Advocacy Group Communications in the New Media Environment

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MoveOn.org. Democracy for America. Organizing for America. The Progressive Change Campaign Committee. These are some of the largest progressive advocacy organizations in America today. All of them have been founded in the past dozen years. All rely on a redefinition of organizational membership which no longer requires any form of annual dues payment. All have been responsible for tactical innovations that, in turn, spread to other advocacy groups through conference panels, training seminars, and staff mobility. If the universe of political advocacy is changing, these are arguably the organizations driving that change. And for all of these groups, email communication – not web pages, not social networking sites, not twitter posts – remains the primary interface with their large communities-of-interest. Among all the novel internet communications technologies to emerge in the past dozen years, e-mail remains unique as a "push" medium, with near-zero scaling costs and near-universal adoption among the populations that advocacy groups seek to reach.

Despite the centrality of e-mail communication to advocacy group activation strategies, there has to date been no systematic analysis of *how* they use the medium in the research literature. The research community has instead displayed a technocentric bias, focusing on emerging communications technologies like blogs (Perlmutter 2008, Farrell and Drezner 2008, Pole 2009, Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell 2010), youtube (Gulati and Williams 2010, Wallsten 2010, Klotz 2010), social networking sites (Williams and Gulati 2008, Baumgartner and Morris 2010), and twitter (Boynton 2010). While advocacy professionals have cultivated a set of best-practices in the areas of list-building, email fundraising, and online-to-offline engagement, academic researchers have gotten

distracted by the latest technological wave and missed the increasingly sophisticated use of these "mundane mobilization tools." (Nielsen 2010)

This paper represents my attempt to develop an empirical picture of how advocacy groups, new and old, utilize email in communicating with their memberships. It provides an initial overview of findings from the Membership Communications Project (MCP), a new dataset consisting of six months worth of advocacy emails from 70 high-profile progressive interest groups – 2,162 emails in all. The MCP data provides a quantitative test of several qualitative observations laid out in my doctoral dissertation (2009a), "Unexpected Transformations: The Internet's Effect on Political Associations in American Politics." Though the MCP is ongoing, open dataset available to test any number of hypotheses, this paper will emphasize three central findings. First, it demonstrates that the new generation of organizations is far more likely than legacy organizations to engage in "issue chasing," the practice of mobilizing their membership around whatever issue dominates the political media agenda on a given day. Second, the new groups largely engage in fundraising that is far more targeted than the general funding solicitations sent by their older brethren. All advocacy groups utilize email to raise funds, but there is a major distinction in the *types* of fundraising email that these groups send to their memberships. Third, MCP data indicates that frequent assumptions of e-mail action alerts as mere "clicktivism" have little in common with the actual tactical repertoire advocacy groups employ through their email communications. E-petitions and other low-threshold activities form just one plank of email-based activation strategies, and it is a plank that is far less prevalent than many researchers would believe.

The paper proceeds in four sections. First I will offer a more detailed discussion of why organizational emails represent such a valuable and important research venue, based on a review of the existing literature and the writings of "netroots" advocacy professionals themselves. This section also places the Membership Communications Project in the context of a broader research program and discusses the three hypotheses to be tested later in the paper. The second section will then discuss the MCP itself, including population definition, content analysis procedures, a novel approach to capturing media agendas in an increasingly fragmented communications landscape, and design limitations. That section will also include distributional data from the MCP dataset, giving the reader a feel for the overall trends contained in the dataset. The third section will provide tests of the three hypotheses, offering independence tests similar in character to those recently employed by Benkler and Shaw in their study of the political blogosphere (Benkler and Shaw 2010). A concluding section will then discuss the importance of these findings, as well as future research opportunities with regards to this dataset.

What's So Special about Email?

Email defines 21$^{\text{st}}$ century advocacy group membership. MoveOn.org boasts a membership list over 5 million, Organizing for America's reportedly exceeds 13 million (Melber 2010). Few of these "members" attend local events, take regular actions, or necessarily donate funds to the organizations. Based on frequent talks I've given at academic conferences, it is clear that many of these "members" (even ones who have

attained a PhD) are unaware that they qualify as members. Any MoveOn email recipient is classified as a "member," whether they have donated, taken online action, or just signed up for a free Obama/Biden sticker. Many legacy advocacy groups, such as the Environmental Defense Fund, have followed suit, redefining membership from a financial-supporter relationship to a communication-recipient relationship. Particularly in the face of falling direct mail open-rates, legacy organizations are pressured to move to keep pace with these looser-and-broader email relationships (Karpf 2009b).

The change in membership definition has an important historical precursor. In her 2003 book, *Diminished Democracy*, Theda Skocpol describes the shift "from membership to management," in which the federated membership organizations that had defined American political associations for centuries were replaced by DC-based professional advocacy organizations. The professionalization of political advocacy was accomplished on the basis of a redefinition in membership, wherein members became small-donor check-writers rather than active local participants. This shift was *itself* technologically mediated, requiring the lowering costs of mainframe computer databases to make large-scale donor management feasible for nonprofit organizations. Skocpol notes that this led not only to the "interest group explosion" of the 1970s, but also to the decline of the previously dominant organizational form – the cross-class membership federation. The (technologically-mediated) shift in membership regime presaged a generational displacement in the interest group ecology of American politics.

In his forthcoming article, "Mundane Internet Tools: the Coproduction of Citizenship in Political Campaigns," Rasmus Kleis Nielsen argues that "when it comes to mobilization, *mundane internet tools* like email and search are more important than

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emerging tools (like social networking sites) or *specialized tools* (like campaign

websites)." Nielsen's evidence is based on detailed ethnographic observation of two

campaign sites in the 2008 election. I have observed a similar distinction in the

conferences, trainings, and meetings of "netroots" advocacy organizations. The 2010

Netroots Nation convention featured no fewer than 6 panels and workshops on writing

effective advocacy appeals, building email lists, and other email-related skills[1]. Netroots

Nation is primarily a blogger convention (it was initially called "YearlyKos," having

grown out of the DailyKos blogging community), yet the attendees display a strong

interest in the usage of the more mundane tools. Likewise, annual technology & politics

events like the New Organizing Institute's "Rootscamps," the Institute for Politics,

Democracy and the Internet's Politics Online Conference, and the Personal Democracy

Forum annual conference all offer multiple sessions on email.

Convergence around e-mail best practices has also launched a new sector in the

professional advocacy world. Several large vendors have emerged to offer state-of-the-

art email management for legacy interest groups, among them Convio, Blue State Digital,

and Democracy in Action. A February 2010 twitter post by Democracy in Action is

indicative of the sheer volume of this communication channel: "So I knew we sent a lot

of email, but 1.73 Billion emails sent last year is crazy.[2]" While these groups have a

presence on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and frequently-updated web pages, e-mail

remains their chief membership communications tool. Specialized tools and emerging

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[1] See http://www.netrootsnation.org/agenda
[2] Reported via Twitter, February 3rd, 8:43AM EST, by username @Salsalabs, the
organizational account of Democracy in Action.

tools are elements of a broad communications strategy, usually aimed at converting

readers to take a first action, thus adding them to the e-mail list.

A recent blog post by Jake Brewer of the Sunlight Foundation, "Rethinking

Advocacy Appeals" offers a tongue-in-cheek example of the standard e-mail appeal:

> SUBJ: Something catchy/funny/intriguing/pun to get you to open the email
>
> Here is the first line in which I try to surprise you or say something memorable so you'll keep going down.
>
> Now I back up that sentence with some facts, and tell you what's happening out in the world that needs your action.
>
> Link 1: http://DoThisActionRightNow.com
> More information describing the problem, and why our action is going to help – maybe even solve – the problem. We really need to do this!
>
> Link 2: http://PleaseActNow.com (going to the same place as link 1)
> Something nice that sums it all up and puts things in context, as well as thanking you for your support.
>
> Love,
>
> Us
>
> PS Here's a link to something else I want you to see, knowing that the PS is one of the most clicked through parts of an email. http://WatchOurAwesomeVideo.com (Brewer 2010)

As Brewer notes, the convergence around a standard style in advocacy emails has

led to a certain degree of skepticism regarding the effectiveness of the communications

channel. For leading professionals in the field, this displays as a continual drive to refine

their craft and find ways to get more from the channel. For cynical observers, it instead

is suggestive of "clicktivism," the ongoing cheapening of activist campaigns. Writing for the UK's *Guardian* newspaper, Micah White argues that "In promoting the illusion that surfing the web can change the world, clicktivism is to activism as McDonalds is to a slow-cooked meal. It may look like food, but the life-giving nutrients are long gone… Clicktivists are to blame for alienating a generation of would-be activists with their ineffectual campaigns that resemble marketing." Stuart Shulman provides a more theoretically and empirically grounded critique in his article, "The case against mass e-mails." Focusing specifically on the use of mass e-mails in administrative rulemaking procedures, Shulman writes that the flood of clickstream comments is "akin to perverse satisfaction, I argue, to cathartically exercise a right while inadvertently destroying it. (Shulman 2009)"

What's missing from the "Clicktivist" critique is the broader membership-development strategy, commonly termed a "ladder of engagement," that underlies these epetitions and other simple online asks. Chris Bowers reveals this strategy in a post to DailyKos, in which he discusses the organization's initial foray into email-based activism:

> A lot of you will ask, justifiably, *"what possible difference can a petition make?"* As progressive activists, you probably get 10-20 requests to sign a petition every week, and they don't seem to have much impact. So, in the spirit of openness, let me explain to you our thinking behind this action.
>
> 1. The first goal of the petition is to use it to get meetings with Senators, or their staff. If we get a lot of signatures, we can meet with returning Senators and candidates for Senate,when we deliver the petition to them. During those meetings, we will have a chance to ask them if they support changing Senate rules with only a simple majority vote on the first day Congress is in session next year.

