

## MoveOn.org: How Grassroots Activists Succeeded When Their Leaders Failed

By Sean Higgins

*Summary: The leftist advocacy group MoveOn.org is a well-oiled, well-funded propaganda machine. During the past decade it has done much to shape the Democratic Party's agenda and advance the party's electoral prospects. MoveOn was succeeding while the Democratic Party was failing in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Perhaps out-of-power conservatives today can learn something from its accomplishments.*

Click on the website for MoveOn.org in June 2009 and look under the area “current campaigns” and you’ll see a laundry list of causes the organization wants you to join.

Topping the 501(c)(4) nonprofit’s list is “10 things you need to know about John McCain.” Odd. That is followed by such items as an appeal to stop “insider politics” from deciding the 2008 election and a call to see Michael Moore’s 2007 film *Sicko*.

There is nothing at all about runaway deficit spending, rising unemployment or bailouts of Wall Street and Detroit. The 2007-2008 troop surge in Iraq is decried but not the 2009 surge in Afghanistan, which MoveOn.org also opposes.

Ironically for an organization that celebrates harnessing the power of the Internet for cutting-edge progressive politics, nobody seems to have updated the “current campaigns” section this year. MoveOn is literally stuck in the past, still fighting the 2008 election.

The main page of the organization – officially its full name is MoveOn.org Civil Action – is a bit more current. There are



Silicon Valley millionaires Wes Boyd and his wife, Joan Blades, founded MoveOn.org, in 1998 in an ill-fated attempt to nip President Clinton’s impeachment proceedings in the bud.

calls to join the fight for tougher cap and trade legislation to limit greenhouse gas emissions. But the petition language is curiously passive, asking rather than demanding.

It reads: “We need a stronger energy bill to fulfill Obama’s vision of a clean energy economy. Congress should strengthen the clean energy standards and restore Obama’s authority to crack down on dirty coal plants.”

Nothing alerts the petitioner to the fact that Democratic Sen. Harry Reid and Speaker Nancy Pelosi lead Congress now or that Democratic Reps. Henry Waxman and Ed Markey are the authors of the bill.

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Don't be fooled. MoveOn hasn't disappeared from the political scene.

Even though its website may not be completely up-to-date, MoveOn has been conducting aggressive email campaigns in recent months. Since Barack Obama was inaugurated in January, MoveOn has bombarded its members with fundraising appeals and exhortations to hold house parties to promote various planks in the president's radical agenda.

MoveOn has been demanding that probes be conducted against Bush administration officials regarding the use of enhanced interrogation techniques such as waterboarding on detained terrorists. The group wants to impeach a federal judge, Jay Bybee, for a legal opinion he wrote regarding those techniques.

The group also appealed for funds for Al Franken's prolonged U.S. Senate recount battle in Minnesota and for emergency donations for groups affected by Bernard Madoff's record-breaking embezzlement. It sent out an email from former DNC chairman Howard Dean promoting government-run healthcare.

MoveOn also teamed up earlier this year with bloggers and organized labor to create a

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political action committee that aims to push the Democratic Party farther to the left. The group, called Accountability Now, aims to be a kind of Club for Growth for the left, targeting Democratic candidates deemed insufficiently liberal.

MoveOn.org was created in 1998 as an Internet-based effort to build grassroots opposition to the Republican effort to impeach President Clinton. By 2000 and 2002 it was fighting against the Republican tidal wave, and in the years since it's been blasting conservatives and urging liberals to get off their rear ends and storm the castle. Now the castle is theirs.

Unlike, say, labor unions or environmental groups that have a clear agenda of laws they want passed and policies implemented, MoveOn.org is all emotion. From the start it's been fueled by rage and consumed by frustration. It appears to have no other philosophy than that conservatives must be discredited and removed from power. The group has worked hard at that.

What's left for MoveOn to do? In February, just after the inauguration of Barack Obama, MoveOn announced that its longtime executive director Eli Pariser would become board president. Pariser, who was hired at age 22 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, had been the heart and soul and brains of the grassroots operation. He has been succeeded by Justin Ruben, the group's former organizing director. (Roll Call, Feb. 12, 2009)

MoveOn remains ready to rumble. MoveOn.org's political action committee has raised more than \$102 million for Democrats and liberal causes, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Or as the singer Johnny Rotten once put it: "Don't know what we want/But we know how to get it."

