

ROV Rolls Out in Pittsburgh—A Key City For 2006 Races

By Lloyd Martinez

One of the most closely watched races in 2006 pits Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum (R) against State Treasurer Bob Casey, Jr., (D) who leads most polls by a slight margin in an election that may be decided by as few as 50,000 votes.

The close senatorial race is one of many contests in Pittsburgh, where Reclaim our Vote has made several grants to improve voter engagement and voting rights. Pittsburgh is a primary Pennsylvania target for voter suppression schemes including those in which voters have arrived at the polls, but found themselves unable to vote because their registration was missing.

Last November, the Pittsburgh Port Authority refused to place ads in city buses informing former felons of their voting rights. The Port Authority explained to the League of Young Voters, a FEX grantee, and the American Civil Liberties Union that the authority, as a matter of policy, does not accept ads that are not commercial—a blatant falsehood. The ACLU and Young Voters countered with a federal unlawful



FEX grantee League of Young Voters working on voter registration.

discrimination lawsuit against the Port Authority.

Pittsburgh was the only Pennsylvania city to have a decline in its number of registered voters leading up to the 2004 election. All other Pennsylvania cities, in contrast, showed large increases. Pittsburgh also has an abysmal voter turnout rate with young voters. In 1999, only 3.6% of registered voters between the ages of 18 to 24 voted.

Three Rivers Community Foundation Develops New Voter Centers

FEX member fund Three Rivers Community Foundation helped form a steering committee to develop Voter Centers for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County that will address voter engagement and voting rights in the region. The committee includes representatives from the Black Political Empowerment Project, Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Council and Clark Consulting, which works with young voters.

- ▶ A grant of \$25,000 was given to the steering committee for voter education trainings, new tailored materials, a website and consulting costs.
- ▶ A grant of \$20,000 was given to help develop

two Voter Centers: one in Pittsburgh and the other in a rural area of Allegheny County.

- ▶ Working with the Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network (NVEN), the steering committee will provide tailored materials to disseminate during voter education trainings.
- ▶ Three Rivers Community Foundation released a request for proposals in June and has made \$80,000 in grants to social justice organizations for voter engagement projects.
- ▶ People for the American Way has hired a full-time staff person to work with the steering committee on voting rights and other activities.

Donor Emphasizes Importance of Media Justice

By Lloyd Martinez

An interview with Sandy Polishuk about media and media justice

Why did you decide to support the Funding Exchange's new Media Justice Fund?

I've always thought of myself as a propagandist in a positive sense. I came out of community radio and am aware of the power of media to affect our consciousness. People need to be educated and become critical thinkers. When someone's out of school, the media is one of the main ways to reach them. I've been aware how critically important the media is to social change and all our other work. I'm also aware that a lot of foundations don't support media. I don't understand why they don't get it. I guess it's up to us to support media justice.

**FEX
In
Person**

Do you think you can get fair and accurate coverage of news in mainstream media—newspapers, radio and television?

You can get some facts and some columnists are ok. The myth of the liberal media is just that, a myth. It's about knowing who owns the media. The A.J. Liebling quote, "Freedom of the press is limited to those who own one," is all too true.

Can public radio, TV and media survive in an "infotainment" society? Who really watches public TV and who should be supporting public media?

Where I live (Portland), NPR is one of the fastest growing

segments. They are growing and their information is better—but better than what? Some of their coverage has moved to the right, because they're afraid of losing government funding. I also recognize their shortcomings. More and more people are relying on the internet because they don't trust that they're getting the full story.

The right seems to use radio very effectively in rural communities and elsewhere to motivate people to vote around cultural issues. Does the left use media well enough to mobilize voters?

I think the left is trying. They're using people power, but not the media. It doesn't feel like we really understand what our strategy is, so we need more think tanks. The right had strategies developed 20 -30 years ago. A long-term strategy for the left is lacking.

Air America is quite popular here. I can't handle the style and commercials, but it's proof of the attempt. I think broadcast is enormously important, but I think the left uses print media when it comes to political work.

