

THE PEOPLE'S LOBBY



RECLAIMING DEMOCRACY
TO PUT PEOPLE AND PLANET FIRST

OUR PURPOSE:

A People and Planet First Agenda

In Illinois, a lot of what Donald Trump is attempting is not new. For years, we've had elected officials at multiple levels of government enriching their friends at the expense of others, slashing the safety net, and attacking communities of color and low-income communities at every opportunity. The People's Lobby is working to transform our state through a multi-faceted strategy that combines escalating people-powered public actions and grassroots organizing in elections up and down the ballot to win on issues ranging from ending mass incarceration to higher wages.

We believe the well-being of people, the needs of our communities and the health of our planet should be the top priorities of our elected representatives. The overwhelming influence of money in politics – money from extremely wealthy individuals and big corporations – ensures that our elected officials put their interests before ours. Too often, that same 1% uses racism and other oppressions to intensify inequality and divide the 99% so that people blame each other and fight over crumbs instead of demanding a fair share for every community.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can reclaim our democracy, unify across the oppressions that cause so much suffering and divide the 99%, and ensure our elected representatives use their power to serve our communities. We can transform government into a force that guarantees economic, racial and gender equality and that protects our local environment and the health of our planet. But it will take large numbers of people working together to achieve these goals.



Recent Victories

Raised the minimum wage: We successfully moved the Cook County Board of Commissioners to raise the minimum wage in a number of Cook County suburbs, resulting in raises from \$8.25 up to \$13 by 2020 for tens of thousands of low-wage workers.

Closed corporate tax loopholes: After years of organizing for a fair state budget, The People's Lobby – with our statewide coalition Fair Economy Illinois – led a set of actions last year culminating in a 2-week, 200-mile march from Chicago to the state capitol in Springfield, where we engaged in civil disobedience as the legislative session was ending. As a result of this campaign, the legislature closed \$125 million in corporate tax loopholes that we proposed as part of the budget deal that passed in July 2017. We also changed the public conversation about the state budget and the visionary array of public services we could have (universal health care, free college, and a clean energy economy, just to name a few) if we tax the 1% and pass a People and Planet First Budget.



Recent Victories Continued

Successfully fought mass incarceration in the Cook County Jail: Since 2016, The People's Lobby has been organizing to end cash bail in Illinois. We introduced state legislation with 18 cosponsoring legislators, organized an action of 200 people with civil disobedience to push Cook County Chief Judge Tim Evans to reform the County's bail system, and moved State's Attorney Kim Foxx to increase the number of situations in which prosecutors are recommending release without cash bail. As a result of our work and the work of our allies, Chief Judge Evans issued an order requiring judges to set bail only within the limits of what defendants can afford. Since then, the number of people incarcerated in the Cook County Jail has gone down from approximately 7,500 to approximately 6,100, and it will likely continue to decrease.

Won clean energy jobs in Illinois: The People's Lobby played a key role in the statewide coalition that won the Future Energy Jobs Bill. Thanks in large part to The People's Lobby's leadership, legislators dumped a consumer-gouging demand charge sought by ComEd and a multibillion dollar coal bailout. The Future Energy Jobs Bill will double the amount of renewable energy in Illinois by 2025 and, for the first time ever, invest \$500 million in targeted low-income solar and green jobs training that will bring tangible benefits to our communities. With a climate change denier in the White House, state level victories like this are our best hope for addressing the threats posed by climate change.

OUR METHOD:

Building a People's Movement

The People's Lobby is a fast-growing, **membership-driven organization** devoted to organizing widespread support for public policies and candidates – including people from our communities – that put racial justice and the needs of people and the planet before the interests of big corporations and the very rich. We train leaders to build bases in our communities, organize support for progressive legislation, endorse candidates and take direct action to pressure elected officials and other powerful people to put the interests of people and the planet first.

Our membership spans the greater Chicago area. On college campuses, Chicago Student Action leaders organize for racial, economic, and gender justice at their universities and beyond. Our Faith Liberation Movement is a collective of clergy and people of faith seeking to transform our economy and society so that justice reigns, rather than the dominant values of greed and individualism.

The time and financial contributions of our members give The People's Lobby the independence to set our own agenda.





We organize diverse constituencies around a shared analysis of economic justice, gender equality, and ending structural racism, including:

- Individual members throughout the Chicago region
- Clergy and congregations, particularly on the South Side and South Suburbs
- Students on college campuses throughout Illinois, including state colleges that are in crisis because of the state budget impasse
- Independent political organizations in Chicago and its suburbs
- Low-income communities directly impacted by environmental injustice

Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by the issues The People's Lobby addresses. Low-income, working-class, and middle-class white people are also hit by these crises. We deliberately build relationships across lines of race, gender, geography, and more and bring a racial justice lens to each campaign.

