Welcome!

We are pleased to present the first issue of the newsletter of the Tax Fairness Organizing Collaborative.

We hope this newsletter helps generate a common identity, solidarity and union among sister organizations doing tax fairness work at the community and grassroots levels.

More importantly, we believe that it can help provide a set of collective assets and points of convergence that enhance our members’ local and state work.

The more we learn from each other’s experiences as economic justice activists, organizers, and advocates, the better our chances for success in this struggle.

The forces and strategies generating economic inequality are systemic. Therefore, our work to change unfair rules and the minds and hearts of the public must be the same. The investments in the struggle for economic justice are ultimately not unique in their nature nor should they happen in a vacuum or remain isolated from each other. As a collaborative friend once told us, “There are no accidents in economic injustice…” So there should be no accidents in implementing principles and strategies for economic justice either. Our aim is to provide a vehicle for learning and networking in support of our common objective: economic justice.

We sincerely hope you find the content of our first issue inspiring and useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions. We also ask that you help support your local tax fairness group or organization and this network — morally, physically, politically, financially, or in any other capacity you see fit.

Solidaridad,

The Tax Fairness Organizing Collaborative
Strategies and Successes

**TABOR takes hit nationally**

Voters in three states, Oregon, Nebraska, and Maine, had ballot measures this past November to establish constitutional caps on public investments modeled after Colorado’s so-called “Taxpayers Bill of Rights” (TABOR). In all three states, the TABOR amendments failed thanks to tremendously effective organizing and education efforts by broad and diverse coalitions.

According to Wikipedia, TABOR is “a concept advocated by certain conservative and libertarian groups, primarily in the United States, as a way of limiting the growth of government by requiring increases in overall tax revenue be tied to inflation & population increases.”

But severely limiting government failed in Colorado, and in 2005 voters there froze key provisions of the cap. Educating voters about the negative experience of Colorado was key to countering the ballot measures in other states, including Missouri where a coalition was able to keep a TABOR initiative off the ballot (see Missouri Beats Back TABOR).

**Missouri beats back TABOR**

Like many states with antiquated tax codes and conservative majorities in office, Missouri has faced budget shortfalls that have decimated public services around the state and eroded the quality of life for its citizens.

For example, the public school foundation formula remained underfunded by over $700 million dollars in 2006 and the Governor slashed Medicaid for over 400,000 low income workers, children, seniors and people with disabilities just a year before.

Part of the budget shortage stems from an existing revenue lid known as the Hancock amendment. This is a constitutional amendment that limits revenue and condemns the state budget to perpetual inadequacy when it comes to investment in the public services that Missourians value most.

As if Hancock were not enough, Representative Carl Bearden, a Republican from St. Charles, the affluent county adjacent to St. Louis, sponsored a bill to put TABOR on the 2006 ballot during the 2006 legislative session. Although Bearden’s legislation failed to pass during the session, advocates in Missouri knew that TABOR was not going away.

In response, advocates around the state including the Missouri Budget Project, Missouri Pro Vote, AFSCME, SEIU and many others established a coalition called Partners to Protect Missouri’s Future to start educating the public about the dangerous impact of TABOR in Colorado and what it could do to Missouri. Partners took responsibility for speaking at public events, developing literature to share with community groups, writing letters to the editor for publication in media markets around

continued on page 3
Alabama Celebrates Tax Reform Win

This has been our most rewarding year ever. We had to pinch ourselves to be sure it was real. We helped pass a landlord-tenant law and a bill to raise the income tax threshold, both in an election year.

Thanks to the hard work of our little band of people called Arise, low-income parents will save as much as $260 on their income tax bill next year. For some, $260 might not be a huge amount, but for thousands of families, it’s going to make a real difference. Add it all up, and this reform puts $40 million back into the pockets of Alabamians who make less than $20,000 a year.

Our members “created a buzz” about the $4,600 income tax threshold so that the term became common knowledge throughout the state. Our policy analysts explained the income tax clearly in The Alabama Tax & Budget Handbook. Our organizers took an empowering message to groups large and small. We triggered news stories on how Alabama had become the only state still taxing a family of four making under $10,000 a year. And we were able to do all this because our members believed in our mission enough to speak up in advocacy and back up their words by writing checks.

