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ANALYSIS OF THE 2012  
MARRIAGE CAMPAIGNS  
FOR THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

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## INTRODUCTION

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.

In the spring of 2013, 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. Because of the four victories for the freedom to marry in 2012, as well as the continued momentum the movement has seen with additional legislative and judicial victories in 2013, these campaigns provide fertile ground for learning. The research and analysis for this report was concluded in late 2013 and released by CAP in July of 2014

Grassroots Solutions partnered with Tom Novick of M&R Strategies, Lisa Grove and Molly Murphy at Anzalone, Liszt, Grove Research, and Freedom to Marry on this project. Tom Novick contributed to the interview portion, analysis, and writing of the report. Lisa Grove and Molly Murphy conducted the polling and focus group research and provided additional analysis of the polling, messaging, and ads produced in each of the four states. The national organization Freedom to Marry (in particular Thalia Zepatos and Holly Pruett) provided strategic and historical insight as well as access to a library of critical documents from the 2012 campaigns that they had accumulated. Freedom to Marry also provided permission for this project to draw upon an earlier analysis conducted on their behalf by Grassroots Solutions – The 2012 Marriage Campaigns: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis (we will refer to this report throughout the document as 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis.) That earlier research project served as a jumping off point for the CAP analysis. It significantly informs parts of this report, and is referenced and cited throughout where applicable.

### 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 were preceded by 31 consecutive electoral defeats. Yet, even in the midst of that often morale-sapping stretch of 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 plan, and while it most visibly bore fruit in 2012, the seeds for those victories were planted long before.

In 2012, the four marriage campaigns successfully leveraged the “movement moment” that had finally emerged by running exceptional electoral campaigns that should be

individually recognized for all they accomplished. At the same time, the success of these campaigns also came from the fact that they were building on the past and ongoing movement-building work of organizations and leaders throughout the country. These campaigns also incorporated lessons from the unsuccessful campaigns, previous legislative efforts as well as public education campaigns around court cases that came before them – a key takeaway for work on other issues. The four 2012 states worked together to make sure they that they structured these campaigns in a way that would push the movement forward but also be able to harness the particular moment and use it to win.

When we began to put this report together we did not imagine having an overarching “theme.” However, as we began to dig deeper into the analysis we found that the idea of creating and leveraging a movement moment was at the center of the majority of our findings, lessons learned, and field research. As such, the report will continue to highlight this concept up as an overarching theme even as specific elements are explored in far greater detail.

## Report Structure and Overview

This report begins with a methodology review and a set of Executive Summaries that highlight the core findings. The body of the report consists of three distinct sections: quantitative data specific to the four 2012 elections results, key finding and lessons learned, and polling and focus group results. Here is a short summary of what you will find in each of those sections:

- 1. State-by-State Election Results and Analysis:** This section includes a state-by-state analysis of the 2012 marriage election results to show how the votes broke down geographically and demographically. While data heavy, this section of the report provides valuable context for the different types of analyses that follow.
- 2. Core Findings and Lessons Learned:** This section examines both the original interests established by the project objectives as well as what came out of our qualitative interview process. There are five core “macro” findings as well as twenty four “micro” lessons learned that are especially key to the 2012 victories and most applicable to other progressive movements.
- 3. Polling and Focus Group Results:** The report concludes with the results of the online polling of young voters and online focus group of faith leaders conducted by Anzalone Liszt Grove Research.

While reading the report we would like to highlight a few important elements. First, when we refer to core findings and lessons coming out of the “campaigns” it means that they were validated by multiple sources from multiple states. Most instances were either validated across-the-board or by the majority, of the state campaigns. Because Maryland ran a somewhat more scaled-back campaign and implemented some different strategies and tactics, the report will often bring attention to Maryland’s unique approach or will often group Maine, Minnesota and Washington together.

Another factor to be aware of is that there were times, in pulling the various sections together, where it became necessary to repeat some information because of its relevance to more than one finding or lesson. We tried to keep repetition to a minimum, but we didn’t want to lose any richness in the analysis by not giving the full picture. Finally, this report intentionally focuses on those finding and lessons that were most unique to the 2012 marriage campaigns and were not just typical campaign best practices. This is important contextually because much of what led to the 2012 victories is that each of the states ran exceptional campaigns – something that is never easy to do – but the intent of this project was not to analyze the campaigns as a whole but to try and distill what was unique and of most interest to partners about winning marriage after so many previous electoral setbacks.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to learn more about how to create the same level of support, passion, and connectivity for other progressive issues that allies and voters experienced during the 2012 marriage campaigns, Grassroots Solutions used a combination of research methods. We divided the research into three phases: first we identified the key lessons through personal interviews, data analysis and an extensive material reviews (with a special focus on the 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis), then we worked with CAP to identify which lessons might be most applicable to other progressive issues, and then we conducted additional field research – qualitative and quantitative – to more fully explore the actual applicability of the marriage lessons to other fields.

The following sections describe these three phases of analysis in more detail.

### Phase One: Information Gathering

- **National Issue Leader Interviews:** With the help of CAP we first identified national leaders to talk to about this project so that we could learn what questions and analysis from the 2012 campaigns would be of greatest interest to them in their ongoing work.
- **Securing Partnership with Freedom to Marry:** We worked with CAP to secure a partnership with Freedom to Marry, which had just created a library of materials and resources from the 2012 campaigns as well as conducted their own an analysis of the 2012 marriage campaigns. This partnership was critical to ensuring that we were not duplicating work that had already been done as well as to securing access to important documents. Freedom to Marry also provided critical assistance identifying and reaching out to potential interviewees and agreed to allow the use of their 2012 Analysis (also conducted by Grassroots Solutions) in the formation of this report to reduce duplication of efforts and save on resources.
- **Personal Interviews:** 70 interviews were conducted with national leaders, campaign staff, volunteers, funders, and allies of the four state campaigns. A list of interview participants can be found in Appendix A. Interviewees were selected with guidance from CAP, Freedom to Marry, and the state campaign managers.
- **Interview Guide:** An interview guide was produced for each of the different types of interviewees and was used to help ensure overall consistency.
- **Detailed Materials Review:** A comprehensive materials review was used to enhance what was learned through the interviews as well as to provide further clarification and details of what, how, and when things were done on the campaigns and by other organizations. A list of materials reviewed can be found in Appendix B.
- **Analysis of Election Results:** Grassroots Solutions analyzed the following types of data for each of the states as well as national trends and statistics: election results and turnout both demographically and geographically, pre-election and exit polling, targeting, micro-targeting, and testing analysis. Much of this analysis was done initially for the Freedom to Marry 2012 Marriage Analysis, but was extended for the goals of this project.

## Phase Two: Feedback on Initial Lessons Learned

- **Collect Initial Lessons Learned:** Once the interviews and materials review was complete, Grassroots Solutions began analyzing the data through the use of Nvivo 9, a sophisticated software program that helped us organize and track the large volume of interview notes, recordings, and materials. Through this process, we began to identify a set of preliminary lessons that emerged from the information gathering phase.
- **Conduct a CAP Strategy Session:** Grassroots Solutions facilitated a strategy session with CAP staff to review the large list of preliminary lessons learned. The group discussed which lessons they were most interested in knowing more about, and this discussion informed further analysis and the development of this report
- **Propose Field Research Options:** In addition to presenting the preliminary lessons learned, Grassroots Solutions and Anzalone Liszt Grove Research presented CAP with a proposal for additional research that would enhance the interview findings. We collectively agreed to conduct further research on the involvement of youth and the faith community in the 2012 marriage elections as well as a deeper exploration of 2012 ad testing to explore impact.

## Phase Three: Analysis, Polling and Focus Group Research

- **Refine Findings and Lessons Learned:** After the CAP strategy session Grassroots Solutions began refining the lessons learned and identifying those core findings that would form the basis of this report as well as additional lessons from the 2012 campaigns that would be most applicable and interesting to the audience of this report.
- **Conduct Field Research:** Anzalone Liszt Grove Research conducted the agreed upon research.
  - Youth Research – This consisted of an online poll among 18-30 year old voters in the four marriage states who voted in support of marriage in 2012; the goal was to understand what motivated young people to turn out to vote for this issue in ways never before seen. There was also an oversampling of those youth surveyed who had a high propensity for activism to determine why they were active in the marriage campaigns and what it would potentially take for them to become involved in other progressive issue fights.
  - Faith Community Research – This research was conducted by using a qualboard technique that is essentially an online focus group. Participants were members of the faith community in the four marriage states who became involved in support of marriage. The goal was to better understand how and why these faith leaders became involved, how their views on this issue evolved, how they were able to reconcile their inner conflicts and what lessons about faith community engagement could be applied to other future campaigns and issues.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

These summaries provide an overview of the findings from the three major sections of this report.

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FOR THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS  
NOVEMBER 2013

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

### Summary of State-by-State 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.

# Summary of Core Findings and Lessons Learned

**Movement Strategy and Infrastructure:** The four marriage victories in 2012 were unprecedented and reflected not only 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.

**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.

**Conversation Campaigns and Long-Form Conversations:** The importance of conversations proved central to every aspect of the 2012 marriage campaigns not just 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 in nature, represented a huge departure from standard campaign practices, but proved essential for persuading conflicted voters. In order to ensure that they could achieve the scale of conversations necessary to win, campaigns developed innovative training and support mechanisms for staff and volunteers.

**Early and Ongoing Investment in Communities of Color Organizing:** While these campaigns approached community of color work differently, had different strategic objectives, and showed progress over past marriage campaigns, most of them could have benefited greatly from an earlier investment in community of color 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, at the right levels, from the communities that campaigns want to engage.

**Faith Programs Built to Scale:** Faith organizing played an essential role in all four of the 2012 marriage campaigns. Hiring experienced and credible staff that came from the faith community added to the success of the 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.

**Additional Lessons Learned:** The analysis of the interview results and the comprehensive material review also identified an additional 24 micro-level lessons that emerged from the 2012 campaigns. These lessons span research, messaging, fundraising, campaign infrastructure, allies and coalition work, and field. They touch on such specific topics as the importance of early public education and the use of legislative sessions to move public opinion, the fostering of “radical hospitality” within campaigns, field as a source of fundraising, strategies for recruiting unconventional allies, and the central role of volunteer leadership development.

# Summary of Polling and Focus Group Findings

## Online Youth Survey 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 social media-reliant. Many check Facebook several times a day, particularly political activists. 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 also 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; many will likely stay home. They care about issues like education, the freedom to marry, and gender equality (among other issues), but will need to be motivated and persuaded to turn out again.

## Online Faith Survey Findings

**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 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 uniformly.

**But they were also motivated by the tenets of their faith that speak to social justice.** Respondents cite love, compassion, justice, and human dignity as reasons for supporting the freedom to marry. They belong to progressive churches that interpret the Bible to wholly support the freedom to marry and many of the leaders were assisted by their congregation 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 priorities.** 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.** There is energy among members of faith to get active in various issues, 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 community. Successful campaigns in the future should seek to replicate this.

# ELECTION RESULTS ANALYSIS

The 2012 election featured four different elections around the freedom to marry. Maine, Maryland, and Washington all saw affirmative ballot measures around state freedom to marry laws while Minnesota fought to prevent a Constitutional amendment that would have restricted marriage equality.

This section of the report provides a broad overview of the four 2012 state campaigns, and then provides a more in-depth analysis of the election results and polling data to show what happened in each state. While much of these state overviews contain observations that are very specific to marriage, they are also important to show how the four campaigns created goals and targets to meet their campaign objectives. This section also highlights voter turnout and demographic trends seen across all four states with an eye toward how these trends might be applicable to other issues on the ballot in future elections. **Much of this analysis is drawn from the 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis.**

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NOVEMBER 2013

# ELECTION RESULTS ANALYSIS

MAINE



**Campaign:** Mainers United for Marriage

**Campaign Manager:** Matt McTighe

**Ballot Measure Name:** Question 1: Citizen Initiative. "An Act to Allow Marriage Licenses for Same-Sex Couples and Protect Religious Freedom"

**Question Wording:** *"Do you want to allow the State of Maine to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples?"*

**Result:** The initiative passed with 52.7% of the vote

The 2012 Mainers United for Marriage campaign was built in the aftermath of a failed 2009 ballot measure. In 2009, opponents of same-sex marriage used a "people's veto" to place a measure on the ballot that overturned the state legislature's attempt to legalize marriage. The pro-freedom-to-marry side lost that election with 47.1% of the vote. The state has a long history of various marriage and anti-discrimination initiatives with five measures on the ballot between 1995 and 2005.

The November 2012 campaign began to take form back in 2010 with a goal of conducting research on best practices and launching a three year public education campaign. The decision to place an initiative on the ballot for 2012 came after the research and when support for the freedom to marry reached the mid-50s in various polls, a level that was determined necessary given the difficulty of passing a proactive initiative. The campaign also underwent an extensive period of additional qualitative research to revamp its message completely, undertaking a more values based message, as well as undertaking a more personal approach that had supporters reaching out to friends and family.

The 2012 initiative was different than the 2009 initiative in that it was a proactive question put before the voters, where the 2009 initiative had been a people's veto of a marriage law previously passed in the state legislature and signed into law by the governor. Equality Maine had to go through a two-step process to get the same-sex marriage question on the ballot. First, they needed to gather enough signatures and then they needed the legislature to approve placing it on the November ballot. They were successful at doing both and in March of 2012, Question 1 was placed on the ballot, and in November 2012, Maine passed Question 1 with 52.7% of the vote.

The prospects for passage of a freedom to marry law in 2012 were good but not certain. With the country recently increasing support for marriage at a rate of roughly 1%-2% a year, and with the prospect of a presidential year turnout and an accompanying slightly younger electorate, the 47% of the vote secured in 2009 seemed a good bet to exceed 50% in 2012.

## Regional Breakdown of the Maine Marriage Vote

The most striking factor in the 2012 marriage results geographically in Maine is the uniform increase in support for the freedom to marry initiative from 2009 when it was defeated. Each of the four regions in the state saw an increase of 5.1% to 5.6% over the support seen in 2009. Each county in the state had an increase of at least 3.8% over 2009. The most anti-marriage county in the state, Aroostook, increased its support from 26.9% in 2009 to 33.1% in 2012. These across-the-board increases in support were very important in the victory, as they reflected either the state simply becoming a little more pro-marriage over the past three years or increases in support through persuasion – or a combination of both.

The following chart shows the marriage results regionally along with results from the recent presidential election, the 2009 marriage initiative, and the two most recent anti-discrimination initiatives in 2005 and 2000. In 2009 and 2005, a “No” vote was the pro-marriage or anti-discrimination position while in 2000, a “Yes” vote represented the anti-discrimination position.

### MAINE VOTE BY REGION

Region	2012	2012 Pres Dem %	Marriage vs. Obama %	2009 Init No %	2012–2009 Marriage %	2005 Init No %	2000 Init Yes %
	Marriage Yes %						
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>	<b>52.7%</b>	<b>57.9%</b>	<b>-5.2%</b>	<b>47.1%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>55.1%</b>	<b>49.6%</b>
<b>South</b>	61.7%	61.6%	0.0%	56.3%	5.4%	62.7%	56.5%
<b>Southeast</b>	49.7%	57.5%	-7.8%	44.6%	5.1%	53.4%	48.4%
<b>Central Coast</b>	49.0%	53.5%	-4.6%	43.8%	5.2%	51.8%	45.5%
<b>Inland</b>	40.3%	54.5%	-14.3%	34.7%	5.6%	44.9%	41.7%

Highlights from the chart include the following:

- **The Southern region** was both the most Democratic (61.6% for Obama) and the most pro-marriage (61.7%). This region is the youngest and best educated in the state, two traits that lead to more marriage support. It also has fewer conservative and evangelical voters, two traits that lead to anti-marriage support. Support for marriage grew 5.4% since 2009, showing that even the most pro-marriage parts of the state still had ample room for growth in support.
- **The Southeast region** contains five counties to the northeast of Portland along the coast. This region has a mix of small towns and coastal communities with a number of industrial areas, such as Lewiston. The region leans Democratic (57.5% for Obama) though it is split on marriage support (49.7%). It has a large number of Catholic voters and older voters from the industrial towns mixed with somewhat younger coastal voters. Marriage support grew at a slightly lower rate in this region than across the state, likely due to these older, more religious voters.
- **The Central Coast region** contains much of the Bangor media market except portions on the western edge of the state. It is a little less Democratic (53.5% for Obama) than other parts of the state, though marriage support of 49% was similar to that in the Southeast region. While perhaps less religious than the Southeast region, it was also more Republican. As Democrats are more likely to be supportive of the freedom to marry, those two features cancelled each other out in comparison to the Southeast.

- The **Inland region** includes the northern part of the state (Aroostook County) and conservative, rural counties on the western side. This region is much more conservative than the other regions, and that is reflected in the low marriage vote (40.3%). The region is very Catholic with a large number of French Canadians. Obama did relatively well in the region (54.5%), though it still had the largest gap between marriage support and Obama's support (-14.3%). The 5.6% improvement in this very conservative region from 2009 was an important factor in the victory in 2012, and an illustration of the importance of increasing margins in areas even if they still fall short of outright victory.

MARYLAND



**Campaign:** Marylanders for Marriage Equality

**Campaign Manager:** Josh Levin

**Ballot Measure Name:** Civil Marriage Protection Act

**Question Wording:** *“Establishes that Maryland's civil marriage laws allow gay and lesbian couples to obtain a civil marriage license, provided they are not otherwise prohibited from marrying; protects clergy from having to perform any particular marriage ceremony in violation of their religious beliefs; affirms that each religious faith has exclusive control over its own theological doctrine regarding who may marry within that faith; and provides that religious organizations and certain related entities are not required to provide goods, services, or benefits to an individual related to the celebration or promotion of marriage in violation of their religious beliefs.”*

**Result:** The initiative passed with 52.4% of the vote

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Civil Marriage Protection Act in March of 2012. A similar effort had failed in the legislature in 2011. Shortly thereafter opponents began gathering signatures to place approval of the bill before the voters on the November ballot. The freedom to marry referendum passed in Maryland with 52.4% of the vote, roughly the same level of support seen in the other states. This support level, however, lagged significantly behind the 63.3% won statewide by President Obama.

Maryland had several unique challenges in passing the freedom to marriage referendum that did not exist in the other states. The state's major LGBT group (Equality Maryland) was in poor financial shape and there would also be competing high profile referenda on the state ballot, including a state version of the Dream Act that would allow in-state tuition at Maryland state colleges for undocumented immigrants. The remaining challenge was that support for the freedom to marry was uncertain among communities of color.

Marylanders for Marriage Equality made the decision to wage a campaign in spite of the various challenges. The strategy for the campaign centered on solidifying support within the Democratic base, making inroads within communities of color, and persuading enough moderate Republicans in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, suburban corridor to put the referendum over the top.

Maryland is unique among the four states in this study in that it is a heavily Democratic-leaning state with a significant African-American population. While Democrats are generally more supportive of the freedom to marry for same-sex couples than other voters, there is a widely held perception that African-American Democrats have a mixed history of support. The Maryland campaign helped show that age and frequency of church attendance are far greater factors than race in terms of support for marriage.

Maryland also had a challenging ballot for the marriage campaign to navigate. The state was not a presidential battleground state so the state’s focus was on a number of competitive issue measures on the ballot. In addition to the marriage initiative, there were two other initiatives, one about tuition for immigrant students (the aforementioned state “Dream Act”) and another about expanding casino gaming (the two sides spent \$93 million on that gambling question alone). While turnout was driven mainly by the presidential campaign, the state’s persuasion attention was primarily on the ballot initiatives.

### Regional Breakdown of the Maryland Marriage Vote

The more interesting comparisons in Maryland look at the differences between the typical partisan vote and support for the marriage measure. While Democrats are generally more supportive of marriage for same-sex couples than Independents or Republicans, there was a smaller difference in Maryland than in the other 2012 marriage states. The main reason for this difference is that African Americans, who overwhelmingly vote Democratic in most partisan elections, are somewhat more split on the issue of same-sex marriage mostly owing to their age and frequency of church attendance.

The following chart shows the Maryland vote by region with comparisons to presidential voting and also with the Dream Act, a state version of which was also on the ballot there in 2012.

#### MARYLAND VOTE BY REGION

Region	2012 Marriage	2012 Pres Dem	Marriage vs. Obama	2012 Dream	Marriage vs. Dream	2012 Marriage Roll-off
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>	<b>52.4%</b>	<b>63.3%</b>	<b>-10.9%</b>	<b>58.9%</b>	<b>-6.4%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Montgomery</b>	65.8%	72.4%	-6.6%	72.3%	-6.5%	4.5%
<b>PG/Charles</b>	48.9%	86.7%	-37.8%	72.4%	-23.5%	5.5%
<b>AA/Howard</b>	54.9%	54.2%	0.8%	53.9%	1.1%	3.0%
<b>Baltimore City</b>	57.2%	88.7%	-31.5%	70.6%	-13.4%	6.3%
<b>Baltimore County</b>	51.7%	58.7%	-7.0%	52.9%	-1.2%	3.4%
<b>Eastern/Southern</b>	43.2%	43.3%	-0.1%	46.7%	-3.5%	4.2%
<b>Western MD</b>	44.1%	40.3%	3.9%	42.4%	1.7%	3.0%

*Note that the above regional chart includes the roll-off percentage for the marriage initiative. Roll-off is defined as the percentage of difference between the number of voters who cast ballots at the top of the ticket (for president) and those who cast ballots for down-ballot races or initiatives. Counties with a smaller roll-off tend to be more engaged on an issue.*

Highlights from the chart include the following:

- **Montgomery:** The most supportive part of the state for marriage was suburban Montgomery County at 65.8%. Montgomery is a Democratic-leaning, increasingly minority county in the Washington, D.C., suburbs. The dominant political force in the county is a progressive upper-income, well-educated electorate. A significant number of non-white voters are also part of this progressive community and were more supportive of marriage than non-white voters in other parts of the state. While the marriage campaign did well in Montgomery, it is possible it could have done even better with a more extensive field program. With a 65%+ level of support throughout the county, a modeling project would have identified a number of supporters for a more robust GOTV program.
- **Prince George's/Charles:** Prince George's has the highest percentage of African-American voters of any county in the state (Baltimore included) and Charles County has a growing African-American population. While this region is heavily Democratic (86.7% for Obama), it voted only 48.9% for marriage. The African-American community in these counties is slightly older with greater religiosity levels than the African-American community in Baltimore and in Montgomery County. The Dream Act was strong in this region as well (72.4%). The Dream Act received a large amount of support from Democrats and from communities of color, while marriage support was more dictated by age and religiosity.
- **Anne Arundel/Howard:** Marriage support was 54.9% in these moderate exurban counties, slightly greater than Obama's 54.2% of the vote. Roll-off was relatively low, at 3.0%, suggesting the counties were highly engaged on the issue. These counties are relatively well educated and young, two demographic factors that contributed to the solid support here.
- **Baltimore City:** Baltimore was more supportive of marriage than the state's other predominantly African-American region (Prince George's County), voting 57.2% "Yes." Baltimore has a smaller share of African-American voters, but the bigger difference on marriage was likely due to an influx of younger white voters into the city. The city also had the largest roll-off in the state, at 6.3%, suggesting that some African Americans were far more excited to vote for President Obama than on marriage. Roll-off was also high in the Prince George's/Charles region, the other majority African-American part of the state.
- **Baltimore County:** This county has a more blue-collar mix of suburban voters than the city or the Washington, D.C., suburbs. The county is less Democratic than the city, with Obama receiving only 58.7% of the vote. Marriage ran behind President Obama, winning only 51.7% of the vote. The Dream Act also fared relatively poorly in the county, winning only 52.9%. The blue-collar voters in Baltimore County tend to be slightly more conservative than voters in other parts of the state. They may also be more religious. Both factors would contribute to a lower marriage vote and a lower Dream Act vote.
- **Eastern/Southern:** The Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland counties had the lowest percentage vote for marriage in the state, at 43.2%. Obama also had a similar percentage of the vote, with 43.3%. The biggest difference between this region and Western Maryland is that the Eastern Shore has a small African-American population. This population was not that supportive of marriage, but it did make the region somewhat more Democratic than Western Maryland. Republican-leaning regions tend to have marriage support that is slightly greater than their partisanship level, as 25% of Republicans supported marriage. This support was largely from younger Republicans, especially women.

- **Western Maryland:** The western part of the state is also conservative, voting “No” on marriage at 44.1%. As noted earlier, this is the most Republican part of the state, with Obama securing a relatively small percentage of the vote, 40.3%. Roll-off was tied with the Anne Arundel/Howard region for lowest in the state, at 3.0%. Votes for marriage ran ahead of Democratic partisanship, largely because of moderate Republicans (25% marriage support). Frederick and surrounding exurban communities are more moderate than some of the more rural counties to the west.

The outcome in Maryland is a good example of why partisanship and marriage results do not parallel each other completely. Partisanship was certainly a factor in support for marriage, but it did not account for younger Republicans who supported marriage, and older, more church-going Democrats who opposed it. Maryland has a large number of the latter category, especially in the African-American community. This demographic is the most significant indicator of why marriage support lagged behind partisanship.

MINNESOTA



**Campaign:** Minnesotans United for All Families

**Campaign Manager:** Richard Carlbom

**Ballot Measure Name:** Constitutional Amendment I – Recognition of marriage solely between one man and one woman

**Question Wording:** *“Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota?”*

**Result:** The proposed constitutional amendment was defeated with 52.6% of the ballots cast voting “No” or being left blank.

Minnesotans United for All Families was formed by two statewide LGBT organizations named Project 515 and OutFront Minnesota along with the national organizations Freedom to Marry, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The Minnesotans United strategy was to run a deeply relational campaign, helping voters make their decision based upon their own self-interest and not on behalf of their LGBT friends and family. The campaign also decided to run a campaign on a massive scale, building a field operation capable of engaging large number of voters in personal conversations while also conducting a large, sustained media campaign over the final months prior to the election.

Minnesota was the only state among the four in 2012 where the issue on the ballot was not to legalize marriage. In Minnesota, the threat was a constitutional amendment to define marriage as being between one man and one woman. A “No” vote on the amendment was a vote in favor of the freedom to marry. The Minnesota campaign adopted a strategy of making the case FOR marriage, in order to get voters to vote “No” on the amendment. This was atypical for “No” campaigns in the past and was a huge factor in their victory as well as helping to set the stage for the state legislature to legalize marriage for same-sex couples, which they subsequently did on May 13, 2013.

A unique aspect of constitutional amendment votes in Minnesota is that they require a majority of ballots cast to pass. Blank ballots are counted as “No” votes. Because of this, a “Yes” campaign tends to be more difficult than a “No” campaign, especially with complicated ballot measures that often lead to a greater number of blank ballots.

