

Transparency and Integrity Fund

October 27, 2009 Docket

Summaries of Grant Recommendations

Sixteen grants totaling \$3,395,000

Transparency: Access to Information

Information Access, Design and Regulation

Center for Responsive Politics

General support, \$350,000 over two years

The Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) is the pre-eminent source for non-partisan and accessible data on money in politics. CRP acquires, categorizes, codes, and disseminates information on money in politics. Its primary (and best known) work involves tracking individual federal campaign contributions: cleaning up data, categorizing and coding donors by industry and interest group, and building easily maneuverable databases. CRP also tracks and codes campaign and lobbying expenditures and monitors the revolving door between the lobbying industry and the federal government. In the past twelve months, CRP has made its data open source allowing for broader use of campaign finance data but also eliminating sources of income that once helped finance its operations. This renewal grant would provide important support for CRP as it develops new sources of funding, adding to and extending a grant made to the organization last year (and bringing its funding level into parity with the National Institute for Money in State Politics, its unrelated state level counterpart).

New America Foundation

Project support, \$200,000 over two years

The New America Foundation's Wireless Future Program promotes a more fair and efficient use of the airwaves in order to unlock the full potential of the emerging wireless era for everyone. This program seeks to ensure open spectrum policies and wireless community broadband policies that serve the public interest as the nation transitions to a digital era. The program also seeks to reverse the ongoing trend toward privatization of the public airwaves and to expand public access to an unlicensed spectrum "commons," thereby facilitating nonprofit community wireless networks and unmediated wireless Internet access. The Wireless Future Program also serves as a resource center for both national and local groups on a range of issues involving the airwaves and wireless communications policy.

Taxpayers for Common Sense

General support, \$150,000 over two years

Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS) is a non-partisan budget watchdog serving as an independent voice for American taxpayers. Its mission is to achieve a government that spends taxpayer dollars responsibly and operates within its means, working with individuals, policymakers, and the media to increase transparency, expose and eliminate wasteful and corrupt subsidies, earmarks, and corporate welfare, and hold decision makers accountable. TCS is participating in the Bailout Watch coalition funded through the Seize the Day Fund, and also

works as part of the Coalition for an Accountable Recovery and other Right-to-Know organizations.

Media Access Project

General support, \$300,000 over two years (tie-off)

Media Access Project (MAP) is a non-profit law firm and advocacy organization that works on behalf of the public to promote freedom of expression, independent media, and low-cost, universal access to communications services. From leading efforts to convince the FCC to create the Low Power FM radio service to being among the first to advocate for open access and network neutrality, MAP has provided critical policy leadership and counsel to the public interest and media reform community. As new media and communication platforms have developed, MAP has fought to assure the public's right to access is institutionalized and protected. MAP works to ensure that current and future media and telecommunications technologies promote, and do not impede, democratic values.

Media and Democracy Coalition

General support, \$100,000 over two years (tie-off)

The Media and Democracy Coalition is a collaboration of over two dozen local and national organizations committed to promoting open and equal access to a democratic media system that serves the public interest. The Coalition facilitates collaboration among diverse organizations; helps build organizational capacity to increase the number of groups working to reform our media landscape; shares information and resources; and creates opportunities for joint mobilization on key media reform policies. The Coalition promotes diversity of media ownership and content, and places a high priority on bridging the digital divide by guaranteeing that Internet access is fast, affordable, and accessible to everyone.

Journalism

American Journalism Review

Project support, \$200,000 over one year (special one-time funding from SOF)

The American Journalism Review (AJR) will develop a year long series of articles that examine the impact of the current crisis in U.S. journalism. AJR will focus on several areas of particular interest to OSI, including the effects of the declining volume of news coverage of key federal agencies and departments; state and local governments; state delegations in D.C., as well as the status of foreign news coverage in the U.S.

Media Consortium

Project support, \$200,000 over two years

Founded in 2006, the Media Consortium is a network of leading progressive independent journalism organizations focused on making connections, building a media infrastructure, and amplifying the voices of progressive journalists in the United States. Over the past year, the Media Consortium has done much to build community and greater strength among progressive media outlets, and is creating a cooperative infrastructure that supports a sustainable future for journalists. This grant will support the Media Consortium's general activities, with a special focus on a new journalism innovations lab.

Sunlight Foundation

Project support, \$300,000 over two years

The Sunlight Foundation is in the vanguard of groups developing user-friendly technical tools that serve watchdog organizations, investigative journalists and citizens seeking to better understand the impact of money on Congressional policymaking. This grant would enable the Sunlight Foundation to continue its journalist training program, which teaches reporters how to improve their news coverage by using its transparency tools. These tools include online searchable databases that provide easy access to a wide range of government information, including federal lobbying data, the personal investments of members of Congress, legislative data, and information concerning federal contracts, grants, and subsidies, and earmarks.