The recent relative quiescence by MoveOn may signal a desire to allow the Obama administration to accomplish its radical goals without being distracted or embarrassed by impatient activists. It may reflect a willingness to allow conservative politicians to fumble the ball and shame themselves without benefit of left-wing attacks. Or the grassroots group may be rebuilding and reassessing what to do next.

Whatever its motives, MoveOn.org's grassroots activism during a period when Republicans ran Congress and the Bush administration occupied the White House is a testimony to what inspired activists can accomplish. Maybe conservatives should take a lesson.

## **Bill Clinton and the Origins of MoveOn.org**

"I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Monica Lewinsky," Bill Clinton said, wagging his finger at the TV camera. "I never told anybody to lie, not a single time. These allegations are false. And I need to go back to work for the American people. Thank you."

It was January 1998 and the nation was transfixed by the scandal of President Clinton's involvement with a young White House intern.

Among the people who shared Clinton's desire that he be allowed to "go back to work" and let everybody else forget about the scandal and "move on" were software developer Wes Boyd and his wife, lawyer Joan Blades. They created the first version of the MoveOn website.

"[M]y husband and I [were] so sick of this conservative offensive to put the president out of the running," Blades told the Atlantic Monthly in 2005. She called the affair a "trick that allowed them, by amusing the crowd with a sex case, to avoid the real problems that should have been at the heart of any public debate worthy of the name."

They were so "deeply scandalized" to use Blades's words that she ended her legal practice and he sold his software company so they could devote all of their energy to promoting the website. The operational headquarters of the effort was the guest house of their home in Berkeley, California. They could literally fight the good fight while watching the sunset over their view of the Golden Gate Bridge.

The site advocated "Censure and Move On" meaning Clinton should merely be scolded for the affair and nothing more. This was despite the fact that the articles of impeachment were not about adultery per se but pertained to alleged perjury, subornation of perjury, and obstruction of justice in relation to the Paula Jones sexual harassment case against Clinton.

To Blades and Boyd, the facts of the case were irrelevant. What was driving them to distraction was that conservatives had seized control of the agenda to the point where they might actually oust Clinton.

Areported half-million people signed their online petition. Copies of the petition were delivered to the district offices of 219 congressmen.

The public did turn against the impeachment and the Republicans got an unexpected drubbing in the November 1998 mid-term congressional elections. Then Republican Whip Tom DeLay (R-Texas) rallied the House GOP to pass articles of impeachment but Clinton survived as the effort stalled in the Senate in January.

MoveOn.org might have claimed victory and closed up shop. But Blades and Boyd remained bitter. Determined to punish those who had caused all of the turmoil (even after it was clear that Clinton had lied) they created the MoveOn.org Political Action Committee.

“We somehow never got back to our regular lives,” Blades told the left-wing website Alternet. “When you become active in the system and communicate to your representatives, and they don’t vote in accordance with your values, your next responsibility is to support candidates who will. All of a sudden we were signed up until 2000.”

**The Bush Victory and 9/11** MoveOn.org’s first electoral campaign after its defense of Bill Clinton was a “we will remember” pledge. Some time after Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives in late 1998, the group asked everyone who had signed its petition (to “work to defeat members of Congress who voted for impeachment or removal”) to give the maximum contribution to anti-impeachment candidates.

MoveOn formed a political action committee (PAC) which raised \$2 million for the election, an impressive sum at a time when the Internet was still a new medium for fundraising. Most was raised from small donors, at an estimated \$35 per donation. (Today most donors write checks for around \$250, though many give much more, according to Federal Election Commission data.)

During the election MoveOn.org shed its last vestiges of non-partisanship. While fighting

impeachment was supposed to be nonpartisan, subsequent campaigns were devoted to advancing the fortunes of anti-conservative, anti-Bush, anti-Iraq war Democrats.

Gun control was MoveOn’s first non-impeachment issue, a 1999 online petition for “gun safety first” in response to the Columbine shootings in Colorado. During the 2000 election MoveOn tried to stop Ralph Nader’s third party presidential bid, arguing that he could split the anti-GOP vote and throw the race to Bush. “What was positioned as a safe protest vote has now become a kind of kamikaze vote,” Boyd said in an email message to MoveOn.org members.

