

## Memorandum

To: Aryeh Neier  
From: Bill Vandenberg  
Re: Seize the Day Fund Docket  
Date: April 13, 2009

Enclosed are five write-ups recommending grants through our Seize the Day Fund. The recommendations include \$1.37 million, of which \$1.07 million will come directly from the Seize the Day Fund and \$300,000 from co-funding with other U.S. Programs funds. One additional write-up – the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force – will be included in the Equality and Opportunity Fund's docket although this recommendation, too, is for the grant to be co-funded with Seize the Day support.

As you know, we are working to move Seize the Day funds into the field as quickly as possible so that recommended grantees can act with the strategic mobility and speed required to take advantage of this moment. Following your approval of the first round of Seize the Day Fund recommendations on March 20, we sent three recommendations to you on April 6, and would be happy to answer any questions you have about those recommendations. We now enclose five additional Seize the Day Fund write-ups, and have scheduled time this Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, to discuss your feedback and questions on this docket, summarized below:

### **Ensuring equity in the economic recovery**

#### **PolicyLink, \$500,000, 1 year general support**

To support PolicyLink's work to cover three principal areas of activity. First, PolicyLink will work to ensure implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) addressing the particular needs of low-income people, women, and people of color. It will seek to shape the distribution of recovery funding that federal agencies distribute by competition and advocate for the provision of additional equity guidance to federal agencies, states, and localities on how recovery dollars should be spent. Second, it will build a field strategy to shape implementation of ARRA funding by providing technical assistance, training, and re-granting to state and local organizations. Third, it will strengthen a national network of nearly 2,500 local equity organizations called "EquityNow" through the development of online resources, mapping of the equity field, and convenings.

### **Expanding public participation in policy efforts/ Equity in the economic recovery**

#### **Jobs with Justice Education Fund, \$70,000, six months project support for the Inter-Alliance Dialogue**

To support an upcoming convening and strategy session for the Inter-Alliance Dialogue, a dynamic new partnership of five national, people of color led grassroots organizing networks that seek to advance an urban rooted agenda to shift the federal debate on economic recovery, structural inequality, and green equity issues. The networks include

the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Jobs with Justice, National Day Laborers Organizing Network, National Domestic Workers Alliance, and the Right to the City Alliance (an OSI grantee) and collectively represent more than 100 local and state social justice organizations and hundreds of thousands of activists in low-income and people of color communities in over 25 states. Through a unique partnership with the Institute for Policy Studies, the Inter-Alliance Dialogue seeks to address racial indicators as a central benchmark for how the economic recovery impacts education, employment, housing, and transportation. It will also focus on labor law and social policy exclusions that leave day laborers, domestic workers, and immigrant workers unprotected in the economy.

### **Expanding public participation**

#### **Rockefeller Family Fund, \$300,000, 1 year project support for the Voter Registration Modernization Project**

To support the Rockefeller Family Fund's new program to transform our nation's voter registration process through the creation of an automatic or universal system of registration. This opportunity builds not only on the 2008 election experience but also on a long and well-documented history of voter registration problems in this country. To assist in these efforts, RFF has created a program fund dedicated to the successful implementation of what advocates are calling the Voter Registration Modernization Project (VRM). As the fund's administrator, RFF will provide strategic advice and assistance with the Project's architecture and approach; monitor the groups' activities and work plans; review their budgetary needs; work with them to determine program funding necessary to facilitate their efforts; and help recognize and seize emerging opportunities to better develop policy solutions, educate, and inform the public and policy officials about issues in this fast-moving policy arena. This grant would include \$100,000 in Seize the Day Fund support along with \$200,000 from the Transparency and Integrity Fund.

### **Innovations in advocacy/ Advancing the hardest issues: Criminal justice**

#### **League of Young Voters Education Fund, \$250,000, 1 year project support for the Citizen Engagement Laboratory and Color of Change**

To support the Citizen Engagement Lab (CEL) and its project, Color of Change (CoC), an Oakland, CA based national online and innovative research and development organization that was established to enhance civic engagement and amplify the advocacy voice of people of color communities. Using the internet, Color of Change amplifies the voices of community members to make government more responsive to the concerns of African-Americans and to bring about positive social change. CoC members have been an influential voice on inequality in the criminal justice system, drawing international attention to the Jena Six and spotlighting the Oscar Grant shooting by the Oakland police, among others. Citizen Engagement Laboratory is currently researching the viability of a new online organizing initiative to advance criminal justice reform while Color of Change is planning ongoing campaigns on voting rights, media bias, and the 2010 Census. OSI support will allow CEL and CoC to continue to build and activate their

membership, deepen their work on criminal justice reform, and explore the development of a new Latina/ o community online organizing project.

### **Innovations in advocacy**

#### **ProgressNow Education, \$250,000, 1 year general support**

To support ProgressNow Education, a fast expanding Denver, CO based national organization that was founded in 2003. Through its 12 state affiliates, hundreds of community-based partner organizations, and 1.5 million online members, ProgressNow Education inspires public participation and coordinates activism at the local and state levels. At the grassroots level it provides web-based tools and trainings to activists and organizations to help them more effectively communicate, organize, and advocate around issues of importance, including economic inequality, tax and budget policy, immigrant rights, and climate change. In addition to the online tools it provides, ProgressNow Education combines civic engagement, earned media placement, and coalition building activities to build the capacity of community based organizations so that they may better shape the issue landscape at the local, state, and national levels. OSI funding support would assist ProgressNow Education in building state capacity to impact federal level issues through the Unity 2009 coalition and expand its criminal justice and drug policy reform work. This grant would include \$150,000 in support from the Seize the Day Fund and \$100,000 from the Democracy and Power Fund.

### **Advancing the hardest issues: structural inequality**

#### **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**

To support the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, a recommendation that is included in the Equality and Opportunity Fund's first docket of 2009. EOF had already planned to recommend renewed general support funding to continue to strengthen the Task Force's leadership on LGBTQ rights at the state and federal levels. With additional Seize the Day funding, the Task Force will lead a collaborative effort involving leading LGBTQ rights and civil rights groups to advocate for non-legislative changes that can be made at the federal executive branch and agency levels to eliminate the structural barriers that prevent LGBTQ people from enjoying equality and opportunity in various spheres of public life. This grant would include \$180,000 in Seize the Day Fund support and \$175,000 from the Equality and Opportunity Fund.