.

### **KIMANI CARTER Morehouse College**

I believe that Common Cause can be the tool that reminds people there's a reason our democracy is representative. Together we can make the changes we need on every level of government.



### **SHELBY LEWIS Spelman College**

In the next 50 years, I want America to be more of a democracy and not a democratic republic. I believe that Common Cause is prepared to lead the fight, and I am happy to be a part of it.

### **DIEUDONNE MUNDY Spelman College**

In the next 50 years, I want to be able to experience a government that represents me and understands me, a Black woman. I want to be able to lead, act, and react without being labeled as hostile, difficult, or angry.



### Volunteers and Activists

After bringing on Roger Craver to help raise the money, John Gardner's next hire was Ruth Saxe to be Common Cause's volunteer coordinator. He knew from the start that the organization could succeed only by recruiting topnotch activists and volunteers. That tradition has carried forward to today.



### TIFFANY RUMBALSKI

**Volunteer, Ohio** 

I host a Common Cause Voter Box in my front yard because I want people in my community to have accurate voting information. That works for everyone who walks past my house in Hilliard, Ohio. But I needed an inflatable T-Rex with an Instagram account to reach a wider audience, so Vinny Voter was born. Vinny loves working with Common Cause because they fight for what we all want (even an inflatable T-Rex): transparency, accountability, and fairness in our United States of America.

### **BOB LEVENTHAL**

### **Volunteer, Washington, DC**

I have been a member of Common Cause since its inception in 1970 and watched how powerfully Common Cause advocated for preserving our democracy while remaining nonpartisan. In 1998, I decided to cut back my work hours and responded to a postcard invitation to volunteer in the DC office. I decided to become a "participant" rather than a "bystander." Every Tuesday morning for 22 years, I made my way downtown to Common Cause headquarters. We had a strong and vibrant group of volunteers, and we felt like we were in the middle of the fight. One of our most important priorities at that time was the McCain-Feinberg Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act. In 2002, with big fanfare, it passed and marked a major victory for Common Cause. These days, the momentum continues, but the methods have progressed. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to be a participant in the struggle to retain our democratic system.





#### **KAY BROWN**

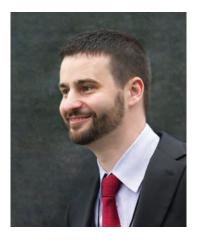
#### **Volunteer, North Carolina**

I decided to become an Election Protection volunteer with Common Cause because I wanted to make sure someone was protecting voters' rights. On Election Day 2018, I noticed that my polling place didn't have the right signage for curbside voting, which many elderly and mobility-limited voters rely on. I spoke to poll workers and made sure they posted the correct information. Since then I've lobbied the Board of Elections directly to make sure that other polling places have the resources they need to avoid making the same mistake—and I'm committed to doing even more for Election Protection in 2020.

### **LAUREN ZITNEY Volunteer, Colorado**

I'm a big believer in democracy. While I certainly have policy preferences, cheering for one side or the other can be deeply unfulfilling because it means someone is always on the "losing team." But Common Cause has been an incredible source of nonpartisan activism for me: when Common Cause wins, government "of the people, for the people, and by the people" wins. Texting voters with the Common Cause Action Team has been such a cool way to see my direct impact. I've had so many conversations where a voter's voice would not have been heard if not for the texts I sent. For me, it's the best medicine for combating the rattling news cycle. I get to feel like I'm part of the solution—not the chaotic problem.





**TODD STIEFEL Activist and Philanthropist** 

In 2019, I decided to spearhead and sponsor the creation of Common Cause's End Gerrymandering Pledge for signing by everyday Americans, campaign donors, elected officials, and candidates for office with the goal of garnering broad and public support for fair, nondiscriminatory, nonpartisan redistricting across the country. I believe that gerrymandering is a direct threat to secular government because it causes more radical candidates from the right and left to be elected to office.

# Elected Officials

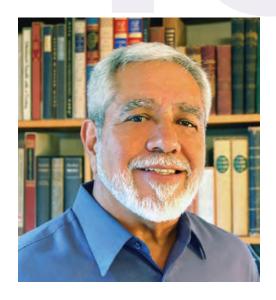
Our working relationships with elected officials are some of our greatest assets. From the halls of Congress, to state houses and governors' offices, to local city and county officials, our collaboration with public officials has yielded real results for our democracy.



#### **GOV. KATE BROWN**

#### **Governor, Oregon**

It takes both government and public leadership, working together, to advance major reform, to advance a democracy where everyone has a voice, and where people matter more than money. Common Cause has been there, time and again, bringing leadership, policy expertise, and public voices into the debate.



