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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:  
ANALYSIS OF THE 2012 MARRIAGE CAMPAIGNS  
FOR THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

# INTRODUCTION

The Center for American Progress (CAP) hired Grassroots Solutions to examine the three successful 2012 proactive marriage campaigns in Maine, Maryland, and Washington, and the successful defensive marriage fight in Minnesota in order to capture the most applicable lessons from these campaigns. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the key findings from a more comprehensive report produced for CAP in November 2013.

For this project, Grassroots Solutions partnered with Tom Novick of M&R Strategies; Lisa Grove and Molly Murphy of Anzalone, Liszt, Grove Research; and Freedom to Marry. Thalia Zepatos and Holly Pruett, and others, at Freedom to Marry provided strategic and historical insight as well as access to a library of critical documents, and an earlier analysis of the 2012 campaigns that they had commissioned, “The 2012 Marriage Campaigns: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis.” That earlier research project served as a jumping-off point for the CAP analysis. It significantly informs parts of the CAP report and is referenced and cited throughout the executive summary where applicable.

This summary begins with a brief review of the methodology followed by an overview of three distinct sections: quantitative data specific to the results of the four 2012 elections, core finding and lessons learned, and polling and focus group results.

## **Overarching Theme: “Creating and Leveraging a Movement Moment”**

Much of the success of the four marriage campaigns in 2012 is essentially a story about creating and leveraging a movement moment. The victories in 2012 had been preceded by 31 consecutive electoral defeats. Yet, even in the midst of those often morale-sapping electoral setbacks, key organizations and movement leaders put together a very intentional plan to change the hearts and minds of voters and create the vision, strategy, infrastructure, and momentum necessary to win on the issue of marriage for same-sex couples. This was, and is, a long-term movement-building plan, and while it most visibly bore fruit in 2012, the seeds for those victories were planted long before.

The idea of creating and leveraging a movement moment is at the center of the majority of our findings, lessons learned, and field research. As a result, the report highlights this concept as an overarching theme even as specific elements are explored in far greater detail.

The ultimate goal of this project was to discern the most applicable lessons from the four 2012 marriage campaigns that can help LGBT and other progressive stakeholders continue to build their movements and secure future state-level electoral and legislative victories.

# METHODOLOGY

Grassroots Solutions used a combination of research methods and divided the research into three phases. First, we identified the core findings and key lessons through personal interviews (including interviews with leaders from other social movements about what would be most helpful to them), data analysis, and an extensive material review. Second, we worked with CAP to identify which lessons might be most applicable to other progressive issues. Third, we conducted additional qualitative and quantitative field research to more fully explore two components of the successful marriage campaigns that were seen as especially critical to other issues and movements—the engagement of younger voters and faith leaders.

# OVERVIEW OF ELECTION RESULTS



**Result:** State question passed with 52.7% of the vote.

**Turnout:** Turnout declined compared to 2004 and 2008, though it was still higher than turnout in other recent presidential elections. Strong turnout in the Portland area was a sign that the marriage campaign had a positive effect on turnout.

**Regional:** Support was highest in southern Maine. In the Portland area, support grew by more than 5% compared to the failed 2009 initiative in all regions of the state.

**Demographics:** Marriage passed in Maine because the state has a large share of non-religious voters who support the freedom to marry by a significant amount. These voters balanced the lack of support from Maine's relatively older electorate.

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**Result:** Referendum passed with 52.4% of the vote.

**Turnout:** Overall turnout declined compared to the high level seen for President Obama in 2008, though it was relatively high for a state without a competitive presidential election.

**Regional:** Support was highest in Montgomery County and Baltimore City, with solid support in other suburban regions. The state's Democratic nature helped pass marriage.

**Demographics:** African-American support for marriage trailed white support by about 8%, though much of the difference can be attributed to religiosity levels among African-American voters. Otherwise, Maryland is a relatively young state with higher education levels, factors that helped the marriage measure pass.

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**Result:** Constitutional amendment was defeated with 52.6% of the vote. 1.4% of the votes against the amendment were blank ballots, which effectively count as "No" votes.

**Turnout:** Turnout was down slightly compared to 2004 and 2008, though it still surpassed expectations. Base turnout for the freedom to marry in the Twin Cities was strong.

**Regional:** The amendment was defeated with strong support in the Twin Cities and suburbs. While support was weaker in rural parts of the state, those parts are now a minority of the state vote.