Minnesota leans Democratic though not overwhelmingly so. In 2012, President Obama won the state relatively easily, with 53.9% of the major party vote, down 1.3% from the 55.2% he won in 2008. Overall, Democratic performance in Minnesota is 52.5%, though it should be noted that Republican candidates generally fare better for state offices (such as governor), than they do for national offices, as Republican national candidates are often too conservative for Minnesota voters. Republicans did have enough strength to take control of both houses of the state legislature in 2010, though not enough to hold the legislature in the more Democratic presidential election of 2012.

The Democratic-leaning electorate was seen as helpful in fighting against the constitutional amendment, though there are enough older and more church-going Minnesotans that the Democratic nature of the state alone could not guarantee a win in the amendment fight.

Several other factors make Minnesota elections unique. First, it is one of the few states with Election Day registration. (Maine also has Election Day registration, a factor that contributed to its own high turnout.) In Minnesota, Election Day registration contributes to the highest turnout of any state in the country, and also has the potential to produce “surge” elections. A turnout surge can benefit either or neither of the major political parties as recent elections can attest: 1990 (Democrat Paul Wellstone), 1994 (Republican Rod Grams), 1998 (Independent Jesse Ventura), 2006 (Democrats take control of legislature), and 2010 (Republicans take control of legislature).

A final factor that makes Minnesota unique and that came more into play with the marriage amendment is that Minnesota’s rural areas have typically voted more Democratic than have rural areas in other similar Midwestern states. Rural areas around the country are typically more conservative and more Republican than urban and suburban areas.

### Regional Breakdown of the Minnesota Marriage Vote

The “No” vote against the anti-marriage amendment followed typical geographic patterns in Minnesota, with urban regions most opposed, suburban regions leaning against the amendment, and rural regions supporting the amendment. The opposition and support patterns were somewhat affected by partisanship, with the more Democratic regions being more opposed to the amendment. Partisanship and marriage support diverged, however, with moderate suburban regions showing more opposition to the amendment than their partisanship might indicate, and rural regions showing higher levels of support for the amendment in relation to partisanship. Age and religiosity appear to be as important as partisanship in explaining the regional marriage vote.

The following chart shows the same 11 Minnesota regions as presented in the turnout chart along with the “No” vote results from the marriage amendment. We have also included the presidential election results and the “No” vote from the voter ID amendment that was also on the Minnesota ballot in 2012. The “No” vote in each of the two amendments represents the progressive position. Finally, we have also included the percent of blank ballots on the anti-marriage amendment. These blank ballots are included in the “No” tallies, though looking at them separately provides some clue as to the increased difficulty of passing a marriage amendment if a “Yes” vote had been required.

## MINNESOTA VOTE BY REGION

Region	2012 Marriage	2012 Pres Dem	Marriage vs. Obama	2012 Voter ID	Marriage vs. Voter ID	2012 Marriage Blank
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>	<b>52.6%</b>	<b>53.9%</b>	<b>-1.3%</b>	<b>53.8%</b>	<b>-1.2%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
<b>Minneapolis</b>	78.0%	82.9%	-4.9%	79.2%	-1.2%	2.1%
<b>St. Paul</b>	70.2%	78.4%	-8.2%	72.3%	-2.1%	2.6%
<b>Duluth</b>	65.6%	69.4%	-3.8%	65.2%	0.4%	1.1%
<b>Hennepin Suburbs</b>	59.4%	55.2%	4.2%	54.6%	4.8%	1.6%
<b>Ramsey Suburbs</b>	56.6%	57.2%	-0.6%	55.5%	1.1%	1.5%
<b>Inner Suburbs</b>	53.4%	50.3%	3.1%	48.6%	4.8%	1.1%
<b>Exurbs – Inner</b>	48.1%	41.8%	6.3%	43.8%	4.3%	1.1%
<b>Exurbs – Outer</b>	43.1%	43.4%	-0.3%	46.9%	-3.8%	1.0%
<b>Rural Northeast</b>	46.3%	58.7%	-12.4%	58.0%	-11.7%	1.1%
<b>Rural South</b>	47.8%	52.6%	-4.8%	52.6%	-4.8%	1.2%
<b>Rural West</b>	36.5%	44.9%	-8.4%	48.8%	-12.3%	1.3%

### Highlights from the various regions are as follows:

- **Urban regions** were strongly supportive of marriage, though not quite as supportive as their partisanship. In Minneapolis, the pro-marriage “No” vote was 78.0%, slightly behind the 82.9% support for President Obama and the 81.5% Democratic performance. In St. Paul, the “No” vote was 70.2%, even further behind Obama’s performance (78.4%). St. Paul is a somewhat older city with a larger Catholic population than Minneapolis, two factors that might explain the difference. In Duluth, the “No” vote was 65.6%, again, about 4% behind Obama. Duluth voters are somewhat older than Twin Cities voters, however, in that light, this relatively narrow gap is impressive. Minneapolis and St. Paul did have the highest rate of blank ballots in the state. This might be a concern in a future amendment fight if a “Yes” vote is required.
- **The suburban vote** leaned toward “No” in all of the regions. The Hennepin County suburbs are the wealthiest suburbs and were the most supportive at 59.4%. Even Republican-leaning parts of Hennepin were supportive of marriage, reflecting the moderate nature of those voters. Support in Ramsey County was somewhat less at 56.6% and lagged behind Obama’s vote by a small amount. The Inner Suburbs vote of 53.4% exceeded Obama by 3.1%, showing some support among Republicans. Washington County ran furthest ahead of Obama of the three Inner Suburbs counties.
- **The inner exurbs** voted 48.1% against the amendment, while the outer suburbs voted only 43.1% “No.” The inner exurbs ran significantly ahead of Obama (+4.3%), showing a number of Republicans voting “No.” The highest rate of cross-over voting against the amendment occurred in Carver and Scott counties. The outer exurbs told a different story, with the anti-amendment vote trailing Obama in all the counties outside of Stearns and Benton (St. Cloud).
- The number of blank ballots on both amendment questions was historically small. The marriage amendment had a blank ballot percent of 1.4% while the voter ID amendment was only slightly higher (1.7%). Regions with the most marriage support (the Twin Cities and the Hennepin County suburbs) also had the largest share of blank ballots. Rural regions that had lower marriage support also had low levels of blank ballots. The marriage campaign benefitted from this larger roll-off as the votes counted effectively as “No” votes. This would have been a bigger concern if the pro-freedom-to-marry side of the vote had been a “Yes” vote. The number of blank ballots was much lower than the campaign had predicted (around 3.7%) and the number in the most recent ballot campaign (4.9%). The campaign still reached its vote goals, so the low estimate of blank ballots did not cause a problem.

In 2012, the Washington legislature passed and Governor Gregoire signed into law SB 6239, which legalized same-sex marriage. The law was to take effect 90 days after the end of the legislative session, but opponents blocked its implementation by collecting the signatures necessary to put the measure to a popular vote. November 6, 2012, Referendum 74 won with 53.7% of the vote, the highest vote percentage seen among the four states.



**Campaign:** Washington United for Marriage

**Campaign Manager:** Zach Silk

**Ballot Measure Name:** State Referendum 74 to affirm Engrossed Senate Substitute Bill 6239

**Question Wording:** *"The legislature passed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6239 concerning marriage for same-sex couples, modified domestic-partnership law, and religious freedom, and voters have filed a sufficient referendum petition on this bill. This bill would allow same-sex couples to marry, preserve domestic partnerships only for seniors, and preserve the right of clergy or religious organizations to refuse to perform, recognize, or accommodate any marriage ceremony. Should this bill be approved or rejected?"*

**Result:** The referendum passed with 53.7% of the vote

In 2009, Washington had considered an initiative on domestic partnership. While the turnout in that race was much smaller than the presidential turnout in 2012, the 2009 results do track fairly closely with the 2012 results. That initiative also passed with slightly more than 53% of the vote (53.2%), although support for domestic partnerships was significantly higher at that time.

Washington United for Marriage was the coalition formed both to pass the initial law through the state legislature and then to win the subsequent referendum on the law. The eventual campaign to pass referendum 74 had three strategic imperatives: to consistently drive a positive core message; to respond immediately to the most potent opposition attacks; and to preempt selected opposition messages including those on domestic partnerships and religious freedom.

Washington is the second-most Democratic among the four states that had marriage initiatives in 2012, trailing only Maryland, and it may be trending a little more Democratic as time passes. While it had been a presidential battleground state in 2004 with John Kerry on the ballot, President Obama won easily the last two elections with 58.8% of the vote in 2008 and 57.6% of the vote in 2012.

Washington's most unique election rule is its all mail-in balloting, which is similar in many ways to the process in neighboring Oregon. Mail-in balloting is one of the factors behind the relatively high turnout in the state. This is helpful to passing an initiative on marriage, because, as was noted previously, a high turnout typically implies a younger electorate.

## Regional Breakdown of the Washington Marriage Vote

The marriage results are similar to the basic vote patterns in the other three states, with urban areas being most supportive, suburban areas leaning “Yes,” and rural areas leaning “No.” The domestic partnership results from 2009 provide an interesting view of how support for the freedom to marry might be evolving in the state.

The following chart provides a regional snapshot of the Washington marriage results with a look at President Obama’s 2012 results along with the 2009 domestic partnership initiative as points of comparison.

### WASHINGTON VOTE BY REGION

Region	2012 Marriage	2012 Pres Dem	Marriage vs. Obama	2009 Domestic Partner	2012 Marriage vs. 2009 DP	2012 Marriage Roll-off
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>	<b>53.7%</b>	<b>57.6%</b>	<b>-3.9%</b>	<b>53.2%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
<b>King</b>	67.0%	70.8%	-3.8%	68.0%	-1.0%	2.5%
<b>Northwest WA</b>	53.4%	57.5%	-4.2%	52.3%	1.1%	2.7%
<b>S Puget Sound</b>	51.3%	56.8%	-5.5%	50.3%	1.0%	2.6%
<b>Southwest WA</b>	45.0%	49.2%	-4.2%	43.5%	1.5%	3.0%
<b>Peninsula</b>	52.1%	55.8%	-3.7%	52.9%	-0.8%	2.2%
<b>Eastern WA</b>	42.2%	44.6%	-2.4%	38.4%	3.8%	2.3%
<b>Central WA</b>	38.1%	41.6%	-3.5%	36.1%	2.0%	2.7%
<b>Tri-Cities</b>	35.6%	36.6%	-1.1%	33.9%	1.7%	2.2%

Highlights by region are as follows:

- **King County:** The marriage amendment won 67.0% in King County, the highest percentage of any region in the state. While this support percentage is impressive, it did represent a small decline of 1.0% from the domestic partnership support seen in 2009. The decline in support compared to 2009 probably does not mean much and might be an artifact of the higher presidential year turnout. Interestingly, marriage did run relatively close to Obama’s performance (-3.8%) compared to the marriage results in other large cities and suburban counties in Washington. Marriage lagged somewhat behind Obama (-11.3%) in the 37th legislative district, the district with the highest non-white population. This gap, however, is much smaller than the 30%+ gap seen in African-American districts in Maryland. Roll-off was relatively small in King (2.5%), another positive result for the marriage campaign.
- **Northwest:** The northwestern region leaned toward marriage, with a 53.4% vote. Support in Snohomish was 53.0%, though it trailed Obama by 5.7%. This gap is most likely due to the presence of some blue-collar moderate Democrats in the Everett area, the largest city in Snohomish. Whatcom County (Bellingham) in the far north of the region had slightly greater marriage support at 55.1%.
- **South Puget Sound:** This suburban region to the south of King was somewhat more competitive with a marriage vote of only 51.3%. The bulk of the region consists of Pierce County where marriage narrowly lost at 49.6%. As in Everett, Pierce (Tacoma) contains a large number of blue-collar Democrats, many of them Catholic. The Pierce vote trailed Obama’s percent by 6.1%, suggesting that some of these conservative Democrats did not vote for marriage. Thurston County was more supportive of marriage, voting 56.1%.

- **Southwest:** The southwestern region is a mix of the Portland, Oregon, suburbs and rural counties. This region generated 45.0% support for marriage. Clark County, the suburban Portland-area county, had slightly greater support (47.0%), though it lagged behind the support seen in the Seattle suburbs. Cowlitz County had a relatively low level of support (42.0%), more than 10% behind President Obama's percent.
- **Peninsula:** This region leaned toward marriage with a 52.1% vote. Kitsap County (Bremerton) had slightly greater support (54.0%), narrowly trailing Obama's 56.0%. The other counties in the region, except for tiny Jefferson, all leaned slightly against the marriage initiative.
- **Eastern:** The eastern part of Washington is relatively conservative, with even Spokane County (44.3%) leaning against marriage. The region as a whole had 42.2% support with most other counties (other than Whitman) having marriage support below 40%. One interesting aspect of the vote in eastern Washington is that support increased 3.8% over the 2009 support for domestic partnership, with an even greater increase (4.5%) in Spokane.
- **Central:** The central Washington region leaned heavily against marriage, with only 38.1% support. The region did see a 2.0% gain in support compared to the 2009 domestic partnership initiative, though that gain was smaller than in eastern Washington. The largest county in the region, Yakima, had an even lower level of support for marriage (36.4%).
- **Tri-Cities:** The most conservative and least supportive region in the state is the Tri-Cities region, with a small 35.6% level of support. The largest county in the region, Benton, had 36.8% marriage support, though that support exceeded the Obama vote by 0.5%. Franklin was heavily against marriage with support of only 31.3%.

# Cross-State Turnout, Demographics, and Voter Movement

This section of the report looks at the election results and polling across all four states to identify common and relevant patterns in relation to voter turnout and general demographic trends. These patterns will hopefully inform future research and campaign planning around the freedom to marry and other progressive ballot fights.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

## Cross State Overall Turnout Finding

Turnout across all four states was not as high as in 2008 – the previous Presidential election year – though beneath the surface, all of the states did show relatively good turnout in the counties and cities with the most support for the freedom to marry. All four states were among the top 13 in the country in terms of turnout of eligible voters, though these states all traditionally have higher turnout. Minnesota and Maine both have Election Day registration, and all of the states except Minnesota have generally more liberal early-voting rules. Some of the more important observations regarding turnout across all four states include the following:

- All four of the 2012 marriage states experienced relatively high voter turnout in 2012. This is an advantage for freedom to marry campaigns where better turnout is almost always positive, as it tends to produce an electorate with a larger share of younger voters. Moving forward, it is worth looking at other states with a higher-than-average national turnout as a significant factor in picking the next states in which to advance.
- All four states had a small decline in turnout from 2008 to 2012 and all but Maryland had an even greater decline from 2004. The decline in turnout is mostly due to the states being less competitive at the presidential level and not due to a lack of intensity and interest around the freedom to marry ballot measure.
- The freedom to marry campaigns did have a positive effect on turnout even within the high turnout presidential election year. All states except Maryland (which had fewer resources to invest in field operations) saw higher than expected turnout in base geographic areas, those counties and cities with the highest percentage support for the freedom to marry. This is a sign that the campaigns with larger field programs were effective at increasing turnout within their most supportive geographic areas.
- The top of the ticket impacts partisan turnout, meaning the stronger the candidates each party runs the greater the potential for impacting marriage or other progressive initiatives. Trying to pass the freedom to marry in a state with a less viable Democratic candidate at the top of the ticket would be challenging. Barack Obama won all four states in 2012, and his presence on the ticket had a positive impact on marriage turnout as his campaign inspired more Democratic turnout in general. One factor in deciding whether to place a progressive initiative on the ballot should be the impact (positively or negatively) of the top of the ticket on the composition of the electorate. The top of ticket impact is not necessarily a positive in a presidential election year as it might be a negative if a Republican were winning that race (as in 2004).

The following table shows the comparative turnout across all four states for the 2004, 2008, and 2012 elections.

### COMPARATIVE TURNOUT (TO) ACROSS ALL FOUR STATES

State	Maine	Maryland	Minnesota	Washington
<b>2004 Eligible</b>	1,003,792	3,797,264	3,609,185	4,272,914
<b>2004 Reg.</b>	1,023,962	3,070,337	3,559,391	3,508,208
<b>2004 Ballots</b>	740,744	2,395,791	2,842,910	2,883,499
<b>2004 Turnout %</b>	72.3%	78.0%	79.9%	82.2%
<b>2004 VEP* TO%</b>	73.8%	63.1%	78.8%	67.5%
<b>2008 Eligible</b>	1,036,242	3,925,117	3,740,142	4,561,163
<b>2008 Reg.</b>	994,153	3,428,935	3,741,832	3,630,118
<b>2008 Ballots</b>	744,542	2,661,905	2,920,032	3,036,878
<b>2008 Turnout %</b>	74.9%	77.6%	78.0%	83.7%
<b>2008 VEP TO %</b>	71.9%	67.8%	78.1%	66.6%
<b>2012 Eligible</b>	1,047,901	4,091,886	3,876,752	4,877,969
<b>2012 Reg.</b>	984,220	3,694,539	3,611,892	3,904,959
<b>2012 Ballots</b>	724,758	2,734,176	2,950,779	3,172,939
<b>2012 Turnout %</b>	73.6%	74.0%	81.7%	81.3%
<b>2012 VEP TO %</b>	69.2%	66.8%	76.1%	65.0%
<b>2012 – 2008 VEP* TO</b>	-2.7%	-1.0%	-2.0%	-1.5%
<b>2012 – 2004 VEP* TO</b>	-4.6%	3.7%	-2.7%	-2.4%

*\*VEP = Voting Eligible Population. The VEP represents the voting-age population of a state (adults age 18+) minus any adults not eligible such as non-citizens or felons who have not had their voting rights reinstated.*

The final two rows on the chart compare turnout of all eligible voters in 2012 to turnout in 2008 and 2004. All four states had a small decline from 2008 to 2012. The largest decline was in Maine followed by Minnesota. This decline is most likely due to the excitement and interest (or lack thereof) in the presidential race. None of the four states was a battleground presidential target in 2012, and only Minnesota was a target at some point during 2008 (early in the year, not late). This shows that freedom to marry can be achieved even in states where there is not a record turnout, though turnout was still relatively high across these states.

The comparisons with 2004 are also worth noting. The 2004 election had a higher turnout than either 2008 or 2012, as there was a larger pool of battleground states coupled with better turnout on the Republican side. Republican turnout was mediocre in 2008 and not much better in 2012. Thus, the 2004 election was a recent high-water mark for turnout with both sides being engaged in a close election. All states saw a decline in turnout in 2008 compared to 2004, except for Maryland. The Maryland increase in 2008 was most likely due to excitement over the election of the nation's first African-American president coupled with some early voting-rule changes that made it easier for people to vote.

One outgrowth of the decline in turnout compared to 2004 was that all of these states had mediocre Republican turnout and relatively good Democratic turnout. This helped produce electorates in 2012 that were slightly more in favor of the freedom to marry compared to the electorates in 2004. If a stronger Republican candidate for president had been on the ballot in 2012, it is likely that marriage support would have decreased slightly (most likely less than 1%) as Republican and anti-marriage turnout would have been greater. This means that the strength of the top of the ticket on both sides is likely to impact marriage when it is on the ballot.

Turnout will be an important factor in future progressive ballot initiative campaigns, though perhaps not quite to the same degree as with a marriage campaign. Support for the freedom to marry is highest among younger voters, a group with the lowest expected turnout of any age group. Thus a higher turnout electorate is also likely to be a younger electorate. Higher turnout is likely to be beneficial to winning other progressive ballot fights if the issue is one where support is greatest among younger voters. This is likely to be true with other socially progressive issues (such as marijuana legalization or contraception) but may not be true with other issues (such as taxes or collective bargaining).

## Impact of the Presidential Election Year

The presidential election year had a significant impact on the turnout seen in all four of the 2012 marriage ballot campaigns. Presidential elections typically have a much higher rate of turnout even when the individual presidential election states are not competitive. In 2012, national turnout was 58.7% of eligible voters while in 2010 turnout was much lower at 41.7% of eligible voters. All 50 states had a higher turnout in the presidential year as compared to the 2010 off-year election.

The higher turnout presidential electorate is by default better for passing a freedom to marry initiative than the lower turnout off-year electorate. The key difference is that the presidential electorate is much younger than the off-year electorate. The share of the national electorate aged 18-24 increased to 8.5% in 2012 from only 5.9% in 2010. The same is true for voters aged 25-44 who comprised 30.0% of the 2012 electorate after accounting for only 27.2% of the 2010 electorate. With support for the freedom to marry strongest among younger voters, the presidential electorate has a stronger base of support for marriage equality than the off-year electorate.

A summary of the impact of presidential elections on turnout includes the following:

- Presidential elections have a higher turnout than any other comparable election. While turnout will still vary based upon the competitiveness of the presidential election (nationally and within each state) and by what else is on the ballot (like a freedom to marry initiative), the presidential election has a bigger impact on turnout than any other individual factor.
- 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 and mobilizing distinct from GOTV.
- Progressive ballot initiatives that have a younger base of support will have a small advantage in a presidential election year. The initiatives with a younger base of support tend to be socially progressive initiatives. Progressive initiatives with more support among older voters may not have the same advantage in presidential election years.
- Campaigns should place a higher priority on increasing turnout in non-presidential election years. In presidential election years the level of turnout is automatically higher. While the 2012 campaigns had a small positive impact on that turnout, the potential exists for freedom to marry campaigns to have a much larger impact on turnout in non-presidential elections.

## Cross-State Demographics and Voter Movement

While each state has its own unique characteristics, it is important to realize that the base of support for freedom to marry is consistent among various demographic groups. It would be possible to do an excellent job of predicting marriage support in a state if one knows the relative age of the voters in the electorate, the education level of those voters, and the frequency of their attendance at religious services.

The marriage campaigns may provide some lessons for other progressive ballot measure in terms of putting together a winning coalition. Polling can help determine whether support for an issue is consistent within demographic groups across state lines. If that is true, the campaign should be able to use that national data to help build a winning base of support within a particular state.

This section will look at the support for the freedom to marry in 2012 within demographic groups across each state. It will also look at the types of voters who were persuaded over the course of the campaign.

### Demographic Overview

The largest drivers of marriage support and opposition in 2012 were as follows:

- **Age:** As several years of nationwide polling have demonstrated, age is the biggest driver of marriage support. Younger voters are simply more supportive and older voters are less supportive. Age is the key reason why support for the freedom to marry is growing nationally by 1% to 2% a year, as older voters leave the electorate and are replaced by younger voters. There is no way to set a standard goal across states for support from younger voters as the path to victory in each state is unique – some states may require an even higher percentage of support from younger voters to offset other demographic challenges. However, the four 2012 races show that support among younger voters was in the 68% to 70% range and that does provide a good baseline target for moving forward. What is most important for the future is ensuring that these younger voters retain their support as they age. Today's 70% supportive 25-year-olds need to become the next decade's 70% supportive 35-year-olds.
- **Religiosity:** Church attendance is also a hugely important factor and helps explain some of the differences across demographic and partisan categories. Voters who attend church services regularly are far more likely to oppose the freedom to marry. In terms of persuasion, the 2012 campaigns had the most success targeting and moving voters who go to church occasionally, not voters who go to church regularly.
- **Education Level:** Education is another important factor behind marriage support, though not quite as important as age. Voters with higher levels of education are more likely to support the freedom to marry, while voters with a high school education are less likely. The education level of the country has improved over the past two decades and is one of the reasons why support for the freedom to marry has increased.
- **Partisanship:** Partisanship is also an important factor in that Democrats are much more likely to be supporters of the freedom to marry than Republicans. Younger Democrats are more supportive than younger Republicans, though both groups tend to be more supportive than older Democrats and Republicans respectively. Partisanship should be viewed in combination with age and religiosity.
- **Republicans:** Republican support for marriage ranged from 15% to 25% across the four states in 2012. Republicans appear to be less persuadable than Independents on the freedom to marry, as support did not increase among Republicans in any of the states over the course of the campaign. However, national polling in 2013 indicates that Republican support for marriage is increasing overall as younger, more supportive Republicans enter the electorate. This polling has shown Republican support increasing

to greater than 30%, though not within the context of a competitive election. In 2012, Republican support dropped notably in Maine and Maryland over the course of the election. Republican support will likely be a significant factor as we seek to win marriage in states that are less Democratic than the four states with successful marriage initiatives in 2012.

A far less significant factor of marriage support and oppositions in 2012 was race, dispelling the previous held “myth” that race is a key determinative factor on marriage.

- **Race:** Race is a less important factor in marriage support. For Example, while support among African Americans is somewhat less than among white voters, the differences are much smaller or disappear when we look within demographic groups at other factors. Church attendance tends to be the dominant factor impacting support. An additional important finding around race is that support for marriage was consistently higher among younger voters and in urban and suburban precincts across race. This finding applies to other potential issue campaigns because it shows the importance of turnout among younger voters of all races as an important foundation for building a progressive majority on a specific issue.

## Voter Movement

The four marriage campaigns had an effect on the voters they contacted. While it is difficult to quantify the exact number of voters moved by the campaigns, there is evidence that some voter groups changed their support over the course of the campaign. The evidence of voter movement comes in a variety of forms. First, it is possible to see broad groups of voters moving in the demographic crosstabs of polls over the course of the campaign:

- In **Maine**, a large gender gap developed over the course of the campaign. More than 60% of women supported marriage equality over the course of the campaign, while support from men declined. The drop in support was almost exclusively among Republicans.
- In **Minnesota**, both Democrats and Independents increased their opposition to the marriage ban amendment, while Republicans remained solidly for the ban. Virtually all of the growth in support occurred among voters who do not go to church weekly.
- In **Maryland**, African-American support increased after President Obama’s declaration, though some of that increase dissipated later in the campaign.
- In **Washington**, support also grew among Democrats as it decreased among Republicans. Washington also saw growth in support among less religious voters.
- **Across the states**, Democrats in general moved toward greater marriage support while Republicans moved against it.

We also had access to some internal campaign data that indicated which voters moved or were persuaded from the volunteer calling programs. In Maine, the most positive movement occurred among women, voters age 18-49, and among Democratic and un-enrolled (independent) voters.

Across all of this data there is a common thread of movements occurring among Democrats and Independents but not among Republicans. This shows that campaigns have identified messages that move Democrats, Independents, and less frequent church-goers. But, moving forward, marriage campaigns need to continue to work on identifying messages that speak to Republicans and frequent church goers.