Do you think there is a way to hold media giants accountable to the public? Should grassroots groups be protesting and lobbying Congress and the FCC?

Yes, I think it is important for people on the left (because people on the right do it) to let broadcasters and other media know when they're out of line.

Everyone has to judge where they spend their time and energy. One of the ways we can weaken ourselves is to feel overwhelmed. But media justice deserves a place on the priority list. It's important that there's some noise, whether it's protesting or writing letters to Congress. We need to show them this issue is important to us.

FEX Promotes Media Justice Initiative Through National Network

By Hye-Jung Park

The Funding Exchange National Network provides grassroots organizers in local communities with resources to take community control over institutions and policies that affect their lives. The Media Justice Fund is a current example of that dynamic.

In an effort to expand the media justice movement across the country, the Media Justice Fund of the Funding Exchange (FEX) has granted \$352,000 to 11 of its member funds in the National Network. These member funds will use these resources to re-grant to organizations working on media justice in their communities.

The Fund's Community Media Collaboration (CMC) grants support projects that address media policy, infrastructure or accountability within the context of a social justice issue or campaign. The Media Justice Toolkits (MJT) grants help disseminate popular education materials to address the impact of media policy on grassroots communities. Also, these grants support awareness of media justice and media activism in those communities. The ultimate goal of these grants is to support or create community-controlled, independent media infrastructure and to take concrete steps

for media activism and advocacy work. Through the Media Justice Fund grants, the FEX member funds organize local and regional convenings, led by local activists and organizers to promote community-based initiatives to facilitate public education and collaboration around media justice work.

The following member foundations of the National Network received grants from the Funding Exchange to pursue these efforts in their communities:

- Appalachian Community Fund (Knoxville, TN) - \$ 40,333
- Bread & Roses Community Fund (Philadelphia, PA) - \$40,333
- Crossroads Fund (Chicago, IL) - \$22,000
- Fund for Southern Communities (Decatur, GA) - \$40,333
- Haymarket People's Fund (Boston, MA) - \$40,333
- Headwaters Foundation for Justice (Minneapolis, MN) - \$22,000
- North Star Fund (New York, NY) - \$40,333
- San Diego Foundation for Change (San Diego, CA) - \$22,000
- The Hawai'i People's Fund (Honolulu, HI) - \$22,000
- Vanguard Public Foundation (San Francisco, CA) - \$22,000
- Wisconsin Community Fund (Madison, WI) - \$40,333

If you have any questions about the Media Justice Fund, you can contact me at (212) 529-5300 ext. 321 or email me at hyejung.park@fex.org

Telecom Corporations Assault Internet Freedom

By Hye-Jung Park

In recent months, ‘Net Neutrality’ has been a hotly debated issue in Washington D.C. and around the nation. Net Neutrality is the guiding principle that keeps the Internet open and democratic. Net Neutrality makes sure that every Internet user can have access to any content without content discrimination. It makes sure that the Internet users can use any appropriate software and hardware to access the Internet, and ensures that the public can inexpensively create and operate web pages.

However, the large telephone and cable companies (AT&T, Verizon and Comcast) are pushing legislation that would end Net Neutrality. These companies seek to be able to monopolize the content carried by the Internet and to decide the speed at which websites can be accessed—based on payment to themselves! And they want to favor certain content and applications—forcing the public to choose from a predesigned menu of services and content.

Congress and Legislation

On June 8, the House of Representatives passed the “Communications Opportunity, Promotion and Enhancement Act of 2005,” or COPE Act (HR 5252), which does not protect Net Neutrality. If implemented this will also allow for telecommunications redlining: allowing phone companies to choose to provide services in only the most profitable areas, while skipping over less profitable rural or low-income areas.



Save the Internet supporters, Buffalo, New York, by courtesy of The WNY Media Network.

The COPE Bill has been followed by a companion bill in the Senate—currently known as the “Advanced Telecommunications and Opportunities Reform Act” or ATOR (also HR 5252). Although slightly less damaging than the COPE bill in some areas, ATOR contains no Net Neutrality protections. In a bipartisan measure, Senators Snowe (R-Maine) and Dorgan (D-N.D.) attempted to amend ATOR with the “Internet Freedom Preservation Act of 2006”—which provides meaningful protection for Net Neutrality. But this amendment was defeated.

