



# **Follow the Money: San Diego County**

*Investigation Reveals How Left-Wing Organizations in San Diego County Get Inappropriate Taxpayer Funding While Engaging in Lobbying, Issue Advocacy, and Political Activities*

December 6, 2022



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# Executive Summary

San Diego County has taken an unmistakable hard Left turn politically in the last ten years — and this report reveals alarming evidence that taxpayer funds have been and continue to be used to finance a network of Left-wing organizations that are behind this political shift.

## ► An Integrated Network of Left-Wing Organizations

Starting 10 years ago and with almost no one noticing, the Left in San Diego began creating and funding an integrated network of so-called “non-profit, non-partisan” groups that has not only been instrumental in advancing Left-wing policy ideas in the region, but has actively helped elect Left-wing politicians to key local government offices.

Our investigation reveals extensive coordination between government agencies and these Left-wing groups for both funding and policy development — with no apparent control on their lobbying and political activities.

The overtly political nature of these organizations and their intimate collaboration amongst each other and with government agencies raises several red flags about the potential misuse of government resources — and thus taxpayer money — to advance partisan political agendas.

***Our investigation has uncovered over \$6.6 million in taxpayer funds have been directed to Left-wing groups in San Diego County through various government contracts and grants.***

***Taxpayer Funds Diverted to Left-Wing Political Organizations in San Diego County (2020-2021)***

	Total	Federal	State	Local
Alliance San Diego	\$699,726	\$246,976	\$277,750	\$175,000
Center on Policy Initiatives	\$348,593	\$208,796	\$0	\$139,797
Environmental Health Coalition	\$1,034,890	\$527,921	\$454,356	\$52,613
Mid-City Community Advocacy Network	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
PANA	\$95,525	\$70,525	\$0	\$25,000
Youth Will	\$171,967	\$109,467	\$0	\$62,500
San Diego Pride	\$2,403,563	\$2,248,113	\$0	\$155,450
San Diego LGBT Community Center	\$1,297,743	\$0	\$812,743	\$485,000
San Diego Organizing Project	\$178,111	\$107,111	\$0	\$71,000
Climate Action Campaign	\$321,921	\$279,536	\$0	\$42,385
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,602,039</b>	<b>\$3,798,445</b>	<b>\$1,544,849</b>	<b>\$1,258,745</b>

\*These figures do not reflect the true and total extent of taxpayer funding diverted to these groups in 2020-2021 but rather only the amounts of contracts and grants directly verified by our investigation. What is not included in these figures is whatever share of over \$100 million in statewide Covid-19 funding for “community-based organizations” that was routed through several foundations and private health contractors.

## ► Direct Use of Taxpayer Funds to Finance Left-Wing Organizations

If these Left-wing organizations were exclusively funded through private donations from individuals and non-governmental organizations, they would have every right to engage in lobbying and political advocacy — provided they comply with transparency and campaign finance laws governing such activity.

Unfortunately, our investigation has uncovered millions in taxpayer funds that have been directed to these organizations through various government contracts and grants — as well as through in-kind use of government staffing resources under the guise of membership on “advisory” working groups.

It is completely inappropriate (and possibly illegal) for taxpayer funds to be used to fund organizations that exist to advance any political ideology, whether Left or Right. It would be even worse for funding to be used for political activities and lobbying as our investigation uncovered in San Diego County.

***“It is completely inappropriate (and possibly illegal) for taxpayer funds to be used to fund organizations that exist to advance Left-wing ideologies — in many cases through political activities and lobbying.”***

## Left-Wing Politicians Actively Directing Taxpayer Funds to Left-Wing Organizations That Supported Them

Our investigation found a correlation between Left-wing politicians gaining control of a governing board and the subsequent flow of money back to the Left-wing groups in the form of contracts, grants, and other in-kind financial resources.

Reviews of the social media posts of the Left-wing groups in our investigation revealed a pattern of favorably presenting a number of Left-wing politicians by name, grassroots lobbying to influence government decision, marketing and promoting policy positions of Left-wing candidates for office, and targeted “Get-Out-The-Vote” activities that would predominantly benefit Left-wing candidates in elections — all while receiving massive sums of taxpayer funding.

Once in office, Left-wing politicians have engaged in a pattern of behavior of actively directing taxpayer financial resources to these same Left-wing groups that supported them during elections. Specifically, board minutes and voting records of several San Diego County government entities reveal Left-wing politicians actively directing contracts and grants to Left-wing groups.

## Refusal to Comply with the California Public Records Act (CPRA)

► In the course of our investigation, several local government agencies repeatedly violated the California Public Records Act (CPRA) by steadfastly refusing to release public records.

For example, after County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher personally directed that hundreds of thousands of dollars be awarded to the Left-wing groups we were reviewing, his office refused — even after repeated letters from legal counsel representing the Transparency Foundation — to release any emails or other communications with these groups.

This illegal action to eliminate transparency raises significant concerns regarding the motivation behind Fletcher’s direction of taxpayer funds to these groups.

## Recommendations for Accountability and Transparency

Based on the evidence uncovered in this investigation suggesting the likely inappropriate, or at least questionable pattern of taxpayer funds being directed to Left-wing groups in San Diego County, the Transparency Foundation recommends a number of reforms be immediately implemented and appropriate audits and investigations be carried out by appropriate government authorities.

The San Diego County Grand Jury should initiate an investigation into the use of taxpayer funds by groups that engage in lobbying, issue advocacy, and political activity to determine if the funding was appropriately accounted for and used.

Given the significant diversion of Covid-19 funds to Left-wing groups that our investigation uncovered, a Congressional committee of appropriate jurisdiction should consider conducting an aggressive oversight hearing on the possible misappropriation of Covid-19 funds using San Diego County as a case study.

Additionally, our investigation uncovered more than \$100 million in statewide Covid-19 funding routed to “community-based organizations” through several foundations and private health contractors. We recommend the California State Auditor investigate which organizations received those funds and what were the deliverables and results associated with the funding.”

To remove any suspicion or doubt going forward, San Diego elected officials and government agencies should adopt a policy to prohibit taxpayer funding for any non-profit organization that engages in lobbying, issue advocacy, or political activity.

Appropriate agencies of jurisdiction should determine whether several of the organizations cited in this report violated state and/or local laws by failing to register as lobbyists given their activities documented herein.

***“To remove any suspicion or doubt going forward, San Diego elected officials and government agencies should adopt a policy to prohibit taxpayer funding for any non-profit organization that engages in lobbying, issue advocacy, or political activity.”***

## Investigation Methodology

The purpose of the Transparency Foundation’s investigation was to determine the following:

1. Whether groups that engage in lobbying and political activities were receiving government/taxpayer funding in San Diego County and how they were receiving it
2. Whether there could be any correlation established between changes in political control of a government entity and subsequent shifts in taxpayer funding being provided to political groups
3. Whether organizations receiving taxpayer funds that engage in lobbying had properly registered as lobbyists

Our investigation began by compiling a list of political groups active on both the Left and Right in San Diego County based on: mentions in local media; organizations registered as lobbyists with local government entities; and existing government funding streams.

For the purpose of this report, we defined activities of “political groups” in three categories:

1. **Lobbying:** Lobbying is defined as directly contacting government officials to advocate for a certain policy or encouraging members of the public to contact government officials to advocate for a certain policy.
2. **Issue Advocacy:** Issue Advocacy is defined as advertising ideas to members of the public to influence their views and positions on issues, which may have an impact on their voting behaviors. While the law does not treat issue advocacy as political activity, there can be no doubt that issue advocacy has an impact on voting behaviors.
3. **Political Activity:** Political Activity is defined as engaging in express advocacy on ballot measures or candidates in elections (endorsements, independent expenditures, etc.) or indirect advocacy by engaging in “Get-Out-The-Vote” activities such as promoting voting in elections or harvesting ballots.

We then examined funding flows from government agencies to these groups under three categories:

1. Local government agencies that were controlled by Democrats
2. Local government agencies that were controlled by Republicans
3. Local government agencies that saw control switch from Republican to Democrat

We then issued document demands to local government agencies under the California Public Records Act (CPRA) for any contracts, grants, deliverables, statements of work, and communications between the government agency and the groups that received funding.

We also obtained any publicly available documentation that would help us reach our research objectives, including obtaining: Form 990s filed with the IRS; lobbyist registration reports from the city and county government; and media reports citing the organizations.

## 10 Left-Wing Organizations Identified as “High Risk” for Use of Taxpayer Funds

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Based on the investigative methodology outlined above, our investigation found the following ten organizations both received substantial taxpayer funding while engaging in lobbying, political activity, and issue advocacy. All ten of these organizations are Left-wing in their political philosophy. We found no Right-wing organizations that triggered our criteria.

Our investigation considers these ten organizations as being “High Risk” organizations whose lobbying, issue advocacy, and political activities should be more carefully scrutinized before any additional taxpayer funding is provided to them.



Name of Group	Description of Organizational Activities	Engaged in Lobbying Government?	Annual Organizational Revenues in Total*	Partial Tally of Government Funding (Calendar 2020-2021)**
<b>Alliance San Diego</b>	Lobbies and advocates for tax increases, expansion of government welfare and rights for illegal immigrants, and union mandates — and conducts community organizing “Get-Out-The-Vote” programs among Left-leaning voters. Website: <a href="http://www.alliancesd.org">www.alliancesd.org</a>	YES  But not registered with either City or County	\$4.6 million	<b>\$699,726</b>
<b>Center on Policy Initiatives</b>	Lobbies and advocates for tax increases, expansion of government welfare, and union mandates — and conducts community organizing and “Get-Out-The-Vote” programs among Left-leaning voters. Website: <a href="http://cpisandiego.org">cpisandiego.org</a>	YES  Registered with both City and County	\$2.3 million	<b>\$348,593</b>
<b>Environmental Health Coalition</b>	Lobbies and advocates for environmental regulations — and conducts community organizing and “Get-Out-The-Vote” programs among Left-leaning voters. Website: <a href="http://environmentalhealth.org">environmentalhealth.org</a>	YES  Registered with City, but not with County	\$5.8 million	<b>\$1,034,890</b>
<b>Mid-City Community Advocacy Network</b>	Lobbies for defund-the-police and government-subsidized free transit, but its website mostly emphasizes “civic engagement” and “Get-Out-The-Vote” campaigns in the mid-city areas of San Diego. Website: <a href="http://midcitycan.org">midcitycan.org</a>	YES  Registered with the County, but not with the City,	Less than \$50 thousand	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)</b>	Lobbies for rights for illegal immigrants, rent control, and removing surveillance tools from law enforcement. PANA focuses on “civic engagement” and “Get-Out-The-Vote” programs in African, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian refugee communities. Website: <a href="http://panasd.org">panasd.org</a>	YES  Registered with both City and County	\$990 thousand	<b>\$95,525</b>
<b>Youth Will</b>	Lobbies for distribution of free menstrual products in public facilities and took credit for lobbying on numerous other county budget decisions. Has extensive activities focusing on “leadership development” of youth activists. Website: <a href="http://youthwill.org">youthwill.org</a>	YES  But not registered with either City or County	\$851 thousand	<b>\$171,967</b>
<b>San Diego Pride</b>	Was originally founded to serve as the financial and logistical entity for the annual LGBT Pride Parade and Festival, but has morphed into a lobbying group on a wide-range of Left-wing policies. Pride also engages in political campaign endorsements and “Get-Out-The-Vote” efforts. Website: <a href="http://sdpride.org">sdpride.org</a>	YES  But not registered with either City or County	\$3.8 million	<b>\$2,403,563</b>
<b>San Diego LGBT Community Center</b>	Was originally founded to be San Diego’s LGBTQ community’s “anchor organization” to provide behavioral health, counseling, and HIV testing, the Center now engages in significant lobbying on public welfare and Defund-the-Police. The Center also conducts extensive “Get-Out-The-Vote” efforts. Website: <a href="http://thecentersd.org">thecentersd.org</a>	YES  Registered with City, but not with County	\$7.6 million	<b>\$1,297,743</b>
<b>San Diego Organizing Project</b>	A network of 29 Episcopalian, Catholic, and other congregations across San Diego, SDOP lobbies on justice system reform, government-subsidized housing projects, rights for illegal immigrants, etc. It engages in significant “civic engagement” and “Get-Out-The-Vote” campaigns. Website: <a href="http://sdop.net">sdop.net</a>	YES  Registered with City, but not with County	\$1.4 million	<b>\$178,111</b>
<b>Climate Action Campaign</b>	Lobbies to impose costly and stringent “Green New Deal” environmental regulations in San Diego — including a mandate to force homeowners to retrofit their homes to eliminate natural gas appliances. Website: <a href="http://climateactioncampaign.org">climateactioncampaign.org</a>	YES:  Registered with both City and County	\$992 thousand	<b>\$321,921</b>

\*Reflects revenue reporting on the most recent Form-990 filed with the Internal Revenue Service and made public on the US Department of Treasury’s website.

\*\*Government Funding Levels Reflect Calendars 2020-2021 based on publicly-available funding decisions identified by the investigation across federal, state, and local government entities. NOTE: the levels of taxpayer funding for these organizations may be much greater than reflected in this chart because of failure by government agencies to respond to our requests in a complete and timely manner, as well as possibility of funding routed through third-parties. For example, we were not able to determine how much of the over \$100 million in statewide Covid-19 funding for “community-based organizations” was routed to these 10 groups through several foundations and private health contractors.

