



2021

Year in Review

LETTER from the Executive Director

The moment we are in is one of extraordinary opportunity and challenge.

As we close out 2021 and reflect on the year that has passed, it is impossible to do so without starting with the contradictions we live and govern with. From the very first weeks of this year, it was clear that we are in a time of unprecedented opportunity and an undeniable urgency to care for people and communities still reeling from the continued impacts of the pandemic, and to build a more equitable and inclusive economy and democracy. At the same time, we began the year with acts and threats of racially motivated, political violence that reinforced what we already know - that we live in a tenuous and precarious time.

Living and governing in the tension between these two realities defines our work every day at Local Progress. Every day we are feeling out the edges of what is possible and pushing ourselves and each other to continue in our work towards equity, justice, and power. This year, Local Progress members in jurisdictions large and small led powerful work to protect and care for community members, to build worker power and fight back against austerity and corporate greed, and to advance a vision for safe, healthy and thriving communities. We also fought collectively against unprecedented attacks at the state level that continued to threaten our autonomy over everything ranging from our bodies to our democracy to our municipal budgets. Elected officials at every level — from school board members to county judges — stepped into their power and demonstrated courage in moments that demanded leadership in the face of extreme backlash and rising political violence.

Each step forward in the work to reimagine public safety at the local level stands on a foundation

created by work in dozens of other jurisdictions across our network and inspires dozens more. The crises we experience - from the waves of evictions and growing homelessness to the humanitarian crises at the border - have a collective impact across our communities, and require a collective response. With the passage of the American Rescue Plan, the bipartisan infrastructure bill, and (knock on wood!) the Build Back Better Act, we can see how a federal governing moment requires even greater innovation, creativity, and collaboration to drive outcomes in line with our vision.

As we look back on the year and plan for the next, it is clear to me that what has always made Local Progress special - our ability to come together across jurisdictions, to work towards a shared vision, and to support each other along the journey to do so - is more crucial than ever. Every single day I'm inspired by the collective courage demonstrated across our network, and challenged to grow an organization that can meet the ambitious vision of LP members. As we look towards 2022, I'm thrilled to share that we are stepping up to this challenge. We are doubling the size of our staff, significantly increasing our capacity to connect and catalyze local progress across the network, and ratifying a strategic framework that will serve as a North Star for our work as we move out of our founding home at the Center for Popular Democracy.

I am closing out 2021 feeling tremendous gratitude and groundedness to be in a community with such extraordinary leaders working together to navigate these uncharted waters.

Forward, together.