As of September 2006, ATOR is stalled in the Senate—largely because of the Net Neutrality issue—but with the telcos’ political clout behind it, the bill may pass soon.

How the threat to Internet freedom will affect you

Google users—Another search engine could pay dominant Internet providers like AT&T to guarantee the competing search engine opens faster than Google on your computer.

Innovators with the “next big idea”—Startups and entrepreneurs will be muscled out of the marketplace by big corporations that pay Internet providers for dominant placing on the Web. The little guy will be left in the “slow lane” with inferior Internet service, unable to compete.

iPod listeners—A company like Comcast could slow access to iTunes, steering you to a higher-priced music service that it owned.

Political groups—Political organizing could be slowed by a handful of dominant Internet providers who ask advocacy groups to pay “protection money” for their websites and online features to work correctly.

Nonprofits—A charity’s website could open at snail-speed, and online contributions could grind to a halt, if nonprofits can’t pay dominant Internet providers for

access to “the fast lane” of Internet service.

Online purchasers—Companies could pay Internet providers to guarantee their online sales process faster than competitors with lower prices—distorting your choice as a consumer.

Small businesses and tele-commuters—When Internet companies like AT&T favor their own services, you won’t be able to choose more affordable providers for online video, teleconferencing, Internet phone calls, and software that connects your home computer to your office.

Parents and retirees—Your choices as a consumer could be controlled by your Internet provider, steering you to their preferred services for online banking, health care information, sending photos, planning vacations, etc.

Bloggers—Costs will skyrocket to post and share video and audio clips—silencing citizen journalists and putting more power in the hands of a few corporate-owned media outlets.

Cap For Emergency Fund Grants Increases To \$5,000

In response to feedback from our community, we have made some important changes in our grantmaking practice: we decided to put our docket on hold for the coming years and have expanded other funds to create a more flexible and strategic grantmaking program.

In addition to our core funds—the OUT, Saguro, and Robeson—we are putting significant resources into our Reclaim Our Vote, Criminal Justice and Media Justice funds. These programs support proactive organizing in an environment of frequent policy changes that threaten our voting rights and civil liberties and pose new injustices that stretch our social justice grantees to their limit. We need to prevent pernicious policies before they happen if

our social justice groups are to stay focused and financially sound.

We have also increased the grants cap for our Emergency Fund to help grassroots groups address urgent political developments in their communities. A prime example is a grant made to the Border Action Network in Tucson, Arizona. The \$5,000 grant was made just three weeks after the passage of misguided and racist legislation, and it helped activists fight the deployment of National Guard troops and the construction of walls across Arizona. These walls would have required the bulldozing of hundreds of homes and businesses.

FEX Strategic Plan Strengthens Network, Social Justice Movement

In June, the FEX Board put in place a work plan to strengthen the FEX network, build a stronger social justice movement, engage more people in social justice philanthropy and become more strategic in leadership development, internally and within philanthropy. Among the 37 objectives of the plan, a few themes stand out:

1. We want to increase our support for and impact on social and racial justice. This theme guides the specific grantmaking initiatives that you’ve read about in this newsletter. However, it also includes engaging more new donors, along with current donor-advised fund advisors, in supporting these efforts. It also requires the network to more fully document all of our grantmaking to better assess our overall program directions and national impact. Increasing FEX network collaboration and coordination of grantmaking is a key component.
2. We want to strengthen the leadership of people of color, both within the network and in philanthropy as a whole. This includes increasing the number and influence of people of color as donors, as well as leaders in governance and grantmaking. As multi-racial organizations, becoming more intentionally anti-racist organizations is a vital part of our work.
3. To reach these goals, we need to keep increasing our resources and organizational strength, both as individual foundations and as a network. Through network events, acquiring new funding for outreach to donors and grantees, collaborating in special grantmaking initiatives, working with new member funds, and sharpening our own network standards and accountability, we will continue to grow as a force for social justice throughout the country.