## Demographic and Voter Movement Conclusions

- Support for the freedom to marry was consistent across states within demographic groups such as age, religiosity, gender, and education level. These basic demographics should consistently provide a preliminary sense of the level of marriage support in a state.
- 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.
- Other progressive ballot initiative campaigns should look to see whether there is a pattern of support on their issue across states. If so, they may be able to look at past campaigns and national polling to help model their path to victory. In addition, it will be easier for those campaigns to build inexpensive micro-targeting support and persuasion models if there is data from other states that is predictive of support in their states.
- Race is a less significant factor in marriage support than other demographics such as age and religiosity. While African Americans show somewhat lower support for the freedom to marry than white voters, much of the difference in support is due to a higher level of church attendance among African Americans and some recent immigrant communities.
- 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 Democratic and Independent support while maintaining their Republican support. This may be a helpful strategy for other progressive campaigns to employ 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.

The lessons learned by the four freedom to marry campaigns around age and religiosity are particularly important as we look toward the future and the prospect of passing other progressive initiatives. Campaigns will need to organize and reach out to younger voters and faith groups, as these groups will be crucial in many states to providing the critical votes needed to pass progressive initiatives.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

## CORE FINDINGS

This section of the report 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. In developing these five core findings it was important to weigh what we heard across all of the interviews as well as the project objectives. We took into particular account what we heard from the early phase of the project when we talked to national movement leaders from issues other than marriage about what they would find most interesting and applicable to their particular movement.

These five core findings are followed, in the next section of the report, by a set of more micro-level but still unique lessons from the 2012 campaign that can also inform future electoral and advocacy efforts on both LGBT and other progressive issues.

ANALYSIS OF THE 2012 MARRIAGE CAMPAIGNS  
FOR THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS  
NOVEMBER 2013

### Movement Leader Questions

An important component of this project was to talk to national leaders from other progressive movements to learn what they would find most helpful and interesting from the study of the 2012 marriage campaigns in relation to their own movement and issues. In addition to finding out what leaders were most interested in learning, we also wanted to know what they considered their biggest obstacles to advancing their particular movements. Learning about their interests and obstacles helped guide us while we conducted the interviews and focused the scope of the report's findings.

While the leaders had a wide range of questions, there was a universal desire to understand what made these campaigns unique above and beyond the typical best practices of campaigns. There was also significant interest in learning how these four state campaigns were able to overcome the long string of defeats the marriage movement had suffered at the ballot box before 2012. In essence, many leaders were posing the fundamental question of how do you most effectively build to and leverage movement moments. In addition to these big questions, there were also more specific questions that emerged around an array of topics. While putting together the findings and lessons learned for this report, those questions were given a great deal of weight.



The following are the top questions that rose to the surface through our conversations with national movement leaders organized by topic:

- 1. Movement Building:** What did we learn that could help give a roadmap for building a campaign that is three years away? How do you start a narrative that begins at the local level and resonates all the way up to the Supreme Court or Congress? How do you balance building a movement and winning campaigns?
- 2. Campaign Structure:** Did these campaigns do anything unique in the structure of the campaign that we can learn from? How did the campaigns and leaders become nimble enough to roll with changes and challenges? What was the role of campaign professionals and consultants in the campaigns?
- 3. Messaging and Research:** How did the campaigns use messaging to change the hearts and minds of voters and also keep moving the rights conversation forward? What were the new and innovative techniques used to target voters?
- 4. Field:** What made the field programs so successful and was it tied to using either a paid or volunteer program? How did the campaigns motivate the young voters and get them to think of this as a sea change? How did the conversational nature of the campaigns change the field operation?
- 5. Coalition Building:** How did the campaigns get so many faith leaders to come out publically and when did that organizing start? What did these campaigns learn from organizing in communities of color? What were the key constituencies outside of the LGBT community that really made a difference in these campaigns, and how did they go about getting their support?
- 6. Fundraising:** How did the funders make decisions about who to fund and who not to fund? What led to the incredible fundraising success of these campaigns?

The four marriage victories in 2012 were unprecedented and reflected not only 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.

One of the most interesting aspects of the successful 2012 marriage campaigns is the story that precedes them. When interviewing progressive movement leaders for this analysis, and inquiring about what they hoped to learn, we heard specific questions, over and over again, such as: “How did this happen all at once in 2012?” “How did each of these, very politically-different states, manage to run campaigns that were similar in message, discipline, and scale?” “What was the shift between the high profile losses on marriage in 2008 and 2009 in California and Maine, and what happened in 2012? A key element to answering these questions lies in the foundation of the laser-focused marriage movement strategy and the cohesive, collaborative, and unified national infrastructure that was developed around that strategy.

## 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 movements 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 and had identified a clear vision of the ultimate objective (securing a Supreme Court decision that grants the freedom to marry at a federal level), a defined 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), and the vehicles and resources that would be needed to effectively carry out the campaign-oriented strategy (a national campaign organization, centralized research and messaging strategy, coordination among national and state partners, state-based campaigns and significant financial backing).

*“If you can’t say what winning is – in a way that’s inspiring and compelling and attainable – you can’t rally people and you won’t be able to measure your own success, inspire people, or shape strategy.”*

*“We just felt like our opponents were more nimble and much more efficient. Despite our best efforts, they beat us in Prop 8 and they beat us in Maine in 2009, and we were not up to the task of pushing back.”*

*“Having that national research to build off of allowed our campaign to have a solid starting point for message testing. I believe we were able to hit the ground running with a solid message framework much faster than any campaign in the past.”*

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 will be for the movement. 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 like securing president Obama’s endorsement – provided the essential “glue” that held everything else together.

## Learning From a Series of Losses

By 2010, the movement for the freedom to marry had experienced some gains through courts and legislative bodies; however the losses at the ballot box were significant. After 31 losses and zero lasting wins, 30 states had constitutionally banned the freedom to marry. The losses of the 2008 “No on 8” campaign in California, and Maine’s 2009 “Yes on One” Campaign were especially devastating, as there had been a sense in both state that victories were achievable. These losses caused national movement leaders to regroup and take stock.

Because the marriage movement experienced these losses within the context of a larger, longer-term, and generally agreed-upon strategy, the leaders of the marriage movement were able to see these losses as not just painful, but as opportunities for learning and improvement. This commitment to learning together as a movement was widely seen as an essential prerequisite for the victories that were subsequently achieved in 2012. The ongoing learning and regrouping were very much tied to the long-term focus and clarity of vision and objectives.

## A More Centralized National Campaign: Freedom to Marry

In late 2009, national leaders from across the LGBT and marriage movements came together to examine existing strategy, determine what was still missing in terms of knowledge, vehicles, and resources, and plot a course forward in furtherance of the established vision and strategy of winning in states and moving opinion nationally. Historically, national marriage advocacy and LGBT organizations worked together fairly loosely, employed somewhat varying strategies and, at times, faced competition around resources.

The key objectives to coming together after 2010, were to focus on creating a stronger national infrastructure, analyze existing research, conduct new research, pool funding resources, assess readiness of states to take on marriage, and better support state campaigns in fighting for the freedom to marry. This infrastructure was key to the marriage victories of 2012 because campaigns were able to build off of existing, ground-breaking research and had a strong support system to turn to for planning and resources.

One of the four essential movement “elements” is identifying vehicles to move the strategy. In thinking more about this question, the organizations developed a vision of centralized support in the form of a national campaign entity. The goal of this entity would be to conduct research, identify tactics for winning on marriage, get buy-in from other relevant organizations, and then push these outward to state-based campaigns. This campaign entity – Freedom to Marry (led by long-time movement leader and strategist Evan Wolfson) – functioned as a strategy center working closely with national partners such as HRC, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and others to catalyze and guide funders and state organizations in hopes that they would lend their work and their support to a combined effort in furtherance of the unified long-term strategy. Freedom to Marry went from being an internal movement center to being the national campaign hub and data repository critical to running more effective campaigns across several states at once.

## President Obama and Shifting the National Narrative

*“President Obama’s announcement in the spring of 2012 was a game changer for us. The timing and impact of that announcement couldn’t have been better.”*

In addition to working with the individual campaigns, one important aspect in moving forward a national strategy and narrative was to create positive momentum for marriage, through a series of campaigns that focused on gaining support of key organizations or individuals. For example, an effort (much of which was led by Freedom to Marry) to get the Democratic Party to adopt a freedom to marry plank for their 2012 platform also helped build momentum for a “Mr. President, Say I Do” strategy to get President Obama to come out publicly in support of the freedom to marry as well as other prominent national business leaders from across the country. While the ongoing support of mayors and national business leaders was important to the progress of the movement, nothing moved the dial of support quite like the President’s proclamation of support in May of 2012. His announcement was felt all over the country, but it had direct impact on the 2012 Maryland campaign where a 17-point spike in support for the freedom to marry followed the President’s announcement.

## Pooled National Resources and Donor Cultivation

It was clear that in order to build a national campaign infrastructure, to employ newly identified tactics, to support state-based work, and to conduct the massive amount of research needed, organizations within the movement would need to raise unprecedented amounts of money and would need to be extraordinarily smart, efficient, and effective in their investments.

*“Having national funding organization like the Civil Marriage Collaborative that were there to help provide resources for 501(c)(3) early public education was a huge benefit.”*

The national leaders and organizations knew they needed to increase the number of funders at the table and to convince foundations and donors of the need to come together and pool their resources. A set of national funders had been collaborating for years to support the freedom to marry came together to identify and cultivate new donors, connect state-based donors to marriage efforts in their state (when possible), and to work with national organizations to develop a readiness assessment to help navigate difficult funding decisions. This allowed the movement to focus resources in areas that were the most well-positioned to win at the ballot box, and it also allowed for donors and foundations to communicate with one another about their investments to fill gaps and avoid duplication.

The 2012 marriage campaigns were expensive, collectively costing over \$40 million. Knowing that these campaigns would need to harness all available resources, funders had to limit their investments to states that were poised to win at the ballot box. This meant difficult decisions when it came to choosing not to fund certain states that did not meet the criteria of readiness or that were unlikely to win for various reasons. This became especially difficult when a state (like North Carolina) was facing an attack by the opposition at the ballot box in the form of an anti-marriage constitutional amendment that was unwinnable due to the dynamics of the Primary Election ballot it was placed on. Although these decisions were difficult, the ability to pool resources and cultivate new major donors, resulted in some of the most well-funded issue campaigns in recent memory; it also led to the ability of these campaigns to continue to raise the needed funds from within their state for large-scale field and television persuasion programs.

## Predictors of Readiness

National leaders who were organizing this collaborative approach put together a series of qualitative and quantitative benchmarks to assess the capacity of organizations on the ground in a state. The assessment of capacity was combined with polling and political intelligence to determine where to invest resources.

National pollsters were enlisted to identify a set of numerical predictors of readiness that could help to assess the likelihood of a positive electoral outcome in each state. These quantitative factors were based on recent polling and were highly specific to the issue of marriage.

The group also identified a series of qualitative benchmarks:

- **State Infrastructure:** A strong statewide LGBT organization that has established relationships, organizing and staffing capacity, and a strong fundraising plan.
- **Previous Opportunity in The State For Dialogue on Marriage:** The state's history around marriage is important.
- **Support And Will Of Local Donors:** An aggressive fundraising plan that shows a path to raising a vast majority of the necessary financial support from within the state. The plan should also indicate how money would be raised to support early education.
- **Willingness To Use Experts, Messaging, And Previous Research Advice:** States needed to be open and willing to seek the consultation and advice of experts, consultants, and past research and analysis in order to better inform their campaign.
- **Campaign Timing:** While you can't always control when something is put on the ballot, we know that waging these fights in presidential years is not only more cost effective, but also increases the likelihood of winning.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

In looking back at these predictors in relation to the 2012 races, it is clear that overall they proved to be an effective tool in helping to assess the major obstacles and strengths the campaigns faced. They also provided a starting point to build from with donors at both the state and national levels. However, a key lesson that emerged from the development and utilization of these predictors is that, while having criteria is important for determining where to invest pooled resources, no single predictor should determine whether or not to invest in a campaign. The predictors should be taken together and should look at both capacity and political reality – which is, in fact, how they were intended to work from the very beginning. For example, if the politics of a state look particularly favorable for an issue, strong existing and organized capacity may not be as important as it would be if the state was more politically vulnerable.

*“Other movements could perhaps learn from our relentless focus on our goal. We came together in solidarity around the goal. We are always driving toward that goal. We wake up every day, thinking about the goal – we’re not balancing it against other things we also want. We work with anyone who will work toward this goal, including people who used to be against us. We will forgive and welcome and bring in anyone who helps us with this goal.”*

## Tying Vision, Strategy, and Infrastructure Together

Some of the most compelling lessons to emerge from this analysis were around the power of a focused movement strategy, the commitment to learning from setbacks, and the development of a strong and cohesive national infrastructure built around the shared strategy.

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.

Perhaps the lesson that emerged from the interviews that contributed most significantly to the marriage wins of 2012, and is potentially the most applicable to other progressive movements, was the unprecedented investment in “collaborative research” and the resulting values-based messaging.

## Identifying the Need for Collaborative Research

When national organizations came together to chart a new path after the losses of 2008 and 2009, they determined that the movement needed to look to research to determine where things were going wrong and why the marriage movement’s messaging was not breaking through to the electorate. In those previous campaigns, even one-time supporters of marriage were being peeled away by the opposition’s messaging, so there was a strong sense that the time had come to revisit the messages being used to drive support for marriage. Extensive research had of course been done over the years but it had never been done on a national and systematic level.

As a first step forward, Freedom to Marry decided to thoroughly examine all existing research on marriage. This involved examining over 85 sets of data, which represented all of the available qualitative and quantitative research on marriage that had been conducted nationally to date. Following this initial work, Freedom to Marry collaborated closely with Third Way and other leaders to develop a more collaborative approach to research. The organizations studied what messages might effectively move persuadable voters and also conducted a deep and thorough analysis of the opposition’s messaging. This collaborative approach to research proved beneficial because it maximized investments by eliminating a great deal of duplication that had been happening across organizations. The collaboration also allowed the research to go even deeper and to uncover things that individual states and campaigns could then build off of.

As part of their joint work, the groups suspended assumptions about what “might be working” when it came to messaging and decided to identify who the undecided voters on marriage were and what their concerns were, and then look at what it might take to move them to becoming full marriage supporters. The group quickly determined that there was a small, though statistically significant block of voters who supported civil unions, domestic partnerships, or some kind of legal recognition for same-sex couples, though they did not support marriage. It was determined that these voters should be considered “conflicted voters” and that the group needed to determine how to continue

*“We all kind of threw our money in a sense together and said, let’s not all research the very same question over and over, let’s split up the questions and you work on that and you work on something else, and we’ll continually share information and insight.”*

to move them to consider full support of the freedom to marry. Different members of the group took on varying pieces of this research to maximize resources. Collectively, they invested in extensive focus groups and online and phone polls.

## Mandatory Collaboration Among Pollsters

In interviewing progressive issue leaders for this analysis, many posed questions around how a multi-faceted, multi-organizational movement could possibly conduct research cohesively and collaboratively, especially on such a large scale. The groups collaborating on research (and the campaigns that followed in 2012) did something fairly revolutionary: they mandated that any and all pollsters on this issue work together to ask the same questions on 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. This focus on collaboration evolved from the initial exploration around existing research and national message testing, to polling on-the-ground in real-time during the 2012 marriage campaigns.

By getting a commitment from the pollsters to embrace this level of openness, collaboration and innovation, it not only saved money and time, but it also helped identify research consultants that were brought into the national movement strategy and committed to helping both win within the states and make the movement stronger.

Lisa Grove of Anzalone Liszt Grove Research, who conducted the initial national analysis and was the pollster for the Minnesota campaign and Amy Simon of Goodwin Simon Strategic Services who served as the pollster for Maine and Washington, continue to play an important role in modeling a collaborative approach to research in a way that helps strengthen the national movement. Also, Fred Yang and Jay Campbell of Garin-Hart-Yang, who were the pollsters for the Maryland campaign, were fully collaborative in 2012 and thus also helped to model this approach.

*“That type of sharing and collaboration was radical within a movement. It was not easy or comfortable or natural but it moved the ball forward faster and more time effectively.”*

## Finding the Right Messaging Team for Each Campaign

Those groups working on the collaborative research project also developed a set of criteria for finding the best research and messaging team. Out of the campaigns, some key identifiers emerged.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

- **Openness to Innovation and Collaboration:** A key to assembling the right team was finding consultants committed to constant inquiry, experimentation, and course correction – and to being part of a multi-state community of marriage campaign experts.
- **Issue and Values Experience:** Past experience working specifically on same-sex marriage was also an important factor. Even more so was the ability for consultants to think about the “heart-over-head issue” that the existing research indicated was critical. Consultants – especially media consultants – needed to be able to work with real people in an emotional context.
- **In-State Experience:** Having consultants with experience thinking about the demographics and persuadable voters of the state was seen as critical, though not dispositive. This was important not only for historical perspective, but also to help provide input and “cover” with the non-paid leadership teams (steering committees).

- **New Thinking:** Given the importance of talking to voters through more intentional and personal conversations, the campaigns were interested in “new” approaches to message development and delivery. In 2012, this interest in new thinking manifested itself through the hiring of social psychologist Phyllis Watts in Minnesota and Maine to ensure that the psychology of moving voters on this issue was fully explored. This new member of the consulting team advised on research as well as script development and training. While a consulting psychologist might not always be needed, her hiring reflected the type of new thinking about message development teams that many leaders felt was crucially important.
- **Modeling and Micro-Targeting Experience:** The campaigns wanted to explore new and innovative ways of testing models, micro-targets, and conducting in-the-field testing. They wanted consultants who were experienced with this level of testing and who could help steer the campaign through these complicated waters.

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

“We didn’t think this is about the issue actually being a problem for voters. We thought we were off on the message piece. Our big problem turned out to be that we weren’t connecting with voters and their values. In all of our polling and focus groups we just kept hearing people say they didn’t understand why gay and lesbian people wanted to be married.”

Prior to 2010, most messages around the freedom to marry were seen as being more intellectual, or “head” arguments centered on 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.

*“Time and time again, we would ask people in focus groups and polls, ‘why did you get married?’ Inevitably, they would answer, ‘for love, of course.’ And then we asked, ‘why do you think gay and lesbian people want to get married?’ and they would say, ‘for rights and benefits.’”*

*“We had to take seriously what was happening psychologically in the people that we needed to move (conflicted voters). And what was happening with them was that they did not identify with LGBT people.”*

The research conducted in 2010 and afterwards revealed that the movement was missing a critical element of persuading conflicted voters on this issue. Conventional 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. In fact, the previous messaging unintentionally alienated straight voters from gay and lesbian people by implying that same-sex couples wanted to get married for very different reasons –rights and benefits – than straight people married for –love.

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. Out of this work movement leaders and the campaigns that followed in 2012 learned that they were dealing with conflicted voters, not the traditional swing voters who are omnipresent in candidate campaigns. These voters were pulled in multiple directions and were unsure how to reconcile their conflicting beliefs. On one hand, they believed in fairness, on the other, their religion, culture, or political persuasion encouraged them to oppose the freedom to marry.

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.

The research also helped the marriage movement realize the importance of a “journey” frame. Campaign advertisements often displayed someone talking about “their journey” to supporting the freedom to marry. President Obama talked about his “journey” of getting to full support, and the campaign asked staff and volunteers to share their personal journeys and stories about supporting the freedom to marry when talking to voters on the phones and at the doors.

# Message Frames for Each Campaign

The following chart shows the core messages that were utilized in the four 2012 freedom to marry campaigns.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis



- ▶ Freedom includes allowing same-sex couples the freedom to marry the person they love.
- ▶ Same-sex couples may seem different, but they hope to marry for similar reasons as everyone else – for love and commitment, and to be there for each other in good times and bad.
- ▶ We are all God’s children. We should treat each other with respect and not judge, and that includes allowing committed same-sex couples to marry.



- ▶ This is not about religious beliefs; it is about treating everyone equally.
- ▶ This is about protecting and respecting people’s civil rights.
- ▶ We all know a gay or lesbian person that we love and respect – our gay family members, friends, and neighbors deserve to be treated equally.



- ▶ Allowing gay couples the freedom to marry follows the core principle of the Golden Rule – treating others as we would want to be treated ourselves.
- ▶ Gay couples want to marry for similar reasons as anyone – to make a lifetime promise of love and commitment.
- ▶ Love is love – it belongs to everybody.
- ▶ Don’t limit the freedom to marry.



- ▶ Freedom includes allowing same-sex couples the freedom to marry the person they love.
- ▶ We are all God’s children. We should treat each other with respect and not judge, and that includes allowing same-sex couples the freedom to marry.

While each campaign was given the values-based messaging research and frames, they all conducted additional state-specific research and adapted the messaging to their particular state and circumstances. While three of the states – Maine, Minnesota, and Washington – focused on some combination of love, commitment, and the Golden Rule, Maryland placed a far greater emphasis on equality and rights-based arguments (though still with a strong values-based orientation) and was successful in doing so. The leaders of Maryland’s campaign had research that indicated that rights-oriented messages would have greater impact on their state’s persuadable voters, and they built their campaign’s message around these concepts. While on one level, this “rights” orientation was similar to the approach taken in other marriage campaigns prior to 2012, the Maryland campaign’s core message focused on the idea of treating everyone equally, which invokes a value similar to the Golden Rule employed in other 2012 states.

*“It was very helpful to have the national research going into our campaign in 2012, but we never took for granted the fact that we needed to test and retest to make sure it was right for our state and our campaign.”*

One of the most critical message-related takeaways from the quantitative interviews is the importance of tailoring messages to the specific state. People cautioned that, in the aftermath of 2012, it is important to be wary of the “myth” that we have “solved” marriage messaging and that the answer is to always use freedom, love, commitment, and the Golden Rule.

To be sure, these messages were highly effective in 2012, and should always be tested and used when the research so indicates. However, at the same time, the importance of tailoring the message to each state’s electorate is paramount (as the Maryland victory indicates,) though even in that instance it was not all or nothing.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

## Why Marriage Matters Public Education Campaign

While the 2012 state campaigns inevitably came up with their individual messages that worked for them, this did not come without a great deal of research and testing both at the national and state levels. Much of the new research on the importance of employing a values-based message frame was originally used before the 2012 election on the “Why Marriage Matters” public education campaign, which laid the groundwork on how to use this kind of messaging to educate voters.

This 501(c)(3) educational campaign provided messaging, web support, television ads, mail pieces, and toolkits free of charge to any local, state, or national organization to utilize. After launching in 2011, the “Why Marriage Matters” campaign was adopted and utilized by over a dozen national organizations and 17 statewide organizations, including three out of the four states that won at the ballot in 2012: Maine, Minnesota and Washington. The collaborative nature of Why Marriage Matters also led to an early phase of cooperation between state and national partners, which widely shared new ads and materials with one another.

### Following are some of messages developed under the “Why Marriage Matters” campaign:

- Marriage matters to gay people in similar ways that it matters to everyone. Gay and lesbian couples want to get married to make a lifetime commitment to the person they love.
- Gay and lesbian couples may seem different from straight couples, but we all share similar values – like the importance of family and helping out our neighbors; worries – like making ends meet or the possibility of losing a job; and hopes and dreams – like finding that special someone to grow old with.

- In America, freedom means freedom for everybody. Marriage is a fundamental freedom that should not be denied to anyone. We should protect, not limit, individual freedoms.
- Treating others as one would want to be treated includes allowing marriage for gay couples. That's as basic as the Golden Rule.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

In states where they used the “Why Marriage Matters” as a public educational effort leading up to the ballot campaign it was felt that they were able to begin the marriage discussion from a more informed place. There was also a sense that the early education work done through “Why Marriage Matters” provided a strong validation for funders trying to make decisions about where they were going to spend their resources. In addition, campaigns were able to use “Why Marriage Matters” as a building block to create their own unique educational campaign utilizing 501(c)(3) resources.

*“I firmly believe we were able to get our campaigns up and running so quickly because of the national research we were handed from the beginning. We sent people out right away and continued to test along the way because we knew we had something good to start with.”*

## Impact of Collaborative Research and Values-Based Messaging

After so many losses, leaders in the marriage movement intentionally invested in bringing stakeholders together to regroup and conduct new research to determine where things had been going wrong. The national organizations and leaders that were working together on this demanded collaboration among pollsters and media experts. The result was a hard-hitting emotional message that spoke to voters in their hearts and successfully combatted the arguments of the opposition. While the national research should not be thought of as a “silver bullet” for every state, it is a great place for campaigns to start and be able to hit the ground running in their own individual message testing.

FINDING  
03

## Conversation Campaigns and Long-Form Conversations

The importance of conversations proved 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 in nature, represented a huge departure from standard campaign practices, but proved essential for persuading conflicted voters. In order to ensure that they could achieve the scale of conversations necessary to win, campaigns developed innovative training and support mechanisms for staff and volunteers.

In 2012, it was not just the content of the message that underwent a radical transformation (from rights-based to values-based messages) but also how these messages were delivered. To varying degrees, the 2012 marriage campaigns focused on the importance of driving conversations about marriage. Traditionally, conversations are the sole purview of a campaign’s field department, but in 2012, the idea and importance of conversations proved far more central to the campaigns as a whole. The particular form of conversation also proved to be critically important and a valuable lesson.

### 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, 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. One of the more public examples of this is how campaigns used a conversational approach to advertising. Most ads were designed around off-the-cuff documentary-style interviews capturing people’s real emotion around their journey of support. These ads showed people around the dining room table or in their living room where they reference conversations that took place for them to get to a place of support.

The campaign’s fundraising teams also introduced the idea of conversations within their work. House parties and gatherings would build in an opportunity for staff to train attendees around how to talk to their friends and family about the issue. In addition to events, the fundraising teams also thought strategically about the content of their email and mail solicitations. It was important that the people who were being highlighted in those solicitations were willing to tell their story about the conversations that led to their support, which helped raise money and spur conversations in others.

Campaigns also used social media to highlight all of the different ways the campaigns were trying to spark conversations, whether it was helping the ads go viral to those audiences that aren’t tuned into broadcast television, or sharing the journeys to support

*“We called this the “surround sound effect.” Voters were being reached with a conversation about marriage everywhere they went and in all aspects of their lives.”*

of high-profile people through personal emails or letters. Campaigns encouraged people to re-post and forward information to friends and family and to talk about it at their church or school. No matter where people turned, whether it was to the television, the internet, or their neighborhood gatherings, the campaigns wanted people to be talking about why the freedom to marry was important to them. Perhaps the most critical takeaway from this aspect of the 2012 campaigns is not to limit the idea of driving conversations to the field team but rather to think about the role of conversations in persuading voters far more broadly across the entire campaign.

