



2023

YEAR IN REVIEW

LOCALPROGRESS

LOCALPROGRESS
IMPACT LAB

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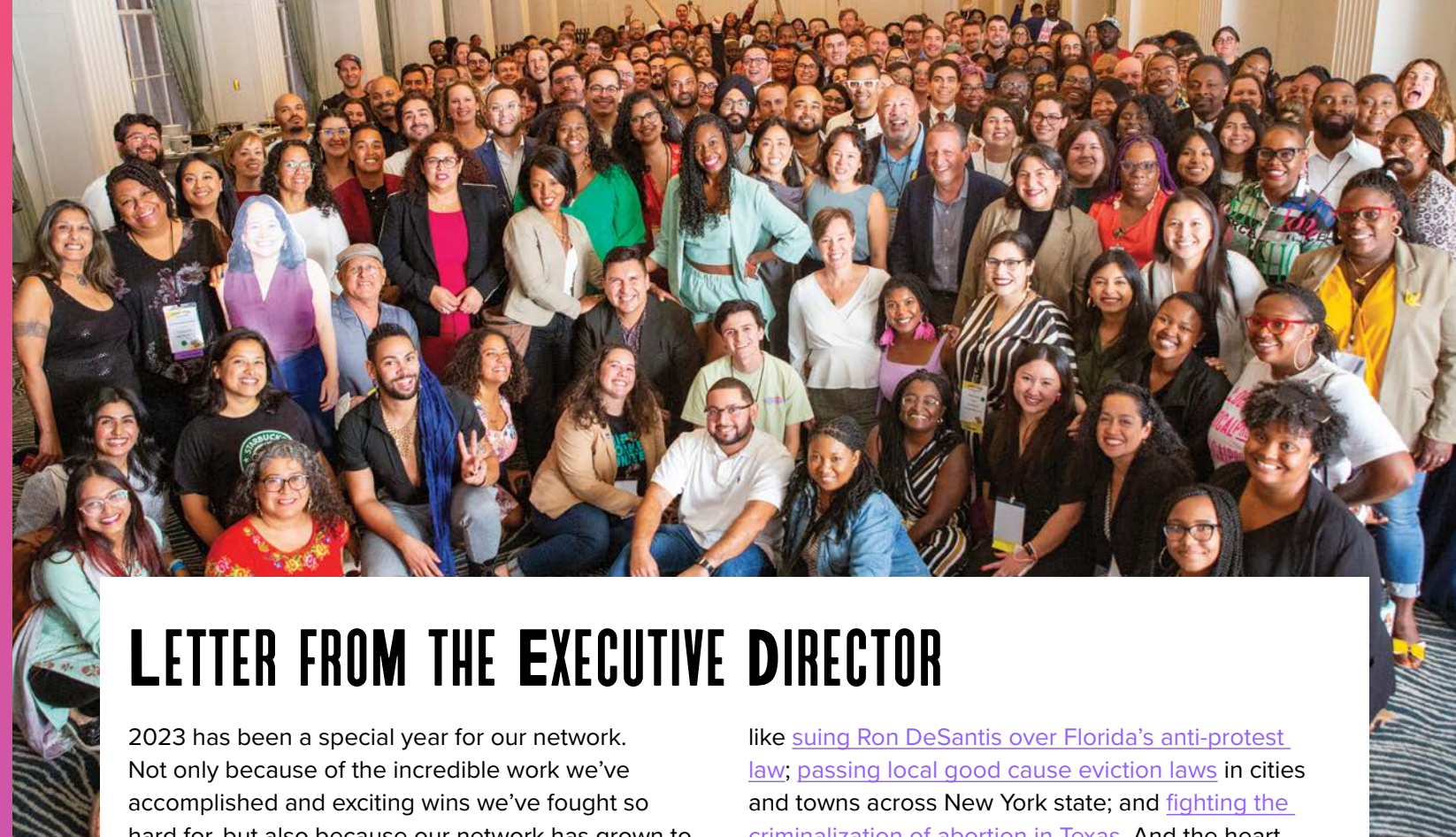
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OUR MISSION

Local Progress and the Local Progress Impact Lab work collectively to advance a racial and economic justice agenda through all levels of government.

