2010 Annual Report

2010 Issue Campaigns

The Battle for Health Care for America Now!
In 2010, CA/IL played a central role at the state and Federal level in passing the landmark health care reform law, the Affordable Care Act. Health Care for America Now and Illinois Main Street Alliance leaders organized dozens of meetings, call-in days, rallies, and press conferences, and attended numerous town halls, parades, and debates in Congressional districts across the state. Throughout the year, our team of 150 suburban leaders and 41 partner organizations worked to ensure passage of the bill.

In 2011, the campaign will focus at the state level. We will be working with the Department of Insurance to develop a state insurance exchange and provide for oversight of health insurance rates in Illinois. Our goals for the exchange are to make sure it is open to as many individual and small businesses as possible, make sure insurance companies sell only quality insurance that meets minimum standards, and make sure the exchange is easy to navigate. At the Federal level, we will fight to ensure the new law is funded and to stop any repeals of critical parts of the law.

CA/IL thanks the members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation, in particular our champions Senator Durbin and Representative Schakowsky, for their tireless efforts in leading the health care fight in Washington D.C.

Illinois Main Street Alliance
In 2010, CA/IL continued to build its small business organization through the Illinois Main Street Alliance. During the summer, six interns created new outreach materials and canvassed small businesses. Through their efforts, 110 new small businesses joined IMSA.

IMSA leaders also participated in a number of press events with key decision makers during 2010, including Senator Durbin, Governor Quinn, and Insurance Director Michael McRaith. IMSA played a key role in the passing of Wall Street reform legislation, the elimination of swipe card fees, and the passing of health care reform.

In 2011, IMSA will develop a dues structure, expand partnerships with state and federal-level businesses, and continue to work on health care and job stimulus issues.

Civic Engagement
To increase voter participation in 2010, CA/IL launched a non-partisan GOTV program targeting 30,000 “drop off” voters in Chicago, Evanston, and Aurora—plus an additional 145,000 voters in Peoria, The Quad Cities, Elgin, Waukegan, and Joliet—who were targeted for an aggressive robo-calling program.

In this historically close election, preliminary analysis shows that in the areas where CA/IL ran its full GOTV program (field, literature, and robo-calls) there was an over 12% increase in voters from 2006.

CA/IL’s 2010 civic engagement program was based on this idea: that to build a progressive movement capable of winning critical victories, we must be aggressive in bringing new and infrequent voters to the polls and building an activist base ready to continue fighting for change.

Civil Justice
In 2010 CA/IL released a landmark voter guide to help inform Illinois voters on the public interest records of the three Supreme Court Justices up for retention on the November 2nd ballot. “Numerous Bar Associations have regularly evaluated candidates for the bench on the basis of legal experience and competence. The Chamber of Commerce reports on how Justices have voted and a limited number of other groups have expressed opinions on judicial candidates. However, to date there has been no systematic evaluation of the judicial candidates from a broader consumer and public interest perspective,” said Professor Walter J. Kendall III, CA/IL Board Member.

Professor Kendall led a group of law students on the project, which summarized the opinions over the last 10 years of the Justices up for retention: Justices Kilbride, Freeman, and Thomas. The students focused on cases where the judges were not unanimous in the holding of the court, and where the decisions directly affected consumers and working families according to long standing positions of CA/IL, such as those on worker and employee rights, consumer rights and protections, civil and social rights, family and children’s rights, and political and campaign reform.

Saving Cook County Health Services
CA/IL continues to help lead the Emergency Network to Save Cook County Health Services. The Emergency Network works with the Health & Hospital Systems Board to bring greater community involvement and experienced leadership to the Board’s strategic planning and budget process. In 2010, CA/IL also worked to bring the voices of the community into the planning process for closing services at Oak Forest Hospital.

Diesel
With Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago (RHAMC), CA/IL continues to lead the Illinois Campaign to Clean up Diesel Pollution, a statewide coalition comprised of almost 100 health, environmental, labor, faith and community organizations.

