



Creating Progressive Infrastructure Now

An Action Plan for Reclaiming America's Heart and Soul

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Summary

The American conservative movement has succeeded in moving public attitudes steadily rightward over the last 30 years, with far-reaching consequences for the country's political governance. This success has been achieved through a well-funded and well-coordinated organizational infrastructure that follows a long-term, disciplined communications strategy. In order for moderates and progressives to maximize the power of their own ideas and values, and to compete effectively with the right wing over the coming decades, they must develop, without delay, their own infrastructural capacity and practices. This paper suggests how to get started.

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Creating Progressive Infrastructure Now: An Action Plan for Reclaiming America's Heart and Soul

By Leonard M. Salle and Katherine A. Forrest

*It is not enough to have better ideas and a better vision.
We need the determination and the means to make the ideas and vision a reality.*

The Conservative Infrastructure and the 2004 Election

In the aftermath of the November 2004 election, as can be expected, numerous political analysts and commentators are giving their thoughts on what has happened and why. Much of what is being said has truth and value, but it does not tell the whole story. There has been almost no media recognition of the role that an extensive network of conservative organizations played in the election. This conservative infrastructure, which advances a long-term conservative strategy, continuously markets their ideology to the broad public, effectively crowding out other perspectives. This conservative strategy played a significant role in the Democratic loss and, over time, has also forced Democrats to move to the Right in hopes of getting elected.

Conservative politicians are provided with both the ideas and the specific language – such as “frivolous lawsuits” and “tax relief” – by the infrastructure, for use in public statements and campaigns. The messaging components of the conservative infrastructure also present these words and the associated conservative perspectives to the public through multiple media, making it appear as if the politicians are simply expressing widely accepted ideas. Moreover, thanks to their institutional infrastructure and its affiliated media, conservative politicians and activists can quickly communicate their messages to the broad public rapidly through conservative talk radio, network television, and print media. The ability to make the “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth” allegations into a major media story, for example, casting doubt upon the integrity and honesty of Senator John Kerry, had a major impact on the 2004 presidential election by almost all accounts.

So any analysis that points only to the mechanics of the campaign, to the supposed strengths of the Republicans and weaknesses of the Democrats, misses a major factor in the political races. The political success of the Republican Party rests largely on a network of right-wing organizations, individuals, and their funders that together formulate and disseminate compelling messages that support conservative candidates. A major driver of the Republican victory was this ideologically-oriented conservative movement infrastructure.

There is no comparable progressive infrastructure. Moderate and progressive candidates are on their own. They have to make their own arguments, they have to develop their own language, they have to educate voters on their issues, and they cannot depend upon an infrastructure and its aligned media for support the way conservative candidates can.

A Brief Historical Perspective

Over the past 30 years, as a result of the effectiveness of conservative infrastructure, politicians of both major parties have had to move to the right in order to get elected. Today, even many Democrats talk about “downsizing” government, “reforming” the system of tort laws, and promoting “choice” in public education. These are all slogans that the conservative infrastructure has been selling the public for years.

The original impetus to create the institutions that now constitute the conservative infrastructure was a memorandum that Lewis F. Powell, Jr., submitted to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (USCOC) on August 23, 1971, addressing what he called the “Attack on American Free Enterprise System.” Powell, who was nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court two months later by Richard Nixon, claimed that "the American economic system" of business and free markets was "under broad attack" by "Communists, New Leftists and other revolutionaries who would destroy the entire system, both political and economic." Powell argued that those engaged in this attack came from "the college campus, the pulpit, the media, the intellectual and literary journals, the arts and sciences, and from politicians." The Powell memorandum was widely distributed to the membership of the USCOC and syndicated columnist Jack Anderson wrote several columns discussing the memorandum.

Powell intended his memorandum to be a call to action for the USCOC, which he thought would be the primary institution considering and implementing his many suggestions for protecting the American enterprise system. However, it was not the USCOC that took action.

In 1973, in response to the Powell memo, Joseph Coors and Christian-right leader Paul Weyrich founded an activist think tank, the Heritage Foundation, which is now the flagship organization of the ultra-conservative movement. Subsequently, the Olin Foundation began funding similar organizations in concert with Richard Mellon Scaife's various foundations, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation, Coors' foundations, foundations associated with the Koch oil family, and a group of large corporations. The organization Philanthropy Roundtable was founded to coordinate this funding. What all these foundations had in common is that their leaders were associated with the extreme right of the political spectrum – such as the John Birch Society and the secretive Christian-Right Council. There are now over 500 organizations that receive funding from this core group.

