



2004 Annual Report

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Executive Summary

DC Vote exceeded expectations in 2004 and achieved successes both in the community and within the organization. Notably, we helped move the DC presidential primary to first in the nation and garnered international media attention. We worked with Representative Tom Davis (R-VA) to draft a bill addressing DC's lack of representation and testified at a landmark congressional hearing in June 2004.

Our educational video, *It's Time*, was shown live during prime time at the Democratic National Convention in Boston. DC Vote participated in more than 15 community events and lectured at area high schools and colleges. We organized and held a protest for Congress repealing DC's long-standing gun safety laws on Capitol Hill that was covered by CNN, FOX, AP, and numerous other media outlets. Although gun violence falls outside our mission, DC Vote determined that the repeal efforts presented an excellent opportunity to show our leadership in pro-democracy efforts and a great opportunity for earned media. Our Internet communications program led to a *Golden Dot Award* with an average of 10,000 unique hits a month to our Web site.

In engaging local volunteers and tapping national champions to further our mission, DC Vote continued to reach out in 2004 to end the denial of democracy. We are proud to report our efforts in working to bring American democracy to America's capital.

I. Outreach and Coalition Building

1. Community Engagement

In 2004, we continued to engage volunteers and supporters in our work and mission. More than 3,000 people have signed our petition this year and have been added to our regular mailing list and e-mail list.

We addressed high school and college students at the following venues:

- DC Vote and Black Youth Vote spoke to hundreds of students at the Friendship Edison Public Charter School
- School Without Walls Public Charter School
- Anacostia High School
- Georgetown Day School
- Maya Angelou Public Charter School
- The American University (multiple classes)
- The George Washington University
- Georgetown University
- Howard University
- University of the District of Columbia
- United Methodist Church Semester in DC Program

We also hosted information and recruitment tables at the following events:

- Mt. Pleasant Day Festival
- Capitol Pride 2004 Festival
- Washington DC Association of REALTORS® & the National Association of REALTORS® 2004 semi-annual meeting
- Consumer Health Foundation's 9th Annual Meeting & 1st Annual Speak Out
- NAACP regional & local meetings
- League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia meetings
- The Fourth Annual NCBCP Black Youth Vote Civic Leadership Conference
- LCCR's Annual Hubert Humphrey Awards Dinner
- Victory Fund
- Hip Hop Summit at the University of the District of Columbia
- DC Learns
- City Year (multiple times)
- UNIFEST
- Envirocitizen
- Adams Morgan Day 2004 Festival
- July 4th 2004 Palisades Parade
- The Green Festival 2004 – DC
- Barracks Row 2004 Festival
- Black Family Reunion Celebration
- Brookland Community 2004 Festival
- Takoma Park 2004 Festival
- Let My People Vote – an Interfaith Dialogue and Conference
- Metropolitan Washington Interfaith conference & meetings
- DC Young Suffragists (multiple educational and advocacy events)
- 14th and U Street Main Street Project
- Greater Washington Urban League - Get Your Vote On! Voter Education Campaign
- Rally at Iraqi Embassy
- Protest on Capitol Hill for the DC Gun Safety Law Vote

2. Utilizing Volunteers and Professional Assistance

This year we hosted 10 interns from area high schools, such as School Without Walls and See Forever, and colleges, including the American University, Howard University, Georgetown University and others. DC Vote interns were trained to take on leadership roles by collecting petition signatures, making telephone calls to involve the local community, organizing and participating in public rallies, testifying before the DC Council, making media calls and other tasks. We also continue to use the pro bono services and resources of a number of individuals and businesses.

3. Building the Coalition

DC Vote targeted non-political and Republican-leaning groups to expand our coalition. We met with DC City Councilmembers Schwartz and Catania to enlist their help in reaching out to DC Republicans. We followed up on their suggestions with calls to various GOP leaders, not all of which were successful. We did, however, add the following organizations to our coalition:

- Armenian National Committee – DC Chapter
- DC Hunger Solutions
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

As the DC FAIR Act gains momentum, DC Vote will aggressively seek partnerships and coalition relationships with Republican groups and individuals.

4. National Champions

In 2004, we worked successfully with coalition partners to involve the Democratic presidential candidates in our cause. Every Democratic presidential candidate went on record with a statement supporting DC voting rights. These statements are available on DC Vote's Web site. The Rev. Al Sharpton spoke about DC voting rights during his speeches at the Convention and around the country. We also reached out to congressional leaders, including the leadership of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Additionally, DC Vote worked to engage leaders in the business community. We were successful in bringing Cathy Hughes of Radio One and Television One, Comcast of the District, and others into the movement.