**Demographics:** Minnesota's Democratic-leaning electorate coupled with a solid performance among occasional churchgoers helped defeat the anti-freedom to marry constitutional amendment.

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**Result:** Referendum passed with 53.7% of the vote.

**Turnout:** Overall turnout dropped compared to 2008, though turnout for marriage was strong with the biggest turnout increase in King County, a base area with 67% support.

**Regional:** Marriage passed with a strong majority in King County and smaller majorities in surrounding suburban counties. Eastern and Central Washington regions, while conservative, saw significant vote growth compared to a 2009 referendum on domestic partnership.

**Demographics:** Washington has a relatively young electorate, a factor that helped pass marriage. In addition, marriage won with huge majorities among Democrats and less frequent churchgoers.

## Cross-State Turnout, Demographic Conclusions

This section looks at election results and polling across all four states to identify common and relevant patterns in relation to voter turnout and general demographic trends.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

- The higher turnout seen in presidential years typically makes an electorate 1%–2% better on support for the freedom to marry. This increase in support is mainly due to the younger presidential electorate. Increasing turnout among pro-marriage base constituencies in non-presidential years will be critical and may require an increased focus on base organizing.
- A state's support for the freedom to marry was largely due to the demographic makeup of the electorate and depended heavily on the share of young voters in its electorate and how regularly voters attend church. The path to victory in each state, however, will be unique.
- Partisanship is a factor in support of the freedom to marry. Democrats are much more likely to be supporters of the freedom to marry, and independents are more persuadable than Republicans. Support among Republicans mirrors other demographic patterns. It would be well worth additional testing on the impact and effectiveness of Republican messengers in the future.
- Marriage campaigns were able to craft a winning coalition by increasing support from Democratic and independent voters while maintaining their Republican support. This may be a helpful strategy for other progressive campaigns as they seek to build overall support of greater than 50% while maintaining some support among the opposition political party.
- The 2012 campaigns were most effective in increasing support among women, voters who never or occasionally go to church (though these non-regular churchgoing voters can be hard to identify), Democrats, and independents.

## FINDINGS

This section highlights five essential macro-level findings. These five findings represent a combination of the most critical takeaways from the 2012 marriage campaigns, particular interests of the organizations sponsoring this report, and lessons that are most applicable to other movements.

### FINDING 01

## Movement Strategy and Infrastructure

The four marriage victories in 2012 were unprecedented and not only reflected exceptionally well-run campaigns but also years of intentional strategy development and movement-building work. A clear vision of success and a well-articulated strategic path allowed the movement to learn from, and overcome, the long string of electoral defeats that preceded 2012. Investment in infrastructure, including a distinct national campaign entity and the pooling of financial resources, were essential steps forward. By establishing a set of predictors that helped to assess capacity and the likelihood of success, national and state leaders were able to systematically build and support strong, centralized, and successful state campaigns in 2012.

## Four Essential Movement Elements

State and national leaders of the marriage movement describe, in various ways, a “hierarchy” of four essential elements that helped lead to the movement’s success over time: 1) a clear vision, 2) a defined strategy for achieving that vision, 3) vehicles and resources to implement the strategy, and 4) identifiable and measurable action steps that the vehicles will execute in accordance with the strategy and toward achieving the ultimate vision.

The national movement for the freedom to marry had long ago applied these four elements: 1) identified a clear vision of the ultimate objective (securing a Supreme Court decision that grants the freedom to marry at a federal level), 2) defined a strategy for achieving that vision (winning on marriage in a large and geographically diverse array of states and shifting public opinion at the national level in order to eventually influence the Supreme Court), 3) created the vehicles and resources needed to effectively carry out the campaign-oriented strategy (a national campaign organization—Freedom to Marry, centralized research and messaging strategy, coordination among national and state partners, state-based campaigns and significant financial backing), and 4) established identifiable and measurable action steps that the vehicles will execute in accordance with the strategy and toward achieving the ultimate vision.

Of the four elements, the first—defining the vision—is perhaps the most critical as it provides the foundation for everything that follows. Another way of thinking about clarity of vision is that it defines what a win for the movement will be. To many, coming into and out of the 2012 elections, the clarity of the marriage movement’s vision and strategy—to ultimately win at the Supreme Court by securing state-based wins and changing public opinion through national efforts such as securing President Obama’s endorsement—provided the essential “glue” that held everything else together.