Goal 1: Winning Public Policies that put People and the Planet First

The People's Lobby's top priority is winning public policies that put the needs of people and our planet before the interests of corporations and the wealthiest 1% and that challenge structural economic, racial and gender inequality. We work on five main issue areas:

- 1. Ending mass incarceration.** The criminal justice system in Cook County and the State of Illinois is badly broken and needs to be overhauled in a number of different ways, particularly the ways people of color are overwhelmingly targeted. The People's Lobby is pushing for reform of the state and county bail/bond system such that low-income people will not be held in jail for weeks or months awaiting trial simply because they cannot afford bail, with a focus on ensuring effective implementation of Judge Evans' order. The People's Lobby is also organizing to move Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx to use prosecutorial discretion to reduce incarceration through a number of measures including reducing overcharging of defendants, stopping prosecution of lower-level drug offenses, releasing data on prosecution decisions and outcomes, mitigating collateral immigration consequences of prosecution decisions, and making more reasonable sentencing recommendations.
- 2. A fair state budget that reverses cuts and expands public services.** The People's Lobby is working on a campaign to move the state to bring in revenue from large corporations and the wealthy in order to fund an ambitious array of programs and services, including a student led campaign for free higher public education.



Goal 2: Building Progressive Political Power to Reclaim Government from Corporate Interests

In order to overcome the force of big money in politics, we need to organize large numbers of people to get involved. This requires us to do politics differently. Instead of putting candidates front and center in conversations with voters, we lead with our values, our vision for the future, and the policies we plan to win when we reclaim government. Then we introduce voters to the candidates we've endorsed who are committed to fight for us. We also recruit and train people from our communities to run for office. And instead of closing up shop after the election, as the mainstream political parties do, we engage our growing base in fights for public policies that will increase investment in our communities.

In 2015, The People's Lobby worked with National Nurses United to form Reclaim Chicago, which leads powerful movement electoral work in partnership with The People's Lobby across the city and state.

Some elected officials The People's Lobby and Reclaim have successfully worked to elect include:

- Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx
- State Senator Omar Aquino
- State Representative Will Guzzardi
- State Representative Theresa Mah
- State Representative Christian Mitchell
- Alderman Carlos Rosa
- Evanston City Clerk Devon Reid
- Evanston Alderman Robin Rue Simmons
- Democratic nominee for Cook County Commissioner Brandon Johnson
- Democratic nominee for State Senate Ram Villivalam

3. Environmental justice. The climate crisis impacts low-income communities and communities of color first and worst, ultimately putting all life on the planet at risk. The People's Lobby is working with Fair Economy Illinois to ensure that the state implements the Future Energy Jobs Act in a way that reduces our carbon footprint and creates economic opportunity in low-income communities.

4. Fair elections. Elections should not be auctions sold to the highest bidder. The People's Lobby is working to pass fair elections ordinances that provide public funding to candidates who can raise small-dollar donations so that they can compete on an even playing field with candidates who raise money from bigger donors.

5. Global minimum wage. With the goal of ending the "race to the bottom", The People's Lobby has begun a campaign to promote the idea of a global minimum wage by pushing Chicago-area Congresspeople to demand that trade agreements (such as NAFTA as it is renegotiated) incorporate wage standards. We are working with Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky to move the Congressional Progressive Caucus to incorporate this demand into its trade platform.



Goal 3: Connecting Analysis and Strategy

The progressive left has consistently lost ground over the past four decades. Some of this is our fault for being fractured and fragmented and for using strategies and tactics developed for a different era. The People's Lobby puts critique, analysis and political education front and center in its training and communications. The Center for Progressive Strategy and Research, our think and do tank, runs a day long analysis training and a monthly reading group for leaders. It has also published The Movement We Need, a manifesto for the American left. Download it at thepeopleslobbyusa.org/our-strategy.

With your support, we will continue these fights!

In 2018 and 2019, The People's Lobby will lead on:

- Visionary policies like universal health care
- Ending cash bail in Cook County and throughout Illinois and changing the way prosecution works in Cook County
- Fighting for campaign finance reform that levels the playing field for progressive candidates
- Fighting for the People and Planet First Budget, which would raise revenue from big corporations and the very wealthy and use it to fund expanded public services across the state
- Endorsing a powerful slate of progressive candidates for Chicago City Council in the 2019 elections
- Expanding our training of grassroots candidates so we can support movement leaders in running for office at every level of government
- Building our membership in the Chicago suburbs so we can increase the progressive movement's statewide power
- Getting low-income solar projects built in the communities where we organize



IN ORDER TO WIN, WE NEED YOU!

The People's Lobby is winning important victories, but we don't have enough power to win all the resources we need for our communities. We need YOU to join this work by giving your financial support and your time!

Visit www.thepeopleslobbyusa.org to become a dues-paying member. Email us at info@thepeopleslobbyusa.org to get involved in our campaigns.



Donations to The People's Lobby are NOT tax-exempt as charitable contributions or under section 162(e) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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