In addition to the Heritage Foundation, some other well-known infrastructure organizations on the Right are American Enterprise Institute, Cato Institute, Pacific Research Institute, American Legislative Exchange Council, and the Federalist Society. Media organizations aligned with the conservative infrastructure include the Washington Times and FOX News. Media personalities that work closely with others to advance the Right's ideology, such as Rush Limbaugh, also function as part of the Right's infrastructure.

The Right's successful dissemination of their values and ideas is why conservative perspectives now dominate the public discourse. It is why so many candidates who, 30 years ago, would have been considered too extreme to be given serious consideration are now being elected. It is why this country now urgently needs a progressive infrastructure (PI).

Understanding the Nature of Infrastructure

Recently there has been talk of creating a “progressive infrastructure” and there already are certain organizations that could participate in that infrastructure. However, a clear understanding what constitutes an infrastructure, progressive or otherwise, is needed.

Webster defines infrastructure as “the basic framework of a system.” We can think of it as something like our interstate highway system, which is the framework that enables surface travel through and around the nation. To be fully operational, the highway infrastructure must incorporate such functions as maintenance, highway patrol, and the accommodation of a variety of different vehicle types.

In this paper, we are talking about an infrastructure where the framework comprises the organizations and individuals that support a political movement based on underlying values and principles. It is a system capable of influencing the public and the politics of the nation by marketing ideas and advancing a political agenda. For such an infrastructure to operate effectively, the infrastructure must be able to serve a number of functions, as in the example of the highway system. If those functions are not provided for, the infrastructure will be an incomplete system unable to accomplish its objectives.

Functions of a Political Movement Infrastructure:

- Articulate the underlying ideology;
- Develop strategies and tactics that can be used by organizations within and allied to the infrastructure;
- Develop and disseminate conceptual frames and language that can be used to advance positions consistent with the movement’s ideology;
- Conduct market research on attitudes, knowledge, framing, language, and media usage;
- Educate public officials and candidates regarding the issues;
- Garner favorable media coverage for the movement’s philosophy and positions;
- Conduct policy research and development that reflects the movement’s priorities;
- Create and disseminate content for the media that effectively communicates the movement’s philosophy and positions;
- Influence major institutions to respond favorably to the movement’s ideas and proposals;
- Track the behavior of opponents and develop appropriate counter-measures;
- Recruit and train members for the movement, including those of a younger generation;
- Cultivate and coordinate both regular and ad hoc funding sources;
- Develop model legislation for adoption by state legislatures and by Congress;
- Prepare policy papers that explain and advocate the movement’s positions on specific issues;
- Create a body of intellectual work that supports critical issue areas;
- Establish speakers bureaus and provide training for speakers
- Provide special training in using verbal framing for office holders, for those who appear in the media, authors, and for grass roots activists;
- Educate and influence decision-makers regarding specific issues;
- Exert an appropriate influence on the legal and judicial systems; and
- Coordinate the various components of the infrastructure on an ongoing basis.

This is not an exhaustive list of infrastructure functions. Other important functions of a political movement, such as grassroots organizing and training of political campaign operatives and candidates, are not being considered here as infrastructure functions, although clearly there are ways in which these overlap or work synergistically with infrastructure activities.

Characteristics of Infrastructure Organizations

Infrastructure organizations are characteristically multi-issue and focused on advancing underlying principles and ideas. This model has worked well for the Right and there is no reason to think it cannot also work well for progressives. Multi-issue think tanks not only develop ideas and policy, but also engage in advocacy, frequently with a strong emphasis on marketing and communications. Such organizations can advance multiple issues simultaneously, relying on unifying frames and language consistent with their philosophy and values.

Multi-issue organizations enable efficient communications. Established relationships with a variety of specialized media and communication outlets—e.g., ethnic-language broadcast media, the Internet blogging community, youth/campus organizations, faith organizations—can be used to disseminate messages about a wide range of issues in ways that would be difficult for single-issue organizations. Multi-issue advocacy organizations can tailor their messages to the interests, culture, and psychodemographics of different target audiences, all the while advancing the same underlying philosophy. They can also serve as resource centers for the media, speakers, politicians, and policy makers who need information quickly and in customized formats.