# Evidence Of Aggressive Lobbying, Issue Advocacy, And Political Activity By Taxpayer-funded Groups

## Alliance San Diego

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$699,726

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive grassroots and direct lobbying activities

**Registered Lobbying:** NO – Alliance San Diego has failed to register as a lobbyist with the city and county.

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** YES

While its legal operating name is “Equality Alliance of San Diego,” this group operates simply as “Alliance San Diego.” The group lobbies and advocates for tax increases, expansion of government welfare and rights for illegal immigrants, and union mandates — and conducts community organizing “Get-Out-The-Vote” programs among Left-leaning voters.

Alliance San Diego is a relatively large organization, with nearly two dozen paid staff. Upon clicking on its “donate” button on its website, visitors are told they are allowed to deduct contributions to Alliance San Diego for tax purposes — yet it issues a call-to-action to “help us reach more voters” to “fight for a more progressive San Diego,” which implies a highly political purpose. In fact Alliance San Diego bragged in a news release in October 2021 that it “engaged over 1 million voters during the 2021 Recall Election.”



### EXHIBIT 1: Alliance San Diego Request for Funding to “Reach More Voters”



1





## EXHIBIT 2: Alliance San Diego Political Activity in 2021 Recall Election



2

A review of Alliance San Diego's social media resources reveals repeated examples of grassroots lobbying activity — even though the organization is not registered as a lobbyist. Grassroots lobbying involves explicitly asking the public to urge elected officials to take a government action.

For example, in December 2021, Alliance San Diego sought to influence the drawing of political district lines in the City of San Diego by contacting its members and the public to “Tell the SD County Redistricting Commission it must prioritize equitable representation for BIPOC communities.”<sup>1</sup>

Alliance San Diego also backed specific legislation before the City of San Diego. For example, on June 2, 2022 Alliance San Diego promoted a petition on the actionnetwork.org platform urging the San Diego City Council to “Pass PROTECT” legislation to “limit bias in police practices.”

The San Diego City Municipal code makes it a misdemeanor for failure to file as a lobbyist when an organization meets the requirement to file.



## EXHIBIT 3: Alliance San Diego Grassroots Lobbying Activity on Social Media



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## EXHIBIT 4: Alliance San Diego Uses Its Social Media Platforms to Praise Democratic Politicians



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## Center on Policy Initiatives

**Taxpayer Funding Received: \$348,593**

**Grassroots Lobbying: YES** – Extensive grassroots and direct lobbying activities

**Registered Lobbying: YES** – Filed with both the City and County

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying: YES**

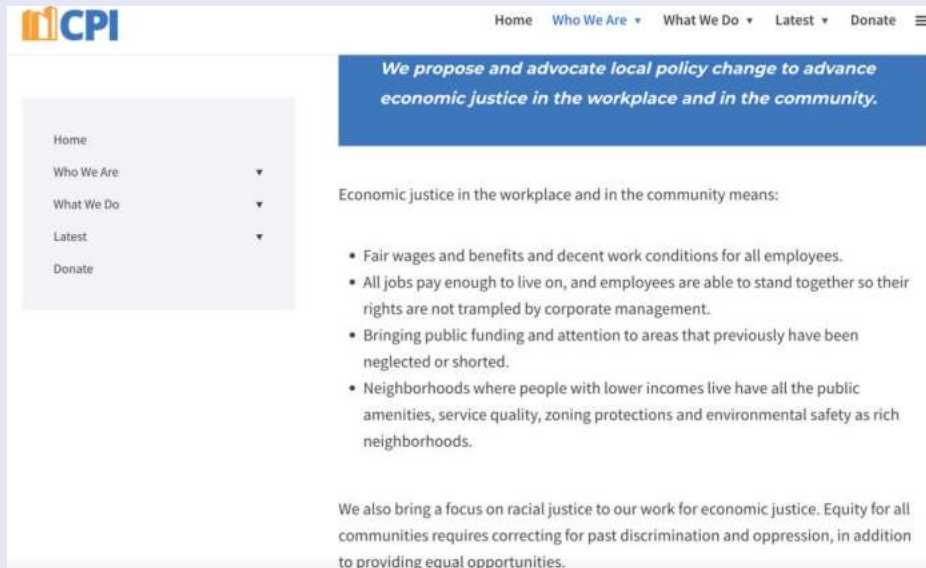
The Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI) is a union-backed policy group that lobbies and advocates for tax increases, expansion of government welfare, and union mandates. CPI is seen as the “thought leadership” hub of the far-Left movement in San Diego. Specifically, our investigation reveals a pattern of CPI formulating policy proposals that are then supported by Left-wing politicians in office.

What is problematic is the fact that CPI receives taxpayer funds all while its principal stated mission is to lobby to change government policies. Politicians giving funding to CPI are literally paying them to lobby them and their colleagues to pass legislation.

Even as it benefits from taxpayer funds, CPI is actively supporting tax hikes on San Diego working families and highly controversial proposals such as “Defund the Police.”



## EXHIBIT 5: CPI's Stated Mission is to Lobby to Change Government Policies



**CPI**  
CENTER ON POLICY INITIATIVES

Home Who We Are What We Do Latest Donate

*We propose and advocate local policy change to advance economic justice in the workplace and in the community.*

Economic justice in the workplace and in the community means:

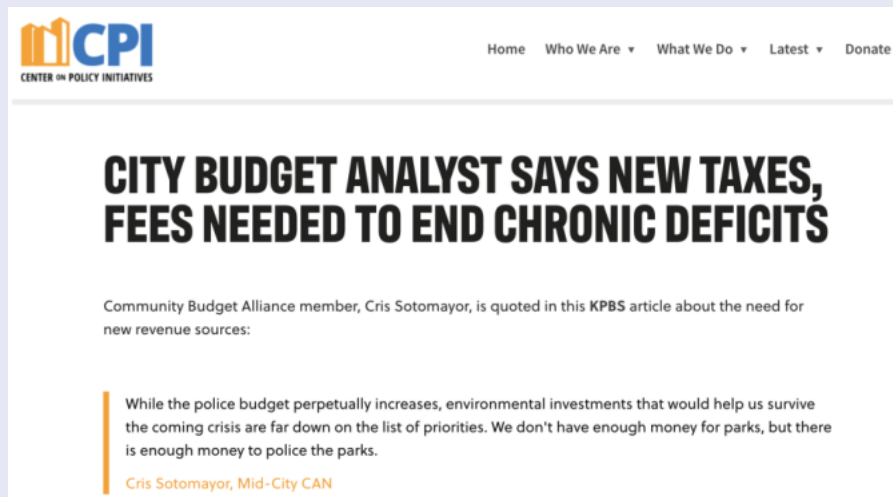
- Fair wages and benefits and decent work conditions for all employees.
- All jobs pay enough to live on, and employees are able to stand together so their rights are not trampled by corporate management.
- Bringing public funding and attention to areas that previously have been neglected or shorted.
- Neighborhoods where people with lower incomes live have all the public amenities, service quality, zoning protections and environmental safety as rich neighborhoods.

We also bring a focus on racial justice to our work for economic justice. Equity for all communities requires correcting for past discrimination and oppression, in addition to providing equal opportunities.

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## EXHIBIT 6: CPI Promotes Tax Hikes – A Policy That Requires Voter Approval



**CPI**  
CENTER ON POLICY INITIATIVES

Home Who We Are What We Do Latest Donate

### CITY BUDGET ANALYST SAYS NEW TAXES, FEES NEEDED TO END CHRONIC DEFICITS

Community Budget Alliance member, Cris Sotomayor, is quoted in this KPBS article about the need for new revenue sources:

While the police budget perpetually increases, environmental investments that would help us survive the coming crisis are far down on the list of priorities. We don't have enough money for parks, but there is enough money to police the parks.

Cris Sotomayor, Mid-City CAN

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## EXHIBIT 7: CPI Embraces the “Defund the Police” Philosophy



**CPI**  
CENTER ON POLICY INITIATIVES

Home Who We Are What We Do Latest Donate

### BUDGET HEARING HELD TO DISCUSS \$19 MILLION INCREASE FOR SAN DIEGO POLICE

CPI Researcher and Policy Advocate, Keara Piña, is quoted in ABC 10's coverage of the May 7th police budget hearing:

This year, instead of adding to an already bloated police budget, we want to do the reimagining of public safety funding alternative to policing, community care, housing, equitable job opportunities, parks and long term programs like youth and young adult violence intervention programs.

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CPI's lobbying efforts to pass Left-wing legislative proposals is extensive. It has convened and serves as the principal staffing support for several coalitions of Left-wing groups. These coalitions then lobby policymakers in local government to pass legislation formulated and supported by CPI.

Specifically, the Community Budget Coalition focuses on lobbying the City of San Diego, San Diego Transportation Equity Working Group focuses on lobbying SANDAG, and the Invest in San Diego Families Coalition focuses on lobbying the County of San Diego.

To help expand campaign funding streams to elect more Left-wing politicians through the compulsory payment of union dues by San Diego workers, CPI is also currently demanding San Diego politicians pass its "San Diego Warehouse Worker Ordinance" to force more workers into unions.

A review of CPI's social media accounts shows extensive grassroots lobbying efforts throughout the year. Although it bills itself as a policy research organization, CPI also has several "community organizers" on its staff.

## EXHIBIT 8: CPI Expressly Lobbies on Legislation Before City Council



The screenshot shows the CPI website with a header navigation bar including Home, Who We Are, What We Do, Latest, and Donate. The main heading is "SD WAREHOUSE WORKER ORDINANCE" with the subtext "Better pay, improved working conditions and safety for warehouse workers". The body text reads: "All people should have dignity, safety and respect at work. People deserve jobs that don't kill them. Jobs shouldn't risk the health and safety of our families and community. Yet during the pandemic companies like Amazon put profits over people and asked workers to risk their lives so people like Jeff Bezos and corporate stockholders could get even richer. But workers are fighting back across the country demanding respect, higher pay and safer working conditions. We have a chance to make sure San Diego workers are treated fairly. Center on Policy Initiatives, International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 542 and the Environmental Health Coalition have come together to fight these abusive conditions. We thank San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chair Fletcher and Vice Chair Vargas for working with us and championing a policy to ensure this growing industry does not exploit San Diego workers."

## EXHIBIT 9: CPI Social Media Promotes Politicians and Engages in Grassroots Lobbying on Legislation



The screenshot shows a tweet from ACCE (@CalOrganize) dated April 1. The text of the tweet is: "San Diego! We need you to write your Councilmember NOW and urge them to vote YES on @SeanEloRiveraD9's proposed moratorium on no-fault evictions during the state of emergency. Landlords are trying to stop this bill. We can't let them! Send an email here: [acceaction.org/sdtenantprotec...](https://acceaction.org/sdtenantprotec...)". Below the text is a video thumbnail showing a woman's face.



CPI also engages in lobbying to influence the outcome of political campaigns – specifically by influencing redistricting commissions. CPI even engaged in grassroots lobbying to influence the drawing of the map for the County Board of Supervisors. This activity raises the question: are politicians channeling taxpayer funds to CPI so they can influence the drawing of districts in their favor? Unfortunately, County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher refuses to release his office's email correspondence on the grants he has provided CPI.



## EXHIBIT 10: CPI Engages in Lobbying to Influence Redistricting

LATEST FROM CPI

### Redistricting: Fighting for a Fair, Equitable San Diego County Map

December 20, 2021 – 2 min read



On December 14, 2021, the San Diego County Independent Redistricting Commission voted to approve the final map that will be used to establish electoral districts for the County Board of Supervisors for the next ten years. You can view the final map [here](#).

For months, CPI convened groups to discuss and strategize about County level redistricting and advocated for the fairest, most equitable map possible. Our primary goal was to keep communities of color together and give them a stronger and fairer voice in the election process. The approved map represents most of what we wanted, including:

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## Environmental Health Coalition

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$1,034,890

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive grassroots and direct lobbying activities

**Registered Lobbying:** PARTIALLY. Registered with the City, but not with the County.

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** YES

The Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) lobbies and advocates for “Environmental Justice,”<sup>2</sup> believing that San Diego’s low-income “communities of color” have been deprived of this right due to racist policies, and are burdened with “more pollution than 80-97% of California.”

As it’s awarded extensive amounts of taxpayer funds by Left-wing politicians, EHC explicitly states that its “Core Strategies” are “Community Organizing,” “Leadership Development” and “Policy Advocacy” — all geared to changing government policies and shaping political leadership.



EHC website explicitly states that it sponsors “Voter Empowerment” programs and shares photos of its staff and members canvassing with express advocacy political literature that urges a YES vote on Measure W and election of specific candidates to office.



## EXHIBIT 11: EHC Extensive Political Activity Including Promoting Ballot Measures

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EHC also states that “our goal is to change the culture of voting in our communities through one on one conversations with registered voters (in person and over the phone in their preferred language) to ensure they hear about the issues in an understandable way and know where and how they can vote.”

In May 2022, even as it was taking taxpayer funding, EHC confirmed it had played an extensive role in supporting a ballot measure to raise sales taxes in San Diego County by collecting “+2000 signatures in our community for this measure.” A review of the campaign finance disclosures for this ballot measure failed to reflect EHC’s in-kind financial contribution of the value of these signatures as required under state law.



## EXHIBIT 12: EHC Admits It Collected Signatures for County Tax Hike – But Failed to Disclose on Campaign Finance Reports

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Despite its extensive lobbying and political activities, Left-wing politicians are helping promote EHC to the general public. For example, County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher even declared April 26, 2022 as “Environmental Health Coalition Day” throughout the entire county and used taxpayer funds to create a video and distribute it on his county taxpayer-funded social media handle.



### EXHIBIT 13: Nathan Fletcher Uses Government Social Media Account to Promote EHC Despite Its Involvement in Political Campaigns



## Mid-City Community Advocacy Network

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$50,000

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive grassroots and direct lobbying activities

**Registered Lobbying:** PARTIALLY – Registered with County; not registered with City.

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** NO. Only filed form 990-N due to small size.