2. Through these meetings, if we get 51 returning and potential Senators in support of changing the Senate rules with 51 votes, then we will have proven that the Senate rules can be changed with 51 votes. Obtaining such proof is the first threshold in actually changing the Senate rules next year. From that point, other actions will follow.

3. Finally, if you take the action, then we will know you are interested in taking part in other, later actions we will conduct on Senate rules reform. We need a list of which activists are, and are not, interested in order to conduct this campaign. That way, we will contact the right people for future actions on this topic. (Bowers 2010)

These strategic choices define the new wave of political advocacy. Good strategic thinking, if well-executed, can lead to substantial political change. Poor (or poorly-executed) strategic thinking produces noise but no effect. The advocacy community is aware of this distinction and actively seeks to improve on their craft. But the technocentric drive within the research community remains focused on emerging and specialized tools in isolation, ignoring the massive amount of quasi-public communication[3] that is often the cornerstone of these broader communications strategies. As such, detailed, public analysis of the primary membership communications channel has been virtually non-existent. The Membership Communications Project is my attempt at systematically wading into the torrential flood of advocacy email communications that arrive on a daily basis to tens of millions of inboxes around the world.

Three Hypotheses

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[3] Organizational e-mails are "quasi-public" because, though they are not placed on the web for public viewing, they are sent to anyone who agrees to receive them. Organizations expect that their opponents are signed up for these communications and act accordingly.

In this paper, I seek to answer three specific questions about progressive advocacy groups using the MCP dataset. Each question is based on assertions made in an APSA 2009 paper presentation, "The MoveOn Effect: Disruptive Innovation in the Interest Group Ecology of American Politics." Those assertions were based on elite interviews, ethnographic observation, and detailed qualitative case analysis, focused on a select few organizations. The MCP provides the data for more rigorous hypothesis testing. The 3 hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Recently-formed advocacy groups will engage in "headline chasing," activating their memberships around a wider variety of issues than their legacy counterparts, in keeping with the day-to-day media agenda.

This hypothesis is based on an analysis of the new membership and fundraising regimes (the so-called "MoveOn effect") that organizations have embraced in the wake of online communications. Direct mail communications carry an added marginal cost for each additional recipient (printing and mailing costs). This cost incentives organizations to develop relatively narrow lists of supporters with a higher likelihood of response, making direct mail profitable in the long-term, but revenue-negative initially. E-mail, by contrast, has near-zero marginal costs. As such, the larger an organization's email list, the better.

I have previously argued that this leads to the emergence of "internet-mediated issue generalists" – organizations that work on a wide variety of issues in accordance with the news of the day. Another previous paper (Karpf 2009c) looks at the

"Superdelegate Transparency Project," a 3-week campaign to influence Democratic superdelegates in the 2008 party primary. Such issues do not fall under any traditional single-issue organization's purview, and as such progressive advocacy groups did not mobilize their membership in previous, similarly-contested party primaries. Indeed, the only organizations that took part in the Superdelegate Transparency Project were members of the "new generation" of advocacy groups. From this case, I have argued that online communication leads to the mobilization of bias around a wider array of issue topics than under previous information regimes.

A preliminary analysis of the MCP dataset, presented at the 2010 Political Networks conference, examined the issue overlaps between the 70 organizations in this dataset. It led to a slight reformulation of my initial prediction: the new generation of organizations is not made up entirely of issue generalists. While several new organizations fall under this heading (MoveOn, PCCC, Organizing for America, Democracy for America, Campaign for America's Future, True Majority), the internet has enabled the rise of niche organizations as well. Groups like Repower America, 350.org, 1Sky, Change Congress, Sunlight Foundation, Courage Campaign, IAVA, VoteVets, and Democracia Ahora all focus on a single issue topic, cultivating a list of online members with a single overarching issue interest. As such, they develop a smaller overall membership, but they also can specialize more and differentiate themselves from the issue generalist organizations.

There is no technical reason why legacy organizations cannot engage in the same "headline chasing" practices as the new organizations. Indeed, several scholars have predicted that they would lead the way in this regard (Bimber 2003, Chadwick 2007).

From a political economy perspective, there is reason to expect generational divergence, though. Older organizations have large staffing and overhead costs. Built for the older information environment, they are separated into departments and organizational work routines that are poorly matched to such issue-surfing. Using the MCP will provide an empirical test of how often, in practice, new and old organizations sent messages that accorded with the issues of the day, as represented by the political news coverage as seen on *The Rachel Maddow Show* and *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, the two most popular left-leaning news programs.

H2: New Generation groups will engage in more "targeted" or "passthrough" fundraising than their legacy counterparts, who will primarily engage in "general" fundraising efforts. New groups will also do more fundraising around issues of the day, reflected by the media agenda.

Whereas "headline chasing" refers to the change in membership regimes, this hypothesis is rooted in the parallel shift in fundraising regimes. Direct mail fundraising is a particularly good revenue stream for providing unrestricted organizational funds – funding not expressly linked to a specific campaign or tactic. Funding from large donors and foundations tends to come with more stipulations about how it can be used, limiting the ability of organizations to pay for their large overhead. Much of MoveOn's fundraising is targeted around a specific tactic – showing supporters a campaign commercial, then asking for $5 to put the commercial on the air, for instance. That type of fundraising works very well for organizations like MoveOn, with their large list and

tiny overhead (31 staff, no offices), but less well for traditional organizations who need to replace the general organizational funds that are disappearing as direct mail continues to decline.

Previous research has focused on the reasons (from a political economy perspective) why older organizations are limited in their ability to engage in "MoveOn-style" fundraising. Legacy organizations, I suggest, are more likely to take their traditional direct mail-style appeals and put them online. The MCP dataset allows for a test of this empirical proposition, based on the 350 appeals that contained a fundraising request. These were coded as "general," "targeted," or "passthrough," with "passthrough" being an email that requested money be sent to an endorsed political candidate (rather than to the organization itself).

H3: E-petitions will make up a plurality, but not a majority, of action requests by advocacy groups.

This hypothesis will be tested through compilation of the 836 messages with an action ask, regardless of organization type. It provides a competing empirical look at the "clicktivism" critique advanced by Stuart Shulman. Shulman looks at a single type of e-mobilization (e-rulemaking mass emails) and develops a broad critique of the medium. The MCP gathers all membership communications from organizations, thus placing the e-rulemaking alerts in a broader context. How much of the advocacy e-mail stream actually consists of e-petitions, versus other, more engaging action requests?

Before turning to the tests of these hypotheses, I will now discuss the design

choices and limitations of the MCP dataset itself.

The Membership Communications Project Dataset

The MCP dataset relies on a relatively simple, intuitive design, accessing

publicly-accessible membership communications from a large cluster of progressive

advocacy organizations. On January 21st, 2010, I created a dummy email account via

gmail. I then visited the websites of 70 advocacy organizations and signed up for any

email lists or outreach efforts provided on through those sites. For the first two weeks of

data collection, I used a broad descriptive classification scheme, then refined it to a set of

seven categories based on observed patterns and commonalities between emails

(described below). The purpose here is to do the basic descriptive work of categorizing

what organizations contact their members about, at what frequency, and with what

requests. This data can then be synthesized for a variety of purposes, including matched

comparative analysis (how do categorically- and topically-similar fundraising appeals

differ in framing and monetary request, for instance) or augmented case-based research

on specific issue areas. Sections 3 and 4 of this paper will provide examples of each of

these approaches.

I encountered three primary hurdles in designing the dataset: (1) identification of

an appropriate sample of political associations, (2) deciding what to do about

conservative groups, and (3) accounting for limitations created by proprietary data and

important email lists that are left "unseen" by the analytic techniques employed. Each

hurdle is discussed in turn below, to be followed by a description of the seven headings in the classification scheme and overall trends found in the data thus far.

Identifying Organizations

As Jack Walker famously demonstrated (1991), population-definition is an eternally troubling issue for students of American interest groups. In practical terms, it was virtually impossible even in the 1980s to define the full universe of organizations. The population-definition problem is even more complicated in the current study for two reasons. First, I am interested in public interest advocacy groups – organizations that seek to mobilize some form of public pressure to affect public policy decisions out of concern for the public good. These "post-materialist" political associations (Berry 1999) are the most visible segment of the DC interest group community. Yet the large majority of lobbying organizations and Political Action Committees (PACs) represent business or other private interests. Sampling from directories of Washington lobbying organizations or PAC spending reports thus does not present a solution. Unlike other recent work that focuses on documenting the lobbying community as a whole, I am interested solely in those groups that seek to galvanize an issue public to take action around their shared values.