Local Progress is a movement of more than 1,400 local elected officials advancing a racial and economic justice agenda through all levels of local government.

The **Local Progress Impact Lab** brings together local leaders, partners, and experts to build the knowledge, skills, and leadership needed to advance racial and economic justice at the local level.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023 has been a special year for our network. Not only because of the incredible work we've accomplished and exciting wins we've fought so hard for, but also because our network has grown to reflect the power and breadth of our communities. For me, it was also extremely special to mark my official transition as the new Executive Director and honor the work and legacy of both Sarah Johnson and Ady Barkan. This transition has been a bittersweet but exciting new chapter in the growth and evolution of our network.

When I started at Local Progress in 2018, we were hitting our stride – having grown out of a small conference room in D.C. into a diverse network grounded in racial and economic justice. **Now, we are an independent organization and an unstoppable movement.** More than 1,400 members strong, representing 48 states and D.C. We've got [four state chapters](#) and member leadership bodies that drive our work around [public safety](#), [housing](#), [school board](#), and our [identity-based caucuses](#). We've trained hundreds of local elected officials through the [Progressive Governance Academy](#) (a program that I personally love so much) and our amazing policy library is bursting at the seams with resources that help move policies and inspire action in every corner of the country. We're now the network known for our trans-local campaigns and state level organizing work,

like [suing Ron DeSantis over Florida's anti-protest law](#); [passing local good cause eviction laws](#) in cities and towns across New York state; and [fighting the criminalization of abortion in Texas](#). And the heart and soul of all of this are the LP members – the local elected officials building power with communities to reshape what is possible.

The best part? We're just getting started.

What we do at the local level matters – now more than ever. Because local is where we visualize new realities, seed the ground for change at the state and federal level, and have the most power to sustain and uphold democracy.

We are proud to share the impact of this growth and of our work from this past year in this Year in Review.

As we move forward, your support is more critical than ever. The strides we've made were only possible because of the collective effort and contributions from people like you. But there's more to be done, and we can't do it alone. We're running into this moment together and there is no stopping us!

Sí se puede,

Ivan Luevanos-Elms



REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND & LEADER, ADY BARKAN

This year, we celebrated the incredible life and continue to mourn the heartbreaking loss of our friend and leader, Ady Barkan. Ady was many things. A proud father, son, and husband to whom family was everything. A fierce organizer who was remarkably brilliant, wickedly sharp, and wildly ambitious. A fighter who refused to back down when things got tough (especially after his ALS diagnosis) and used every opportunity to [speak truth to power](#). And a true friend who was uncommonly kind and unbelievably funny.

He was also the founding director of Local Progress. For those who knew him during his years at LP, you know that he is the architect behind so much of what you see and feel as part of this network. He infused his brilliance and political savvy into changing the way people thought about

governance — helping people understand that elected officials, like all people, are more effective when they're organized. There's a line from his book, *Eyes to the Wind*, that we come back to time and time again: **"Speaking alone my voice is weak. But when we come together, our voices echo so loud."** It is a reminder and a call to action. It's probably one of the more subtle and truly poetic ways he's called us to act with the boldest leadership possible, reminding us that our courage and conviction to do this work is grounded in love, support, and community.

LP is one of the many legacies Ady is leaving behind, alongside his fight for universal access to life-saving and life-giving healthcare. We honor his memory and carry on his unfinished work as we continue to fight.

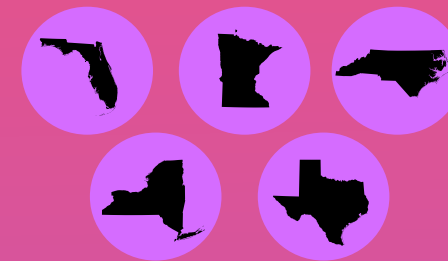


AT A GLANCE

1,465 members in 48 states and DC



More than 242 new members in 2023



5 state organizing committees: FL, MN, NC, NY, TX



3 identity caucuses: Black Caucus, Women's Caucus, and Nuestro Caucus



3 member-led issue steering committees: public safety, housing, school boards



648 of state and local elected officials trained through the Progressive Governance Academy in 2022 and 2023.