### FINDING 02

## Collaborative Research and Values-Based Messaging

A significant investment in examining all existing research and conducting extensive new research prior to and throughout the 2012 elections, led to a critical shift from rights-based to values-based messaging. Starting in 2010, marriage movement leaders emphasized the importance of collaborative research in which methodologies and findings were shared across organizations, consulting firms, and eventually the 2012 campaigns, fostering greater movement cohesion and ongoing learning. The new research-based messages that emphasized the values of love, freedom, and the Golden Rule proved extremely effective at moving persuadable voters in 2012.

### Mandatory Collaboration Among Pollsters

In interviews with progressive-issue leaders for this analysis, many posed questions around how a multifaceted, multi-organizational movement could possibly conduct research cohesively and collaboratively, especially on such a large scale. The groups collaborating on research (and the 2012 campaigns that followed) did something fairly revolutionary: they mandated that any and all pollsters on this issue work together to ask the same questions in polls, open the work for feedback, and share all data and findings with one another so that new research efforts could build on the work that had already been conducted.

Getting a commitment from the pollsters to embrace this level of openness, collaboration, and innovation not only saved money and time, it also helped identify research consultants, who would join the national movement strategy and commit to both helping win within the states and make the movement stronger.

### A Shift from Head to Heart: Values-Based Messaging and the Notion of a “Journey”

Prior to 2010, most messages around the freedom to marry were seen as being more intellectual, or “head” arguments presented through the frame of the rights and benefits denied to gay and lesbian people without access to marriage. Other narratives used in fighting back against anti-marriage constitutional amendments likewise used head arguments about preserving the integrity of the state’s Constitution.

The research conducted in 2010 and afterwards revealed that the movement was missing a critical element for persuading conflicted voters on this issue. Conventional head arguments did not appeal to voters' essential values, to their lived experience with marriage, and to their understanding about why gay and lesbian people wanted to get married. The research also explored how voters would respond emotionally and psychologically to the issue and helped identify central emotional concerns and fears that voters didn't even realize they had about marriage.

The key messages that emerged from the new collaborative research as persuasive to conflicted voters were grounded in fundamental values such as "love," "commitment," "freedom," and "the Golden Rule." Fundamentally, the argument was that gay people want the freedom to marry for the same reasons straight people do—for love and commitment.

## FINDING 03

# Conversation Campaigns and Long-Form Conversations

The research found that conversations were central to every aspect of the 2012 marriage campaigns, not just to the field programs. The particular form of conversations that campaigns used in the field also proved to be significant. "Long-form" persuasion conversations that lasted between eight and ten minutes, and were highly personal and adaptive, represented a huge departure from standard campaign practices, and they were essential for persuading conflicted voters. To ensure that they could achieve the scale of conversations necessary to win, campaigns developed innovative training and support mechanisms for staff and volunteers.

## The Whole Campaign as a Conversation Campaign

Research revealed that people were 67% more likely to vote in support of the freedom to marry if they had had a personal, heartfelt conversation about marriage with an LGBT person or an ally. Given this finding, the campaigns pushed themselves to think of their entire campaign as a way to drive conversations—not just the field operation—but also paid and earned media and fundraising. Across the campaign's staff (from managers to consultants and organizers) people were encouraged and pushed to think about how to shape their work around the idea of sparking conversations.

## Deeply Relational, Highly Accountable, and Massive Scale Conversation Campaigns

In designing their "conversation" campaigns, the leaders of the four 2012 marriage states recognized early that they would need to constantly balance the need to be extremely personal with the imperative of achieving scale. The Minnesota campaign developed a three-pronged strategy statement that they used to frame and anchor all parts of the conversation campaign. This strategy revolved around the critical importance of being deeply relational, highly accountable, and massive in scale, and while it was expressly articulated in Minnesota, most of the states were working on similar balancing acts.

## The Importance of Long-Form Conversations

In addition to imagining and structuring the entire campaign to emphasize conversations, most of the 2012 campaigns also designed their field operations around a unique type of campaign conversation—"long-form conversations." In 2012, long-form conversations were one-on-one, eight to ten minute conversations with persuadable voters that involved back and forth dialogue, in which people could share their own experiences and ask questions of each other.