Mid-City Community Advocacy Network (Mid-City CAN) claims it is a non-profit focused on creating a “safe, productive and healthy community”<sup>3</sup> in the City Heights planning areas of the City of San Diego. However, a review of its website shows Mid-City CAN not only does not provide services, it has very little policy programs.

For about 20 years, City Heights has been identified by Left-wing activists as having the greatest number of unregistered or inactive Left-leaning voters. Mid-City CAN seems to be dedicated to changing that as its website and associated program activities have an extensive focus on “Civic Engagement” and “Activism” with an emphasis on “turning out the vote.”



## EXHIBIT 14: Mid-City CAN Openly Promotes “Voter Outreach Goals”

### Get Out the Vote Team Meets Outreach Goals

Congratulations to our 2022 Get Out The Vote field team for meeting their voter outreach goals!

Voter registration and voter engagement are critical power-building strategies for Mid-City CAN. By registering and encouraging people who don't normally vote to participate, we are building a stronger and more robust democracy. Increasing the number of voters in City Heights also ensures that City Heights becomes more powerful, that resources are invested more equitably in the community, and that residents' needs are taken seriously by decision-makers. The voters who chose to, are then linked to Momentum Team campaigns where they can actively engage on the issues critical to their daily lives.



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While Mid-City CAN's main focus seems to be voter contact, Mid-City CAN has been used as a participant in letters and press conferences lobbying various government agencies – particularly the City of San Diego, County of San Diego and SANDAG. Presumably as a list-harvesting activity as well as a grassroots lobbying activity, Mid-City CAN has also sponsored events to promote passage of controversial legislation — including virtual forums during the pandemic to promote a key piece of legislation in the Defund the Police movement.



## EXHIBIT 15: Mid-City CAN Engaging in Grassroots Lobbying Activities to Defund-the-Police



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## Youth Will

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$171,967

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive

**Registered Lobbying:** NO, not registered with either the City or the County.

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** NO

Just as Mid-City Community Advocacy Network (Mid-City CAN) seems focused on registering and activating Left-leaning voters in a geographic area, Youth Will seems focused on registered



and activating Left-leaning voters in the younger demographic — particularly aged 25 or younger.

More concerning, Youth Will actually is a well-camouflaged front organization for Rise Urban Leadership Institute of San Diego.<sup>4</sup> Rise San Diego offers consulting services to organizations including on the controversial curriculum known as “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion”<sup>5</sup> training. This makes isolating the finances of Youth Will a difficult task. What is more troubling is the fact that the agenda for the County of San Diego listed Youth Will — not Rise San Diego — as the name used for funneling taxpayer funds to Rise San Diego.

In yet another astonishing move, at the same meeting (May 5, 2020) that it provided separate funding for Youth Will “to organize and direct emergency resource ambassadors”<sup>6</sup> related to Covid-19, the County of San Diego then granted funding to Rise San Diego to “work with Youth Will” — even though the organizations were exactly the same legal entity. This gross lack of transparency demands an explanation as our investigation is concerned as to why government officials would want to hide the true extent of funding for Rise San Diego/Youth Will.

Despite not registering as a lobbyist, Youth Will openly brags about its activities that resulted in changes in government policies — including the creation of a “menstrual equity” initiative calls for menstrual products to be now made available at all San Diego County facilities. Are we to believe that all of the policy changes claimed on Youth Will’s website came about without a single lobbying contact to government officials?



## EXHIBIT 16: Youth Will Openly Admits Influencing Government Decisions

### Our Wins As a Local Advocacy Organization

**\$1,000,000** – In March of 2021, we created opportunities for youth employment from the county’s dedication of funds to the Youth Environmental Recreation Corps. This positive impact in the community provided initiatives for work in wildlife protection efforts, food gardens, biodiversity incentives, and additional green efforts.

**\$350,000** – We created the Office of Child & Youth Success in June of 2021. Businesses, schools, healthcare providers, non-profits, and other outside entities have one place to address all the needs of San Diego’s youth, through this centralized office.

**\$250,000** – The city’s “Summer for All of Us” program creates employment opportunities for the city’s youth at rec centers through the City Youth Environment Corp. in June, 2021.

**\$80,000** – We created the #Free4Me pilot program, in May of 2021. This provides free menstrual products in public facing facilities, with funds provided by the county.

**\$30,000** – With a grant from the Emergency Resource Ambassadors County of SD in May of 2020, Youth Will employed young people to assist with the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. They were able to initiate community impact providing emergency resources to low-income youth, as well as make these resources readily available. Also collecting youth’s needs and the advocacy of those necessities.

San Diego Youth Will > Projects > Health > Menstrual Equity



### Menstrual Equity

HEALTH

#### Impact To The Community:

Access to menstrual health products is a barrier and economic burden for our communities, especially for low-income folks and people of color. The County of San Diego addresses the economic burden that disproportionately impacts low income folks and people of color when it comes to accessing menstrual health products. Having this access to menstrual health products will allow our communities to properly maintain menstrual hygiene, while not having to compromise paying for rent, food, and other basic necessities.

#### Initiative:

Menstrual products to be made available at ALL county facilities (parks, rec centers, etc) long term (expansion of the pilot program).

#### Project Categories

- Community Empowerment →
- Criminal Justice Reform →
- Education →
- Environment →
- Government →
- Health →

#### Subscribe to our newsletter

Name

Youth Will's main focus and activities are directed at building youth “activism” teams and “voter engagement” efforts. Despite being a 501c3 organization, Youth Will also engages in direct political campaigning — as evidenced with their Vote Yes on A outreach in the November 2020 election to support tax hikes.



## EXHIBIT 17: Youth Will Engaging in Campaign Activity to Promote Prop A Tax Hike



17

## Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$95,525

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive grassroots and direct lobbying activities

**Registered Lobbying:** YES with both the City and County.

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** YES

The Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA) is oriented to African, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian legal and illegal immigrant communities. Self-described as a “research, public policy, and community organizing hub dedicated to advancing the full economic, social, & civic inclusion of refugees,”<sup>7</sup> PANA states its mission is to “prevent replication of hierarchical power structures that can lead to the very systems of inequity we seek to dismantle.”



Our investigation uncovered an extensive effort by PANA to engage immigrant communities leading up to the 2021 Recall Election expressly encouraging them to vote. PANA carefully worded its online materials on the Recall to avoid making an explicit recommendation on how to vote, but argued with a successful Recall “a new governor may be elected with a small number of votes.”



## EXHIBIT 18: PANA’s “Get-Out-The-Vote” Efforts in the 2021 California Recall Election

The screenshot shows the PANA Gubernatorial Election FAQ webpage. At the top, the title "PANA Gubernatorial Election FAQ" is displayed in orange. Below the title, there are three orange buttons: "IN-PERSON VOTING LOCATIONS - LIST", "GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION FAQ (OROMO)", and "GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION FAQ (ARABIC)". Below these buttons, there is a section titled "Vote NOW in the California Recall Election by Sept 14, 2021. Elected officials should represent our communities & our values & that only happens when we turn out to vote & make our voices heard." This is followed by a list of questions and answers:

- 1. What's at Stake?:** The future of California is at stake. The election will determine who will be our governor, impacting public health, education, affordable housing, immigration justice, and workers' rights.
- 1. Who can vote in this election?:** All registered voters in the County of San Diego are eligible to vote. [Check your voter registration status](#) at [sdvote.com](#) to make sure your information is up to date.
- 2. How Do I Cast my Ballot?:** All active, registered voters will receive a ballot in the mail. Voters may cast their ballots by:
  - Sending it by mail (must be postmarked before Election Day), OR
  - Dropping off your ballot to any U.S.P.S. office or collection box, OR
  - Dropping off your ballot at a [mail ballot drop-off locations](#) in SD county, OR
  - Voting in-person from Sep 11th-Sep 14th
- 1. How can I vote in person?:** In-person voting locations in SD County will be open Sep 11th-13th from 8am-5pm AND on Sep 14th from 7am-8pm. In-person voting locations will offer voter registration, replacement ballots, accessible voting machines, and language assistance. [To find an in-person voting location near you](#)

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Our investigation also uncovered that PANA has been one of the more active Left-wing groups engaged in extensive lobbying on a variety of controversial legislative topics. PANA was active in the Defund the Police push as well as a proposal to prohibit San Diego police from cooperating with federal law enforcement on surveillance activities.

PANA also claims to fight for “tenants rights” — but their main proposals focused on forcing landlords to enter into risky rental agreements with illegal immigrants.<sup>8</sup> PANA also is engaged in grassroots lobbying of federal elected officials — but our investigation did not determine whether PANA is compliant with federal lobbying reporting requirements.



## EXHIBIT 19: Examples of PANA Engaging in Grassroots Lobbying on City Legislation



Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans - PANA

23h · 🌐

5 out of 9 councilmembers voted on an amendment to weaken a two year community-led effort to increase transparency and oversight. Thank you to the hundreds who e-commented and called in, the fight continues on July 19.

Read the full article at <https://voiceofsandiego.org/.../san-diego-exempts-cops.../>



**San Diego Exempts Cops on Federal Task Forces from Surveillance Ord...**  
The City Council voted 5-4 to amend the ordinance so that it exempts San

[tps://voiceofsandiego.org/2022/06/21/san-diego-exempts-cops-on-federal-task-forces-from-surveillance-ordinan...](https://voiceofsandiego.org/2022/06/21/san-diego-exempts-cops-on-federal-task-forces-from-surveillance-ordinan...)

**POLICY + CAMPAIGNS**



PANA advocates for policies that advance the rights and furthers protections for refugee communities. Through our Right To A Roof campaign, we have worked with City Council to pass the Source of Income Anti-Discrimination ordinance as well as Inclusionary Housing and are currently seeking protections for tenants from wrongful evictions and displacement.

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## EXHIBIT 20: While Lobbying to Pass Legislation, PANA Declares City Politician "Real Hero"



PANA

@PANASanDiego

Brown Act prevents the amended ordinance from being adopted. Requires it to go back to first hearing. The council is shooting for it to be heard on July 19th. Question still remains if it will need to go back to meet & confer.

6:13 PM · Jun 20, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

1 Retweet 2 Likes



Tweet your reply

Reply



PANA @PANASanDiego · Jun 20

Replying to @PANASanDiego

This has to be said. @CD4Monica is a real hero.



3

10



20



## EXHIBIT 21: PANA Engaging in Federal Grassroots Lobbying



21

## San Diego Pride

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$2,403,563

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive

**Registered Lobbying:** NO – not registered with either the City or the County.

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** NO

San Diego Pride was originally founded to organize and serve as the funding vehicle for the annual San Diego Gay Pride Parade. Unfortunately, in recent years San Diego Pride has morphed into a far-Left political advocacy, lobbying, and voter engagement organization.

In fact, a simple review of its website and associated social media accounts shows San Diego Pride now endorses ballot measures, engages in “voter outreach,” promotes the profile of various Left-wing elected officials, and advocates for specific government policy and actions on a wide-range of topics including abortion, minimum wage hikes, amnesty for illegal immigrants, defund the police, etc.<sup>9</sup>

As it seeks to boost turnout of Left-leaning LGBT voters, San Diego Pride has funded and carried out extensive voter engagement and turnout activities as outlined on its “Vote with Pride” section of its website.



## EXHIBIT 22: San Diego Pride Engaging in Support for Ballot Measures

**BALLOT MEASURES**

In order to address issues of reproductive justice, education justice, and health justice that systematically impact the LGBTQ community – particularly LGBTQ families and people of color, San Diego Pride is supporting four measures this election cycle – three statewide measures and one local (San Diego City) measure. Please join us in supporting these ballot measures as we address abortion and birth control access, arts and music education, health justice, and reproductive justice in the form of accessible and affordable childcare.

San Diego Pride's ballot measure positions are below.

There are a number of ballot measures we have not taken a position on. We recommend these unbiased resources to learn more about all of the ballot measures:

- [Statewide ballot measures](#) (via League of Women Voters of California Education Fund)
- [Local ballot measures – San Diego County](#) (via Voters' Edge)

Vote YES for LGBTQ+ health, justice, and opportunity.

Vote YES on Prop 1, Prop 28, Prop 31, and Measure H.

San Diego Pride has taken a position on the following measures:

**Statewide Ballot Measures:**

- Proposition 1 – Right To Reproductive Freedom: YES
- Proposition 28 – Arts & Music Education Funding: YES
- Proposition 31 – Ban on Flavored Tobacco Sales: YES

**City of San Diego Ballot Measures:**

- Measure H – Increases Childcare for Working Families: YES

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## EXHIBIT 23: San Diego Pride Engaging in Voter Outreach and Turnout

**Vote With Pride in 2022**

Mark your calendars & turn out to vote in the midterm election by **November 8th**. Elected officials should represent our communities & our values & that only happens when we turn out to vote & make our voices heard.

Note: Every registered voter in California will receive a mail-in ballot. You can vote by mail, by dropping off your mail-in ballot at drop-off locations, or in-person.

Find more information here: <https://www.sdvote.com/>

[REGISTRAR OF VOTERS](#)

[FIND A DROP-OFF LOCATION](#)

**Volunteer for Vote With Pride**

It's important for LGBTQ+ people and our allies to exercise our right to vote! San Diego Pride's Advocacy Team will be contacting Pride's supporters and other voters in the San Diego region by text and phone banking to ensure that everyone has the information they need to cast their ballot by mail, drop-off, or in-person. All of our text banks will be hybrid events. Our canvases and phone banks will be in person.

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Despite this conversion in its mission and associated activities, San Diego Pride generates revenues from tickets, sponsorships, and beverage sales from the annual Pride Parade and festival — in addition to extensive taxpayer funding from government grants.