We will continue to seek opportunities to involve individuals and organizations with national profiles in the fight to pass the DC FAIR Act and in our annual Champions of Democracy fundraiser.

II. Advocacy

1. DC FAIR Act

Working together with the DC FAIR Act Coalition, DC Vote convinced Davis' staff to abandon the "retrocession-light" approach and provide DC with a true vote in the House by treating DC as if it were a state.

This was implemented through Coalition meetings with Davis and his staff to discuss the bill. The DC FAIR Act was perfected by clarifying that changes to the Electoral College would be postponed until 2008 and by inserting an inseparability clause that invalidated the entire bill if any provision is found unconstitutional.

DC Vote staff, board members, and interns testified at the DC City Council hearing on a resolution in support of the DC FAIR Act.

We helped convince Democratic House staff to support contracting with a conservative legal scholar to write an opinion for the Committee on Governmental Reform. We assisted Davis' staff to identify witnesses for the hearing, and we created a page on our Web site that chronicles the history of the hearing, testimonies, related documents and media that is more

comprehensive than any other site. Executive Director Ilir Zherka testified at the landmark hearing alongside two board members and the Honorable Kenneth Star, among others.

2. Lobby Rider

DC Vote has worked consistently to remove the rider that prohibits the DC Council from working to address disenfranchisement. Since this is part of the appropriations bill, we fought to have the rider removed in that bill and will fight to keep the rider out of the FY 2005 appropriations bill as well. We successfully lobbied the Senate to adopt our proposed language change in 2003 and 2004. To secure adoption in the House, we met with the new counsel for the Subcommittee to discuss the change, as well as organized a group of supporters to pack the Subcommittee hearing.

We successfully worked with the Mayor's office and Councilmember Jack Evans to ensure they protested the rider's inclusion during the Subcommittee hearing. To ensure additional support, DC Vote visited every Republican representative on the Subcommittee to lobby for adoption of the Senate language and secured their neutrality on the rider. Additionally, we successfully worked with the Mayor's Chief of Staff to get the Mayor to include in a letter to Majority Leader Tom DeLay a request to adopt the Senate language.

We understood it was crucial to inform the media on these developments, and we worked to secure *Roll Call*, the *Washington Post*, WTOP - Mark Plotkin, and NewsChannel 8 - to cover the hearing and the rider consideration.

The outcome was disappointing. Tom DeLay would not budge on this issue and the rider again was added to DC's appropriations bill and is once again law.

3. Protecting Democratic Rights

Our coalition partners were engaged in signing onto letters we sent to Congress and helped with our work on the DC gun safety laws repeal effort. Although gun violence is a topic outside our mission, the bills circulating in the Senate and the House of Representatives to repeal DC's gun safety laws were egregious in their goal of undermining DC's local democratic process. DC's local political leaders and a majority of DC's citizens support the gun safety measures and have done so for decades. DC Vote determined that the repeal efforts presented an excellent opportunity to show our leadership in pro-democracy efforts and a great opportunity for earned media.

DC Vote and the coalitions working to stop the gun safety law repeal effort in Congress were successful in ending threats by members of the Senate to add the gun safety law repeal bill to DC's appropriations bill. While the bill eventually passed in the House, DC Vote and our coalition partners generated a great deal of earned media on the issue. DC Vote accomplished the following on the gun safety law repeal:

- DC Vote sent a letter signed by 15 organizations in opposition to the bill to every senator and member of Congress

- DC Vote circulated an advocacy alert to 5,000 individuals resulting in hundreds of calls and letters to Congress as well as the media – local and national
- DC Vote worked with our coalition partners – Common Cause, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and League of Women Voters – to help them with their national advocacy alerts, which in turn resulted in thousands of calls and letters from around the country
- DC Vote appeared on local broadcast news programs and wrote an op-ed signed by Mayor Williams that appeared in the *Washington Post*
- DC Vote organized and held a protest on Capitol Hill that was covered by CNN, FOX, AP, and numerous other print, radio and televised media outlets

III. Communications

1. Earned Media

We are increasingly sophisticated in the strategies we pursue and the results we expect with earned media opportunities. In 2004, we saw several chances, including the DC primary and Tax Day, to draw media attention. Our work on the DC FAIR Act and Lobby Rider also increased our profile.

