

# PIPER FUND

a proteus fund initiative

## Year-End Report 2018



Piper Fund is a donor collaborative that brings together individual donors and foundations to defend democratic institutions and diminish the influence of corporate and special interest money on our political and judicial systems. We champion work that fights for democratic ideals and institutions and gives a stronger voice to historically disenfranchised communities. We collaborate with funders and movement leaders to build community power, in order to create a healthy democracy that protects fundamental rights for all individuals.

## Overview

In the face of growing attacks on our democracy in many forms, Piper Fund recognizes that we must simultaneously protect our democracy while advancing reforms to strengthen it.

In 2018 we expanded and deepened our work to build the capacity of democracy advocates and leaders across the country, to engage effectively in both types of efforts simultaneously. We also added a new program area in response to efforts at the state and federal levels to criminalize or otherwise disincentivize public protest—one of the most basic rights and democratic norms.

Piper Fund plays a vital role within the democracy space—we are respected as a funder, thought leader, and strategic convener among state and national democracy advocates, with deep expertise in states stemming from our close connections to state and local groups. Piper is a trusted leader that identifies threats, investigates optimal solutions based on the field's strengths, provides grants to build infrastructure to fill the field's deficiencies, and mobilizes national groups and philanthropists to support reform efforts that foster civic participation of underrepresented communities and protect our democracy.

## Our Guiding Principles and Strategies

During this challenging period for our democracy, funders and groups on the ground have been looking to Piper for leadership to build collaborative strategies that protect our judiciary, our right to protest, and our democracy from the influence of corporate and wealthy special interests.

In order to achieve short-term results as well as long-term reform, we use multidimensional grantmaking to support issue campaigns, convenings, capacity and leadership-building, media and communications strategies, research, and input from experts to amplify the power of community-based organizations serving underrepresented communities within broad reform coalitions.



"Piper has supported our work to educate and empower communities that are often most disadvantaged by our money-driven political system."

Larry Stafford Jr.  
Executive Director, Progressive Maryland

### **Convening the Field**

We regularly convene grantees and other key stakeholders in the field for collaborative planning and learning, and to help build a stronger field.

**6 Convenings**  
**10 Webinars**  
**11 Funder Briefings**

### **10 Grants to National Organizations**

**to build capacity for  
state and local efforts**

### **Capacity and Leadership Building**

All of our initiatives include a field-building component to bolster the capacity and leadership of local advocates, to build support for policies that ensure a healthy democracy.

### **Building Infrastructure and Peer Networks**

We help drive strategy and build infrastructure for the field by assessing needs, offering strategic counsel, and connecting local leaders to national grantees and peer organizations for technical, communications, and organizing assistance.

### **Grantmaking in 23 States and DC**

### **3 National Networks** **Multiple local coalitions**

**for Money in Politics;  
Judicial Independence; and  
Protecting the Right to Protest**

### **Building Inclusive Coalitions**

We support locally-based and national coalitions to better connect civic engagement with building-community power, and to encourage participation of those who have historically been marginalized by an unfair democratic process.

## A New Piper Program: Protecting the Right to Protest



Dakota Access Pipeline protests in 2016. Photo: John Wathen.

As part of a larger effort to dismantle democratic norms at both the state and federal levels, over 85 bills have been introduced in 35 states since 2017 to disincentivize protest, with policies ranging from dramatically increased civil fines for protestors and increased criminal penalties for specific forms of protest, and even for organizations and individuals supporting protest.

These bills have disproportionately targeted communities of color and other marginalized communities. For example, bills raising criminal penalties for protesting on highways have targeted the Movement for Black Lives; bills preventing protest at “critical infrastructure” sites have targeted pipeline protestors, including Native American communities; and so-called “Campus Free Speech Bills” have targeted student movements against white supremacy. Already, bills have passed in several states, and proposed regulations in Washington, DC, would further silence dissent.

As efforts to silence people’s voices began to spread across the country, Piper Fund and its affiliate, the Piper Action Fund, leapt into action and established a rapid response fund to support the right to protest. In 2018, we funded organizations in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC, to engage communities around the importance of freedom of assembly; and commissioned messaging research to understand how the public views the right to protest.

## Building a Movement to Protect the Right to Protest

Piper and Piper Action Fund have led the creation of the **Protect Dissent Network**, uniting 19 national groups with expertise and resources to protect freedom of assembly, by developing infrastructure and tools to educate the public. The network brings together organizations from multiple fields—environmental justice, student and faculty rights, racial justice, legal, and more—to coordinate support for state groups. As a result of these efforts, state advocates have garnered significant press coverage, expanded community engagement, and built alliances among diverse local groups.