Arguably the most influential of the conservative infrastructure organizations is the Heritage Foundation. It is a multi-issue advocacy think tank whose operations include development of long-term policy strategy, policy research, publications and presentations, wide-ranging communications to the public and to office-holders, training of conservative spokespersons and media personnel, production of media content (including for television and radio), maintenance of an information database for mainstream media, and acting as a central clearinghouse for a large infrastructure of hundreds of other organizations. In the words of its president, Edwin J. Feulner, “We don’t just stress credibility... We stress an efficient, effective delivery system. Production is one side; marketing is equally important.” The Heritage Foundation’s primary objective is the dissemination of conservative ideas; its primary strategy is to employ information technology and the media in order to influence political leaders and public opinion.

In addition to the Heritage Foundation and a number of other think tanks, the Right’s infrastructure organizations include, but are not limited to, those that provide model legislation for state legislators; those that recruit and train law students to be advocates for the movement, then facilitate their career advancement in government and policy-making positions; those that coordinate funding; and those that coordinate with single-issue organizations. Although these organizations are not involved in marketing or communications per se, their participation in the conservative infrastructure is essential. The conservative

infrastructure has one or more organizations that carry out each of the infrastructure functions listed above.

Infrastructure Independent of Political Parties

An important, distinguishing characteristic of political movement infrastructure is that, although its advocacy may appear to be aligned with a political party, the infrastructure is, as a matter of law and perception, separate from any political party. Because the Right's infrastructure is separate from the Republican Party, conservative infrastructure organizations can maintain their tax-protected status, while acting as strong advocates for positions that are consistent with those of Republican politicians and the Party. Indeed, the conservative infrastructure develops and sets the long-term policy agenda on an ongoing basis, as well as engaging in short-term tactics to advance specific issues. Conservative politicians can use talking points provided by right-wing think tanks, appear on infrastructure-developed media programs, and have what they say repeated in the Right's echo-chamber. The lack of a similar infrastructure has put progressive politicians and their political parties at a distinct disadvantage.

Potential Components of a Progressive Infrastructure

A number of existing progressive organizations can potentially become part of a new progressive infrastructure. These include multi-issue advocacy organizations, which would have distinct value as focal points for a political movement infrastructure. However, with proper coordination, a number of the numerous single-issue nonprofit organizations and even politically-oriented for-profit entities can play important roles in carrying out some of the functions of the infrastructure, such as policy and market research, policy development, and strategic communications.

The Commonweal Institute, a multi-issue advocacy think tank, was established in 2001 by the authors of this paper, who intended it to serve as one of the central components of a progressive infrastructure. The organization was designed to reach the general public and diverse audiences, not just the progressive mainstream. Its planned operations feature a long-term strategic plan (to be developed in collaboration with other progressive organizations), coordination of short-term tactical actions with the long-term strategy, policy research, market research (frame development, cognitive interviewing, focus groups, polling), and training. Diverse audiences will be reached through use of market segmentation, multiple media channels, content and language appropriate to the targeted audience, and creation of customized communication products.

A new progressive think tank, Center for American Progress, currently focuses on timely national and international issues, communicating to major media and through its website and e-mail. The Rockridge Institute is a think tank specializing in framing for multiple issues. A number of progressive organizations, including but not limited to the Institute for Policy Studies, Economic Policy Institute, Campaign for America's Future, Demos, Media Matters for America, and Center for Policy Alternatives, also appear to be positioned to function as infrastructure organizations. Each of these organizations has distinct capabilities and interests that are potentially complementary. Working within the context of an infrastructure, each of these organizations would be able to have greater impact as a result of coordination (see Internal Coordination below).

Most existing progressive organizations have a discrete issue focus. Since they represent so much of the existing progressive capacity, it will be essential that they become integrated as much as possible into infrastructure operations. This can be accomplished, in part, through shared strategy, framing, and language. Infrastructure organizations with marketing and communications capabilities can reach the broader public with the intellectual product of single-issue organizations, a number of which conduct substantial amounts of research and policy development. Multi-issue infrastructure communication organizations, however, may be able to take strategic advantage of synergies between issues -- such as education, immigration, and the economy; or energy independence, job creation, and transportation policy – in ways that cross traditional issue boundaries. It will be the responsibility of coordinating infrastructure organizations to ensure that the research undertaken by single issue organizations is not duplicated by infrastructure organizations. For example, if an issue organization specializes in economic analysis, every effort should be made to use that capability rather than duplicating it within an infrastructure type organization.

The Action: Creating a Progressive Infrastructure

The following suggestions are intended to spur the thinking of individuals or groups that could participate in creating and funding a progressive infrastructure (PI).

