



## MESSAGE FROM ACORN'S NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

2006 was a monumental year for ACORN. We grew to more than **350,000 ACORN members** in the U.S. and internationally! Our major campaign this year – raising the minimum wage by ballot initiative in four states – led to raises for 1.5 million workers. ACORN also ran the nation's largest nonpartisan voter registration effort this election cycle, kept up the fight for justice for Katrina survivors as they return and rebuild New Orleans, and organized on many more issues that affect low-income families. I invite you to read the highlights of ACORN's organizing in 2006 below, and look forward sharing even more exciting work in the year ahead.



In solidarity,  
Maude Hurd, ACORN National President

## BEST OF ACORN ORGANIZING -- 2006

**ACORN Grows:** ACORN now has 350,000 member families and organizing operations in over 110 U.S. cities in 39 states, and internationally in Argentina, Canada, Mexico, and Peru!



**ACORN and allies increased the minimum wage in states across the country, delivering raises for millions of workers.**

**Minimum Wage Initiatives:** In Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, and Ohio, voters overwhelmingly approved ACORN-backed ballot initiatives to raise the state minimum wage by \$1.35 or more – delivering raises to 1.5 million workers! To pass the measures, over 1,600 ACORN members, canvassers, and volunteers worked with labor-faith-community coalitions to contact 380,000 voters in low-income neighborhoods. ACORN also had a leading role in legislative campaigns that raised the minimum wage in eight states (Md., Mich., Ark., Pa., N.C., Mass., Calif., Ill.) and the City of Albuquerque, N.M.

knocked on 1.5 million doors in 20 states to get out the vote in the weeks before the election. ACORN and allies including Project Vote and the Advancement Project also won legal victories striking down restrictions on voter registration in Ohio, Georgia, and other states. In Pennsylvania, Washington, and Maryland, ACORN and allies defeated provisions to disqualify voters based on routine errors in state databases. In Florida, ACORN stopped a series of measures making it harder to put initiatives on the ballot like ACORN's successful 2004 initiative to raise the statewide minimum wage.

**Increasing Civic Participation:** ACORN ran the country's largest voter registration drive this election cycle, registering over 540,000 new voters. ACORN members and organizers



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**Justice for Hurricane Katrina Survivors:** ACORN organized thousands of Katrina survivors across the country to demand immediate relief and a voice in the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast region. In February, nearly 500 Katrina survivors from several states rallied in Washington DC with Congressional leaders for additional federal rebuilding assistance. In New Orleans, ACORN organized to prevent the city from taking land through eminent domain in flooded communities and also successfully pressured the city to restore utilities services in the Ninth Ward. ACORN's Home Clean-Out Demonstration Program also gutted over 1,850 homes to preserve them for later rebuilding. In November, a federal district judge ruled in favor of ACORN and Katrina survivors who had been denied FEMA housing assistance without a clear explanation or appeal process. The judge forced FEMA to send out new letters of explanation to thousands of Katrina survivors in Texas, giving affected families the chance to get millions in housing benefits restored.



Over 400 members of the ACORN Katrina Survivors Association converged in Washington, D.C., to rally for federal rebuilding assistance.

Throughout the year, a group of university-based urban planners and architects led by the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University worked with ACORN and the ACORN Housing Corporation to develop a "People's Plan" for rebuilding New Orleans' Ninth Ward. This plan was released at the end of the year, and offers a comprehensive strategy for restoring the community, enhancing quality of life, and enabling former residents and business owners to return home.



ACORN members from around the country marched for a minimum wage increase at ACORN's National Convention.

Washington, D.C., and Nassau County, N.Y., ACORN-led coalitions won measures providing living wages for thousands of workers. Chicago ACORN helped pass a landmark ordinance requiring "big box" stores in the city to pay \$13 per hour in wages and fringe benefits. Though Mayor Daley vetoed the ordinance— his first veto over the city council in 17 years – the campaign was a breakthrough in the fight to hold large retail stores accountable as they expand into low-income urban neighborhoods.

**ACORN's 16th National Convention:** Raising the States: Over 2,500 ACORN members and staff took part in the largest convention in ACORN's history in Columbus, Ohio. ACORN members rallied at the state capitol and signed up voters in low-income neighborhoods to build support for our minimum wage campaigns. Speakers at the event included Senator Hillary Clinton, former Senator John Edwards, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, Reverend Al Sharpton and comedienne Roseanne Barr.

**Winning Living Wages:** ACORN continued to play a leading role in the national living wage movement. In Pine Bluff, Ark.,



Chicago ACORN members rallied to make big box stores in the city pay a living wage.

**Taking On Predatory Lenders:** After negotiations with ACORN, both Jackson Hewitt and Liberty Tax eliminated their application fees on Refund Anticipation Loans (RALs) in 7,000 stores – saving customers over \$164 million per year! In Rhode Island, ACORN helped pass one of the strongest laws in the country regulating predatory home loans.



**ACORN reached thousands of low-income families and Katrina survivors with information about free tax prep services and the Earned Income Tax Credit.**

**Helping Families Claim the Earned Income Tax Credit:** ACORN ran free tax prep sites in 72 cities and helped 30,000 low-income families collect over \$38 million in refunds, including \$25 million in EITC and Child Tax Credits. With support from the William J. Clinton Foundation, ACORN also conducted EITC outreach targeting Katrina survivors in ten cities and prepared taxes for nearly 1,000 survivors.

