

PEOPLE'S
ACTION
INSTITUTE

2022

ANNUAL REPORT

LAUNCHING AN ORGANIZING REVIVAL

We are in the midst of a triple crisis. Rising authoritarianism threatens democracy. The climate crisis threatens to displace millions of people from their homes. Civil society is in decline due to disconnection and despair.

PAI and our affiliates have fought for reforms that recognize poor and working people's dignity and make material and political improvements to millions of lives. Despite some incredible victories and midterm election results which demonstrate some of the power we've built through organizing, we need far more power to win the bigger fights that lie ahead.

An age of emergency is upon us in the United States and across the globe. Political, social, economic, and environmental crises increasingly compound each other. A broad consensus has emerged from our work about the urgency to build a multiracial pluralistic democracy through an Organizing Revival.

Over the last decade, the progressive movement made major gains in growth, capacity, and the sophistication of campaigns and electoral politics. These gains helped win important victories. Yet, there's a shared recognition among our network and other progressive organizing networks that the fundamentals of community organizing have been eroded by constant mobilization, transactional campaigning, unhealthy competition amongst peers for funding, and a lack of emphasis on the skills needed to build durable power.

We have an opportunity to turn disconnection into strength. Millions of people across the country know what it's like to worry about how they will pay rent or lose someone too soon because they lacked health care. Even more people feel disconnected from their communities and have not been given a good reason to believe they can play a meaningful role in our democracy. Organizing is the art of turning people's individual pain into collective struggle—and then into collective power. We are fighting against mass alienation—most Americans do not know more than one of their neighbors. To build the power we need, we must combat the dismantling of social cohesion itself and the resulting vulnerability to authoritarianism. Community organizing can be our most effective tool.

The Organizing Revival is PAI's deep investment in training tens of thousands of organizers who will develop even more leaders across the country to build community power in rural, suburban, and urban communities. Our focus is now on expanding and deepening community organizing so we can build lasting power across the country. We must invest in our most precious resources: the capacity and leadership of our people and their ability to truly connect to one another.

The pillars of the Organizing Revival include:

Building an **ORGANIZING INFRASTRUCTURE,**
building **OUR BASE,** & developing those who are
MOST IMPACTED
by the issues we are working on

**RUNNING
ELECTORAL
& ISSUE
CAMPAIGNS**
that build
our base
& build our organizations
into **STRONGER** entities



Telling the
story of the
POWER
of organizing
**TO INSPIRE
MILLIONS**
to join our movement

ORGANIZING MONEY IN POWERFUL WAYS,
both from philanthropy but also from our own people

This revival will allow us to engage hundreds of thousands of people in transformative conversations and help those people, in turn, to engage in ongoing and sustained collective action that can heal divisions. Through his work, we can advance toward the promise of an authentic multiracial democracy in America.

POWER BUILDING

Powerbuilding and training drive all of People's Action Institute's work and are therefore at the core of our Organizing Revival. In 2022, we introduced our base-building bootcamp, a new 12-week intensive course for organizers to empower new leaders with the skills necessary to find and recruit members, proposition them into leadership, and support them as they turn their pain into powerful collective action. Participants learned to manage their energy, facilitate effective meetings, and strengthen their work by connecting to their own motivation.



To build momentum, People's Action Institute launched an Organizers Cohort to encourage graduates of this base-building bootcamp to stay connected through monthly meetings, problem-solve with peers, and support each other through mutual accountability. We also created an analogous Organizing Directors Cohort to address an important gap in training so that senior staff at member organizations can continue to grow and strengthen their organizing skills through professional development. Since the launch of this cohort in the summer of 2021, Organizing Directors from 23 organizations meet every other month for three-hour sessions to focus on issues relevant to their members, to develop their core management skills, strategic campaigns, and ground themselves in the fundamentals of base building.

We also revived our Weeklong Training Institute in 2022, which hosted 35 individuals to take their leadership skills to the next level. This training focused on three primary topics: Ideology and Methodology, Skills, and Political Education. We also conducted one-on-one coaching sessions with member organizations who share in our powerbuilding work. This combination of training, targeted coaching and new leadership development opportunities resulted in real improvements in the strategic direction and base-building capacity of our member organizations.

CAMPAIGNS

Health Care for All

People's Action Institute's Health Care for All Campaign has evolved to include the fight for Medicare for All and the Care Over Cost Campaign, an effort to fight back against health insurance companies putting profit over people's well-being, address people's immediate need by fighting insurance claims denials, and grow our base of engaged members fighting for health care.

