

## ACORN

Report prepared by the Victory Institute

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### Executive Summary

ACORN (Association of Community Organizers for Reform Now) is a radical left-wing community organization that operates in 40 states nationwide

- Involved in election fraud, racketeering, extortion, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer funds
- Implicated or charged in voter registration fraud crimes across the country
- Despite criminal charges, ACORN is eligible for up to \$8.5 billion in taxpayer funds
  - Has received \$53 million of taxpayer money since 1993

## Criminal Charges

- Nevada filed criminal charges against ACORN in May
- Court documents cite ACORN's involvement in Ohio, Colorado, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin
  - Under investigation in Tennessee as of November 2006
- RICO organized crime lawsuit filed against ACORN in Ohio<sup>1</sup>
  
- ACORN is headquartered in the same building as CSI, and along with Project Vote, the groups regularly send money to each other
  - ACORN and CSI share the same board of directors
  - 270 related organizations share ACORN's address
    - 1024 Elysian Fields Ave. in New Orleans, LA
    - Formerly a funeral parlor
  
- ACORN maintains that although many of their registrations are fraudulent, they claim that their activity doesn't produce fraudulent votes.
- Wade Rathke founded ACORN in 1970
  - Rathke was former member of the radical leftwing organization Students for Democratic Society
  - Fired from role as ACORN's Chief Organizer in 2008 by the ACORN national board<sup>2</sup> despite claims that he resigned<sup>3</sup>
  - Still retains control over Community Organizations International (formerly ACORN International)
  - Co-founder of the Tides Foundation and chairs the Tides Center,
  - Also founded Service Employees International Union, Local 100

## Congressional Actions

- Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) called for an investigation of ACORN, but later said that

1 <http://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/acorn.pdf>

2 <http://www.capitalresearch.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/acorn-v-rathke1.pdf>

3 [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/16/us/16acorn.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/16/us/16acorn.html?_r=1)

the hearing was “unwarranted”

- Hours before Conyers made his statement, ACORN and two of its former senior employees were indicted with 39 felony counts of voter registration fraud in Nevada
  - That same week, seven former ACORN employees in Pennsylvania were charged with filling out hundreds of fraudulent voter registrations
  - When questioned on his reversal, Conyers said that the “powers that be” stopped the investigation<sup>4</sup>
- Congresswoman Michele Bachmann's (R-MN) amendment to H.R. 1728, the Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act, would have denied funding to ACORN
    - Unanimously approved by Financial Services Committee, but gutted by Congressman Barney Frank (D-MA)
  - Bachmann then sponsored H.R. 2715, the Taxpayer Protection and Anti-Fraud Act
    - Would prohibit the Department of Housing and Urban Development from funding organizations like ACORN who are indicted for election fraud
    - H.R. 2715 is also opposed by Frank

## Double Standards

- ACORN claims to support raising minimum wage
  - ACORN sued California seeking an exemption from the state minimum wage for its own employees
- ACORN claims to support equal opportunity laws
  - Sued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to force ACORN to comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- ACORN supports higher taxes
  - Public records show ACORN has over 200 federal, state, and local tax liens
    - Owes over \$3.7 million in taxes<sup>5</sup>
    - Likely to be from unpaid payroll taxes
      - Payroll taxes fund social and wealth redistribution programs supported by ACORN
- ACORN claims to support workers' rights

<sup>4</sup> [http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/25/conyers-abandons-plan-probe-acorn/?feat=home\\_headlines](http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/25/conyers-abandons-plan-probe-acorn/?feat=home_headlines)

<sup>5</sup> [Foundation Watch November 2008](#)

- The National Labor Relations Board ordered ACORN to rehire and pay restitution to three employees it fired for trying to join a union in 2003
- ACORN had workers in Missouri sign contracts stating that they would be “working up to 80 hours over seven days of work” in 2006
- ACORN opposed the Supreme Court's decision<sup>6</sup> to allow states to require voters to produce a photo ID when voting
  - ACORN president Maude Hurd: “The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to uphold Indiana’s voter ID law today is one more strike against the basic right to vote. This ID law is a tool that further disenfranchises people of color and low-income Americans, citizens some partisan politicians believe will vote against them and their party.”