With Protect Dissent Network partners, Piper and Piper Action Fund are cosponsoring a multi-part webinar series to educate advocates on attacks on the right to protest, critical infrastructure bills, “Campus Free Speech” bills, attacks on dissent from a people-of-color lens, and corporate funding behind these anti-protest laws.

In addition to Piper Fund and Piper Action Fund, the network currently includes: American Association of University Professors, American Constitution Society, Amnesty International, Center for Media and Democracy, Climate Disobedience Center, Color of Change, CREDO Action, Defending Rights & Dissent, Democracy Initiative, Earthworks, First Amendment Center at the Freedom Forum Institute, Greenpeace, Law for Black Lives, National Lawyers Guild, Palestine Legal, Partnership for Civil Justice Fund, PEN America, and UnKoch My Campus.

## Mobilizing Philanthropy to Protect the Right to Protest in DC

In 2018, the Proteus Fund also mobilized philanthropy to speak out against new anti-protest regulations in Washington, DC. Proteus worked closely with the Wallace Global Fund to circulate a letter, **signed by 141 foundations and individual donors**, to oppose newly proposed National Park Service regulations. If implemented, these regulations would prohibit protests and vigils in front of the White House; make the permit process longer and costly; and add a financial burden on protesters for police barricades, trash removal, use of grass, turf, benches, poles, and walkways.

Piper’s rapid response support also enabled advocates to launch an online effort to oppose these regulations that would drastically curtail the freedom of assembly, and in under a week, over 140,000 comments were submitted to the federal government.



## Judicial Independence: Building Networks to Protect Our Courts

Attacks on state courts, often bankrolled by secret money sources, have appeared in many forms in recent years. In 2018, proposals were put forth in several states to impeach justices in retaliation for specific decisions; to reduce the role of state courts by ceding power to state legislatures; and to strip the courts' authority to hear redistricting cases via a resolution proposed by the American Leadership Exchange Council (ALEC). These assaults on our courts imperil the very foundation of our democracy—threatening to diminish the separation of powers and checks and balances.

As the assaults on the judicial branch have increased, the Piper Fund has evolved and expanded its work to meet these new threats. With Piper's support, state groups have been successful at preventing multiple attacks on judicial independence, and even at avoiding constitutional crises. Together with national partners, state coalitions have created a strategic approach to protect the judiciary as a whole.



Fair courts/fair maps mobilization in North Carolina.  
Photo: Jenny Warburg.

Piper's judicial independence work has forged a growing and diverse network, led by trained advocates who understand how these issues impact their local communities, the need to defend existing systems, and advocate for reform. Piper supports coalitions in states experiencing attacks where advocates have conducted extensive public education and organizing around the importance of judicial independence.

Additionally, in 2018 Piper grantees released several reports: the Brennan Center for Justice presented concrete reform proposals to curb special interests' influence on our courts; Common Cause Ohio identified the scope of the problem of money in judicial elections and practical solutions to remedy it; and ReThink Media released its first judicial independence messaging guide. Piper also [commissioned the Center for Media and Democracy](#) to conduct research into groups leading attacks on judicial independence in the states.

## Mobilizing the Judicial Independence Field

Piper Fund is a founding member of the **National Fair Courts Working Group**, which helps drive strategy for the field and includes: the American Constitution Society, Brennan Center for Justice, the Center for American Progress, Lambda Legal, National Institute on Money in Politics, National Council of Jewish Women, ReThink Media, re:power (formerly Wellstone Action), and the Piper Fund. Since its founding in 2016, the NFCWG meets regularly to discuss strategies to expand the judicial independence field and to provide strategic support to state-level groups.

In 2018, Piper launched a subgroup that meets regularly to review state courts facing attacks or moving towards positive reform. In addition to grantmaking, Piper has provided further assistance—both to grantees and organizations we don't fund—by assessing needs, offering strategic counsel, and connecting them to national groups.

## Long-Term Investment Pays Off in North Carolina



North Carolina experienced numerous attacks on judicial independence in 2018: the threat of impeachment of state supreme court justices; and a number of proposed amendments, including one that would have given the state assembly the authority to select judges, and one that would have eliminated gubernatorial authority to appoint the State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement.

Thanks in part to Piper's years of support and commitment, North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections was able to mobilize its growing network of allies, coalition and national partners, quickly and effectively. Many former governors and former state supreme court chief justices spoke out against these amendments. More importantly, North Carolinians demonstrated they understand the importance of defending their state courts' judicial independence—a majority of the public opposed these amendments.