Our promotion of DC's first-in-the-nation presidential primary generated printed news articles in publications across the nation, Internet media, radio dialogue, and televised news stories locally, nationally and internationally.

Millions learned about DC's plight when our educational video, *It's Time*, aired during prime time at the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston. DC Vote produced a new educational video, *Bring Democracy Home*, which focused on the service and sacrifice given by District residents in times of conflict. The video aired on Comcast in Boston during the Convention, on Comcast of the District and DCTV, and it was viewed by thousands on our Web site.

DC Vote sent letters to all Massachusetts residents in our database and organized coalition partners to attend a 'Boston Tea Party' as part of the Democratic National Convention in Boston. The event generated local and national media coverage.

On Tax Day we employed new tactics by having an actor dressed as Uncle Sam. DC Vote staff, volunteers and the DC Young Suffragists engaged residents and commuters around the National Capitol Postal Station next to Union Station. Uncle Sam and his followers gathered more than 300 petition signatures, handed out hundreds of brochures, bumper stickers and newsletters, and we encouraged people to place a DC Vote sticker on their tax return. The event was covered in the local and national news.

2. Local Media Attention

In the past year, have appeared on the following news programs:

- NewsChannel 8 on numerous occasions to discuss DC's first-in-the-nation presidential primary, the DC Flag Bill, the Gun Safety Laws Repeal Bill and protest, the DC FAIR Act and committee hearing and our Tax Day rally
- *Roll Call* newspaper with an op-ed by our executive director and in many articles discussing DC's first-in-the-nation presidential primary, the Democratic National Convention, the House Governmental Reform Committee hearing, the first raising of DC's flag at Union Station since the plaza was created, the introduction of three bills dealing with DC's voting rights, the Organization of American States' findings that the U.S. Government violates international law with DC's disenfranchisement and Champions of Democracy
- Several international radio and television programs – the U.S. Virgin Islands, Al-Arabiya (largest Arabic television network), CNN Asia, Knack (Benelux television), Kurd National News (Iraq) and others
- Local television news stations and print media covered a majority of our media events throughout the year

Our external communications program was firmly in place this past year. We produced and mailed four newsletters, one for every quarter, to more than 4,000 people each time. We produced monthly bulletins and e-mailed more than 5,000 people announcing each one of them. We sent regular e-mail updates to our core supporters and periodic e-mail updates to various groups of supporters.

This year we expanded our marketing effort with both paid and pro bono advertisements in several publications: the *Washington Informer*, the *Washington Post Express*, the *Afro-American* and LCCR's Annual Gala Journal.

3. Increased Traffic on the Web site

DC Vote's Web site is the most comprehensive Internet site for information on DC voting rights. The traffic on our Web site has greatly exceeded our expectations with an average of 10,000 unique visits per month in 2004 (greater than 600 per day) – nearly four times the number for 2003. DC Vote's Web site earned the coveted "Golden Dot" award for civic excellence in an online advocacy campaign from the Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet of the George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management (other recipients have included MoveOn.org in another category). DC Vote's Web site will continue to be the best source of information on all topics related to the DC voting representation movement. Our membership base is integrated with our updated Web site, and we will continue to share our information with the general public.

IV. Financial Support

1. Foundations

In 2004, we made a concerted effort to secure additional foundation grants for general operating expenses and projects. We doubled the number of proposals submitted to achieve that goal. Considering the significant organizational and legislative momentum we had in 2004, several foundations decided to make new grants. The following independent foundations sponsored our general and project efforts in 2004:

- Carnegie Corporation
- Consumer Health Foundation
- Eugene & Agnus E. Meyer Foundation
- Herb Block Foundation
- Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen Foundation
- Public Welfare Foundation
- Trellis Fund

Additionally, DC Vote was selected by three charitable organizations to be highlighted as a good investment for donors:

- The Community Foundation in their Spirit of Giving Guide for 2004-2005, “Hear My Voice”
- Philanthropists for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) in their first report on sound donor investments
- TouchDC.org on their newly re-launched Web site as one of 55 organizations that are highlighted for charitable giving and volunteer opportunities

2. Membership Development

Our membership program serves primarily as a marketing and outreach effort, since the threshold amount is only \$20. The program also gives us an opportunity to identify people who are willing to join us as advocates and potentially give more money over time.

