

## The Congressional Progressive Caucus:

*Fringe-Left Democrats Wield New Influence*

By Cheryl K. Chumley

**Summary:** *The Democrats' capture of Congress gives unprecedented power to the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC)—the organized left wing of the party. Among its expected 70 members in the 110th Congress, at least seven are slated to chair powerful congressional committees and a dozen or more will head subcommittees. In 2005 the Caucus created a fundraising arm, the American Progressive Caucus Policy Foundation (APCPF), whose capacity to inflict long-term damage on American liberty should not be underestimated.*

**T**he congresswomen from the 9th and 6th districts of California put it best.

“Progressives have forged new and powerful ways to join and influence the debate here in Washington,” said Barbara Lee. Lynn Woolsey observed, “We are in the midst of a progressive awakening in this country and I have never been more confident and optimistic about the future of progressive politics.” Representatives Lee and Woolsey are the co-chairmen of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. Lee represents the cities of Berkeley and Oakland, while Woolsey represents Marin and Sonoma counties.

Don't be fooled by their districts. The Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) is not a tiny faction of lawmakers representing radical university towns and well-heeled chardonnay sippers on the Left Coast. With the control of Congress shifting to the Democratic Party this month, the CPC is growing in size and influence. It is shifting into high gear and intends to bring its revolutionary vision to all of America.



**Socialists wield serious power in the new Democratic Congress. Members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus at an anti-war press conference in 2005, from left to right: Jim McDermott, Lynn Woolsey, and Barbara Lee.**

In 2005 CPC unveiled “The Progressive Promise,” its policy agenda for the nation. It hired a full-time staffer and it created a non-profit fundraising arm, the American Progressive Caucus Policy Foundation. Conservative activists and Republicans in Congress could be excused if they were unimpressed by these meager achievements.

But what a difference a year makes. In the 109th Congress the CPC's membership was 59 members of the House of Representatives and the three nonvoting delegates from Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. In the 110th Congress that number is likely to reach 71 and two former House

members in the CPC, Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Vermont's Bernie Sanders, will become members of the U.S. Senate. (The last CPC member in the Senate was the late Paul Wellstone of Minnesota.) Lee is jubilant.

### January 2007

#### CONTENTS

The Congressional Progressive Caucus: Fringe-Left Democrats Wield New Influence  
*Page 1*

Philanthropy Notes  
*Page 8*

The CPC is the election's real winner, she says, rejecting the political pundits who counsel Democrats to move to the right to hold power. Their advice represents "an incomplete picture of the new political landscape in Washington, D.C.," Lee told the San Francisco Chronicle.

Is Lee correct? Starting this month House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will preside over three groups of Democrats. The Congressional Progressive Caucus will brandish the rhetoric of class warfare and work with a network of left-wing advocacy groups to coordinate attacks on corporations and "the rich." But the conservative Blue Dogs (44 members in the last Congress) will emphasize fiscal restraint and a balanced budget. And the business-friendly House New Democrat Coalition will back trade deals and tax credits for business innovation and more government support for research and development. (The New Democrats had 47 members in the last Congress, many of them also Blue Dogs, e.g. defeated senatorial candidate Harold Ford and California's Ellen Tauscher and Jane Harman). Pelosi pledges that Democrats in Congress will consolidate their power and prepare for the 2008 elections by staying away from controversial issues such as impeachment and radical policy proposals like

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a military draft. But she has yet to confront the newly energized CPC.

### **Riding A Two-Headed Donkey**

Pelosi promises to devote the first 100 legislative hours in the House to what she considers a mainstream agenda. House



**Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders is a self-described socialist**

Democrats, she says, will raise the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour, cut student loan interest rates in half, authorize the federal government to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for lower drug prices for Medicare recipients, cut subsidies for oil companies, and fund embryonic stem cell research.

