Executive Director's Message

It's Time That You Take Your First Step

A few weeks ago, my daughter and I retraced Granny D's final six miles into Washington, DC. Thanks to the many of you who gave money to Open Democracy in honor of the 20th anniversary of that epic walk and her speech from the U.S. Capitol steps. It gave me shivers to read Doris' speeches at the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol and think of all the accomplishments of this 90-year-old grandmother.

Doris is remembered for that walk and its impact on campaign finance reform, but did you know that later, when the Senate was considering the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Reform Act, Doris walked around the Capitol, sometimes for 24 hours straight and pausing only briefly. “Senators would speak with me only because they did not want to see me dead on their doorstep,” Doris said.

It’s that determination, that grit, that made Granny D not only a hero to the Democracy reform movement, but an astounding example of what one person can do to make change.

Granny D taught us about the power of our action. So let’s talk about you for a moment. What can you do to take action today and help the Democracy movement achieve victory. We understand that not everyone can walk 3,200 miles. But most of you CAN write a postcard or a letter. Most of you CAN make a phone call. If you did either of those things, asking our legislators to support Democracy reform, that small action would make a difference. Combined with hundreds of calls and letters from others, you’ve made a BIG difference.

Granny D’s 3,200-mile walk started with one first step for change. It's time that you to take your first step. #TogetherWeFixIt

Contact Us!

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NH Rebellion: NHRebellion.org Facebook, Twitter

Haven't joined us yet? Visit any one of the websites' Join pages
Coronavirus & its Effect on Open Democracy Events & Operations

Open Democracy Offices
The staff of Open Democracy are adjusting their schedules as needed, and are working from home. If no one answers at the office, please call us on our cell phones or email us: Olivia Zink, 603-661-8621; Brian Beihl, 603-620-8300; Doreen Dewmarais, 603-608-6211. We've been working from home for two weeks and expect to continue to do so.

April 4th Democracy in Action Conference
You've likely seen that the Democracy in Action Conference a video-only event. We've slimmed down the conference to four pre-recorded workshops, plus three hours of live content 9-noon on April 4 featuring author and consultant Gerri King, and volunteerism expert Steve Scudder. (See the detailed article below)

Regional Democracy Team Meetings & Action Cafes
All ODA Regional Democracy Teams and Action Cafes have been paused for in-person, but we’re encouraging all participants to be writing their legislators, the Governor, and the Secretary of State.

“The Power of One” Granny D Play
Our Granny D Legacy Committee, led by Pat Waterman and Carol Wyndham, is disappointed to announce that all of the dates have been postponed. Along with actress Dixie Tymitz and husband and logistics wizard, John, the committee worked for months in setting up a dozen venues to host the Power of One, the one-woman play about Granny D and her determination to make change. New dates are being discussed, and we’ll announce them in future editions.

As noted, our April 4 Democracy in Action Conference has been retooled to become an online-only Zoom video conference. Our keynote speaker, author and organizational development consultant Gerri King, Ph.D will be speaking live at 9 am on Managing Teams, supporting our theme of equipping our volunteer activists around the state. Next at 10 am volunteerism expert Steve Scudder speaks on recruiting, keeping and using your volunteers effectively. Gerry King speaks again at 11 on the “Art of Facilitation” at meetings and events.

Don't miss this opportunity to become a more effective citizen, and help the groups to which you belong! RSVP today!

A Word About Fundraising in Turbulent Times . . .
You've likely noticed that we stepped up our small-donation fundraising, just prior to coronavirus becoming a crisis.

Fact is, we need your support now more than ever. But we also understand that many of you are furloughed, or have suffered losses to your income or savings.

Please give what you can when you can, and if you can't give of treasure, please give us time volunteering, taking action, or recruiting others to the cause.

Democracy doesn't stop for pandemics or bad economic times. In fact, it's times like these where those who seek to take power from the people prey on the vulnerable. Please help us in our mission. Thank you.

The Staff of Open Democracy & Open Democracy Action
Give to Open Democracy, tax deductible for voter education and action, 501c3
Give to Open Democracy Action, not tax deductible, for state house and national advocacy
Get an Early Start on the DIA Conference by Joining the Workshop Pre-recording!
Four additional workshops are being pre-recorded and will be available to all participants after the live program, or at a time of your choosing. If you’d like the opportunity to participate in the pre-recording you can ask questions) register for free using these Zoom links:

*Untangling Gerrymandering and Redistricting* - Online video recording with a great panel of NH experts. On **April 1, 4 pm** go [here to log on](#) and participate, Meeting ID: 169 605 404, Password: 004480. Features Liz Tentarelli from the League of Women Voters NH on the history of redistricting and context for the fight, Henry Klementowicz from ACLU NH on the latest proposal, HB 1665 and what it does, Kyri Claflin of the Kent Street Coalition on the grassroots organizing effort, Lucas Meyer on how we talk about HB 1665 and how we can win, and Olivia Zink on how to take action.