## 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.

In order to achieve these objectives, campaigns needed to have longer, more meaningful conversations with voters in order to be able to share personal stories and get to the core of what the voter may be conflicted about around the freedom to marry. While it was important to have as many conversations as possible, campaigns knew that they had to have systems of accountability set up that would be able to record and track data after each conversation so they could continue to move people down the road to support. Campaigns also knew that neither having conversations nor building systems of accountability were going to lead to success unless they could build a program to a massive scale. That meant that across the state, staff and volunteers were not only making calls and knocking on doors for the campaign, but also conducting their own conversation campaigns with friends, family, and neighbors.

The idea of being deeply relational and highly accountable, in particular, was extended beyond the field programs to all other aspects of the campaign as well. Campaign leaders focused on building campaign cultures that engaged staff and volunteers alike and created an atmosphere that could support extensive personal conversation. Staff and consultants focused on being accountable to the research and campaign goals, and everyone thought constantly about how to take conversations to scale through all aspects of the campaign. As such, deeply relational, highly accountable and massive scale can be seen as the outline of a strategic blueprint for building a conversation campaign.

## 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 operation 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. 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 seconds and one minute 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.

The genesis of longer-form conversations can be found in the research that showed the impact of a personal conversation and the experiences on previous marriage campaigns.

*“The ability to have those one-on-one longer conversations was huge. It was personal and the people were earnest and research showed us those conversations stuck in voters’ minds.”*

*“Since working on the 2012 campaign I have been encouraging my organization to think differently about our approach to talking with our members. We are trying to incorporate more of the conversational style of communication like we practiced on the marriage campaign. Since doing so, we have seen an increase in membership and a deeper connection to our members because of it.”*

There was a strong sense that one of the major stumbling blocks of previous marriage campaigns was that supporters would peel off when opposition attack ads hit the airwaves with powerful, emotional messages. The shift to long form conversations, like many other key aspects of the 2012 campaigns, actually began well before 2012. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force had done extensive work in California and elsewhere to develop and refine the long-form conversation approach.

In 2012, the shift to long-form conversations proved critical to persuading voters and protecting supporters from vulnerability to the opposition’s attacks. Campaign numbers were showing that they were gaining more solid support from conflicted voters after having a meaningful, personal conversation with them. In the end, campaigns reported up to 10% of people were moved in support of the freedom to marry during every volunteer shift, which at least anecdotally demonstrates the effectiveness of this type of conversation. These conversations were a back and forth dialogue, in which people could share their own experiences and ask questions of each other. This model (while not a silver bullet for every movement or campaign) should be considered as an option, particularly when delivering similar kinds of values-based messaging.

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## Scripts

The only way to effectively conduct these deeply personal and relational conversations was by allowing more time for them on the phones and at the doors. The scripts that staff and volunteers used for these long-form conversations were far more flexible and much longer than conventional persuasion scripts. Typical campaign persuasion scripts consist of a one- or two-sentence rap about why it is important to support the candidate or issue. The scripts for the 2012 freedom to marry campaigns were designed for the staff or volunteer to tell their own story and then ask personal questions of the voter related to their feelings about marriage and their experiences with gay people.

The scripts would then give the caller/knocker options for the conversation flowing in several different directions based on the individual voter’s concern or interest area. Here are a few examples of typical script questions used:

- **Why did you choose to get married?**
- **Do you know any gay people?**
- **What concerns you about gay and lesbian people getting married?**

Conversations were meant to be interactive. The callers would start by telling their story and then talk with the voter about the role of marriage in each of their lives. It was important that throughout the conversation the caller reflected on the core values of the messaging as much as possible, like “freedom” and “The Golden Rule.” Conversations usually concluded with a question such as “Do you want to limit the freedom to marry for someone else?” to try to again gauge the level of the voters support.

Callers and door-knockers were trained to be unfailingly polite and to thank the voter for sharing their feelings, regardless of what those feelings were. This allowed authentic conversations to organically develop between the caller/knocker and the voter. Volunteers had to recognize that they were not looking to change the minds of every

*“We were tweaking the scripts weekly and sometimes daily. We thought of them as living and breathing documents that needed to adapt to what we were hearing from the staff and volunteers. We wanted to give people the strongest tool possible so they had a good experience and would come back again and again.”*

voter they talked to, but to help them continue on their journey of support. In order to track movement during the conversation, callers and knockers would ID the voter at the beginning of the conversation (using a traditional 1-5 scale) and would then ID them again at the end of the conversation using the same scale. Through extensive debriefing with volunteers and staff after the conversations, the campaigns were constantly tweaking and changing the scripts to incorporate the feedback they were hearing. By doing this, the campaign ensured they were listening to volunteers and in turn helping people have the best conversations possible.

Volunteers had to recognize that they were not looking to change the minds of every voter they talked to, but to help them continue on their journey of support.

## Training and Support for Long-Form Conversations

Staff and volunteers were embarking on long and emotionally-charged conversations with voters. As such, additional support mechanisms beyond what field campaigns typically employ were needed to ensure that people felt comfortable having the conversations. Campaign offices created fun and welcoming environments. Through successful leadership development programs, super-volunteers were trained to be coaches, to listen to phone-bankers’ conversations, and provide feedback and support. Because these were different kinds of conversations than most people (even seasoned politicians) were accustomed to having, there was also a greater emphasis on training.

*“When we looked at the numbers it was really daunting to see how many voters we needed to reach. And we also knew that the nature of the kinds of conversations we needed to have were going to be hard. These long trainings and long conversations could have easily turned into people volunteering only once because they’re so tough. But, by having highly trained staff and super-volunteers we made the entire experience relational, it really made people want to become champions and keep coming back.”*

Training for new volunteers lasted an average of 60 minutes before calling or knocking with an additional 30- to 60-minute debrief at the end of the shift. While this was a huge departure from normal campaign practices where you would try to get people on the phones or doors as quickly as possible, the campaigns realized that without including a sufficient amount of training time on the front end, volunteers would feel greater anxiety and discomfort leading these conversations. The trainings involved walking through the new messaging and the reasons behind it, helping volunteers realize their personal stories around the issue, and giving them plenty of time to role play with the script.

There was a strong sense across the campaigns that the substantial investment in training also made it more likely that volunteers would return. Once a volunteer had been through a longer training they would only need a refresher course (about 15 minutes) when they returned the next time to volunteer. The 2012 campaigns saw some of the highest volunteer retention rates of any past statewide campaign, and they attribute that to the care and attention they gave to listening and training their volunteers.

## Balance Between Long-Form Conversations and Getting to Scale

Because of the need for longer conversations, volunteers made fewer contacts in a single shift than could be expected in a traditional campaign. There was a constant tension between reaching the needed number of contacts and allowing the conversations to be longer in order to effectively persuade voters – tension between the “deeply relational” parts of the conversation strategy and the “massive scale” aspect, both of which were seen as critical to success.

In order to address the tension, campaigns were constantly assessing how to best balance quality and quantity. The following are some ways that the campaigns were able to get to scale:

- **Use Offices and Partner Resources:** Campaigns were creative about getting to scale while being mindful of their budgets. The campaigns harnessed momentum around the freedom to marry by recruiting and training as many volunteers as possible. In order to accommodate the number of volunteers in a given evening, campaigns utilized coalition partners’ offices, dialer systems, and staff members. Each of the four campaigns had offices across the state so that people in rural communities could also volunteer. Oftentimes there would be five different phone banks operating on a given night within a single city.
- **Advanced Track For Experienced Callers and Doorknockers:** Longer trainings and supportive environment paid off as volunteers recommitted over and over. Experienced volunteers became more skilled in their persuasion techniques and would return for regular shifts. All volunteers were “powerfully invited” to commit to weekly shifts with the campaign. Once volunteers had been through the initial training, they could skip the training for a quick 15-minute introductory session with other advanced-track volunteers and make it to the doors and phones faster.

## Long-Form Conversations in Other Movements

Across the interviews, there was a consistent sense that future LGBT and marriage campaigns and other progressive movements could likely benefit from exploring long-form conversations. One key advantage of these conversations is that they allow the voter to participate in a journey on the issue. Instead of attempting to *convince* a voter through a script that talks *at* them, the long-form conversation creates the context for an actual back and forth between the caller or knocker and the voter. Campaigns saw that this kind of interaction allowed volunteers to share their personal stories with the voters and in turn give them the opportunity to ask voters more personal questions, such as about their feelings on marriage, love, and commitment.

If an issue or campaign’s research calls for values-based messaging for persuasion, or involves moving deeply conflicted voters, those movements or campaigns should look at the possibility of longer-form conversations. With the proper investment in message development, scripting, and training, progressive issue campaigns could feel the winning effect of these conversations on their efforts, at the ballot box, in advocacy efforts, and for the future of their movements.

*“I can’t tell you the number of times I walked around the phone bank and heard people laughing or even crying while on the phone with voters. Volunteers were connecting with callers like I had never seen before because we trained them well and allowed them to feel comfortable with a very conversational script.”*

FINDING  
04

## Early and Ongoing Investment in Communities of Color Organizing

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.

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.

Organizing in communities of color has historically presented challenges for freedom to marry campaigns. As such, studying the work done by the four 2012 marriage campaigns in these communities was an important original project objective. Additionally, a number of the movement leaders interviewed, at the outset of this project, expressed special interest in capturing lessons relating to the tension between electoral and movement building objectives.

Even before 2012, the 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 other states with smaller minority populations, organizing in communities of color is less critical to securing the electoral victory but 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.

The following lessons that emerged from the 2012 campaigns can help show the way forward for this continual improvement:

1. **Partner with existing organizations**
2. **Engage community leaders and organizations early**
3. **Develop community specific materials and messages**
4. **Have a dedicated budget for communities of color organizing**
5. **Hiring experienced and skilled organizers from within the communities you are organizing**
6. **Create a unique hiring process and campaign structure for this work**
7. **Integrate 501 (c)(3) Education and Outreach into your program**

## State-By-State Overview

Before beginning to examine the core findings for the communities of color work, it will be helpful to understand what kinds of work was done within the four 2012 marriage campaigns.

The 2012 freedom to marry campaigns adopted a wide range of strategic approaches and investment levels for their work in communities of color. It is worth noting at the outset that much of this work was done through multiple entities – the campaigns themselves, anchor state-based LGBT organizations, and allied partners – but for the purposes of this section and analysis, this work will often be collectively referred to as the work of the “campaigns.” The following snapshots of how each state approached work in communities of color will help place the lessons that emerged from across the campaigns into an appropriate context.



**Because Maine has such a small population of people of color (roughly 5%), all work they did within communities of color was done through their robust faith organizing department.** There was no specific staff or plan in place to organize within communities of color in Maine. This was a strategic decision that made good sense given the electoral imperatives and the path to victory in Maine. It is also an effective illustration of the fact that there will not always be a place for longer-term movement-building objectives within the context of an immediate electoral campaign.



**For Maryland, the African-American vote makes up around one quarter of the electorate, and organizing in this community will always be an integral piece of statewide campaigns.** The Maryland Marriage Alliance was the main opposition group in the state and was led by Reverend Derek McCoy, a prominent African-American faith leader. He, in turn, assembled a group of other African-American faith leaders to collectively oppose marriage. A key to their strategy was winning votes against the marriage measure in the African-American community.

Marylanders for Marriage Equality partnered with many organizations of color, but the largest partnership was with the NAACP. That organization worked with the campaign to cover over 500 polling locations on Election Day and offered a critical leadership voice on the importance of voting “Yes.”

There was also a strong focus on the Latino community in Maryland. A state version of the Dream Act that would allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at public universities was also on the 2012 ballot. With these two questions on the ballot, the Gill Foundation, GLAAD, Freedom to Marry, CASA de Maryland, Equality Maryland Foundation, and America’s Voice put together a comprehensive 501(c)(3) education program. Through the use of a bilingual speakers bureau, leadership and volunteer trainings, earned media opportunities, and by providing communities with tailored materials, this education campaign worked to build Latino community support for the freedom to marry, and LGBT community support for Maryland’s Dream Act.



**It was decided early on in the campaign that Minnesota would create a Communities of Color Organizing team (distinct from the Geographic, Youth & Faith Organizing teams that were also being built).** While campaign leaders acknowledged that they could organize communities of color through those other teams, they felt that a higher level of relationship building and outreach could be achieved through a dedicated Communities of Color Organizing team. This team was on the payroll of OutFront Minnesota (one of the leaders of the Minnesota campaign), allowing organizers to work on additional issues impacting those communities – especially the other constitutional amendment that was on the ballot requiring a photo ID to vote.

This Communities of Color team organized leaders and volunteers, and had specific community meetings within the Latino, Hmong, African-American and Native-American communities. They were able to garner the endorsements of key community leaders and organizations, launch community-specific earned media events, and produce letters from community leaders that were distributed throughout targeted neighborhoods.

Minnesotans United for All Families also partnered with organizations anchored within communities of color, and, in some instances, funded those groups so that their existing organizers could work on behalf of the campaign within the neighborhoods they were already organizing in. To complement the work in the field, the campaign also invested in community radio, newspapers, websites, and localized direct mail.



**The Why Marriage Matters Washington (WMMW) campaign relied heavily on the work they were doing with the Pride Foundation and the Western States Center on a 501(c)(3) education program to reach out to communities of color.** The education campaign ran from May 1 to September 30 and was an aggressive effort focused on mobilizing trusted organizations and individuals of color to share their support for the freedom to marry, while also elevating the profile of LGBT people of color within their own communities.

A key component of the work was hiring culturally competent staff from within each community who would work in the African-American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, and Native-American communities to recruit, train, and engage volunteers in the educational effort. They also worked to gain the endorsements of organizations and community leaders who were able to represent the campaign. There was great visibility for the campaign at community-specific fairs, festivals, and venues over the summer. There was also an investment made by the campaign in paid print advertisements in African-American, Asian Pacific Islander, and Latino press outlets, and radio ads geared to the Latino community were run in Spanish and English.

The work that was done during the 501(c)(3) education phase was critical when the campaign began to transition the communities of color work to be more 501(c)(4) oriented in October 2012. The campaign partnered with the Win/Win Network for this work as it was a local nonprofit focused on building progressive influence in Washington State and was well regarded in communities of color. There was also a dedicated staff person from HRC who served as the conduit between the campaign and Win/Win. The ACLU also played a role on the 501(c)(4) side by developing and running advertising in community of color media outlets.

## Partner with Existing Organizations

Campaign leaders agreed that there is often a lack of existing capacity within states to do LGBT-specific work within communities of color. This challenge existed going into the 2012 campaigns, and, to some extent, remains an obstacle coming out of them.

With this context in mind, it was important for the campaigns to try and identify those organizations that were both aligned on the freedom to marry issue and that were already working within the communities and neighborhoods that the campaigns were hoping to reach and organize. In some instances, the campaigns wanted to contract directly with these organizations to have their staff work on the marriage issue because the campaigns found it very challenging to hire staff to lead and do community of color work. More often there was just a general interest in building relationships with these organizations to extend the campaigns' reach and credibility.

The campaigns learned that they needed to try to find ways to assimilate the work on marriage into the existing work of the partner organizations. This was important because some leaders within communities of color felt that the marriage issue subtracted important staff resources from other issues and fights that they wanted organizations and staff to be working on as well. Unless the marriage campaigns could figure out how to connect the work, these leaders were less inclined to be supportive or dedicate resources to the marriage fight. This was not always a natural instinct for the marriage campaigns as they understandably wanted their issue to be paramount. However, the willingness to partner on other issues and illustrate connections and commonalities paid significant dividends. It was also a critical part of building relationships and trust, which, while always important in any grassroots organizing effort, is especially critical when doing work in communities of color where there is a long history of distrust and of political campaigns parachuting into the communities in a disrespectful manner.

Another important lesson learned about partnering with outside organizations had to do with establishing clear expectations. This was especially true in the instances where the campaigns were funding or contracting for organizers through existing groups. In those cases, the absence of upfront discussions about expectations and, in particular, roles, deliverables, and timelines, led to confusion, frustration, and, in some cases, damaged relationships. Having clearer expectations and goals in place for the organizations that campaigns are working with not only makes it easier to jointly track the progress of the work, but also allows the partner organizations to identify assistance or support that they may need ahead of time to achieve their goals. This could include help with message development and discipline, training staff and volunteers, and the development of community-specific materials. In 2012, the absence or delay in setting clear expectations often made it hard for the campaigns to provide the necessary support to their community partners.

## Engage Community Leaders and Organizations Early

Endorsements from prominent leaders and organizations within the different communities of color were important to the freedom to marry campaigns. These endorsements yielded content for community-specific materials and spokespeople for the campaigns. Engaged community leaders were able to explain why supporting the freedom to marry was important as it related to their specific organization or community.

However, the campaigns also learned that securing that level of endorsement and support (where leaders are willing to lend their names to materials and speak out on the issue) takes a significant amount of time, often several months or more. Many of the campaigns

*“One of the most effective things we did was solidarity organizing with Hispanic organizations already working on the other amendment. Joining forces and using the other issue as an entry point helped build trust and elevated our voice in the community.”*

*“Letters of support from tribal leaders and key leaders from other communities of color were very effective, but we waited too long and were not able to have the kind of statewide impact we could have if we had started building relationships earlier.”*

felt that they started building relationships too late, and while they were often successful in securing endorsements, they felt they could have been far more effective if they had begun earlier. There needs to be enough time to identify who the key leaders and organizations are and identify who from the campaign is best positioned to reach out to them to build the relationships. At the same time, most organizations have a fairly formal and intensive endorsement process, so the campaigns found that they needed to begin months prior to needing any formal action.

A key lesson was thinking about this work through a relationship-building lens, which, in the minds of many, is distinct from simply conducting outreach or having conversations about the issue. The latter is how too many electoral campaigns traditionally frame and approach their community of color work. Relationship building involves going deeper, getting to know leaders in each community, learning about their self-interest, discovering their concerns and hesitations about engaging around marriage, and talking through all of this. Relationship building takes time but the benefits can include more endorsements and a much deeper and sustained level of engagement.

## Develop Community-Specific Materials and Messages

In 2012, the marriage campaigns that were doing community of color work successfully leveraged community-specific talking points, materials, and ads. These often featured a prominent community leader and messages tailored to the specific community. In the case of immigrant communities, the campaigns tried, as often as possible, to offer both English and translated versions of materials. Many of these materials were provided by national partners such as Freedom to Marry and the Familia es Familia campaign, and were based on national research. The Familia es Familia campaign, for example, created bilingual messages and corresponding materials that were often used as models. This is another area (in addition to the overall message development work) where centralized capacity that had been built was used across multiple states.

Campaign leaders believed strongly that utilizing community-specific materials was a significant asset when it came to building relationships and making inroads in communities of color. These materials were a physical manifestation of the campaign’s willingness to invest in these communities and a sign of respect for how to enter and engage with leaders, organizations, and residents in communities of color. As noted above, they often also provided a distinct contrast with the approach that the opposition campaigns were taking. Many campaign leaders and observers expressed the sense that coming out of the 2008 California campaign, the freedom to marry side of this issue had been struggling to make inroads with communities of color. While developing community-specific materials is certainly not the sole solution to this challenge, used in combination with a more focused approach to relationship building, partnering with existing organizations, and hiring the right staff, it helped the campaigns feel that they were making progress with this work.

Messaging that resonated particularly well in communities of color emphasized maintaining cultural values and demonstrated how voting for the freedom to marry fit within these values. Statements that focused on keeping families together, always having each other’s back, and maintaining social harmony were all reflective of these values.

## Have a Dedicated Budget for Communities of Color Organizing

An interesting observation from 2012 is that many campaign leaders thought that a more intentional and strategic approach to budgeting community of color work would have been beneficial. In hindsight, leaders believed that the absence of dedicated budgets for this work often made it harder to attract staff, created the disconcerting sense that community of color organizers had to constantly “fight” for resources, reflected a lack of prioritization (and a poor reflection of the campaign’s values), and limited the ability of staff and community leaders to think expansively about the work because there was little to no sense of what resources might be available to execute the work.

## Hiring Experienced and Skilled Organizers from within the Communities You Are Organizing

When campaigns made the decision that organizing in communities of color was a priority, having the right staff working for the campaign was perhaps the most critical success factor. Yet, each of the campaigns doing this work struggled with staffing to some degree – either finding the right staff from the beginning or suffering from repeated turnover. The lessons that emerged reflect the importance of having staff from the communities being organized, hiring staff at the right levels with the necessary skills, and setting up hiring and campaign systems that are conducive to attracting and retaining staff from communities of color.

For many of the 2012 campaigns, the effectiveness of working in communities of color was directly tied to their ability to hire staff directly from the communities that they would be organizing. This was a challenge for many of the campaigns (and often for their associated 501(c)(3) partners) as they often did not have pre-existing relationships that allowed them to find the right people.

Having campaign organizers from the communities in which they will be working provides much-needed credibility and often results in a jump-start of a campaign’s community of color work. To achieve this goal, some of the 2012 campaigns contracted directly with existing organizations that had organizers on the ground working in these communities already. While there was mixed success with this model, most of the challenges had to do with setting expectations and striving for clarity about deliverables and deadlines. The model itself is seen as effective and something to replicate in the future, though the campaigns also recommended having at least one central staff person to coordinate and track this partner-driven work.

The other model, of course, is for the campaign to hire staff directly from the communities of color. This model, too, is seen as effective, though it places a premium on hiring the right people and providing effective supervision (versus finding the right partner organization). In either case, the paramount take away is the value of having organizing staff from the communities being organized.

In addition to hiring staff from within the communities, it is also important that staff hired as community of color managers and organizers should ideally walk into the campaign with extensive relationships in their community among political, volunteer, and community leaders. There often isn’t time within a campaign cycle to build those relationships, so they need to exist when they are hired. At the same time, organizers

*“After struggling for a while, we finally figured out that we didn’t need to reinvent the wheel. There were people already organizing within those neighborhoods and we just needed to see how we could partner with them.”*

hired to work in communities of color need to have a different and often higher skill set than organizers hired to work in other areas of the campaign. These organizers will be asked to facilitate conversations with leaders and community activists, and many times these will be difficult conversations to maneuver with the complex political issues surrounding them. Because of that, these organizers need to have not only the relationships and credibility, they also need to have knowledge of community dynamics and the ability to publicly represent the campaign when needed.

Campaigns found it extremely difficult to find qualified candidates for these positions, especially outside of the major metropolitan areas where they didn't have as many relationships with organizations and other leaders who could help them recruit. In the case of Washington State, for example, they ended up hiring consultants who worked within the communities they wanted to organize, but didn't have the level of LGBT experience they would have liked. Managers found that job candidate's names did not usually come off the street; they came from partner organizations and from other trusted leaders in the communities. This means that campaigns need to begin earlier to try and find the higher level of organizers needed. It also likely requires budgeting at a higher level for these positions, which will help attract more qualified candidates. Interestingly, the campaigns had more success finding higher-level staff (often pastors) for their faith-based work and in the future, it may be worth looking at those programs for applicable lessons.

## Create a Unique Hiring Process and Campaign Structures

Finding and hiring the right staff for freedom to marry work in communities of color involves designing appropriate hiring processes and placing new staff within the campaign structure so that they can be successful. In 2012, all of the campaigns were managed by white staff who oversaw all of the hiring and often the interviewing for all senior positions. Leaders felt that this may have limited their ability to attract leaders and organizers of color into the campaign.

Having a more diverse group of people soliciting and reviewing applications can help determine early on whether applicants truly come from the communities in which they will be working. Additionally, it creates a more welcoming and open sense of the campaign. This doesn't stop with the hiring process though. In 2012, most of the campaigns hired just one person to organize an entire community on their own. This approach was not only challenging – because in most cases a single organizer can't cover enough ground to truly make a difference – but it was also very isolating for the organizers. It would also likely have allowed the campaigns to achieve an even greater impact across these different programs.

## Integrating 501(c)(3) Education and Outreach Into Your Program

The lessons learned about strengthening organizing, outreach, and relationship building in communities of color can be done effectively and legally through 501(c)(3) investments. The same holds true for faith and general education work, but most people brought up the importance of leveraging 501(c)(3) resources in the context of work in communities of color. Many of the campaigns took advantage of the potential for 501(c)(3)-funded work by partnering with key regional, national, or in-state LGBT or progressive partner organizations to mount 501(c)(3) education campaigns. These campaigns

extended well beyond work in communities of color but in many instances also focused extensively on outreach and relationship building in minority communities, which is why this topic is covered here.

Despite the successes in launching unique education campaigns, there was a strong sense that more could have been done to leverage 501(c)(3) resources for work in communities of color earlier and in a more sustainable manner. It is critical that these 501(c)(3) education efforts begin as early as possible so that campaigns don't have to start from scratch every time a new issue hits the legislature or the ballot box. In 2012, the educational campaigns were being launched in conjunction with (or well after) the 501(c)(4) campaigns. Some people felt that this was a classic case of putting the cart before the horse, and that if a larger and more sustainable (c)(3) outreach effort was already in place through existing state equality organizations the campaigns could have more effectively built on top of these efforts.



## Critical Recommendation Around 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 the 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. In conducting this analysis, it is important to distinguish between electoral objectives and longer-term movement-building goals.
- 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:** Highly skilled staff with deep relationships in the community are especially critical for this work and may require the campaign to tailor its hiring practices and dedicate greater resources for salaries.

Faith organizing played an essential role in all four of the 2012 marriage campaigns. Hiring experienced and credible staff that came from the faith community added to the success of the 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.

*“The role of our faith program was to own the religious conversation around the marriage campaign or in the least prevent the other campaign and its supporters in their attempt to own the religious message around marriage.”*

Faith played a critical role in all four of the 2012 freedom to marry campaigns and this represented the culmination of an ongoing evolution in the marriage movement. The movement started from a place where members of the faith community would only be asked to stand up on stage at a press conference and overtime moved to a much deeper level of engagement. Campaigns may have intended for the main goal of these programs to be about owning the religious conversation, but ultimately faith programs came to be so much more. The role that faith leaders played as one of the most prominent public faces of the campaign as well as their ability to put people's religious concerns at bay, helped voters move through a journey toward supporting the freedom to marry.

In order 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 extremely applicable to other progressive movements and could be implemented around a campaign or as an ongoing practice within an organization. The 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 communication and media strategy around faith work.**
- 6. Putting in place a forum for conflicted voters of faith.**

In order to build strong faith programs it was critical that campaigns had the right staff leading the efforts. It was also essential that staff be recruited from within the faith community and have the level of experience and organizing skills that could put them on the senior leadership of the campaigns. Training and leadership development were also critical elements to being able to build faith programs to scale and secure the support needed from the faith community.

## Building a Solid Faith Organizing Department

Faith-based communities typically have strong relationships and structures already in place. The challenge for the 2012 marriage campaigns was to figure out how to begin to interact and engage with all levels of these communities. In order to do this, campaigns needed to find the right staff to lead the faith organizing efforts. In three of the four states, campaigns tapped members of the clergy to lead their faith organizing and this proved to be a central element of their success.