In 2022, the Care Over Cost cohort expanded from seven to 16 member groups, and was able to reverse four claims denials by for-profit insurers on behalf of individuals around the country. In December, this cohort gathered in Indianapolis to protest denials of care at the headquarters of Elevance Health, the nation's largest private insurer. These efforts to publicly expose how denials of care fueled Elevance's record-setting \$6.1 billion profits garnered coverage by ABC, NBC and NPR affiliates and the Indianapolis Star newspaper.

We've focused on growing our existing relationships with key allies and health care partners including the Center for Popular Democracy (CPD), Health-care for America Now (HCAN), Community Catalyst, Protect our Care, Public Citizen, Families USA, Social Security Works, Drug Policy Alliance, Harm Reduction Coalition, Lower Drug Prices Now, and labor partners like National Nurses United (NNU) and SEIU. To better support our member organizations, we've also restructured our Health Care for All cohort in consultation with Powerlabs, a firm that supports organizations' work to design and run campaigns.

In 2022, our health care organizing resulted in significant provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act that will reduce the cost of prescription drugs for seniors. In New York, we pushed the state legislature to prohibit health care providers from collecting medical debts by placing liens on individuals' homes or garnishing wages. In New Hampshire, we helped secure a victory allowing Medicaid recipients over 21 years old to receive coverage for preventative dental care, an expansion from only emergency dental coverage.





Overdose Crisis

People’s Action Institute was proud to conclude 2022 with a victory that will help turn the tide on the overdose crisis and bring much-needed help to people struggling with addiction. The Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment (MAT) Act was signed into law at the end of December, as part of the FY2023 Omnibus Appropriations bill. This will increase access to proven, evidence-based treatments such as buprenorphine for people with opioid-use disorder and removes bureaucratic barriers that kept health care providers from being able to prescribe lifesaving treatments. Upon passage of the MAT Act, the number of practitioners prescribing buprenorphine jumped from 130,000 to 1.8 million nationwide.

This remarkable victory was made possible through the tireless work of a powerful cohort of People’s Action Institute member groups in 11 states and a growing coalition of more than 500 groups who, like People’s Action Institute, demand an end to our overdose crisis.

In addition to building our base and educating key decision-makers about the opioid crisis and the lifesaving potential of legislation, we focused on shifting the public narrative around the opioid crisis and the failings of the War on Drugs. Even as we celebrate this victory, we plan to use it as a reminder of the effectiveness and power of our multi-pronged strategy and national, grassroots approach.



People & Planet First

In 2022, we supported and strengthened frontline groups to organize and develop a powerful and diverse base of directly impacted grassroots community leaders to win good green jobs and equitable investments in communities. Through our work, we resourced grassroots organizations to finalize 12 grants to frontline groups which are organizing and developing community leaders. People's Action Institute also provided support in capacity-building and training to the members of our People and Planet First cohort, with a focus on campaign planning and strategy development.

People's Action Institute also continued to set the stage for increased federal investment to address climate change through sustained advocacy. We co-lead efforts to establish the Green New Deal Network and to transform the THRIVE Agenda Resolution, which we co-wrote in 2020, into the THRIVE Act, which set a "\$1 trillion per year" marker for Biden's infrastructure agenda to invest in care, climate, and justice. This collective work ultimately resulted in the passage of key elements of the Build Back Better agenda, with President Biden signing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan into law and the inclusion of nearly \$400 billion in federal

investments for climate and environmental justice causes in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Our commitment to movement unity and collaboration with other frontline organizations and our allies to bring millions of people together played a big role in our success in securing these unprecedented investments in environmental readiness. We will continue to build the new clean energy economy through state and local campaigns that leverage the Inflation Reduction Act while also mobilizing against the fossil fuel industry. We are also engaging 12 cohort organizations to design the next national climate justice campaign.



Leveraging Federal Funds

Over the past year, our Leveraging Federal Funds campaign focused on advancing a federal policy agenda with concrete victories that will have real impact on people's lives. We are building the capacity of member groups to leverage federal funds allocated to cities and states to ensure that resources are used effectively to benefit people and strengthen communities.

People's Action Institute organized across the network to help secure the federal bills resulting in \$4 trillion to states and municipalities to address the climate crisis, grow the workforce, fight back against greedy utility companies, and strengthen communities.

While these federal investments are historic in size and scope, with immense potential to transform

communities, the funds are not readily accessible, as they are spread through an often-confusing web of agencies and grants with different rules in every state. To alleviate this burden, our Leveraging Federal Resources program worked with our member groups to identify, interpret, and navigate federal funding opportunities so they can find and demand the resources that will help their communities most. We hosted biweekly meetings with cohort members and provided online and in-person training and webinars, individualized coaching for organizational leaders, technology support, and strategic campaign support. We also held a convening in Washington, D.C. in December to share our experiences, build relationships, and plot the next phase of activity.