How do we know we can take credit? Strictly speaking, it’s always hard for advocates to know who really deserves credit for social change. Is it the design of the plan, the leadership of the legislative sponsor, or the calls of our members? That’s why we were pleased to see the Birmingham and Montgomery editorials giving credit to us, along with Gov. Bob Riley and bill sponsor John Knight. At the bill signing ceremony, we were praised by both Riley and Knight . . . and the next month, Knight threw a party in our honor!

More than 100 members met legislators at the State House to lobby for the Arise legislative agenda.

Missouri continued

the state, and other earned media activities that highlighted the prospective dangers of the TABOR spending lid.

Despite these efforts, TABOR re-emerged late in 2006 when an out-of-state group hired a petition firm to gather signatures on a petition to place TABOR on the November 2006 ballot. Advocates moved quickly with a plan to prevent the petition from reaching the requisite number of signatures to qualify for the ballot.

With the help of Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, Pro Vote, AFSCME, and others, partners quickly developed the “decline to sign” campaign that would eventually incapacitate the TABOR signature gathering effort. Trained field staff went into two key targeted congressional districts where the pro-TABOR effort already faced challenges in meeting signature goals in the existing timeframe. AFSCME and Missouri Pro Vote took the lead in implementing the “decline to sign” tactics over two weeks.

Ultimately, the pro-TABOR forces failed to gather enough signatures to qualify for the ballot, but went ahead and submitted their signatures anyway. Because they were short of signatures and the filing didn’t follow other legal requirements, Missouri’s Secretary of State rejected the petition, and a Cole County Circuit Judge later upheld her decision. TABOR was defeated this time.

In 2007 however, TABOR has already re-emerged in the General Assembly and advocates are again marshalling resources for what has become an annual battle over revenues in Missouri.
Turning Town Hall Meetings into Tax Reform Forums

In Kentucky, the Governor's Town Hall Meetings went a little differently than planned, thanks in part to KFTC members. Instead of agreeing with the administration’s premise that the state has extra money, KFTC members used the meetings as a forum to talk about the need for fair and adequate tax reform that would be a sustainable solution to Kentucky’s budget crisis.

Kentucky is 50th in the nation in per capita K-12 investment in education, according to Governing Magazine. And a report recently issued by Education Week determined that because of poverty and an under-equipped education system, a child born in Kentucky is significantly less likely to succeed than children in 40 other states.

Of course Kentuckians know that we need to address the chronic underfunding of essential state programs. But Governor Ernie Fletcher has been trying to build support for using projected “extra money” for tax cuts and tax rebates for people and businesses.

The tax plan we supported would raise about $200 million annually for Kentucky, even while providing the support that lower-income families need. By broadening our tax base by expanding the sales tax to include selected services, like limousine services and country club fees; by instituting a more progressive tax structure, and by preserving Kentucky’s estate tax, Kentucky would be calling on its wealthiest citizens to pay their fair share. And by instituting a refundable state earned income tax credit, Kentucky would be offering support to low-income working families. The comprehensive tax plan, then, is both adequate, providing a constant stream of money for essential programs, and fair.

Kentuckians have been following our lead. At the Morehead Town Hall Meeting, for example, tax rebates and tax cuts did not get any votes when people had to choose between tax cuts and investing in health care and education.

Lindsey Lewis, a Madison County chapter member and a student at Eastern Kentucky, knows about the effects of under-funding higher education all too well. At Richmond’s Town Hall Meeting, Lewis raised her concerns about the state’s diminished investments in higher education and the accompanying tuition hikes, pointing out that several of her friends have had to drop out of school because they couldn’t afford the costs. Lewis said, “The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education’s Measuring Up gave Kentucky an F in Affordability in 2006. We need to budget more for higher education, because if we don’t, Kentuckians are simply not going to be able to afford to go to school.”