This approach was in marked contrast to previous marriage campaigns and also to most traditional campaign field operations. In a typical field program, conversations are most often tightly scripted and usually average between 30 and 60 seconds in order to maximize the volume of the conversations. The 2012 campaigns employed a new approach that focused on long-form conversations and made it a central piece of their campaign strategy.

In 2012, the shift to long-form conversations proved critical to persuading voters and protecting supporters from vulnerability to the opposition's attacks. In the end, campaigns reported up to 10% of people were moved in support of the freedom to marry during every volunteer shift.

While these campaigns approached community of color work differently, had different strategic objectives, and showed progress over past campaigns, most of them could have benefited greatly from an earlier investment in organizing, outreach, and relationship building. Success in this work requires a strategic integration with the other departments of the campaign and a dedicated approach to hiring staff from the communities that campaigns want to engage.

### Tension Between Electoral and Movement-Building Objectives

Even before 2012, movement-building/campaign tension has historically manifested itself in the community of color work conducted by marriage campaigns. In some states, communities of color represent key persuasion targets, and outreach and organizing in these communities are a critical part of the path to victory. In states with smaller minority populations, organizing in communities of color is less critical to securing electoral victory, but it is important for broader and longer-term movement-building objectives. Another historic challenge has been that doing effective organizing and outreach in communities of color requires dedicated strategies and investments that campaigns have not always adopted or adopted in time to have an impact.

The campaigns of 2012 appear to represent both a significant leap forward in terms of attention to outreach and organizing in communities of color, and at the same time, an affirmation that some of the historic challenges still remain. The tension between electoral and movement-building objectives was present in 2012 as three of the states—Maine, Minnesota, and Washington—have relatively small community of color populations and accordingly were frequently recalibrating the extent to which the campaigns focused on this work. In addition, there was a fairly universal sense that, while the community of color work was more effective than in the past, there is still significant room for improvement.

### Critical Recommendation for Communities of Color Organizing

In many respects 2012 represented a pronounced step forward in terms of marriage organizing in communities of color. At the same time, critical lessons emerged that can inform both future marriage campaigns and other movements.

- 1. Honestly assess campaign versus movement-building objectives:** The degree to which community of color work is integral to a campaign's path to victory will vary dramatically by state depending on demographics. However, any state with significantly large communities of color requires a robust program, as these communities represent either base or persuasion targets.
- 2. Focus on relationship building:** Although many of the 2012 campaigns focused some portion of their work in communities of color, all of them felt that they could have benefited from more time, resources, and a more intentional and strategic approach to building key relationships among leaders.
- 3. Create a dedicated budget for organizing communities of color:** Having dedicated resources helps with expectation setting and provides a baseline for ongoing strategic discussions to determine if resources are aligned with objectives and priorities.
- 4. Invest in skilled staff from the communities:** A highly skilled staff with deep relationships in the community is critical and may require the campaign to tailor its hiring practices and dedicate greater resources for salaries.

This section was largely taken from the Freedom to Marry Report titled *2012 Marriage Campaigns: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis*. That Freedom to Marry study focused on communities of color in great depth and as such, is directly applicable to this project's objectives.

Faith organizing played an essential role in all four of the 2012 marriage campaigns. Hiring experienced and credible staff members from the faith community added to the success of these programs. Through early and ongoing organizing and systematic leadership development within the faith community, the campaigns were able to make clergy and faith leaders some of the most prominent public faces of the 2012 marriage debates, and this aided in holding people's religious concerns at bay and persuading deeply conflicted voters.

### Six Key Strategies

To successfully maximize the role of the faith community and build faith programs to scale, the campaigns utilized a six-prong approach that had never been seen in previous efforts. This approach is viewed as being highly adaptive to other progressive movements and could be implemented around a campaign or as an ongoing practice within an organization. Work with the faith community consisted of the following components: 1) building a solid faith-organizing department, 2) faith training and leadership development, 3) early and ongoing recruitment of clergy and faith leadership, 4) leading a conversation campaign within congregations, 5) building a communications and media strategy around faith work, and 6) creating a forum for conflicted voters of faith.