More than 375 elected officials, partners, and allies attended this year's national convening in St. Louis, MO!



25 organizing calls, policy webinars, and strategy briefings in which members shared and learn about best practices in local policy and designed local strategies to advance our agenda



10.4k followers on Twitter and 420+ followers on our new Instagram!



More than 60 national and local press hits that lift the work of local leaders into the national narrative.

OUR IMPACT

We advance a racial and economic justice agenda grounded in our four strategic pillars:

Racial justice as the beacon of justice for all

Elected officials as an organized force

Collaborative governing

Adaptive change from the ground up

Here are some highlights of the work we're most proud of:

Creating Real Traffic Safety by Targeting Structural Problems

Traffic safety is more than enforcement. It's about making sure we are safe on our roadways and in transit, and that we can make it to our destination free of harm, discrimination, and violence. Across the country, there is already work being done that reimagines traffic safety with the holistic understanding of what people need to move safely and freely within their neighborhoods and communities. This includes, among many things, removing police from traffic enforcement. In response to the police shooting of Tyre Nichols in January, LP member and **Memphis City Councilmember Michalyn Easter-Thomas** introduced [legislation](#) that would stop pretextual stops for six minor traffic violations. The bill was modeled after Philadelphia's Driving Equality law that took effect last year thanks to the leadership of LP member and **Philadelphia Councilmember Isaiah Thomas**. By [connecting members](#) in Memphis with the work happening in Philadelphia, we were able to support change happening from the ground up and ensure local elected leaders had the technical expertise and peer support to change what is possible. At Local Progress, we know that by building on and replicating work across jurisdictions, we can [redefine what is possible from the ground up](#). That's

why our role is to build a network that catalyzes and unlocks the collective power of elected officials to advance a shared vision.



Taking Action to Protect Workers

This year has been marked with a historic groundswell of grassroots labor organizing. From victories for UPS workers to ongoing strikes for hotel workers, writers, and actors, people across the country are advocating for economic justice. Increasingly, local governments are leveraging their powers to improve

working conditions and advance worker protections. This includes creating local labor agencies, serving as a model employer, and passing laws to raise labor standards. These are just a few examples, check out our full [2023 Labor Day report](#) to see more.



School Board Members Are Organizing to Build a Multi-Racial Democracy

Public schools are the center of our communities and the bedrock of a healthy democracy. They are also a political battlefield for a coordinated right-wing strategy – focused on CRT, book bans, disempowering educators, and attacking LGBTQ+ students – in an attempt to weaken our public education system and, ultimately, undermine our democracy and stop social change. We need progressive champions stepping up to fight back and win the fully funded and equitable public schools we all deserve.

That's why 40 school board members from 16 states across the country gathered in Baltimore for two days of strategy, peer learning, community building, and leadership development at our first-ever [school board convening](#). In total, LP members came from 37 school districts that represent 1,644,557 students from across the country!



The convening marked an important evolution of [our school board work](#) – building on the establishment of our [school board steering committee](#) and the growth of our school board cohort over the past year (which now includes about 300 members).

At the convening, our key partners in education justice organizing – including [National Education Association](#), [American Federation of Teachers](#), [Alliance to Reclaim our Schools](#), and [HEAL Together](#) – helped us dig deeper on school board governance, budgeting, and campaigns that advance equity. The convening offered an important reminder of how needed and important this work is. Despite the rise of conservative extremism in school board governance, there are bold progressive champions stepping up in this moment.

