

Organizing Advice: What Can I Do?

Recognize the Assault

The Right's many groups organize on a wide variety of specific issues, from education, the environment, civil and human rights, immigration, and criminal justice to developing new constituencies such as fathers and conservative people of color. Often they will link one issue with another under a broad umbrella campaign, such as "traditional family values," "fiscal responsibility" or "compassionate conservatism." Look for connections across their issues, and observe patterns and trends in how specific topics are addressed. For instance, projects in one state are often duplicated in others such as attempts to roll back gay rights or bilingual education. Find out as much as you can about the right-wing groups and spokespeople that work nationally and in your area and what influences them. Realize that the Right has influenced the "center" of U.S. politics to be more conservative. Learn to recognize that moderate public statements often mask deep conservatism, especially in areas where race plays a big part, such as criminal justice and education.

Defend the Basics

Defending democracy means reclaiming as progressive ideals the basic values and practices of the democratic process such as fair elections, a vibrant free press, liberty, human rights for all people, social and economic justice and the chance for everyone to lead dignified lives. Counter to these values, the Right seeks to attract the allegiance of some by limiting the rights of others and by sanctioning benefits for its supporters. At the same time it claims to do this in the name of freedom and democracy. Recognize and expose this hypocrisy and contradiction, such as the claim that a tax cut for the rich will benefit everyone. Work to extend basic rights and seek social and economic justice for all people. This work will pose a significant challenge to the conservative vision of the United States.

Get Involved

If activism is new to you, channel your insight and motivation into action. Notice the issues that strike a chord for you and seek out like-minded individuals and groups interested in the same things. Recognize that working *for* an issue that defends basic democratic values can be as valuable as working with a group that specifically organizes *against* the Right. Consider your circumstances, your comfort level, and your skills, and do what's comfortable for you. There are as many ways to participate as there are issues and perspectives, and activism includes much more than electoral politics.

If you have been involved and focused on a single issue, be open to its possible connections to other topics. Sometimes single issue organizing can miss opportunities for bringing on more supporters. Consider acting on those connections. The Right successfully makes such connections across issues all the time, and they have used this strategy successfully to build their influence. If you have experience with political groups, reflect how your understanding of the Right can help inform their goals and planning. Share these insights with others, and keep informed about new developments.

Maintain Momentum

Progress towards reclaiming democracy depends upon sustained effort. Luckily there are many ways of participating in the democratic process. Support those who organize such tactics as voting campaigns, educational projects, demonstrations, boycotts, letter writing, phone chains, lobbying and internet activity. Continue to participate yourself, including with financial assistance if you are able. Finally, recognize that understanding and challenging the Right takes time. Be determined, outraged, committed, but also patient.