San Diego Pride's policy and political advocacy is so extensive that it presumably goes beyond their founding purpose approved by the Internal Revenue Service of organizing and serving as the funding vehicle for an annual event for the LGBT community.



San Diego Pride explicitly admits on their website they engage in grassroots lobbying when they say “Advocacy team members may be called upon to call their elected or appointment policymakers....” Despite this admission, and numerous appearances by Pride staff at City Council hearings, San Diego Pride has failed to register as a lobbyist with the City of San Diego or the County of San Diego.



## EXHIBIT 24: San Diego Pride Admits It Engages in Grassroots Lobbying of City, County and State Officials – But Remains Unregistered



### Local Advocacy

San Diego Pride's local advocacy encompasses City, County, and Statewide policy and community mobilization. We work with local partners through Engage San Diego and other regional coalitions to build power and ensure that our local policymakers and leaders promote and support LGBTQIA+ equality and freedom.

We mobilize voters in San Diego County through our [Vote With Pride](#) program. [Click here for EQCA's tracker of statewide legislation related to the LGBTQ community.](#)

### Advocacy Team

The Pride Advocacy Team is the core group of volunteers that Pride calls on to support LGBTQIA+ equity advocacy efforts. This group of advocates has priority access to training, briefings, and actions related to San Diego Pride's advocacy efforts locally, nationally, and globally.

Advocacy team members may be called upon to call their elected or appointed policymakers, contact voters in San Diego County, participate in trainings and train-the-trainer workshops, may be invited to join lobby days at the City, County, or State level, and more! To join our advocacy team or learn more, fill out the form below.

[JOIN OUR ADVOCACY TEAM](#)



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## LGBT Community Center

**Taxpayer Funding Received: \$1,297,743**

**Grassroots Lobbying: YES – Extensive**

**Registered Lobbying: PARTIALLY – registered with the City, but not the County.**

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying: YES**

The San Diego LGBT Center began decades ago as a social networking and social service provider to the LGBT community in San Diego. The Center has a good number of services it advertises on its website including behavioral health, counseling, and HIV testing, etc.

However, in recent years the Center has greatly expanded its lobbying and political activities. Specifically, the Center website admits it “builds community power ... through providing education, resources, and accessibility to voting in elections...we know that in our LGBTQ



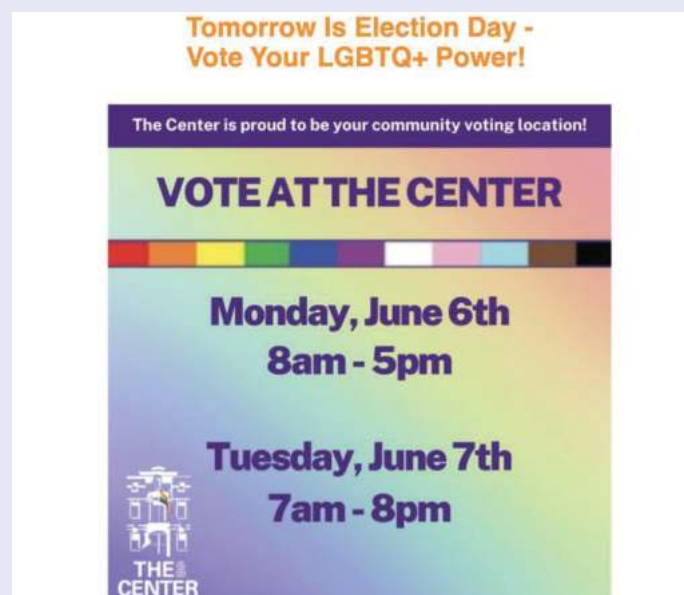
community, our voice is in our vote and with each election, we have another opportunity to flex our collective LGBTQ power.”<sup>10</sup>

The Center’s lobbying includes support for government-subsidized housing projects, proposals to weaken law enforcement, changing budget allocations on a wide-range of programs at the City and County levels of government, and advocacy of LGBT curriculum and programs in public schools.

The Center’s political activity is substantial with a focus on “Get-Out-The-Vote” efforts. While their official communications refrain from express advocacy for or against candidates, in past elections community activists and politicians have alleged that Center “volunteers” have engaged in inappropriate express advocacy while working on the Center’s “Get-Out-The-Vote” phone banks.



#### EXHIBIT 25: San Diego LGBT Community Center Engages in Voter Outreach and Turnout



Tomorrow, Tuesday, June 7th, is Election Day in California! Every registered voter in San Diego County was mailed a ballot and you have several options:

- Vote in-person at the [Registrar's Office at 5600 Overland Avenue](#), today from 8 am to 5 pm and tomorrow from 7am to 8pm.
- Vote by mail by placing your ballot in the envelope provided. Date and sign the outside and drop it into the mail. *No postage needed!*
- Drop off your ballot at any official [Ballot Drop Box location](#).
- Vote in person at any [Vote Center](#) throughout the County – including at [The San Diego LGBT Community Center](#) on:
  - **TODAY: Monday, June 6th, 8am – 5pm**
  - **TOMORROW'S ELECTION DEADLINE: Tuesday, June 7th, 7am – 8pm**

Remember, if you are still not registered to vote, did not receive a ballot, misplaced your ballot, or made a mistake, you can still register and vote at any of the [200+ Vote Centers](#), regardless of where you live, and you can receive in-person voting assistance from Registrar of Voters staff, including assistance in multiple languages.

**Tomorrow's election is critical to our LGBTQ community; please vote so we may all stand strong, stand proud, and create a country where every LGBTQ person is safe, healthy, and enjoys full civil rights.** If you'd like to get involved in The Center's ongoing, nonpartisan voting campaigns as a volunteer, email us at [civicengagement@thecentersd.org](mailto:civicengagement@thecentersd.org).

## San Diego Organizing Project

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$178,111

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive

**Registered Lobbying:** PARTIALLY – Registered with the City, but not the County.

**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** NO

The San Diego Organizing Project (SDOP) claims to be the policy advocacy group of a network of 29 Episcopalian, Catholic, and other congregations across San Diego. SDOP advocate and lobbies for Defund-the-Police concepts, criminal justice system reform, government-subsidized housing projects, rights for illegal immigrants, etc.<sup>11</sup>

SDOP even boasts about the effectiveness of their lobbying efforts by reporting that it has been successful in diverting \$60 million in taxpayer funding.



### EXHIBIT 26: San Diego Organizing Project Admits Influencing County Legislation

**SDOP**  
San Diego Organizing Project

About Us ▾ Issue Campaigns ▾ Take Action News & Updates ▾ Contact Donate

**OUR MAJOR VICTORIES**

**Advocating for Our Tax Dollars to Support Our Communities**

One of our proudest accomplishments and greatest benefits of our partnerships is that San Diego County agreed to allocate \$60 million for direct services to San Diego County residents, and invited SDOP and the Invest in San Diego Families coalition to the table to help direct how these funds will be used. This will ensure that our most vulnerable communities in San Diego County will receive the support, services and programs we desperately need. Through our relational efforts, we are slowly turning what could have been perceived as an adversarial interaction into a successful collaborative effort for all.

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Most of SDOP's efforts seem focused on political activities. SDOP makes some dramatic claims as to the extent and impact of their political activities to influence the outcome of local elections — including this bold statement detailing the extent of their political activities on their website:

*We mobilize low-frequency voters in San Diego's low-income communities and communities of color by phone banking and canvassing our neighborhoods. We help our people understand the ballot measures that affect our daily lives, so our votes can transform our communities.*

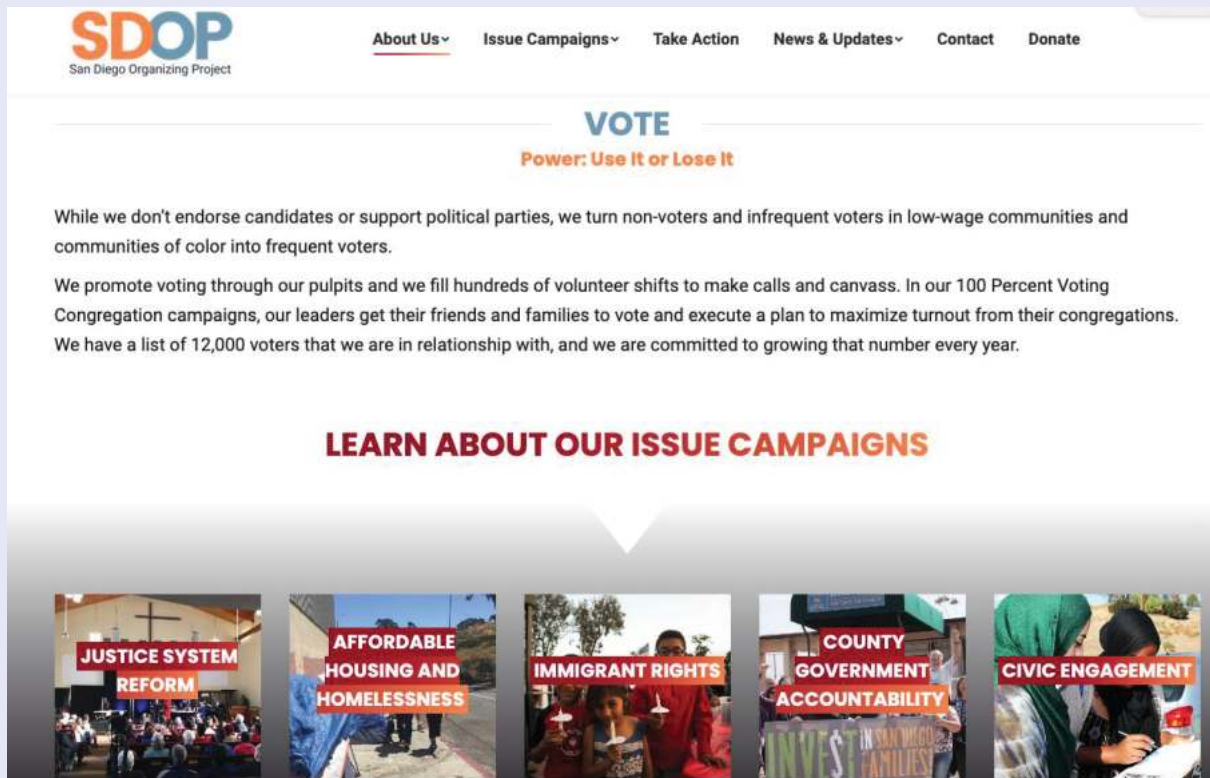
By organizing thousands of phone banking and canvassing events, we turn non-voting or infrequent voters of color into frequent voters through long term engagement at multiple levels. We integrate voting work into our long-term, deep organizing work in our congregations and neighborhoods. Through this work, we activate voters who stay engaged in transforming our communities for years to come.

In 2016, we built our internal list of voters in our congregations to 10,000. We held over 11,000 conversations, filled over 400 volunteer shifts, and got 9,631 pledges to vote, mostly from infrequent voters of color.

SDOP ran a successful voter engagement campaign for the 2018 November elections, which included: 300 Phone Banking and Walk Shifts; 6,700 Voter Conversations; and, 3,351 Pledges to Vote. We also worked on an experimental project to identify and engage immigrants who have recently gone through naturalization and are now new voters.<sup>12</sup>



## EXHIBIT 27: San Diego Organizing Project Engages in Voter Outreach and Turnout



## Climate Action Campaign

**Taxpayer Funding Received:** \$321,921

**Grassroots Lobbying:** YES – Extensive

**Registered Lobbying:** YES – both City and County.

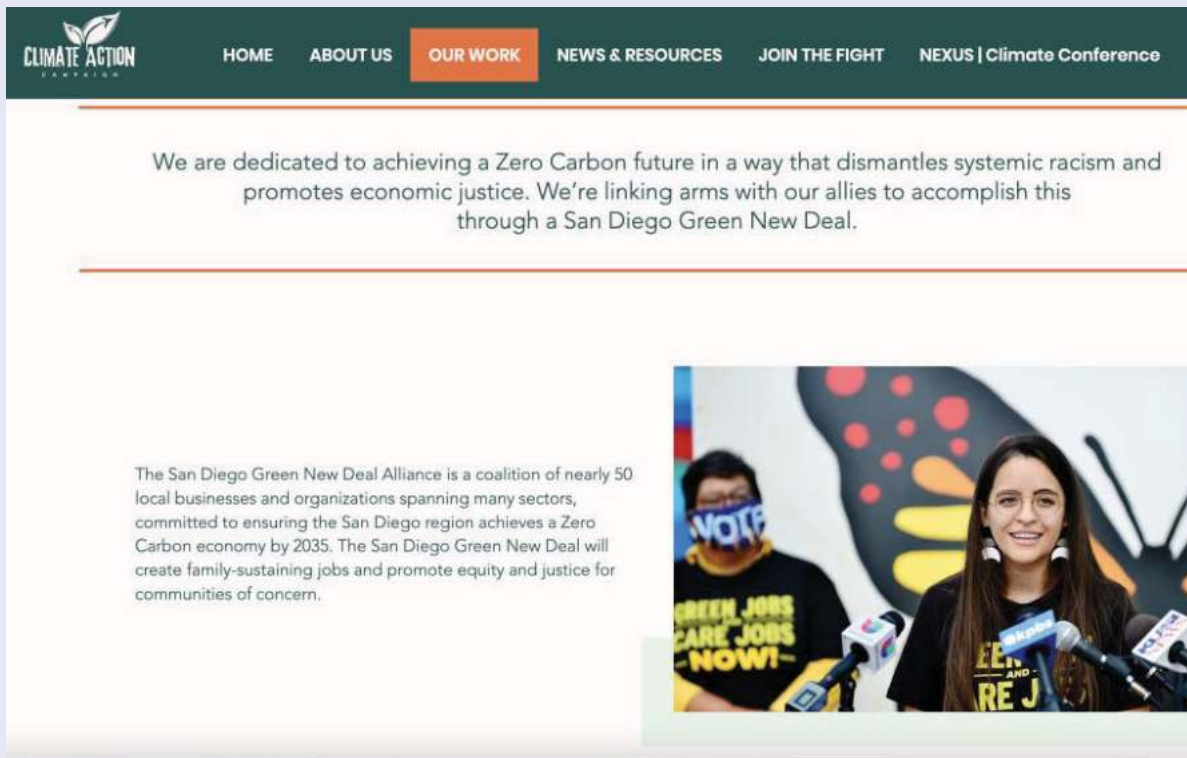
**990 Disclosure of Lobbying:** YES

Founded in 2015, the Climate Action Campaign lobbies local government in San Diego County to implement the “Green New Deal.” Policies include implementing the Mileage Tax on all drivers

(costing \$600-900 per year per driver in a per-mile assessed fee<sup>13</sup>) as well as forcing all San Diego homeowners to retrofit their homes to remove any natural gas appliances (costing roughly \$30,000 a year per homeowner).