Sally Evans, a Central Kentucky member, voiced concerns about the lack of investments in health care at the Morehead meeting. Evans said to Governor Fletcher, “Sir, you are a physician, and you know how limited access to health insurance is for the working people in this state. And you know how health departments are the safety net for those people. And you must also know how the funding for those health departments has been cut drastically over the course of your administration. In a religious nation, and a rich nation, like this one, I think that’s absolutely immoral. And, really, I just don’t know that I’d call this a surplus, when Kentucky doesn’t even have the funds to provide education, shelter, and adequate health care for its people.”

“**There is power in numbers.**

*When people network and work together, they can accomplish more than just trying to do it by themselves. I’ve been a part of many KFTC actions. I’ve gone to Frankfort to lobby. I’ve been part of public hearings. One time we held a funeral for the state of Kentucky. It was being buried in waste. We preached the funeral in the rotunda and had a police escort. We wrote up a death certificate and placed it on the Governor’s desk. It really got people’s attention.*

Doug Doerrfeld was also at the Morehead Town Hall Meeting and voiced his objection to spending the one-time projected surplus. “I take exception to the fact that you’re calling this a surplus, when we have chronic underfunding of health care, housing, and education,” he said. “We need to increase tax revenue to move Kentucky forward.”

With hard work and passionate advocacy, we turned the Governor’s strategy for building support of his agenda into opportunities for spreading the word about the need for more revenue.
Strategies and Successes

Reframing surpluses with a call to invest

At Tennesseans for Fair Taxation’s July Board meeting, Nashville member Martha Wettemann and others raised concerns about the public misconceptions that are created by the so-called budget surplus Tennessee experienced in early 2006.

When the public hears about surpluses of $350 million in the papers, they are apt to believe that the state is awash in money. Meanwhile, public structures across the board have faced year after year of budget cuts with 9% and 5% across-the-board cuts in 2003 and 2004, followed by the loss of health care by 200,000 Tennesseans in 2005 and 2006. Any talk of surpluses in such an environment is a misnomer, yet we still hear about it in the papers.

That’s why TFT worked with the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, a DC-based tax policy research group, to produce a new report entitled, “The Real Budget Deficit: A call to invest in Tennessee, its communities, and its people.”

The problem with any talk of surpluses and deficits in Tennessee, the report points out, is that it only measures how revenue is coming in relative to previous years and the low expectations of our elected officials. If we measured revenue against what it would take to fund public services at the same level as our eight neighboring states, Tennessee would be facing a combined state and local shortfall of $3.4 billion.

The vast majority of that shortfall is in the area of public education, both higher ed and K-12. In fact, $2.1 billion of the total shortfall is related to education funding. Evidence in the report clearly points out the link between this under-funding of services and performance levels.

Education provides our young people with the tools they need to succeed in the 21st century, yet Tennessee lags behind neighboring states, and the nation, when it comes to proficiency in reading and math, high school graduation rates, college enrollment, and other important indicators of educational performance.

If Tennessee’s public investment and performance levels for education were on par with our neighbors, 32,000 more young adults would be enrolled in our public universities and colleges, 49,000 more adults would have bachelor’s degrees, 3,300 more eighth graders would be considered proficient or better in math, and 47,000 more adults would have high school degrees.

The same sort of budget shortfalls are seen in other program areas besides education. For example, Tennessee’s public investment level in environmental protection, parks, and agriculture lags $300 million behind the region. Meanwhile cancer-causing chemicals released into the environment in Tennessee are twice the neighboring-state average. While the amount of toxins released is in large part a function of the type of industries present, adequate enforcement and investments can help protect our communities while promoting safe workplaces.

Public safety, transportation, and social services are among other areas that are under-funded in Tennessee relative to our neighboring states.

Martha Wettemann states, “We’ve always heard about how Tennessee is 49th in education funding and 50th in home and community-based care for seniors, but this report gives us a first real look at what it will take to close the public investment and performance gap that separates Tennessee from our neighbors in the South. It would take even more to bring Tennessee up to the national level.”