## Obama's ACORN Connections

- President Barack Obama previously worked for ACORN and one of their sister organizations<sup>7</sup>
  - Headed a registration effort for Project Vote in 1992
  - Was a top trainer for ACORN's Chicago conferences
  - Represented ACORN in a 1995 case upholding the constitutionality of the Motor Voter Act
    - The act created the mandated, nationwide postcard voter registration system that ACORN uses to flood election offices with bogus registrations.
- Obama's campaign paid an ACORN affiliate, Citizens Services, Inc. (CSI), \$832,598 for their “get-out-the-vote” services
  - The expense was misrepresented to the Federal Election Commission as polling, advance work and staging major events
    - Obama campaign only corrected the filing after the it was revealed by the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
- In 2008, Obama's campaign sent a donor list to Project Vote, ACORN's sister organization
  - Donors who had contributed the maximum amount according to federal law were to be targeted to donate to ACORN's Get Out the Vote efforts
  - Other donor lists were sent to ACORN from other Democratic campaigns, as well as the 2004 DNC donor lists
- Obama's first judicial nominee was former ACORN fundraiser David Hamilton<sup>8</sup>
  - 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals
  - Hamilton is also a former leader of the ACLU

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<sup>6</sup> *Marion v. Crawford County Elections Board*

<sup>7</sup> <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122533169940482893.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://spectator.org/blog/2009/03/19/leading-conservatives-oppose-h>

## Embezzlement

- Dale Rathke embezzled \$948,607.50 from ACORN and affiliated groups in 1999 and 2000
  - Was serving as comptroller of Citizens Consulting Inc.
    - Money sent to ACORN and its affiliates first goes through CCI
    - CCI charges an undisclosed processing fee for their services
- A small group of executives kept the matter silent
  - Did not alert law enforcement
  - Did not alert other board members
- ACORN management covered up the embezzlement for eight years
  - Many members that hid the fraud are still working for ACORN
- Tides Foundation founder Drummond Pike paid the remaining balance of Rathke's debt<sup>9</sup>
  - ACORN attempted to conceal Pike's payment

## Get Out the Vote Program

- According to another former ACORN employee, more than half of the group's voter registrations are false
  - Said employees had quota of 20 new registrations per day, or they would be fired on the spot
  - Said **ACORN employees were trained how to deny voter fraud**
  - Said **ACORN considered 40% an acceptable level of accurate voter registrations**
- A U.S. Attorney said that fraud can't be stopped until after the election
  - Government fears the appearance of impropriety, racism, or voter suppression<sup>10</sup>
- St. Louis mayor Francis Slay (a Democrat) has said that bloated voter rolls lead to stolen votes
- Former ACORN head organizer Nate Toler said “**There’s no quality control on purpose, no checks and balances.** The internal motto is 'We don’t care if it’s a lie, just so long as it stirs up

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/us/17acorn.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110010400>

the conversation.””

- Also said that “I may have my head chopped off for telling the truth.”
  - ACORN fired Toler for talking to the Wall Street Journal
- If problems arise, ACORN blames lower-level employees who face criminal charges
  - ACORN internally calls this practice “throwing folks under the bus”
  - Also blame election officials
- During the 2008 election, ACORN registered names like Mickey Mouse in Orange County Florida and the starting lineup of the Dallas Cowboys in Las Vegas
  - Other ACORN-registered names include Jive Turkey and Mary Poppins

## Pennsylvania

- ACORN employee approached a county election employee with a registration. The county official filled out everything but the name and social security number to see what would happen
  - ACORN submitted the form with a forged signature and false social security number