#### RAY GARDUNO

### Former Albuquerque City Councilor and Former Common Cause New Mexico Board Member

I am so proud of Common Cause New Mexico. They are truly living up to this great organization's motto, "Holding Power Accountable." They have fought for the right to vote with automatic voter registration, limited the power of big money in elections with public financing (I was the first person elected under Albuquerque's public financing program), and held public officials accountable with an independent ethics commission. They always remain nonpartisan. When I was elected to the City Council it was expected that I step down from the board—as it should be! For 50 years, Common Cause has been on the front lines in the fight to save our democracy. And now, after 50 years, their work is more relevant than ever.

#### **REP. RUBEN GALLEGO**

#### **U.S. House of Representatives, Arizona**

From the days when I interned with Common Cause and throughout my years in Congress, I continue to witness Common Cause staff, volunteers, and activists working tirelessly to get big money out of politics, enhance the right to vote, and hold power accountable to help amplify the voices of all Americans.



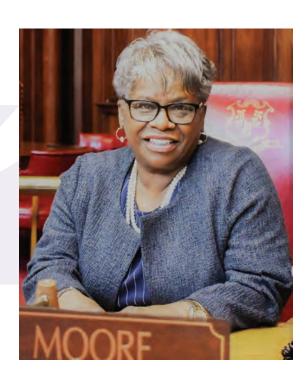


# REP. JOHN SARBANES U.S. House of Representatives, Maryland

I want to congratulate Common Cause on reaching this important milestone. With the support of prominent organizations like Common Cause, the U.S. House of Representatives made history last year by passing H.R. 1, the For the People Act—a transformative anticorruption and clean elections bill. I look forward to continuing our critical work together to clean up corruption in Washington and return to government of, by, and for the people.

### **SEN. MARILYN MOORE State Senator, Connecticut**

I am just completing my third term as a state senator. This opportunity to serve was made possible because Common Cause in Connecticut led the effort to pass the Citizens' Election Program, and I was able to qualify for campaign finance funds. As a newcomer, and from the poorest city in the state, I did not have access to large sums of money that would allow me to compete with established campaigns and party-endorsed candidates. In four races, I've run as an independent Democrat in one of the most corrupt cities in Connecticut. The independence offered by State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) funds allows me to run without compromise. My only commitment is to my constituents and not big money. I am very grateful for the leadership of Common Cause.



### Distinguished Alumni Leaders

Former staff often tell us it was "the best job they ever had." We value all the wonderful individuals who have contributed their time and talents to Common Cause. Below are a few notable leaders through our first 50 years.

#### **NAN WATERMAN**

#### **Common Cause Chair (1978–80)**

Dorothy Ann "Nan" Waterman (1919–2006) was the second chairperson of Common Cause, the successor to John W. Gardner. Following an organization's founder, especially someone of John's stature, is always unenviable. Yet Nan led the national governing board and represented Common Cause with characteristic authority, gusto, and good cheer during her three-year term. A wife, mother of five sons, and civic giant in her own context, she was an ebullient, witty woman in a man's world who would not have been chosen by her national governing board colleagues to assume the organization's chair had she not proven herself one of the board's leading members and exhibited unusual leadership gifts and the strength of character to match them. She began her rise with the Muscatine, Iowa, chapter of the League of Women Voters. Steadily becoming more prominent, she became president of the League's Iowa chapter, then its national vice president. One of the founders of Iowa Common Cause, she was elected to the national governing board in 1973. Among the early leaders of Common Cause, Nan occupies a place alongside John Gardner, Archie Cox, Jack Conway, David Cohen, and Fred Wertheimer—the only woman among them. —James M. Banner Jr.





### ANN MCBRIDE

### **Common Cause President (1995–99)**

I knew John Gardner—not deeply at the time—and had always respected him. So I decided to come check out this new organization he had founded. I soon volunteered and began to hone my skills, surrounded by some very excited and talented folks. I later became an organizer and then a lobbyist for one of the hardest issues Common Cause has worked on—campaign finance reform. In the '70s Common Cause resembled a campaign headquarters and the energy in the office had heart and a certain passion. Eventually, the opportunity came to become president, and I embraced the challenge. It wasn't always easy to be a woman in that position in those days—the Hill was a far different place with a hard culture (although sometimes being underestimated worked in my favor!). It is still hard, but perhaps I and some of my female contemporaries made things just a little easier. In a crowded arena of democracy organizations today, Common Cause has rightfully earned a reputation for being thoughtful, fair, and effective.

#### **DON SIMON**

### **Common Cause Executive Vice President and General Counsel (1995–2000)**

I started at Common Cause as a summer law clerk in 1977 while I was still in law school, and then joined as a full-time (and very young) lawyer in the fall of the next year. Giants walked the halls then—David Cohen, Fred Wertheimer, Ann McBride, and, of course, John Gardner. I was awed then and have remained so since—by the passion and rigor of the incredibly smart and dedicated people who work for the organization, by the consistent commitment to excellence in everything the organization does, and most of all by the organization's animating principle that democracy succeeds only when citizens are informed, empowered, and engaged in order to hold accountable those with power.