However, many House Democrats and their allies among activists and in the media do not interpret the November election as a chance to merely tinker with public policy. "If the progressives have a certain swagger these days, it's because they're convinced it was their vision—opposition to the war, unapologetic Bush-bashing—that won Democrats the election," writes the *New Republic's* Michael Crowley. *Investor's Business Daily* observes that the Congressional Progressive Caucus "can no longer be dismissed as a fringe group."

The self-styled "progressives" promise to hold Democrats' feet to the fire and prevent Pelosi from governing from the middle. "Democrats ran the most populist elections in memory," says Robert Borosage, co-director of the Campaign for America's Future. "We

need to make sure the Democrats deliver on their promises, and that the 100 Hours Agenda is just the first step in creating an economy that works for working people. The 100 Hours Agenda gives Democrats a chance to show that we support positive policies for change, and we're not just against the Republican agenda."

On December 5 more than 40 advocacy groups met to devise a common strategy to support congressional Democrats while pressuring Pelosi and incoming Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to move further to the left. Led by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, USAction and Borosage's Campaign for America's Future, the ad hoc coalition also includes ACORN, the AFL-CIO, League of Conservation Voters, MoveOn.org, National Education Association, National Council of Churches, National Organization for Women, People for the American Way, and the Sierra Club.

These activist groups and the CPC want the House leadership to challenge every action of the Bush administration. They want to pull the U.S. out of Iraq and abandon the war on terror. On Iraq, Woolsey has said, "We might find there are other ways to leave besides cutting off the money. But bottom line, that might be the only thing that Congress can do." Indeed, one of the CPC's first official events after the November election was to invite George McGovern, the party's 1972 presidential candidate, to address it on foreign policy. The 84-year-old former senator proposes a phased withdrawal of troops from Iraq to be completed by June 30.

### **Bernie Sanders and the CPC: What to Expect**

The Congressional Progressive Caucus was founded in 1991 by self-described socialist Bernie Sanders, the mayor of Burlington, Vermont, who in 1990 was elected to the House of Representatives as an Independent. Sanders served eight terms in the House; in 2004 he won 69% of the vote against Democratic and Republican challengers. Last November, just before his election to the U.S. Senate, again as an Independent, the 65-year-old New York transplant was asked by a *Washington Post* reporter: "Are you now or have you ever been a socialist?"

Replied Sanders, "Yeah. I wouldn't deny it.



Not for one second. I'm a democratic socialist."

Some other CPC members also aren't afraid to tout their connections to democratic socialism. "I'm a member of DSA [Democratic Socialists of America]," Representative Danny Davis, an Illinois Democrat, said in 2000. "There's an active chapter where I live. They're basically no different than a lot of the people I know." New York's Major Owens is also a DSA member.

Leftist organizations like the Democratic Socialists of America, an affiliate of the worldwide Socialist International, must be thrilled at how far they've come. In the late 1990s the House CPC was a 50-member minority faction in a minority party facing Newt Gingrich and the Republican Revolution (See "The Progressive Caucus," *Organization Trends*, February 1997). Today the Congressional Progressive Caucus will push socialist policies in the House—and the Senate. "A Socialist in the Senate?" headlined a 2005 CommonDreams.org profile of Sanders's political aspirations. "If Sanders moves over to the Senate, he'll have even more power to grill (Alan) Greenspan and the rest of the plutocrats in power." The article gushed:

"Sanders in the Senate could stiffen the spine of Democrats. He's an outspoken supporter of workers' rights ... he's for universal health care, and the importation of prescription drugs from Canada. He stands up for gay rights and the right to choose. He's for full public financing of campaigns. And he's a leader in the media reform movement."

The CommonDreams.org story highlights the support Democratic National Committee head Howard Dean, a former governor of Vermont, gave the Sanders campaign. Chairman Dean reportedly described the congressman's Senate triumph as "a win for Democrats," too.

Despite his Independent affiliation, Sanders was endorsed in 2006 by senior figures in the Democratic Party, including Dean, New York Senator Charles Schumer, who heads the party's Senate fundraising arm, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and Nevada Senator Harry Reid. Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama, the senator

from Illinois, campaigned in Vermont for Sanders.