Second, the internet has facilitated novel structures for "netroots" political associations. Given my interest in including such groups in this study, it would be imprudent to assume that novel organization forms will appear in Washington directories. MoveOn has 5 million members, 38 staffpeople and zero office space. The PCCC has

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450,000 members, between 4 and 11 staffpeople, and no office space. Interest group studies have traditionally been equated with studies of "the DC lobbying community." Though both groups have *some* presence in the nation's capital, their decision to eschew the substantial overhead costs associated with a large staff of policy experts and lobbyists may be indicative of a broader change in the field of internet-mediated political associations. It is unclear whether the traditional indexes of DC interest groups appropriately capture this new generation of infrastructure-poor, communication-rich organizations.

To provide a workaround of sorts, I chose to rely on some high-profile moments in recent history to create a relevant convenience sample. In the aftermath of the America Coming Together 527 effort[4] in the 2004 Presidential election, a large network of progressive/liberal major donors was unhappy with the results of their donations. Rob Stein, Erica Payne, and a few other high-profile individuals connected to the community began presenting a slideshow on "The Conservative Message Machine Money Matrix." Their central argument was that conservative donors had built a set of institutions that helped them achieve greater successes in elections and governance than the single-issue groups prevalent in the American left. This led to the founding of the Democracy Alliance in 2005 as an umbrella organization for the major donor community. Altogether, Democracy Alliance donors have provided over $100 million in funding to the organizations that they have jointly identified as representing important pieces of progressive infrastructure. (Brookes 2008)

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[4] "527" refers to a line in the tax code 527 groups are organizations that engage in Independent Expenditure Campaigns during election cycles, under guidance established by the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002.

The list of groups eventually funded by the Democracy Alliance thus provides a network of interest in its own right. Funding from the Alliance not only represents a substantial investment of resources (creating a practical floor for the advocacy groups represented in the study), but also indicates that the groups fit together in an attempt at building a set of progressive institutions. Though support from the Democracy for Alliance is not a necessary and sufficient condition for including an organization in the list of "public interest political associations," it is a highly suggestive place to start. Furthermore, though this direct donor list is not public information, the former Director of the Democracy Alliance published a helpful guide to the groups she/they felt were part of the new progressive infrastructure in her 2008 book *The Practical Progressive*. Technically, we do not know if the groups listed in this book represent the full population of supported organizations, but we *do* know that the list was assembled by a panel of 24 progressive "experts" with links to Payne and the Democracy Alliance. From the perspective of prominent public interest group leaders, this list provides a starting point for populating a study of the political left. Payne's book lists a total of 81 organizations, though 32 of those organizations represented elements of progressive infrastructure that do not engage in direct mobilization (*The Nation* magazine and blogs like the *Huffington Post* and *DailyKos*, for instance). In all, 49 of the 81 groups had some form of email list to which a member or supporter could subscribe.

In addition to this list of 49 groups, I added 21 additional organizations that were either well-known members of the political left (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Organization for Women, Amnesty International, American Civil Liberties Union) or prominent "netroots" groups that had

been founded since the book had been published (Organizing for America, Change Congress, Progressive Change Campaign Committee, Courage Campaign). This augmented list also included several environmental orgs (Greenpeace, Alliance for Climate Protection, 1Sky, 350.org, National Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Defenders of Wildlife) in preparation for a related study I will be conducting on that community. Note that those environmental orgs include very old groups (Sierra was founded in 1892) and very new groups (350.org was founded in 2007). I am open to adding other clusters of issue groups to the dataset upon request. The appendix to this study lists all of the groups included from the Democracy Alliance list, along with the 21 groups I augmented the list with. I encourage the reader to peruse the appendix at this point and consider whether the compiled list seems appropriate.

For this paper, I segment this broad list of progressive organizations into two groups based on founding date. Organizations founded after 1996 are considered members of the "new generation" of political associations, having been created to take advantage of the new communications landscape. Organizations founded prior to 1996 are considered "legacy" political associations[5]. 1996 provides a natural break in the data, as there are several organizations in the dataset founded in 1996, '97, '98, and '99, but only one organization founded in the earlier 1990s (FairVote was founded in 1992 under the name "Center for Voting and Democracy.") 40 organizations were founded post-

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[5] These terminology decisions reflect some important realities. First, it would be inappropriate to term the new generation "internet-mediated organizations" since, as Bimber (2003), Chadwick (2007) and others have noted, older organizations have themselves adopted internet-mediated tools. Second, the "legacy" organizations include groups founded in the direct mail era and groups founded in the earlier era described by Skocpol (2003). Groups like the Sierra Club (founded 1892) underwent major structural adaptations in response to the new membership and fundraising regimes of the 1970s (Andrews et al 2010).

1996, two of which contributed no emails to the dataset, while 30 organizations were founded pre-1996, four of which contributed no emails to the dataset. Of the 2,162 emails in the dataset, 911 come from legacy political associations, and 1,251 come from the new generation. This produces surprisingly similar averages for the two subsets, with the average legacy organization sending 30.4 emails over the past 6 months and the average new generation organization sending 31.3 emails in that timeframe.

In doing so, I am adopting an axiomatic assumption about organizational structure, rooted in Dimaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional isomorphism theory. Advocacy groups in a membership and fundraising environment will face pressures to develop isomorphic institutional structures. Groups from the direct mail era will all have high-level departments in charge of direct mail operations, for instance. Rather than classify organizations by subject era – grouping all civil rights organizations under one heading, grouping environmental organizations under another – I instead classify organizations by founding date. The questions I seek to answer specifically concern whether groups founded in the online communications regime operate differently then groups founded in earlier communications regimes, (regardless of field of specialization)[6]. Note that, since the MCP is an open data project, alternate segmentations of the list can be freely tested by members of the research community.

The Left-Right Divide in Organizational Communications

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[6] This choice also alleviates some otherwise-difficult classification problems. Should Color of Change be considered a "civil rights organization" or an "internet-mediated organization," for instance? It was developed as a spinoff of MoveOn to better respond to the particular interests of the African-American community. A strong argument could be made for both.

Absent from this study is any advocacy group representation from the political right. Particularly during a time period when conservative grassroots mobilization appears to be on the rise through the "tea party" movement, this design choice requires explanation. I leave conservative advocacy organizations out of this study for two reasons: network structure and historical patterns.

Regarding network structure, political associations demonstrably learn from one another through four forms of networked communication. First, staff of like-minded political associations move from one group to another over the course of their careers, bringing skills and learned organizational habits with them. Given that the nonprofit community is a relatively low-paying sector, structured around the rewards of "doing good, rather than doing well," this staff mobility remains concentrated within ideological sectors. It is common for a staffer from the Sierra Club to move to the National Resources Defense Council. Moving from the National Organization for Women to the National Rifle Association would be far more surprising. Likewise, professionals within the political left have learned best practices for email communication at a series of conferences and trainings – events like the New Organizing Institute's "Rootscamp," Camp Wellstone trainings, and the annual Netroots Nation conference – where conservative nonprofit professionals are absent. There are a few industry-wide conferences – events like the Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet's Politics Online Conference and the annual Personal Democracy Forum conference, but conservatives are in the minority at these events as well. Most progressive organizations use the same consultants to manage their email programs – primarily Democracy in

Action, Blue State Digital, and Convio. These consultancies cater to the ideological left, and presumably help to educate organizations on email best-practices. Finally, organizations learn best practices through coalition work, sustained working relationships between Executive Directors, and confidential data-sharing agreements with organizations such as Catalist. All of these linkages display a heavy ideological bias. I thus would hypothesize greater overlaps among progressive organizations than among political associations as a whole. The groups in this study compete for donors and volunteers, working toward similar, often overlapping goals. They learn from each other through conferences, partnerships, and staff transitions. Little if any of that connectivity is present across the ideological spectrum, suggesting that conservative political associations (particularly the new wave of tea party-related groups) ought to be treated separately.

Not only are various forms of network tie more prevalent within ideological communities than across the partisan divide, there are strong reasons to expect the American right to adopt new media in different ways. Matthew Kerbel has argued that conservative "netroots" institutions are more vertically-integrated, while the progressive netroots are more horizontally-integrated due to the previous existence of major media institutions on each side (2009). Similar trends are likely present in the area of organizational communications, with longstanding conservative groups inheriting the legacy of direct mail pioneer Richard Viguerie (whom Jeffrey Berry once described as a "one man tragedy of the commons") and organizations like Americans for Prosperity and Americans for Tax Reform run by longtime conservative leaders Dick Armey and Grover Norquist. Between those major groups, the prevalence of Fox News, and conservative

discussion sites like FreeRepublic.com, we should not expect the email usage patterns of the political left to mimic those of the political right. A comparative analysis of these differing trends would be a worthwhile undertaking, but such an analysis moves beyond the limits of the current research endeavor. Particularly in the relatively new field of email communication, one should not expect all organizations to develop similar practices. I thus set out to gather data on the political left, leaving the political right as a puzzle for another time.

Backchannels and Proprietary Data: Limits of the Dataset.

It bears noting that a study such as this *cannot* cover all of the email communication occurring between these organizations and their members. As one staffperson of an internet-mediated group noted to me, "the only way to see every message we send out to the membership is to be on staff." Organizations segment their lists in a variety of ways; with the newer groups like MoveOn engaging in much more sophisticated data segmentation than their more longstanding counterparts. The data collected for this analysis thus presents an "audience-eye view" of membership communications. Lacking an omniscient-narrator perspective, the study lacks three types of data that would otherwise be of substantial interest: listserv communications, backchannel google groups, and clickstream/segmented data.