Establishing the PI Project Team

Since time is pressing, establishing the PI has to be approached as a critical undertaking spear-headed by a project team. This team should include members with planning and management skills, as well as those who are intellectually familiar with PI concepts. Even when an excellent plan exists, nothing will happen unless the persons needed to execute the plan are identified and given the money and authority to proceed. It would be desirable to involve members of the moderate and progressive business and venture capital community in establishing and possibly working with the PI Project Team. This would help the Project Team take advantage of their specific expertise in creating what will amount to a new industry.

Initial Work Plan

With the functions of an infrastructure in mind and a systems approach, the Project Team would create a work plan that would be refined over time. The purpose of an explicit initial plan is to “get the ball rolling.” Additionally, since the need for the PI is urgent, activity on many of the various work plan items should proceed simultaneously, or almost so. This parallel development would work well, because at the early stage of activities there will likely be little interdependence.

Items in the initial work plan might include: creation of a “map” of the desired PI; preparation of presentation materials; a series of funders’ conferences; articulation of an underlying progressive ideology; framing and language for certain specific issues; and the establishment of special training programs about use of appropriate framing for moderate and progressive office holders, candidates, those who appear in the media, and authors.

Early on, it will be important to identify and begin working with those who will likely be directly involved in the PI, as well as to identify, inform, or involve a number of research and issue-focused advocacy organizations that ultimately could coordinate their activities with those of the PI. There should also be communications with strategic initiative alliances (e.g., around environmental issues or reproductive rights) and single-audience-focused organizations (e.g., those that work with youth, elderly, or racial/ethnic subgroups) about their possible relationship to PI organizations.

Ongoing Development of the PI

An important basis for the ongoing development and functioning of the PI would be the creation of long-term strategies for multiple issues. This would make it possible for moderates and progressives to move from a reactive to a proactive stance. The Heritage Foundation's 1,100-page "Mandate for Leadership" served as the guiding strategic document for the Reagan administration; Heritage has subsequently published periodic strategy updates. A similar strategic approach would serve as a guide for coordinating progressives' activities on both a short-term and a long-term basis.

Once underway, the PI would continue to expand in its capacity to influence public opinion and the political direction of the nation. Framing and language consistent with underlying progressive values and ideology should be broadly disseminated through the PI and across various media. Single-issue organizations would be able to coordinate with the PI and in some cases may become part of the PI. The base of both major and small funders would continue to expand both in response to the effectiveness of the PI and because the PI organizations would be able to use their marketing capacity for fundraising purposes. The parts of the PI that are not directly involved in idea marketing would also be critical, as is the case with the conservative infrastructure. Moving forward, the PI should focus on using creativity and innovation not only to keep up with, but also to seek advantage over, the well-established conservative infrastructure, which can be expected to continue to innovate as well.

Development of PI should be seen as synergistic with other activities to advance progressive ideas. For example, the success of major strategic initiatives, such as those developing around energy independence and alternative economic models, will depend upon a supportive political environment. PI would work to create such a favorable political environment on a continuous basis, independent of election cycles. In addition, multi-issue advocacy PI organizations with extensive communication capabilities could offer strategic initiative advocates a variety of ways of presenting their ideas and would provide access to wider audiences.

Process Considerations

In order to provide ongoing, valued support for the progressive community, to arrive at consensus expeditiously, and to maximize efficiency, PI organizations and their major backers will need to address several key matters of process.

Stakeholder Input into Decision-Making

A viable progressive movement cannot be expected to be created or maintained only from the top down. The PI will need to use processes that enable and welcome substantive input to

decision-making from all stakeholder groups, including grassroots and state level organizations, and diverse constituencies. Soliciting and valuing input from these stakeholders will help to ensure a higher level of participation, mutual trust, and overall effectiveness. At the same time, it will be important to establish realistic project plans and to see these plans through on schedule.

Long-Term Vision

An early, major challenge will be to articulate a progressive vision in clear, concise terms, and to achieve sufficient consensus on this vision that it becomes useful for focusing the activities of PI organizations. The various specific policy goals of different progressive groups need to be coordinated under a short, simple list of fundamental objectives. The conservative movement, for example, has condensed their objectives to free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional values, and strong national defense. At the more detailed level, these are implemented by conservative infrastructure organizations through strategies to increase privatization, decrease taxes (particularly on the investor class), decrease regulation, counter the belief in shared responsibility for the common good, and secure control over major energy sources, among other aims.