*Build Power & Move People to Action Workshop:* Online video recording session with Louise Spencer, Issac Grimm, Olivia Zink and Arnie Alpert. Go [here to log in](#), Thursday, **April 2, at 7 pm.**

Unfortunately, we won’t have this one done before April 4, but you’re encouraged to join us on **April 9, 4 pm** for the pre-recording of *Digital Organizing for Democracy Reform* with our friends from Rethink Media, who advise Open Democracy Action on democracy reform strategies. Go [here to join the April 1, 4 pm Zoom Meeting](#).

**Regional Democracy Teams Roll Out “Action Cafes”**
We tried a new concept called an Action Cafe in January, a joint event with Rights & Democracy and the Peterborough Plus chapter of League of Woman Voters NH. We meet in a local cafe or coffee house to discuss an issue, get coffee or lunch, then do a small action together.

We’ve written “thank you” postcards to legislators who voted with us, written letters to legislators on the Election Law committee on the redistricting commission, stamped money with our “Not to be Used for Bribing Politicians” stamp. These cafe events are not just about Democracy reforms as our partners also bring their actions. In addition to being lots of fun, we learn together about the issue, then take action together to make change. It gives us an opportunity to explain complex issues like gerrymandering and voting districts.

Kudos to Heather Stockwell of RAD and Kate Coon OD board member and chapter organizer from LWV NH’s Peterborough Plus for “thinking outside the meeting box” to get this started. It’s been a good relationship for all three groups.

Just before the social distancing recommendations, we had dates and locations for our Seacoast, Southern NH, Monadnock, Central NH teams, and two events scheduled for the North Country in North Conway and Campton. We hope to resume these events when it is safe to do so.

In the meantime our teams have been charged with contacting their legislators from the sanctuary of home. The weekend of March 28, team members and core volunteers were asked to write their NH senators about the HB 1665 Advisory Independent Redistricting Commission, and an effort will be forthcoming on a “no excuse absentee voting” bill, HB 1672, which has taken on new importance.

**Be a Part of a Team!**
Central NH RDT: **Jim Howard**, 603-491-8131  
Upper Valley RDT: **Olivia Zink**, 603-934-4297  
Monadnock RDT, **Brian Beihl**, 603-620-8300  
North Country RDT: **Brian Beihl**, 603-661-8621  
Seacoast RDT: **Brian Beihl**, 603-620-8300  
Southern NH RDT: **Brian Beihl**, 603-620-8300

Do YOUR PART for Democracy and go to our [Take Action page](#) and click on [Regional Democracy Teams](#). Questions? Call Brian Beihl at 603-620-8300 or send an [email](#).
Updates on Our Top Three Current Legislative Priorities

If you’d like to see the complete list of Open Democracy Action’s priority legislation, visit the State House page.

Gerrymandering & Redistricting

Since our last newsletter, the landscape has shifted a bit on an independent redistricting commission for NH. SB 8, which we discussed in our last newsletter, is no longer in the forefront, in lieu of another similar bill out of the House, HB 1665.

This new HB 1665 bill has now passed the NH House with 11 Republican votes, but questions were raised in committee about making it more appealing to Republican legislators. An amendment to the bill was passed which more directly calls the bill an “advisory” independent redistricting commission, removes the language which automatically kicks the bill to the NH Supreme Court in case of a deadlock, and underscores the ability of the legislature to amend the final maps.

The Fair Maps Coalition, of which Open Democracy Action is an active member, still supports the amended bill. Because of the commissioner selection process, the transparency at every step, and the time constraints of the process, it’s less likely partisan actors could hijack the process. The benefits far outweigh the risks for both parties.

HB 1665 is in the Senate’s hands, where it will likely pass. It is our job to make it a bipartisan vote. Please write a letter to your senators and to the Governor.

No Excuse Absentee Voting

Just last year a bill was vetoed by the governor which would have eliminated the four official reasons for town clerk’s to issue an absentee ballot. But the Covid19 pandemic has rekindled that debate, and HB 1672 is getting renewed attention.

Currently, the only allowable reasons include: Physical disability, Religious observance, Absence from City on the day of election, and Employment obligations, including child or elder care.

With April & May town meetings, the NH state primary in September, and the national election in November, we at Open Democracy Action are concerned that the State is not taking into consideration voters with compromised immune systems, stay-at-home orders, transportation issues, or other legitimate issues preventing voters from coming to the polls. In fact, the Secretary of State’s office has consistently spoken out against it, saying no excuse absentee ballots and vote-by-mail ballots suppress voter participation. To the contrary, states with vote-by-mail programs have seen a 10% increase over their previous turnout, and the turn out of adjoining non-mail voting states.

As part of a coalition of state groups, Open Democracy Action will be calling on you in the coming weeks. Our elder voters, those with health issues and others who would not go to the polls MUST speak up to Secretary of State Gardner and Governor Sununu. We’ll be in touch shortly to tell you ways you can let them know.

New Tool to Help You Contact Your Senator

The State’s legislative website does not make it easy to contact your elected representatives. We’ve created a new tool for you to find phone numbers, addresses, emails, Democracy reform voting record, party affiliation, their committees, and what towns they serve. It’s not pretty, but has the information you need to quickly contact your senator.