Listservs have been a staple of intra-organizational communications since the mid-1990s, leading to some amusing anecdotal evidence about the uptake of new communications technologies by legacy organizations. When one major political

association was discussing the launch of a new presence on blogs and social network sites, several board members indicated that they were "just more comfortable with traditional listservs.[7]" That email has diffused so widely as to be considered "traditional" in comparison to new media technologies is a testament to the pace of technological change. Regardless, it also serves as an indicator that even the slowest-adopting organizations have developed capacities for internal communication through listservs and other closed channels. This represents a large bulk of email communications between political associations and their stakeholders (staff, volunteers, and donors) excluded from the MCP dataset. The dataset is concerned with *external* communications between organizations and their large supporter lists, though the boundaries between "external" and "internal" are themselves an organizational choice often put to debate.

Likewise, networks of cross-organizational stakeholders communicate frequently over private, semi-secret backchannel lists, organized through the Google Groups utility. The largest of these lists is "Townhouse," which encompasses the progressive netroots and is named after a bar in Washington, DC where leftwing bloggers often congregate in person. (Shulman 2007, Yglesias 2007) Blogger/Journalist Ezra Klein also organized "JournoList," which attracted public notoriety in the summer of 2010 after conservative media mogul Andrew Breitbart offered $100,000 for access to the list's archives and conservative pundit Tucker Carlson's "Daily Caller" website published an expose on the supposed "liberal media conspiracy" contained within the backchannel discussion[8].

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[7] Participant-observation, May 2007
[8] The JournoList controversy is the subject of a separate paper that, coincidentally, I am also presenting at APSA 2010. The interested reader is invited to read the paper, "Beyond Citizen Journalism," or attend the panel.

Backchannel lists provide a networked equivalent of the "inside" discussion occurring on organizational listservs. They thus are excluded from this study (although they are the topic of a companion study).

Finally, missing from this study is any indication of email effectiveness. Data such as clickthrough rates, message tests, regional variation, and email segmentation are kept proprietary by the advocacy groups themselves. Though these groups frequently contract with organizations such as Catalist for industry-wide analysis, those reports likewise are conducted behind the veil of confidentiality. For this reason, the MCP dataset's reliance on public data is quite limiting. Do (some) organizations send different messages to Providence, RI than to Tucson, AZ? Do they make different action or funding requests? How closely do they track and respond to individual-level clickthrough rates? Which types of email appeal are most and least effective. There is a wealth of private industry knowledge on this subject which, at present, cannot be tested, though it is my hope to develop future partnerships in that area.

Recognizing those limitations, I can now detail what the significant advances that the MCP *does* provide in understanding organizational advocacy appeals:

Data Collection

Having used the augmented Democracy Alliance list to identify a convenience sample, I then created a dummy account through gmail, visited each organization's website, and signed up for any email lists, online membership status, or action alert programs offered by the organization. Knowing that some organizations send more

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additional emails to the subset of members that take action, I clicked through and took the first online action offered by all groups as well. As messages came in to the account, I coded them based on 9 variables. [date], [organization], [topic], [digest/e-newsletter], [action ask], [fundraising ask], [request for member input], [event advertisement], [media agenda link]. Each of these is discussed in greater detail below:

1. Date. Useful for treating the dataset as a time-series, and for observing the lifespan of an issue topic. Data collection began on January 21, 2010 and continued through July 21, 2010, providing six months of activity in total. Figure 1 reveals the flow of emails over the initial six months of this study. The lowest point occurred during the week of the DC blizzard, when many organizations had to close their offices. Other low points, such as the week of 7/5-7/11, were attributable to holidays (July 4th and Memorial Day) since July 4th. The high point occurred in the week leading up to final passage of the Health Care Reform package in the House and the week following the gulf oil spill. There is relatively little variance in the total traffic of email from this set of organizations, an indication that communications protocols are well-established and fluctuations in communication frequencies are likely non-random.

--Figure 1 here –

2. Organization. Though the weekly volume of messages underwent only minor fluctuations, these messages were far from evenly distributed among organizations. Over the 26 weeks that the study was conducted, 6 organizations sent no messages (AFL-CIO, Young Democrats, Rock the Vote, National Security Network, American Progressive Caucus Policy Foundation, and American Constitution Society for Law

and Politics) and another 12 organizations sent fewer than one message per month (Bus Project, Alliance for Justice, Democracia Ahora, Public Campaign Action Fund, Gathering for Justice, Amnesty International, League of Young Voters, Progress Now, Women's Voices/Women's Vote, 21st Century Dems, Center for Progressive Leadership, and FairVote). 10 organizations sent more than 2 messages per week (Brennan Center (57), Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (59), PCCC (63), Organizing for America (75), Democracy for America (82), MoveOn (99), Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (110), Faith in Public Life (127), Sierra Club (145), and Campaign for Americas Future (288)). Campaign for America's Future alone sent out 13.3% of all messages in the dataset, primarily due to their twice-daily digest emails, "Progressive Breakfast" and "PM Update." Faith in Public Life likewise sent out a daily digest, "Daily Faith News," while the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities sent out frequent report releases and the Sierra Club sent out a variety of e-newsletters, as well as e-mailed versions of Executive Director Carl Pope's blog posts[9]. Figure 2 provides the distribution of group emails.

<div align="center">--Figure 2 here --</div>

3. Topic. Here I categorized the messages by issue topic, or by other dominant feature. The "Legal Services E-lerts" from the Brennan Center, for instance, is a series of alerts about legal services generally, and thus received that topical heading. Likewise, Faith in Public Life sent out "Daily Faith News" every weekday, listing faith-related headlines in the news. I relied on the dominant language of the email to

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[9] Technically, Pope ceased to be Executive Director of the Sierra Club midway through the data collection period. He took a new position as Chairman of the organization, and continued unchanged in posting to his "Taking the Initiative" blog.

determine issue topic, so if the message was framed around Health Care, but also discussed the Recovery Act, it was coded as "Health Care." Likewise if a message was framed as "weekly e-news," it was simply recorded as "e-news." Topical headings are used in category 9, [media agenda] and in constructing affiliation network graphs (Karpf 2010).

4. <u>Digest/E-newsletter</u>. The next five headings categorize the messages by their content-type. Digest/e-newsletter is is the largest category, encompassing 48.5% of the messages received (1,049 messages). It includes daily news digests from groups like Campaign for America's Future and Faith in Public Life, featuring links to news or blog posts of potential interest to their supporters. Also included are report releases from organizations like the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and emailed versions of blog posts by groups like the Sierra Club. Note that these make up the top 4 most prolific organizations. A small set of groups use email to frequently send informational updates to their membership, and those updates make up nearly half of the email traffic from the organizations in the study. These emails generally do not attempt to mobilize the resources of any members, with only 126 action alerts (12.0%) and 108 fundraising, member input, or event announcements (10.2%). Nearly all of those action alerts, input and fundraising requests, and event announcements appeared in heavily-formatted e-newsletters that include sidebar columns inviting readers to take action or announced an upcoming event. All e-newsletters, digest emails, or other information-only messages are coded as a 1 in this column. All other messages are coded as a 0. Total messages by category are

presented in figure 3 (categories are non-exclusive, so percentages do not sum to
100).

--figure 3 here –

5. Action Ask. The "action ask" measure captures all emails that requested some action
on the part of their membership. Rather than a binary category, this field recorded the
type of action requested (sign petition/write letter/attend rally/call Senator) and the
target of the action (administration/congress/corporation), recording all non-action
emails with a 0. 836 messages included some form of action alert (38.7%), 710 of
which were not contained in an e-newsletter. Eight organizations never sent an action
alert, including Faith in Public Life and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities,
who sent the 3rd and 4th most total messages in the dataset. Targets and action
requests varied over the course of the six months of study. I will compile the 836
requests in the following section, to investigate H3.

6. Fundraising Ask. Along with mobilizing the membership to take political action,
mobilizing the membership to donate money represents a crucial activity for
organizations. Particularly as direct mail marketing is in industry-wide decline
(Flannery and Harris 2008), email-based fundraising provides a replacement revenue
stream with lower overhead costs, faster turnaround, and the potential for dynamic
message testing and sophisticated data mining. As noted previously, I recorded 3
distinct types of fundraising email. The first is a general request to become a member
or supporter of the organization by donating to their work. Such an ask is virtually

identical to the direct mail-type fundraising appeal. The second is a request to support a specific action, such as giving $10 to put a television commercial on the air. Such fundraising is event-specific, introducing restrictions on its use for general organizational overhead costs. It is generally thought of as easier-to-raise, but less useful to the organization.[10]

A third type of fundraising appeared frequently in the dataset as well. This was a form of "pass through" fundraising, in which organizations urged their membership to donate directly to supported political candidates. These donations are bundled together, so the candidate knows which advocacy group they are associated with, but they otherwise do not provide for organizational operating expenses. Such fundraising was pioneered by EMILY's List, but many peer organizations choose instead to raise money for their own electoral campaigns, rather than bundling money and sending it to the candidates themselves. The links provided frequently lead to an ActBlue.com fundraising page, meaning that none of the money flows into the mobilizing organization's coffers. In this column, I record a "1" for general funding requests, a "2" for targeted funding requests, a "3" for passthrough funding requests, or a "0" if no funding request was present.   Figure 4 displays the breakdown of funding appeals by category. In total, there were 214 general funding requests in the dataset, 56 targeted funding requests, and 80 passthrough funding requests. In the next section, I will provide a contingency table of these emails, separated by organization-type, and provide a Chi-squared test of independence.