As long as the Democratic Party was out of power, CPC initiatives were largely ignored. But caucus proposals are sure to be



**Barbara Lee (left) with her mentor, Ron Dellums, a left-wing extremist and former congressman**

trumpeted as common sense solutions in the new Congress and Sanders's new position in the 100-member Senate gives the CPC added clout. Reid has given Sanders five committee

## Who Leads the Caucus?

The current leaders of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Representatives Barbara Lee and Lynn Woolsey, personify the modern Left in America.

Barbara Lee, born in 1946, has a long history of radical political activism. A former social worker and chief of staff to Representative Ron Dellums, Lee was first elected to Congress in 1998 to replace the retiring Dellums. This November, Lee won reelection with 86% of the vote. In 2001 Lee was the only member of Congress to vote against authorizing the president to use military force against any group or nation that assisted the terrorist attacks of September 11. Her stand—the vote on the resolution was 420-1—and other votes against the war in Iraq and the Patriot Act have made Lee a heroine to the anti-war movement. Perhaps unaware of the existence of the State Department, Lee and Ohio Representative Dennis Kucinich (a CPC member who has announced that he will run again for president in 2008), have co-sponsored a bill to create a redundant cabinet-level "Department of Peace." In February 2005, Lee introduced a nonbinding resolution "disavowing the doctrine of preemption," which the resolution says "poses a threat to international law and to the national security interests of

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***David Horowitz, a former communist himself, calls Lee "an anti-American communist who supports America's enemies and has actively collaborated with them in their war against America." Lee and her boss, former congressman Ron Dellums, actively collaborated with a Marxist dictatorship hostile to the United States, according to Horowitz and other sources.***

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assignments: He will be a member of the Senate committees on Environment and Public Works; Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; and Veterans Affairs as well as the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the all-important Budget Committee.

the United States."

Writing about Lee's hold-out vote less than a week after September 11, conservative critic David Horowitz called Lee "an anti-American communist who supports

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America's enemies and has actively collaborated with them in their war against America." Horowitz should know whereof he speaks. A former Berkeley leftist, he has recalled meeting Lee in the 1970s at the Oakland headquarters of Black Panthers chieftain Huey Lewis. Horowitz noted that in the 1980s Lee's boss, Ron Dellums, had a top security clearance because he was chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on military installations. When in 1983 U.S. forces liberated the Caribbean island nation of Grenada from a Marxist dictatorship, they uncovered official documents showing how Dellums collaborated with Grenada's Castro-backed rulers. Following a fact-finding mission to Grenada, Dellums certified that its new airport, constructed with Cuban assistance, was no threat to U.S. security because it could not be used for Cuban and Soviet military planes.

According to Wall Street Journal columnist John Fund, Dellums's office "prepared a report on the trip and asked for the Marxist regime to vet it, according to documents from a meeting of the communist government's politburo that American troops captured."

"Barbara Lee is here presently and has brought with her a report on the international airport done by Ron Dellums,' the documents read. 'They have requested that we look at the document and suggest any changes we deem necessary. They will be willing to make changes.' The meeting documents go on to discuss possible military uses of the airfield," noted Fund.

"If this is not treason, what is?" asked Horowitz.

Lynn Woolsey, born in 1937, was first elected to Congress in 1992 to replace then-Representative Barbara Boxer after Boxer won election to the Senate. Now in her eighth term, she received 70% of the vote in November. If Barbara Lee speaks for angry radicals on Oakland's mean streets, then Lynn Woolsey represents the well-to-do liberals of the wine country.