Empowering Localities to Choose Welcome

All human beings have inherent dignity and the right to seek safety. Every day, adults, children, and families are making treacherous journeys across borders in search of a better future – in many cases as a matter of life and death. And every day, communities across the country are stepping up and choosing welcome – volunteering their time, skills, and care to welcome people in search of a better life with dignity. This year, Local Progress Impact Lab supported local electeds across the country to support new arrivals with dignity. In February we released a new

resource titled [Local Power to Choose Welcome](#), offering a roadmap for creating a welcoming infrastructure and detailing medium-term solutions that local governments can take to support residents' transitions into their communities. We also organized strategy calls between LP members in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, and New York City to help them share lessons learned and strategize together on infrastructure needs and narrative challenges.

Securing Big Wins & Progress Against Abusive State Preemption

Local governments are closest to their communities, therefore it's critical they have the ability to address their communities' unique local needs. In the midst of nationwide attacks on local democracy, leaders across the country won important fights to protect local control this year:

'A Huge Win': Texas Judge Finds Law Limiting Local Rule Is Unconstitutional

"When local policymaking is stifled, community voices are silenced," said a

In **Texas**, Alongside community organizations, faith leaders, and labor unions, LPTX members spoke out against [HB 2127](#) – also known as the Death Star law – a wide-reaching preemption law that strips local governments of their right and ability to effectively govern. After months of local advocacy against the Death Star law, it was [ruled](#) unconstitutional. This win represents, as LPTX said in a [statement](#) with local partners, "the power of our localities, our local elected officials, and the communities they represent." As expected, the state of Texas filed for an appeal, so local Texas communities will continue to fight back against this harmful law.



In **Missouri**, LP Board Member and **St. Louis Board of Aldermen President Megan Green** – joined by hundreds of low-wage Missouri workers from [Missouri Workers Center](#) and LP members from across the country – [announced](#) eight new ordinances in a

push to win back the local freedom to act in the best interest of Missourians. These types of protections have been banned in recent years by sweeping, corporate-backed state preemption laws. These ordinances would automatically take effect when Missouri state lawmakers prioritize people over corporate interests and overturn preemption.

SIX FLORIDA CITIES SUCCEED IN REDUCING HARM OF HB 1, END COURT CHALLENGE

In **Florida**, six cities succeeded in [reducing the harm of HB 1](#) – the state's anti-protest, anti-local control law introduced by Governor Ron DeSantis in 2021 in response to the racial justice protests of 2020 following the murder of George Floyd and others by police. In direct response to the cities' lawsuit (and following a failed attempt by Governor DeSantis to dismiss the challenge in court), the state legislature made critical changes to the law that resolved the original version's primary flaws. After over a year of fighting back against HB 1, this was a victory for everyone concerned about the law's impact on home rule and participatory democracy. But we know there's still much to do as communities continue to organize to reimagine public safety. HB 1 reflects a troubling trend of state executives and legislatures undermining local democracy and further marginalizing communities often left out of governance. The end of this lawsuit reenergizes our fight against abusive state preemption – in Florida and across the country.

Developing the Leadership of Elected Officials Through the Progressive Governance Academy (PGA)

A joint project between State Innovation Exchange (SiX), Local Progress Impact Lab, and re:power, the PGA supports progressive elected officials to build power in partnership with their peers and with local progressive movement actors, while strengthening

their skills in governance for a lifelong career in public leadership. Over the last two years, we trained 648 state and local elected officials, including in Chicago, Los Angeles County, Michigan, Minnesota and North Carolina.

Demonstrating What Housing Justice Looks Like



Local governments are continuing to lead the way in protecting tenants and normalizing stable rents in their communities. In July, more than 60 local elected leaders from across

the country joined our [Housing Steering Committee](#) in submitting a [public comment](#) for the Federal Housing Finance Agency, urging action on tenant protections. LP member and **Oklahoma City Councilmember JoBeth Hamon** [joined tenants in DC](#) to testify in a congressional briefing about the need for federal intervention. The federal government can and should reinforce the work being done at the local level while also filling gaps in tenant protections across localities. Across the country, local leaders have passed