## EXHIBIT 28: Climate Action Campaign Wants to Pass “Green New Deal” Legislation Locally



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The Climate Action Campaign has also actively engaged in political campaigns. Its own website features a rally with a “Yes on A/No on B” campaign sign and the Climate Action Campaign’s Executive Director has used her title and organization in making political endorsements and in signing arguments for and against measures on the ballot.



# Key Findings from the Investigation

## ► **FINDING: Significant Disparity Between Left-wing and Right-wing Organizations on the Use of Contracts, Grants, and Staff by Government Entities**

Our investigation failed to find any contracts or grants awarded during 2021-2022 by Republican-controlled city councils or school boards in San Diego County to groups that could be considered conservative, let alone groups engaging in lobbying, issue advocacy, or political activity. In fact, conservative organizations that filed 990s and operate primarily in San Diego County did not have government funding streams — either because they refuse to accept government funding or no government agency considers them for funding.

In stark contrast, our investigation found significant funding taxpayer streams being provided by Democrat-controlled city councils and school boards to Left-wing groups.

As detailed in the chart on “10 Left-Wing Organizations Considered High Risk for Use of Taxpayer Funds,” our investigation found at least \$6.6 million in taxpayer funds flowing to these groups between 2021-2022 — not counting indirect support through the use of government resources.

Given opacity of local government financial reports and the difficulty our investigation encountered in getting several local San Diego County government agencies to comply with our requests under the CPRA, we believe the total amount of taxpayer funding going to Left-Wing groups in San Diego County is substantially higher than what this report captures.

***“We believe the total amount of taxpayer funding going to Left-Wing groups in San Diego County is substantially higher than the \$6.6 million that this report captures.”***

## ► **FINDING: Left-Wing Organizations in San Diego County Operate in a Highly Integrated Manner**

Left-wing groups are engaging in an exceptionally high level of collaboration in San Diego County — raising concerns that government funding streams provided to these groups may be cannibalized or co-mingled between groups that engage in political activity and those that claim not to.

Several umbrella entities reflect the high degree of coordination and cross-communication: Engage San Diego, the Community Budget Alliance, and the Invest in San Diego Families Coalition.

The stated mission of Engage San Diego is a “San Diego where the electorate and leadership are reflective of people who live and work here”<sup>14</sup> and the group says its strategy to achieve this is the broadly-defined “voter engagement.”

The stated mission of the Community Budget Alliance is a coalition managed through the Center for Policy Initiatives that engages in direct and grassroots lobbying of local government officials. The coalition seeks



defunding of police, rent control, tax increases, welfare expansion, and union-only access to government contracts.<sup>15</sup> Invest in San Diego Families is the mirror coalition focused on lobbying the County of San Diego.

Examination of local media articles since 2015 reveals many of the groups in all three umbrella entities show up to each other's press conferences and events and engage in cross-promotions. Indeed, evaluating even the social media accounts of the organizations demonstrates a blurring of the lines of identity between the groups.

### **Engage San Diego Members**

- ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties
- Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
- Alliance San Diego
- Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI)
- Environmental Health Coalition (EHC)
- Justice Overcoming Boundaries
- LGBTQ Center
- Mid-City CAN
- Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)
- Planned Parenthood Action Fund of the Pacific Southwest
- San Diego Organizing Project
- United Taxi Workers of San Diego

*Website: [www.engagesandiego.org](http://www.engagesandiego.org)*

### **Community Budget Alliance Members**

- ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties
- Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
- Alliance San Diego
- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 127
- Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI)
- City Heights CDC
- Communication Workers of America (CWA) Local 9509
- Emerald Hills Neighborhood Council
- Employee Rights Center (ERC)
- Environmental Health Coalition (EHC)
- Interfaith Worker Justice San Diego (IWJ-SD)
- LGBTQ Center
- Logan Heights CDC
- Mid-City CAN
- Muslim American Society-Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (MAS-PACE)
- Outdoor Outreach
- Parent Voices
- Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)
- Pillars of the Community San Diego (POTCSD)
- Planned Parenthood Action Fund of the Pacific Southwest
- San Diego Building & Construction Trades Council
- San Diego Pride
- San Diego Organizing Project
- San Diego Tenants United
- San Diego 350

- United Domestic Workers of America/AFSCME Local 3930 (UDW)
- Youth Will

Website: [cpisandiego.org/cba](http://cpisandiego.org/cba)

### **Invest in San Diego Families Coalition**

- ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties
- Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
- Business for Good San Diego
- The Chicano Federation
- Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI)
- Council on American-Islamic Relations
- Employee Rights Center (ERC)
- Environmental Health Coalition (EHC)
- Interfaith Community Services
- Majdal Center
- Muslim American Society-Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (MAS-PACE)
- Mid-City CAN
- Pillars of the Community
- Planned Parenthood Action Fund of the Pacific Southwest
- San Diego LGBTQ Center
- San Diego Hunger coalition
- San Diego Organizing Project
- SEIU Local 221
- Youth Will

Website: [investinsdfamilies.org/about](http://investinsdfamilies.org/about)

## **► FINDING: Left-Wing Organizations are Targeting Communities that Can Benefit Democratic Candidates in Elections with Taxpayer Funds**

Many of the Far-Left organizations examined by this investigation seem to have committed explicitly to "civic engagement" and "Get-Out-The-Vote" activities targeting communities that ostensibly will generally benefit Democrat candidates in elections.

In fact, the explicit goal of Engage San Diego is to do just that.

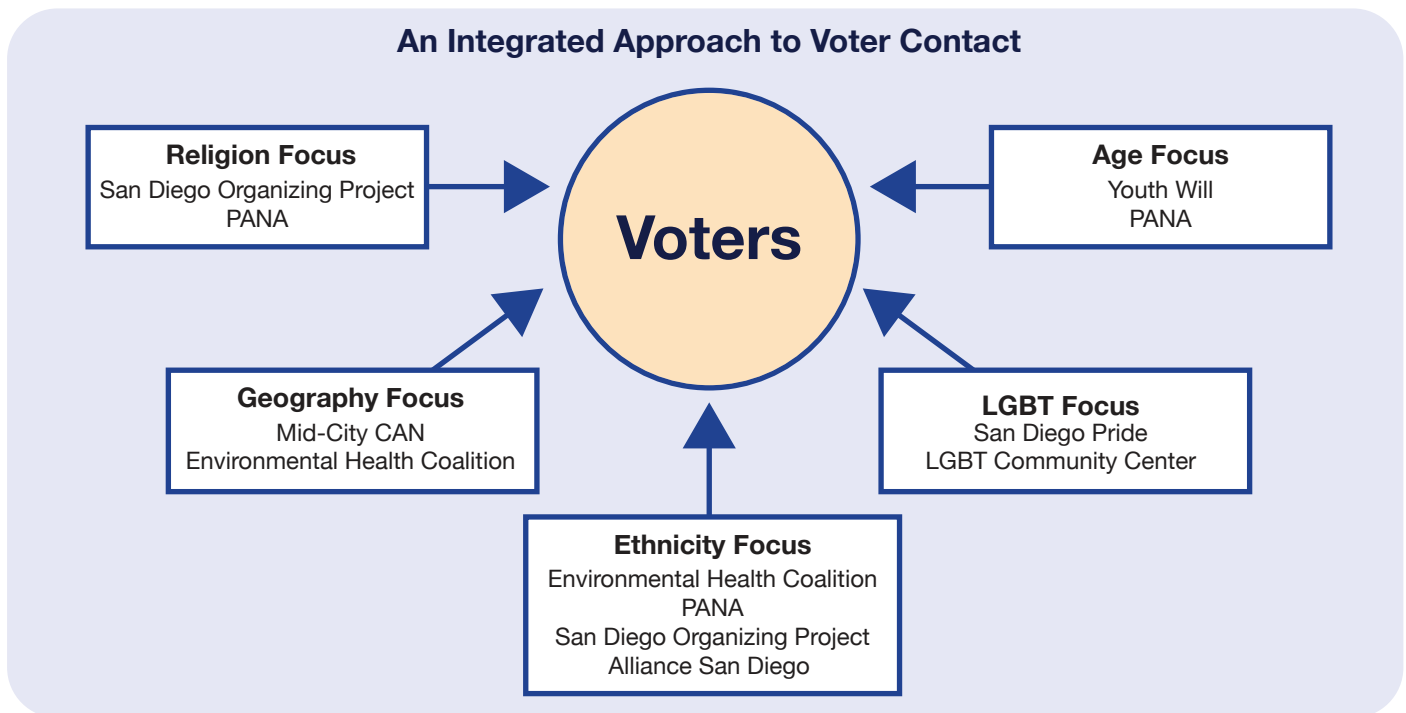
*ENGAGE SAN DIEGO: "Increase voter participation in historically and systemically excluded communities of San Diego. Through voter outreach, civic engagement, experimentation, advocacy, and communications, Engage San Diego aims to expand political opportunity by increasing electoral and civic participation of underrepresented communities in the County of San Diego – with a focus on the New American Majority Electorate of low-income families, youth, women, and LGBT, African-American, Latinx, AAPI, immigrant, and refugee communities."*<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the explicit goal of Engage San Diego, we found most of the Left-wing groups receiving taxpayer funds — whether formally part of Engage San Diego or not — are working on projects exclusively or predominantly targeting the communities defined in the Engage San Diego goal statement.

What emerges is a tapestry of organizations that are found to be collaborating on projects as a whole (i.e.

the coalitions in the finding above) while individually focusing on similar political activities in specific segments of the electorate:

- Youth Will focuses on younger voters
- PANA focuses ethnically on African-American and Middle-Eastern communities, but also has a Youth Congress program and engages in substantial outreach to the Muslim community.
- Environmental Health Coalition focuses geographically on Barrio Logan and ethnically on Latinos
- Mid-City CAN focuses geographically on mid-city areas
- LGBT Pride and the LGBT Center focus on the gay community



Whether geographic, age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity — the Left in San Diego has a group exclusively focused on “Get-Out-The-Vote” projects there.

While nothing is wrong with this integrated web of hyper-focused political groups, it becomes a problem when these same groups are receiving large amounts of taxpayer funding at the same time.

***“While nothing is wrong with this integrated web of hyper-focused political groups, it becomes a problem when these same groups are receiving large amounts of taxpayer funding at the same time.”***

For example, on January 11, 2022, the County of San Diego awarded a \$25,000 grant to San Diego Organizing Project “to support program staff and organizers with the leadership development and formation of Latinx leaders within South Bay San Diego; costs for promotional and marketing materials, presentation materials, community engagement and education, policy development, and research.”<sup>17</sup>

As a member of Engage San Diego and with their own “Get-Out-The-Votes” proudly displayed on their website, it would be hard for San Diego Organizing Project to argue that their “leadership development” and “community engagement” activities funded by taxpayers through this grant are somehow completely separate from their “voter participation” goals within the same community that they proudly boast on their website.

## ► FINDING: Left-Wing Groups Failed to Register as Lobbyists

Federal, state, and local laws each define specific requirements for organizations to register as lobbyists. Without an audit of expenditures by these organizations, it is impossible to determine whether an individual organization crossed the threshold of expenditures to trigger a registration requirement. However, as outlined in the narrative descriptions, all ten of the “high risk” Left-wing groups are engaging in some form of lobbying and usually the lobbying activities are quite substantial based on our review of their program activities.

Several organizations are not currently registered with either the City of San Diego or the County of San Diego as lobbyists — or both. However, several organizations who registered locally as engaging in “lobbying” have filed IRS Form 990 declarations stating they engage in “NO” lobbying.

Our investigation flags several Left-wing organizations in San Diego county as possibly being non-compliant with lobbyist registration requirements.<sup>18</sup>

	Investigation Found Lobbying Activities?	Registered with the City?	Registered with the County?	Checked YES on IRS Form 990 for Lobbying?
Alliance San Diego	Yes	No	No	Yes
Center On Policy Initiatives	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Climate Action Campaign	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Environmental Health Coalition	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Mid City Community Action Network	Yes	No	Yes	No*
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
San Diego LGBT Community Center	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
San Diego Organizing Project	Yes	Yes	No	No
San Diego Pride	Yes	No	No	No
Youth Will	Yes	No	No	No**
Rise San Diego	Yes	No	No	No

\*Mid City Community Action Network only filed a form 990-N due to its small size.

\*\*The Employer Identification Number listed by Youth Will on its website pertains to the Rise Urban Leadership Institute of San Diego. Our investigation found no separate or individual filing by Youth Will on the IRS repository of tax-exempt organizations' filings.