Piper has been investing in North Carolina for over a decade. Our long-term grantmaking strategies towards leadership and capacity building, together with our short-term support for strategic communications, networking, and public education, have allowed for a vibrant judicial movement in North Carolina.

## Money in Politics: Advancing Democracy Reforms

Throughout 2018, Piper Fund provided resources to organizations to build coalitions and conduct public education in support of money in politics reforms, while our affiliate, the Piper Action Fund, funded legislative advocacy and outreach to underrepresented communities in support of democracy ballot measures.

This past year saw significant advances: DC's mayor signed off on a new public financing system for launch in 2020; voters in Baltimore overwhelmingly supported a new public financing system; and in Missouri, the public passed a measure to lower contribution limits and strengthened ethics rules. In New York City, voters approved a city charter amendment to revamp its campaign finance rules; and the public passed new disclosure requirements in Phoenix and Tempe, Arizona, and Portland, Oregon. Moreover, in Albuquerque, advocates certified sufficient signatures to place a Democracy Dollar initiative—modeled after the Seattle Democracy Voucher system—on the ballot in 2019.



Advocates celebrate vote in favor of a ballot measure towards Baltimore's new public financing program.

Piper Fund's program to advance state and local money in politics reform, which centers strategies and tactics on the engagement of underrepresented communities, is having real impact on greater civic participation across the country. Efforts by the Fair Elections Maryland coalition to build community power and to amplify the voices of leaders of color at the county level, for example, have built significant momentum for statewide reform. Over the past few years, advocates have systematically expanded public support for public financing programs in Montgomery, Howard, and Prince George's Counties as well as Baltimore City. Piper and Piper Action Fund's long-term investment in Maryland has helped create a diversified movement working across democracy and social justice issues.

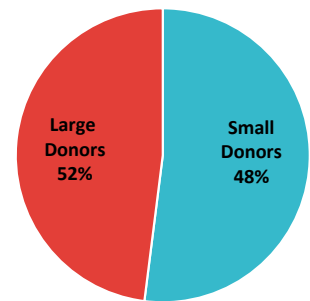


In Seattle, a broader engagement of community-based organizations cemented the path toward an innovative public financing program that has gained national attention.

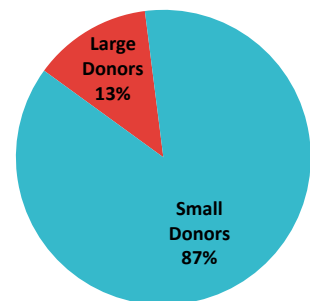
[Research commissioned by Piper](#) showed that Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program significantly increased the number of people contributing to municipal candidates and expanded participation in the city's elections among women, communities of color, young people, and low-income families. These successes have prompted advocates across the nation to explore similar programs in Albuquerque, Minneapolis, Chicago, Oakland, New York City, Austin, New Hampshire, and Cambridge, MA.

In 2018, Piper also funded coalition-building and public education in several other states including Oregon, New York, Florida, and New Hampshire, as well as sustained efforts to support the implementation and defense of existing policies in Maine, Connecticut, Arizona, California, DC, and Seattle, WA.

2013  
City Council & City Attorney Candidates



2017  
City Council & City Attorney Candidates



### Strategic Leadership: Unifying the Money in Politics Field

Piper has also partnered with a set of national groups to unify and strengthen the money in politics field. In late 2017 Piper engaged several national allies—Center for Popular Democracy, Common Cause, Demos, Every Voice, and ReThink Media—in conversations around how we could work together more closely to support state and local organizations and coalitions.

To that end, this group, now known as the **National Money in Politics Working Group**, crafted [a shared statement of values to guide our collaborative work](#), identified an initial set of states around which to partner, and in 2018 convened 50 organizational leaders from 19 states for a first-of-a-kind summit to build a stronger ecosystem for state-level reforms.

We are enthusiastic about this historic alignment around a model of locally-driven coalitions that can educate the public and build a more sustainable, representative movement dedicated to defending our democracy.

## Convening Philanthropy and Advocates to Build Networks and Strategy

In 2018, Piper expanded its convening role across all our program areas and served as a learning community for allied partners in philanthropy.