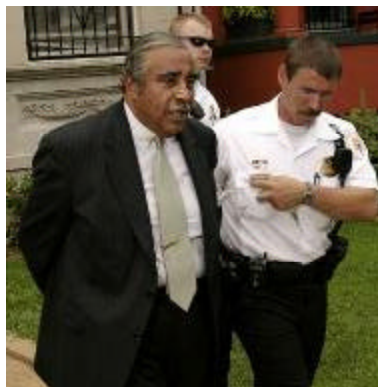
However, Woolsey's own background is not privileged. Her website calls her "an unapologetic progressive and the first former welfare mother to serve in Congress." The bio describes "a young single mother struggling to raise three children by herself, even

though she was employed she needed public assistance just to make ends meet." It continues, "That experience of needing a helping hand from her government has never left her."



**Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank of Massachusetts**

Woolsey's top domestic priority is her bill to provide paid family leave, daycare for children under three, and public pre-school for all three, four and five-year-old children "for every family that wants it." She names the legislation 'The Balancing Act' "because



**Charles Rangel, new House Ways and Means Committee chairman, after arrest at a Sudanese Embassy protest in 2004**

it helps parents manage the balance between work and family."

Woolsey has a gay son and opposes restrictions on homosexuals serving in the military. In 2000 she introduced a bill to rescind the federal charter of the Boy Scouts of America because it does not accept gay scouts and scoutmasters. The bill was defeated by a vote of 12 to 362.

Woolsey not only voted against the Iraq war but she introduced a bill to repeal the authorization to use military force against Iraq. In February 2006, she invited anti-war protester Cindy Sheehan to the president's State of the Union address as her guest, and in March 2006 she introduced the "Common Sense Budget Act" to reduce the Defense and Energy department budgets while boosting the budgets for social welfare and to fight global poverty.

Like Lee, Woolsey has been touched by scandal.

In 2004 a public outcry forced Woolsey to apologize for writing a letter on her official congressional stationery that urged a judge to be lenient in sentencing a rapist, Stewart Pearson, whose mother worked in Woolsey's San Rafael office. Pearson pleaded guilty and was sentenced to eight years in prison for incapacitating a 17-year-old girl with chemicals and raping her.

"Mr. Pearson's mother is a faithful employee, who I wanted to help, but I should not have intervened," wrote Woolsey in a letter published by the Marin Independent Journal. "Given my outspoken support for both women's rights and victims' rights, my constituents and my community are right to be shocked by my action. I apologize to them."

As this newsletter goes to press, CPC has not yet decided whether Lee and Woolsey will continue to co-chair the caucus in the 110th Congress.

## The Socialist Connection

CPC may soft-pedal its socialist ideology in the new Congress, but a 1999 position paper on economic inequality makes clear its rejection of capitalism:

"Economic inequality is the result of two and a half decades of government policies and rules governing the economy being tilted in favor of large asset owners at the expense of wage earners. Tax policy, trade policy, monetary policy, government regulations and other rules have reflected this pro-investor bias. We propose the introduction or reintroduction of a package of legislative initiatives that will close America's economic divide and address both income and wealth disparities."

"The Progressive Promise," CPC's new po-

**January 2007**

litical manifesto, recites the left's usual complaints: Taxes are too low, capitalism is unfair, Americans are racists, and U.S. foreign policy can't be trusted. But if CPC's ideas are trite, its power is fearsome.



**Tom Lantos, new chairman of International Relations Committee**

CPC members will control many powerful committees in the new Congress. CPC members slated for committee chair assignments include New York's Charles Rangel, the next chairman of the powerful tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank, who will be chairman of the Financial Services Committee, and California's Henry Waxman, who will chair the Government Reform Committee. Mississippi's Bennie Thompson will chair the Homeland Security Committee. Michigan Representative John Conyers replaces Wisconsin's James Sensenbrenner as head of the Judiciary Committee. California's George Miller takes over Education and Workforce from North Carolina's Howard "Buck" McKeon, and Tom Lantos replaces the retiring Henry Hyde as chairman of the House International Relations Committee.

