



Open Democracy Strategic Plan 2018-2021

approved by the Board on July 17, 2018

Our Vision	A democratic government where everyone participates and everyone's voice is heard.
Our Mission	Political equality for all through an open, accountable, trusted government free from the corrupting influence of big money politics.
Our Values	<p>As an organization and as individuals, we are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to an inclusive democracy where citizens' voices are heard • Collaborative and transparent in our work, as we model good political leadership • Careful in our stewardship of the organization, recognizing that long-term financial sustainability will be required to meet our mission • Inspired by our founder, Granny D, who believed that every person has the power <i>and the responsibility</i> to make a difference
Who We Serve	Open Democracy is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization, focused on New Hampshire, with about 33,500 supporters from across the ideological spectrum. We are part of a national network of organizations working to reform campaign finance and protect voters' rights. We also work with New Hampshire-based organizations that are focused on issues affected by money in politics.
Our Programs and Services	<p>Open Democracy seeks to accomplish our mission through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating the public, opinion leaders and the media about the problems caused by money in politics, and potential campaign reform solutions • Raising the visibility of campaign finance reform as campaign issue during the First in the Nation presidential primary
Our Goals: 2018-2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an election system within New Hampshire that will provide responsive government 2. Use the unique opportunity of the New Hampshire presidential primary to influence candidates' agenda on campaign finance reform 3. Organize a grassroots "citizens movement" to support campaign reform 4. Educate and work with state legislators to support campaign reform 5. Strengthen our organization and position it for long-term sustainability

Background and Context:

The political and social environment is more opportune for campaign reform than it has been since Open Democracy was founded.

Within the past five years, there has been a sea-change in the public's perspective. As of late 2013, 91% of people thought campaign reform “would never happen.”¹ Now, 65% say “new laws could be effective in reducing the role of money in politics.”²

The desire for change crosses all partisan lines. Eight-in-ten Granite Staters believe that Big Money is a problem in New Hampshire politics. Almost identical numbers of Republicans (54%) and Democrats (55%) believe that Big Money is a “major” problem in New Hampshire.³

A majority of Granite Staters support public funding to fix the problem. Half of Republicans, 68% of independents and 70% of Democrats would support state legislation establishing a “Civic Dollars” public funding system.⁴

There is growing awareness that **voters' concerns about donor influence are eroding their faith in the basic form of our government.** Nationally, 55% of Americans say “the influence of campaign contributions” on politicians’ decisions “challenges their faith in American democracy” – and barely half say they still *have* “faith in American democracy.”⁵ Unexpected allies such as the business-led policy group Committee for Economic Development are paying attention, and have endorsed public funding of campaigns as the solution to “make it possible for our elected policymakers to run without reliance on big-dollar donors.”⁶

Public concern about the problem has risen to the point where **reform has become a campaign issue.** Nationally, it is tied with racism as voters’ top concern about America. Here in New Hampshire, 64% of voters say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who participated in a public funding system; that includes 59% of Republicans, 66% of independents and 71% of Democrats.⁷ One of the 2018 gubernatorial candidates is campaigning on the issue; many of the congressional candidates are, also.

The NH Legislature has previously considered public funding proposals.

- A 1999 Legislative Study Committee⁸ crafted a proposal to publicly fund campaigns for governor and executive council; that bill⁹ was filed in 2000 but killed in the House. A second bill¹⁰ – to publicly fund campaigns for governor, executive council and state senate – was passed by the Senate in 2000 but deemed “inexpedient to legislate” by the House.
- The Legislature endorsed the concept of public funding for state elections in 2008¹¹ and a 2008 special commission made recommendations about how the system should be funded.¹²

However, the NH Legislature has yet to implement such a system; and in 2018, HB 1773 was voted “inexpedient to legislate.”

Open Democracy's organizational assets include:

- **More than 6,500 committed volunteers** who have signed petitions, contacted their legislators, written letters-to-the-editors and joined walks.
 - **Institutional credibility** as New Hampshire's voice in the campaign finance reform movement. The media knows Open Democracy and trusts our information. Organizational partners and funders trust us to follow-through on our plans and promises.
 - **Issue expertise and political sophistication** that will enable our supporters to knowledgeably raise the topic in the context of presidential campaign events.
 - **Experience using New Hampshire's Town Meeting structure** for public education and civic engagement opportunities at the municipal level.
 - **Ability to engage political candidates in public discussions** about the problem of special-interest influence and leverage those conversations into campaign policy positions.
 - **The Reformers Caucus of Open Democracy Action** includes over 40 legislators, representing all three New Hampshire political parties.
-

Our Goals: 2018 to 2021

Goal #1: Create an election system within New Hampshire that will provide responsive government.