At this time the website was improved and upgraded with new forums added for readers to discuss politics and the introduction of networking tools to foster grassroots organizing. Today these social media devices are routine but less than a decade ago they were major innovations. The group also grew beyond Blades and Boyd, and full-time staff were hired to manage the site.

In 2006 it spun off a new 501(c)4 lobbying group, MomsRising.org, to mobilize mothers to push for Big Government programs. The group sums up its issues using the acronym MOTHERS: **M**, “Maternity/Paternity Leave”; **O**, “Open, Flexible Work”; **T**, “TV We Choose & Other After-School Programs”; **H**, “Healthcare for All Kids”; **E**, “Excellent Childcare”; **R**, “Realistic & Fair Wages”; and **S**, “Paid Sick Days for All.” The MomsRising website is generally careful, however, not to explain how these programs would be put into effect or how much taxes would have to be raised to pay for them.

MoveOn.org prides itself on being more grassroots-oriented than other liberal groups. Members, who are invited to vote in forums on what they think the group’s agenda should be, help to determine where MoveOn’s money is spent.

It was all for naught: The GOP won the White House and kept control of Congress. These Republican victories further radicalized MoveOn.org and its fans. A website born to let the president do his job and “move on” became a forum for attacking the incoming Bush administration and its policies.

What happened after the 9/11 terror attacks showed just how radical MoveOn would become. While the overwhelming majority of Democratic officeholders and most liberal groups supported U.S. military action against the terrorist-friendly Taliban regime in Afghanistan, MoveOn.org became a leading anti-war opponent. (Later, it would try to rewrite history. “MoveOn did not oppose the U.S. military action in Afghanistan,” it said in a June 2005 statement.)

Boyd and Blades wrote a new petition: “Our leaders are under tremendous pressure to act in the aftermath of the terrible events of Sept. 11th. We the undersigned support justice, not escalating violence, which would only play into the terrorists’ hands.” They followed-up by hiring an executive director, a 22-year-old website operator named Eli Pariser.

Pariser had run a website called 9-11peace.org that later merged with MoveOn.org. “He put out a message similar in results to the one we had, basically an e-mail petition asking for restraint. It went viral on an international scale,” Blades said in an interview for reporter Byron York’s book *The Vast Left-wing Conspiracy*. “We did provide him with some assistance, and we started working together on other issues and eventually merged.”

Pariser was literally a born radical. Members of his mother’s family were Polish socialists, and his parents co-founded an alternative school in-between stints protesting the Vietnam War. “After Sept. 11 his parents couldn’t understand why Pariser insisted on calling himself a patriot,” wrote a reporter for a New York Times Magazine profile.

### Opposing the War in Iraq

After the Taliban was toppled, MoveOn quickly turned to agitating against military action in Iraq. By this time the website claimed membership of 1.3 million, though only 900,000 resided inside the United States. (Today it claims 3.2 million members while implying that the majority of its donations come from 125,000 people.)

MoveOn.org’s tactics included petitions and fundraising. It purchased advertising, including a TV ad that said a U.S. invasion would spark nuclear Armageddon.

The text was: “War with Iraq. Maybe it will end quickly. Maybe not. Maybe it will

# Organization Trends

spread. Maybe extremists will take over countries with nuclear weapons. Maybe the unthinkable.” Today the ad reminds us that at the time even most liberals thought Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

In February 2003 MoveOn.org came up with a new tactic. It initiated a “virtual march on Washington.” Unlike the mass demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the 1970s, MoveOn.org members tried to flood Capitol Hill with calls, faxes and e-mails opposing the war. MoveOn.org hired Fenton Communications, which often works on behalf of left-wing groups, to sell its message. (For more on Fenton Communications, see *Organization Trends*, December 2004.)

But organized protests against the Iraq war failed just as the New Left failed to stop the Vietnam War. By June 2003, MoveOn.org was calling for an independent commission to investigate the reasons behind the invasion. An attempt to rally support to stop a recall of Democratic California Gov. Gray Davis also failed. As a popular mass movement MoveOn.org seemed to be running out of steam.

## Enter George Soros

In the 2004 election cycle, hedge fund billionaire George Soros was adamant that President Bush should not be re-elected.