## Washington

- Seven ACORN employees and supervisors were charged in King County with felony voter registration fraud in 2007<sup>11</sup>
- ACORN submitted 1805 registrations to King County
  - 97% were fraudulent: Only 9 were valid and 34 were still under investigation<sup>12</sup>
    - 6 ACORN employees were charged with 1 to 8 counts each of filing false information on voter registration, and charged a supervisor with providing false information and making a false statement to a public official
    - 2 were also charged in Pierce County with submitting 55 phony registrations
    - ACORN paid King County \$25,000 for administrative costs and signed a 5-year agreement to toughen up training and procedures for detecting and reporting fraud<sup>13</sup>
      - ACORN is subject to criminal prosecution if fraud occurs again
    - ACORN's Washington state head John Jones insisted that this was an isolated incident

11 [http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2003806904\\_webvotefraud26m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2003806904_webvotefraud26m.html)

12 <http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110010400>

13 <http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/ABPub/2007/07/26/2003807088.pdf>

## Ohio

- ACORN affiliate Project Vote regularly advised Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner on election strategy, and claimed credit for Brunner's directive **restricting challenges to suspected unlawful voter registrations**
  - A federal court ruled that Brunner **violated federal election laws** by not validating newly registered voters<sup>14</sup>
  - The court accused Brunner of failing to provide county election administrators with "an effective way to access and review mismatches."
    - Brunner immediately appealed the ruling.
  - Ohio Republican Party Deputy Chairman Kevin DeWine: "Her refusal to comply with federal law raises serious concerns about her ability to objectively oversee this election. It's especially troubling in light of her connection to ACORN and that group's stunning confession this week of fraudulent registration activity happening right here in Ohio."
  - When Barack Obama was asked by an Ohio woman how he would ensure that the 2008 election wouldn't be stolen, his reply was "It helps in Ohio that we've got Democrats in charge of the machines!"<sup>15</sup>
- One new voter admitted that he signed 73 voter registrations in Cuyahoga County over 5 months in 2008<sup>16</sup>
  - Was approached by six or seven ACORN solicitors at a time
  - ACORN state director Katy Gall: solicitors are paid by the hour, not by the registration
  - Another Cleveland man is under investigation for registering 10-15 times through ACORN<sup>17</sup>
- ACORN admitted to Cuyahoga County Ohio board members in 2008 that it can't eliminate fraud from its operation<sup>18</sup>
  - Also blamed election officials for not scrutinizing ACORN's registrations
- In 2007, an ACORN-registered voter in Ohio was indicted for illegal voting and false registration<sup>19</sup>

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14 [http://ohiogop.blogs.com/state\\_of\\_the\\_union/2008/10/breaking-news-court-finds-brunner-in-violation-of-federal-law.html](http://ohiogop.blogs.com/state_of_the_union/2008/10/breaking-news-court-finds-brunner-in-violation-of-federal-law.html)

15 <http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2008/09/03/1334964.aspx>

16 [http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/content/local\\_news/stories/2008/10/13/acorn\\_probe.html?sid=101](http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2008/10/13/acorn_probe.html?sid=101)

17 Fox News removed link to article (published 10/13/08)

18 [http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2008/10/voterregistration\\_cant\\_be\\_tota.html](http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2008/10/voterregistration_cant_be_tota.html)

19 [http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/content/local\\_news/stories/2007/05/09/gilbert.ART\\_ART\\_05-09-07\\_B4\\_QI6KOMU.html](http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2007/05/09/gilbert.ART_ART_05-09-07_B4_QI6KOMU.html)