Over the last year, our campaign has won a number of significant victories. This past spring, the Illinois Department of Transportation adopted a strong clean-construction policy, mandating the use of pollution controls able to reduce diesel soot pollution by 50 percent.

Also, as a result of CA/IL’s work and subsequent major media attention, Metra began using 100% Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel fuel. The agency also committed to look for funding to affix idling controls to 100% of their fleet. Lastly, in an effort to identify long term solutions, Metra has agreed to apply for federal funding to develop a cleaner engine prototype.

Finally, during the federal lame duck session, the reauthorization of the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act passed both chambers of Congress. This bill, cosponsored by Senator Durbin, is expected to provide $500 million in grants and loans over a five-year period for a variety of diesel cleanup options, including retrofits and retirements of thousands of diesel engines nationwide.
Under the new law, Illinois lenders may choose to offer one of two types of products: long-term loans with APRs under 99 percent, and higher-cost, shorter-term loans with additional protections for the most credit-challenged borrowers. The Act balances the need to offer borrowers access to credit, while at the same time protecting consumers from potentially abusive rates, fees, and predatory debt cycles, and provides an opportunity for the Payday Loan Reform Act to actually work.

Social Security
CA/IL partnered with the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans to form the Illinois Coalition to Strengthen Social Security to protect Social Security from cuts as proposed by the Commission on Fiscal Reform and Responsibility. This fall, the coalition held a rally in Chicago and a Social Security forum with Congressman Danny Davis, and mobilized members to participate in a national call-in day. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, a member of the Fiscal Commission, spoke out against cutting Social Security in the name of fixing the federal deficit and introduced her own deficit reduction plan that reduced the deficit without cutting Social Security. Although the commission’s proposal did not receive enough votes to go to Congress, Social Security is still under attack. CA/IL will continue to lead the coalition into 2011.

Campaign Finance Reform
In 2010, CA/IL worked as part of the Fair Elections Now Campaign, working to build support for two campaign Finance bills, the DISCLOSE Act and the Campaign Finance Reform Act.

Responsible Budget Coalition
CA/IL is a leader of the Responsible Budget Coalition (RBC), a statewide campaign made up of over 300 diverse organizations that are united in efforts to solve Illinois’ budget crisis. In 2010, RBC organized a major march on Springfield which brought over 15,000 people to the state capitol. A policy summit was held in Chicago in autumn of 2010 to organize major Illinois public policy leaders. The summit was keynoteed by Dean Baker from the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, D.C. We also held lobby days, organized roundtables, and conducted media outreach in support of a comprehensive tax-reform package. In 2011, we will continue to fight for passage of a balanced solution to the Illinois fiscal crisis. We must take action today to solve Illinois’ budget crisis, save jobs and essential services, eliminate the state’s long-term structural deficit, and make taxes more fair.

Consumer Financial Protection and Predatory Lending Reform
In 2010, CA/IL led the Americans for Financial Reform coalition in Illinois. Its goal was to advocate for passage of the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act—a bill that will provide meaningful consumer protections in order to prevent another economic collapse created by unregulated financial activity. We held a series of actions, call-in days, roundtables, and meetings with key legislators. In April, over 2,000 people gathered in the Chicago Financial District to demand that Congress stop bailing out Wall Street and start passing critical legislation to make sure it doesn’t happen again.

The passing of this legislation creates the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, opens up the $600 trillion “shadow market,” and creates several new safeguards against Wall Street excesses.

CA/IL is also the convener of the Msgr. John Egan Campaign for Payday Loan Reform. In 2010 the campaign celebrated a major victory with the passage of HB537. Signed into law by Governor Quinn on June 21, the bill is the result of three years of negotiations with industry representatives. Starting in March 2011, the law caps rates for nearly every short-term credit product in the state, prevents the cycle of debt caused by frequent refinancing, and gives regulators the tools necessary to identify potentially predatory lending practices before they become widespread. HB537 was sponsored by Sen. Kimberly Lightford (D-4) and Rep. Lou Lang (D-16).

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