In solidarity,

Sarah Johnson

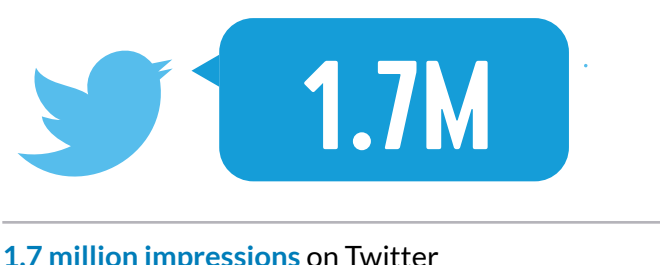
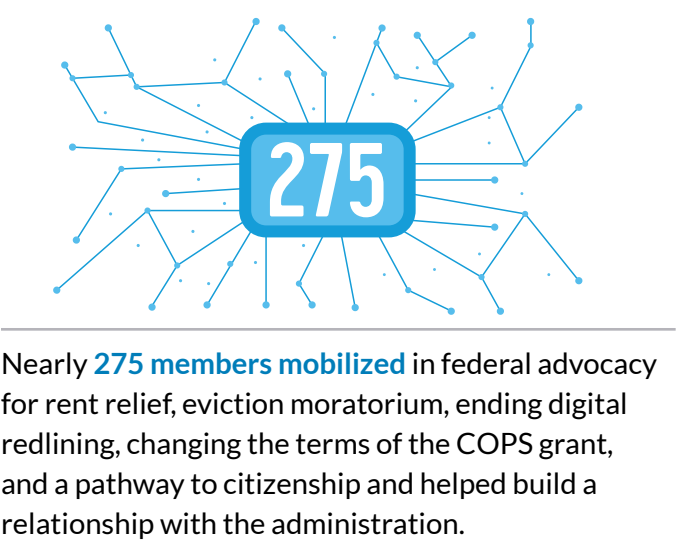
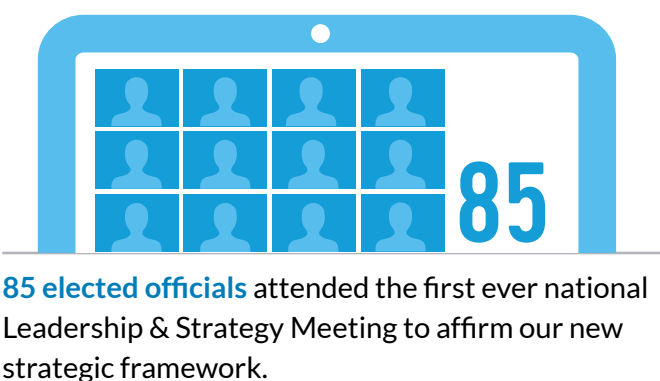
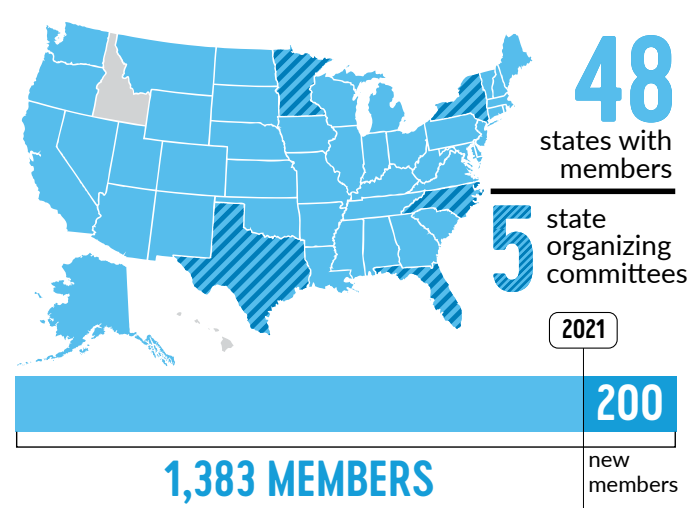
OUR MISSION

We are a movement of local elected officials advancing a racial and economic justice agenda through all levels of local government. We are elected leaders who build power with underrepresented communities, share bold ideas and policy among our network, and fight to reshape what is possible in our localities all across the country.

Photo from our last in-person national convening in Detroit, MI in July 2019.

AT A GLANCE

1,383 members in 48 states and DC
5 state organizing committees
Over 200 new members in 2021



OUR IMPACT

This year, we advanced a racial and economic justice agenda by:

- **Building capacity and infrastructure** that increases alignment, shared strategy, and trans-local collaboration.
- **Organizing** to exercise collective action.
- **Redefining the role of elected officials** in the progressive movement and building a new model of collaborative governance.

BUILDING CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TRANS-LOCAL COLLABORATION

We increased alignment, shared strategy, and collaboration across localities through policy assistance, leadership development, and programming that supports communities of learning.

WORKING TOGETHER, LOCALITIES ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA PASSED HISTORIC NONDISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS



In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed [House Bill 142](#), an anti-LGBTQ law that replaced the state’s infamous anti-transgender bill. At the end of 2020, a key section of the bill

expired, clearing the path for localities to finally pass local nondiscrimination protections. Over the course of 2021, Local Progress members worked alongside coalition partners to pass LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinances in 15 municipalities – including [Hillsborough](#), [Carrboro](#), [Chapel Hill](#), [Orange County](#), [Greensboro](#), [Durham](#), and [Raleigh](#).

This work was made possible thanks to years of organizing and infrastructure building, through which Local Progress North Carolina became an official state chapter – joining LPTX and LPNY as our network’s third state chapter. By connecting locally, Local Progress members have been able to coordinate strategies to build power at the state level and discuss regional issues that cross municipal boundaries.

ORGANIZING TO EXERCISE COLLECTIVE ACTION

Working together across cities, towns, counties, and school boards, we drove and engaged in strategic campaigns that won pivotal legislative victories at the local level, built state power, and elevated important issues to the national stage.