Thanks to this work, People's Action Institute network partners organized to win a number of key advances:

- **Pennsylvania Stands Up** delivered the Whole Home Repairs Bill and took advantage of \$125 million made available through the American Rescue Plan. This program provides \$50,000 per home to support repairs and weatherization, which will facilitate the creation of jobs and make it easier for homeowners to qualify for green energy improvements in the future;
- **Connecticut Citizen Action Group** helped pass legislation that resulted in \$14 million from the American Rescue Plan Act being invested in affordable housing, weatherization, solar panel installations, and heat-pump retrofits;
- **Maine People's Alliance** organizing resulted in legislation directing \$20 million from the American Rescue Plan to affordable housing, weatherization, solar panel installation, and heat pump retrofits;
- **New Jersey Research Project** also won \$149 million additional funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to support recovery programs and home repair funds for survivors of storms;
- **Citizen Action Wisconsin** secured passage of their Climate & Equity plan for the City of Milwaukee that will now create opportunities for federal resources to invest in Green Building infrastructure, people centered transit and good jobs; and
- **Missouri Jobs with Justice** pushed for an ARPA-funded pilot program providing guaranteed basic income, the first of its kind in the state.



Housing Justice and a Homes Guarantee

In 2022, our Homes Guarantee campaign organized, grew our membership and built momentum toward our goal of ensuring that everyone has a safe, accessible, permanently affordable home. Over the course of the year, Homes Guarantee leaders launched a campaign to win tenant protections through executive and agency-level action. We organized with more than 50 tenant-led groups in 24 states and built a campaign team of over 100 tenant leaders, 25 organizers, and a team of policy and political partners. Our Housing Justice team worked throughout 2022 to build a base of poor and working-class tenants and developed cohort members' staff leadership and base-building skills through weekly calls and investment in training as a consistent practice. We brought tenants to meet with White House staff to discuss tenant protections and released a draft executive order on rent regulation signed by more than 260 organizations. In early 2023, the Biden Administration announced new tenant protections, which were a direct result of our organizing.

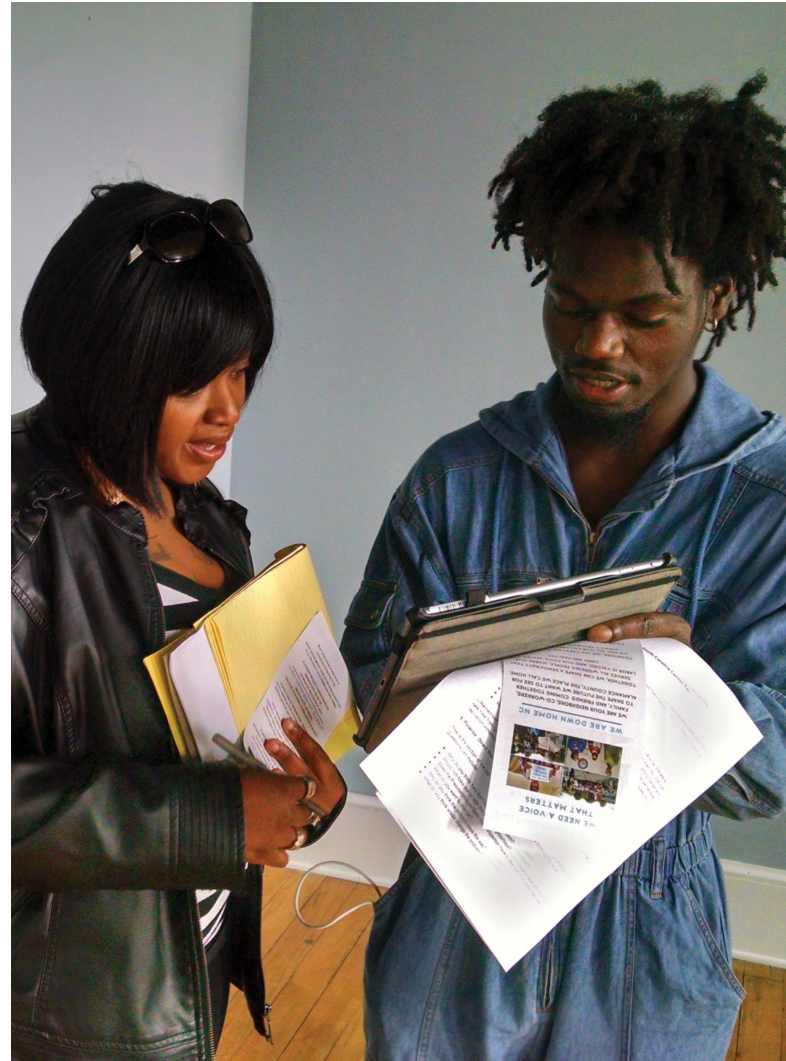
Thanks to our work, the Homes Guarantee campaign helped tenants in Louisville, Kentucky, form a tenant union which helped to shift property maintenance from an unreliable company to a union-backed company. Supported by organizers from the KC Tenants group and our Housing Justice team, Kansas City tenants won the right to legal counsel.