I had the privilege of being associated with Common Cause in a number of different roles over the years, and I cherished them all. The years-long fight for the McCain-Feingold reform bill, culminating in its passage in 2002, remains by far the proudest accomplishment of my career, though my own role in the sweep of that enormous effort was modest. But every minute of my work on that project, as well as all of my other work for Common Cause over the years, provided me with the immense personal and professional satisfaction of working with really smart people who held themselves to the highest of standards for the best of causes. And for that, I am forever grateful to Common Cause.



#### **ARCHIBALD COX**

### **Common Cause Chairperson (1980–92)**

The challenge is to reshape the machinery of self-government so that the long-run progress of the whole enterprise is the center of attention, so that every citizen knows that he or she can participate and that his or her participation counts, and so that decisions are taken, hard choices are made, and problems are solved.

Feb. 3, 1980, statement to The New York Times upon his election as chairman of Common Cause





#### FRED WERTHEIMER

### **Common Cause President (1981–95)**

After 24 years with Common Cause, including 14 years as president, I am proud to see that John Gardner's vision that government must work for all citizens and his commitment to engaging citizens in determining their own destiny are alive and prospering in the organization he created.

Common Cause provided me and innumerable others with the rare opportunity to go to work every day knowing we were working to make things better for the American people, to make the voices of ordinary Americans more powerful, and to represent hundreds of thousands of Common Cause members dedicated to the public good.

There are values that guided Common Cause through its battles, through its successes and setbacks: A deep commitment to government integrity, accountability, and transparency. John Gardner's counsel that reform is not for the shortwinded. Recognition that fundamental change takes time. Understanding that to win, we must

be ready to strike when opportunities arise. Knowledge that while perfection is not achievable, principled policy goals can be reached.

In my years at Common Cause (and at Democracy 21, the organization I created in 1997) there have been operating principles that remain with Common Cause today: we never give up; we never give in; we never go away. Integrity is core, as embodied by John Gardner and former chairman Archie Cox. Eternal vigilance is required to preserve our democracy and to hold government and officeholders accountable. Common Cause has been guided, as I have, by Nelson Mandela's wise advice that "it always seems impossible until it's done." John would be bursting with pride to see Common Cause today thriving and with great leadership, fighting for the interests of the American people, and pursuing the same values, goals, and mission he set forth 50 years ago on the day he founded Common Cause.

#### ROBERT REICH

#### **Common Cause Governing Board Chair (2013–16)**

My first job with Common Cause was in 1972. A member of Common Cause hired me to launch what was to be Common Cause's first state chapter in New Hampshire. But I made a critical error—I never checked in with headquarters. Two months into my work, I was summoned to Washington by Jack Conway, then Common Cause's president, who quashed my enthusiasm by telling me that Common Cause did not have state chapters and that my efforts were for naught! It was not a propitious start.

Still, I had been bitten by the Common Cause bug, and eventually Fred Wertheimer suggested I join the National Governing Board. By that time, Richard Nixon had resigned, Washington was buzzing with post-Watergate reforms, and Common Cause was playing a leading role. I marveled at Fred's energy and enthusiasm, as well as his command of facts and legal arguments. Archibald Cox served as chair of the National Governing Board then, co-navigating our way with his intellect and moral compass.

When Bill Clinton was elected president and asked me to run his economic transition team, Fred phoned. "Remember the importance of campaign finance reform," he said. "Make sure Clinton makes it a high priority." I assured Fred that the issue was indeed a high priority for the president-elect. I was proven wrong, of course.

While serving as secretary of labor, I encountered Fred and Common Cause staffers and witnessed

their growing clout in Washington and across the country. Focused on the issue of widening income inequality in America, I was also beginning to understand the connection between increasing wealth moving into the hands of very few people and the escalating corruption of American democracy.

In 2009, Common Cause president Bob Edgar asked me to chair the National Governing Board, and the experience was one of the most satisfying of my life. Those who remember Bob know what a powerful figure he was, combining deep moral conviction with extraordinary eloquence and the corniest sense of humor I've come across. His sudden and tragic death shook us all deeply, but we forged ahead.

In 2018, as I got more deeply involved in presidential politics, I resigned my position rather than threaten Common Cause's nonpartisan charter and standing. I felt secure that under Karen Hobert Flynn's steadfast leadership, Common Cause was in good hands. I was right.

My almost half-century love affair with Common Cause has not ended. No grassroots organization has had such an unremittingly positive role in American democracy as has Common Cause. Common Cause continues to do what it can to preserve and strengthen our democracy.

I cannot imagine a more worthy undertaking.



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Since 1970, more than 500,000 generous individuals, foundations, and allies have provided financial support to Common Cause and the Common Cause Education Fund to advance our work fighting for democracy. Your crucial resources, your generous time, and your thoughtful guidance have made all the difference in the world, and we could not have reached this milestone without you. To recognize every name would fill more pages than this book contains, but to each and every one of our tremendous supporters:

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                   his tremendous leadership and Kerstin Vogdes Diehn for her incredible design work on this project.
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