policies to protect their communities from price increases, discrimination, eviction, and retaliation. Rent stabilization provides renters with financial stability by limiting the rent hikes landlords can impose. More and more localities have been passing this key policy, including Cudahy, CA, Montgomery County, and St. Paul. To further support this work, we also developed [two new resources](#) to help electeds and community members continue to advocate for strong rent stabilization policies. And in places where rent stabilization is preempted by the state, we helped provide the data and messaging guidance needed to advocate at the state level. In Florida, our [housing poll](#) showed the public support needed to advocate [against](#) state preemption of rent stabilization. This year we also dove into the issue of short-term rentals, which exacerbate housing costs and displacement, [publishing a new brief](#) and supporting members in fashioning local strategies to curb their proliferation.

Reimagining School Safety Together via Immersive Learning Experience

Localities across the country are building real school safety by investing in everything students need to thrive and working to dismantle carceral elements in schools. In October, we brought two dozen local elected officials, community partners, and government staffers together in Milwaukee to learn about the work done to create real safety in schools. The goal of the two and a half day [site visit](#) was to inspire members to take action back home and empower them with new resources for how to create real safety in their schools. This site visit was anchored by both our [Public Safety Steering Committee](#) and the [School Board Steering Committee](#) – bodies at LP that help our organization determine what we should prioritize. Living into our theory of change around collaborative governance, LP members were able to bring a plus-one with them to help bring this work back home – including restorative practice experts and community leaders. The group met with students, teachers, district staff, and community organizers to identify lessons learned and best practices that can inform their own work. Upon returning from the trip, **New York City Councilmember**



Tiffany Cabán shared how the site visit directly inspired her work back home: "I'm in a hearing on safety in schools and crafted my line of question using so much of the information I learned on our site visit." Similar to [our trip to Portland last year](#), this site visit is part of our broader public safety work and will help inform the development of policy resources on school safety.

GROWING AND COHERING THE LP NETWORK

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

Helping Local Electeds Feel Seen and Get Organized



Local Progress organizes caucuses for members to do work together within shared identities, helping create a safe space for community building, organizing, and collective healing.

This year we launched our third identity caucus: the Nuestro Caucus, and strengthened our Black Caucus and Women's Caucus as spaces for peer support, learning, and organizing. The [Black Caucus](#) focused on resilience and community building, supporting the unique needs, opportunities, and challenges that come with governing while Black. At the national convening, Black Caucus members completed the first pilot for the soon-to-be-launched *Governing While Black* module developed as part of the PGA. The [Women's Caucus](#) also dug deep on healing and restorative practices that can support women through the physical and emotional toll that holding elected office can have. In the coming year, the Nuestro Caucus is excited to start building out its leadership committee and holding space to support Latinx members.

“IT IS INVALUABLE TO HAVE A SPACE TO BE IN COMMUNITY WITH MY PEERS WHO SHARE SIMILAR LIVED EXPERIENCES AND KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH. BEING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL IS HARD AND WE NEED SAFE SPACES LIKE THIS IN ORDER TO SHARE STRUGGLES, CELEBRATE VICTORIES, RECHARGE, AND FIND JOY — BECAUSE THAT IS HOW WE BUILD RESILIENCE IN THIS WORK.”

– Nancy Metayer, Coral Springs Commissioner

Introducing the Leadership Collaborative



Elected officials – like all people in our society – are more effective and powerful when they work together. By organizing together, we can share knowledge and strategies and build new ways of doing the work. This

year we launched the **Leadership Collaborative** – a cross-organizational, multi-state, multi-issue, multi-racial space hosted as four convenings over the course of the next three years. Designed for LP members who hold leadership positions across the network (including our [state organizing committees](#), [program steering committees](#), and [caucus leadership committees](#)), each convening will focus on one of the key pillars of our

[Strategic Framework](#). We launched our [first one](#) in March of this year, bringing together more than 40 LP member leaders and partner organizations to discuss ways to organize within their councils or boards, across their states, and at the national level. At Local Progress, we understand that we are all stronger when we collectively organize as local electeds across the country and in deep partnership with grassroots allies towards a shared vision. [The Leadership Collaborative](#) is how we deepen that work.