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 that 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 faith staff who not only had credibility in the community (though that is really essential), but also 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.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

It was also seen as critically important to identify faith staff who not only had credibility in the community (though that is really essential), but also the organizing skills necessary to recruit other faith leaders and congregation members to the marriage campaign.

*“Hiring staff from within the community and starting our program in early spring had a lot to do with our success.”*

*“Having the faith organizing director sitting on our senior leadership team only made sense. They have their hands in all aspects of the campaign from training to communication to field and everything in-between. We needed that perspective throughout the campaign.”*

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. In Minnesota, where the Faith Director did serve on the leadership team, this was seen as a critical aspect of their success. Because faith organizing is tied into so many aspects of the campaign (training, outreach, fundraising, communications, field) it is important that the Faith Director be a part of strategic and planning conversations from the beginning.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

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 area to warrant this senior-level position. It is important to identify that need in the earliest parts of the campaign in order to utilize the community leader’s effectiveness.

## Faith Training and Leadership Development

With such a large number of congregations and faith leaders to engage, it was deemed important for the campaigns to implement a strong faith training and leadership development program. Having well-trained and well-connected staff was critical, but there was no way that campaigns could ever hire enough staff to be able to implement the six major approaches on their own and get to the scale needed to have success.

Trainings for people in the faith community, much like every other part of the campaign, needed to be accessible, ongoing, and large in scale. While there were different

*“I must have participated in close to 75 trainings across the state and I don’t think I ever heard the same story twice. People were coming to this issue from very different places and it was important to meet them at the place they were at and not try to fit them in our box.”*

approaches to training within the faith community, in the end, the most effective trainings were tailored specifically to those types of individuals being trained. When training clergy and congregational decision-makers who were going to be moving this issue to a higher level, a half-day training was helpful in that it allowed for meaningful conversations and deep thinking around how to best communicate about the freedom to marry within the entire congregation. For members of the congregations and lay leaders, having a training that was no more than an hour and that included materials or some kind of a “kit” that people could take and use within their church was most effective. The use of videos and other interactive elements of the training were also helpful in that they fostered greater engagement and sparked conversations during the training itself.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

While these methods were used to train thousands of faith leaders and lay people in how to have meaningful conversations, faith programs across-the-board faced the challenges of tracking these conversations and providing consistent follow-up and ongoing training to those interested in participating. First and foremost it was important to ensure that these conversations were happening in large numbers across the state, but campaigns repeatedly expressed that they wished they could have had more control and accountability from the faith programs.

## Early and Ongoing Recruitment of Clergy and Faith Leadership

Building the list of committed clergy and faith leaders was an ongoing focus of the campaigns. In every state there were a handful of key members of faith communities who provided vital support, without which the campaigns would have met roadblocks and obstacles to further faith organizing. The campaigns started by reaching out to those key leaders, which was both politically necessary and helpful for gaining the most up-to-date information from within the faith communities.

**“In Maryland’s campaign the ability to get the support of two prominent African-American pastors was a pinnacle moment for the campaign and continued to help move the dial of support throughout the campaign.”**

*“We brought on a faith director early in the year, and the organizing work that we were able to do in conjunction with the communications and research team was key to helping take control of the religious conversation, and to help level the playing field with the opposition’s message.”*

By doing this outreach early, campaigns were also able to identify potential problems. In Maryland people shared that Catholic bishops were strongly opposed to the freedom to marry campaign, which meant the campaign would have a hard time recruiting clergy to join the effort. However, because the campaign knew about this problem far enough in advance, it was able to organize a parallel organization of lay persons called Catholics For Marriage. This organization not only provided cover for those members of the clergy who were interested in getting involved, but also for Catholic parishioners to have a place to organize.

Typically, members of the clergy were asked to sign onto a faith supporter list and then asked to participate in the following ways:

- **Preach In Support Of The Freedom To Marry:** For some this would mean taking a direct stand, and for others it was about talking about the themes of the campaign that resonated most for them like “The Golden Rule” or “Love is Love.”
- **Support And Promote a Conversation Campaign Within Their Congregations:** This included clergy getting trained themselves and making multiple training opportunities available.
- **Taking A Public Stand:** Clergy were encouraged to be public even beyond their congregations. Some focused on letters to the editor, but many were featured in ads, campaign literature, and as spokespeople at campaign events.

In addition to recruiting individual members of the faith community, there was also a push to have denominations and larger congregations take formal votes in support of the freedom to marry. Much of this work started long before these campaigns were formed. Statewide LGBT organizations and organizations such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign had been fostering and building these relationships for years. While states had a great deal of success getting formal statements of support from large denominations and congregations, there was a strong feeling that more could have been done to take advantage of these historic proclamations. In the future, campaigns could make more direct asks such as calling for church bodies to organize conversation trainings around the issue, asking faith leaders to promote these trainings, and creating a core team of leaders and lay people who would serve as ongoing liaisons with the campaign. Because of the short timeline of a campaign, it is critical to have these kind of defined asks established from the beginning.

## Leading Conversation Campaigns within the Congregations

Just as meaningful conversations were an important aspect of moving voters throughout the four campaigns, they were especially important to the faith program. For years, the opposition to legalizing marriage for same-sex couples had used religion as a moral wedge issue to make people feel that they were going against their faith if they supported the freedom to marry. In 2012, it was seen as critical that these campaigns give members of the faith community an opportunity to talk to each other about their support as well about any apprehensions they might have.

*“We needed to tell our story and just listen, even to statements and opinions that we might find objectionable because it was critical to moving voters down a path to being able to vote for the freedom to marry.”*

In order to build a core group of people willing to lead conversations within their congregations, campaigns trained individuals in how to tell their story and how to listen to the stories of others. From the trainings, volunteers learned that not every conversation’s goal is to move voters to support the freedom to marry but rather it is to begin the conversation and hopefully to move them to think differently about the freedom to marry and begin their journey to support.

In addition to trainings, campaign faith-organizing staff held regular conference calls, prayer breakfasts, and one-on-one meetings to update faith and congregational leaders on the campaign, messaging, and new training resources. This regular communication proved to be helpful at keeping people on message and helping to share ideas from people having great success within their congregations.

Several campaigns tried to build systems of organizing within the congregations where there was a designated lead that the campaign staff would check in on to get reports on the quality and quantity of conversations happening within their congregation. That level of tracking was found to be one of the biggest challenges. Accountability and tracking are important aspects of building a successful faith program, and these campaigns felt they should have done a better job of setting up tracking systems early for faith programs.

# Building a Communication and Media Strategy around Faith Work

Campaigns and national movement leaders invested a great deal of resources into testing faith-based messages as well as messengers who were from the faith community. All four states landed on at least one core message based around faith principles. Here are examples of some of those messages:

“We are all God’s children. We should treat each other with respect and not judge, and that includes allowing committed same-sex couples to marry.”

“Allowing gay couples the freedom to marry follows the core principles of the Golden Rule – treating others as we would want to be treated ourselves.”

“We are all God’s children and the greatest commandment is to love others as you love yourself.”

In addition to these messages, which were used as overarching messages for all voters, having faith leaders delivering them was widely seen as an essential element of some of the strongest paid-media ads and earned-media stories that ran throughout the campaigns. Whether it was a Maryland pastor speaking about how his view of the legal right to marry had nothing to do with Biblical beliefs, or a reverend and his wife in Washington talking about the journey they had to go through when they found out their son was gay, these ads always tested among the strongest of the campaigns. Many of the interview participants believed that some of the reasons that people of faith had such an impact on voters was that they were addressing head-on issues that had previously kept people in conflict.

Faith organizers credit much of the success of the media and messaging around faith to the close working relationship between their departments and the communications and research teams. Having a shared understanding and level of trust led to building a common work plan that was critical to the success of the campaigns.

## Putting In Place a Forum for Conflicted Voters of Faith

The campaign’s faith organizers realized early in the campaigns that not all faith leaders or members of faith communities would feel comfortable going to something as formal as a “conversation training.” Staff began to look for other opportunities to engage people of faith. One opportunity was utilizing already existing forums that many congregations have in place. Typically, these are weekly prayer groups or monthly discussion groups. Faith organizers got on the calendars for these events in a wide range of congregations and tried to start getting congregation members comfortable talking about their personal feelings about the freedom to marry.

These forums were set up for conflicted voters of faith, not voters who were decidedly opposed to the freedom to marry. None of the campaigns put resources into trying to convert members of the faith community who were strongly opposed to freedom to marry. These larger forum-type settings gave people who were conflicted the opportunity to learn and grow toward support.

# The Critical Importance of Faith Organizing

We believe that having a faith program built to scale could benefit most other progressive movements. While the messaging and impact will vary, there are several key factors that translate across issues:

- Training a broad spectrum of faith leaders and congregation members on your message has the ability to touch hundreds of thousands of targeted voters in a way that gets right to their head and heart.
- Faith leaders speaking out about an issue gives it credibility and helps people feel more comfortable with it.
- Having a faith director as part of your campaign will allow you to access many parts of the community that have been traditionally hard to break into such as various communities of color and rural areas that may be hard to reach depending on the size of the campaign.

What compelled faith leaders to become involved in these campaigns and to what extent they were involved, as well as what these leaders would like to do in the future for other progressive issues will be looked at more in-depth later in the report in the Anzalone Liszt Grove Research section called “Analysis from Faith Leaders Online Focus Group.”

# LESSONS LEARNED

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

ANALYSIS OF THE 2012 MARRIAGE CAMPAIGNS  
FOR THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS  
NOVEMBER 2013

## 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 to educate, organize, and build relationships. Those that saw the best results from these 501(c)(3) dollars started utilizing them well in advance of the campaign itself. 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.

Campaigns partnered mostly with key regional, national, or in-state LGBT or progressive partner organizations to mount these 501(c)(3) education campaigns. These efforts ranged from large advertising buys to local community organizing efforts that disseminated materials and had conversations utilizing a similar message to the campaign, but that didn't mention the election or voting "yes" or "no." Some efforts had been ongoing for several years leading up to the campaign because there had been previous legislative or electoral efforts or a strong commitment to education by one of the statewide LGBT organizations. Where there were early and ongoing education efforts, campaigns found that voters could think about the issue outside the context of an election. This resonated with them because they didn't feel like they were trying to be persuaded or "campaigned to."

*"We did inoculation first, because if we did it after the other side made accusations, we lost credibility and just got into a back and forth."*

When campaigns used 501(c)(3) dollars in advertising there was great success when they highlighted the values message frame. By doing this early, campaign would give targeted voters the chance to think more about these issues before the opposition began their attacks. With early values based messaging education, targeted voters were less likely to shift their positions which usually happen toward the end of the campaign.

Another advantage of doing early and ongoing education work is that it helps diffuse the electoral/movement-building tension that often arises in issue campaigns like these. Campaigns by necessity need to look through a short-term, rapid, results-oriented electoral lens, which is often not the best foundation for building authentic and sustainable relationships in targeted communities like the faith and communities of color. In those states that had a dedicated and ongoing education and outreach program campaigns felt it helped to temper this problem.

## LESSON 02

# Use Legislative Session to Move Message through Earned Media

*“Campaigns should especially understand the incredible missed opportunity if they don’t treat legislative sessions like a full-on campaign, like it is the last week before the election. Those three points made it very hard to beat us.”*

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. Washington provides a good example. Polling showed support for marriage at 50% in January 2012 at the beginning of the legislative session. Two months later at the end of the session it had moved to 53%. No paid advertising was conducted, but advocates had effectively used messages and messengers through earned media to move the needle. The governor had come out in support of marriage, noting her own journey on the question. A Republican state senator with a lesbian daughter gave a particularly compelling floor speech saying she wanted her daughter to have what she and her husband had shared. “You know, I was married for 23 years to the love of my life and he died six years ago....” The speech got over two million YouTube hits.

## LESSON 03

# Dual Track Messaging

Campaigns used the strategic approach that once they went up on the air with ads, they wanted to make sure that they never “went dark” with their affirmative, values-based messages. In addition to their ongoing positive strategy, they knew that there would be times that they needed to anticipate and respond to attacks from their opponents. Because they were committed to keeping their ongoing positive message on air they would have to plan for a dual-track messaging plan. Anticipating this need and budgeting accordingly was a key to the success of these campaigns. This dual-track approach allowed them to stay laser focused on their core message and, at the same time, respond aggressively to the opposition’s arguments.

## LESSON 04

# Use of New Research Techniques

The research conducted in the four campaigns included a broad array of typical research tools: focus groups, live interviewer telephone surveys, online ad tests, and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) surveys. Campaigns also had the results from a variety of field and message experiments conducted in Maine and Oregon in 2010 and 2011. (Basic Rights Oregon played an important leadership role positioning Oregon as a “laboratory state” for testing and research even though their own marriage campaign was delayed until 2014.) This base level of research, done by national organizations, was used to form assumptions in each of the 2012 states. Then each state tested those assumptions in the context of their individual state campaigns. By doing this, the campaigns were able to start several steps ahead of where they might have been without that research.

The state campaigns also experimented with new approaches to modeling and micro-targeting. Each of the states used comprehensive micro-targeting surveys to help identify persuasion and retention universes for field contacts. States also developed a new series of models looking at a range of different factors including homophobia, religiosity, and voter conflict. In addition to modeling and micro-targeting, campaigns used significant, nontraditional field testing of messages, scripts, and tactics with voters on the phones and at the doors to provide real-time feedback loops during the campaigns.

*“Research this extensive is time and resource intensive, and we had to integrate it into our calendaring, which complicated the production logistics of our advertising. But in the end, it was worth it.”*

# CAMPAIGN INFRASTRUCTURE AND CULTURE

A key lesson to emerge from this analysis is that intentional planning about the type of campaign infrastructures and the specific nature of the campaign culture that are desired will pay repeated and positive dividends. Rather than considering campaign infrastructure and culture as ancillary pieces that occur in a piecemeal fashion, the 2012 marriage campaigns put time and strategy into developing these pieces, which would serve to advance all areas of the campaigns.

## LESSON 05

### A Stand-Alone Campaign Structure

Each state was home to at least one statewide LGBT organization that was leading the charge for the freedom to marry at the legislature (or in the case of Minnesota, to defeat the proposed anti-marriage amendment). 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. Each state made the intentional decision not to incubate or host the campaign as part of any existing organization, coalition, or table. In setting up the campaigns, the goal and focus of each was singular: to win at the ballot box on marriage in November 2012.

Leaders from all four campaigns, as well as national leaders, extolled the numerous benefits of a stand-alone campaign structure, with a singular focus. First, it created a new "brand" for the public to rally around. In each of the four states, the energy around the marriage campaigns was palpable. A united statewide effort allowed the campaigns to harness this energy. A central united campaign also prevented possible off-shoot efforts that could have taken away valuable donors or volunteers. Instead, the campaigns were able to consolidate resources under one entity while existing progressive organizations could add capacity and support to that campaign. Having total control over the campaign also allowed for strict message discipline from top to bottom. Campaign leaders also expressed that because of this model, messaging never swayed from the core, research-driven messages of the freedom to marry.

*"In the beginning we talked about running the campaign through the state-wide organization. We were so thankful we formed a separate campaign because it just made everything a little easier. There were still personality challenges and power plays, but there was never the perception that just one organization was in control. It was a shared campaign that everyone felt invested in."*

## LESSON 06

### Engaged, But Trusting Campaign Committees

Campaigns also benefited from active and engaged campaign committees, who understood and took seriously their roles in making important strategic decisions on behalf of the campaign. These boards of directors were comprised of national and state-based marriage and LGBT leaders, local, political thought leaders, donors, unlikely messengers, and leaders of key constituency groups. A consistent observation across interviews revealed that it is important for campaign committees to both weigh in and help shape key strategic decisions but also demonstrate full faith in the campaign manager to lead the campaign and make decisions with autonomy when necessary. There were times in each state, when the campaign manager had to make important decisions quickly, without an opportunity to consult the campaign committees. In these cases, it was critical that the campaign manager be trusted to act, and not get hung up in needing permission from the committee.

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. Across the interviews, 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. In both instances, there is likely much that can be extrapolated from these 2012 LGBT specific lessons and applied to the role of anchor organizations on other issues.

Statewide LGBT board members and executive staff played critical roles in providing insight into the history of LGBT politics within the state. They also helped put together the initial campaign structure – hiring the campaign manager and setting up the boards of directors. Statewide LGBT organizations were able to rapidly turn their base of members, volunteers, and donors into campaign supporters, volunteers, and donors. Early campaign staff and volunteers were able to utilize these organizations' lists to rapidly build a base of volunteers and build to scale rapidly. All of this allowed the marriage campaigns to start earlier than might have otherwise been possible and hit the ground running.

Many staff members from statewide LGBT organizations also moved over to the campaign as in-kind staff. We heard that in several states, nearly all statewide LGBT organizational staff had moved over to the campaigns by October of 2012. In addition to staff moving over to work on the campaign directly, we also heard that some organizations, working closely with the campaign, were given chunks of organizing that was done for the campaign, but under the umbrella of their organization. Both of these efforts proved to add much-needed capacity as well as additional issue expertise and relationships with members of the base and donors.

*“We were used to LGBT people serving as the voice and face of these campaigns. It took some convincing and getting used to the fact that our community had to take a step back out of the public eye and let mostly straight people tell their stories about why they supported the campaign. Once we were able to see the data on how it was working, we gladly got on board.”*

A final unique role for statewide LGBT organizations was helping translate and secure buy-in for the campaigns strategies. Because the 2012 marriage campaigns employed messaging that was new to many long-time LGBT activists, existing statewide organizations had a significant role to play in educating their base about campaign strategies and decisions. In many cases, it would have been advantageous for the statewide LGBT organizations to start even earlier and to share more of the data and research with their base about what the campaign was planning to do and why. It was particularly helpful when the statewide organizations could act as trusted messengers to discuss why and how the campaigns' messaging and approach were decided upon.

While the statewide LGBT organizations played a unique role in relation to the 2012 campaigns, integrating the organizational work within the campaign context was not without some real challenges. In some cases, it was difficult for organizational staff to make the transition to campaign staff. Not only were the campaign hours significantly more intense (without an increase in pay, in most cases), but the cultures were also different. Many staff went from roles that resembled movement-building, to the daily goal-driven, single focus of campaign life. These campaigns learned (sometimes through trial and error) the importance of being clear about the expectations of what was going to be asked of staff before transitioning over to the campaign. When organizational staff did make the transition to the campaign there also needed to be an open and ongoing channel of communications available for them with the campaign leadership.

We also heard about some struggles with getting a handle on the lines of reporting when it came to statewide LGBT organizational staff housed within the campaign. There were times staff members got conflicting directives from their supervisor on the campaign and their supervisor at their home organization. Future campaigns, in similar situations, would benefit from constant communication between home organization supervisors and campaign supervisors to ensure that the in-kind staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and receive clear directives so they are not being pulled in different directions.

## LESSON 08

### National and State Interplays

*“Campaigns are always nervous about national organizations parachuting in at the last minute to try to tell us how to do our jobs, but that never happened in our campaign. National staff were there to lend us their valuable experiences and advice to solve problems and get work done. We couldn’t have done this without our national partners.”*

In the context of these campaigns, national organizations worked closely with statewide LGBT organizations to help them chart a strategy for taking on the freedom to marry at the ballot box. 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 without creating the feeling that they were “coming in and taking over” the direction of the campaigns from state-based leadership.

Staff and board members of national organizations reached out to have personal conversations with the staff and board members they would be working with on the campaigns. National organization staff took care to get to know campaign staff, to learn about the unique culture of the state-based campaigns, and to defer to state-based staff on questions about the specific politics of the state. Many of the national organizations involved in conducting the research, sent staff members to live and work as part of the state-based campaigns. This allowed much-needed capacity, as well as deep issue expertise to be brought to the state level.

The national infrastructure and support also provided a platform for campaign leadership in each state to regularly share best practices and challenges with one another. This included regular conference calls between the four campaign managers, occasional conference calls between field directors, and liberal sharing of phone and door scripts, as well as joint investment in technologies and opposition research. Taken together, the strategic collaboration between state and national organizations allowed the campaigns to move rapidly to scale, avoid “recreating the wheel,” and anticipate opposition attacks.

*“Having the ability to bounce ideas off of the other state’s campaign managers who were going through the same experiences was super helpful. Whenever I felt like I was stuck I knew there were three other managers out there who I could call and talk it out with.”*

*“At first, it felt like a gigantic waste of time to be having these additional meetings between departments. However, as the campaign gained momentum, we were able to identify the really critical points of strategic collaboration easily. In the end, these meetings saved us a tremendous amount of time and paid incalculable dividends in the effective execution of strategy.”*

## LESSON 09

### Collaboration Between Campaign Departments

On a large-scale campaign, decisions within departments often impact the work in other areas and therefore cannot be made in a vacuum. 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 areas in which there was a need for stronger

collaboration. For example, in Minnesota, the faith department (a field program) and the communications team met regularly to plan their work in the context of a shared strategy. The result was a powerful media campaign specifically around faith community support for the freedom to marry. The other campaigns also learned similar lessons about the importance of sharing work across departments.

## LESSON 10

# Campaign Culture and Radical Hospitality

Each of the four campaigns maintained a different, though intentional, internal culture. Culture was defined as how the campaign looks and feels on the inside for staff as well as for volunteers. This focus on culture proved to be an important and effective tool for advancing the campaign's external objectives. The campaigns worked hard to create a shared sense of ownership among staff and volunteers and a sense of pride in being part of something bigger.

For many volunteers, and often staff (many of whom moved over from LGBT organizations), these campaigns were their first entrée into a political campaign, and they were drawn by the issue rather than because of being already highly engaged in politics. The campaigns featured friendly, high-energy, welcoming environments and embraced organic displays of support from supporters. The benefit of focusing so heavily on culture was that it helped balance the intense hours and incredible pressure with environments that made it easier to accept and perform within those otherwise uncomfortable realities of campaign life.

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. Radical hospitality can be defined as a practice of placing extraordinary effort and emphasis on making people feel welcome, ensuring that people feel comfortable and that their physical and spiritual well-being will be taken care of, and that people always know where to go for help. This was a critical practice for these campaigns because they were asking people to give a tremendous amount of time and energy, and have difficult conversations over and over with both strangers and people they know.

Radical hospitality can be defined as a practice of placing extraordinary effort and emphasis on making people feel welcome, ensuring that people feel comfortable and that their physical and spiritual well-being will be taken care of, and that people always know where to go for help.

In order to get to scale, some of the field campaigns depended on volunteers acting as staff and working full-time or nearly full-time. Campaign staff and super-volunteers were intentionally trained on the tools and behavioral expectations of radical hospitality. No matter what a campaign staff person was doing at any given moment, there was nothing more important than welcoming a new person who walks into the campaign office.

*“Radical hospitality is the belief that whenever any person walks through the door of the campaign it is our primary job to make that person feel like they are in the exact right place at the exact right time, and that they are incredibly welcomed. This means everything from ‘Did I park my car in the right place?’ to ‘Is there a glass of water?’ to ‘I go by gender neutral pronouns,’ to ‘I’ve never worked on a campaign before,’ or, ‘I have a ton of experience and I was really wounded in 2009 when we lost.’ We want people to feel like whoever they are and whatever they are bringing into the room is super welcome and is going to be held and respected.”*



## A Radical Hospitality Check-List

- ✓ Always ensure that the campaign space is as clean and comfortable as possible.
- ✓ Set up a system for volunteers to bring food and drinks into the campaign office, so that there are always refreshments available for volunteers and campaign visitors.
- ✓ Provide clear and inviting signage so that people know where to go and aren't confused.
- ✓ Make sure that there is a volunteer or organizer with a designated job of enthusiastically greeting and welcoming people. This person should also be prepared to answer questions about parking, directions, etc.
- ✓ Demonstrate empathy to all volunteers. Many times volunteers were being asked to step far outside their comfort zones. Knowing that campaign staff and leaders will support them helps volunteers step up and try new things.
- ✓ Consider the special needs of your base and explain these accommodations. In the case of the LGBT community, this includes things like providing gender-neutral bathrooms and making preferred gender pronouns a part of introductions. The marriage campaigns also learned that in order to bring in new supporters, they also had to explain these practices so that people weren't confused.
- ✓ Take time to celebrate successes. This can be in the form of phone bank dance breaks or simply a round of applause after an action. In addition to celebrating, provide a time and space to shake off any negative interactions that occurred with a voter during the action. It makes it easier to tolerate when volunteers know they are all "in it together"
- ✓ Make welcoming everyone's top priority. When a staff member or leader sees a new person in the office, they should stop whatever they are doing, walk up to that person, smile, shake their hand, and thank them for being there.
- ✓ Thank volunteers, donors, supporters, and even passersby for their time, their work, and commitment. Demonstrate that you value the time and effort it took for them to be a part of the work.

## LESSON

### 11

# Support, Nurturing, and Training for Campaign Staff

*“This field experience is like no other...it is intense to the staff, to the volunteers. There is an emotional element to it. You can't turn and burn, after the calls you need to talk through it...they have had some of the most intense conversations of their lives. This was a very crazy and intense field program compared to any other campaign. People need to feel good about their work, it grounds them in inspiration and gets them back to a good place.”*

Radical hospitality wasn't just for volunteers. In order for campaign staff to work arduous hours, under tremendous pressure, on a deeply personal and emotional issue, they needed support, training and care. These campaigns required staff members to repeatedly develop, tell, and refine their own personal story of a journey, in order to model the stories that volunteers would need to tell when talking with voters, and ultimately, what voters would need to do themselves, if these campaigns were to win.

Campaign leadership recognized early on that to retain talented staff, working long campaign hours, with an added deeply personal and emotional component, they would need support, training, and nurturing. The campaigns benefited from an understanding about creating space and support for staff. 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 were hired in waves, to ensure that staff members had an opportunity to bond with one another and gain the necessary skills to hit the ground running.

# FUNDRAISING

A key element of success for the marriage ballot measures in 2012 was fundraising, with most of the states far surpassing initial goals and raising significantly more than anticipated. Some of the campaign's fundraising success can be attributed to fundraising best practices – applicable to any campaign. For example, during the interviews we heard a lot about the investment made early in experienced fundraising staff and consultants and also the success of the online fundraising programs that raised between \$700,000 and \$2.7 million. One other noteworthy fundraising piece was that the campaigns excelled at raising small-dollar amounts and in-state funds – in Washington 75% of the donations came from Washington and in Minnesota 85% of the contributions were from Minnesota.

Other fundraising lessons were considered more unique to the 2012 marriage campaigns and are covered in more detail below.

