Executive Director's Message
If you haven’t heard, despite our best efforts, a minority of legislators chose party over the voters in sustaining Governor Chris Sununu’s veto of the HB 706 independent redistricting committee. We are grateful for all the hard work of our volunteers who wrote letters to the editor, wrote letters and emails to the Governor, and who called their legislators. In fact, all six of the Democracy bill veto overrides failed (full report below) much to our dismay, the majority of legislators, and the voters.

But take heart. Some valuable gains have been made this term. The passage of HB 504 by the New Hampshire House and Senate means that the Granite State becomes the 20th state to call for a 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution overturning Citizens United. More of the public understands what gerrymandering is, and why fair voting districts are important. And all those veto override votes? They were all “roll call votes” showing exactly who took positions against the voters. These results will be publicized by our legislative & lobbying entity, Open Democracy Action, in a legislative scorecard distributed later this fall. We’re already working with legislators who are Democracy champions to refile some bills and sponsors other new bills in the coming year.

Finally, we hope you’ll attend this week’s fundraisers for Open Democracy. At this writing, attendance was still low for the amazing speaker we have Thursday, Oct. 3, former Federal Elections Commission Chair Ann Ravel. Some of you may have seen her in the PBS documentary, Dark Money, and she’s an engaging speaker and an expert on the infiltration of Big Money in our system.

We hope you’ll come out and help support the work we do here at Open Democracy.

Sally Embley, former OD board member and longtime activist at the “20 for the 28” event in Concord.

(See the full roll call vote here to see how your reps voted.)

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Ann Ravel, former Federal Elections Commission Chair Speaks October 3 in Peterborough and Portsmouth
If you haven’t already sent your RSVP, do so now for “Unraveling America’s Democracy Problem” with former Federal Elections Commission Chair Ann Ravel on October 3, a fundraiser for Open Democracy.

There are two events open to the public, the first a luncheon at noon at Hilltop Golf Course, Peterborough, and a dinner later that evening at the Portsmouth Country Club in Greenland, with cocktails starting at 5:30, and dinner at 6:15. Tickets are $60.00 for the luncheon, and $75.00 for dinner, and proceeds benefit Open Democracy’s mission. RSVP online or by calling Doreen at 603-608-6211. Are you able to help with a generous sponsorship of Ann Ravel’s visit? Please contact Doreen to find out how.

Overides to Democracy Bills Come Close, But Fail to Reach 2/3 Majority

Fair Voting Districts
Open Democracy Action was hopeful that HB 706 independent redistricting bill would be overturned, thanks to much help from our supporters. While the bill had support from a few courageous Republican House members, leadership pressure forced members to support the governor. HB 706 failed to reach the 2/3 threshold, 227-145. CACR 9, a NH House resolution enshrining an independent redistricting commission into New Hampshire’s constitution is in committee now, and may be voted on near the end of 2019. Other new redistricting bills already have sponsors for 2020 because legislators know that the voters are demanding it, despite the governor's veto.

Disclosure and Transparency
SB 106 would have required political groups spending $2500 or more to register and report to the secretary of state, reducing the flood of anonymous Dark Money mailers we saw in 2018. It passed unanimously in both House and Senate committees, and passed unanimously in the Senate. Senators would not vote to overturn the governor's veto, and SB 106 failed 15-9 in the Senate, with Senator Jeb Bradley the sole Republican vote.

SB 156 would have required Dark Money donors to LLCs to disclose register and report their donations to the secretary of state. LLC donations are a sleazy practice by both parties to hide out-of-state, Big Money donations, primarily for NH gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races. The bill had been vetoed by the governor on free speech grounds. Again, the 2/3 threshold was not met, and the override failed.

Voting Rights
HB 106 and HB 106 were intended to overturn 2018’s SB 3 and HB 1264 Domicile voter suppression bill. SB 3 tightened residency definitions for residency and domicile, and HB 1264 changed a definition required for a driver’s license. Both laws had the effect of keeping students and other long-term temporary residents from voting in New Hampshire. SB 3 and HB 1264 are still in the court system.

Coming Up!

● Oct. 3 Open Democracy Fundraiser w/ Fmr. FEC Commissioner Ann Ravel in Peterborough & Greenland
  Tix: OpenDemocracyNH.org.
  ● Oct. 6. Table at Stratham Fall Fest 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
  ● Oct. 7 - 3:30, Open Democracy Action Board meeting, 4 Park St. Concord
  ● Oct. 7 – 6:30, Presentation at Bedford Library.
  ● Oct. 9 – 4:30, Open Democracy Board, Bow Library
  ● Oct. 10 Democracy Town Hall w/ Gov. Steve Bullock in Manchester, moderated by Arnie Amesen and hosted by Open Democracy. 6 p.m., Jupiter Hall, Manchester
  ● Oct. 12 Democracy Town Hall w/John Delaney at Rochester Performing Arts, 1 p.m.
  ● Oct. 15 Staff 2020 Planning Retreat, Ashland, NH
  ● Oct. 27 - Democracy Town Hall w/Gov. Bill Weld in Concord. Details TBD.
  ● Oct. 30 – Granny D Legacy Committee at NH Social Studies Teacher Conference
Utility Lobbying Limits, Inaugural Committee Reporting, and a Civic Engagement Improvement Committee Become Law

While our high priority bills did not pass, we still had some modest successes. SB 206 disallows utilities from using rate payer money for lobbying, a response to hundreds of thousands of dollars spent in the Northern Pass project proposal.

After a scandal uncovered by the NH Union Leader where Governor Sununu’s family and staff may have benefited from services provided to the governor’s inaugural committee, SB 105 limits inaugural committee donations to $10,000, and requires supporting documentation for any expenditure $1000 or over. Given the circumstances, the governor didn’t have much choice but to sign it.