Soros and insurance magnate Peter B. Lewis together gave as much as \$5 million to MoveOn.org in 2003. “I like what they do and how they do it,” Soros told the *New York Times* (Nov. 18, 2003). “They have been remarkably successful; I want to help them be even more successful.” Throughout the 2004 cycle, Soros spent at least \$23.7 million on anti-Bush “527” pressure groups, including the money that he directed to MoveOn’s 527, the MoveOn.org Voter Fund. (For more on Soros and his connection to MoveOn, see *Foundation Watch*, March 2004.)

By this time MoveOn.org claimed an e-mail list with 2.4 million names, far bigger than anything the Democratic Party could claim. It was no surprise then that Democratic Party officials came calling.

Then-Vermont Gov. Howard Dean was one beneficiary of MoveOn activism. He handily won the website’s so-called Internet primary in 2003, accelerating his rise in party circles and forcing other Democratic

candidates to mimic Dean’s opposition to the Iraq war. A MoveOn.org staffer would later become Dean’s website manager.

In late 2003 then-Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe tried to buy the list. MoveOn.org rebuffed him, but it did allow the party to copy an e-mail pitch it created to stop congressional redistricting of Texas.

By 2004 MoveOn.org was an independent source of political power that was starting to make its Democratic allies nervous. In August, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry felt obliged to denounce a MoveOn.org ad that alleged President George W. Bush had used family connections to escape combat in Vietnam. Kerry issued a statement calling the ad “inappropriate” adding: “This should be a campaign of issues not insults.”

MoveOn.org also became a funder of other groups, giving \$1.6 million to other nonprofits during the election. They include: Iraq Veterans Against the War (\$20,000); the left-wing Campaign for America’s Future (\$175,000); Floridians For All, a minimum wage activist group (\$450,000); Give Nevada a Raise, another minimum wage group (\$250,000); the NAACP National Voter Fund (\$100,000); the People for the American Way Foundation (\$100,000); and, American Family Voices, which used robo-calls to attack Republicans (\$100,000).

By this time MoveOn had become mostly a conduit for fundraising. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, MoveOn’s political action committee has raised more than \$102 million since 1998. Most of that – about \$99 million – was in just three election cycles: 2004, 2006, and 2008.

Since 2000 dozens of Democrats have come to depend on MoveOn for major contributions. In preparation for the 2010 election, MoveOn.org has already contributed more than \$215,000 to the campaigns of Democratic senators, including Ohio’s Sherrod Brown (\$23,400), New Hampshire’s Jeanne Shaheen (\$15,800), Montana’s Jon Tester (\$62,800), Oregon’s Jeff Merkley (\$24,700) and West Virginia’s Robert Byrd (\$88,600).

It has been among top contributors to Democrats in 77 different races since 2000.

Beneficiaries of the group’s largess include:

- 1- The late **Mel Carnahan**’s ultimately successful 2000 bid to oust GOP Sen. **John Ashcroft** (\$28,512).
- 2- Democrat **Tom Carper**’s successful 2000 bid to oust GOP Delaware Sen. **Bill Roth** (\$13,685).
- 3- Democrat Florida Sen. **Bill Nelson**’s successful 2000 re-election campaign (\$19,599).
- 4- Democrat **Walter Mondale**’s failed 2002 bid to win the Senate seat of the late **Paul Wellstone**, a fellow Democrat (\$124,588).
- 5- Democrat **Ken Salazar**’s successful 2004 bid for an open Colorado Senate seat (\$57,652).
- 6- Democrat **Jon Tester**’s successful 2006 bid to unseat Republican Sen. **Conrad Burns** (\$62,790).
- 7- Democrat **Ned Lamont**’s ultimately unsuccessful 2006 bid to oust Connecticut Sen. **Joe Lieberman**, who left the Democratic Party to become an “Independent Democrat” (\$251,126).
- 8- Democrat **Patrick Murphy**’s successful 2006 bid to oust incumbent GOPer **Michael Fitzpatrick** in Pennsylvania 8th congressional district (\$88,112).
- 9- Democrat **Tammy Duckworth**’s unsuccessful 2006 bid for Illinois’s sixth congressional district (\$13,283).
- 10- **Kay Hagan**’s successful 2008 bid to oust GOP North Carolina Sen. **Elizabeth Dole** (\$39,654).
- 11- **Jeff Merkley**’s successful 2008 bid to oust GOP Oregon Sen. **Gordon Smith** (\$24,731).
- 12- Democrat **Al Franken**’s 2008 bid to oust Republican Minnesota Sen. **Norm Coleman** (\$39,587) that was ultimately successful after a protracted recount battle.