FIGHTING FOR COMMUNITIES DURING STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS



This year, state legislatures unleashed a tidal wave of preemption bills attacking and undermining local control – a direct response to the pandemic, the growing movement for racial justice, and the presidential election. Across the country, and particularly in states where we have state chapters, Local Progress members organized and advocated for state action that will help communities recover with more equitable outcomes and also pushed back against bills that threaten or undermine those values.

PUSHING FOR A PATHWAY TO CITIZENSHIP

In coalition with immigrant justice allies, Local Progress helped mobilize more than 700 state and local elected officials from across the country calling on the Biden administration and Congress to include a clear pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status holders, essential workers, and their families in all economic recovery legislation. The letter amplified the

LPTX helped defeat a bill that would preempt local authority around public health and workplace safety guidelines that helped slow the spread of COVID, called on the state legislature to focus on getting relief to communities still reeling from the winter storm crisis, and members testified during multiple committee hearings, including in favor of the George Floyd Act. **LPNC** pushed for a people’s budget and against a bill that would require local law enforcement to cooperate with ICE. **LPFL** rallied behind local democracy and called out the legislature for pushing bills that cater to special interests. **LPNY** launched its third legislative toolkit while also organizing to hold the governor accountable. The chapter was also part of statewide coalitions that were successful in creating a right to clean air, clean water, and a healthful environment for all New Yorkers.

pressure from grassroots immigrant justice groups urging Democrats in Congress to act. LP Co-Chair and Philadelphia City Councilmember Helen Gym helped release the letter on behalf of hundreds of LP members and doubled down on the call to action, uplifting the work localities have done to protect immigrant communities.

BUILDING A NEW MODEL OF COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

One of our core strategies is redefining the role of elected officials in the progressive movement. We worked with movement partners and elected officials at other levels of government to actualize mechanisms for shared power and mutual accountability with communities historically marginalized by government and policy making.



IN BROOKLYN CENTER, INSIDE/OUTSIDE STRATEGY LAYS FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY WORK

In May, Brooklyn Center Mayor and Local Progress member Mike Elliott introduced a sweeping resolution to reshape public safety in the Twin Cities suburb. Named in honor of Daunte Wright and Kobe Dimock-Heisler, the resolution – which the city council voted 4-1 to pass – creates new divisions of unarmed civilian employees to handle non-moving traffic violations and respond to mental health crises. It also limits situations in which officers can make arrests and use force, as well as establishes a department of community safety and violence prevention to oversee all safety efforts in the city. Key components of the resolution were inspired by and will take best practices from the work LP

members are leading in places like Denver, Austin, Berkeley, Minneapolis, Oakland, and Ithaca. In many ways, our involvement in Brooklyn Center has broken new ground for how Local Progress can lean in to collaborate on a local inside-outside campaign. From the immediate aftermath of the police killing to the formation and passage of the resolution to the ongoing process of implementation, Local Progress played an in-depth and critical role in this effort. With deep movement partnerships in the state, Local Progress supported members in coalition building and developing campaign, community engagement, and communications strategies.

DIVING DEEPER

This year, we dug deeper in critical areas of work and experimented with new ways of supporting and engaging local elected officials.

FIGHTING FORWARD IN FLORIDA



Local governments are those closest to communities. It is critical that they are able to make policy and budgetary decisions that are inclusive of and responsive to the most pressing needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us how important it is for local governments to have the authority and flexibility to address the unique, ever-changing needs of their communities.

In April, during the state’s legislative session, the Florida legislature fast-tracked and passed House Bill 1 — now known as Florida’s Anti-Protest / Anti-Local Control Law. It is a far-reaching law that undermines both free speech and assembly, and the ability of local governments to pass budgets responsive to their communities’ needs. The law permits state officials to complete a line-by-line review of municipal law enforcement budgets and force modification to those budgets. It also waives sovereign immunity for cities and makes them civilly

liable for personal injury, wrongful death, or property damage that occurs during “unlawful” assembly.

Through a press conference, a letter to the governor signed by 28 local elected officials, LP-member testimony in front of Florida’s Senate Appropriations Committee, and op-eds, members of Local Progress Florida continue to stand with community members and partners in opposition to House Bill 1.

Following months of organizing in coalition with legal partners Public Rights Project, Southern Poverty Law Center, and Community Justice Project, nine cities filed a lawsuit against House Bill 1 in November — setting the stage for our network’s first body of work around state litigation.