**“The San Diego City Municipal code makes it a misdemeanor for failure to file as a lobbyist when an organization meets the requirement to file.”**



To illustrate this, let's take Youth Will/Rise San Diego. It is highly suspicious that an organization that admits its focus is "governmental advocacy" isn't registered as a lobbyist with any government entity. It's more suspicious when that same group has a section on its website titled "Our Wins As a Local Advocacy Organization" that touts specific government actions that were made through budget and legislation.



## EXHIBIT 16 Flashback: Youth Will Openly Admits Influencing Government Decisions

### Our Wins As a Local Advocacy Organization

**\$1,000,000** – In March of 2021, we created opportunities for youth employment from the county's dedication of funds to the Youth Environmental Recreation Corps. This positive impact in the community provided initiatives for work in wildlife protection efforts, food gardens, biodiversity incentives, and additional green efforts.

**\$350,000** – We created the Office of Child & Youth Success in June of 2021. Businesses, schools, healthcare providers, non-profits, and other outside entities have one place to address all the needs of San Diego's youth, through this centralized office.

**\$250,000** – The city's "Summer for All of Us" program creates employment opportunities for the city's youth at rec centers through the City Youth Environment Corp. in June, 2021.

**\$90,000** – We created the #Free4Me pilot program, in May of 2021. This provides free menstrual products in public facing facilities, with funds provided by the county.

**\$30,000** – With a grant from the Emergency Resource Ambassadors County of SD in May of 2020, Youth Will employed young people to assist with the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. They were able to initiate community impact providing emergency resources to low-income youth, as well as make those resources readily available. Also collecting youth's needs and the advocacy of those necessities.

16



## EXHIBIT 29: San Diego Organizing Project Registers as a City Lobbyist – But Claims on Federal Tax Form It Does Not Lobby

**Annual Lobbyist Directory** Back to Lobbyist Search

2022  Export

Lobbyist Type	Firm / Organization Name	Registered / Updated	Terminated	Access
Organization	<b>San Diego Organizing Project</b> 7 lobbyists	01/15/2022		<a href="#">View Filings</a> <a href="#">Details</a>

**efile GRAPHIC print - DO NOT PROCESS | As Filed Data - | DLN: 93493321134400**

**Form 990** **Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax** **OMB No. 1545-0047**  
 Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service **2019** **Open to Public Inspection**

**A For the 2019 calendar year or tax year beginning 01-01-2019, and ending 12-31-2019**

**B** Check if applicable:  
☐ Address change  
☐ Name change  
☐ Initial return  
☐ Final return/terminated  
☐ Amended return  
☐ Application pending

**C** Name of organization: **San Diego Organizing Project**

Doing business as

Number and street (or P.O. box if mail is not delivered to street address) Room/suite  
 4305 University Avenue

City or town, state or province, country, and ZIP or foreign postal code  
 San Diego, CA 92105

**D** Employer identification number  
 95-3284521

**E** Telephone number  
 (619) 285-0797

**F** Name and address of principal officer:  
 Dinora Reyna  
 4305 University Avenue 530  
 San Diego, CA 921051696

**G** Gross receipts \$ 1,438,796

**H(a)** Is this a group return for subordinates? ☐ Yes ☒ No  
**H(b)** Are all subordinates included? ☐ Yes ☒ No  
 If "No," attach a list. (see instructions)  
**H(c)** Group exemption number ▶

**I** Tax-exempt status: ☒ 501(c)(3) ☐ 501(c) ( ) ◀ (insert no.) ☐ 4947(a)(1) or ☐ 527

**J** Website: ▶ www.sdop.net

**K** Form of organization: ☒ Corporation ☐ Trust ☐ Association ☐ Other ▶

**L** Year of formation: 1978 **M** State of legal domicile: CA

Form 990 (2019) Page 3

**Part IV Checklist of Required Schedules**

	Yes	No
<b>1</b> Is the organization described in section 501(c)(3) or 4947(a)(1) (other than a private foundation)? If "Yes," complete Schedule A	Yes	
<b>2</b> Is the organization required to complete Schedule B, Schedule of Contributors (see instructions)?	Yes	
<b>3</b> Did the organization engage in direct or indirect political campaign activities on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office? If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part I		No
<b>4</b> Section 501(c)(3) organizations. Did the organization engage in lobbying activities, or have a section 501(h) election in effect during the tax year? If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part II		No

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## ► **FINDING: Left-Wing Groups Failed to Report Campaign Contributions**

Without a full audit of these organizations, it is nearly impossible to tell how much taxpayer funding was diverted to political efforts. Our investigation has surfaced enough evidence of inappropriate activities that would warrant those audits.

However, in some cases the organizations got sloppy with their social media posts and inadvertently revealed they were funding political activities. For example, in May 2022, even as it was taking taxpayer funding, EHC confirmed it had played an extensive role in supporting a ballot measure to raise sales taxes in San Diego county by collecting “+2000 signatures in our community for this measure.” [See screenshot in exhibit 16.]

Collecting signatures on a ballot measure is defined as an inherently political activity and any staff time or resources spent on signature collection would constitute an in-kind contribution to the campaign committee sponsoring the ballot measure. Nevertheless, a review of the campaign finance disclosures for this ballot measure failed to reflect EHC’s in-kind financial contribution of the value of these signatures as required under state law.

## ► **FINDING: Several San Diego Local Government Employees Are Caught Proactively Directing Grant and Contract Solicitations to Left-Wing Organizations**

Our investigation uncovered multiple instances of government staff proactively reaching out to Left-wing organizations in advance of public contract and grant solicitations to give the organization a “heads up” that funding is available.

It is highly unusual for a government agencies to serve as the fundraising or business development partners for a non-governmental organization.

***“It is highly unusual for a government agencies to serve as the fundraising or business development partners for a non-governmental organization.”***

For example, since the Left-wing takeover of SANDAG governing board majority in 2018, email chains seem to suggest an ongoing narrative within the government agency that the Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI) has become the “go-to” preferred group to hire or partner with for all sorts of government activities. However, outside of their affiliation with the Left-wing political groups, the qualifying experience of CPI in performing the various tasks that the contracts and grants seem to reference is far from obvious.

As reflected in several findings below, a number of Left-Wing organizations are being contacted by government officials and employees with offers of grants and contracts to perform services far outside what their qualifying experience would warrant.

## ► **FINDING: SANDAG Staff Caught Actively Reaching Out to Center for Policy Initiative’s to Support Funding for Them Explicitly Citing CPI’s Political Work in Raising the Minimum Wage**

Why does SANDAG have so much interest in funding and partnering with CPI? Our investigation found an alarming answer.

In one email exchange on February 12, 2021, a SANDAG government employee sent an email to CPI that references the political advocacy work done by CPI as a key selling point for SANDAG selecting CPI to partner with.

Referencing express political advocacy as the basis of a government agency for wanting to partner with a group is highly inappropriate. But that's exactly what our investigation found with funding being allocated by SANDAG.

*"My name is (redacted) and I am the Senior Compliance Analyst at the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). I found your information on the Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI) website and I was hoping to discuss an opportunity with you to partner on a grant from the California Workforce Development Board and the Employment Development Department. The grant is called the Workforce Accelerator Fund and SANDAG is applying as a "New Project" to potentially receive the max grant amount of \$250k. Our goal is to develop a program that will create a pathway for underserved individuals to quality jobs in the construction industry and eventually accelerate growth in that area.*

*To apply for the grant, SANDAG would need four (4) partners and one of required partners is a "Customer/Worker," which the request for application (RFA) describes as "this individual could represent a community based organization, worker center, worker or community advocacy group, labor organization, etc." After talking with one of our Senior Planners, **she mentioned that CPI is a community advocacy group responsible for the initiative to raise the minimum wage in San Diego.***

*Additionally, after further reviewing your website, we believe that CPI would be a good fit as our partner on this grant as the organization assists the working people and diverse communities."*

#### ► **FINDING: CPI Made Partnering with SANDAG on a Grant Contingent on Funding for Organized Labor Groups that Spend Heavily on Political Campaigns**

Reflecting the pattern discussed in the previous two findings, on February 17, 2021, SANDAG pro-actively reached out to the Center for Policy Initiatives to ask the groups to join in supporting the application of a CALTRANS grant that SANDAG desired to win. CPI would receive funding as a "research partner" under the grant if SANDAG won the award. No other organizations were contacted to partner on the project — just CPI.

If that is not bad enough, CPI's Jacqueline Guan wrote back that CPI's support for the grant would be made contingent on SANDAG supporting policies that require the use of the San Diego Building and Construction Trades Council programs.

*"CPI agrees to be the research partner on this grant as long as the project creates a pathway to high road careers and is in alignment with opportunities at the San Diego Building and Construction Trades Council."*

This apparent "quid-pro-quo" on its face is concerning — but it is even more inappropriate given that the SDBCTC funds political campaigns for candidates and ballot measures. In addition to using its funding to support candidates and ballot measures all around San Diego County, San Diego County Building and Trades Council also spent more than \$1 million in supporting a ballot measure that would have provided additional funding for SANDAG — creating the appearance of a political campaign to increase taxes on San Diegans to provide funding for a government agency that would in turn provide more funding for the SDBCTC.

***“This apparent “quid-pro-quo” on its face is concerning — but it is even more inappropriate given that the SDBCTC funds political campaigns for candidates and ballot measures.”***

► **FINDING: San Diego County Provided \$10,000 Grant to Mid-City CAN to Facilitate their Fundraising Efforts**

It is one thing to fund a Left-wing organization under a dubious grant or contract, but it is quite another thing to purchase fundraising assets for a Left-wing organization. That’s exactly what is happening in San Diego County.

On June 8, 2021, the County of San Diego issued a \$10,000 taxpayer grant to Mid-City CAN to “provide funds for website upgrades to include fundraising software, such as Salesforce, and WealthEngine.”<sup>19</sup>

The funding of software, platforms and other tools for a group to engage in fundraising is a highly questionable use of taxpayer funds that undeniably and inappropriately is intended to subsidize the fundraising costs for Mid-City CAN’s extensive lobbying and political activities.

► **FINDING: County of San Diego Possibly Padding Financial Support Using Contracts and Grants**

Our investigation found ample evidence to suggest that taxpayer funds may have been provided to Left-wing groups in the form of contracts and grants that failed to provide adequate deliverables to benefit the public — or were so grossly “padded” that funding could be easily diverted to other uses.

***“Taxpayer funds may have been provided to Left-wing groups in the form of contracts and grants that were so grossly “padded” that funding could be easily diverted to other uses.”***

Money, after all, is fungible; the direct awards by governments to left-wing groups for their own capital and operations frees up their resources, providing them with the ability to better pursue their political objectives, whether or not their taxpayer funding is used directly for such activities.

For example, on June 8, 2021, the County of San Diego directed that the San Diego LGBT Center receive \$20,000 for “televisions for the lobby.” At the same meeting, the County of San Diego provided the San Diego LGBT Center \$40,450 to “renovate unused storage space into a meeting room.”<sup>20</sup>

The San Diego LGBT Center may have gotten this facility upgrade contract idea from their friends at the San Diego LGBT Pride group down the street from them. San Diego LGBT Pride had snagged a cool



\$40,000 from the County of San Diego in similar “renovation funding” for their office in January 2020.<sup>21</sup>

A number of other contracts and grants were provided by the County of San Diego to Left-wing groups with the mere justification being “information technology.” Our investigation did not obtain a proper justification for why taxpayers were being forced to fund the information technology needs of Left-wing groups. Quite the opposite — our investigation found several instances of funds being directly used for political advocacy.

Take, for example, the \$50,000 IT contract recently awarded to the San Diego Organizing Project (March 1, 2022).<sup>22</sup> Our investigation found that San Diego Organizing Project’s IT grant included “website hosting and development platforms, costs to create social media platforms” — despite the fact that both the website and social media handles for this group engage in grassroots lobbying and issue advocacy.

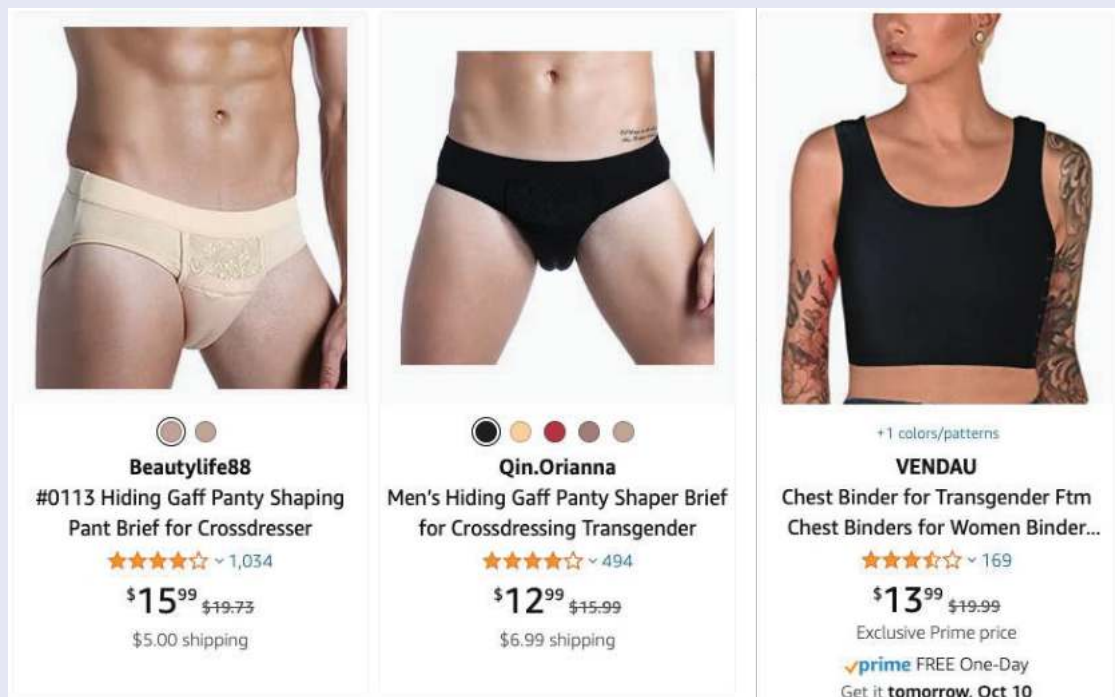
Between November 2020 and June 2021, the County of San Diego awarded the Environmental Health Coalition over \$37,600<sup>23 24 25</sup> in grant funding for “information technology.” Environmental Health Coalition’s website is almost exclusively issue advocacy, political activity, and lobbying efforts — and one cannot possibly believe that the information technology purchased with taxpayer funds was utilized exclusively for activities outside of these areas.