## LESSON 12

### Embracing Organic Activities

*“I spent a lot of time in the beginning worrying about all of these events popping up on Facebook and Twitter and then after so many of them were really successful and awesome opportunities, we all started to embrace all of these ideas and tried hard to give people the room they needed, but provide some good resources too.”*

*“In Washington we had a group of artist working with the campaign on projects that could engage more young people. There was an amazing moment in July when the Seattle rapper Macklemore released a song called “Same Love” and it really sent a spark across Washington and the rest of the country. It became sort of an anthem for us.”*

One element that proved successful in all the states was to allow supporters to “open source” events. The campaigns took advantage of the movement energy that was happening across the respective states and allowed people to have creative ownership over organizing and fundraising events that were being planned by supporters. In a typical campaign, many would be concerned about giving up this control and would worry about negative effects that could emerge in the media. The leaders of the 2012 marriage campaigns would say that they reached a middle ground where they let people have creative liberties. The campaigns tried to supply as many materials and give as much message direction as possible so that people could still be inventive, but they also fostered the spirit and message of the campaign.

While it is important to recognize that not every unique event that was organized for the freedom to marry campaigns would be appropriate for another movement or issue, there were many events that can provide a sense of what it looks like if a campaign or organization is willing to give up some control and take a few risks. Here are a few examples of the types of events that were successful in 2012.

- **Runs and Races** – 5K and 10K races were used to raise money for the campaigns. In some cases people would get sponsors for their race and then donate the money to the campaign. In Minnesota, activists planned a 5K race called “The Big Gay Race” that brought thousands of people together to raise money and awareness for the campaign. This race is now an annual race that continues to raise money for the LGBT movement in Minnesota.
- **Pub Crawls** – Because organizing the younger 21 to 35 crowd was such an important part of the campaigns, allowing people to organize different kinds of pub crawls was a great tool to register voters, raise money, and get people excited about the campaigns. These particular events were less effective for recruiting volunteers as people often did not (understandably) remember or honor their volunteer commitments.
- **Movie, Music and Theater Events** – Movie theaters, music venues, and local theaters sponsored nights at their establishments or artists planned specific shows. These events raised funds, registered voters, and gained good earned media opportunities for the campaigns.

## LESSON 13

# House Parties with Dual Purpose

*“That was an important lesson for us – take the things that are working and build it out to a massive scale like we did with house parties.”*

As a campaign 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 think of these as an opportunity to raise a lot of small-dollar donations. Instead they focused on making sure that every event – whether campaign organized or organic – had some kind of volunteer recruitment and campaign conversation component. These parties became as much about organizing within neighborhoods or friends and family circles as they did about raising money.

Many events had an action that accompanied it like canvassing a neighborhood before or after the party, or asking everyone to take out their cell phone and identify 10 friends who they could call and have a conversation with about the campaign. In order to have this type of action-oriented approach, there also needed to be a simple training component. The training was never as in-depth as that given to volunteers who worked in the offices, but at the core they trained people on the importance of having conversations and being able to tell their own story. This was just another example of how these campaigns were able to take their conversation campaigns to a larger scale.

Even with the action-oriented house party model, these parties were still able to raise a significant amount of money for the campaigns. Each state had staff specifically dedicated to organizing house parties.

- **Minnesota** held over 1,000 house parties and raised \$2.7 million between house parties and other events. During a “One Day United” event in November of 2011 they had a hundred house parties in a single day and raised over \$100,000 dollars. It was so successful they doubled the number in May of 2012 and then tripled it in September of 2012.
- In **Washington** a staff person organized and coordinated over 200 fundraisers in five months that raised \$425,000. She worked directly with about 150 volunteers regularly to help plan events and reach goals.
- **Maine** held more than 150 small-to-medium-sized house parties all over the state.
- **Maryland** utilized the house party model in its faith organizing to have another opportunity for congregational leaders to speak to members of their faith about the campaign and why they were supporting the freedom to marry. Their original goal was to have three faith house parties per week starting in early July of 2012.

*“If you were at the grocery store and you saw someone else with a T-shirt on you felt like you had a friend shopping with you – or you would be walking down the street and a bus driver would honk and give you thumbs up because of your shirt. This was happening all over the state and really building excitement.”*

## LESSON 14

# Investing in Merchandise Helped Harness the Energy of the Movement Moment

Political campaigns generally believe that you should keep merchandise to a minimum as “signs and shorts don’t persuade voters.” Interviewees told us that while they resisted big investments in merchandise in the early stages of these campaigns, it quickly became apparent that there was something unique that called for spending more. In communities across each of the states it became important for supporters to have a lawn sign in their yard or apartment window. It was a source of pride and a piece of their activism. There were also ample stories of people having a campaign T-shirt for every day of the week and always enough bumper stickers for each of their cars and bicycles too.

Not only was the merchandise helping to build a real sense of excitement and energy within the campaigns, it was also raising a significant amount of money. For example, in Minnesota, the campaign raised over \$1 million from merchandise sales alone. These campaigns utilized a practice that was started in the Obama campaign in 2008 where campaigns never gave anything away.

**“We took a page out of the Obama campaign and figured we’d ask people to pay \$10 for lawn signs. We weren’t sure it was going to work, but we ended up selling 40,000 of them!”**

People talked about how there were big lines of people at campaign event booths buying merchandise, internet sales were much larger than expected, and people were visiting the campaign offices to buy as well. When people came to the offices, this gave the campaign the opportunity to talk to those folks face-to-face and recruit them to take the next step and volunteer.

In the end, the campaigns believed that the investments they spent in merchandise provided a greater sense of community and helped foster a strong energy you could feel across the states.

## LESSON 15

### Field as a Source of Fundraising

***“We didn’t think we could open some of our satellite field offices until closer to the election to save money, but found that the amount of revenue that was coming in off the street meant we could have more of a presence around the state and engage more volunteers. They basically paid for themselves and then some.”***

Typically field programs within campaigns have one purpose and that is to talk to voters. In the 2012 marriage campaigns, the field teams wore more than one hat as they also did a fair share of fundraising. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force staff pioneered this during the Proposition 8 Campaign in 2008 when they raised close to one million dollars through asks in the field. In 2012, people were flocking to the field offices to give contributions and frequently wanted to give money when volunteers were calling them or visiting them on a canvass.

These 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, which often led to additional donations or volunteers.

Campaigns took advantage of these revenue-raising opportunities whenever they presented themselves. In Maine, because of a snafu, phone bankers did not have prospects to call one night, so they spent the time calling for small-dollar donations. It was so successful that the campaign made the fundraising phone bank program a central part of their finance operation. In the final seven months of the campaign, the fundraising phone bank team brought in just under \$500,000 from 12,450 donors.

Much like the merchandise sales, this isn’t always going to be the case for every progressive issue campaign. But, the lesson that is important to recognize about field fundraising was that these campaigns were nimble and able to recognize when these opportunities arose and take full advantage of them to raise money and engage more voters.

# PARTNERS AND ALLIES

While each of the 2012 marriage campaigns worked with coalition partners and allies differently there were some key lessons learned from both positive and challenging experiences that can inform coalition work on other progressive issues. For this section, we look first at lessons learned that cut across several constituencies including communities of color, faith, Republicans, businesses and progressive allies. The lessons that emerged from the interviews were in many cases universal to constituency and coalition work. Lessons more specific to organizing in communities of color and faith were covered in the five core findings earlier in this report.

## LESSON 16

### A Strategic Approach to Recruiting Unconventional Allies (R's calling R's, Catholics calling Catholics.)

There were strategic approaches employed across the campaigns for both recruiting conventional and unconventional allies as well as reaching out to targeted voters within those constituencies.

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. Some prime examples of this would be having a supportive CEO reaching out to other prominent business people or an African-American minister reaching out to another African-American faith leader or a supporter of the campaign that has a personal relationship with that person. This approach takes much more time than just having an organizer do this work, but over and over campaigns were seeing great success and an even deeper level of commitment out of those people and organizations recruited in this way.

Another tool that helped with outreach to leaders and voters in this community was making sure that they had community specific materials to provide to people. While this seems like a fairly obvious practice, many campaigns do not take the time to do this. We heard many stories of campaign press releases that were sent in English to non-English-speaking news publications, and when translated by the publication, the true meaning was lost. In at least one case, the translation was seen as offensive to the community the campaign was trying to reach. By providing translated and community-specific talking points, brochures, and ads, campaigns can tailor the messaging to accommodate the target community and help deepen communications with that community.

*“Some of our most successful organizing was done because we were able to get a tribal leader on a piece of literature the last month of the campaign. Having that leader speaking directly to their community helped by leaps and bounds.”*

## LESSON 17

### Engaging Progressive Allies

Campaigns felt that spending some time at the front end of the campaign making sure that they were building strong lines of communication and securing a solid partnership with progressive allies was important. 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 and concentrate on organizing more unique allies. In states where there wasn't that strong infrastructure, building these relationships was important to making sure they weren't duplicating work and providing organizations with the tools and resources necessary to advocate on behalf of the campaign.

When there was a strong progressive infrastructure in place, these campaigns made sure to bring the key architects of those programs to the table early, when possible, even before a formal campaign committee was formed. Most states with a strong infrastructure have set up leadership tables run by different entities like the state political parties, nonprofits, and independent expenditure organizations. While making sure they were abiding by the different campaign finance laws, campaigns needed to have a strong representative sitting at each of those tables and building a strong relationship while making sure the needs of the freedom to marry campaign were being met.

In states where there wasn't necessarily a formal progressive infrastructure set up, campaigns concentrated on relationship building with specific leaders and organizations. From these one-on-one relationships, they were able to bring small tables of people together to try to ensure that, when legal, coordination was happening.

These campaigns had the advantage of taking place in a presidential year where turnout of progressives was going to be high. In off-year elections it will be even more important for campaigns to work with progressive allies to ensure they are working in concert to turn out the unpredictable base.

## 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. Partnerships in the business community more often came about because of individuals in leadership positions within a business having a connection to the campaign or the issue.

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. These business leaders are used to having electoral candidates approach them for donations, but rarely do those candidates ask for more than money and the ability to use their name. Working on an issue campaign like the freedom to marry, there is the opportunity to ask them to become engaged at a deeper level such as to speak publically about the issue, put their name on a support of fundraising solicitation, or even appear in an ad.

In Washington, the campaign had more success getting global companies like Amazon, Expedia, Google, Microsoft, Nike, and Starbucks to make their support for the freedom to marry public. But, it was the connection to the leaders of these companies that produced the most money and support. In the other states campaigns struggled to get big companies to make public endorsements.

**“We had an issue that happened in our governor’s race a few years back where Target and Best Buy got into trouble for supporting a candidate that was anti-gay, so they were not going to go out on a limb for us because of the possible backlash.”**

Recognizing the struggle early, they focused more on the key figureheads of these companies and other leaders. All of the states had great success in engaging hundreds of mid-sized and small businesses with the campaign. Some raised money, some provided food and meeting spaces, and all provided great visibility for the campaigns throughout the states by displaying huge signs and including the campaign in their advertising.

# FIELD

Investment in large, geographically diverse, data-driven and highly targeted field programs proved to be a winning strategy for the 2012 marriage campaigns. Three of the four marriage campaigns invested in massive field programs – some of the largest their states had ever seen. These programs took full advantage of the energy that the freedom to marry movement was generating by bringing on-the-ground conversations about marriage to all corners of their states.

Again, while there are countless examples of best practices around voter contact as part of the field programs from the 2012 campaigns, we wanted to concentrate on those elements that were most unique and have interesting implications for other progressive movements. The following section will present lessons from six areas of the marriage field programs. It is of course important to recognize that long-form conversation was an integral part of the 2012 freedom to marry field campaigns. However, because we covered the topic of those conversations in our five core findings earlier in the report we will not repeat that information but rather build off of it with these more micro-level field lessons.

## Six Areas of the Marriage Field Programs

1. Modeling and Micro-Targeting
2. Paid and Volunteer Field Programs
3. Volunteer Recruitment and Leadership Development
4. Friends and Family Programs
5. Young Voter Program
6. Get Out the Vote (GOTV)

### LESSON 19

## Modeling and Micro-Targeting Analysis

One important component of any issue or electoral campaign is being able to narrow down the universe of voters that you talk to at different stages of the campaign. The 2012 freedom to marry campaigns not only used modeling and micro-targeting effectively but utilized new and innovative approaches that have provided interesting lessons for future campaigns.

To add some context to the kind of modeling and micro-targeting we are referring to, we wanted to provide some general background information on the subject. Campaign targeting has evolved a great deal over the past decade. Voter files have improved with the addition of online interfaces like the VAN (Voter Activation Network), additional demographic and consumer data, and the ability to share data between organizations and campaigns. Micro-targeting is a statistical technique borrowed from the commercial advertising world that combines all of the additional voter file data with polling data to create a predictive model or score for voters. Most campaigns, including all of the 2012 freedom to marry campaigns, made use of this type of analysis.

All four of the 2012 marriage campaigns used “shared” progressive voter files with data from Catalist, America Votes, State Voices, and other sources. The shared voter files included basic micro-targeting data to help the campaigns construct their phone, canvass, and mail universes. The shared voter files included data on partisanship, ideology, and turnout at no extra cost to the campaigns.

*“Access to a shared voter file like the VAN was critical because it provided us with pretty sophisticated data from the start of the campaign that cost us very little.”*

The latest versions of these shared progressive voter files are developing an expanded inventory of issue models that can be used when a ballot campaign cannot afford its own model or to help improve and lower the cost of a new model they might choose to construct. The shared voter file data also allowed the marriage campaigns to get started with volunteer test universes before they had access to their own state-specific micro-targeting data.

Some of the more common modeling and micro-targeting products used by the 2012 freedom to marry campaigns and other issue campaigns today include the following:

- **Support Scores** – predict the chance that an individual voter will support a candidate or an issue (like the freedom to marry).
- **Turnout Scores** – predict how likely it is that a voter will turnout in a specific election. Often used to create GOTV universes when combined with a support score.
- **Message Models** – measure how effective a particular message is with a voter. Message models are often used to find cross-pressured voters who respond to a message but may not yet be supportive of a candidate or an issue.
- **Persuasion Models** – predict which voters can be persuaded on a particular issue or with a particular message. Persuasion models are a newer type of model and are still very experimental as it is much more difficult to measure which voters move on an issue (as opposed to which voters support that issue). The science of creating persuasion models for issue and candidate campaigns is advancing rapidly. Additional types of persuasion models are worth considering for future issue campaigns. President Obama’s reelection campaign had success using a persuasion model built off of the huge number of ID calls they had conducted (and the changing responses over time from voters that had been ID’d multiple times). The 2013 campaigns have been experimenting with persuasion models that use a large sample of phone calls coupled with a short persuasion message to identify persuasion targets. The results of 2012 and 2013 persuasion model tests should be available in plenty of time to incorporate the best practices into future 2014 ballot campaigns.
- **EIP models** – An experiment informed program (EIP) is a type of persuasion model that is created from a survey of voters that received a specific voter contact program (usually mail or phone) compared to voters who did not receive that particular voter contact program.



## Modeling Recommendations for Future Marriage and Other Issues Campaigns

The 2012 campaigns made excellent use of rapidly evolving micro-targeting technology, and their experience helped develop a set of basic recommendations for future consideration.

- **Campaigns should use micro-targeting:** Micro-targeting does an excellent job of identifying supporters and voters who are most likely to vote. All campaigns should use these basic models, even if they can only afford a less expensive automated survey project.
- **National models are needed:** National models should be considered in the future. While each state is different and the language of ballot initiatives can vary, the core support for and against various issues is often similar across states. Support for the freedom to marry was similar across demographic groups in all four states in 2012, making marriage an ideal issue for the creation of a national model. With similar demographic support across states, a national model should be able to approach the accuracy of a state-based model. National issue models have already been created around such issues as choice, climate change, gun control, and fiscal issues. We should be able to pool national data sets on the fight around the freedom to marry and other issues to construct a relatively accurate national model. Such a model could be used across states and to support legislative efforts as well as electoral campaigns.
- **The biggest advantage of a national model is cost:** While a national model might be two to three times more expensive than a state-based model, it could be used in any state and also could serve as an input to future state-based models to increase their accuracy. If a national support model is validated within a particular state it might even eliminate the need for an additional state-based model. It would also be an important resource for use early in campaigns and for states with more limited financial resources.
- **Cost matters and needs to be evaluated against efficiency gains:** Cost should be a factor when deciding what type of models to construct. More expensive programs with more voter contact might justify a more expensive project. However, campaigns should not spend \$100,000 on a modeling project to target \$300,000 worth of mail – they might spend that amount on a program that generates millions of volunteer calls with very specific persuasion messages. A good micro-targeting project might add 5% to 10% to a campaign’s efficiency beyond the free tools already available to them through shared voter files. The voter contact then needs to be large enough or expensive enough to justify the cost. Three of the marriage campaigns made up to a million volunteer calls (not contacts) in addition to other mail and paid phones that might have used the targeting. These campaigns were large enough to justify more significant investments in modeling, and program size should be a key consideration for future efforts.
- **More testing of persuasion models is needed:** Persuasion models have only been used by progressive campaigns for a short time and are still experimental in nature. If volunteer phone and canvass programs continue to be a substantial part of progressive issue campaigns, the community will need better persuasion models to help target those programs. An ideal persuasion model would identify voters who are more likely to move on a particular issue (positively or negatively) with a specific type of communication like a volunteer phone call. Testing should also be part of the process to help determine which messages are the most persuasive and which types of contact are the most durable.

While the 2012 marriage campaigns emphasized personal and relational conversations to move persuadable voters, they employed somewhat different models for delivering these messages. 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. Maine did the most with paid-voter contacts – an in-house paid-canvass and early in-house paid-phone program both drew their staff heavily from the campaign’s base of volunteers and from allied organizations. Maine also had a very significant volunteer component to its persuasion program. Minnesota represented the other end of the spectrum, running a 100% volunteer-based voter contact program. Washington and Maryland employed more of a mix.

Coming out of these campaigns it is important to note that we are not suggesting there is a right or wrong model for persuading voters. Both the paid and volunteer models were considered to be highly effective in 2012. The right model should depend on the unique characteristics of each state, including when the campaign starts, geography, access to financial and volunteer resources, persuasion needs, and other field objectives. What follows is a short description of how and why the 2012 campaigns made their decisions about persuasion models.

- **Volunteer Only:** From the beginning, the Minnesota campaign believed that in order to get to the kind of scale they needed to be at by October for the most intensive persuasion and for GOTV, they needed to build a volunteer base that would far exceed the capacity possible through a paid canvass. They also believed that, because these conversations were so personal, they would need to be as genuine as possible, and volunteers would more likely be able to speak in a more genuine manner. The campaign found that volunteers, if trained properly, could deliver that message effectively and relationally to persuadable voters.

It is important to note, however, that Minnesota’s all-volunteer program was built through the investment in over 90 paid staff. These field staff focused on identifying and developing a broad base of volunteer leaders, who essentially extended staff capacity. The hundreds of trained leaders were the critical linchpins for recruiting and mobilizing the thousands of volunteers who would have the persuasion conversations. Most of the conversations in Minnesota occurred over the phone, though some targeted canvasses were employed as well.

- **Mix of Paid and Volunteer:** Maine, Maryland, and Washington employed a mix of both paid and volunteer persuasion field work. Maine chose to use paid staff because they started so early and felt that they could easily burn volunteers out if they were asking them to commit to being with the campaign for more than a year. They also had the financial resources to run a significant paid operation. Another factor in deciding to use paid staff in Maine and Washington was the difficulty in finding the number of volunteers that needed to be working in smaller cities and more remote areas of the state. A major benefit of a paid canvas is the flexibility to send it where it’s most needed.

Those campaigns that ran both volunteer and paid persuasion programs felt there were advantages and disadvantages to both. Several of the campaigns felt the quality of conversations were better with volunteers or with paid staff who were especially committed to the issue – staff that came from allied organizations or from the volunteer base of the campaign. The campaigns felt that volunteers and these types of paid staff connected to the voters better, and on average cared more deeply about the issue they were talking about leading to more persuasive conversations. This is in contrast to paid staff who were “hired off the street” or from more traditional canvass

sources. With those types of paid staff, that were somewhat less connected to the issue personally, there was a sense that the level of authenticity and connection with voters was not as great. That is not to say, however, that these conversations were ineffective; they were just less relational and perhaps slightly less persuasive based on feedback received.

Both Maine and Washington also felt that the paid operation offered a level of efficiency, consistency, and accountability that helped the campaign better track their progress to goals. In the case of Maine, for example, they were able to monitor the live paid calls that were being made and figure out what was working and not working within the scripts and identify further training needs.

Regardless of whether it was a volunteer or a paid staff person, campaigns invested time and resources into ensuring that they were well trained and having a positive and powerful experience. They knew the importance of making sure that anyone coming into contact with the campaign could feel the energy of the campaign and want to either become involved themselves or at least think more about what marriage meant to them.

> Source: 2012 Freedom to Marry Analysis

## LESSON 21

# Volunteer Recruitment and Volunteer Leadership Development

In order to complete the necessary number of persuasion conversations, field programs prioritized developing dedicated volunteers into leadership positions at every stage of the campaigns. Organizers were trained to identify volunteers with leadership potential and would then recruit that potential leader for a one-on-one and appeal to the person's self-interest to invite that volunteer into a leadership position within the campaign. That meant that staff had to be very observant of the volunteers who walked through the door. They listened and took note of the volunteer's connection to the movement and the campaign and evaluated their capacity quickly.

**“Our field staff was amazing at turning volunteers into leaders. I remember one woman who just walked in off the street to see if she could phone one night. The next time I saw her she was leading a training and coming in four nights a week. It was all about recognizing people's strengths and making them feel part of the family.”**

*“There was one woman who I thought was on payroll until the last week of the campaign when I found out she was a full-time volunteer. These volunteers felt a huge sense of ownership over the campaign and were our heart and soul.”*

In many cases, volunteer leaders acted as full-time staff and played an array of roles on the campaigns, from running all aspects of canvasses to training volunteers, to coaching phone bankers, to managing campaign offices and organizing materials. Organizers provided ongoing support, training, and feedback to volunteer leaders as they developed in their roles. Staff made themselves available to volunteers and were always very hands-on. Staff would conduct one-on-ones with volunteer leaders to find out what additional resources they needed and help them overcome challenges they were experiencing as well as to recognize their strengths and help them build off of them.

## LESSON 22

# Friends and Family Programs

*“I had been active for a long time in LGBT-rights work, but I realized I had never had a real conversation with many of my relatives about why I did this work and why this campaign was so important to me. I admit I was nervous, but because of my training and experience with the campaign I took the leap and I think I actually got my uncle to change his vote.”*

For many years “friends and family” programs have played an important part of reaching voters in campaigns. By asking supporters to think of five to ten people to reach out to and talk with about the issues, campaigns hugely expand their reach and capacity. With the availability of social media tools like Facebook and Twitter it is easier than ever to ask people to reach out to their networks and talk about the campaign. The freedom to marry campaigns were no different, they all planned to have some type of friends and family program integrated into their voter contact plans.

Several unique aspects of the friends and family program to these marriage campaigns were the rate at which people were coming to the campaign and asking “how can I talk with my friends and family about this issue?” Also, the fact that the campaigns were not just asking people to tell their friends and family to “vote yes or vote no,” they were being asked to have the same kind of personal conversations that were being employed across the campaign. That meant that campaigns had to develop a higher level of outreach and training in order to assure that people had the tools necessary to have effective conversations with friends and family members.

Campaigns conducted in person and sometimes online trainings across their states that reviewed the campaign’s message of leading with the heart, from an emotional and vulnerable vantage point. They were taught to listen and ask pointed questions of the person that could help initiate a good conversation. The trainings actively discouraged “head” and fact-driven conversations as well as defensiveness and use of words like “discrimination” and “bigotry.”

One of the primary challenges of the friends and family programs, was that accountability was low. At least two of the campaigns employed new technology to help friends and family program participants track their conversations in the VAN (Voter Activation Network) through Facebook. However, the technology was not user-friendly enough so that the hundreds of people going through the program were readily utilizing it. Some of the campaigns adopted a model of calling and coaching program participants to provide support and to get reports on their conversations. Anecdotally, the numbers that exist suggest that voters who had conversations with someone through the friends and family program were persuaded at a higher rate than those who received regular persuasion campaign calls or door-knocks.

Friends and family 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

In all four states, young people represented one of the largest blocks of supporters of the freedom to marry. At the same time the campaigns recognized that historically young people were among the least likely to turn out to vote. Nationally, some speculated that young people who turned out in 2008 to support Barack Obama were disillusioned by the lack of change and would likely sit out the 2012 elections. To address this, the

marriage campaigns built programs and created a narrative that would make 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. They used rapid leadership development programs through already existing student groups to bring young people together and create a sense of momentum. From August through November, young voter programs from the marriage campaigns were visible and active on as many college campuses and in neighborhoods where there were significant numbers of young people living. Each state employed varying tactics for engaging young people, but all of them 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.

Most campaigns employed some combination of the following tactics, which could be utilized on college campuses effectively by future marriage and LGBT campaigns and other progressive issues.

*“We wanted to make sure that people were hearing about the campaign in class, on the bus, in the cafeteria, at their frat party, and at happy hour. Plus volunteers were having a blast.”*

- **Class Raps:** Students were encouraged to ask their professors for a few minutes during class to let students know about the opportunity to be involved in the campaign. Scripts for class raps were characteristically simple and energizing and focused on four key themes, 1) Education about what was on the ballot and telling why it is important to them personally, 2) Encouraging students to vote at school instead of in out-of-state home precincts 3) Information about voter registration and polling place locations, and 4) Volunteer recruitment. Having the ability to reach students in their classrooms allowed the campaigns to talk to those students who did not live on campus or participate in events or activities were the campaign was focusing their energies.

Some professors notably would not allow class raps due to the political nature of the issue. For future movements or campaigns, the 2012 marriage campaigns recommend building relationships early with faculty and staff on campuses in order to promote greater buy-in for campaign activities.

*“These tactics led to young people feeling like they were part of something big, a movement for their generation. It gave them the ability to have a voice and be able to say ‘hey parents...you are wrong.’ I think it was one of the most effective moments of mobilizing young people during an election ever. I think that was very empowering.”*

- **In-Person Volunteer Recruitment:** Students and campaign organizers mapped out the areas of highest foot traffic on campus and stationed volunteers with clipboards in these places on a daily basis. Volunteers were trained primarily to recruit volunteers and to educate students about the issue and the campaign.

One unique aspect of these programs was that they went beyond the confines of the campuses. Teams of people were deployed at night to bars and parties, dance clubs, rock concerts, anywhere young people would be gathered.