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[10] Universities face an equivalent dilemma in fundraising, with alumni often wanting to donate to specific programs or new construction projects, and the Office of Development urging alumni to give to the General Fund so the donations can be put to their greatest use.

--figure 4 here--

7. Member Input. Online membership communication makes it theoretically possible for organizations to radically expand the degree of input they receive from members. In the absence of the internet, membership deliberation can be prohibitively resource-intensive for a national organization, requiring either an expensive annual convention or a lengthy series of in-person membership meetings. Early scholars and practitioners had hopes that the speed and flexibility of email and other online communications platforms would make organizations far more participatory. (Fine 2006, Trippi 2004) Those hopes have mostly been dashed at this point, but the MCP provides a novel opportunity to gather empirical data on membership input. When do organizations solicit member input? Which organizations do so, and how frequently? This column codes user surveys, membership votes, and invitations to submit user-generated content as a 1, and all other messages as a 0. Only 70 such messages were sent in the 6 months of data collection (3.2%). I intend to provide a detailed exploration of this small-but-important class of emails in a future study.

8. Event Advertisement. This column covers announcements of upcoming conferences, trainings, or other organizational events. Though this type of email, coded as a bivariate 1 or 0, does not appear very frequently (217 messages/ 10.0%) one organization (New Organizing Institute), *solely* sent out event announcements during
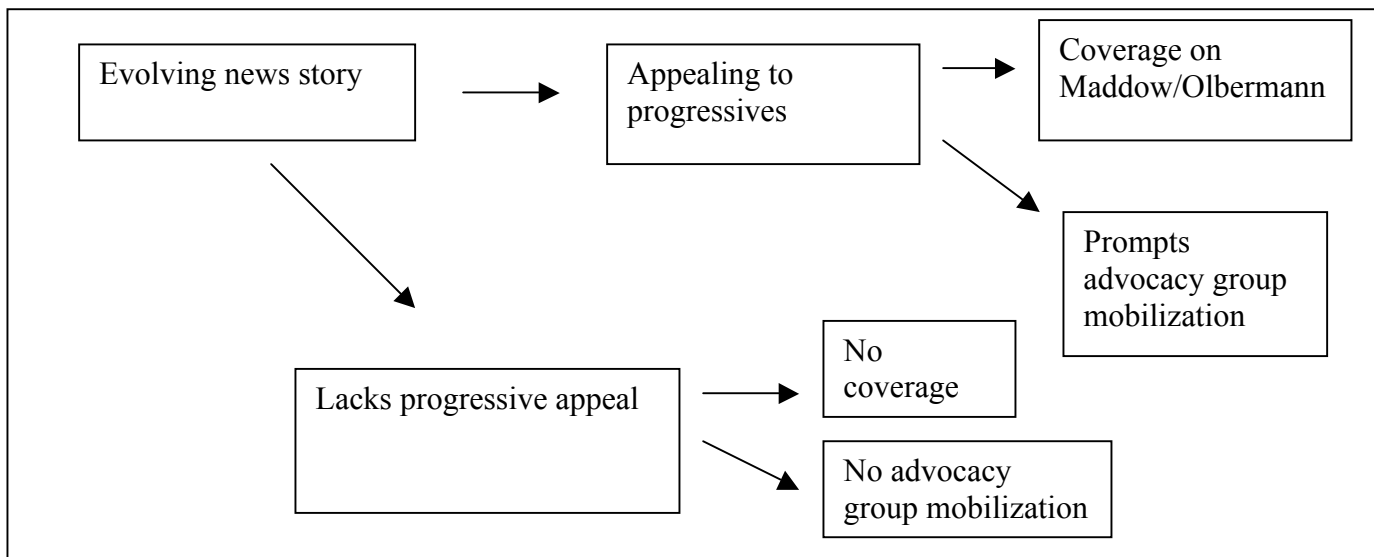
the 6 months of data collection, while another (Advancement Project) sent out only event announcements and a monthly e-newsletter.

9. <u>Media Agenda</u>. This last heading requires further exposition, as it is a novel design choice. As a test of the "headline chasing" claim, I compare the topic of organizational emails (listed in column 3) to the topics covered on the top two left-leaning news programs, *The Rachel Maddow Show* and *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*. These two hour-length programs appear in the primetime news slots on MSNBC (8PM and 9PM, rebroadcast at 10PM and 11PM). Their hosts are liberal icons, frequently cited by the political netroots, with Olbermann occasionally blogging at DailyKos.com. If an email topic received coverage on one of these programs on the day of, the day before, or the day after the date that the email was sent, it is coded as a 1. Otherwise it is coded as a 0. 909 of the 2,162 emails in the dataset were tied to the media agenda in this manner.

I would stress at this point that I am <u>not</u> making the claim that these two television programs <u>set</u> the left's media or political agenda. Though Rachel Maddow occasionally holds exclusive interviews that are newsworthy in their own right, and though Keith Olbermann's occasional "special comments" likewise attract broader attention, for the most part these programs are *reflecting* the news of the day, rather than *creating* it. An emerging research tradition documents the fragmentation of the news environment (Jamieson and Cappella 2010, Sunstein 2001, Xenos and Kim 2008). The current state of media fragmentation suggests that not only are the issues

of the day *framed* differently, but also that different issues receive attention from left-leaning and right-leaning venues.

It is my contention that the audience of Maddow and Olbermann heavily overlaps with the membership/supporter base of progressive advocacy organizations. As such, the issues which, on a day-to-day basis, appear to the two programs' editorial staffs as being of high audience interest could be termed the issues which are at the top of the progressive media agenda. This relationship is depicted in the flow chart below.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                           │
│  ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐  │
│  │ Evolving news    │ ───▶ │ Appealing to     │──▶ │ Coverage on      │  │
│  │ story            │      │ progressives     │    │ Maddow/Olbermann │  │
│  └──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘  │
│           │                         │                                     │
│           ▼                         ▼                                     │
│                               ┌──────────────────┐                        │
│                               │ Prompts advocacy │                        │
│                               │ group            │                        │
│                               │ mobilization     │                        │
│                               └──────────────────┘                        │
│  ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐                               │
│  │ Lacks progressive│ ───▶ │ No coverage  │                               │
│  │ appeal           │      └──────────────┘                               │
│  │                  │      ┌──────────────────┐                            │
│  └──────────────────┘ ───▶ │ No advocacy      │                           │
│                            │ group mobilization│                          │
│                            └──────────────────┘                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Daily coverage from the two programs was recording according to topic area. Health Care Reform dominated coverage on the two shows between January 21 and March 31, 2010, generally as the lead story. Maddow demonstrated a preference for coverage of Don't Ask, Don't Tell hearings, coverage of the C Street house run by Christian organization "the Family," that houses several prominent Members of Congress, and filibuster reform. Olbermann demonstrated a preference for criticizing

Sarah Palin, organizers and activists in the "tea party" movement, Republican

officials and Fox News contributors. Both programs featured some coverage of

Financial Reform, unemployment legislation, and breaking news stories on disasters

(Haiti and Peru earthquakes, plane crash into Austin IRS building) and Republican

scandals. Both programs turned central attention from Health Care to extreme

rightwing responses to the bill's passage in late March and early April. The BP oil

spill then took center stage, receiving top billing on almost every program from from

April 30 to mid-July. As hypothesized, several internet-mediated generalists

(including MoveOn, PCCC, Democracy for America, Organizing for America, and

Campaign for America's Future) sent out action alerts in response to the oil spill,

having previously not focused on environmental or climate issues.

Results

We can now turn to the statistical tests of the three hypotheses, separating the new

and old advocacy groups into two categories based on the year they were founded to

engage in a simple Chi-squared test of independence.

Test of H1

To test H1, I separated messages based on the media-agenda variable, pooling

organizations based on the new generation/legacy organization distinction. Table 1

presents the results of a chi-squared test of independence. 50.4% of all messages from the

new generation advocacy organizations related to the issues discussed by Maddow and

Olbermann, while 30.6% of the messages from legacy organizations had this connection,

providing a Yates Chi-square of 83.79, significant at the .0001 level[11]. Given the top-

heavy nature of the distribution (The Campaign for America's Future contributes nearly

1/3[rd] of all media agenda-related messages for the new generation groups thanks to their

twice-daily updates), table 2 provides a list of organization-by-organization proportions

of messages that fit the media agenda. Organization with less than 6 emails (1

email/month) were removed from table 2 for the purpose of visual clarity. Only two

legacy organizations sent out a higher percentage of media agenda-related messages than

the average (Center for Community Change and AFSCME). Legacy organizations are

concentrated in the 22%-38% range, whereas new organizations occupy the top and

bottom of the list, with 13 organizations above 50% and 8 organizations below 20%.

--Tables 1 and 2 here --

The finding regarding new organizations accords with the major finding from my

preliminary network analysis of the MCP organizations from May, 2010. Issue

generalists engage in frequent headline chasing. Niche organizations work within their

niche. Those niche organizations whose topic happened to be in the news *did* take that

occasion to activate their membership. As one example, Democracia Ahora sent a total

of 5 emails, all of them in response to the passage of a controversial state immigration

law in Arizona. In the three months of data collection prior to the law's passage,

Democracia Ahora sent no messages. Such activity on the part of niche specialists

should perhaps be termed "headline reacting" rather than "headline chasing" –

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[11] Computed using Richard Lowery's free online toolset:
http://faculty.vassar.edu/lowry/newcs.html?