Objective: Legislation to establish new campaign funding system for up to three top state offices introduced *and passed*. New system will empower small donors and include public funding.

Strategies:

- Meet with legislators from both parties to develop parameters of system and write legislation
- Ensure that the bill is sponsored by legislators from both the Democratic and Republican parties
- Create messaging and materials to advocate for the bill, to appeal to audiences across the political spectrum
- Create public awareness about the bill through media announcement when it is filed, emails to supporters, earned media and social media campaigns (being careful to stay within lobbying limits)
- Political organizing and grassroots lobbying by Open Democracy Action

- Work with appropriate state agencies to ensure that implementing regulations are effective and timely issued
- Use supporter- and social-media campaigns to spread awareness of the new system after implementation

Objective: Support efforts on our broader Democracy agenda including disclosure of political spending, redistricting and voting rights.

Strategies:

- Work with coalition partners to support their efforts through testimony, cosponsoring events, cosigning op-eds and other activities
- Use social media posts about these issues to drive supporter engagement

Goal #2: Use the unique opportunity of the New Hampshire presidential primary to influence candidates' agenda on campaign finance reform.

Objective: Get every presidential primary candidate, from all parties, on record specifying what actions they would take in the first 100 days as President to reduce the influence of money in politics.

The 2016 “NH Rebellion” – a project of Open Democracy – was extremely successful in getting candidates on the record, and it attracted thousands of new supporters to Open Democracy.

Strategies:

- Create an online calendar of candidate appearances and make it available to media contacts and other organizations
- Recruit and train 100 volunteers to bird-dog, organized into regional teams
- Staff organizer to schedule two-person bird-dog pairs (questioner and videographer) to attend events and ask candidates “What specific actions will you take in your first 100 days as President to reduce the influence of Money in Politics?”
- Staff organizer to followup to obtain reports, and post reports online
- Volunteer supporters will attend high-visibility events, such as parades and agricultural fairs, in identifiable “campaign” T-shirts to show how many people care about this problem
- Maintain bird-dog reports online, after election, for accountability and other uses

Objective: Visibility: amplify project with social media and earned media.

Strategies:

- Publicize availability of online bird-dog reports, for reference by media and other organizations
- Develop relationships with reporters who use candidate appearance calendar and encourage them to write about candidates' positions on Money In Politics

- Amplify all press coverage with social media
- Post bird-dog reports to online blog/news sites, including Independent Voter News
- Host Open Democracy Media Center during the five days before the First In The Nation primary, providing reporters with access to: issue experts, candidates' positions on campaign reform, informed voters to interview, and Granny D posters

Objective: Engage opinion leaders that candidates will want to recruit to their campaigns.

Strategies:

- Identify NH-based opinion leaders from across the political spectrum
- Arrange in-person meetings to discuss issue
- If in-person meetings are refused, identify supporters who can followup with the opinion leader and request participation
- Develop materials, including issue-specific fact sheets, that explain how special interest influence affects policy outcomes
- Maintain email list of opinion leaders and email periodic updates, including results of new polls on the issue and newly-released research

Objective: Provide in-person issue briefings to candidates and their staff.

Strategies:

- Use calendar of candidate appearances to identify scheduling opportunities
- Contact campaigns to schedule in-person meeting(s) with candidate and/or staff
- Provide written materials, including issue-specific fact sheets and relevant polling data
- Followup in-person meetings with campaign staff with request to meet in-person with candidate
- Maintain email list of candidates and campaign staff and email periodic updates, including results of new polls on the issue and newly-released research

Goal #3: Organize a grassroots “citizens movement” to support campaign reform

Objective: Increase public awareness and understanding of the problem of special-interest influence in politics at both the state and national level through research, earned media and social media.

Strategies:

- Staggered release of research “white papers” tying topics of public concern to money in politics. Each white paper should be supported by a press release, op-ed and social media campaign; and reduced to single page “Fact Sheet”

- Create an online “tool kit” that can be used for Town Meeting resolution campaigns; track new activists who use toolkit and engage them as supporters
- Use performances of one-woman play “Granny D: The Power of One” to obtain cable and local news coverage
- Use online petitions and social media campaigns to reach and recruit concerned citizens as new supporters
- Biweekly email newsletters to keep supporters engaged and up-to-date on the issue, and involved in Open Democracy activities

Objective: Create six regional teams to organize events and provide a visible presence for Open Democracy in areas around New Hampshire.