### Building a Solid Faith Organizing Department

It took time to find the kind of staff that not only had experience working with the faith community but also the skills necessary to tackle the difficult intersecting issues of religion and the freedom to marry. Hiring staff members who already had credibility within the faith community opened the doors to collaboration at a much faster pace. It was also seen as critically important to identify staff who, not only had credibility in the community (though that is essential), but also had the organizing skills necessary to recruit other faith leaders and congregation members to the marriage campaign. Faith department staff also had to be comfortable with the high-pressure, deadline-driven electoral environment. Finding faith staff who had all of these skills proved challenging, but the entire skills set that combines credibility within the community, ability to navigate complex and charged situations, and an aptitude for and experience with organizing is seen as crucial for building faith programs to scale.

Across the interviews, campaign leaders also expressed the belief that having the Director of Faith Organizing serving on their leadership team would have made a big difference in terms of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of their persuasion and base-building operations.

While the faith community was critical to the success of these campaigns, it might be a different constituency that rises to the top of another issue areas priorities to warrant this senior-level position. It is important to identify that need in the earliest part of the campaign in order to utilize the effectiveness of the community leaders.



# LESSONS LEARNED

While the five core findings reflect the most significant macro-level lessons that emerged from the 2012 campaigns, there were many more micro-level lessons noted throughout the interviews, which we felt were also important to include. These 24 lessons are categorized by topic area for greater accessibility and summarized below.

## LESSONS 01-04

### Messaging, Communications, and Research

#### **LESSON 01 – Start Public Education Early and Inoculate Voters**

All four 2012 marriage campaigns took advantage of leveraging 501(c)(3) dollars as early in the development of the campaign as possible to educate, organize, and build relationships. Some areas where they saw the best use of these dollars were in faith communities, communities of color, and general voter education work—especially by capitalizing on the Why Marriage Matters campaign that had been developed by Freedom to Marry.

#### **LESSON 02 – Use Legislative Session to Move Message through Earned Media**

It is possible and smart to use a strategic earned-media campaign during the legislative session to move voter opinion on marriage prior to the official start of the campaign. By having legislators from both sides of the aisle participate in an earned media campaign, Washington moved the support level from 50% at the beginning of the legislative session to 53% after a series of strategic and well-timed media events.

#### **LESSON 03 – Dual Track Messaging**

A strategy followed by the campaigns was to never let their affirmative values-based messages “go dark,” once their ads were on the air. However, they also knew that the time would come to respond to attacks from their opponents. The campaigns then planned and budgeted for a dual-track approach that allowed them to stay focused on their core message and, at the same time, respond aggressively to the opposition’s arguments.

#### **LESSON 04 – Use of New Research Techniques**

While all four of the campaigns used a broad array of traditional research techniques, they also used the results from a variety of field and message experiments conducted in Maine and Oregon in 2010, which allowed them to start several steps ahead. Each of the states also used comprehensive micro-targeting surveys to help identify persuasion and retention universes for field contacts, as well as significant, nontraditional field testing of messages, scripts, and tactics with voters on the phones and at the doors.

## LESSONS 05-11

### Campaign Infrastructure and Culture

#### **LESSON 05 – A Stand-Alone Campaign Structure**

As soon as each state’s legislature voted to place marriage on the ballot, leaders from the statewide LGBT organizations, leaders in the state’s marriage and LGBT movements, national leaders and state-based political thought leaders worked to set up stand-alone, professionally run campaign structures. By doing this, the goal and focus of each campaign was singular—to win at the ballot box on marriage in November 2012—and was not wrapped up in any other business of an existing organization or coalition table.

## LESSON 06 – Engaged, but Trusting Campaign Committees

Campaigns also benefited from active and engaged campaign committees that understood and took seriously their roles in making important strategic decisions on behalf of the campaign. A consistent observation across interviews revealed that while it is important for campaign committees to both weigh in and help shape key strategic decisions, it is also important to demonstrate full faith in the campaign manager to lead the campaign and make decisions with autonomy when necessary.

## LESSON 07 – Role of Statewide LGBT Organizations

While the campaigns functioned as stand-alone entities, they originated from existing statewide LGBT organizations. These organizations helped to set up the campaign structures, and they leveraged their long-standing relationships with base supporters to provide early momentum. Valuable lessons emerged relating to the unique role and contributions of statewide LGBT organizations in relation to the campaign structures, as well as some challenges that had to be overcome.

## LESSON 08 – National and State Interplays

Once the official campaigns were launched, national leaders built strong and trusting relationships with campaign managers, board members, and senior staff, which allowed them to lend their significant expertise to the campaigns without creating the feeling that they were “coming in and taking over” the direction of the campaigns from state-based leadership.