Democracia Ahora existed in that issue space, reacting to the political moment as it emerged. Several issue generalists also turned their focus to the Arizona immigration issue, but they were following the media agenda, rather than reacting when the media agenda came to them. It appears as though the legacy organizations essentially engaged in the same "headline reacting" activity. Environmental organizations rarely connected with the media agenda until the oil spill occurred, while labor groups primarily connected with the media agenda when health care, the jobs bill, or wall street reform were in the news.

Test of H2

To test H2, I created a 2x3 contingency table, pooling organizations by founding year and separating the 350 fundraising emails into the three distinct categories. Table 3 presents the results, which exhibited a Yates Chi-square value of 62.97, significant at the p<.0001 level. Figure 5 displays these distinctions graphically. Though the total number of fundraising messages sent by the two pooled populations were relatively similar (n – 185 for new organizations, n = 165 for legacy organizations), there were stark differences in the types of appeal that were sent. New generation organizations **did** send out 77 general fundraising messages, and were particularly likely to do so in the days following a major victory (passage of Health Care Reform and Wall Street Reform, for instance), but they also were frequent targeted and passthrough fundraisers. The passthrough fundraising category was particularly interesting. Of the 16 passthrough fundraisers originating from legacy organizations, 12 came from EMILY's List and 4 came from the League of Conservation Voters. By contrast, the Progressive Change Campaign

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Committee sent out 21 of these messages, Democracy for America sent out 18 of them, MoveOn sent out 16, and VoteVets sent out 7. DFA (35), PCCC (26), MoveOn (30) and EMILY's List (32) were the four organizations who sent the most fundraising messages in total as well, all of them using it as a central tactic in their efforts around Democratic Primaries.

--Table 3 here –

--Figure 5 here --

General fundraising messages went out in response to end-of-quarter deadlines, perceived threats, and major victories. The new organizations proved more adept in raising targeted funds, while my hypothesis that older organizations primarily seek to place their direct mail-style appeals online is supported by this test.

Test of H3

For H3, I categorized the 835 action alerts based on the type of action requested and the audience of that action. Figure 6 presents the results. Contra-Shulman, it would appear that emails to rulemaking agencies and epetitions more generally make only 29.6 % of the action requests sent by progressive advocacy organizations (inclusive of the so-called "Critter Lobby" discussed by Shulman). At least during the six months of this study, progressive advocacy groups were more interested in urging their members to email congress (144 cases) and call congress (127) than they were in soliciting e-rulemaking comments (45) or petitioning any audience (202). Furthermore, local action requests made up 10.2% of the total mobilization efforts (85), and creative tactics such as

distributed Get-Out-The-Vote calling systems (14) were used in the late moments of primary campaigns.

If we categorize all email requests to sign an e-petition or send an email as a case of "clicktivism," then 55.8% of the advocacy action requests fall into this category (466 cases). But here I would remind the reader of Chris Bowers's commentary regarding the *strategy* underlying a typical e-petition. "The first goal of the petition is to use it to get meetings with Senators, or their staff… " and "We need a list of which activists are, and are not, interested in order to conduct this campaign. That way, we will contact the right people for future actions on this topic." I took a single online action with each group for the MCP dataset, so as to pass beyond the most basic data segmentation schemes. How many more non-email calls to action would be in the dataset if I had clicked on every e-petition? How did these e-petitions figure into broader organizational strategies? These are the types of information that are shared behind organizational firewalls, and occasionally at the email workshops at "netroots" events. For the purposes of this initial study, at least, it is enough to establish that the simple accusation that online activism is simply list-building and e-petitions is challenged by the empirical data. In 2,162 emails over the past 6 months, only 202 included an epetition. The rest were informational, or event announcements, or fundraising appeals, or requests for member input, or requests to take some other form of political action.

Discussion/Conclusion: A Disruptive Technology

The goal of this project has been to delve into the heavily understudied field of advocacy group emails, in the process developing an empirical picture of how this communications medium is used by the groups themselves. The central contribution of this paper is in the quantitative support it provides for a set of propositions forwarded in an earlier qualitative project. I have argued in the past that the political economy of the "new generation" of advocacy groups leads it to engage in "headline chasing," and to engage in a different type of fundraising than the older groups. The counterclaim – that older groups will simply adopt the new technologies and continue on – is challenged by the empirical picture presented here. Simply put, there are stark differences between the types of fundraising appeals and advocacy messages sent by the legacy organizations and the new internet-mediated issue generalists. A set of internet-mediated niche specialists also has developed, which engages in targeted fundraising without following the media agenda from issue to issue. But this strongly suggests that there are substantive differences in how new groups and legacy groups adopt information technologies. Organizations with existing overhead and staffing structures have sunk costs that prevent them from adapting the "best practices" taught at netroots conferences annually.

The MCP data also suggests a counterargument to claims that the new organizations merely engage in "clicktivism." At a base level, the paper has shown that e-petitions make up a smaller portion of the total action requests than critics would likely suspect. Moveover, organizational leaders themselves indicate that e-petitions and other simple clickstream actions form the first rung in a "ladder of engagement," meant to build a base of political activists who will take increasingly complex actions.

The "ladder of engagement" represents a clear next step for this research agenda. Along with providing pooled distributional data on how high-profile progressive advocacy groups use email, the MCP can also be used for augmented case research. If there is indeed a "ladder of engagement," we should be able to view it by focusing in on a single campaign effort and seeing how requests change over time. Do groups make increasingly complex requests of their membership, as they appear to claim? I intend to take an initial look at this question through an analysis of the Bill Halter/Blanche Lincoln Arkansas Senate Primary in a follow-up study. MCP data provides a timeline of mobilization efforts, which started with a simple e-petition, then moved to passthrough fundraising requests and ended with a nationwide distributed Get-Out-The-Vote phone bank. A closer look at this and other campaigns will provide a far more detailed response to the "clicktivist" critique.

		Email subject - media event of the day		
		Media agenda	Non-media agenda	Total
Organization	New (38 groups)	629 (.50)	619 (.50)	1248
	Old (27 groups)	280 (.31)	634 (.69)	914
	Total	909 (.42)	1253 (.58)	2162

Null hypothesis of independence between Organization and Email subject is rejected with a Yates ChiSquare value of 83.79 (1 df and $p<.0001$)
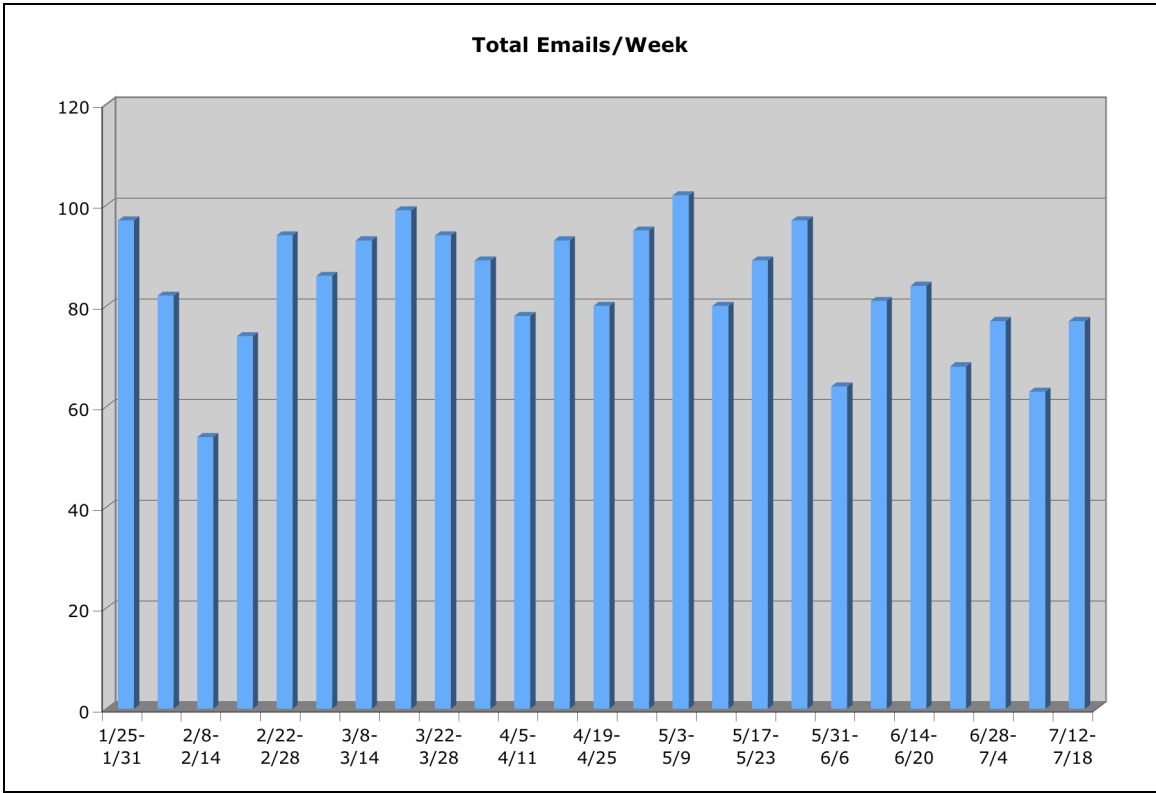
Table 1: contingency table of organizations and media agenda