Local Progress played a critical role in recruiting and supporting members to pass resolutions in their localities authorizing their participation in the lawsuit. The work has been deeply led by LP members in nearly every locality, particularly in Gainesville — which was the first city to join the litigation thanks to the leadership of former LP member Gail Johnson.

Now that the lawsuit has been filed, Local Progress will continue to provide coalition building and communications support to members as plaintiffs, helping to build public support and interest in the case and sharing a model for other electeds across the country battling preemption laws.

SUPPORTING HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN EQUITY & RECOVERY

The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan is a transformative opportunity to invest in communities hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis and center equity in long-term recovery plans.

With the first tranche of ARP funds dispersed earlier this year, localities have moved quickly to engage communities and approve spending plans that prioritize both immediate and long-term needs. Local Progress shifted our pandemic response to an eye towards long-term equitable recovery. We executed a series of memos and webinar-based programming to support members in understanding ARP guidance; how best to use ARP funds to support education, emergency rental assistance, and cash assistance programs; and using data and disparity studies to inform program resource allocation and implementation.

NYC PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP LAB

This year, New York City elected the most diverse & progressive Council in its history. Recognizing the exciting opportunity to organize new leaders and promote new models of governance, Local Progress launched the NYC Progressive Leadership Lab (PLL) in August. The NYC PLL is a professional development program designed to provide newly elected officials in New York City with the training and skills they need to govern effectively and truly represent the values of their communities. The six-month program - which has 30 participants - will run through February 2022 and will look at the

With localities in direct control over how ARP funds are spent, this is also an important opportunity to feature the work members across the country are doing and showcase the power of investing in the building blocks of equity. We’ve already seen some exciting plans. The Seattle City Council - led by LP member and Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda - approved a spending plan for \$128 million. Addressing homelessness and community well-being are the two most significant priorities, with almost \$50 million for permanent housing, emergency housing, shelters and services. Austin City Council also voted on a framework for how to spend their ARP funds, making a historic investment of nearly \$100 million in homelessness solutions. The funding will provide housing, mental health care, and job aid, and would drastically reduce homelessness in Austin.

structural reforms and changes that need to take place in order to effectively address the historical hurdles that have hindered bold leadership on a wide range of issues.

The NYC Progressive Leadership Lab is hosted by Local Progress in partnership with the Progressive Governance Academy (a project with State Innovation Exchange and re:power), Working Families Organization, and Advocacy Institute.

GROWING AND COHERING THE LP NETWORK

As our network grows, we've been intentional in building more structured spaces for alignment and community.

BUILDING THE BLACK CAUCUS



Over the past year, Local Progress has been working to formalize our Black Caucus — our first identity caucus created with shared values, purposes, priorities, and a shared structure. Through a deeply collaborative process, Black leaders in our network crafted a vision for this community.

The challenges and barriers facing Black elected officials go far beyond a lack of policy resources. Together, the Black Caucus will be a space and a community through which we work through the

unique challenges facing Black leadership. It will be a group that celebrates and affirms one another and a source of emotional support through tough moments. It will bring new intentional courage to our network to challenge practices of anti-Blackness.

The work to build the Black Caucus has also helped us shape a framework for creating future identity caucuses and we look forward to leaning into this work in the year ahead.



2021 LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY MEETING IN TEMPE, AZ

This year, Local Progress underwent a strategic planning process to clearly articulate our theory of change and strategic vision for our work. Our framework was developed through a series of generative and focused meetings and drafted in an iterative process with our board, member leaders, and staff. In early December, we convened our network's first leadership and strategy meeting to present and affirm our strategic framework.

In our first national hybrid event, more than 85 member leaders joined virtually and in person in Tempe, AZ to engage in peer-to-peer learning and build and deepen Local Progress as a community of mutual support and collective action.

IN THE NEWS

Over the last few years, Local Progress has steadily grown its communications work and media presence. This year, we increased the visibility of work at the local level, helped push the national narrative on key issues, and uplifted local elected officials as champions of progressive change. Here are some of our favorite moments:



More than 700 local officials call for immigration in reconciliation bill



Do legislators want to do your city’s job? These preemption bills suggest they do.