To publicize the new report, TFT’s Media Committee planned a series of same-day press conferences in five cities during mid-October. Thanks to the work of these active members, news of the new report was covered in several papers and TV stories across the state. TFT is currently working to mass-produce the report for distribution to community leaders statewide. In the meantime, downloads of the report from TFT’s web site is approaching 2,000. You can download a copy of the report at www.yourtax.org/deficitreport/.
Strategies and Successes

Winning the anti-tax debate with an Opportunity Agenda

Recent events in Maine demonstrate the power of the citizen initiative process as an organizing tool and as a means of shifting the terms of public debate. Maine faces many economic challenges and, for the last several years, the debate has been framed by a series of initiative campaigns, representing powerful contrasts in worldview.

Anti-tax interests in Maine have claimed that cutting taxes and public spending should be the chief means of addressing our economic problems. In 2004 and 2006, they waged campaigns for anti-tax initiatives. Though they lost both campaigns, the media now routinely describes Maine as the “highest-taxed State,” and takes it as a given that this is a substantial source of Maine’s economic problems. Citizens and politicians alike have accepted this fallacy as conventional wisdom. When the only question is “How much should we rein in public spending?” the answer is bound to move the discussion closer to that goal.

In 2006 however, our new organization, Opportunity Maine, brought community leaders, activists and traditional and non-traditional student leaders together to advance a different vision of community economic development through the initiative process. As policy researchers and business, civic, and educational leaders have noted, the income gap between Maine and the rest of New England was largely a result of a higher education gap. Unfortunately, state government had repeatedly failed to take bold action commensurate with the magnitude of the problem.

Rising education costs – whether for young people, laid-off workers seeking new training or adults pursuing higher-paying careers – have dramatically outpaced inflation and, with mounting student debt and continued cuts in federal support, have effectively become a regressive tax for many. Now that’s a burden we should be talking about!

To address this, Opportunity Maine’s plan will allow any Maine resident who earns an associate’s or bachelor’s degree here to claim an income tax credit large enough to cover their student loan payments, so long as they continue to live and work in Maine after graduation. Alternatively, this tax credit will be available to Maine businesses that make their employees’ educational loan payments, allowing a substantial benefit to current and future workers and providing a strong incentive for the development and attraction of new businesses.

This notion of citizen-centered economic development captured the imagination of Mainers across the state and of all ages and political persuasions. As our signature drive heated up, the media began discussing economic development within Opportunity Maine’s frame. Suddenly, public investment to advance economic opportunity took center stage as a solution to Maine’s economic challenges.

We and our strategic ally, the League of Young Voters, organized on many campuses and found that young people saw our initiative and TABOR as alternatives to one another, and they invariably chose our approach. They saw the superiority of long-term investment in people over short-term tax cuts. Youth turnout soared in 2006, and was overwhelmingly against TABOR. Given the enormous amount of positive media attention the Opportunity Maine campaign garnered, we can reasonably assume that many people in the public at large made that connection as well, and voted accordingly.

We were able to recruit and train more than 500 people who collected well beyond the required number of signatures in just under four months. Our Legislature has passed a citizens’ initiative outright only five times in the 107 years since Maine first created this tool of democracy and, through a strategic campaign in our communities, statehouse and media, we just managed to make the Opportunity Maine initiative the sixth, with a large margin in the Senate and an unheard of unanimous vote in the House! Many legislators said they felt compelled to support it due the breadth and depth of grassroots support demonstrated and well-documented research we presented.

We still have a public awareness campaign ahead of us to protect this first-in-the-nation law and to encourage further progressive investments that build the skills and capacities of our people and strengthen our families and communities. That said, we are excited to show that anti-tax arguments can be defeated by organizing, educating and empowering people to advance an agenda of economic opportunity and security that has gotten short shrift in our state Capitol.
Taking back New Mexico with a fair tax system

In 2003, New Mexico’s Governor Bill Richardson pushed through a phased-in tax cut that reduced the top personal income tax in the state almost by half by 2007, from 8.2% to 4.9%. Meanwhile, the rates for the poorest New Mexicans were not reduced at all. When the tax cut is fully implemented in 2007, New Mexico will no longer have a progressive income tax structure. In addition, the new tax cuts include a large reduction in capital gains taxes, a windfall for our wealthiest residents.