That’s just from MoveOn.org’s PAC. In its 2008 annual report, it claims that MoveOn.org members donated a total of \$740,306 to Franken. Others on the list also got six-figure donations, it claims.

## Pinnacle of Influence

As the war in Iraq turned very sour in late 2006, MoveOn.org founded Americans Against Escalation in Iraq (AAEI) to pressure lawmakers to oppose the Bush administration’s proposed troop surge. AAEI, headed by Tom Matzzie, a former Washington director of MoveOn.org, mounted a three-month campaign dubbed “Iraq Summer” to turn 40 Republicans against the effort. The principal

target was Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who was up for reelection in 2008. AAEI ran 15 ads against him for supporting “Bush’s war.”

Matzzie told the New York Times that he spoke at least once a month with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and was in daily contact with their staff. Rolling Stone’s Matt Taibbi noted that most of AAEI staff came from the consulting firm HildebrandTewes, which was founded by Steve Hildebrand and Paul Tewes, former staffers for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

MoveOn.org then made a major mistake. As the surge policy began to succeed, MoveOn ran a full-page ad in the New York Times in September 2007 which attacked Gen. David Petraeus, then leading the U.S. forces in Iraq. Anticipating that Petraeus would report that the troop surge effort was a qualified success, the MoveOn ad called him “General Betray Us.” By this time MoveOn.org was such a key inside player in Democratic politics that the congressional leadership dared not condemn or even question the ad. Then-Sen. Barack Obama came closest, with his spokesman issuing a statement that he did not question the general’s patriotism. But he added that the ad was otherwise correct.

“There’s no evidence that this surge is producing the political progress needed to resolve the civil war in Iraq, or that it will be accomplished through more of the same,” Obama spokesman Bill Burton said.

MoveOn.org conceded that the ad made some of its own members nervous: “Most MoveOn members liked it, but there have been some folks who’ve questioned why we targeted General Petraeus or chose the language we did.”

They had reason to be worried. As the Washington Post reported at the time: “While some of Petraeus’s statistics are open to challenge, his claims about a general reduction in violence have been borne out over subsequent months. It now looks as if Petraeus was broadly right on this issue at least.”

MoveOn.org continued to defend the “betray us” language, but the ad created a backlash. Congress passed the war supplemental funding that the Bush White House wanted, and 71 senators, including 22 Democrats, voted for

a resolution sponsored by Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) condemning the ad. There was even more public controversy when it was revealed that the New York Times sold the ad space to MoveOn.org at a discounted rate, which some said was a potential violation of campaign finance laws.

Anti-war liberals began criticizing the MoveOn.org anti-surge campaign as a failure. Writing in Rolling Stone in February 2008, Matt Taibbi called it “one of the most awesome political collapses since Neville Chamberlain.” He added: “[M]uch of what has passed for peace activism in the past year was little more than a thinly veiled scheme to use popular discontent over the war to unseat vulnerable Republicans up for re-election in 2008.”

MoveOn also suffered a humiliating defeat in the 2006 congressional elections. After raising more than \$250,000 nationwide for anti-war candidate Ned Lamont and helping him snatch the Democratic nomination in Connecticut away from incumbent Sen. Joe Lieberman, Lamont lost in the general election. Lieberman, who beat Lamont by 10 percentage points, ran as an “Independent Democrat” and now caucuses with the majority Democrats in the Senate.

### MoveOn.org in the Age of Obama

MoveOn.org claims credit for directing \$88 million in campaign donations to Barack Obama’s presidential campaign and for organizing millions of volunteers for phone banks and get out the vote efforts.

Today the MoveOn.org affiliate AAEI appears to have folded. According to NPR it spent an estimated \$1.5 million on ads attacking Republican Presidential candidate John McCain in 2008. The ads showed children undergoing basic training, implying a McCain presidency would result in voters’ children going off to fight a war. The group’s website has gone dark.