Other CPC members are expected to receive plum subcommittee chairmanships:

- California's Pete Stark, in office since 1973, replaces Nancy Johnson as chairman of the House Ways and Means subcommittee on health. Stark has long campaigned for socialized medicine.
- Eleanor Holmes Norton, the non-voting delegate for the District of Columbia, may dole out pork-barrel projects as chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee on economic development, public buildings, and emergency management.

- The famously obstreperous Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas will chair the Judiciary Committee's immigration and border security subcommittee, and Mel Watt of North Carolina will chair Judiciary's panel on commercial and administrative law.
- The notorious Maxine Waters of California will chair the housing panel of the Financial Services Committee. She has suggested CIA involvement in causing the proliferation of crack cocaine in inner cities.
- New Jersey Representative Donald Payne will chair the Africa, global human rights, and international operations panel of the International Relations Committee.

Clearly, there is also considerable overlap in the membership rolls of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus. In 2006, 26 of the 43 black caucus members—60%— were CPC members. (See "Pushing The Black Liberal Agenda: Has the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Squandered Goodwill," by Randy Hall, *Organization Trends*, July 2006).

### The CPC Agenda

What to expect from the Congressional Progressive Caucus? "The Progressive Promise," the caucus master plan for killing the U.S. economy, vows to nationalize the health care industry, raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation, preserve Social Security, re-build schools and infrastructure, and "pro-

mote environmental justice." The caucus promises to gut the First Amendment by fighting "corporate consolidation of the media." It would also build more affordable housing, and strengthen unions and union-organizing rights. In foreign policy,



**New Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (left) with Cindy Sheehan**

progressives would bring American troops home from Iraq, re-build U.S. international alliances, combat global warming, and support debt relief for poor countries.

Expect the CPC to continue to produce its annual Alternative State of the Union Address and Alternative Budget, jointly with the Congressional Black Caucus. The CPC is also likely to propose a program similar to its "American People's Dividend" of 2001, which the *Nation* magazine described as "a progressive alternative to Bush tax cuts when the federal budget was in surplus."

CPC may also engage in political theater stunts such as its "Economic Human Rights Bus Tour." During a 2001 tour the CPC delegation (including Representative Nancy

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Pelosi, Berkeley's Barbara Lee, and Michigan's John Conyers) traveled to rural and inner-city sites in California where activists choreographed hearings on injustice and the need for more grassroots organizing and federal government programs.

## Policy Foundation

The American Progressive Caucus Policy Foundation was set up in 2005 to be a "non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization formed to work with the Congressional Progressive Caucus of the U.S. House of Representatives." While it has a website ([www.apcpf.org](http://www.apcpf.org)) there is as yet little information on its activities. Bill Goold, the foundation's executive director—and the only full-time staffer for the Congressional Progressive Caucus—did not return telephone calls from *Foundation Watch*. Goold, a longtime Capitol Hill veteran who has worked for Bernie Sanders and Iowa senator Tom Harkin, is also a former senior AFL-CIO official.

While the CPC is aggressively partisan, the American Progressive Caucus Policy Foundation, a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity, must assume the pose of nonpartisanship. The foundation's mission—to "bring together the collective wisdom of progressives inside and outside of Congress," and to "serve as a communications, fact finding, research and education center"—suggests that APCPF will follow the usual practices other 501(c)(3) advocacy groups use to avoid IRS scrutiny.

Plans call for the foundation's directors and advisors to meet before each congressional session for a "strategic planning fo-

rum for progressives." The next planning sessions are supposed to emphasize "peace and security" issues followed by energy and



**New Government Reform Committee Chairman Henry Waxman**

the environment, civil rights, health, education and the economy. "We will build a presence in Washington, D.C., with nationwide reach," says the foundation website.