In coalition with allied organizations, the SouthWest Organizing Project developed a multi-pronged approach focusing on short-term strategies to counter the Richardson tax break, and long-term strategies to realize tax fairness and adequacy for New Mexico’s social needs. As a grassroots organization that focuses on direct community organizing, our piece of the puzzle is to educate working families in New Mexico about fair taxation and provide opportunities for them to speak directly with their elected officials on tax policy issues. We see this as a long-term base-building effort among our constituency.

Throughout 2006 we conducted popular education in-house meetings and workshops. What we discovered is that within our communities people have limited understanding of the concept of progressive taxation. However, in polls conducted during the last election cycle, specific progressive tax policies consistently polled positively among New Mexicans. Our task was to empower our constituencies to articulate that sentiment directly to decision makers, in support of bills that will truly represent the interests of working families.

So it was a powerful experience for us to bring twenty of our low-income constituents to speak with their elected officials in the hallways of the State Capitol during the legislative session. They articulated why progressive tax policies such as the Working Families Tax Credit and the Corporate Income Tax Mandatory Combined Reporting Bill are important for the futures of their communities and their children.

Our most significant challenge is learning how to talk about tax issues in ways that are accessible to working families, especially those in Spanish-speaking communities. The assistance of United for a Fair Economy in helping us to develop our workshop has been a great resource and as we conduct workshops we continually incorporate feedback.

As we write this, the legislative session is almost over and some of the bills have been tabled while some are still being debated. In the coming years we will greatly expand the numbers of working families who are able to hold their elected officials accountable on fair tax policy. We are confident that the outcome will mitigate if not completely reverse the now regressive tax system we currently have in place.
Strategies and Successes

Success on the Estate Tax in Washington State

Last November, Washington state residents recognized the value of their state’s inheritance tax and voted to preserve it. We can all learn from their experience.

With backing from an ultra-conservative donor, business and anti-tax organizations got last minute ballot status in 2006 for an initiative, I-920, that would repeal Washington’s estate tax. The odds were against being able to protect one of Washington state’s few progressive taxes: voters had overwhelmingly supported statewide tax cut initiatives in the past. And mid-summer polling showed that over half the state’s voters thought they would eventually pay the inheritance tax, when in fact, 99.5% of state residents do not pay estate tax in Washington because it only affects individual estates worth more than $2 million ($4 million for a couple).

In just a few months’ time, an energetic and creative effort to retain the estate tax soundly defeated I-920 by a margin of 62-38. A huge shift in opinion occurred between September polling and Election Day on November 7th. Voters in every region of the state — not just the more progressive Puget Sound region — rejected I-920.

What happened? The “No on 920” Campaign was formed and raised funds to run ads on two key aspects of the estate tax: the fact that only about 250 estates a year pay the tax, and the link to education. Washington’s estate tax is dedicated to public education, and generates $100 million a year for smaller class sizes in K-12, as well as more financial aid and an increased number of higher education slots. “In every community, we knew how many children and young adults benefited from the estate tax,” said Sandeep Kaushik, the campaign’s communications director.

The Washington Tax Fairness Coalition (WTFC), which has a diverse membership of over 70 organizations located around the state, set aside other priorities to partner with the Campaign when I-920 qualified for the November ballot. The Coalition used traditional grassroots organizing and earned media strategies, coupled with web-based education and online activism to reach and mobilize voters statewide.

Staff and leaders spoke out in print, on the radio and on TV — and helped convince key editorial boards to recommend a “no” vote on I-920 to their readership. The Coalition recruited over a dozen community-based, of color and environmental organizations, broadening and deepening the list of estate tax stakeholders. Members sent thousands of e-alerts, developed and distributed materials at community, labor, education and political meetings statewide and made our Coalition website a major hub of “No on 920” information.

“Perhaps most importantly, our Coalition helped frame the estate tax in the broader context of tax fairness,” said WTFC’s Executive Director Barb Flye. “We emphasized that valuable public goods like education are paid for by our collective tax investment,” Flye explained. “We talked to voters about the inequality in our state’s tax system and got them to understand how the estate tax helps to balance that out by getting the wealthy to pay more of their fair share.”

Some wealthy individuals were also terrific advocates, making the connection between financial success and public investment in education. Most notably, Bill Gates, Sr., father of the richest man on earth, helped the public to see Washington’s estate tax as an “opportunity recycling program.”