It’s not just IT contracts that seem to be used as padding. Our investigation uncovered a contract for actual padding — known as “binders and tuckers!”

On December 17, 2021, the County of San Diego awarded the San Diego LGBT Center \$20,000 “to support funding for binders and tuckers to transgender and gender non-conforming individuals.”<sup>26</sup> After researching what “binders and tuckers” actually are, our investigation found examples of these products for sale on Amazon .



### EXHIBIT 30: San Diego LGBT Community Center Got \$20,000 in Taxpayer Funds to Purchase Low-Cost “Binders and Tuckers” (Source: Amazon)



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Given the low-cost of these items, and assuming there are not more than 200-400 individuals so poor they cannot afford to purchase their own “binders and tuckers,” our investigation flags this grant as questionable and possibly being used to pad more than the transgender individuals it purports to serve.

Finally, our investigation found “kitchen sink” statements used to justify various grants to Left-wing groups.

For example, in June 2021, the County of San Diego gave another \$60,000 <sup>27</sup> to the San Diego Organizing Project for an incoherent jumble of activities — to “fund a community needs survey, the promotion and execution of their Cleanliness and Safety Program, community outreach to collect stories from their work to advocate for greater change and provide storytelling training to community leaders, and County-Wide advocacy efforts to help bring attention to community needs.” Good luck figuring out where the taxpayer funds actually went with that mish-mash of activities.

### ► **FINDING: Questionable San Diego County \$40,000 Grant to Center for Policy Initiatives for Simple Blog Post**

On March 10, 2020, the County of San Diego gave \$40,000 to Center on Policy Initiatives for “research and analysis projects” related to a “poverty and income series.”<sup>28</sup>

Pursuant to our request under the CA Public Records Act, our investigators asked the County for any deliverables associated with this contract, but received none suggesting that the county never received any documents, reports, or deliverables.

In reviewing CPI’s website, however, our investigators found four blog posts on from February to October 2020 that are contain nearly identical narratives and simply use readily-available Census data on San Diego County. Besides providing these readily-available data sets from the Census bureau in a few tables and charts, the blog post contains no additional data or in-depth analysis.

Each blog post itself says they take “6-10 minutes to read” but it is highly doubtful it took much longer than that to compile each of these simple posts. It leaves our investigators with the question: did it really take \$40,000 of taxpayer funds to write these simple blog posts — and if not, where was the taxpayer funding diverted to?

Of note, at the very end of each blog post, CPI did thank the County for funding the blog post by noting “We would like to thank the San Diego County Board of Supervisors for supporting this year’s report series.”

What is most revealing is two of the blog posts were made prior to the County of San Diego even voting to provide the funding for the project — suggesting that the work may have already been done and CPI was using existing work product to justify \$40,000 in taxpayer funding.



#### **EXHIBIT 31: Short Blog Posts Were Sole Deliverables of \$40,000 Research Grants**



##### **View posts:**

- [cpisandiego.org/poverty-income-earnings-north-county/](https://cpisandiego.org/poverty-income-earnings-north-county/)
- [cpisandiego.org/poverty-income-earnings-east-county-2018/](https://cpisandiego.org/poverty-income-earnings-east-county-2018/)
- [cpisandiego.org/poverty-income-earnings-south-county-2018/](https://cpisandiego.org/poverty-income-earnings-south-county-2018/)
- [cpisandiego.org/city-of-san-diego-poverty-income-earnings/](https://cpisandiego.org/city-of-san-diego-poverty-income-earnings/)
- [cpisandiego.org/county-of-san-diego-remains-filled-with-inequality/](https://cpisandiego.org/county-of-san-diego-remains-filled-with-inequality/)

► **FINDING: Alliance San Diego and the Chicano Federation Given Nearly \$400,000 From San Diego Unified School District for Covid-19 “Canvassing” Program With Dubious Contract Deliverables**

In December of 2021, the San Diego Unified School District hired Alliance San Diego and the Chicano Federation for a “canvassing” program — providing nearly \$400,000 in taxpayer funds for the effort.<sup>29</sup> The effort was billed to the media as a “public health” project related to urging parents to get their children vaccinated.

The first red flag our investigation found was a shocking lack of justification for the past performance qualifications of either group to be awarded a public health contract to give advice to parents on Covid-19.

Alliance San Diego is a purely political organization and provides zero social services — let alone public health services. Even though Alliance San Diego had no qualifying experience in the public health field, it was awarded a \$175,000 contract and the school board negligently and falsely made the findings that it had such unique experience as to remove the contract from needing a competitive bid.

***“The school board negligently and falsely made the findings to award Alliance San Diego a \$175,000 no-bid contract.”***

While the Chicano Federation does promote various welfare programs on nutrition, it too has limited public health experience but received a contract for over \$208,000 from the school board — under the same negligent and false findings.

The board also declared “Consultant/Professional is specially trained and possesses the skills, experience, education, competency, licenses and/or credentials necessary to perform the required services.”

In reviewing the staff bios and education experience of both Alliance San Diego and the Chicano Federation, we found no doctors, nurses, or public health professionals on their staff.

The red flag on how the contracts were awarded was just the beginning. In investigating the “program deliverables” of the contracts, our team can conclude that the contracts were either egregiously wasteful and/or funding was diverted to support other activities of the organizations.

Specifically, the contracts claimed that Alliance San Diego and the Chicano Federation would staff door-to-door canvassing of homes in target neighborhoods, engage in texting, and have volunteers at schools for several “curb-side” efforts.

The contract specifically stated that “ASD will deliver weekly updates on program effectiveness (including number of contacts and number of agreements – broken down by contact method and location if possible), any anecdotal data gathered in direct conversations regarding the topic, and ASD will deliver a final report to SDUSD within 8 weeks of the agreed upon program completion date. The final report shall include all points covered in weekly reports and an accounting of the funds spent to provide the services to SDUSD.”

The only program deliverables were a handful of emails with figures for how many homes were canvassed, how many parents were reached, etc. No final report was produced beside these simple emails on the project.

Canvassing is defined as simply walking to a door, knocking, possibly speaking to the resident, and perhaps leaving a door hanger behind.

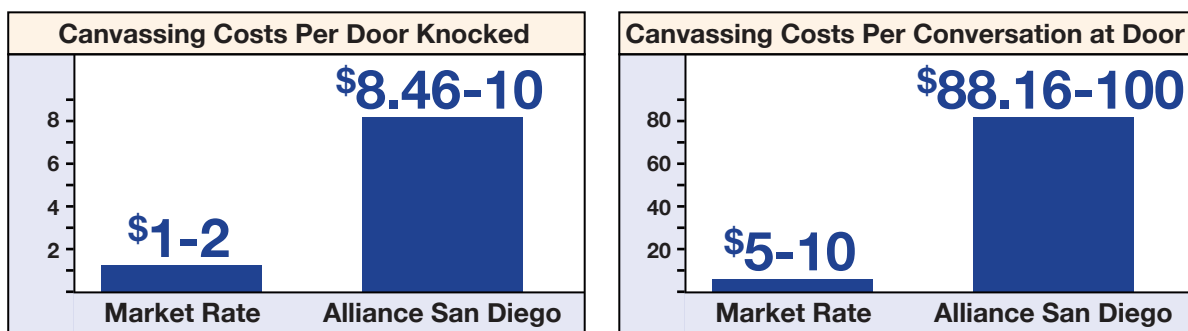
In the political industry, canvassing can be free when done by volunteers or can be outsourced to canvassing firms for roughly \$1-2 per door.

First, only a small fraction of the homes in the San Diego Unified School District were even canvassed — 20,678 homes “knocked” versus roughly 390,000 housing units.<sup>29</sup>

Second, Alliance San Diego’s charge to taxpayers for its canvassing was a whopping \$8.46 per door — substantially above market rate! Worse, the cost-per-household spikes to over \$10 when including the Chicano Federation Funds.

According to Alliance’s self-generated stats,<sup>29</sup> only 1,985 parents were reached at home. That translates into \$88.16 PER conversation with a parent! When including the Chicano Federation’s contract, the figure would be above \$100 per conversation with a parent.

If the school district really wanted to reach parents to talk about Covid, it would have been better to simply offer each parent who contacts the district headquarters to have the conversation a free \$20 gas card! However, we seriously doubt talking to parents was the real goal of these contracts — particularly the contract with Alliance San Diego.



► **FINDING: Substantial Amounts of Covid-19 Taxpayer Funds Were Repeatedly Given to Left-Wing Organizations with Little or No Justification and Questionable Deliverables**

It’s not just Alliance San Diego that got a chunk of Covid-19 taxpayer funding and provided dubious deliverables in return.

Continuing with a pattern of abusing Covid-19 funding, our investigation found over \$700,000 in other Covid-19 taxpayer funds that were dispensed by the local governments in San Diego to Left-wing organizations — all that had no prior experience in working on public health issues.

***“Our investigation found over \$700,000 in other Covid-19 taxpayer funds that were dispensed by the local governments in San Diego to Left-wing organizations — all that had no prior experience in working on public health issues.”***

For example, in June 2020, Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans received \$25,000 “to fund



the purchase of cabinets, storage containers, and shelving to store food; purchase supplies such as depends, diapers, infant formula, toilet paper, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, tissue paper, cleaning supplies, and personal protective gear; and to purchase groceries for distribution to individuals and families impacted by COVID-19.”<sup>30</sup>

Besides offering a page of information on how individuals can obtain food from government agencies (e.g. school lunches) or other non-profits, PANA does not seem to provide any of these items directly to members of the public. Of note, in September 2020, the County of San Diego took the unusual action of amending this contract to allow for “operational expenses.”<sup>31</sup>

San Diego LGBT Pride also received \$50,000 for the nearly verbatim statement of work — i.e. “to support the purchase of cabinets, storage containers, and shelving to store food; and to purchase supplies such as depends, diapers, infant formula, toilet paper, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, tissue paper, cleaning supplies, personal protective gear, and groceries for distribution to individuals and families impacted by COVID-19. The allocation will also support operational expenses related to behavioral health services, counseling services, homelessness, addiction, and youth services, as these needs have increased due to COVID-19 crisis.”<sup>32</sup>

A review of San Diego LGBT Pride programs since 2020 reveals absolutely no hint that the organization provides or ever provided distribution of these kinds of items — and the organization does not offer counseling programs. (See <https://sdpride.org/programs/>) San Diego LGBT Pride does have an extensive “Advocacy” program and “Vote with Pride” program.

In June of 2021, the County of San Diego provided a \$40,000 grant to Mid-City CAN “to provide funds for the one-time salary and benefits for a community health worker position for their Community Vaccine Assistance effort.”<sup>33</sup> A review of Mid-City CAN’s website found no evidence of a community health worker position or staffer. Only a single web-page with just 1,042-words of information on Covid-19 — with links to government agencies for “assistance” was found. (See: [https://www.midcitycan.org/covid\\_19](https://www.midcitycan.org/covid_19))

In May of 2021, County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher directed \$91,831 to Center on Policy Initiatives to cover salary expenses for two “part-time” CPI staffers who would presumably be working on the “We All We Got” program to “provide family food distributions and weekly food distribution” to individuals impacted by COVID-19.<sup>34</sup>

However, in reviewing the CPI website, our investigation found the only staff listed are “community organizers” and there is no mention of them ever having run a food distribution program.

Finally, our investigation is quite concerned about a press release issued by Gov. Gavin Newsom on May 4, 2021 where his office announced the state would use Covid-19 funds provided by the federal government to direct “85.7 million to support community-based organizations.”<sup>35</sup>

The Governor’s press release touted funding would go to over 480 organizations statewide with some of the funds going to “a new state “Get Out the Vaccine” effort coordinates with 70 community-based organizations to employ callers and door-knockers.” Critics of the Governor raised concerns that the door-to-door canvassing effort seemed to be timed to highlight Covid-19 as an issue leading up to the 2021 Recall election.

Unfortunately, which organizations received money and how much money was received remains a big mystery – as Newsom’s program utilized third-party foundations and private health contractors to distribute the funds. We strongly suspect that several of the 10 High Risk groups this investigation flagged in San Diego county received some of these funds – but cannot determine how much and what results were produced, if any, without further investigation.

► **FINDING: Covid-19 Taxpayer Funds Provided a Financial “Windfall” for Left-Wing Organizations in San Diego – Including Over \$1.8 Million for San Diego Pride Alone**

It was not just the Covid-19 contracts and grants to Left-wing organizations that were vehicles for directing taxpayer funds to Left-wing organizations in San Diego County. In fact, our investigation found that the federal Covid-19 Paycheck Protection Program was extensively used by the Left-wing organizations.