**One of the Congressional Progressive Caucus's two new senators, Sherrod Brown of Ohio**

The foundation's current chairman is Laura Kalick, an attorney with BDO Seidman, LLP, who has an extensive background in tax law and the law of nonprofits. Kalick told *Foundation Watch* that she developed a personal interest in the foundation's mission while helping it obtain tax-exempt status. She acknowledges the lack of public information: "We really are just getting off the ground and

hoping to get grants and contributions." Other members of the board include CPC co-chiefs Lee and Woolsey, vice-chairman Lorelei Kelly, and board secretary Stephen Shaff. Kelly taught peace studies at Stanford University and has worked on national security policy for Woolsey. In a May 25 column on the Huffington Post website, she lamented that "the ability of progressives to stake out more visible positions on Capitol Hill is an activity that has been vital and lacking for more than a decade." (She also called Newt Gingrich the "pyromaniac of government.") Board secretary Stephen Shaff is vice-chairman of the board of Progressive Democrats of America, a political action committee.

## What Now?

America's future increasingly depends on the Democratic Party in Congress. The public, which has had a poor opinion of Congress, has given the party a chance to lead. But Democrats will first have to decide what they want to do.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus has no doubts about its own agenda. They think the country is anti-Republican and wants radical change. The New Republic's Michael Crowley notes that CPC members have every reason to be "suspicious that moderates plan to shunt them into the attic like so many crazy relatives." That will be difficult, however, given CPC's control of so many important congressional committees.

Many Republicans blame their losses on their own political shortcomings, but are sure the country supports them on core values. How the Democrats handle their victory may well determine whether they are right.

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**MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS  
IN THE 109TH CONGRESS (2004-2006)**

<b>Neil Abercrombie</b> , Hawaii	<b>Tom Lantos</b> , California	<b>Louise Slaughter</b> , New York
<b>Tammy Baldwin</b> , Wisconsin	<b>Barbara Lee</b> , California	<b>Hilda Solis</b> , California
<b>Xavier Becerra</b> , California	<b>John Lewis</b> , Georgia	<b>Pete Stark</b> , California
<b>Corrine Brown</b> , Florida	<b>Ed Markey</b> , Massachusetts	<b>Bennie Thompson</b> , Mississippi
<b>Sherrod Brown</b> , Ohio	<b>Jim McDermott</b> , Washington	<b>John Tierney</b> , Massachusetts
<b>Michael Capuano</b> , Massachusetts	<b>James McGovern</b> , Massachusetts	<b>Tom Udall</b> , Colorado
<b>Julia Carson</b> , Indiana	<b>Cynthia McKinney</b> , Georgia	<b>Nydia Velazquez</b> , New York
<b>William “Lacy” Clay</b> , Missouri	<b>George Miller</b> , California	<b>Maxine Waters</b> , California
<b>Emanuel Cleaver</b> , Missouri	<b>Gwen Moore</b> , Wisconsin	<b>Diane Watson</b> , California
<b>John Conyers</b> , Michigan	<b>Jerry Nadler</b> , New York	<b>Mel Watt</b> , North Carolina
<b>Elijah Cummings</b> , Maryland	<b>John Olver</b> , Massachusetts	<b>Henry Waxman</b> , California
<b>Danny Davis</b> , Illinois	<b>Major Owens</b> , New York	<b>Lynn Woolsey</b> , California
<b>Peter DeFazio</b> , Oregon	<b>Ed Pastor</b> , Arizona	<b>Madeleine Z. Bordallo</b> , Guam (nonvoting delegate)
<b>Rosa DeLauro</b> , Connecticut	<b>Donald Payne</b> , New Jersey	<b>Donna Christensen</b> , Virgin Islands (nonvoting delegate)
<b>Lane Evans</b> , Illinois	<b>Charles Rangel</b> , New York	<b>Eleanor Holmes Norton</b> , District of Columbia (nonvoting delegate)
<b>Sam Farr</b> , California	<b>Bobby Rush</b> , Illinois	
<b>Chaka Fattah</b> , Pennsylvania	<b>Bernie Sanders</b> , Vermont	
<b>Bob Filner</b> , California	<b>Jan Schakowsky</b> , Illinois	
<b>Barney Frank</b> , Massachusetts	<b>Jose Serrano</b> , New York	
<b>Raul Grijalva</b> , Arizona		
<b>Luis Gutierrez</b> , Illinois		
<b>Maurice Hinchey</b> , New York		
<b>Jesse Jackson Jr.</b> , Illinois		
<b>Sheila Jackson Lee</b> , Texas		
<b>Stephanie Tubbs Jones</b> , Ohio		
<b>Marcy Kaptur</b> , Ohio		
<b>Carolyn Kilpatrick</b> , Michigan		
<b>Dennis Kucinich</b> , Ohio		