Board Oversees New Strategic Plan: A Roadmap for Network and Staff

The Funding Exchange Board of Directors begins the new program year with a fresh start in three important ways: First, the board will implement and help oversee a new Strategic Directions Program Plan, which will guide our work over the next two to three years. The four key areas of work are: FEX Network Development, Movement Building, Philanthropic Organizing, and Strategic Leadership.

The national office staff under the guidance of interim directors Charlene Allen and Ron Hanft have worked diligently to coordinate activities more fully and to forge ahead on strategic plan initiatives that include grantmaking programs such as Reclaim our Vote and the Media Justice Fund. The strategic plan helps shape the daily work of the national office and keeps it on track to reach important visionary goals.

Second, the board has streamlined both the size of the board and the meeting schedule, as well as establishing a new committee structure to reduce board costs and move the work forward.

Third, the board now has the important task in October of interviewing final candidates and hiring a new Executive Director for the Funding Exchange. Our search committee, made up of board members, donors, grantees, and fellow travelers, worked hard over the summer to recruit a number of strong candidates.

National Network Funds Groups for Rebuilding, Reform in Gulf South

A year ago the Funding Exchange national office created its Katrina Relief Fund. Thanks to many donors, we provided grants for media activism, regional rebuilding of grantee organizations, and efforts for major policy and reform work. In addition, the national office collaborated with the National Network to provide grants that will address a wide array of troubling issues, many of which percolated to the surface in the aftermath of the recovery and early rebuilding stages in the Gulf region.

The Agape Foundation/Third World Majority San Francisco, CA \$5,000

The Agape Foundation is a non-profit public foundation which raises and distributes funds to groups working for nonviolent social change. Third World Majority (TWM) is a media training and production resource center run by a collective of young women of color and allies dedicated to developing new media practices that affect global justice and social change through grassroots political organizing. Together the Agape Foundation and TWM are supporting relief and media justice fact-finding efforts by journalists of color in the Gulf States.



Soil samples were taken following protocols by FEX grantee Louisiana Bucket Brigade (LABB).

Louisiana Bucket Brigade New Orleans, LA \$2,100

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade is an environmental health and justice organization promoting grassroots action in neighborhoods threatened by industrial polluters. The LABB supports community organizing for toxic cleanup in Chalmette, St. Bernard Parish, and other areas that have been hit hard by Hurricane Katrina. In addition, the LABB is fundraising for relief efforts in St. Bernard Parish.



Victoria Cintra, Director of the Biloxi office of Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance, Jackson, MS, (MIRA,) pickets Beau Rivage. Photo courtesy of Vicky Cintra/MIRA.

Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance Jackson, MS \$10,000

MIRA is a diverse membership-based alliance composed of a broad range of individuals and community groups committed to guaranteeing the human rights of immigrants and all workers in Mississippi. Funding from the Katrina Justice Fund will be used to support the salaries and benefits of the organizers headquartered in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Project South, Atlanta, GA \$7,500

Project South creates popular education to build grassroots leaders. They provide opportunities for organizers to learn and develop movement building tools. They strive to build a stronger movement for social and economic justice by connecting local organizing efforts to consciousness, vision, and strategy. In the aftermath of Katrina, Project South has created new relief centers that coordinate food, health, and media services. Project South is also educating activists, and marching on New Orleans for the "Right of Return" for evacuees.

Critical Resistance, Oakland, CA \$5,000

Critical Resistance (CR) is a national grassroots group that fights to end the prison industrial complex (PIC) by challenging the belief that policing, surveillance, imprisonment, and similar forms of control make our communities safer. Critical Resistance is coordinating a multi-pronged response in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Their effort includes a fact-finding delegation on the status of prisoners; a media campaign addressing amnesty for "looters," and rebuilding their own New Orleans-based Southern regional offices.