Rural Organizing and Disinformation

To fight the growing threat of authoritarianism in rural communities, People’s Action Institute and our member organizations developed a strategy that integrates deep canvass persuasion campaigns with digital organizing to disrupt the spread of disinformation. To do this, People’s Action Institute designed a deep canvass and digital experiment to inoculate voters from disinformation about the democratic process, focusing on mail-in ballots. The most important insights were developed by the ‘script iteration team’ of deep canvassers from participating member organizations and allies.

People’s Action Institute conducted this experiment over a 10-week period from October to December, which led to internal tracking measures showing that canvassers completed 68.5% of their conversations. Canvassers also reported that 65.2% of people who completed conversations would both share stories and name the emotions they associated with their stories. While we are still conducting the final evaluation with the research team, we believe that the major takeaway from this experiment is that it is possible to inoculate people from some of the most intense attempts to promote conspiracy theories designed to attack our democratic institutions through deep canvassing.



Deep Canvassing: Conversations that Move People

In 2022, we integrated deep canvassing—the innovative use of extended, relational conversations to change hearts and minds around divisive issues—into our powerbuilding strategy. We built support for both issue campaigns and the social justice movements that help individuals process conflict, build empathy, and break down the “isms” that divide us. We did this through the work of the Deep Canvass Institute (DCI), a collaborative initiative between People’s Action Institute and the New Conversations Institute, which hosts a robust training program that has taught the practice of deep canvassing to an unprecedented number of volunteers, member organizations, and movement allies.

The Deep Canvass Institute (DCI) hosts training sessions in three parts:

- The 101 Curriculum supports the development of individual deep canvass skills and experience within an advanced deep canvass program.
- The 201 Curriculum trains those who have already developed deep canvass skills to take on a phone-bank role, and
- The 301 Curriculum trains trainers to execute a successful deep canvass course for brand-new volunteer deep canvassers.

In 2022, we trained 1,078 participants with 1.5 hours of orientation around deep canvassing. 665 participants from 131 unique organizations completed a nine-hour intensive training program, and 75 new deep canvass trainers completed the 14-hour ‘Training for Trainers’ program and are now training volunteers in their organization to lead deep canvases. 31 organizations completed skill-series and training-for-trainer programs, and are receiving ongoing coaching from the Deep Canvass Institute through bimonthly “community of practice” convenings.

We also added assertiveness training, which helped participants recognize that building and exercising power is necessary for transforming communities. Feedback from evaluation surveys revealed that this new component helped build a sense of urgency amongst participants and encouraged people to take action following the training.

In 2022, we successfully conducted a total of 303,915 total deep-canvass conversations around a variety of key topics to help build an aligned, multiracial movement that can transform our country. One of these topics included reducing anti-immigrant sentiment and shifting people’s worldview around immigrants. In 2022, we expanded our regional strategy to include the states of Michigan and Maine while also continuing to focus on our

2021 states of Arizona, Colorado, New Hampshire, and Nevada. Between Michigan and Maine, we made 41,720 phone calls and door knocks and held 3,500 conversations. We recruited 187 people as volunteers and trained 450 volunteers through the Deep Canvass Institute on the immigration deep canvass script. These new deep canvassers and conversations added to our big learnings for our methodology in this most recent round of conversations. For instance, one learning that emerged was how we can use class solidarity to cut through some of the most divisive immigration narratives.

People’s Action Institute also worked to build support for government action on climate change. We focused on utilizing this script to support the development of deep canvass campaigns to move people from apathy and inaction to taking action on climate in Wisconsin, Alabama, New Hampshire, and Iowa. Overall, we trained 1,330 people to do climate-deep canvassing and made over 19,000 calls. After evaluating our work over the past year, we determined that deep canvassing is not the best tactic right now for our member organizations focused on climate change. Therefore, moving forward, we anticipate focusing more on base-building and expanding the skill sets and infrastructure within our member organizations focused on climate change to be able to build more powerfully with new individuals they engage.



CONCLUSION

Launching the Organizing Revival has been a significant focus of our 2022 work. This effort will allow us to use our strengths—training, deep canvass, strategic campaigns, grassroots action, movement politics, and alliance-building—to reinvigorate the field of community organizing across the country. The revival is a clear roadmap to the power we need to fulfill the promise of a multiracial democracy. We know it won’t be easy or quick, and we are ready to lead the way to build a stronger, more resilient and inclusive country in which we all belong.

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