*(Source: Congressional Progressive Caucus website. All CPC members here listed are Democrats with the exception of Bernie Sanders, an Independent.)*

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**Terrence Scanlon, President**

# PhilanthropyNotes

In one of his final acts as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator **Charles Grassley**, an Iowa Republican, asked the **IRS** to investigate “serious allegations of inappropriate activity” by the tax-exempt group **Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now**, which has been linked to numerous instances of voter fraud. Grassley wrote in his letter that four ACORN employees were indicted for allegedly filing false voter registrations in Missouri, and that ACORN failed to respond to his requests for information. Separately, ACORN, a longtime proponent of a “living wage” for workers, was accused of stiffing its employees last year by failing to pay back wages.

Conservatives are more generous than liberals, according to economist **Arthur C. Brooks**, author of the recently published, *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth About Compassionate Conservatism*. Conservatives are one or two percentage points more likely to give money each year than liberals and households headed by a conservative give about 30% more to charity than households headed by a liberal, even though liberal families earn 6% more annually than conservative families, according to Brooks, who is director of nonprofit studies for **Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs**.

Who says beggars can’t be choosers? **Fairfax County**, Virginia, that’s who. The county is barring residents from donating home- or church-prepared food to the poor, unless the county first approves the kitchen in which the food was prepared, the Washington Post reported. **Tom Crow**, a top county health bureaucrat, said the new policy imposing restaurant-like standards was aimed at protecting “a medically fragile population...more susceptible to food-borne illnesses than the general population.” **Jim Brigl**, chief executive of **Fairfax Area Christian Emergency & Transitional Services**, said the policy was absurd: “We’re very aware that a number of homeless people eat out of dumpsters, and mom’s pot roast has got to be healthier than that.”

Calling foundations “the least accountable major institutions in America,” a nonprofit veteran has written a new book urging foundations to make their activities more transparent or risk increased public distrust and possible government regulation, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reported. Grantmakers must “open their doors and windows to the world so that all can see what they are doing and how they are doing it,” **Joel L. Fleishman**, a **Duke University** professor writes in *The Foundation: A Great American Secret – How Private Wealth Is Changing the World*. If foundations fail to play ball, a federal Foundation Freedom of Information Act might be needed, he said.

And the **Democracy Alliance**, **George Soros’s** billionaires’ club that aspires to push America to the left while building a permanent Democratic majority, is finally promising to make its surreptitious grantmaking operations more transparent. DA founder **Rob Stein** said November 30 that his group plans to begin cooperating with journalists. “We’re two years old, now, and we’re more mature and confident of ourselves, and I think that over time, there will be more coverage of us,” he said. Stein made the comments at a November 30 panel discussion hosted by the **Hudson Institute’s Bradley Center for Philanthropy & Civic Renewal**. The Democracy Alliance was profiled in last month’s issue of *Foundation Watch*.

Meanwhile, activist **Gara LaMarche**, a principal in the Democracy Alliance, has been appointed chief executive officer of the \$4 billion **Atlantic Philanthropies** effective April 2007. The left-leaning Bermuda-based grantmaker, which is among the 20 largest foundations active in the U.S., plans to give away its entire endowment over the next decade. It pledged last year to give \$2.25 million through 2010 to the **Center for Constitutional Rights** to help give America’s terrorist enemies access to the U.S. civilian justice system. LaMarche is currently vice president and director of U.S. programs for Soros’s **Open Society Institute**.