The Southern Center for Human Rights Atlanta, GA \$5,000

The Southern Center for Human Rights is a non-profit, public interest law firm dedicated to enforcing the civil and human rights of people in the criminal justice system in the South. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the SCHR conducted a preliminary study of evacuated pre-trial detainees. As a result of their alarming findings the SCHR worked to staff and mobilize an indigent defense system that will effectively and ethically represent the thousands of individuals who face criminal trials without assistance of counsel.

REJOICE, Inc. Resource Center for Families Kenner, LA \$10,000

Rejoice helps families get back on their feet and stay on their feet not only as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, but also through life challenges as well. Funding from the Katrina Justice Fund will be used to train displaced people in environmentally-sound clean-up and construction work to help them rebuild their own homes and provide them with a viable skill for ongoing employment in the region. REJOICE also provides stipends to students who carry out the organization's work.

Safe Streets/Strong Communities New Orleans, LA \$7,000

Safe Streets/Strong Communities mission is to transform the New Orleans Criminal Justice System into one that creates safe streets and strong communities for everyone, regardless of race or economic status. This group views Hurricane Katrina as an opportunity to organize a public safety and criminal justice system that provides safety from all forms of violence and crime and is democratic, fair and accountable.

Third World Newsreel/ "The People Left Behind" New York, NY \$9,800

Third World Newsreel is committed to the creation and appreciation of independent and social issue media by and about people of color in the U.S. and the communities of developing countries around the world. TWN is supporting "The People Left Behind" a recent documentary film reflecting upon the mostly African-American poor, sick, elderly, disabled, children and prisoners who suffered before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina.

People's Organizing Committee New Orleans, LA \$10,000

POC is composed of residents from the 9th Ward who came together to ensure that survivors play a central role in the rebuilding of their neighborhoods. Funding from the Katrina Justice Fund will be used for initiating a Job Training Program that will enable survivors themselves to rebuild their homes, neighborhoods, and community.



Volunteers of People's Organizing Committee, New Orleans, Louisiana, prepare for cleaning up housing project.

Pacifica Reporters Against Censorship/ Free Speech Radio, Berkeley, CA \$5,000

Free Speech Radio News is a daily half-hour progressive US radio newscast owned and managed by news reporters in the US and around the world. The reporters for Pacifica Radio formed FSRN when they went on strike in 2000. FSRN is heard on more than 100 stations, mostly in the US. In response to the unprecedented need for independent news reporting during and after Hurricane Katrina, FSRN continued to highlight the plight of endangered public service providers like the New Orleans Charity Hospital, which provides free medical healthcare to the poor.

Saving Our Selves Atlanta, GA \$10,000

SOS was created to provide relief, recovery and supportive service assistance to communities directly impacted by Katrina. Funds from the Katrina Justice Fund will be used to provide training in the areas of human rights for internally displaced persons, HASMAT and OSHA safety regulations, community rebuilding, disaster response, legal advocacy, collective bargaining, environmental justice, community development, human/civil rights, direct action and strategic planning.

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Reclaim Our Vote (ROV)

Three Rivers Community Foundation 2006 Grantees (Pittsburgh-Allegheny)

Allegheny County ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) \$15,500

ACORN will use their grant money to organize voters in low-income communities, providing voter education and registration to 31,000 individuals by October. They will also develop community leadership in low-income areas, and then conduct campaigns to educate and inform the general public of the community issues faced by low-income and elderly people in their neighborhoods. The community leaders will also meet with their state and city officials to discuss critical issues.

Black Political Empowerment Project \$10,000 (Highlighted on Page 8)

Just Harvest Education Fund \$15,500

Just Harvest will use the funds to support their "Just Vote!" Campaign, which is a non-partisan organizing campaign aimed at informing low-income people throughout Allegheny County about their stake in the electoral system, enabling them to make informed personal voting decisions, and registering and mobilizing them to vote. Their goal is to make elected officials accountable to low-income people with regard to their decisions on poverty-related public

issues. They will partner with at least 50 organizations, and plan to register 1,000 new voters by October. In addition, they will contact at least 4,000 new and infrequent voters to remind them to vote. They will compile statements and records of candidates on poverty-related issues for a voter guide to be distributed to 10,000 people before the November election.