## LESSON 09 – Collaboration Between Campaign Departments

The 2012 marriage campaigns benefitted from intentionally devoting time and resources to sharing information and getting buy-in across departments. This happened in the form of weekly senior staff meetings across departments and also through consciously identifying specific areas in which there was a need for stronger collaboration.

## LESSON 10 – Campaign Culture and Radical Hospitality

The notion of “radical hospitality” was put into full effect in the field programs of the 2012 marriage campaigns and was interwoven with intentional efforts to build highly engaged campaign cultures. A critical practice for these campaigns was making people feel welcome, ensuring that they felt comfortable and that their physical and spiritual well-being was taken care of, and that people always knew where to go for help. This practice was particularly important because the campaigns were asking people to give a tremendous amount of time and energy, and to have difficult conversations with both strangers and people they knew.

## LESSON 11 – Support, Nurturing, and Training for Campaign Staff

Radical hospitality wasn’t just for volunteers. Campaign leadership recognized early on that to retain talented staff—who were working long campaign hours, and with a deeply personal and emotional component—they would need to provide support, training, and nurturing. Supervisors were trained to take time to talk with staff about their personal goals for staying happy and healthy throughout the campaign. Day-long trainings were organized as staff members were hired in waves, to ensure that staff members had an opportunity not just to gain the necessary skills to hit the ground running but also to bond with one another from the outset.

LESSONS  
12-15

Fundraising

## LESSON 12 – Embracing Organic Activities

The campaigns took advantage of the movement energy that was happening across the four states and allowed people to have creative ownership over organizing and fundraising events that were being planned by supporters. The leaders of the 2012 marriage campaigns reached a middle ground between control and entrepreneurship where they let people have creative liberties but provided the necessary materials and message direction so that people could still be inventive while maintaining the message of the campaign.

## **LESSON 13 – House Parties with Dual Purpose**

As a best practice, all of the campaigns ran house party programs to raise funds and reach people in more intimate settings. What was unique about these marriage campaigns was that they didn't just use these as an opportunity to raise a lot of small-dollar donations. Instead they focused on making sure that every event—whether generated by the campaign or organic—had some kind of volunteer recruitment and campaign conversation component.

## **LESSON 14 – Investing in Merchandise Helped Harness the Energy of the Movement Moment**

Interviewees told us that while they resisted making big investments in merchandise in the early stages of these campaigns, it soon became apparent that it was a source of pride and a piece of supporter activism to have a yard sign, t-shirt, or bumper sticker. Not only did the merchandise help to build a real sense of excitement and energy within the campaigns, it also raised a significant amount of money. For example, in Minnesota, the campaign raised over \$1 million from merchandise sales alone.

## **LESSON 15 – Field as a Source of Fundraising**

In the 2012 marriage campaigns, the field teams wore more than one hat as they also did a fair share of fundraising. People flocked to the field offices to make contributions and frequently wanted to give money when volunteers called them or visited them during a canvass. The field offices became a central hub for people to come in and experience the energy of the campaign. The campaigns knew that they couldn't just have a donation box at the door—they had a greeter at every office who interacted with every person who came in the door, and this often led to additional donations.

LESSONS  
**16-18**

## **Partners and Allies**

### **LESSON 16 – A Strategic Approach to Recruiting Unconventional Allies**

The campaigns relied heavily on finding people who had a trusted relationship with a targeted community member or ally, and that person would work closely with the respective campaigns over a period of time to secure the partnership. While this approach takes more time, campaigns saw great success and an even deeper level of commitment from the people and organizations recruited in this way.

### **LESSON 17 – Engaging Progressive Allies**

In states where there was a strong progressive infrastructure, campaigns were able to more quickly form deeper relationships with allies and spend less time organizing friends. This allowed them to concentrate on organizing more unique allies. In states where the infrastructure wasn't that strong, building these relationships was important to making sure they weren't duplicating work and that they were providing organizations with the tools and resources necessary to advocate on behalf of the campaign.

### **LESSON 18 – Consider Business Leaders vs. the Businesses Themselves**

The success that the campaigns had engaging businesses was often less about the company itself and more about the individual(s) leading a given business. Campaigns found they had success putting together a list of owners, CEOs, and senior leadership of companies and corporations and then sitting down with experienced fundraisers and other leaders of that community to talk about those people that they believed would be friendly to the issue.

