

In 2005-2006, ACORN plans to partner with other progressive voter engagement organizations to purchase and maintain a common voter file. A common voter file will maximize the resources of the progressive voter outreach community, and enhance ACORN's work by improving our effectiveness and efficiency.

With a common voter file, ACORN will:

- Coordinate voter outreach and mobilization work with other progressive organizations to maximize the power of our resources
- Target our voter contact where we will get “the most bang for our buck.”
- Build a long-term base of progressive voters by collecting and maintaining information on contacted voters from partnering organizations, and by developing low-propensity voters into habitual voters.

We will do this by integrating the value of the voter file into the work that we already do.

### **Neighborhood Organizing**

With a voter file, we will be able to compose walk lists and call lists to recruit members, identify potential leaders, and mobilize community members around events. The voter file will also help us to integrate our issue work with electoral engagement work by giving the members the tools to start thinking about their community in terms of precincts and political power, and to use political power building – increasing the number of community members registered to vote, for instance – as a strategy to winning on their local issues. The voter file helps them to identify and tap into their existing networks, in addition to being a source of new contacts to move on the chapter's issues, events, and, potentially, elections.

### **Membership Canvass**

With the Membership Canvass, we are looking to build a large base of voters we can move on issues and elections that affect low- and moderate-income people. With a voter file, we will be able to target the neighborhoods we work in more effectively, with a particular eye on those neighborhoods where we can “get the most bang for our buck” – neighborhoods likely to be supportive of our issues, but where extra voter education and mobilization work would have a dramatic impact on turnout in strategically chosen legislative and Congressional races. Using precinct walk lists will enhance the canvass; the canvasser knows if the resident is registered, how often the resident has voted in past elections, the resident's name, and other demographic data that helps them to tailor the canvass message to the individual. In addition, we will be able to take the voter information gathered from this mass canvass and add it to the voter file, in order to enhance the work of partnering progressive organizations.

### **Precinct Leader Action Network**

A voter file will greatly enhance the neighborhood-based Precinct Leader Action Network (PLAN), a network of precinct teams working, on a year-round basis, to train and mobilize local citizens around issues that are of day-to-day importance and engage them in electoral politics. PLAN leaders will use the voter file to generate walk lists and call lists for general voter outreach, registration, education, and mobilization around issues, elections, and events, in addition to member and volunteer recruitment. The voter file will also give us the ability to look at precincts, neighborhoods, and individual streets strategically, to determine communities and voters where our registration and mobilization efforts will give us the most bang for our buck. Again, the information we collect will be added to the common voter file to benefit the efforts of partnering organizations.

Our lead partners in obtaining a voter file include Project Vote, USAction, and Clean Water Action. The coalition will acquire the voter data, enhance it with demographic and consumer information, including income, housing, educational background, ethnicity and employment, in addition to phone number and email addresses. The coalition will provide data management services for progressive voter engagement organizations and coordinate the long-term maintenance.

While many progressive organizations have been interested in efforts to acquire a voter file, most of the projects being discussed in the voter participation community are too ambitious to be in place in the short term, and a program that starts in the 2005 is a critical need to fill.

Initially, we would not acquire files for all jurisdictions but instead would focus on states where partner organizations have strength and/or interest for the 2005-2006 election cycle. The file would be built in several stages: a 2005 test phase with 3 or 4 states, a 2006 mid term stage growing from 2005 and adding geographies of interest and then a full build out for 2007 and beyond. The states to be included in each stage are as follows:

**2005 Test Phase**

New Jersey  
Virginia  
Ohio  
Florida

**2006 Mid Term Phase**

Michigan  
Arizona  
Pennsylvania  
Washington  
Minnesota

**2007 and Beyond**

Arkansas  
Georgia  
Wisconsin  
Oregon  
Nevada  
New Mexico  
North Carolina  
Maryland  
Delaware  
Other States and Congressional Districts as Requested

A common voter file for progressive voter engagement organizations is critical to the progressive movement. It will allow progressive organizations to use their resources more efficiently – both by cutting down the cost of maintaining separate voter files, and by coordinating the work of individual organizations to reduce duplicated efforts. By conserving resources, organizations will be able to spend their money where it matters most – on voter contact. In addition, the voter file will allow individual organizations to target areas and particular voters where their specific organization gets the most bang for its buck – where the organization's message and capacity make the most difference in turnout increase. Organizations will also be able to tailor and personalize their message to individuals to increase the effectiveness of their work. Finally, and

most importantly, high-quality maintenance of the voter file and collecting voter data from the work of the partnering organizations will contribute to building a progressive voter base to move the progressive politics in the future.