Greater Pittsburgh Student Voices \$15,500

GPSV will use their funds to enhance their voter outreach and education drives through more emphasis on high school registration events and a voter education-focused Civics Fair, where students will compete with peer-education, service-learning, and media-production projects related to voting issues. They intend the Civics Fair to become an annual event. They have developed a network of more than 100 teachers and 43 high schools, and have forged collaborations with 10 organizations and offices.

The League of Young Voters Education Fund \$15,500

The League of Young Voters will utilize its funding to enhance their all-encompassing voter engagement strategy, including registration, education, mobilization, and election protection. They will use several nationally recognized models, including "guerrilla style" outreach and arts-based education models. Their goal is to register 2,000 new voters by the general election, specifically targeting ex-offenders and current inmates. They will also distribute 10,000 pieces of educational material and 10,000 voter guides.

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Interfaith Workers Justice Chicago, IL \$5,000

Founded in 1996, Interfaith Workers Justice is the leading national organization strengthening the religious community's involvement in issues of workplace justice. Since Hurricane Katrina, IWJ has been a strong voice calling for ethical standards for reconstruction. Funding from the Katrina Justice Fund will be used to support IWJ's New Orleans Workers' Rights Summer Internship Program.

Texas Environmental Justice and Advocacy Services Houston, TX \$4,580

TEJAS is an environmental justice organization that is committed to the promotion of environmental rights in communities of color and low-income populations within the Gulf Coast Region. Funds from the Katrina Justice Fund will be used in a community wide interview and to produce a video documentary and radio human interest features for use in an environmental advocacy campaign.

The Innocence Project New Orleans New Orleans, LA \$2,500

The Innocence Project New Orleans (IPNO) represents innocent prisoners serving life sentences in Louisiana and Mississippi and assists them with their transition upon release. IPNO is working to get clients' cases back on track and back in court after flooding damaged and displaced critical trial evidence. They continue to search for and recover evidence lost or damaged in the floods.

Grantee Spotlight:

The Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)

By Lloyd Martinez

Launched in 1986, the Black Political Empowerment Project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania seeks to increase awareness within the African American community of the need to be registered and the need to vote in **each and every election**. B-PEP's operational plan helps African Americans realize true political power. It mirrors the election cycle and features ongoing voter registration, organized debates between candidates and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) initiatives.



Tim Stevens, the Executive Director of B-PEP, addressing a rally in February, against HB 1318, a voting restriction bill which was later vetoed by then Pennsylvania Governor, Ed Rendell.

B-PEP advocates that those in political office move to expeditiously and effectively meet the needs, concerns and aspirations of the African American population they are elected to serve, and recognizes the pivotal and powerful connection between the consistently high voting patterns in the African American community and its impact on the political process.



With a grant from the Funding Exchange and the Three Rivers Community Foundation, B-PEP will implement a civic participation strategy that involves voter registration and GOTV campaigns in every sector of the African American community.

They will: 1) register 2,500 new voters and track their voter registration through the county voter database, follow up with these new voters with their GOTV campaign on election day; 2) conduct surveys related to voters' experiences and attitudes about voting, the persistent problems of violence in African American communities, and key issues they would like to address with elected officials.

In addition, the project will train and dispatch 50 Voter Registration volunteers to 25 community events and 10 local African American churches;

recruit and help train 20 Election Protection volunteers; and sponsor or co-sponsor and help to organize three to five candidate debates and forums with elected officials and public servants.

The voting project will also include B-PEP Moments or media releases carried on WAMO radio station and in the New Pittsburgh Courier that describe the responsibilities of different elected offices to help contextualize candidate messages. B-PEP will also introduce its work in public schools with a 4-Point Plan for Student Empowerment, which includes student governments in middle and high school as an integral part of the curriculum and the school community.

Not only does B-PEP partner with more than 60 local and statewide organizations, but also it collaborates with People for the American Way Foundation's election protection coalition in Allegheny County and the statewide Vote Pennsylvania campaigns. The work of these coalitions is some of the most sophisticated voter protection work in the country.



Please make a special contribution to the OUT Fund this year.