### **LESSON 19 – Modeling and Micro-Targeting Analysis**

The 2012 campaigns made excellent use of rapidly evolving micro-targeting technology. This experience helped in the development of a set of basic recommendations for future consideration, which include: always taking advantage of existing models; polling local, regional, and national data sets to construct a relatively accurate national model for future work; evaluating cost against efficiency gains; and developing more effective persuasion models.

### **LESSON 20 – Paid and Volunteer Field Programs**

The biggest variances across the states were in the mix of paid versus volunteer voter contact as well as the types of paid contact that were being made. There were advantages to the various approaches. The campaign in Minnesota—where an all-volunteer program was run—found it was able to have a deeper, more effective level of persuasion conversations with highly trained volunteers. In Washington and Maine—where the campaigns ran more mixed paid/volunteer programs—they found that the hybrid approach offered a level of efficiency, consistency, and accountability that helped the campaign better track the progress towards goals. The type of paid vote contact staff also made a difference. In every case it was thought that the right model should reflect the unique characteristics of each state, including when the campaign starts, geography, access to financial and volunteer resources, persuasion needs, and other field objectives.

### **LESSON 21 – Volunteer Recruitment and Volunteer Leadership Development**

Organizers were trained to identify volunteers with leadership potential. That meant that staff had to be very observant, listen for the volunteer’s connection to the issue, and then be able to evaluate their capacity quickly.

In many cases, volunteer leaders eventually acted as full-time staff. This approach dramatically increased campaign capacity and made the investment in leadership development worthwhile.

### **LESSON 22 – Friends and Family Programs**

Friends and family programs played an important role in allowing volunteers to have a personal conversation about a very personal issue. These types of programs are likely to be an important feature of future campaigns and progressive movements because of their effectiveness at persuasion, their ability to reach a larger scale of voters, and because of their ability to use social media to track personal conversations. The technology to make these conversations accountable is developing rapidly and is likely to play a significant role in advancing progressive politics once it is user-friendly enough for mass numbers of rank-and-file volunteers to utilize it.

### **LESSON 23 – Young Voter Programs**

The 2012 marriage campaigns built programs and created a narrative that made the freedom to marry a defining issue for young people and turned it into a “generational call to action.” Young voter campaign programs took advantage of college campuses as organizing hubs across their states and used rapid leadership development programs through existing student groups to bring young people together and create a sense of momentum. Campaigns prioritized creating fun social atmospheres and providing opportunities for students to hear directly from their peers about why this movement and this election would be so defining for their generation.

### **LESSON 24 – Get Out the Vote (GOTV)**

The 2012 marriage campaigns didn’t feel they could stop persuading voters before Election Day, and they shifted to a dual (and sometime triple) track where they were focused on turning out the base, continuing to persuade conflicted voters, and, in two of the four states, checking in on supporters they considered soft before adding them to the GOTV universe.

# POLLING AND FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

## Youth Poll Results and Analysis

### Youth Survey Background and Methodology

Progressive campaigns can thrive or fail based on turnout among younger voters—in 2012, voters under 30 turned out in historic numbers, many of them motivated by the freedom to marry. Therefore, our goal was to understand what motivated young people to turn out to vote for this issue in ways never before seen to determine whether there were underlying motivations that transcended the marriage issue that could be applied to other progressive races.

The following sections detail the results of an 800-person online survey conducted with 18 to 29-year-old voters who voted in the 2012 general elections in Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, or Washington State. Voters were also screened to ensure that they voted in support of marriage for gay and lesbian couples on the state ballot initiatives and amendments. Additionally, we conducted an oversample of 200 voters who met all of the above criteria, but were also modeled to have a proclivity for political activism, reported having volunteered on a campaign or for a political issue, or donated money to a campaign within the last two years. Throughout the report, voters from the base sample are referred to as non-activists and those in the oversample will be referred to as activists.