AAEI director Tom Matzzie now heads an organization called the Campaign to Defend America (CDA). If Republicans ever get their act together and figure out a way to effectively attack the Obama administration expect CDA to swing into action “defending America.” MoveOn.org’s founder Wes Boyd is listed as CDA’s “secretary.” It was funded in part with a \$3.5 million donation from the George Soros-backed Fund for America.

MoveOn.org remains active. In March it spent \$150,000 on radio and Internet ads to target 20 wavering Democrats to support President Obama’s \$3.6 trillion fiscal 2010 budget. For instance, it pressured two Arizona House Democrats first elected in 2006 as fiscal moderates, Reps. Gabrielle Giffords and Harry Mitchell, to vote for the Obama budget, spending \$5,500 in Gifford’s Tucson district and \$20,000 in Mitchell’s Phoenix district to secure their votes. MoveOn has 70,000 members in Arizona. (Mitchell was one of 20 Democrats who voted ‘no’ on the legislation, which passed by 233-196 on April 2. Giffords voted ‘yes’.)

MoveOn is moving on to other issues. The Iraq war, once central to its agenda, has faded. In a 2009 online poll less than half of MoveOn.org members (48.3%) now cite ending war in Iraq as a priority. Universal healthcare is now the top item on its agenda (64.9%) followed by economic recovery and stopping climate change.

*Sean Higgins is a Washington, D.C.-based reporter.*

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Many thanks.

Terrence Scanlon  
President

# BrieflyNoted

**ACORN**, a group that claims to protect the poor, has accepted money from a developer to support Atlantic Yards, a Brooklyn, New York, project that is expected to displace poor residents. Last year **Forest City Ratner Companies LLC** agreed to give the venal poverty group a \$1 million loan and a \$500,000 grant. To make sure ACORN stays on board, the last \$200,000 is to be paid out in equal installments this month and in August 2010. ACORN owes millions of dollars in back taxes to the **IRS**, states, and localities across the nation.

ACORN chief organizer (CEO) **Bertha Lewis** lashed out at President **Obama** for choosing a finance executive whom she claimed refused to be a fund manager in a toxic assets program. “American homeowners and taxpayers demand nothing less than all hands on deck to save the American dream and rescue the economy,” Lewis said. “**Wilbur Ross** has so far refused to do his part. That must change, now.” Ross controls **American Home Mortgage Servicing Inc.** (AHMSI) which ACORN described as one of the “Homewrecker 4” for not participating in the federal mortgage restructuring program. AHMSI spokeswoman **Christine Sullivan** told *Organization Trends* that Lewis has got the wrong guy. The company joined Obama’s program after months of negotiations, she said.

**Joseph Romm**, a senior fellow at **John Podesta’s Center for American Progress**, tried unsuccessfully to distance his **George Soros**-funded organization from **NASA’s** reigning climate kook, **James Hansen**. Hansen has attacked what he calls the “counterfeit climate bill known as Waxman-Markey” for not punishing industry enough. In a revealing Huffington Post op-ed, Romm branded him a traitor who is “mostly providing aid-and-comfort to the deniers and delayers.”

President Obama was booed at a meeting of the **American Medical Association** when he told attendees he will not risk offending trial lawyers by pushing for medical malpractice liability reform. It’s just more proof to suggest that the Big Government healthcare alliance is falling apart.

Asked to comment on the extramarital escapades of South Carolina’s Republican governor **Mark Sanford** and Sen. **John Ensign** (R-Nevada), **Americans for Tax Reform** president **Grover Norquist** was characteristically blunt. “I disagree with the idea that this shows problems for the modern Republican Party,” said Norquist. Referring to the conservative ideology of the two men, he quipped, “I think instead it shows the sexual attractiveness of limited-government conservatism.”

Fans of the late **Michael Jackson** wanna be startin’ somethin’. Upset that Rep. **Peter King** (R-New York) called Jackson a “pervert” and other things, they’ve started raising money against King at the liberal fundraising website, **ActBlue.com**, which describes itself as “the online clearinghouse for Democratic action.” They point out that Jackson was acquitted of child molestation charges. “As we mourn the loss of an American legend, political grandstanding is not what we need right now!” the fundraising page asserts.