**Affordable Housing:** ACORN members successfully fought for affordable housing set asides in specific developments in New York City, Garden City, N.Y., Los Angeles, Calif., and other cities. In New York City, ACORN and the Housing Here and Now Coalition won a low-income housing trust fund and an affordable housing requirement in areas of high development, which will create over 20,000 units of affordable housing. New York ACORN also secured a \$10 million city budget allocation saving 8,400 Section 8 vouchers. Also in New York, a state board gave final approval for a multi-billion dollar development in Brooklyn, which, as part of an ACORN-negotiated agreement, will include thousands of affordable rental and home ownership units.

**Improving Utilities Services:** ACORN chapters nationwide won reforms of utilities practices, helping low-income customers pay their bills and avoid service disruptions. In Texas, ACORN won a statewide no shut-off agreement for the summer from the Public Service Commission, and in Florida, ACORN members convinced a state commission to reduce proposed utilities surcharges by \$500 million. ACORN also waged successful campaigns for service reforms in Michigan, Maryland, Orlando, Fla., and Houston and Dallas, Texas.



**ACORN worked with allies to improve the quality of education in classrooms around the country.**

**Better Schools:** ACORN organizing won better programs for low performing schools in many of our neighborhoods. In California, ACORN played a key role in working with the mayor of Los Angeles to pass a law increasing the voice of parents in city schools, while statewide ACORN and allies helped pass a law to improve the recruitment and training of teachers. Chicago ACORN and coalition partners won a new appropriation of \$3 million for Grow Your Own Teacher projects around the state.

**Healthcare for All:** ACORN continued our fight to win health care access for low and moderate income families. In San Francisco, ACORN was part of a successful coalition effort to pass an ordinance providing health care for every city resident. ACORN chapters in San Diego, Calif., and Columbus, Ohio, also helped eliminate over \$700,000 in medical debt and over \$1.2 million in liens for patients unfairly denied reduced cost “charity care” at local hospitals. Chicago ACORN worked with allies to stop a large hospital chain from closing an acute care hospital serving low-income city residents.

**Immigration:** ACORN members joined the largest mass movement our country has seen in decades as we participated in immigrant rights marches around the nation to demand comprehensive federal immigration reform and a legal path to citizenship. These events helped block federal legislation making it a felony to aid undocumented immigrants or to be undocumented in the U.S., and set the stage for a renewed push for immigration reform in 2007.



**Arkansas ACORN members participated in an immigration rally on May 1 with over 1,000 people.**



**ACORN members held protests at Sherwin Williams stores demanding the company pay to clean up poisonous lead paint in low-income communities.**

**Environmental Justice:** ACORN held protests at Sherwin Williams stores throughout the United States, Canada, and Latin America as part of an ongoing campaign to demand that paint manufacturers pay for the clean up of lead paint that has poisoned hundreds of thousands of children. The cities of El Paso, Texas, and Providence, R.I., also divested thousands of shares of stock from Sherwin Williams after hearing ACORN members testify about the impact of lead poisoning in their communities.

**Organizing Against Wal-Mart:** ACORN worked with the Wal-Mart Alliance for Reform Now (WARN) to stop the construction of Wal-Mart stores in Orlando, Sarasota, Plant City, and Temple Terrace, Fla. Also in Florida, the Orange County Commission enacted an ACORN-backed one-year moratorium barring big box retailers from building new stores in the county.

**Building a Movement of Unionized Childcare Providers:** New York ACORN and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) won state legislation – with the governor’s approval expected in 2007 – giving over 25,000 childcare providers the right to bargain collectively for better wages. In New Jersey, ACORN worked alongside CWA and AFSCME to organize over 7,000 childcare providers, and helped secure an Executive Order from the governor granting the providers collective bargaining rights.

Our sister organization SEIU Local 880 signed a historic contract bringing more than \$250 million in rate increases and benefits to 40,000 state childcare providers.

**ACORN Housing Corporation (AHC):** In 2006, ACORN Housing Corporation’s housing counseling program helped 10,298 families become first-time homeowners, and refinanced 1,234 homeowners into more affordable mortgages. ACORN Housing’s development program secured over \$100 million in construction financing and began development of 890 new units of affordable housing. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, AHC provided housing counseling to over 4,000 displaced homeowners and built the first new houses in New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward.

**Taking Action for Our Communities:** In thousands of local neighborhoods ACORN members won victories for low and moderate income communities, including

- Millions for home repair in Minnesota, Detroit, Mich., Toronto, Orlando, Fla., San Antonio, Texas, Nassau County, N.Y., and Oakland, Calif.
- A \$5 million city subsidy for the building of a supermarket in a neglected Las Vegas, Nev., neighborhood.
- A statewide record sealing law to help nonviolent ex-offenders find jobs in Illinois.
- Increased police accountability in neighborhoods in Contra Costa County, Calif., Portland, Ore., Jacksonville, Fla., San Antonio, Texas, and Lima, Peru.
- Strong tenants’ rights laws in California, Madison, Wis., and Jackson, Miss.
- Hundreds of neighborhood safety improvements such as stop signs, speed humps, traffic signals, sidewalk repairs, and trash clean-ups.



**In Madison, ACORN successfully pressured the city council to pass a law allowing tenants to make critical repairs and then deduct the amount from rent payments.**