### Youth Survey: Key Findings

- **Youth voters in these states were excited about the election and paid close attention in the lead-up.** These voters reported paying closer attention to politics before the 2012 election than in the past—60% of political activists and 51% of non-activists said they paid more attention, while 32% and 44%, respectively, paid about the same attention as they had in the past.
- **Social media played a huge role in sharing information about the campaigns and encouraging others to support them.** Youth voters are very reliant on social media. Many, particularly political activists, check Facebook several times a day. For both activists and non-activists, sharing their views through Facebook and Twitter was the most common way that youth voters became involved in the campaigns. Most non-activists limited their involvement in the campaigns to personal conversations and social media. Activist voters were more likely to take part in official campaign activities. For most non-activists, this was the first time they had become involved with a campaign.
- **Youth voters attributed their support for marriage to values of freedom and equal treatment.** The top reason that these voters supported the freedom to marry in 2012 was the idea that *the freedom to marry the person you love is a basic freedom that should not be denied anybody and that nobody should be told that it is illegal to marry the person they love.*
- **Youth voters also felt compelled to change history, a theme that can be applied to other issues outside of marriage.** Rivaling their specific concern for giving all couples the freedom to marry, youth voters also felt that these initiatives gave them an opportunity to change history, and that the results of these initiatives would be an important accomplishment. The campaigns were able to elevate this issue for younger voters and give them a vested stake in the outcome in a way that other campaigns should aspire to emulate.
- **Youth voters are most interested in education, marriage equality, and gender equality issues.** When looking forward to future campaigns and issues, youth voters are still very passionate about the freedom to marry, and it is one of the top issues they are most likely to become involved with. Education and reducing the cost of college also rank at the top of the list (no surprise since 18% of the survey were current students and 55% were college grads). Gender equality issues and protecting reproductive health for women are very important to these voters as well.
- **Youth voters will need to be targeted and persuaded to become involved.** Despite their enthusiasm for the 2012 elections, these voters are not steadfast political activists and they lack enthusiasm for the 2014 elections; many will likely stay home. They care about issues such as education, the freedom to marry, and gender equality (among other issues), but they will need to be motivated and persuaded to turn out again.

# Faith Leaders Online Focus Group Results and Analysis

## Background and Methodology

The faith community played a critical role in all four states—unlike ever before, religious and lay leaders from several Christian denominations came out in support of marriage. Their endorsement of the marriage campaigns proved critical to conflicted voters who were looking for moral validators when making their decision on how to vote. Because their involvement was critical to the success of these campaigns, we wanted to understand how to engage them on issues outside of marriage.

To do this, we conducted a three-day online focus group (known as a qualboard) with members of the faith community in the four marriage states who became involved in support of marriage. The goal was to understand how they became involved, how their views on this issue evolved, how they were able to resolve their inner conflict (if they had one), and what information may be applied to other future campaigns.

By using the qualboard forum we were able to solicit robust feedback from members of the faith community, who reside all across the four states. Online focus groups allow participants to log on during times that work for their schedules and answer questions, participate in the discussion, and interact with the moderator. Therefore, we were able to hear from more faith leaders through the qualboard than if we had conducted a traditional in-person focus group, and we received richer, more thoughtful responses.

## Faith Leaders: Key Findings

The following are key findings of the faith leaders online focus group.

- **These faith leaders were uniquely motivated to join freedom to marry campaigns.** First of all, many of them were personally affected by the issue because they are either gay or they have close friends or family members who are. Secondly, these leaders recoiled at the idea that the loud anti-marriage voices from some in the faith community would appear to represent all members of faith.
- **They were motivated by the tenets of their faith that speak to social justice.** Respondents cited love, compassion, justice, and human dignity as reasons for supporting the freedom to marry. They belong to progressive churches whose interpretation of the Bible supports the freedom to marry and many of the leaders were assisted by their congregations in their campaign efforts.
- **Positive experiences with the freedom to marry campaigns have motivated them to get involved in other issues.** Now that they have experience with organizing and media efforts, the satisfaction of a well-run and successful campaign, and a desire to do more good, these faith leaders are open to getting involved in a wide variety of progressive issues.
- **Issues pertaining to justice for marginalized groups are at the top of their priority list.** These issues include immigration reform, economic justice, racial and gender equality, and education reform. They see these issues in a similar light to what they saw in the freedom to marry campaign—a fight to make sure that all of God’s children are treated with the same love and have the same right to human dignity.
- **Progressive campaigns should actively reach out to faith communities and encourage them to build coalitions from within.** Faith communities have the energy that is needed for activism, but there isn’t always a mechanism. These faith leaders praised the organization of the freedom to marry campaigns and enjoyed being able to build ties with other religious leaders in their communities. Successful campaigns in the future should seek to replicate this.