“I FELT REALLY AGITATED AROUND STRATEGY BUILDING. THERE ARE A LOT OF BUREAUCRATIC TOOLS THAT ARE TRYING TO LESSEN OUR POWER AND I'VE BEEN INSPIRED BY FOLKS WHO DO AMAZING THINGS IN THE FACE OF INTIMIDATION.”

– Johana Bencomo, Las Cruces City Councilor, Local Progress Women's Caucus Co-Chair

Our 2023 National Convening: Collective Courage. Collective Power.

Every year, our [national convening](#) is a space where our network comes together to learn, strategize, and find joy. This year was our largest and most exciting national convening to date – with more than 44 different strategy meetings, workshops, and site visits, covering everything from workers' rights and rent stabilization to reproductive justice, federal implementation, and navigating the challenges and opportunities in elected office.

More than 375 local elected officials, partners, and allies in community – sharing, healing, and learning together. We exchanged ideas and found inspiration. We laughed, we cried, and many of us found the clarity or the renewed energy we were looking for.

“EACH AND EVERY SINGLE PERSON IN THIS ROOM SAID, 'I HAVE A DUTY.' THAT'S COURAGE THAT SAYS THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY ATTACK ME, OR MISUNDERSTAND ME, I AM COMPELLED TO MOVE FOR MY PEOPLE, TO STAND STRONG FOR MY PEOPLE.”

– Rep. Cori Bush

Check out [our photo album on Facebook](#) and [our favorite hot takes on Twitter](#).

“EVERYTHING THAT WE DESERVE, WE CAN WIN. AND THE ONLY WAY WE WIN IS THROUGH COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE AND ORGANIZATION WITH OTHER PEOPLE. YOU CANNOT DO IT BY YOURSELF.”

– Chicago Teachers Union President Stacy Davis Gates.



IN THE NEWS

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:

MotherJones

The Accountant Who Wants to Take On the Police

Orlando Sentinel

Attack on renter protection is another attack on local democracy

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Republicans Are Systematically Blocking Cities' Ability to Protect Abortion

NEXT CITY

Texas Cities Are Getting Ready For The State's 'Death Star' Law

GOVERNING

THE FUTURE OF STATES AND LOCALITIES

Less Politics Is Local: States Get Increasingly Aggressive About Pre-Emption

Texas Signal

How This Election is Putting Real Safety on the Ballot in Texas

Stateline

States and cities eye stronger protections for gig economy workers

CITY & STATE NEW YORK

Local elected officials from around the state call for immigrant protections from feds

The Copper Courier

Here's What Rural Leaders Say Their Communities Need

CNN

The UAW won big against Detroit automakers. Unionizing Tesla and Toyota will be tougher

STORIES FROM THE NETWORK

Connecting Community Responder Programs Leads to Success



After attending the Portland Street Response site visit in October 2022, [Chicago Alderperson Rossana Rodriguez](#) used the relationships she built from that trip to support the work she was doing to advance a

community responder program in her city. With support from Local Progress, she invited experts from Portland and Albuquerque to share their experience and expertise at a [city council meeting in July](#) – helping to make a strong case for support of the [Treatment Not Trauma](#) initiative she has been working to pass and fund for the last two years. The program is now [a step closer](#) to being implemented as part of the city's public safety response.

Inspiring Progress on Short-Term Rental Regulations

In August, the Local Progress Impact Lab held a network briefing on short-term rental regulations. After attending, Rochester City Council Vice President Mary Lupien was inspired to pursue a short-term rental ordinance in her locality, which currently has no local regulation. Working with Local Progress, she was able to draft an ordinance based on a similar one that already existed in Beacon, New York.