New Org	Old Org	Media Agenda	Total Msgs	%
Progressive Congress		7	9	0.78
Campaign for America's Future		212	288	0.74
Organizing for America		54	75	0.72
350.org		9	13	0.69
MoveOn		63	99	0.64
Media Matters		22	35	0.63
PCCC		38	63	0.60
	Center for Community Change	11	19	0.58
True Majority		19	34	0.56
Color of Change		10	18	0.56
Courage Campaign		13	24	0.54
1Sky		9	18	0.5
Catholics in Alliance		12	24	0.5
Democracy for America		41	82	0.5
Moms Rising		8	17	0.47
	AFSCME	16	37	0.43
Demos		9	21	0.43
	Citizens for Tax Justice	11	28	0.39
Faith in Public Life		49	127	0.39
	Human Rights Campaign	15	40	0.38
Sunlight Foundation		6	16	0.38
	Leadership Council on Civil Rights	22	59	0.37
Repower America		7	19	0.37
	NAACP	15	42	0.36
	Sierra Club	51	145	0.35
	League of Conservation Voters	12	35	0.34
	National Organization for Women	8	24	0.33
	Environmental Defense Fund	7	22	0.31
VoteVets		6	19	0.32
	SEIU	3	10	0.3
	Planned Parenthood	8	27	0.30
	Defenders of Wildlife	15	51	0.29
	EMILY's List	12	45	0.27
	Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	29	110	0.26
	Economic Policy Institute	9	35	0.26
	Century Foundation	3	12	0.25
Progressive Majority		3	12	0.25
	NARAL	9	40	0.23
	ACLU	8	36	0.22
	NRDC	10	45	0.22
Change Congress		3	15	0.2
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington		2	10	0.2
Progressive States Network		9	47	0.19
Truman Project		2	11	0.18

Greenpeace	2	12	0.17
Brennan Center	6	57	0.11
New Organizing Institute	1	11	0.09
Human Rights First	2	30	0.07
Iraq and Afghanistan Vets of America	1	15	0.07
Free Press	1	17	0.06

Table 2: Media Agenda Propensity Scores by Organizational

		Email			
		General	Targeted	Passthrough	Total
Organization	New (38 groups)	77 (.42)	44 (.42)	64 (.35)	185
	Old (27 groups)	137 (.83)	12 (.07)	16 (.10)	165
	Total	214 (.61)	56 (.16)	80 (.23)	350

Null hypothesis of independence between Organization and Email subject is rejected with a ChiSquare value of 62.97 (2 df and p<.0001)

Table 3: Contingency table of organizations and fundraising emails

Figure 1: Total Emails/Week
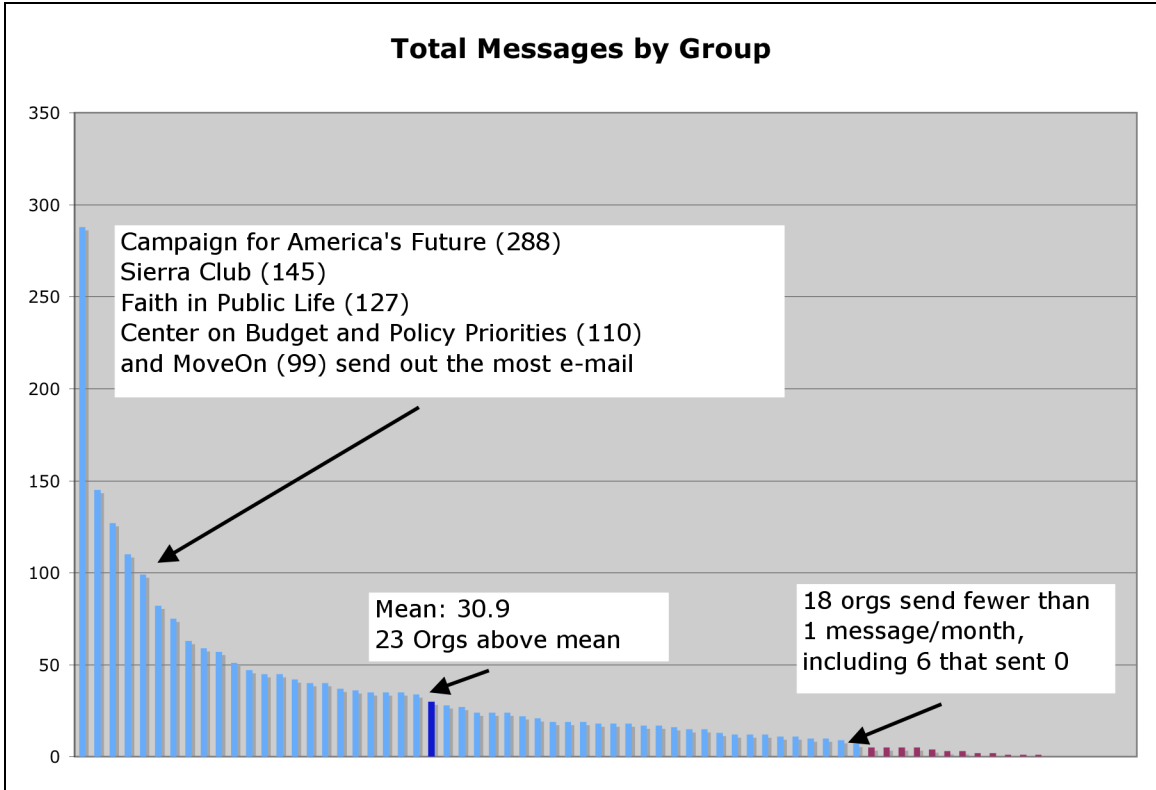
Figure 2: Total Messages Ordered by Group

Total E-mails by Category

Category	Value	Percentage
Digest/e-mail	~1050	48.5%
action ask	~840	38.7%
fundraising	~355	16.3%
Member Input	~70	3.2%
Event Invite	~215	10%
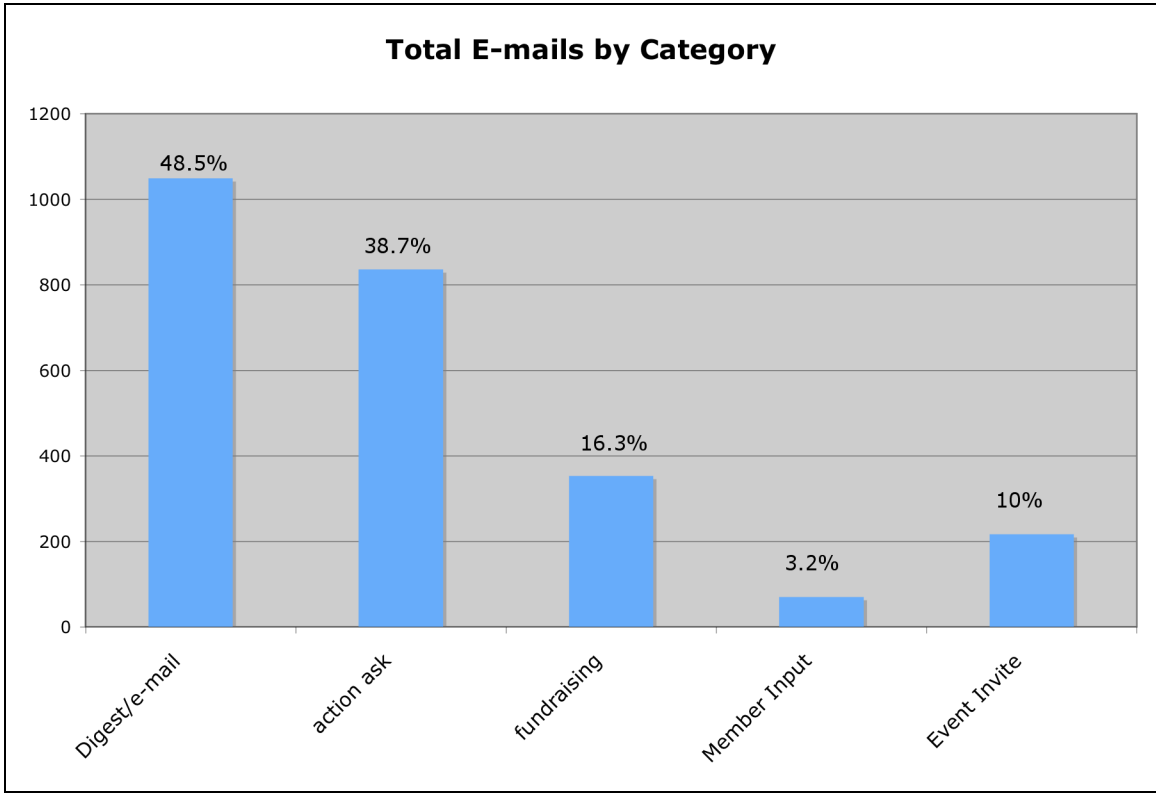
Figure 3: Total Emails by Category