- ACORN registered a 16- and 10-year old in Summit County, Ohio in 2006<sup>20</sup>
- Franklin County Elections Board officials questioned the validity of hundreds of names during 2006 election, most of which were registered by ACORN<sup>21</sup>
  - Franklin County issued subpoenas to ACORN solicitors suspected of forging hundreds (the Plain Dealer reported 500<sup>22</sup>) of signatures on petitions and voter registrations<sup>23</sup>
    - Found nonexistent addresses, similar handwriting, and a registration card for a dead man
- Cuyahoga County election officials investigated over a thousand possible fraudulent voter registrations in 2004
- Franklin County grand jury indicted ACORN employee for forging a registration form after county election officials found dozens of registration forms with fake names and false information<sup>24</sup>
- ACORN fired two employees after thought to be the source of fake names and forged signatures on voter registration forms in Franklin County<sup>25</sup>
  - Agreed to perform extra checks on forms before submitting them to county officials
- In 2004, ACORN affiliate was given crack cocaine for voter registrations

## Missouri

- According to a Kansas City elections official in 2006, 40% of ACORN's 35,000 registrations in appeared bogus
- Over 15,000 registrations in Kansas City were questionable
  - Election officials cited duplicates, questionable and unreadable information, or names, addresses and Social Security numbers that don't match actual records
  - ACORN stated they caught and fired employees who filed fraudulent registrations and brought the matter before election officials BUT...
    - Chairman of the Kansas City Board of Elections said that ACORN helped to identify

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20 *Associated Press* removed link to article (published 9/20/06)

21 *Columbus Dispatch* removed link to article (published 9/1/06)

22 *Plain Dealer* removed link to article (published 8/11/06)

23 [http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/contentbe/EPIC\\_shim.php?story=208695](http://www.columbusdispatch.com/live/contentbe/EPIC_shim.php?story=208695)

24 *Columbus Dispatch* removed link to article (published 9/8/04)

25 *Columbus Dispatch* removed link to article (published 6/30/04)

perpetrators only after they learned that evidence was sent to FBI

- 4 ACORN employees were indicted for allegedly filing 15,000 fraudulent registration forms
  
- ACORN's St. Louis registrations were so bogus that election officials sent letters to 5,000 ACORN-registered voters asking the recipients to contact them
  - Only 40 responded
  - 1,000 addresses listed didn't even exist
  - ACORN founder Wade Rathke called Missouri election officials “slop buckets”
    - Accused officials of having “broken the law in trying to discourage new voters illegally.”
  
- A Democratic deputy elections director for St. Louis complained that they met twice with ACORN before the 2006 election, but ACORN ignored their requests
  
- ACORN blames any problems on dishonest former employees

## **Mob-Style Protection Racket**

- “Muscle for the Money”

## **ACORN Affiliates**

ACORN has as many as 150 subsidiary organizations according to a recent legal filing by its board of directors

- ACORN Housing Corporation
  - 40% of AHC's revenue comes from the federal government
  - AHC funneled \$4.6 million to ACORN

- Project Vote / Voting for America, Inc.
  - According to sworn testimony of a former employee, ACORN and Project Vote were one and the same

## Media

- *New York Times* reporter had been writing stories on ACORN until an informant told her that ACORN was involved with the Obama presidential campaign
  - The *Times* did not run the story because “it was a game changer”
  - The *Times* did not publish any further stories on ACORN throughout the remainder of the election

## Congressional Hearings

- March 2009: House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties hears testimony alleging that ACORN participates in illegal activity and mafia-style tactics
  - ACORN allegedly violated campaign finance and tax laws in addition to their protest-for-hire and coerced donations
  - House Judiciary Chairman John Conyers (D-MI) called the allegations “a pretty serious matter” and brought up the possibility of a congressional probe
  - Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties: there was not enough “credible evidence” to necessitate a hearing on ACORN

## 2010 Census

- ACORN will be one of the groups participating in the 2010 Census

## Home Staying Program

- ACORN campaign of breaking into and seizing private property that is being foreclosed
- Program in effect in 24 cities nationwide
- In February, 30 ACORN members cut the lock of a foreclosed house of a member and declared the property was theirs
  - Baltimore ACORN Foreclosure Fighters Co-Chair Louis Beverly declared: “Once they have your home, there's nothing you can do except to resort to civil disobedience.”