Strategies:

- Identify part-time or volunteer coordinators for each region
- Identify bipartisan advisors in each region who can support the coordinator
- Hold joint events such as breakfasts with other organizations in each region
- Hold house parties and “Democracy and Dessert” events in each region
- Use geographically-targeted paid social media to reach potential supporters with invitations to walks, plays and other community events
- Hold letters-to-the-editor campaigns in each region
- Track Town Meeting campaigns and their results

Objective: Partner with other organizations to amplify message and grow citizens’ movement: 50+ community organizations.

Strategies:

- Continue “Democracy Table” and participation in existing coalitions and informal partnerships
- Open Democracy’s Coalition Committee will identify and recruit other organizations to work with, in a three-tiered structure
- Leverage partnerships with other organizations through joint activities and emails sent to other organizations’ members
- Make presentations at targeted Rotary meetings

Goal #4: Educate and work with state legislators to support campaign reform.

Objective: Bridge the partisan gap, intentionally engaging supporters from across the ideological spectrum.

Strategies:

- Complete Brown & Company messaging project to identify “red flags” and cross-partisan branding
- Continue informal partnership with Take Back Our Republic, co-hosting events, co-signing op-eds and other joint projects
- Recruit additional conservative voices for Open Democracy committees
- Make presentations at targeted Rotary meetings and meetings of other conservative-leaning organizations

Objective: Educate legislators about the problem and their constituents’ support for solutions including public funding

Strategies:

- Provide written materials including white papers and fact sheets
- Maintain email list to provide legislators with periodic updates, including results of new polls on the issue and newly-released research
- Invite legislators to attend Open Democracy walks, play performances and other events held in their districts
- Conduct social media campaigns centered around online petitions to legislators regarding the general issue (but *not* mentioning specific legislation)
- Political organizing and direct and grassroots lobbying will be done by Open Democracy Action

Goal #5: Strengthen Open Democracy and position it for long-term sustainability.

Objective: Continue focus on Open Democracy’s organizational infrastructure

- Re-architect and update Open Democracy and NH Rebellion websites
- Recruit new members for Board, Advisory Board and Board Committees
- Review this Strategic Plan every six months and update as appropriate

Objective: Ensure Open Democracy’s financial sustainability

Strategies:

- Identify and apply for additional foundation grants
- Maintain relationships with current funders, through both personal contacts and reports quantifying grant results
- Strengthen/reestablish and maintain relationships with 40+ previous individual major donors
- Identify, meet and develop relationships with potential new major donors
- Send mid-year and end-of-year appeals to 1,800+ continuing donors
- Send quarterly low-dollar email solicitations to entire database, with separate targeted solicitation of supporters outside New Hampshire

Objective: Create a broad-based organization, including population segments that are not currently well-represented in the Money in Politics movement.

Strategies:

- Identify organizations that represent under-represented populations including: youth and millennials, disabled, senior citizens, people of color, low-income and LGBT
- The Coalition Committee will contact these organizations and ascertain possibilities for coalition-building or partnerships
- Recruit underrepresented voices for Open Democracy committees and board

Objective: Promote the legacy of civic activism exemplified by our founder, Granny D.

Strategies:

- Hold annual “Granny D Memorial Walk” each August; the Fifth Annual walk will be held on August 25, 2018
- Organize “20th anniversary” commemoration of Granny D’s cross-country walk on January 1, 2019
- Hold annual “Seacoast Walk” each July
- Cosponsor with PACE performances of the one-woman play by Dixie Tymitz, “Granny D: The Power of One” currently scheduled for October 2018

¹ http://images.politico.com/global/2014/02/09/fund_for_the_republic_survey_topline.html

² http://www.people-press.org/2018/04/26/6-quality-and-responsiveness-of-elected-officials/6_10-2/

³ http://www.opendemocracynh.org/polling_data_ppp

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Axios poll available at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PZ-ITv4o5A3-K4_CQLzerggalYWsrx-gpzgtTBKLSak

⁶ <https://www.ced.org/policyissues/money-in-politics>

⁷ http://www.opendemocracynh.org/polling_data_ppp

⁸ Chapter 264 of the Acts of 1999

⁹ 2000 session, HB 1526

¹⁰ 2000 session, SB 447

¹¹ Chapter 55 of the Actos of 2008

¹² The Commission report is available at <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/statstudcomm/reports/534.pdf>