- **Visibility:** While not generally considered an effective voter engagement tactic, visibility played an important role on college campuses. As Election Day drew near, student volunteers turned their entire campuses into visibility opportunities for the campaigns. Distributing fliers, chalking the sidewalks, decorating dorms and classrooms, playing music, and wearing costumes created an environment in which it was impossible to be on campus and not be aware of the coming marriage vote. This also created hype and the sense and social pressure of, “everyone on this campus is voting to support marriage.”
- **Organic Events:** The campaigns benefited from allowing young supporters to create their own organic events (with particular encouragement to stay “on-message”). This gave young people a sense of ownership over the campaign and encouraged creative activities for engaging their peers. When possible organizers would track invites on Facebook and Twitter to see if there was the opportunity to provide messaging ideas or campaign materials. We heard about dance-a-thons, bean bag toss tournaments, keg-parties and neighborhood cleanups all being organized to raise awareness, money or recruit young volunteers.

With some fear that the presidential campaign didn't have the kind of gravitas that it did in 2008, each of the four campaigns ran massive get-out-the-vote operations.

Traditionally campaigns begin GOTV about two weeks out from Election Day. Most campaigns started with the idea that they would be pivoting away from their persuasion work around that two-week out time and put 100% of their effort into using their volunteers and staff to turn out marriage support voters. But, for the most part, the 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.

Because, for the most part, campaigns employed the typical best practice tactics for GOTV like phoning and canvassing base voters, organizing rides to the polls, providing poll watchers and visibility, we would like to concentrate on those tactics that were unique and offer up some interesting lessons for future campaigns.

- **Supporter Retention Programs:** Campaigns ran three types of programs during the GOTV Phase: traditional supporter turnout, persuasion of conflicted voters, and retention of softer supporters. The need to continue persuading voters right up until the end of the campaign is not necessarily unique, but it is an important lesson that campaign staff wanted to talk about because they wished they had planned better for it in advance of GOTV so they had additional dollars and bodies to continue with the persuasion program until closer to Election Day.

The program that was unique to these campaigns was the idea of a supporter retention program. Because of the history of other freedom to marry campaigns facing a drop in support when the opponents attack ads ramp up, Minnesota and Maine determine early on that they would develop a "retention" program aimed at soft supporters and would have the goals of uncovering any hidden concerns the voters may have and inoculating them against the opponents' messaging and shoring up their support. The campaigns used multiple ways of identifying these potential soft voters. With modeling, specially designed scripts, and data collected throughout the campaign, they identified between 30,000 and 50,000 voters that fell within this universe. These voters then received unique contacts from the campaign by mail, phone, and at their door. While there isn't a lot of data to know the effectiveness of these programs, we heard from both campaign managers who employed this program that it was critical to their success.

- **Campus Program:** A centerpiece of all of the campaigns was the effort to seize the opportunity to get young voters to vote with a massive campus-based program, both paid and volunteer. Beyond the traditional tactics of phoning, visibility, and rides to the polls, the Minnesota campaign utilized an aggressive dorm and apartment door-knocking program that included three complete passes of the dorms and on-campus apartments. There were varying levels of accessibility to these buildings, which required organizers to recruit students living in the dorms and partner with allied organizations prior to Election Day to gain access. The third pass of the day was called the "Dorm Storm." This was a no-holds-barred, high energy run through the dorms to create a sense of urgency, spirit, and collectivism around the last chance to vote. While these efforts need to be cautious and not create a high-level of annoyance for students and strong opposition from residential authorities, volunteers reportedly loved it and these volunteers went on to aid to help with the polling locations right up until the last voter voted.

# POLLING AND FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

As a result of the preliminary lesson learned that Grassroots Solutions and Anzalone Liszt Grove Research presented to CAP in August 2013, the team put in place a plan for additional research to explore the involvement of youth and the faith community.

ANALYSIS OF THE 2012 MARRIAGE CAMPAIGNS  
FOR THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS  
NOVEMBER 2013

grassroots  solutions

## Research Methodology

- 1. Youth Research** – We conducted an online poll among 18 to 30-year-old voters in the four marriage states who voted in support of marriage in 2012. 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. There will also be an oversampling of those youth surveyed who have a high propensity for activism to determine why they were active in the marriage campaigns (if applicable) or what it would take for them to become involved in a progressive-issue fight.
- 2. Faith Community Research** – We conducted a three-day online focus group (known as a qualboard) among members of the faith community in the four marriage states who became involved in support of marriage. The goal was to understand how these people became involved, how their views on this issue evolved, how they were able to reconcile 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 respective states. These particular people also lead busy lives and do not have traditional 9-to-5 jobs. 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 than if we had conducted a traditional in-person focus group, and received richer, more thoughtful responses.

# Youth Poll Results and Analysis

The success of the initiatives in Minnesota, Maine, Maryland, and Washington State all hinged on broad coalitions of support and involvement – from the business community, Republicans, faith leaders, and youth voters all supported these initiatives at levels rarely seen before. In Minnesota, more voters cast ballots on Amendment One than on the presidential ticket. Youth voters have always been more supportive of the freedom to marry than their older counterparts, but often cannot be relied upon to turnout or to vote all the way down the ballot. In November of 2012, their extremely high turnout played a critical part in the success of all four initiatives.

In partnership with Grassroots Solutions, Anzalone Liszt Grove Research set out to determine what motivated voters under 30 in these four states to vote in support of the freedom to marry, with the larger goal of understanding how these voters may be effectively engaged in future progressive causes and campaigns. The results of the youth survey are fascinating and provide a blueprint for how these voters may be mobilized to turnout in future elections, but also how they could be engaged to become involved with campaigns in the lead-up to elections.

**Ultimately, young voters recall feeling excited and engaged in the 2012 election, and their enthusiasm was as much about the marriage amendments as it was about the Presidential campaign. Their support for the marriage campaigns was largely because of the “marriage moment” – meaning that they cared about this issue specifically, and believed that action was “long overdue.” Their passion for giving all couples the freedom to marry the person they love drove their support; they also felt caught up in being a part of history and accomplishing something big.**

One of the most important findings from this survey was the intensity of support among voters who have a close friend or family member who is gay. These voters were much more likely to pay attention to the 2012 campaigns, more excited about voting, and more likely to take action beyond voting than voters who did not have a personal relationship with a gay person. This is not a new trend – for several years we’ve seen that voters who are close to a gay person are more inclined to support marriage equality – but this finding is particularly relevant to this project because we are starting with a sample of largely progressive voters who DID vote for marriage. Even with those initial givens, knowing a gay person still makes the difference.

This conveys how incredibly important it will be for any future campaign – LGBT or otherwise – to make the issue personal, to ensure the concerns hit home for voters. Feeling personally connected to the issue in a human way (not just in a “greater good” way) is critical. While some issues lend themselves to personal connection easily (gender equality, education), other issues may require more storytelling to relate common human experiences and desires (immigration, minimum wage).

While the freedom to marry drove their interest and involvement in the campaigns, youth voters are not single-issue voters. They care deeply about marriage equality, but they also are passionate about education issues, women’s reproductive rights, access to healthcare, and gender equality. These concerns all hit home for these voters (and underscore how a personal connection to an issue makes voters more likely to take action) much in the same way they did with the freedom to marry issue.

## 1. Youth Survey Methodology

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

While the freedom to marry drove their interest and involvement in the campaigns, youth voters are not single-issue voters. They care deeply about marriage equality, but they also are passionate about education issues, women’s reproductive rights, access to healthcare, and gender equality.

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.

## 2. 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 it.** Youth voters are very social media-reliant. Many check Facebook several times a day, particularly political activists. 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 like education, the freedom to marry, and gender equality (among other issues), but will need to be motivated and persuaded to turn out again.

### 3. Voting and Civic Engagement

This was the first election for more than a quarter of young voters. Among the non-activist set, 29% report that the 2012 election was the first one in which they had voted. The numbers are virtually the same among activists, 1 in 4 voted for the first time (26%). Not surprisingly, there is a strong age correlation to first-time voters, and those between the ages of 18 and 21 were most likely to be voting for the first time.

#### FIRST TIME VOTERS BY AGE

Non-activists	29%
Activists	26%
18-21	88%
22-25	36%
26-28	11%
29-30	8%

The 2012 election attracted more attention from these voters than ever before and more than half (51%) of non-activists and 60% of activists reported paying closer attention to politics during that election cycle than in years past. While this also has a strong age correlation, the majority of voters aged 18 to 28 paid closer attention to the 2012 cycle than to any in years past, and even 29-30 year olds were divided (44% paid closer attention in 2012, while 50% paid about the same level of attention).

#### ATTENTION LEVEL IN 2012 BY AGE

	Closer Attention in 2012	About the Same
Non-activists	51%	44%
Activists	60%	32%
18-21	60%	27%
22-25	58%	36%
26-28	50%	45%
29-30	44%	50%

In Minnesota, youth voters were MORE excited about voting for the freedom to marry than they were about voting for president (53% marriage / 47% presidential).

Most of these voters cast ballots for President Obama at the top of the ticket (76% of non-activists, 82% of activists), but their anticipation and interest in the election was divided between the presidential election and the freedom to marry initiatives in their state. In Minnesota, youth voters were MORE excited about voting for the freedom to marry than they were about voting for president (53% marriage / 47% presidential). In the other states, majorities were more interested in the presidential, but the margin was narrow – in Washington, 57% presidential / 43% marriage initiative; in Maine 59% presidential / 41% marriage initiative; in Maryland, voters were most interested in the presidential, 66% compared to 34% for the freedom to marry. The trend in Maryland falls in line with the somewhat more muted freedom to marry campaign apparatus in the state compared to the other three.

**These younger voters are strident supporters of the freedom to marry, and very few needed time to decide how they would vote – 76% report that they *always knew how they were going to vote on the initiative, and only 5% waited until a few days before the election to decide.*** These trends are largely true across all demographic groups, though there is a stark difference between voters who are close friends with a gay or lesbian individual and those who are not. The data on the table below EXCLUDES gay individuals to remove any potential self-interest bias.

## WHEN VOTERS DECIDED HOW THEY WERE VOTING

	Know LGBT person	Do not know LGBT person
In the last couple days	4%	8%
About a week or two before	5%	7%
About a month before	5%	7%
Always knew how they would vote	79%	66%

Younger voters tend to be less consistent in their voting habits, and despite these voters' increased interest in the 2012 election, they have not remained engaged and many indicate they may not vote in the 2014 midterm election. Only two-thirds of non-activists (67%) say they are almost certain to vote, while 12% say the likelihood is 50/50 or that they will not vote. First-time voters are the least likely to return to the polls in 2014 – just 56% say they are almost certain to vote, and 16% say the chances are 50/50 or worse. It will be critical to the success of the upcoming elections to make in-roads with youth voters similar to those made in 2012.

#### 4. Political Participation and Involvement with the Freedom to Marry Campaigns

In the months and weeks leading up to the November 2012 elections, youth voters tuned in and paid attention to the freedom to marry campaigns going on in their states. Activists were much more avid: 53% paid very close attention, and 86% paid very close or some attention. Even non-activists reported following the campaigns: 27% paid very close attention, and 74% paid very close or some attention. Youth voters in all states plugged, but those in Maine did so at a higher rate: 46% paid very close attention, compared with 33% in Minnesota, 30% in Washington, and 29% in Maryland.

That said, and as we suspected, most of these voters did not get personally involved – 67% of non-activists say they did not get involved at all, and only 3% of them got very involved. Activists, true to their description were more active – though only 18% report being very involved, just 27% said they had no involvement, and the majority took either some or a little action. Maryland voters were least involved – 61% did not become involved at all – while Maine voters were most active with half participating in some way.

## INVOLVEMENT IN MARRIAGE CAMPAIGNS BY STATE

	Very/somewhat involved	Not at all involved
Non-activists	14%	67%
Activists	46%	27%
Maine	26%	50%
Minnesota	22%	58%
Washington	19%	58%
Maryland	20%	61%

When asked to describe what actions and activities define involvement with a political campaign, voters largely pointed to volunteering with the campaign, donating money, phone calls, and door-knocking.

► *When you think about ways in which a person might become involved in a political campaign, what sorts of actions or activities come to mind?*



Majorities of voters reported involvement when provided with a broader list of ways in which a person might get involved – including conversations with friends and family, social media, and buying merchandise.

The perception that political involvement with a campaign is limited to attending official campaign events or becoming an official volunteer with the campaign helps instruct why relatively few non-activist voters believed that they got involved with the campaigns. In actuality, majorities of voters reported involvement when provided with a broader list of ways in which a person might get involved – including conversations with friends and family, social media, and buying merchandise. We found that the perception that involvement in a campaign is restricted to spending time in a campaign office with other volunteers prevented many from initially thinking they had been involved.

Social media emerged as the dominant way in which non-activists got involved with freedom to marry campaigns, and points to how involvement and participation have been redefined in a digital age. Facebook posts led the list (32%), followed by persuaded friends and family (30%), then sharing videos and other materials through Facebook and Twitter and joining a Facebook group (21%) fell behind that. Non-activists did not take a large participatory role with these campaigns – 11% bought merchandise and 9% put up a sign, but almost none of them made phone calls (2%), door-knocked (1%), or attended a campaign event (5%).

These different types of involvement were largely new to non-activists, including the social media participation; **51% of non-activists who posted on Facebook or Twitter had never done so for a previous campaign, and 57% had never joined a Facebook group until the freedom to marry campaigns.** For things like donating money and buying merchandise, even fewer non-activists had participated in this before (67% and 60% respectively say it was the first time). The survey shows that voters were swept up by what these campaigns were doing.

Activists were more involved, though social media and conversations with friends still dominated. Nearly half (48%) posted on their Facebook accounts about the campaign, 44% joined a Facebook group, 39% persuaded friends and family, and 34% shared videos and other material on social media. Activists also donated money – 31% report giving money, compared to just 4% of non-activists. Across the board, these voters were much less reluctant to participate. Still, despite having a proclivity for activism, for many it was the first time they had taken such action.

## WAYS IN WHICH VOTERS TOOK ACTION

	Activists	First-Time Activists	Non-Activists	First-Time Non-Activists
Posted on Facebook/ Twitter	48%	27%	32%	51%
Joined a Facebook group	44%	33%	21%	57%
Persuaded friends/family	39%	33%	30%	46%
Shared videos, articles, or information about the campaigns on Facebook/ Twitter	34%	22%	21%	55%
Donated money	31%	43%	4%	67%
Purchased merchandise	28%	34%	11%	60%
Put up a sign supporting a cause	23%	40%	9%	66%
Attended a campaign event	23%	35%	5%	69%
Made phone calls to let voters know about the campaigns	14%	47%	2%	65%
Knocked on doors	8%	49%	1%	52%

As the Grassroots Solutions team found through their interviews, in-depth, one-on-one conversations were key to converting uncertain voters and helping them along their journeys toward supporting the freedom to marry for gay and lesbian couples. Many youth voters had conversations about this issue with friends and family. Largely, these conversations took place with peers – 47% said they mostly communicated with people their own age, and 38% communicated with people of all ages. Age of the respondent did impact who they spoke with, and the very youngest voters were more likely to talk to people older than they were about the issue (19% of 18 to 21-year-olds spoke with mostly older people, 13% of 22 to 25-year-olds, 9% of 26 to 28-year-olds, and 6% of 29 to 30-year-olds).

### 5. The Marriage Moment

Youth voters in these four states were largely driven to get involved (in whichever way they did) because of a firm belief in the freedom to marry for all couples, and their interest in seeing these campaigns succeed rivaled (and in Minnesota exceeded) their interest in the presidential election. To this extent, it was the marriage moment specifically that called them to action. Voters who were solely motivated by the issue of marriage will be harder for us to persuade to participate in other issues.

Rivaling the cause of the freedom to marry itself, youth voters were also compelled to change history and believed that the marriage vote was an important accomplishment to see happen. The idea that they were able to play a role in changing a law they felt was overdue, or in making history is not limited to marriage – these feelings come from the sense of urgency that the marriage campaigns were able to convey. This theme can be ported to other campaigns by doing the same.

We believe that the marriage campaigns were able to elevate the freedom to marry by making it about a larger movement – it was about rights, it was about changing history in addition to the values of freedom and love/commitment. These two themes together worked to drive unprecedented support for all types of unusual allies (including youth). This is the type of message that can and should be taken to other campaigns – voters want to feel like their involvement will be bigger than ONE law or policy.

When asked to describe why they became involved (even if “involved” just meant voting for it), voters describe the importance of doing this, and their belief that all people should have the right to marry the person they love and be treated equally. Many also have friends who are gay and their personal connection to the issue motivated their involvement.

► *What about the marriage campaign made you want to become involved?*



When presented with message material and asked to rate how well it describes their views, the messages that the freedom to marry campaigns delivered in their field, online, and paid communications rose to the top – nobody should be told it is illegal to marry the person they love (85% of non-activists and 76% of activists believe it describes very well why they got involved in the campaign. Moreover, 83% of non-activists and 80% of activists believe it is important to me that gay and lesbian couples have the same rights as straight couples and 82% of non-activists and 77% of activists believe that love is love it belongs to everybody. These have limited portability (except to other freedom to marry campaigns).

An overarching belief that this law was long overdue or that the amendment was wrong (in Minnesota) also drove involvement (74% of non-activists), and it was a chance to change history (51% of non-activists and 63% of activists). Also, as we have described previously, having close gay friends or family members gave voters a very personal reason to become involve (52% of non-activists and 51% of activists).

As we will describe in future sections, these voters are very motivated by social justice issues. These traits are only somewhat tied to the freedom to marry issue – giving voters the chance to make history, or to participate in passing a long-overdue law (particularly one that empowers a group of people typically neglected), will give us a way to reach and engage them.

These voters were much less persuaded to get involved by social pressures or appeals to the sexiness of the campaign. The idea that their friends were doing it, it would be fun, or the national attention the campaigns received had less of an impact for driving support than the larger movement did.

## REASONS FOR INVOLVEMENT

	Non-Activists	Activists
Nobody should be told it is illegal to marry the person they love	85%	76%
Love is love and it belongs to everybody	82%	77%
It is important to me that gay and lesbian couples have the same rights as straight couples	83%	80%
[MD, ME, WA ONLY] This law was long overdue	74%	70%
[MN ONLY] This law was wrong	72%	82%
I wanted the initiative to be successful	64%	62%
I have close friends or family members who are gay	52%	51%
It was a chance to change history	51%	63%
It felt like an important accomplishment	48%	60%
Everyone I know supports marriage for gay and lesbian couples	24%	31%
The campaign was getting national attention	22%	40%
The campaign staff was friendly and welcoming	20%	39%
My friends were getting involved on the campaigns	17%	34%
Staff from the campaign kept me well-informed of ways that I could get involved	15%	33%
I thought it would be fun	13%	25%

Interactions with campaign staff had less impact on participation than values-laden messaging. This is due in part to the fact that very few of the youth voters participated in the campaign in a formal capacity, and not because they had negative experiences. Many were never in a situation to meet campaign staff.

Many youth voters did not get involved at all (aside from casting a ballot), and for those voters, time was the largest barrier to involvement. Others generally do not enjoy politics or campaigns, or are frustrated by the way politics works and did not want to participate.



## ISSUE PRIORITIES AMONG ACTIVISTS AND NON-ACTIVISTS

	Non-Activists (top 3 issue)	Activists (top 3 issue)
Marriage for gay and lesbian couples	38%	35%
Improving education	39%	21%
Making healthcare more affordable	36%	30%
Protecting women’s reproductive health options and access to birth control	26%	25%
Reducing the cost of college	26%	23%
Reducing poverty	20%	23%
Gun violence prevention	19%	19%
Increasing our use of renewable energy	19%	17%
Gender equality	17%	25%
Standing up to efforts to cut pay and benefits for American workers	13%	9%
Protecting air and water	12%	14%
Racial equality	11%	19%
Immigration reform	9%	15%
Adoption rights for gay and lesbian couples	6%	12%
Workplace protections for gay and transgender individuals	3%	6%
Beating back on attempts to take away workplace safety protections	1%	2%

Youth voters also display a willingness to become involved in some of the issues that they pay attention to.

Youth voters also display a willingness to become involved in some of the issues that they pay attention to – for non-activists, improving education has the most potential to engage (45% would become involved in improving education and 42% would become involved in reducing the cost of college). This issue hits home personally, as 18% of these voters are currently students and another 55% are college graduates. There is very little gender gap on this issue, as it impacts men and women voters.

Marriage for gay and lesbian couples is also very important for non-activists (39% would consider becoming involved), though we should note that other issues that impact LGBT individuals such as adoption rights and workplace protections do not rate very highly (26% and 18%, respectively).

Issues impacting women are especially powerful – following education and the freedom to marry, protecting women’s reproductive health options and access to birth control (36%), making healthcare more affordable (35%), and gender equality (32%) are a set of issues with which these voters would become involved. Women voters are particularly passionate about the suite of issues impacting women.

Political activists are willing to become involved in more issues – though many of the issues they are interested in overlap with issues that appeal to non-activists. Like non-activists, improving education is the most important issue to them (52% would become involved in that issue and 50% in reducing the cost of college). Following this, they would remain involved in marriage equality (50%) but like non-activists, adoption rights (33%) and workplace protections for gay and transgender individuals (32%) are not as motivating.

Gender issues are important to activists – 48% would become involved in gender equality issues, 47% in making healthcare more affordable, and 40% in protecting women’s reproductive health options. Activist voters also rank reducing poverty as one they would become involved in (45%).

**POTENTIAL ISSUES YOUTH VOTERS COULD GET INVOLVED WITH**

	<b>Non-Activists</b>	<b>Activists</b>	<b>Likely 2014 Voters</b>
Improving education	45%	52%	51%
Reducing the cost of college	42%	50%	45%
Marriage for gay and lesbian couples	39%	50%	48%
Protecting women’s reproductive health options and access to birth control	36%	40%	47%
Making healthcare more affordable	35%	47%	43%
Gender equality	32%	48%	40%
Reducing poverty	30%	45%	39%
Increasing our use of renewable energy	27%	36%	36%
Protecting air and water	26%	34%	32%
Adoption rights for gay and lesbian couples	26%	33%	31%
Racial equality	24%	36%	28%
Gun violence prevention	22%	34%	26%
Workplace protections for gay and transgender individuals	18%	32%	27%
Standing up to efforts to cut pay and benefits for American workers	17%	27%	24%
Immigration reform	14%	26%	19%
Beating back on attempts to take away workplace safety protections	8%	16%	11%

**7. Messages to Inspire Participation and Engagement for Future Progressive Campaigns**

Pivoting away from the freedom to marry and marriage campaigns, when provided with a range of persuasive messages to motivate involvement in issues that matter to them, youth voters still gravitate toward the effective messages from the 2012 marriage campaigns.

Looking outside of marriage, the message strategy to motivate involvement in other campaigns differs between voters who are already predisposed to becoming involved and those who are simply voters (and not activists). For the non-activists, a message that stands up to right-wing extremists who try to force their anti-women agenda is very effective (40% very convincing). This aligns with the importance of gender issues to these voters.

To motivate participation in issues outside the freedom to marry, this focus on making powerful change together is the best track, especially when combined with a push against the billionaires and corporations trying to buy elections.

Also effective is the rallying message that when people come together, they can make powerful change (38% very convincing when modified with a comparison to the 1960s, and 36% without the modifier). To motivate participation in issues outside the freedom to marry, this focus on making powerful change together is the best track, especially when combined with a push against the billionaires and corporations trying to buy elections. This taps into a larger sense of frustration we are seeing everywhere, and gives urgency to getting involved. These messages can be powerful when woven together and are more portable to several issues.

#### TOP MESSAGES AMONG NON-ACTIVISTS

	<b>% Very Convincing</b>
The freedom to marry the person you love is a basic freedom that should not be denied anybody. This is too important an issue to sit back and not take action.	55%
It is wrong to make it illegal to marry the person you love, and the only way to make sure this doesn't happen is to get involved and convince people to stand up for equal rights for all couples.	44%
Last year, right wing extremists tried to force their anti-women agenda by restricting access to birth control and redefining rape, but hundreds of thousands of regular Americans stood up and sent the message that the powerful few cannot quiet the voices of everyday families. We need to continue to stand up to these extremists who are trying to roll back the clock on women's rights. [SPLIT B]	40%
When people come together, they can make powerful change. That is what happened in the 1960s when people stood up and said segregation was wrong and demanded action. It is time to show our parents and grandparents that we too can organize and fight for what we believe in. [SPLIT A]	38%
When people come together, they can make powerful change. It is time to show our parents and grandparents that we too can organize and fight for what we believe in. [SPLIT B]	36%
As Americans, we have a duty to stand up for the things we believe in. Whether the issue be local or national, the only way to make real change is to get involved and make our voices heard.	34%
Our country is split into haves and have-nots, and too many families are struggling to get by while the big corporations get tax breaks. This is too important a time in our country not to stand up and fight to make sure that everyone gets a fair shot and no one is left behind.	34%
Last year, corporations and billionaires tried to buy the election, but hundreds of thousands of regular Americans stood up and sent the message that the powerful few cannot quiet the voices of everyday families. We need to continue to stand up to these large special interests who try to rig the system against us. [SPLIT A]	31%
Too often it feels like our political leaders either don't care or have stopped listening. Coming together to speak with one loud voice is the only way to get their attention.	29%

Activists are as persuaded by the freedom to marry messages as they are by rallying calls to get involved for larger social change. Tied for the strongest message is the focus on our duty as Americans to stand up for the issues we believe in. Since these voters are predisposed for action, this message likely taps into their existing view and reaffirms why it matters, rather than persuading them to this effect. These voters also tend to gravitate more toward social justice, and the message that focused on standing up to make sure everyone gets a fair shot and no one is left behind is most persuasive and taps into their strong passion for social justice and equality.