The governor also signed a bill creating a committee to review civic engagement in New Hampshire, and make recommendations to improve it in the state, communities and schools. While this might be seen as a slam-dunk bill, the decline of civics in schools and falling voter participation are alarming, so Open Democracy Action testified for and supported the bill.

“20th for the 28th” Celebration Applauds Petitioned Warrant Article Leaders, Bill Sponsors, and Voters

On a beautiful but windy fall day, activists and legislators gathered near the NH State House steps to celebrate the biggest victories of this legislative session, the passage of HB 504. The resolution directs our Congressional Delegation to call for a 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution to overturn Citizens United.

As written in HB 504, the amendment would give Congress the authority to regulate money in politics without it being a violation of free speech, and also requires fair redistricting. While the governor vetoed the bill, this was merely a technicality. As a resolution, it must be passed only by the NH House and Senate, which made New Hampshire the 20th state of the 32 required to move the amendment forward for ratification.

Speakers included Senator Melanie Levesque, who championed the bill in the Senate, but also a number of petitioned warrant article leaders, whose efforts over the last five years resulted in 82 towns passing resolutions calling for the overturning of Citizens United.

Also speaking was Rep. Ellen Read, who while working for NH Rebellion in 2015, helped coordinate the warrant article initiative. Almost five years later, Rep. Read became the prime sponsor of the legislation.

A highlight for the attendees was the signing of five poster with the HB 504 language written out in a colonial script. One warrant article leader remarked that he signed it large enough “So the Governor could read it without his spectacles,” in a reference to Declaration signer John Hancock’s comment, “There! John Bull can read my name without spectacles and may now double his reward of £500 for my head. That is my defiance.”

The signed posters will be delivered to our Congressional delegation in Washington later this month, and one to Governor Chris Sununu.

Get Involved!

Our ODA Policy Committee could use a couple more members, given the number of bills we’ve been supporting at the State House. If you are detail-oriented, don’t mind coming to Concord three times a month and want to make a BIG difference, this might be for you! Call Rick Bourdon 603-759-1888.
Granny D Legacy Committee in Talks with Legislators for Annual “Granny D Day”
Granny D Legacy Committee members met last week with Senator Jeanne Dietsch to discuss a permanent holiday for Doris Haddock. New Hampshire governors have been issuing proclamations each year to commemorate Granny D’s birthday, but the committee is working to make January 24 “Granny D Day” in perpetuity. Senator Melanie Levesque has agreed to be the prime sponsor, and it will be considered in the 2020 half of the 2019-2020 term.

Regional “Democracy Teams” Coming in 2020
In an effort to empower our members, Open Democracy will be taking a bold step in the coming months. Our power as a movement is being limited by the number of voters and activists we can reach. The Open Democracy staff has only so much time to organize, publicize and support events, so we do the bigger events, but don’t get into smaller communities, Lions Clubs, chambers of commerce, and town political committees.

To expand our power base, we’re calling on our supporters to help us organize regional Democracy teams. These teams will meet on a periodic basis, plan local events, and take actions like walks. For instance, we may ask you to organize a short walk on Granny D Day, January 24, or when Democracy legislation is pending, we may ask you to meet with your local state reps or senator to speak with them about it. We hope you’ll also reach out to groups of all kinds in your communities to talk about campaign finance reform and Big Money politics, and what your friends and neighbors can do to help.

We’re figuring out how all this will work, and how we’ll do the training to support you. But look for our first steps in next month’s Equal Voice. In the meantime, if you want to volunteer to be a leader in your area, don’t wait! Send an email to Brian Beihl and let’s make some change!

Open Democracy Action Hosts Three Presidential Candidate Democracy Town Halls in October
Open Democracy Action, with co-sponsor Equal Citizens, have confirmed three Democracy Town Halls with Presidential candidates during the month of October. Open Democracy Action will take the lead on October 10’s event with Montana Governor Steve Bullock and moderator Arnie Arnesen, 6 pm at Jupiter Hall, 89 Hanover St, Manchester, NH 03101.

Then on October 12 at 1 pm, Congressman John Delaney will appear at the Rochester Arts Center, 32 N Main St, Rochester, NH 03867, moderated by Open Democracy Action’s Olivia Zink.

At the end of the month, October 27, Gov. William Weld will appear in the Concord area, at a venue to be determined. Look for other events coming up, as we are in conversations with other candidates.

Democracy won’t fix itself. Can you chip in to help?
If you are able, consider making a sustaining membership donation to help with our cause, or a legacy gift to further the organization’s long-term efforts. Call Olivia Zink at 603-715-8197 to find out more. You can also make a one-time donation anytime by visiting the websites for Open Democracy (501c3, tax deductible) or Open Democracy Action (501c4, not tax deductible). Thank you for supporting our work.
Passing of John Friede, Philanthropist, Democracy & Environmental Activist

A long-time member, donor and activist in Open Democracy has died. John Friede of Peterborough, a friend of Granny D’s who worked on campaign finance reform issues for decades, died on September 10 from complications brought on by acute pancreatitis.

John was passionate supporter for the causes to which he gave his time and money. He founded environmental groups, including groups protecting the Amazon as well as his adopted state of New Hampshire. He was an avid musician and outdoor athlete, and hiked all over the country, introducing his sons, Forrest, Rowan & Benson to the outdoors.

For Open Democracy, he was known to write a check in the heat of the New Hampshire primary to cover the costs of a project he wanted to move forward, and had just walked with his youngest son, Benson, in the Granny D Memorial Walk & Rally on August 3, appropriately, with a campaign finance sign in his hand. Walk on, John Friede. You will be missed by our movement.