Log on to: http://OpenDemocracyAction.org/nh_senate_contact_tools
Granny D Day Legislation Passes in Senate
Sen. Melanie Levesque sponsored a bill, SB 537, this year to commemorate January 24th “Granny D Day” in perpetuity in New Hampshire. The bill faced little opposition in the Senate and should pass in the House, but may encounter some friction, despite Doris “Granny D” Haddock’s role as America’s leading figure in campaign finance reform activism. We are hopeful that Gov. Sununu, who has signed consecutive annual proclamations of Doris’ birthday, will sign the bill.

Other Important Bills
A few of our other priority bills are still moving forward, including a “corporate ban” bill which would not allow direct campaign donations by corporate entities to NH State Reps, Senators, Executive Councilors and the Governor. HB 1643 would help to disrupt the campaign donation for favors cycle. Due to Citizens United however, businesses could launder that money through a Political Action Committee using “restricted funds.”

Groups have been conducting political advertising in New Hampshire with mailers with no return address on them, so we don’t know who is sending political advertising and how much they are spending. Last year’s version of the current HB 1525 passed unanimously in both House and Senate committees last term, and unanimously in the full Senate, but was vetoed on free speech grounds. All we’re asking is that, like town meeting, you stand up, state your name, and be accountable for your words. The bill requires that groups doing $2500 or more in political activity must register with the Secretary of State and report their spending. That way, the voters know who is trying to influence our elections.

>Take Action! Write a Postcard!
New Hampshire is one of only a handful of states who still highly-restrict absentee voting. The only reasons currently are Physical disability, Religious observance, Absence from City on the day of election, and Employment obligations, including child or elder care. What if I have a compromised immune system? What if I have no transportation? What if I’m elderly and I’m at a higher risk for infection? Please let Sec. William Gardner know how you feel about NH’s current restrictions.

Roundup of First Quarter Activities
From singing corruption carols to funerals for Democracy to taking action on legislation, our members – YOU – played a huge role in making the first part of 2020 successful. Thank you!

January 5-9 Open Democracy staff and volunteers participated in the New England College Student Convention at the DoubleTree New Hampshire Convention Center.

January 10 – Open Democracy Action & Equal Citizens hosts the last Democracy Town Hall with Deval Patrick in Dover.

January 21 – Anniversary of the Citizens United Decision – Held our “Funeral for Democracy” with about 30 mourners in City Plaza in front of the State House.

January 24 – Granny D’s Birthday celebration was the largest ever, with the annual luncheon for the legislators in Concord, hosting 70 state reps and senators and an executive councilor, a Big Money politics demonstration by the Seacoast Regional Democracy Team in Portsmouth’s Market Square, an Action Cafe in Keene at the Monadnock Co-op, and a movie showing later that night in the bandstand on Keene’s Central Square.

January 30 – SB 537, which proclaims January 24th, “Granny D Day” in the state of New Hampshire, passes the Senate in a unanimous voice vote. It will be heard in the House Executive Departments & Administration committee when the legislature resumes.
February 7 – Hearty NH Rebellion walkers braved winds and icy sidewalks to trudge to St Anselm’s College for the Democratic debate. Also attending was the new Campaign Finance Corruption Chorus, which got recorded by both NHPR and NPR, and appeared on NHPR the next day, singing “Bought & Sold” to “Silver Bells.”

February 9, Campaign Finance Corruption Chorus sang outside of the McIntyre-Shaheen Fundraising Dinner in Manchester.

February 10 & 11, Olivia and Brian are interviewed by 11 national media outlets.

February 16, New members of the Open Democracy Advisory Council announced at a Concord reception.

February 12-27 - Took a post-primary breath, then resumed work in the legislature on the remainder of 20 priority Democracy reform bills.

February 29 – Olivia retraced Granny D’s final six miles into Washington, and reads Doris’ speeches at the Lincoln Memorial and the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

March – Planning for the in-person Democracy in Action Conference, then retooling it for an online conference, and setting up, then postponing, Regional Democracy Team “Action Cafes” around the state.

March 25 – Recording of Public Funding of Elections workshop for the April 4 Democracy in Action Conference.

Open Democracy & Open Democracy Action Upcoming Calendar

Our events in April, May & June are understandably under review. We’re looking at our options for spring fundraiser, which was to be a dinner with a speaker. Likewise, we’re thinking outside the venue for annual meeting ideas. The date can’t legally be moved out of June, but perhaps you have a good idea? Drop a note to Olivia.

Carol Shea-Porter to Lead Open Democracy Advisory Council

At a February 16 event at the Concord Women’s Club, former Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter was announced as the new chair of the Open Democracy Advisory Council. She takes the reins from former chair Dan Weeks, who is remaining part of the Council and who had previously been executive director of Open Democracy. The advisory council members offers advice, help, and support on strategies, contacts, and connections; act as liaisons with other groups and individuals; and expand Open Democracy’s reach and scope to open doors to new networks, people, and resources.

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