A central task, then, involves formulating and articulating relatively simple principles and goals that will reflect underlying progressive values in the coming decades, as we undertake such large-scale and long-term endeavors as:

- Achieving a fruitful balance between the interests of the business sector and the needs of the public;
- Speaking for “the commons,” or those shared assets – physical, social, human-made – which we inherit as a community rather than as individuals, and to manage these assets on behalf of future generations (paraphrasing Adam Werbach, www.commonassets.org);
- Creating a progressive vision for America that is well equipped to confront the challenges facing our nation and the international community, including religious fanaticism, environmental deterioration, an increasing divide between the wealthy and the poor, and new developments in technology and communication.

Internal Coordination

The conservative infrastructure has created mechanisms for continually adjusting short-term tactics to match longer-term strategies and overall goals. These include weekly meetings of dozens of the key players, at which priorities and responsibilities are discussed and decided. Responsibility for convening and running the meetings is assigned to a specific individual. This coordination and harmony between short-term and long-term, plus a disciplined approach to communications, have been instrumental to the Right’s success.

The organizations and individuals in the PI will need to develop and maintain similar levels of strategic coordination and communications savvy in order to advance consistent, persuasive messages that communicate its vision effectively to the American public. This can be facilitated by appropriate funding specifically for the coordination function. Ideally, each of the component organizations would have its own areas of specialization in terms of functional capacity and interests (e.g., policy research, framing, market research, media access, areas of policy expertise, training, databases), with relatively little overlap. The component PI organizations would work cooperatively on endeavors.

For example, if a public education issue were identified as a high priority, one organization might agree to conduct and/or coordinate all of the necessary research, another might do framing and language development around the issue for all to use, another might coordinate all the training for speakers and preparation of materials to be distributed to public officials, and yet others work specifically to ensure appropriate coverage by mainstream and ethnic media. Several organizations might issue communications related to public education in order to achieve maximum media penetration and sustained attention to the issue. The net effect would be that the organizations would reinforce each other, but not duplicate efforts. Management of such multi-disciplinary team efforts will clearly be a skill required for those responsible for this coordination role.

Key Ingredient: Funding the PI

Funding the PI will require a different approach than traditional project-directed funding. First, since the major focus of the PI at this point is developing capacity, rather than defining and executing single projects, the funding also must focus on development of institutional capacity. According to a recent report about conservative infrastructure by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), “Conservative foundations have, in part, been so effective not so much due to the size of their grants but rather because they tend to give more to general operating support.”

Another important point to recognize regarding funding of the PI is that, as argued above, the infrastructure must be able to carry out a number of functions if it is to operate most effectively. If some of those functions are not provided for, the infrastructure will be an incomplete system and therefore unable to fulfill all of its objectives.

Progressives who normally make substantial political contributions should think of supporting PI as, in effect, making a political contribution. Providing support to the infrastructure will improve chances for progressive candidates to be elected. Unlike political contributions that result in a win or loss in a specific election, a contribution to the PI can be expected to result in ongoing and increasing political strength for progressives.

For the many moderate and progressive individuals and foundations that focus their support on specific issues, a contribution to building PI will improve the political environment for the causes they care about. Currently, in the absence of PI, many worthy progressive programs are being adversely affected by the conservative-dominated political environment that is hostile to their aims.

Strategic Investment Model

The preferred model for funding progressive infrastructure is what we will refer to here as the strategic investment model. Following this model, funders and their advisors would refer to the infrastructure mapping, created as part of the initial work plan described above. Existing organizational and individual resources (fully functional or potential) would be identified and given necessary support. Additionally, where the mapping indicates gaps that no existing organizations or individuals appear ready to fill, funders should seek ways of filling them,

including expanding the capabilities of existing organizations or, if necessary, creating new organizations.

The Venture Capital (VC) Model

A funding model that should complement the strategic investment model is the VC model, which in recent years has become a popular model for funders in the business and financial sectors. The VC model has developed as groups of wealthy progressives have come together in a number of cities across the country, seeking to direct their support to organizations that will help progressives become more effective.

For the most part, these groups appear to use the VC model, which has been responsible for much of the growth and success of the high-tech industry. After inviting organizations to make presentations to the group, the funders then choose from among the proposals, whether from well-known, established entities (preferred by groups in New York and Washington) or from new, innovative ones (preferred by those in California).

A strength of the VC model is that it efficiently identifies new ideas and options. Another strength is that it provides both financial support and expertise to promising organizations at an early stage. Additionally, VC funders can act much more rapidly and flexibly than can traditional foundation funders. The VC model has had great success in industry because there is a clear incentive for entrepreneurs to innovate and fill in gaps, thus rounding out an entire industry. The venture capitalists funding industry have a strong profit motive, too; they can afford to invest in many start-ups in order to achieve the occasional home run.