## TOP MESSAGES AMONG ACTIVISTS

	<b>% Very Convincing</b>
The freedom to marry the person you love is a basic freedom that should not be denied anybody. This is too important an issue to sit back and not take action.	62%
As Americans, we have a duty to stand up for the things we believe in. Whether the issue be local or national, the only way to make real change is to get involved and make our voices heard.	52%
Our country is split into haves and have-nots, and too many families are struggling to get by while the big corporations get tax breaks. This is too important a time in our country not to stand up and fight to make sure that everyone gets a fair shot and no one is left behind.	51%
It is wrong to make it illegal to marry the person you love, and the only way to make sure this doesn't happen is to get involved and convince people to stand up for equal rights for all couples.	50%
Last year, right wing extremists tried to force their anti-women agenda by restricting access to birth control and redefining rape, but hundreds of thousands of regular Americans stood up and sent the message that the powerful few cannot quiet the voices of everyday families. We need to continue to stand up to these extremists who are trying to roll back the clock on women's rights. [SPLIT B]	50%
When people come together, they can make powerful change. That is what happened in the 1960s when people stood up and said segregation was wrong and demanded action. It is time to show our parents and grandparents that we too can organize and fight for what we believe in. [SPLIT A]	49%
When people come together, they can make powerful change. It is time to show our parents and grandparents that we too can organize and fight for what we believe in. [SPLIT B]	49%
Last year, corporations and billionaires tried to buy the election, but hundreds of thousands of regular Americans stood up and sent the message that the powerful few cannot quiet the voices of everyday families. We need to continue to stand up to these large special interests who try to rig the system against us. [SPLIT A]	45%
Too often it feels like our political leaders either don't care or have stopped listening. Coming together to speak with one loud voice is the only way to get their attention.	39%



**POLITICAL INFORMATION SOURCES**  
*(Percentage who use the source at least daily)*

	<b>Non-Activists</b>	<b>Activists</b>	<b>Likely 2014 Voters</b>
Facebook	39%	68%	50%
Radio	29%	40%	35%
Local TV news programs	27%	32%	27%
Newspapers or websites for newspapers	24%	44%	33%
Online news sites like CNN.com	21%	42%	30%
Cable TV news	20%	37%	21%
Websites like Huffington Post or Reddit	16%	38%	20%
Twitter	12%	35%	14%
Podcasts	4%	17%	6%

Effective progressive campaigns should be ready with an intensive social media and online strategy as these sources are highly relied upon by younger voters as ways to get news, get involved in the campaigns by sharing their opinions, multimedia, and joining groups. This can increase young voters' interest and activism in the campaigns.

# Analysis from Faith Leaders Online Focus Group

The involvement of faith communities in Washington, Minnesota, Maine, and Maryland was critical in achieving success at the ballot in November 2012. Thanks to endorsements from and the active involvement of faith leaders, the campaigns were able to reach previously off-limits voters and help them along their journey in support of marriage. In order to better understand the viewpoint of supportive faith communities, their motivation for getting involved in freedom to marry campaigns, and how we can harness their energy for future progressive fights, we conducted a three-day, online focus group of faith leaders who were active in last year's freedom to marry campaigns.

Many of our respondents recall becoming motivated to take a public stand on the freedom to marry after perceiving that the average American views the faith community as uniformly against it. These leaders view their support for the freedom to marry as not in spite of their faith, but rather because of it. Respondents repeatedly cite the values of the Golden Rule, Jesus' work with marginalized communities, and the power of love for their reasons to support freedom to marry.

That being said, not all of these leaders had always been supportive of marriage for gay and lesbian couples. Many admit that their views have evolved over time, most noticeably thanks to their personal and professional relationships with gay and lesbian individuals. For these faith leaders, their views have evolved to the point where they reject some of the caveats that we have traditionally inserted into Christian messaging – including the one about being raised to think homosexuality is a sin.

Overall, these faith leaders had a very positive experience with the freedom to marry campaigns. They were taking a stand on a core belief, they had the backing of their faith community, they felt that they were making a difference, and they were able to see their hard work pay off. If there was one source of tension during the campaign, it was the sheer amount of time that many ended up volunteering. While a nuisance or inconvenience at times, it was not prohibitive for them to remain involved and did not diminish their support for the cause.

Nevertheless, these leaders are more than willing to become involved in another campaign. Several mentioned the relationships they built during the campaign – relationships with religious leaders from across denominations, with local legislators, and with community members – that they are eager to keep strong and build upon. In 2012, most of these faith leaders were motivated specifically by the issue of the freedom to marry, and other progressive campaigns may have a hard time translating that motivation to non-marriage campaigns. That said, these participants are still motivated by tenets of their faith to care about other social justice problems as well, and there may be an opportunity to engage them on these types of campaigns and issues in the future.

As momentum continues to grow for the LGBT movement, and as campaigns gear up for fights on immigration reform, minimum wage hikes, and criminal justice issues, the faith community will be an important ally for progressives. This three-day discussion with leaders in this community provided useful guidance on how we can tap into their core values and motivations to reach and engage them.

## 1. 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 up their minds. 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) among members of the faith community in the four marriage states who became involved in support of marriage; the goal was to understand how these people became involved, how their views on this issue evolved, how they were able to reconcile 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 respective 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 than if we had conducted a traditional in-person focus group, and received richer, more thoughtful responses.

## 2. Key Findings:

The following are key findings followed by a more in-depth analysis of our three-day, 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 – either because they are 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 uniformly represent all members of faith.
- **They were also motivated by the tenets of their faith that speak to social justice.** Respondents cite love, compassion, justice, and human dignity as reasons for supporting the freedom to marry. They belong to progressive churches that interpret the Bible to wholly support the freedom to marry and many of the leaders were assisted by their congregation 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 priorities.** These issues include immigration reform, economic justice, racial and gender equality, and education reform. They see these issues in a similar light as they saw 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.** There is energy among members of faith to get active in various issues, 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 community. Successful campaigns in the future should seek to replicate this.

### **3. Faith guides participants' daily lives and motivates involvement on social issues:**

All participants in this focus group are members of their Christian faith communities and were involved in one of the four freedom to marry campaigns in Washington, Minnesota, Maine, or Maryland. Most participants serve their churches in a formal capacity – either as clergy or as lay leaders. Participants belong to various Christian denominations, including Catholic, Unitarian, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, and United Church of Christ. This provided a mix of denominations, from the more conservative (Catholic, Episcopalian, Methodist) and the more progressive (Unitarian).

Unsurprisingly, the respondents are guided by the tenets of their faith and attempt to use honesty, compassion, kindness, love, respect, and the Golden Rule in their everyday lives. This manifests itself not only in their preaching and pastoral care, but also in participation in charity, advocacy, and other community efforts.

Their faith and values also impact their political views. All are frequent voters, and many have donated to causes, participated in rallies, written to their elected officials, attended community forums, and testified at legislative sessions. These leaders discuss social issues both from the pulpit and in more casual conversations, and few believe there are topics that are off-limits to discuss. However, they are careful to distinguish what they personally take a stand on and what their congregations advocate for.

“In order to represent the church I serve, a congregational vote must be taken on any particular issue. This happens sometimes, but not often.

The congregation makes the decision about what to take a stand on or not. I, however, as an individual clergy person can absolutely take public stands, and do.”

“As a representative of Central, I respect the decisions of the Church Council and/or congregational vote on political issues. I would only say that I represent Central on an issue if I have the full endorsement of the people who have called me to work here.”

While they speak for their congregations only if a vote has taken place on the issue, these leaders often get more involved personally. Priorities differed from participant to participant, but all were influenced by their values:

“I take a public stand on issues which involve injustice toward marginalized communities, just as I see that Jesus did in his ministry.”

“When the rights of the weak are being infringed upon, when laws are being handed down that allow for discrimination and second class citizenship, I will take a stand.”

“The issues where love and life are diminished or threatened are most important to me.”

Apart from the issue of the freedom to marry, they have taken public stands on issues related to immigration, healthcare, climate change, anti-violence efforts, reproductive rights, and poverty.

“We need to speak to immigration as people who know and are part of this story. We must also think about the Ruths, Josephs, and others in the Bible who were at some point foreigners in a strange land.”

“Living wage, immigration, gay marriage, climate change. For many of these, it's a question of hospitality and how we're called to welcome others, even those sometimes perceived as different or outside. It's also an issue of stewardship, how we're called to 'steward' and care for the gifts God gives. These gifts are basic like relationship (think about gay marriage), or time, or the earth.”

#### 4. Views On Marriage

Given their involvement in the campaigns, these faith leaders are, unsurprisingly, strongly in favor of the freedom to marry. Many have been asked advice on this issue by members of their faith community, and some have provided pastoral care on the issue.

Several leaders said their views had evolved over time. They recalled how, as they got older and got to know gays and lesbians, they realized that these people were not doing anything wrong, that they simply loved their partners. This led to the realization that marriage for gay people was just as important as marriage for straight people.

Some said they had been taught that homosexuality was wrong, while others believed civil unions were a fair alternative to marriage. Among those who said their views have changed, conversations with gay and lesbian individuals as well as reinterpretation of their Christian values led them to greater acceptance. They felt this realization led to a re-interpretation of their faith – to love all people as God loves them, and to support marriage BECAUSE of their faith.

“When the issue first came up I thought civil unions could be the answer that would stop all the conflict about it. When I learned that civil unions felt like a second-class status to GLBT folks and did not confer all of the benefits of marriage, I quickly changed my mind.”

“Understanding historical context when interpreting the Bible was a key element for me theologically and personally.”

“As a child and teenager I thought that homosexuality was a sin, but during college, through education and experience, my views became more open and compassionate.”

Several participants are gay themselves, and they talked frankly about the particular difficulties they had in reconciling their sexuality with their faith.

“I use to be closeted and hated myself, but once I accepted that my sexuality was a gift from God I stopped hating myself.”

“Being gay, I struggled through elementary, junior high, and high school with how to reconcile my sexuality with faith...Once I saw people like me who were faithful and faith-filled individuals it allowed me to see myself in new ways.”

Faith leaders are clear that they now support the freedom to marry, not in spite of their faith, but because of it. Specifically, they cite love, compassion, justice, and human dignity as core values that influenced them in their support.

What’s more, when given eight different reasons for supporting marriage efforts, a freedom message (“The freedom to marry the person you love is a basic freedom that should not be denied anybody. This is too important an issue to sit back and not take action”) ranked the highest, followed closely by two reasons that spoke to the image of the faith community:

“As people of faith, we have a duty to stand up for the things we believe in. Whether the issue be local or national, the only way to make real change is to get involved and stand up for our values.”

“Too many people assume that people of faith are anti-gay or oppose marriage for gay and lesbian couples. We have a responsibility to stand up to these wrong assumptions and show that people of faith believe in equal treatment for all people, and stand behind all peoples’ freedom to marry the person they love.”

Faith leaders are clear that they now support the freedom to marry, not in spite of their faith, but because of it.

Many participants belong to progressive churches that largely embrace marriage for gay and lesbian couples. Most leaders' views on the freedom to marry echoed those of their congregation, many of whom voted to take a public stand on the issue. Several mentioned that the clergy in their church is authorized to bless weddings of same-sex couples.

Some, however, particularly Catholic and Methodist participants, had to wrestle with the fact that their denomination as a whole does not officially stand in support of the freedom to marry. A Catholic respondent explained:

“When a Referendum on marriage equality came up and our Bishop asked for Catholics to oppose it, I joined with a group of Catholic friends to support marriage equality publicly.”

Another chose to join another church because the one she was in would not allow her to become an ordained pastor due to her sexual orientation.

“I grew up United Methodist and wanted to become an ordained United Methodist Pastor, but in college, when I came out, I realized that I could not be ordained.”

When asked how they would convince a fellow member of faith who was conflicted on the issue, love and inclusion were the overarching values. One respondent noted that “compassion, love and justice are Gospel Values,” while another said that “Jesus’ model was one of inclusiveness and outreach to the marginalized.”

#### **5. Faith leaders motivated by a desire to be a counter to Religious Right:**

For some leaders who are either gay or have close family members who are involvement in a freedom to marry campaign was particularly personal. Regardless of their own background, most knew friends or members of their congregation who are in same-sex relationships. Outside of personal connections, many felt the need to stand up after feeling sad, angry, and frustrated with what they felt was a misappropriation of their faith by the opposition.

“I was sad and angry that some religious leaders refused to listen to the voices of modern Biblical criticism and the cries for equality and justice from their sisters and brothers. Their opposition motivated me to work harder to see that justice was done in my state.”

“The position of our Catholic Bishops in Washington State motivated us to speak out. They used long discredited arguments that we responded to with positive statements about love, human dignity, and fairness.”

These faith leaders felt it was necessary to take a stand on the freedom to marry – as well as on social justice issues in general – in order to clarify that the conservative voice is not necessarily the Christian voice.

“If this is something that we understand as a gospel issue, I can’t help but speak out for it. So often the conservative voice claims the whole Christian voice. Since we do read the Bible in varied ways and interpret scripture and experience in many ways, we must speak from our interpretation and experience.”

“I truly believe that it is absolutely necessary for faith leaders to speak out on all issues of social justice. It is particularly important when others in religious organizations are either supporting oppression or remaining silent.”

“To see and hear religious leaders reminding people of the Biblical calls to work for justice for the marginalized was a powerful example for those who just didn’t see why the marriage issue was important.”

This was echoed when participants were asked to highlight the reasons they personally stayed involved in the campaign out of a list of ten commonly given reasons. The top four listed were:

- **I felt a responsibility to show that people of faith are not anti-gay**
- **My faith teaches me to treat others as we ourselves would want to be treated**
- **I have close friends or family members who are gay**
- **Nobody should be told it is illegal to marry the person they love**

Most of these leaders have evolved past the traditional Christian-targeted messaging. When told that “some of us were taught that homosexuality is a sin...it is only for God to judge,” participants responded that they found the statement “offensive.” One respondent noted that we need to “get beyond the sin idea,” and another that “my faith teaches me to love others, not merely to respect them.”

It also helped that many of these faith leaders had the backing of their congregations. Respondents say reaction to their involvement in the campaign was “very supportive” and “almost exclusively positive” within their faith communities. Almost all of the clerical respondents had lay people from their congregation help out in the campaign as well, through letter writing, phone banking, hosting house parties, and more.

#### **6. Participation in the freedom to marry campaigns:**

Although the freedom to marry is an important issue for these faith leaders, and they have all been involved in social issues before, most said they did not reach out themselves to get involved in the campaign, but rather were contacted by members of the campaign or other members of the clergy.

Their positions within their church varied, from members of the board to paid Faith Director to unofficial liaisons, but most were heavily involved (10-20 hours a week on average) in the effort for marriage in their state, through organizing efforts, media appearances, and preaching.

“I was a member of the faith leader table, then agreed to film a TV commercial in which my wife and I endorsed the campaign. Then our image appeared on the cover of a mailer that was sent to voters throughout the state.”

“I worked with other churches and organizers to set up a Graceful Dialogue training around same-sex marriage and encouraged people of faith to canvass either by phone banking or door-to-door.”

“I was involved with a team of 10-12 other clergy and together we created two events that worked to empower and equip faith leaders – the first had around 130 faith leaders in attendance, the second had nearly 200 involved.”

Their experience with the campaigns was largely positive. Respondents enjoyed getting to know other religious leaders, and allies felt they were appropriately supported and appreciated, thought trainings were helpful, and appreciated the dedication and passion of campaign staff.

While mostly positive, there were two chief concerns expressed from a few participants. For those who offered constructive feedback, the time commitment required and the occasional lack of communication were obstacles for them.

“This campaign seemed to take EVERYTHING from folks...I know for me and for many local pastors it was a challenge to find the balance between jumping in, too, and at the same time keeping our responsibilities to our congregations and to family. It took discipline and made me ask what are the situations where you must just give it all.”

“There needed to be a stronger matrix for the coalition. Information was not evenly distributed, and, at times, I was not sure who had the most up-to-date info.”

These concerns did not deter their interest or desire to be involved, and only came up when specifically asked to reflect on potential areas of improvement. What’s more, now, almost a year after the November election, most of these faith leaders are still involved in issues facing the LGBT community, including several respondents who are working on rights for transgender individuals.

## **7. The Next Issue**

All of the faith leaders spoke positively about their involvement with the freedom to marry campaigns, and indicated that it has encouraged them to get involved in other important issues. Chiefly, these leaders cited the relationships they built during the campaign (with both other faith leaders and local legislators), and the experience they now have under their belts (especially in relation to speaking to the media) as giving them confidence to get involved again. One respondent noted that after such heavy involvement in the freedom to marry fight, she can’t return to complacency.

“I was particularly aware that if I can give so much time to marriage equality, I need to keep stepping up, risking, speaking out on a bunch of other injustices. Some aren’t quite as personal, but have implications as tragic and heart-wrenching.”

These leaders see a role for the faith community on a wide range of issues that they view through a social justice lens, echoing the sentiment they had on the freedom to marry that “as people of faith, we have a duty to stand up for the things we believe in. Whether the issue be local or national, the only way to make real change is to get involved and stand up for our values.”

“There are a never ending number of social justice issues to be addressed. Some of the key ones today are: mass incarceration, sustainability of this earth, transgender civil rights, peace efforts in the Middle East, and income disparity. Faith leaders are engaged with these issues because social justice is fundamental to the message of their faith.”

“Immigration rights is a similar kind of campaign. It is similar in that there are stories of those experiencing dehumanizing treatment merely for being who they are and trying to get by in the world on equal footing with everyone else.”

“Immigration reform, care of creation, affordable housing, ending poverty, economic justice, racism, and unemployment are issues that faith-based organizations address in my state. These are all issues that relate to the Biblical calls for justice for the oppressed and the responsibility humans have to care for the whole creation.”

And many respondents make it clear that, while they may not be as involved in a cause now as they were during the freedom to marry campaigns last fall, they are not just sitting around either.

“I am helping lead a statewide initiative campaign to require universal criminal background checks on gun purchases.”

“We tried to get the state legislature to pass a bill raising the minimum wage to \$9.50/hour. It didn’t get through both houses this year; we’re already working hard to organize people for next year.”

“I am involved in the protests around the Affordable Care Act. Not against the ACA, but protests about the efforts to defund it.”

While there is appetite among these faith leaders for greater involvement in another big campaign, there isn’t a consensus on what this issue will be. At least a third of respondents would consider getting involved with each of 13 listed progressive issues. The most popular issues spanned the spectrum, including immigration reform, racial and gender equality, economic justice, foreign policy issues, the environment, and education. A couple of respondents added reforms to the criminal justice system and fighting human trafficking to their list of priorities.

## ISSUES

<b>Number of respondents who would consider getting involved</b>	<b># (out of 14)</b>
Immigration reform	12
Racial equality	12
Gender equality	11
Economic justice	10
Improving education	10
Foreign policy issues, like peace-keeping	10
The environment	10
Gun violence prevention	9
Workplace protections for gay and transgender individuals	8
Expanding access to healthcare for gay and transgender individuals	7
Protecting women’s reproductive health options and access to contraception	7
Adoption rights for gay and lesbian couples	6
Healthcare issues, like implementing the Affordable Care Act	6

In general, respondents see their involvement in any of these issues as part of their responsibility to follow the gospel and make the world a better place.

“Really all of the issues are about our responsibility to others to help make the world a more just and fair place...I love our denomination’s saying, “Standing on the side of love,” but I always add that we should not just be standing, but rather, phoning, knocking, calling, voting, advocating, etc. all on the side of love.”

“In all cases, it’s really about recognizing that the gospel calls us to engage, to risk, to follow to places, and engage people that may be perceived as outside. When I see it this way, I can see myself engaging in pretty much all the issues, and it’s more a matter of attending to what I can, and not what I can’t. Then it’s a matter of time and energy and what is being organized locally.”

More specifically, respondents see these issues in the following buckets:

- **Justice for Marginalized Groups** (immigration reform, racial equality, gender equality, economic justice, education):

“We have to come to terms with the fact that the face of our nation is changing, the minority is becoming the majority, and that all people in our borders need to be treated fairly and with love and kindness.”

“There is no Jew nor Greek, no slave nor free, no male nor female, we are all one in Christ Jesus.”

“In the past decades we have seen a widening gap between the economically privileged and the economically deprived.”

“Education is fundamental to empowerment.”

- **Stewards of the Earth** (the environment):

“We have a responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation. Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein.”

“We have inherited the earth and it is up to us to make certain future generations will be able to enjoy all that the earth has given us without dire consequences.”

- **Peace** (foreign policy issues, gun violence prevention):

“God calls us to be instruments of peace and justice in the world.”

“We need to address mental health needs earlier and more completely, we need to address the root causes of our culture of violence.”

Despite their involvement in the freedom to marry campaigns, in comparison with other progressive ideals, further rights for gays and transgender individuals (workplace protections, healthcare access, adoption rights) ranked lower on the list for these individuals. There was also less interest in organizing around healthcare reform, though it’s possible that the October 2013 shutdown of the Federal Government over arguments about the Affordable Care Act soured opinions on this subject.

## 8. Lessons for future campaigns:

**Actively reach out and encourage clergy to speak with their fellow leaders.** Many commented that simply knowing the importance of the movement and how it relates to the values and principles of the faith movement was key. Reminding members of the positive changes that have come from past collective action and how important their voices were helps.

**Help build a coalition of faith members who can stand up on their own.** One respondent noted that “the energy for action is definitely there.” But another pointed out that while his church is very concerned about the racial dimension of mass incarceration, they don’t know how to take action without a coalition working on specific legislation. For many, one of the biggest positives from their time spent on a freedom to marry campaign was the friendships and professional relationships they developed with other religious leaders. There is a desire to keep these ties strong. Though one respondent cautions:

“It is not helpful for social justice organizers to be people who do not understand or sympathize with faith community concerns and simply parachute into the faith community to “use” it for the social justice agenda. Instead, social justice efforts should be led by clergy and other faith leaders themselves or perhaps staffers who are ordained or recognized as leaders in their faith communities.”

**Attitude matters.** Several noted that as religious people, they sometimes feel “disregarded as an ally by progressive communities.” How much or how little their opinion was valued and how they were treated by members of the LGBT campaign impacted their views greatly.

**Be conscious of people’s time.** At the end of the focus groups, respondents were asked to select different ways they may choose to become involved with an issue. While almost all were willing to encourage members of their church as well as outsiders to support an issue, volunteer for a campaign, donate money to a campaign, or speak about an issue from the pulpit, far fewer chose “becoming an official spokesperson for a campaign” or “knocking on doors to encourage voters to support the issue,” the two most time-intensive tasks on the list.

## CONCLUSION

With four unprecedented wins for the freedom to marry in 2012, there was fertile ground for learning whether there were ways to replicate the same level of support, passion, and connectivity for other similar LGBT fights and other progressive issue campaigns. By distilling the top five findings from across more than 75 interviews, identifying 24 additional micro-level lessons, and exploring in greater depth the role of young voters and faith leaders, this report helps identify the elements of a successful path to winning future progressive victories, whether electoral or legislative.

We hope the balance between the qualitative and quantitative research within this report helps to take a look back at what happened in these four campaigns, but also look forward to the future. The phased approach to the research helped us balance the importance of looking backward and forward. Key to this was first identifying what issues or lessons mattered most to leaders of other movements. These areas of interest helped shape the interviews that followed and the identification of the key lessons learned. Collaborative work with CAP then helped us clarify which of these lessons were both most unique to the 2012 marriage campaigns and most applicable to other progressive issues. Finally, the additional polling and focus group work allowed us to explore some of the lessons in far greater depth and to more fully test their applicability to other progressive causes.

The work of building and maintaining social movements is complex, difficult, and far beyond the scope of any one organization, state, or set of leaders. That being said, the four successful 2012 races offer many valuable lessons about what it takes to establish the foundation of a strong social movement and how to best maximize the chances for leveraging “movement moments” as they emerge.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview List

#### Maine Interviewee List

Shenna Bellows, *Maine ACLU*  
David Farmer, *Business Outreach Campaign Staff*  
Stacy Fitz, *Former Republican Legislator*  
Michael Gray, *Old Orchard Beach Methodist Pastor*  
Matt McTighe, *Campaign Manager*  
Amy Melo, *Campaign Field Director*  
Amelia Nugent, *Campaign Faith Staff*  
Amy Simon, *Campaign Pollster*  
Betsy Smith, *Equality Maine*  
Donald Sussman, *Campaign Donor*  
Ali Vander Zanden, *Campaign Outreach Director*  
Phyllis Watts, *Campaign Psychologist on Research Team*  
Evangeline Weiss, *National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*

#### Maryland Interviewee List

Rev. Delman Coates, *Mount Ennon Baptist Minister*  
Joanna Diamond, *Campaign Youth Director*  
Carrie Evans, *Equality Maryland*  
MacArthur Flournoy, *HRC Faith Director*  
Suzy Gellman, *Campaign Donor*  
Josh Levin, *Campaign Manager*  
Rep. Maggie McIntosh, *State Legislator*  
Walter Olson, *Cato Institute*  
Kim Propeack, *CASA de Maryland*  
Karin Quimby, *HRC Catholic Outreach*  
Fred Yang and Jay Campbell, *Campaign Pollster*

## Minnesota Interviewee List

Christine Almeida, *Campaign Board Chair*

Lee Anderson, *General Mills*

Richard Carlbom, *Campaign Manager*

Patrick Connelly, *Republican Consultant*

Ryan Greenwood, *Campaign Field Director*

Lisa Grove, *Campaign Pollster*

Ann Kaner-Roth, *Project 515*

Kristin McMullen, *Campaign Finance Director*

Monica Meyer, *OutFront MN*

Josh Nussbaum, *Campaign Field Staff*

Joel Quie, *Lutheran Pastor*

*Presbyterian Congregational Faith Leader*

Kelly Schwinghammer, *Campaign Communications Director*

Leah Solo, *Campaign Political Director*

Grant Stevenson, *Campaign Faith Director*

Javen Swanson, *Campaign Faith Staff*

## Movement Leader Interviewees

Brad Clark, *One Colorado*

Tanya Coke, *Funders Against Death Penalty*

Kevin Jennings, *Arcus Foundation*

Gene Karpinkski, *League of Conservation Voters*

Michael Podhorzer, *AFL-CIO*

Dawn Laguens, *Planned Parenthood*

Dena Sher, *ACLU*

## National Leaders

Tyler Deaton, *National Funder*

Paul A. Di Donato, *Civil Marriage Collaborative*

Sarah Reece, *National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*

Marty Rouse, *Human Rights Campaign*

Marc Solomon, *Freedom to Marry*

Evan Wolfson, *Freedom to Marry*

Thalia Zepatos, *Freedom to Marry*

## Washington Interviewee List

Ward Curtin, *Deputy Campaign Manager*

Rod Hearne, *Executive Director, Equal Rights Washington*

Dustin Lambro, *Campaign Outreach Director*

Anne Levinson, *Campaign Donor Relations*

Elwood McCloud, *Campaign Small Business Engagement*

Tracy Newman, *Campaign Finance Consultant*

Zach Silk, *Campaign Manager*

Amy Simon, *Campaign Pollster*

Aubrey Thonvold, *Campaign Faith Director*

Kelly Weigel, *Western States Center*

Thomas Wheatley, *Freedom to Marry*

# Appendix B: Materials Reviewed

Freedom to Marry 2012 Analysis

National Messaging Research and Materials

Campaign Managers Reports

State Campaign Plans and Budgets

Research and Polling Memos

Voter Contact and Volunteer Scripts

Faith, Youth, Republican, Business and Communities of Color Engagement Plans

National and State Fundraising Plans and Reports

Campaign Staff Debriefs

Campaign Ads and Direct Mail