Florida ‘Anti-Rioting’ Law Will Make It Much Easier to Run Over Protesters With Cars



Tensions build between Gov. Tim Walz, progressives over Brooklyn Center response



City leaders call for end to ‘digital redlining’



Why Texas legislators are attacking local budget control



Moratorium over: N. Carolina towns advance LGBT protections



What we’re getting wrong about the border crisis

WHAT’S AHEAD

As we look back on the year, we’re also excited for what’s to come in the year ahead. 2022 will be a transformative year for Local Progress. We are growing out of our home at the Center for Popular Democracy and into our own organization. We are ratifying and launching a strategic vision - a long-term north star - for our work. And our staff is doubling in size.

Next year will also be Local Progress’ 10-year anniversary. We have come a long way from the first small and cramped meeting of a few dozen elected officials in a Washington, DC basement conference room. Since then, our network has grown to represent hundreds of communities across 48 states, led by elected officials who are at the forefront of imagining and advancing a new vision for local government -- one grounded in equity, justice, and collective power building.

IN 2022, WE ARE EXCITED TO:

- **Grow our national program work**, with a continued focus on work to reimagine public safety and prevent evictions and expand the stock of affordable, safe and accessible housing.
- **Expand the breadth and impact of the Progressive Governance Academy**, increasing training opportunities and growing curriculum to meet participants’ needs.
- **Continue to support high impact state level campaigns** in MN, TX, FL, NY and NC and expand our focus on identifying new organizing efforts outside of staffed states.
- **Advance work to center racial justice in all of our program, organizing, and leadership development work**, through ongoing work across the organization at the staff and leadership level and the expansion of our caucus work.
- **Lean into urgent opportunities**, including supporting worker standards and organizing at an exciting time of growing worker power, deepening support to school board members in a challenging time and increasing our focus on helping members implement and impact federal policy.
- **Launch a 501 c(4) organization**, which will be the primary home for our advocacy and collective action, and establish the infrastructure to support its growth and development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TEAM

Melissa Carrera, New York
Downstate Coordinator (she/ella)

Tarsi Dunlop, Policy and Program
Manager (she/her), thru Oct 2021

Silvia Fabela, Program Director (she/her)

LiJia Gong, Policy and Legal Director (she/they)

Reynold Graham, Campaigns Organizer (he/him)

limay Ho, Director of
Organizational Development (they/them)

Sarah Johnson, Executive Director (she/her)

Ivan Luevanos-Elms, Organizing Director (he/el)

Francesca Menes, Deputy Organizing Director (she/her)

BOARD

Greg Casar, Austin City Councilmember,
Co-Chair (he/him)

Helen Gym, Philadelphia City Councilmember At-Large,
Co-Chair (she/her)

Dorcey Applyrs, Albany's Chief City Auditor (she/her)

Kristerfer Burnett, Baltimore City
Councilmember (he/him)

Phillipe Cunningham, Minneapolis City
Councilmember (he/him)

Lorena González, Seattle City Council President (she/her)

Megan Ellyia Green, St. Louis City
Councilmember (she/her)

Andrew Friedman, Center for Popular
Democracy (he/him)

Tefere Gebre, AFL-CIO (he/him)

Deandrea Newsome, North Carolina State
Coordinator (she/her)

Jonathan Peebles, Development Director (he/him)

D'Ana Pennington, Program Manager (she/her)

Jillia Pessenda, Minnesota State
Coordinator (she/her)

Chad Radock, New York Chapter Manager (he/him)

Aparna Raj, Communications Manager (she/her)

Elizabeth Roberts, Operations Manager (they/them)

Ari Schwartz, Associate Program Director (he/him)

Kara Sheehan, Texas State Coordinator (she/her)

Trisa Taro, Communications Director (she/her)

Jillian Johnson, Durham Mayor Pro Tem (she/her)

Kelly Kent, Culver City Unified School District
Governing Board (she/her)

Robin Kniech, Denver City Councilmember At-Large
(she/her)

Brad Lander, New York City Comptroller (he/him)

Bob Master, CWA (he/him)

Stephanie Morales, Portsmouth Commonwealth's
Attorney (she/her)

Marcelia Nicholson, Milwaukee County Board
President (she/her)

Regina Romero, Tucson Mayor (she/her)

Arti Walker-Peddakotla, Oak Park Village Trustee
(she/her)

Becky Wasserman, SEIU (she/her)



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