To engage a greater audience of individual donors at the \$20 level and up, we sent out solicitation letters to more than 25,000 people from a targeted list of those who had voted in DC’s first-in-the-nation presidential primary. We facilitated online donations and added a “donate” button to our monthly e-mail bulletins. We also included a donation envelope in each of our newsletters. As a result, we had nearly 600 new donors this year.

3. Corporate and Individual Donors

DC Vote's 2004 Annual Champions of Democracy reception was very successful. We projected that we would "stretch" ourselves and raise approximately \$120,000 and have 200 people attend the event. We exceeded our expectations. A diverse crowd of nearly 400 people attended the event with many new faces. Our total revenue was more than \$130,000. Corporate support doubled, as did the number of people giving \$5,000 and above. Revenue from the silent auction brought in more than \$8,000, almost double what we raised last year. In 2005, our goal is to increase our gross income from COD to at least \$150,000.

Conclusion

DC Vote capitalized on opportunities throughout 2004 to strengthen support for the DC voting rights movement. Outreach activities served as an essential component of communicating our message and mission. Whether educating students or collaborating with coalition partners, we succeeded in increasing visibility of and engagement in the issue. We also continued the push for legislation by working with the DC FAIR Act Coalition and testifying before Congress about DC representation. Stepping slightly outside our mission, we demonstrated our commitment to protecting democracy in DC with efforts to stop the repeal of DC's gun safety laws.

We took advantage of various media opportunities offered by the presidential election and are especially proud of our award-winning Web site, which garnered a significant increase in traffic in 2004 and continues to serve as the most comprehensive resource for DC voting rights information. Finally, our development program continued to grow with more foundation support and donor involvement. While not every objective was achieved, such as removing the lobby rider from the DC appropriations bill, DC Vote established itself as an effective organization leading the movement for representation in Congress.

Board of Directors for 2004

Daniel Solomon – Chair
Director, The Naomi & Nehemiah Cohen
Foundation

Johnny Barnes
Executive Director, ACLU – National
Capital Area

Cynthia Robbins – Vice Chair
Managing Director, See Forever

Lisa Bolden
President, HealthCapital Partners

Bruce Spiva – Treasurer
Partner, Tycko, Zavareei & Spiva LLP

Wade Henderson
Executive Director, Leadership Conference
on Civil Rights

Mark Schaefer – Secretary
United Methodist Chaplain, American
University

Aviva Kempner
Filmmaker and Writer

Lori Masters

Partner, Jenner & Block LLP

Kay Maxwell

President, League of Women Voters

Samuel McCoy

Consultant

Charles Miller

Partner, Covington & Burling

Maria Olivas

Senior Manager, External Affairs, Verizon
Washington, DC

Chellie Pingree

President & CEO, Common Cause

Sarah Pokempner

Social Worker & Community Activist

Kathryn Schmidt

Retired Liaison, League of Women Voters

Walter Smith

Executive Director, DC Appleseed

Joseph Sternlieb

Deputy Director, Downtown Business
Improvement District

Joshua Wyner

Chief Program Officer, Jack Kent Cooke
Foundation

Iir Zherka

Executive Director, DC Vote

DC Vote Coalition Partners**National Partners**

- Alliance for Justice
- Coalition to Stop Gun Violence
- Common Cause
- FairVote - the Center for Voting and Democracy
- Friends of the Earth
- Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR)
- League of Women Voters of the United States
- Mautner Project - the National Lesbian Health Organization
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- National League of Cities
- National Urban League
- People For the American Way (PFAW)
- U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG)

- United Auto Workers (UAW)
- USAction

Local Partners

- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of the National Capital Area
- American Jewish Committee
- Armenian National Committee - Washington, DC Chapter
- Council of Latino Agencies
- D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute
- D.C. Hunger Solutions
- D.C. NAACP
- DC Action for Children (DC ACT)
- DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, Inc.
- Downtown Coalition of Congregations
- Foundry United Methodist Church - Democracy Project

- Greater Washington Board of Trade
- Greater Washington Commercial Association of REALTORS (GWCAR)
- Greater Washington Urban League
- InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia
- Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO
- ROOT (Reaching Out to Others Together)
- So Others Might Eat (SOME)
- United Nations Association of the National Capital Area
- Washington, DC Association of REALTORS (WDCAR)
- Whitman-Walker Clinic
- YWCA National Capital Area

DC Vote Staff for 2004

Ilir Zherka - Executive Director
 Kimberly Bassett – Program Director
 Kevin Paul Kiger, MPH - Communications Director
 Chris Belisle - Development Associate
 Antonette Russell - Operations Manager