Fundraisers by Type

passthrough
23%

targeted
16%

general
61%
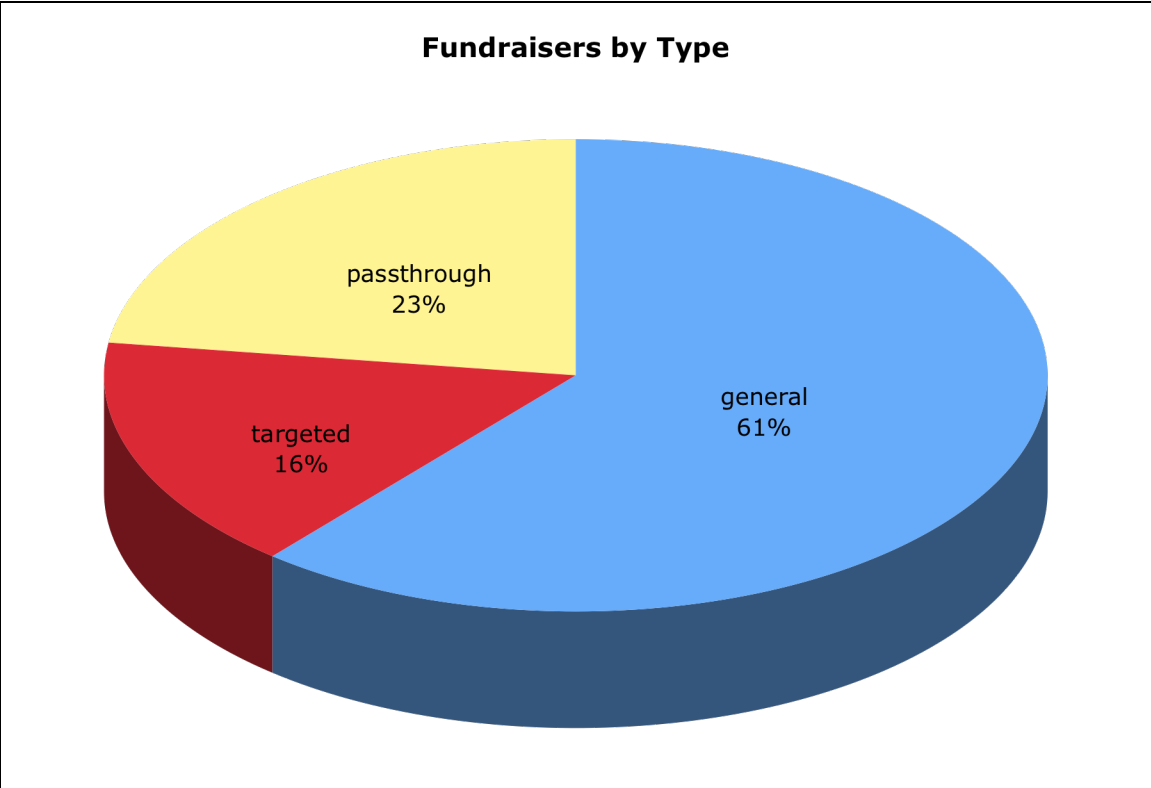
Figure 4: Fundraising Appeals by Type
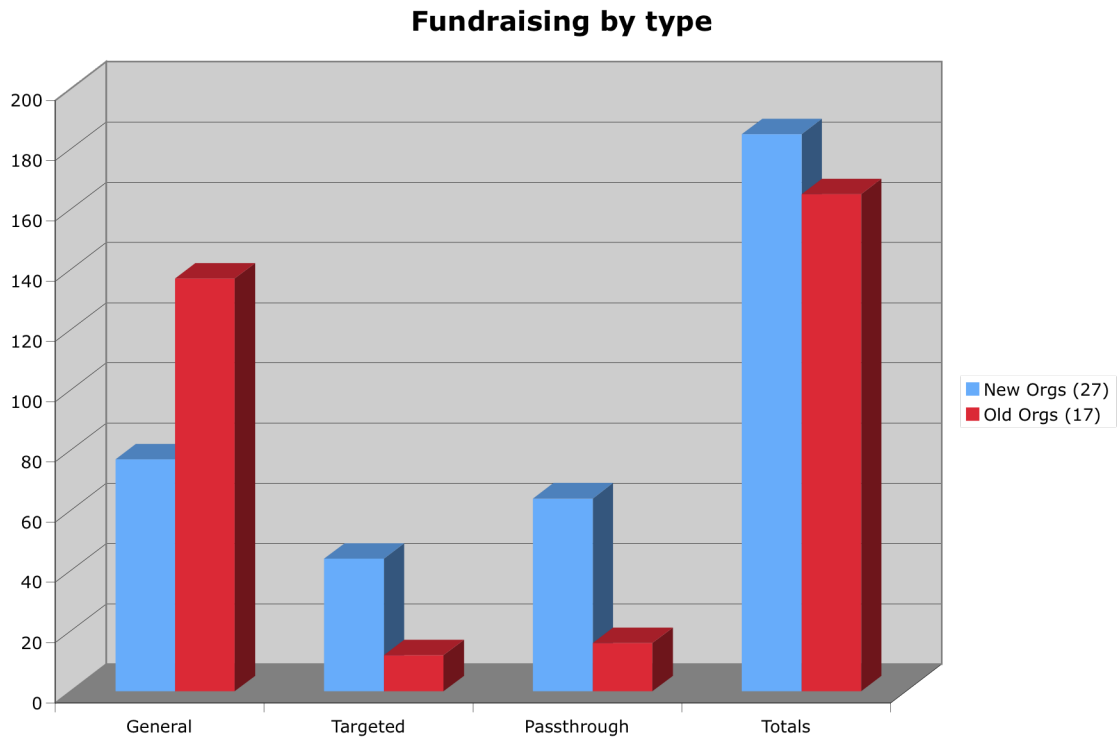
Figure 5: Fundraising Appeal by Organization Type
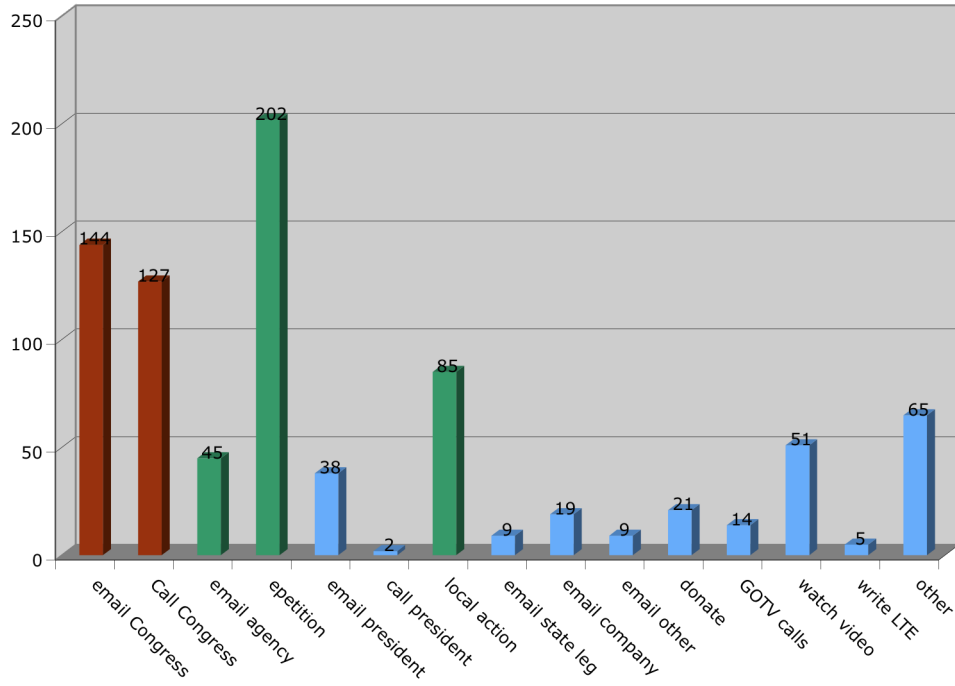
Total Action Requests

Figure 6: Action Requests by Type and Audience

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Appendix: List of Organizations Included in the Study
From *The Practical Progressive* (50 groups)
21st Century Dems
Advancement Project
Alliance for Justice
American Constitution Society for Law and Politics
American Progressive Caucus Policy Foundation
Brennan Center for Justice
Bus Project
Campaign for Americas Future
Catholics in Alliance
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Center for Community Change
Center for Progressive Leadership
Century Foundation
Citizens for Tax Justice
Color of Change
Citizens for Responsibility and ethics in washington
DemocraciaUSA
Democracy for America
Demos
Economic Policy Institute
EMILY's List
Fair Vote
Faith in Public Life
Free Press
The Gathering
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of Conservation Voters
League of Young Voters
Media Matters
Moms Rising
MoveOn
NARAL
National Council of La Raza
National Security Network
Planned Parenthood
Progress Now
Progressive Majority
Progressive States Network
Public Campaign
Rock the Vote

SEIU
Sierra Club
Sunlight Foundation
Truman Project
US Action/True Majority
Vote Vets
women's voices, women's vote
Young Dems

Additional Organizations (20 groups)

Organizing for America
Courage Campaign
New Organizing Institute
EDF
NRDC
350.org
1sky
Alliance for Climate Protection
PCCC
Greenpeace
NOW
ACLU
NAACP
IAVA
AFSCME
AFL-CIO
Amnesty International
Defenders of Wildlife
Change Congress
Open Left