### Convening Funder Partners and Allies

Every year, we convene Piper Fund's donor partners and allies in philanthropy—in the spring and fall—to expand our collective knowledge of threats to democratic norms and institutions, as well as how we and our grantees can best mobilize and advance reforms that will strengthen civic participation. Our program director and program officers often participate as panelists throughout the year to engage funders, raise the profile of our issues, and bring in new support of Piper's initiatives among the philanthropic community. Some examples are:

Event	Panel and Speaker
<b>Philanthropy Massachusetts and Exponent Philanthropy</b> Boston, MA	<b>"New Political Landscape: Philanthropic Reaction to Challenges and Opportunities"</b> January 30, 2018  Melissa Spatz, Program Director
<b>Minnesota Council on Foundations</b> Minneapolis, MN	<b>"Public Policy Retreat: Human &amp; Civil Rights"</b> June 22, 2018  Kathy Bonnifield, Judicial Independence Program Officer
<b>Environmental Grants Association Annual Fall Retreat</b> Asheville, NC	<b>"Protecting the Right to Protest: A Critical Issue for Environmental Grantmakers"</b> October 1, 2018  Melissa Spatz, Program Director
<b>Democracy Alliance Fall Conference</b> Washington, DC	<b>"Activism Under Siege: Protecting Protest and the Right to Free Speech"</b> November 15, 2018  Melissa Spatz, Program Director
<b>Funders' Committee for Civic Participation 2018 Convening</b> Denver, CO	<b>"Scenario Planning to Protect the Courts" and "Money in Politics Working Group Lunch"</b> May 16, 2018  Kathy Bonnifield, Judicial Independence Program Officer; and Melissa Spatz, Program Director

## Protecting the Right to Protest

Together with a set of national partners, Piper and Piper Action Fund co-convened their first in-person meeting of the **Protect Dissent Network** in June 2018, to deepen the partnership among participating organizations and build infrastructure and strategy ahead of the 2019 legislative sessions. A second in-person meeting took place in December to identify likely threats to the right to protest for 2019 and reach consensus on priorities.

## Judicial Independence



Fair Courts Convening participants, January 2018.

Early in 2018 we partnered with re:power (formerly Wellstone Action Fund) to host the annual **Fair Courts Convening** for national and state advocates from over 20 states, which enabled networking, peer learning, evaluation, sharing of new messaging research, and discussion of tactics to protect judicial independence.

We also supported regional convenings, including a training for advocates to create tactical maps for defending judicial independence through a human rights frame, via a grant to the Center for Victims of Torture and Kansas Values Institute, which leads the Kansans for Fair Courts coalition.

In June, Piper grantees North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections and the Institute for Southern Studies hosted their first **Southern Fair Courts Convening**, aimed at increasing the number of southern states groups fighting for judicial independence.

## Money in Politics Reform



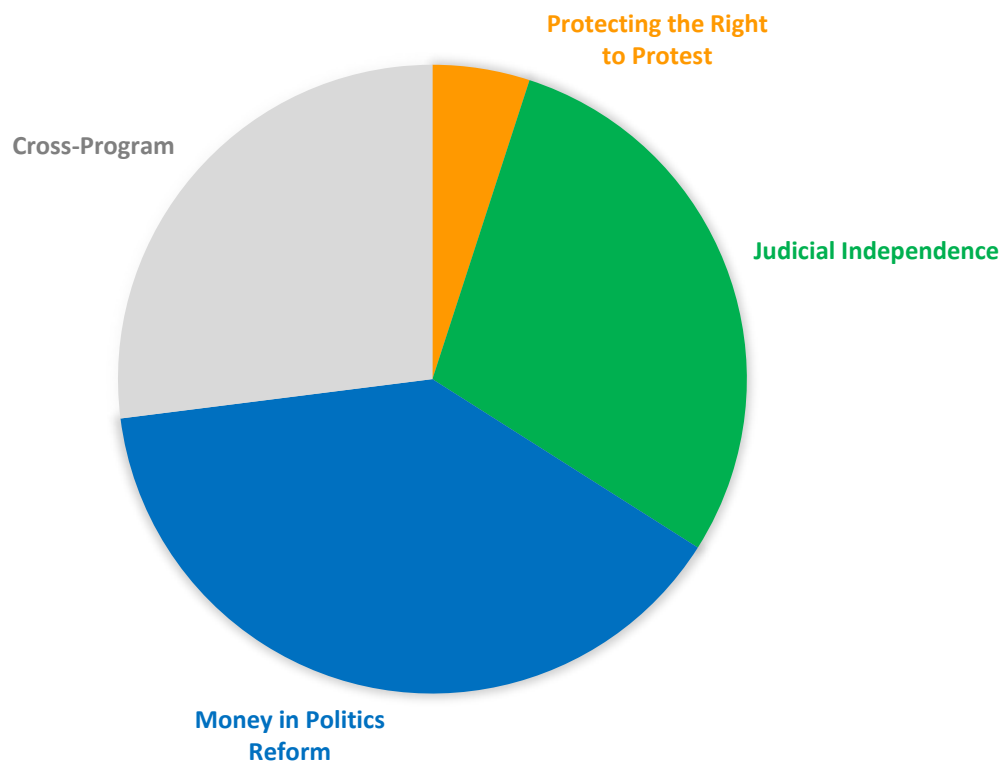
Money in Politics National Convening participants, March 2018.