The key to preserving the federal inheritance tax — and winning more widespread tax reforms at the state and federal level — may lie in reminding voters that fair taxes, based on ability to pay, that fund essential public goods like education, are essential to gaining the opportunity and security we all crave and deserve.
ACPP Poverty & Policy Conference blends knowledge, skills, and vision

“It’s inspiring to know that nearly 400 Alabamians are willing to brave icy winds to spend a day envisioning a fairer Alabama!” That’s the report from Presdelane Harris of Alabama’s Arise Citizens’ Policy Project, who not only attended the conference but chaired the planning committee.

On February 15th, the 2007 Poverty & Policy Conference filled Birmingham-Southern’s Norton Campus Center with civic and church leaders, community advocates, educators, students, social workers, and other hardy souls from around the state.

This year’s conference theme, “Let Justice Roll,” echoed throughout the day in keynote addresses by Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Sue Bell Cobb, Anniston Star editor Bob Davis, and Birmingham Civil Rights Institute co-founder Odessa Woolfolk. Three breakout sessions offered a total of 24 workshops on topics ranging from Medicaid reform to affordable housing to environmental justice.

The broad array of training and discussion allowed participants to start at the introductory level on a new issue or dig deeper into more familiar terrain. “We wanted the workshops to reflect the distinctions — and the connections — among knowledge, skills and vision,” said Harris. “All three are essential ingredients for effective advocacy.”
Kentucky’s Economic Justice Alliance Conference

How can we help change the health care crisis? How can we fight for sustainable economic development? How can we talk about government more effectively? And how can we build leadership among Kentucky citizens who want and need economic justice to make long-term changes in our state?

These were the questions taken up at the Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance Conference on January 20. Almost one hundred KFTC members and representatives of ally organizations came to Lexington to learn about “Putting Economic Justice on Kentucky’s Political Agenda.” The conference addressed items on economic justice’s immediate concerns, like raising the minimum wage, but also focused on organizing and strategizing for long-term change in Kentucky.

And as many members pointed out, this is not only a time of great need, but also of great hope. Rural voters are looking for a home for their values and concerns, and economic justice is becoming more present in that search. Russell Oliver of our Perry County chapter said, “I wonder why the U.S. is the only major industrial country in the world that doesn’t have universal healthcare. I’m much more concerned about that than who marries whom.”

Dana Beasley Brown, a KFTC member in Wilmore, had several conversations with KFTC members throughout the day, and noticed that the conference had galvanized people to demand that economic justice be at the center of Kentucky’s political agenda. “I hear a lot of hope from the people in this room, and I’m excited about all this energy for change,” Brown said.

The conference offered workshops about economic development, building support for single-payer health care in Kentucky, building leadership among groups affected by economic injustice, electoral organizing, talking about government more effectively, and tax justice plans for Kentucky. All of the workshops were geared toward improving our grassroots strategies for empowerment and long-term change. As emphasized by Amy Shir, a KFTC member in Louisville who ran a great race for State Representative in November, “Grassroots organizing is really powerful…We just have to show up for each other. If we don’t show up for each other, we lose. It’s gotta be us.”

Expose, disclose, and propose in Wisconsin

continued from page 7

development initiatives, along with the number of jobs created and the wage and benefit levels of the jobs. This part of the project will begin in spring 2007.

The third stage, Propose, will include concrete proposals for reforming the state’s tax system. We believe that we will have a receptive audience for proposals that would increase state and local revenue after moving through successful Expose and Disclose stages. This final part will begin in late 2007 or early 2008.