Integrity: Government Accountability through Support for Key Institutions

Broad and Equal Access to the Ballot

Demos

Project support, \$250,000 over one year

Demos is a non-partisan public policy research and advocacy organization whose activities encourage high levels of electoral participation and civic engagement. The recommended grant would be split evenly between Demos' Public Agency Voter Registration (PAVR) project and Public Works project. PAVR seeks to close the gap between low and high-income citizens registering to vote by implementing Section 7 of the National Voter Registration Act (also known as the Motor Voter Act) in public assistance agencies within target states (e.g., Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia). The Public Works project seeks to create a sustainable, widespread understanding of and support for the essential roles of government and is being recommended by the Transparency and Integrity Fund as part of its state-based strategy.

Independent and Diverse Judiciary

University of Minnesota (Infinity Project)

Project support, \$160,000 over two years

This recommended grant would provide renewal support to the Infinity Project, a coalition of lawyers, activists, educators, and others concerned with bringing greater diversity to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. Since OSI provided start-up funding to the Infinity Project in 2008, the Project has been deeply influential in shaping the public conversation about the federal courts and the need for diversity on the bench in the Midwest. (The 8th Circuit includes Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, and Arkansas). Infinity now has active members in all 8th Circuit states except Nebraska and is doing more intensive work in Minnesota, Missouri and Arkansas, states in which judicial openings currently exist.

Lambda Legal

Project support, \$260,000 over two years (\$200,000 from TIF; \$60,000 from EOF)

This recommended grant would provide renewal support to Lambda Legal's *Fair Courts Project*. The project engages LGBTQ and judicial independence organizations to educate citizens about the importance of fair courts to democracy. Over the past two years the project has worked in Iowa to defend the Iowa courts from attack in anticipation of and following the state Supreme Court's recognition of same-sex marriage rights. Lambda Legal has been a valuable and active member of the Justice at Stake Judicial Diversity Working Group, bringing an often overlooked perspective and strategic savvy to developing efforts to advance judicial diversity around the country.

Alliance for Justice

General support, \$250,000 over two years (tie-off)

This recommended grant would provide a final two years of funding for the Alliance for Justice, a long-time grantee of U.S. Programs for its work on judicial nominations. AFJ is one of three co-chairs of the Coalition for Constitutional Values, which has made great progress, over the past two years, in reconfiguring its advocacy strategies to center discussions of judicial nominations in constitutional and legal values. AFJ provides essential research support to Coalition members as well as a wide range of non-profits concerned with the future of the Federal judiciary.

Society of American Law Teachers

General support, \$250,000 over three years (tie-off)

This recommended grant would provide a tie-off grant to SALT. OSI funded SALT as part of the Progressive Legal Infrastructure portfolio to undergo a strategic planning process. That process resulted in a major restructuring of SALT's organizational structure (shifting from an all-volunteer to a professional model) to allow for greater engagement in, and influence on, issues of civil rights and civil liberties both within and outside the legal academy. A three year general support grant followed. In the past few years, SALT members have been very active in fighting attacks on affirmative action in a number of states. SALT is now engaged in rethinking the intersection of law, regulation, and economic theory in legal academic work and the law school classroom. As SALT no longer fits within the restructured U.S. Programs funding priorities, but because its current (more costly) organizational structure resulted from OSI support and encouragement, we are recommending a three-year tie-off grant to allow SALT to find other sources of support without seeing their recent reorganization result in organizational collapse.

State and Local Strategies

MAPLight.org

Project support, \$200,000 over two years

MAPLight.org uses technology to increase government transparency, specifically by using data to illuminate the connection between campaign donations and legislative votes. MAPLight recently broke new ground in the field by focusing on the municipal level with the launch of "MAPLight.org Los Angeles". MAPLight.org Los Angeles reveals campaign contributions to Los Angeles City politicians, providing citizens with key campaign finance data including

industry, interest group, company and individual campaign contributions to Los Angeles elected officials. MAPLight.org is developing this and other tools that will enable organizations and individuals to include customized money and politics data on websites, on the bills, legislators, and issues of greatest relevance to them. This grant would enable MAPLight.org to begin to expand its groundbreaking transparency work to several states and cities of particular interest to TIF, including Texas, Louisiana (specifically New Orleans), Wisconsin, and Maryland.

Wisconsin

Institute for Wisconsin's Future

Project Support, \$150,000 over two years

Since its first grant from OSI last October, the Institute for Wisconsin's Future has become deeply involved in efforts to reform Wisconsin's big money judicial elections. The Institute is currently organizing a major event on the need for public financing with the League of Women Voters. The Institute has also been working with state-based businesses to create a non-partisan alternative to the highly-partisan Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, which has played the most significant role in ramping up the corrosive campaigning that has undermined judicial integrity in that state.

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign

Project Support, \$75,000 over one year

A wide variety of advocates and experts currently point to Wisconsin as the best short-term hope for judicial selection reform. Three recent Supreme Court elections marked by the influence of big money make reform a strong possibility. The state legislature is currently close to passing a bill that would create a public financing system for judicial elections. We are recommending a renewal grant to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign to engage in public education about the need for reform of judicial selection processes and, if the current legislation passes, engage in a campaign to build public involvement in the tax "check-off" provision that will fund future court elections.