In March of 2018, members of the **Money in Politics National Working Group**—a coalition of the Center for Popular Democracy, Common Cause Education Fund, Every Voice, Piper Fund, Demos, and ReThink Media—collaborated to organize a day-and-a-half convening, specifically focused on money in politics. The convening brought together advocates from 19 states for an intensive day of workshops designed to build their skills and provide an entry point for people-of-color-led organizations, new to money in politics issues, to learn from other leaders in the field.

The meeting provided both formal and informal networking opportunities, including an opening reception and dinner, small group discussions, as well as a closing dinner. Attendees participated in hands-on workshops addressing a range of competencies, intended to give organizational leaders increased capacity, skills, and relationships to launch and lead reform efforts in their own communities.



## 2018 Grantmaking



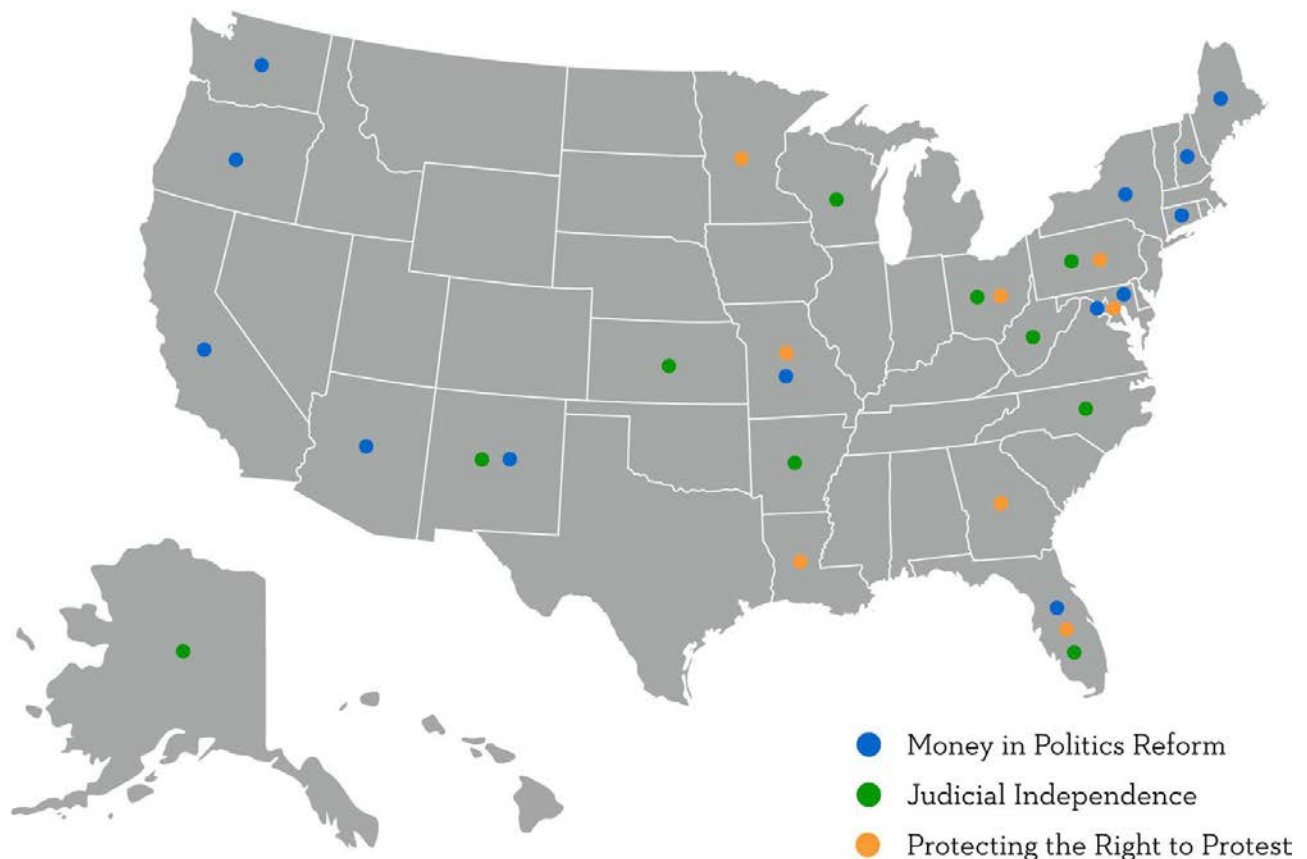
The Piper Fund awarded grants totaling \$2,455,900 in 2018:

- Money in Politics: \$715,100. These funds supported public education, research, coalition-building, convenings, and communications about money in politics.
- Judicial Independence: \$958,600. These funds supported public education, research, coalition-building, convenings, and communications about judicial independence, primarily impacting state courts.
- Right to Protest: \$122,200. These rapid response grants supported state groups to engage their communities around the importance of protecting freedom of assembly.
- Cross-Program: \$660,000. These funds supported field-building to bolster the capacity of local advocates across our multiple program areas.

Through grants to 10 national organizations, Piper also helped bolster the capacity of local advocates to achieve, implement, and protect policies that ensure a healthy democracy.

Piper Fund's separate 501(c)(4) affiliate, the Piper Action Fund, also awarded \$909,000 in grants in 2018, to support state legislative campaigns and work around ballot measures, primarily in support of money in politics reform.

## Our Grantees for 2018



# PIPER FUND

a proteus fund initiative

### ALASKA

Justice Not Politics Alaska Civics Education Fund

### ARIZONA

Arizona Advocacy Foundation

### ARKANSAS

Arkansas Public Policy Panel

### CALIFORNIA

ACCE Institute

Common Cause Education Fund CA

### CONNECTICUT

Common Cause Education Fund CT

Connecticut Citizen Research Group

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Center for Working Families Fund (Tides Foundation)

Partnership for Civil Justice Fund

### FLORIDA

Dream Defenders (Tides Foundation)

New Florida Majority Education Fund

Progress Florida Education Institute

### GEORGIA

ProGeorgia State Table

Southern Center for Human Rights

**KANSAS**

Kansas Values Institute

**LOUISIANA**

Louisiana Bucket Brigade

**MAINE**

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

**MARYLAND**

Common Cause Education Fund MD

Maryland Public Interest Research Foundation

Progressive Maryland Education Fund

**MINNESOTA**

MN350

**MISSOURI**

NAACP Collective Action Fund (Tides Foundation)

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Coalition for Open Democracy

**NEW MEXICO**

Common Cause Education Fund NM

**NEW YORK**

Public Policy and Education Fund of New York

**NORTH CAROLINA**

North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections

**OHIO**

Buckeye Environmental Network

Ohio Voice

**PENNSYLVANIA**

Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future

League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Education Fund

**WASHINGTON**

Washington Community Action Network Education and Research Fund

Win/Win Network

**WEST VIRGINIA**

Ohio River Valley Environmental Coalition

**WISCONSIN**

Common Cause Education Fund WI

**NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Center for Popular Democracy

Center for Victims of Torture

Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action

Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (NEO Philanthropy)

Institute for Southern Studies

Public Citizen Foundation

ReThink Media

Rockwood Leadership Institute

re:power (formerly Wellstone Action Fund)

William J. Brennan Jr. Center for Justice

# PIPER ACTION FUND

a proteus action league initiative

## ARIZONA

[Arizona Advocacy Network](#)

## FLORIDA

[Mi Familia Vota](#)

## MAINE

[Maine Citizens for Clean Elections Action](#)

## MARYLAND

[Common Cause MD](#)

[MaryPIRG Citizen Lobby](#)

[Progressive Maryland](#)

## MISSOURI

[Jobs with Justice Ballot Fund](#)

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

[Open Democracy Action](#)

## NEW MEXICO

[Organizers in the Land of Enchantment](#)

## NEW YORK

[Citizen Action of New York](#)

[Community Voices Heard Power](#)

[Long Island Progressive Coalition](#)

[New York Communities for Change](#)

## OREGON

[Common Cause OR](#)

## WEST VIRGINIA

[Ohio River Valley Environmental Coalition](#)

## NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

[Center for Popular Democracy Action Fund](#)

[ReThink Media Advocacy \(Tides Advocacy\)](#)