The coalition behind the overall campaign includes the Wisconsin AFL-CIO along with other unions, the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, faith-based organizations, and advocacy organizations. Overall staffing, technical assistance and outreach is provided largely by the Institute for Wisconsin’s Future, a Milwaukee-based non-profit which works on state policy issues.
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<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Tennesses for Fair Taxation</td>
<td>2918 E. Magnolia Ave, Ste 150</td>
<td>Tel: 865-524-4424</td>
<td><a href="http://www.yourtax.org">http://www.yourtax.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Virginia Organizing Project</td>
<td>703 Concord Avenue</td>
<td>Tel: 434-984-4655</td>
<td><a href="http://www.virginia-organizing.org">http://www.virginia-organizing.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Institute for Wisconsin’s Future</td>
<td>1717 S. 12th Street, Suite 203</td>
<td>Tel: 414-384-9094</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wisconsinsfuture.org">http://www.wisconsinsfuture.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Support the Tax Fairness Organizing Collaborative**

Please consider a generous contribution to the TFOC's national coordination and organizing work and/or to the work of TFOC member organizations (see list above). All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

- **YES**, I wish to contribute ____$35__ ____$50__ ____$100__ ____$500 or this amount $________ to the TFOC's national coordination and organizing work. (Please make check payable to United for a Fair Economy-TFOC).
- **YES**, I wish to contribute ____$35__ ____$50__ ____$100__ ____$500 or this amount $________ to the following TFOC member organization
  (Please make check directly payable to the organization).

Payment: __ Check(s) enclosed. Please use checks for donations to TFOC member organizations.

  - Please use Credit Card for TFOC National Coordination and Organizing contributions only.

Charge my Visa/Mastercard (circle one)

Account# __________________________ Exp date __/____

Name on card ____________________________

Signature ______________________________

Address __________________________________

City __________________________ State _____ Exp ________________

Mail this form with payment to:

United for a Fair Economy  
29 Winter St.  
Boston MA 02108
About the Collaborative

The Tax Fairness Organizing Collaborative, convened by United for a Fair Economy in 2004, is a network of statewide grassroots organizations that are educating and organizing for fair and adequate taxation primarily at the state level. The Collaborative seeks to create a long-term national infrastructure of tax fairness organizing to complement the policy work of the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative and the Economic Analysis and Research Network. The Collaborative, with participants in 20 states and growing, shares information and strategic relationships with many national organizations and networks working on tax and budget issues.

What We Do & Why
Anti-tax, anti-government forces have gained tremendous ground over the past 30 years, having “out-organized” those of us who are concerned about public investment, equal opportunity and social welfare. The anti-tax forces have also succeeded in molding public consciousness so that it fails to connect quality of life and economic security with taxes. Rather, a majority of Americans have come to believe that government is an impediment, not an enhancer, to their quality of life – and, as a result, support for the public sector has eroded drastically.

TFOC and its member organizations believe that long-term, sustained grassroots education and organizing across the country are essential ingredients for restoring faith in government while holding it accountable. We believe in fostering civic participation, and raising the essential funds to create a society that provides economic security for all. To that end, establishing a powerful, effective national infrastructure for tax organizing is one of the most important gaps to fill in the progressive movement.

The specific goal is to create and support a powerful network of state groups engaged in educating and organizing grassroots constituencies to achieve progressive taxation at the state and federal levels, while changing public attitudes about the essential links between grassroots political power, civic participation, government responsibility and accountability, and a vibrant commonwealth.

To achieve that goal, the Tax Fairness Organizing Collaborative:

- Brings together grassroots state organizing groups to exchange experiences and share best practices;
- Shares strategies across state lines and forms affinity groups to tackle common problems;
- Provides current information on messaging, framing, and communications strategies;
- Develops and shares culturally appropriate tools to draw diverse constituencies into tax debates;
- Initiates the newly minted cadres of state tax activists into the effort to reform federal tax policies; and
- Builds a Collaborative structure through which members can better secure long-term funding to build and sustain tax organizing capacity.

Benefits to Members

- Periodic emails that contain information/resources of interest.
- Two newsletters per year that, among other things, highlight successful TFOC member tax fairness activities/campaigns.
- Annual TFOC conference that provides a forum for the exchange of best practices, problem solving and the discussion of issues of interest/concern to TFOC members.
- Periodic regional mini-conferences on topics of interest.
- Training in popular education methodologies.
- Assistance developing state tax/budget workshop curriculums and training trainers to lead them.
- Support in the planning and implementation of creative actions, and other innovative ways of garnering media visibility.
- Limited technical support in the areas of communications and fundraising.
- Opportunities to apply for mini-grants, as funds are available.