Advancing Fair Workweeks

In April, Evanston Mayor Daniel Biss reached out to the Local Progress Impact Lab as he was conceptualizing work to establish a fair workweek for workers in his city. The Impact Lab was able to connect him with partners advancing this work. In May, the Evanston City Council adopted the city's first fair workweek ordinance, requiring employers to provide employees with predictable work and additional compensation for any shift changes. The law – which [went into effect](#) on September 1 – applies to all businesses in a covered industry with 15 or more employees.

Empowering Leaders Across the Bay Area



Despite large investments to get progressive candidates elected to office, very few resources exist to support elected officials once they begin to govern. The skills you need to win an election – like fielding, fundraising, communications – are not the same skills you need to govern effectively – such as policy analysis, constituent outreach, coalition management, and parliamentary procedure. Recognizing this need, the Local Progress Impact Lab collaborated with [Bay Rising](#) – a growing alliance of community-led organizations across the Bay Area – to launch the [Progressive Governance Lab](#). The six-month leadership development program supported dozens of elected officials across the San Francisco Bay Area, most of whom were recently elected and do not have support staff or an existing community organizing infrastructure to lean on.

“ I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BUILD COMMUNITY WITH OTHER PROGRESSIVE ELECTED OFFICIALS. I HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP SKILLS TO MOVE MY POLICY AGENDA FORWARD. AND I AM INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM PEOPLE THAT HAVE EXPERIENCE, AS I TRANSITION INTO MY ROLE AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL MYSELF. ”

– George Syrop, Hayward City Council



WHAT'S AHEAD

Here are a few projects we're excited to share with you in 2023:

Activating local electeds into collective action together on the issues most pressing to their communities during the upcoming election cycle.

Continuing to grow our leadership development opportunities through state organizing, identity caucuses, governance trainings, and a network-wide learning community.

Developing regional organizing framework in the Northeast and Deep South and exploring new state organizing in California, Colorado, and Pennsylvania.

Experimenting with new and creative narrative projects that engage more local leaders and reach a broader audience beyond the progressive movement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Team

Joshua Acevedo, Campaigns Organizer, School Boards (he/him)

Tannya Benavides, Texas Chapter Manager (she/her)

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Kidist Teferi, HR & Operations Manager (she/her)

We also thank those who helped anchor so much of this work while on staff:

Silvia Fabela, Program Director (she/her) *until Feb 2023*

Sarah Johnson, Executive Director (she/her) *until Sept 2023*

Deandrea Newsome, North Carolina Chapter Manager (she/her) *until Aug 2023*

Vishal Reddy, Legal Fellow (he/him) *until Sept 2023*

LP Board

Kristerfer Burnett, Baltimore City Councilmember, Co-Chair (he/him)

Jillian Johnson, Durham City Councilmember, Co-Chair (she/her)

Alexandra Anello, El Paso City Representative (she/her)

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

Kendra Brooks, Philadelphia City Councilmember At-Large (she/her)

Andrew Friedman, Senior Director of Strategy and Co-Founder of The Action Lab (he/him)

Megan Ellyia Green, St. Louis Board President (she/her)

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

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

Shane Larson, Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Government Affairs and Policy at Communications Workers of America (he/him)

Jerry Maldonado, PolicyLink Vice President of Programs (he/him)

Eddy Morales, Gresham City Council President (he/him)

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

Teresa Mosqueda, Seattle City Councilmember (she/her)

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

Gabriela Santiago-Romero, Detroit City Councilmember (she/her)

Becky Wasserman, SEIU Director of Government Relations (she/her)

Donors & Supporters

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Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies

Communications Workers of America

Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

Ford Foundation

Four Freedoms Fund

Headwaters Foundation for Justice

HouseUS

HR&A Advisors

Inatai Foundation

Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation

JPB Foundation

Local Solutions Support Center

McKnight Foundation

Mertz Gilmore Foundation

Nathan Cummings Foundation

National Education Association

New York Women's Foundation

Omidyar Network

Open Society Foundation

Open Society Policy Center

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Raikes Foundation

Robert Sterling Clark Foundation

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Rural Democracy Initiative

Scherman Foundation

Service Employees International Union

Surdna Foundation

The California Endowment

The Grove Foundation

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

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