For example, San Diego LGBT Pride received a whopping \$880,000 in PPP funds in 2020, \$155,000 in PPP in 2021, and \$813,000 in 2021 under SBA’s Shuttered Venue Operators Program.<sup>36</sup> These amounts seem shockingly out-of-touch with the financial model San Diego LGBT Pride uses to plan, fund, and execute its annual LGBT Pride Parade and festival.

Alliance San Diego received \$247,000 — along with a \$10,000 grant for “economic injury disaster grant.”<sup>37</sup> (If you are keeping score, when including the dubious San Diego Unified School District canvassing contract reviewed in a previous finding, Alliance San Diego snagged more than \$430,000 in taxpayer funds from Covid-19 funds alone!)

The Climate Action Campaign of San Diego reported they received \$279,000 in free funding from the federal government under the Paycheck Protection Program related Covid-19<sup>38</sup> — with one \$134,000 award roughly 12% of their entire funding for a single year — even though funding streams did not show a disruption in revenues for this group during the same time.

Likewise, the Center on Policy Initiatives received \$209,000 in PPP funds and Rise Urban Leadership Institute got \$109,000.<sup>39</sup>

► **FINDING: Shell Entities Being Used to Hide Funding of Left-Wing Groups**

As outlined in our description of Youth Will, we found that Youth Will is a front group for Rise Urban Leadership Institute. That struck our investigation as odd.

We became even more alarmed when we saw the May 5, 2020 minutes from the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors meeting where Youth Will received grant funding “to organize and direct emergency resource ambassadors” related to Covid-19.<sup>40</sup> Yet at the same exact meeting, the County of San Diego then granted funding to Rise San Diego to “work with Youth Will” — even though the organizations were exactly the same legal entity.

This gross lack of transparency demands an explanation as our investigation is concerned as to why government officials would want to hide the true extent of funding for Rise San Diego/Youth Will by pretending that the two groups are separate and distinct when, in fact, they are the same alter-ego.

► **FINDING: High Risk that San Diego Foundation Is Being Used as a Conduit Funding Entity for Transferring Government Funds to Left-Wing Groups**

Our investigation uncovered the use of the San Diego Foundation as a conduit funding entity in San Diego County. What the San Diego Foundation does with private donations is a matter for it and its donors. However, what the San Diego Foundation does with government funds is a matter of public interest and it demands transparency.

**“Our investigation uncovered emails that reveal that SANDAG actively participated in the drawing of various redistricting map proposals”**

In February 2020 and again in April 2022, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors directed \$450,000 to the San Diego Foundation for broadly defined “information technology” support to community groups.<sup>41 42</sup>

According to its two most recent IRS 990 reports, the San Diego Foundation then granted the following, the bulk of which is listed in its most recent 990 filing, covering tax year 2020:

- San Diego Unified School District: \$700,000
  - For various purposes, including “COVID Response.”
- Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans: \$481,000
- San Diego LGBT Community Center: \$277,469
- Center on Policy Initiatives: \$170,000
- Alliance San Diego: \$102,500
- Rise San Diego: \$51,420
- San Diego Organizing Project: \$50,000
- Chicano Federation: \$50,113
- Climate Action Campaign: \$41,000

When we contacted the San Diego Foundation for justification for these grants or a copy of any documentation on deliverables produced with these funds, they failed to provide ANY response. This lack of transparency is concerning and unacceptable.

### ► **FINDING: SANDAG Used Taxpayer Funds to Participate in an Effort to Boost Census Participation in Democrat-Leaning Areas**

It’s not just the direct transfer of taxpayer funds to Left-wing organizations that our investigation uncovered. Local government staff resources are being used on questionable political projects.

For example, in several email chains we obtained, SANDAG staff worked with Center on Policy Initiatives, a private public relations vendor, the Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA), and United Way on advertising strategies to boost participation in the 2020 Census.

In several email chains, PANA repeatedly instructed SANDAG to print hundreds of copies of handouts for their efforts on the Census.<sup>43</sup> Having a non-governmental organization give instructions to government officials to procure taxpayer-funded resources is quite alarming.

SANDAG may try to defend this work with the specious claim that some of the transportation funding agencies take population into account when providing making allocations. However, the email chains revealed that SANDAG was only interested in boosting participation in these specific zip-codes:

- Zip Code 92105 (City Heights, Oak Park)
- Zip Code 92115 (Mid-City, College Area)
- Zip Code 92025 (Escondido)
- Zip Code 92173 (San Ysidro)
- Zip Code 91910 (Chula Vista)
- Zip Code 91911 (Chula Vista)

Analysis of these zip codes show that they tend to vote overwhelmingly Democratic in elections. The narrow nature of SANDAG’s focus in its investment of public resources raises questions as to their true intent in participating in this effort.

It should be noted that in their 2020 Post-Enumeration Study, the Census Bureau itself admitted that it overcounted the populations of eight states (all of them blue states) and undercounted the populations of six states (all of them red states) in the 2020 census. The result was blue states received 3 electoral votes that they arguably should not have received.

## ► **FINDING: SANDAG Used Taxpayer Funds to Subsidize Left-Wing Redistricting Efforts**

One of the most consequential determinants of which political party wins a given seat is how the districts are created for each seat. That's why the redistricting process every ten years has been the subject of manipulation by individual politicians, interest groups and both political parties.

Our investigation uncovered emails that reveal that SANDAG actively participated in the drawing of various redistricting map proposals and even covered the costs of printing various mapping documents – all on the direction of one of the Left-wing groups we studied.

On June 7, 2021, PANA's Jeanine Erikat wrote to a SANDAG staff member that "...your maps have been integral to our mapping sessions." SANDAG staffer Adam Attar, responded "Glad that our maps are well received" (emphasis added) and then proceeded to offer more free taxpayer-funded assistance to the partisan effort in the form of photocopying various mapping documents and tools.

One is left to wonder whether SANDAG would have provided mapping resources and covered the printing costs for the Republican Party of San Diego as well.

No matter which side of the political spectrum asks for it, it is completely inappropriate for government resources to be used to support partisan or ideological redistricting efforts.

***It is completely inappropriate for government resources to be used to support partisan or ideological redistricting efforts.***

## ► **FINDING: San Diego County Democratic Party Had Plan to Take Over San Diego County Board of Supervisors and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) — And the Result Was a Spike in Funding from Both Entities to Left-Wing Groups Post-Takeover**

Our investigation turned its attention to "why?" Why are local government agencies in San Diego County suddenly and deliberately directing taxpayer funds to Left-wing organizations? It seems it is part of a specific plan.

In the wake of the 2012 elections, the Left-wing in San Diego County devised a plan to "take over" two San Diego County government agencies: the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).

The plan involved coordinated activities between the San Diego County Democratic Party, organized labor unions, and a variety of Left-wing non-profit organizations.

The plan to take over these two local government agencies had two goals: first, to change policies; second, to access taxpayer funding for Left-wing groups.

***The plan to take over these two local government agencies had two goals: first, to change policies; second, to access taxpayer funding for Left-wing groups.***



On January 30, 2021 the Voice of San Diego reported a controversial post made on Facebook by the then-Chairman of the San Diego County Democratic Party about this plan. Rodriguez-Kennedy had revealed that Democrats “had spent millions of dollars and marshaled hundreds of volunteer hours to get Democrats elected, with the explicit expectation that they would then send fellow Democrats to SANDAG.”

The plan worked.

In 2018, thanks to winning seats at the City Council level and to a change in voting rules on the board under AB 805, Democrats captured control of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). SANDAG is essentially the county’s transportation agency and has a massive funding stream thanks to billions in transportation funds from federal and state allocations and a local sales tax called TRANSNet. Then in 2020, Democrats captured control of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors with a 3-2 majority.

It should be noted that when Rodriguez-Kennedy refers to having “spent millions of dollars” he is not referring to funds solely raised during that time by the San Diego County Democratic Party. Examination of campaign finance reports from the San Diego County Democratic Party do not substantiate “millions of dollars” spent. We assume Rodriguez-Kennedy must be referring to a larger concept of groups that indeed “spent millions of dollars” during this period.

The exponential rise in SANDAG funding of Left-wing groups seems to be the motive of this campaign spending with a focus on SANDAG.

Indeed, our investigation found a significant shift in funding being provided by SANDAG and the County of San Diego immediately after Democrats captured control of these agencies in the 2018 and 2020 elections respectively.

For example, SANDAG’s use of taxpayer funds to finance the Center on Policy Initiatives skyrocketed after the political shift in 2018 — and an intimate collaboration between SANDAG staff and CPI staff was documented after 2018. In fact, SANDAG staff began identifying new opportunities for collaboration with CPI during this period, to the point of actively soliciting CPI’s help — and selected CPI to serve on various advisory boards and joint grant applications.

At the San Diego County government, Supervisor Nathan Fletcher exponentially increased District 4’s discretionary grant funding for Left-wing organizations compared to his predecessor Ron Roberts. Fletcher increased funding for groups in the Community Budget Alliance that actively lobby the County of San Diego for changes in budget allocations across a range of programs.



# Recommendations

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- 1 Ban Taxpayer Funding to Political Groups:** To remove any suspicion or doubt going forward, San Diego elected officials and government agencies should adopt a policy to prohibit taxpayer funding for any non-profit organization that engages in lobbying, issue advocacy, or political activity.
- 2 Response from Local Government Agencies and Left-Wing Groups:** We strongly urge the local government agencies cited in this report (particularly the County of San Diego, SANDAG, and San Diego Unified School District) to respond to the concerns surfaced by this investigation by providing any and all information that could clarify the use of taxpayer funds by these Left-wing groups. Additionally, the Left-wing groups should come forward with any and all information that would justify their use of taxpayer funds.
- 3 San Diego County Grand Jury Investigation:** The San Diego County Grand Jury should initiate an investigation into the use of taxpayer funds by groups that engage in lobbying, issue advocacy and political activity to determine if the funding was appropriately accounted for and used. While the Transparency Foundation had to rely on voluntary compliance by government agencies with our document requests under the California Public Records Act (CPRA) requests, the citizen-led county grand jury is a mechanism exists to compel organizations and government staff involved in these contracts and grants to provide the information needed to more fully investigate the concerns surfaced in this report.
- 4 Congressional or Inspector General Investigations:** Significant evidence exists to conclude that Covid-19 funding from the federal government was used inappropriately by San Diego local governments and Left-wing groups for political activities. We have no confidence that the same local government agencies that potentially engaged in misconduct would be willing to properly investigate these concerns. As a result, the Transparency Foundation recommends that a Congressional committee of appropriate jurisdiction consider conducting an aggressive oversight hearing on the misappropriation of Covid-19 funds using San Diego County as a case study — and make a formal request to appropriate Inspectors General of federal agencies for investigatory support in this matter.
- 5 State Audit of Covid-19 Grants:** Our investigation uncovered more than \$100 million in statewide Covid-19 funding routed to “community-based organizations” through several foundations and private health contractors. Because these foundations and private entities were used to distribute funds, state public records laws do not apply and we could not determine which organizations received funding and how much funding was distributed. We also do not know what results taxpayers received for this massive expenditure. As a result, we recommend the California State Auditor investigate which organizations received those funds and what were the deliverables and results associated with the funding.

## **Online Document Library**

The Transparency Foundation has compiled an appendix containing supporting documents used in our investigation and the writing of this report. You can access those documents at [thetransparencyfoundation.org/follow-the-money-documents](http://thetransparencyfoundation.org/follow-the-money-documents)

## **Become a Whistleblower**

Do you have information about the topics discussed in this report? We would like to hear from YOU!

The Transparency Foundation has a strict policy of protecting any Whistleblower who steps forward with information relating to potential wrong-doing in the government or in the use of taxpayer funds. Please contact us!

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## **Our Mission**

**The Transparency Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to making public institutions more transparent and accountable to the people they serve.**

The Foundation sponsors investigatory research projects on a range of issues related to public finance and government performance, including how government manages its finances, whether government funds are being used for intended and legitimate purposes, what tangible outcomes are produced from government programs, what is the true cost of a program, how does a program compare to benchmarks, and how government can improve its overall transparency, accountability and performance.

The findings from our investigatory research projects are be released to the public and any potential violations of the law are referred to the appropriate government agency of jurisdiction.

# End Notes

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- <sup>2</sup> Environmental Health Coalition. “Our Story.” Environmental Health Coalition. Accessed November 30, 2022. <https://www.environmentalhealth.org/about/our-story/>.
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- <sup>7</sup> Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA). “About.” PANA. Accessed November 30, 2022. <https://www.panasd.org/about>.
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- <sup>11</sup> San Diego Organizing Project. San Diego Organizing Project, February 14, 2022. <https://sdop.net/>.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>15</sup> “Community Budget Alliance – CBA.” Center on Policy Initiatives, April 19, 2022. <https://cpisandiego.org/cba/>.
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- <sup>30</sup> “County of San Diego Board of Supervisors Minute Order.” Board of Supervisors Meeting agendas, June 2, 2020.  
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- <sup>36</sup> USASpending.gov website: San Diego LGBT Pride Award IDs 5530727706 (\$880,000 in 2020); 2018848602 (\$155,000 in 2021); SBAHQ21SV006776 (\$813,000 in 2021).
- <sup>37</sup> USASpending.gov website: Alliance San Diego award IDs 6532527006 (\$247,000) and EIDLGT:3600593992 (\$10,000).
- <sup>38</sup> USASpending.gov website: Climate Action Campaign award IDs 7614607004 (\$134,169; April 8, 2020); 4188708303 (\$136,367; January 23, 2021); EIDLGT:3308086272 (\$9,000; July 2, 2020).
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- <sup>42</sup> “County of San Diego Board of Supervisors Minute Order.” Board of Supervisors Meeting agendas, April 26, 2022.  
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