Although ideally suited to industry, there are limitations of the VC model for the purpose of creating a PI. First, it is not ideally suited to building a coordinated, interlinked, functioning industry quickly. Secondly, there is no assurance that newcomers will work in line with overall long-term strategic initiatives, as will be necessary for proper functioning of the PI. Third, the financial incentive for nonprofits to identify and fill infrastructure gaps does not exist or is not as clear. However, it is both desirable and possible for the VC model to incorporate elements of the strategic investment model. By doing so, those who are currently using a VC funding model would likely be central to creating a fully functional PI.

The Traditional Foundation Model

The traditional foundation funding model, which uses narrow guidelines and proposals, is slower and more cumbersome, and seldom provides the unrestricted funds needed for major institutional growth. This model is valuable for funding specific projects, but, as currently structured, it is not appropriate for building a substantial, flexible, and interlinked PI rapidly. One of the ongoing efforts in creating a PI will be to encourage foundations to provide the type of unrestricted long-term funding that characterizes a number of the conservative foundations. Because of the work of NCRP and others, it appears that some foundations are now discussing the value of providing this type of funding and, as a result, there may be changes in funding policies of some moderate-progressive foundations in the near future.

Optimally, funding for the PI will be based primarily on the strategic investment model, complemented by VC model funding, which can be particularly useful for identifying and funding innovative and creative elements that could function within the PI. The VC model can

also incorporate elements of the strategic investment model. Traditional foundation funding and donations from individuals and organizations in time may also play a role. Obviously, it will be important to have close coordination between funding activities to ensure the efficient use of funds.

Conclusion

Moderates and progressives should not waste any time in their quest to reclaim the heart and soul of America. A crucial first step is to understand the functions of political movement infrastructure, the necessary funding approach, and the importance of strategic coordination and communications. The next stage is to begin actually establishing a comprehensive progressive infrastructure.

Every day that we do not act on this, the conservative infrastructure will strengthen the position of the right wing of the Republican Party. Every day that we do not act, the ability for progressives and moderates to reach the broad public with their messages will be diminished.

We must not miss the opportunity to create a reasonable, just and sustainable society, for all people now and for future generations.

So what do we do? We act – now. This paper suggests how to get started.

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About the Commonweal Institute

The Commonweal Institute, a multi-issue think tank and communication organization, strives to create a political environment more supportive of progressive institutions, issues, and candidates. The Institute has conducted research on the conservative infrastructure, its strategies, and how its actions are impacting mainstream American institutions such as public schools, the civil justice system, and the philanthropic community. This paper is one of the materials that the Commonweal Institute is preparing to promote the development of a political movement infrastructure with the capacity to get progressive ideas out more effectively to the public and those in positions of power.

During the past 15 months, the Commonweal Institute has issued two ground-breaking reports. *The Attack on Trial Lawyers and Tort Law* galvanized trial lawyer organizations throughout the country with the realization that Congressional lobbying alone is not sufficient, and that they must address public opinion as well. *Responding to the Attack on Public Education and Teacher Unions* is the first publication that presents strategies for protecting public education from the right-wing assault; it also includes recommendations for building progressive infrastructure. Another recent Commonweal Institute report, *Faulty Data and*

False Conclusions: The Myth of Skyrocketing Medical Malpractice Costs, addresses a major political issue at a critical time, providing solid evidence to discredit the claims of the “tort reform” movement.

Focusing on the importance of reaching the broad public during this past election season, the Commonweal Institute sponsored the Digital Polemics 2004 Documentary Film Festival in Austin, Texas; participated in the production of the *Votergate* documentary videos; and held a series of popular workshops, "Talking Politics with People Unlike Ourselves." Commonweal Institute Fellows and staff have published articles (print and online), given public presentations, and appeared on radio and television.

The members of the Commonweal Institute’s Advisory Board reflect the organization’s focus on moving public opinion. They include George Lakoff (framing and language expert), Celinda Lake (focus groups and polling), Paul Ray and Brooke Warrick (survey research and market segmentation), Rudolph Malveaux (ethnic music as political communication), Joan Blades (co-founder of MoveOn.org), and David Zucker (public relations). The Commonweal Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization incorporated in Washington, D.C.

The authors, Leonard M. Salle and Katherine A. Forrest, are the co-founders of the Commonweal Institute. Their biographical information can be viewed at http://www.commonwealinstitute.org/about_us.htm#Founders.