



New Liberal Alliance Hopes to Replicate Conservatives' Success

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Wealthy liberals are being tapped for money to develop a funding clearinghouse for progressive organizations in the hope that liberals can replicate what they now recognize as the success of the conservative movement in building effective institutions for developing new ideas and promoting public policies.

The new liberal organization, the Democracy Alliance, has a long-term goal of coming up with \$200 million for this purpose.

Its creation is a product of frustration among wealthy liberal donors who believe their financial contributions have had little impact on the direction of national policy in recent years. Envious of the effectiveness of such major conservative institutions as the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Leadership Institute and Young America's Foundation, these liberals are eager to build an equally effective body of institutions that can wage intellectual and ideological battles for their side.

Wake-Up Call

Political operative Rob Stein, who served as chief of staff to Commerce Secretary Ron Brown during the Clinton Administration, is directing the project. Stein has said he woke up one morning after the 2002 elections and discovered he was living in a one-party country. He vowed to study the conservative movement to determine why it was winning. The answer took him nearly a year to find. When he thought he had it, he compiled it into a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation, packed up and hit the road.

The presentation is becoming famous in liberal circles. "The Conservative Message Machine Money Matrix," as Stein calls it, carefully maps out in Hillary-Clinton-vast-right-wing-conspiracy-style, the right's networking and funding in diagrams and bullet points. Stein claims that a few well-connected, wealthy clans, including the Scaife, Bradley, Olin and Coors families, founded a \$300-million network of groups that now dominate American policy. Stein uses his presentation to try to persuade liberal donors to invest in his Democracy Alliance.

The alliance was forged from the remnants of the Phoenix Group, an assembly of financiers who backed pro-Democratic 527 organizations such as MoveOn.org during the 2004 election cycle.

Major donors George Soros and Peter Lewis, who each gave roughly \$23 million to 527s for the

2004 elections, have latched onto the cause and are attracting other donors. A constellation of Hollywood elites, retired investment bankers, entrepreneurs and philanthropists are backing the cause. The effort reportedly has 80 founding donors, but former Clinton White House spokesman Mike McCurry, who is working with the alliance, says some of those wealthy people are still only considering investing in the venture.

Prospective donors have been asked to make an initial pledge of \$200,000 a year for five years to Democracy Alliance-endorsed think tanks and advocacy groups. Despite rumors that liberals would face a “donor crunch” driven by the proliferation of left-wing groups competing for money the alliance is not worried.

More than 700 wealthy liberals have already watched Stein’s PowerPoint presentation in private meetings.

“There is enormous capacity for financial giving,” said McCurry. “There are enormous resources not being invested effectively and the Democracy Alliance will make giving more purposeful. If anything, I think the pie will grow as more people want to be a part of it.”

McCurry said Democracy Alliance’s agenda is “broadly defined” and will be focused on economic issues that affect the everyday lives of middle-class Americans. The group is not likely to endorse candidates, but isn’t necessarily ruling it out. “This isn’t about electing people,” said McCurry. “It’s giving them the tools to make them govern more effectively.” He said that groups hoping to win financing from Democracy Alliance backers should have a long-term focus on issues and advocacy.

He said the alliance is looking for organizations that will build the left’s capacity to do four things over the long-term: Unify liberals, enhance liberal communication and media relations, build a cadre of new liberal leaders, and promote what McCurry calls “civic engagement.”

To secure backing from the Democracy Alliance, groups proposing to do these things, McCurry said, must have multi-year plans, must be structured so they are easily replicated and expandable, must be willing to collaborate with other groups and must be able to convince donors they will produce significant political returns.

Lee Edwards, distinguished fellow of conservative thought at the Heritage Foundation and author of 16 books related to conservative history, is skeptical of the Democracy Alliance’s plans, saying they are emphasizing media and financial structuring over philosophy. “What they are building is a Potemkin Village,” said Edwards. “It’s all a facade. There is no principle. You draw back the curtain and there’s nothing there.”

College Liberals

One group likely to receive significant funding from Democracy Alliance is the Center for American Progress, headed by former Clinton Chief of Staff John Podesta. It has already spawned a subgroup, Campus Progress, which works to mobilize liberal college students.

David Halperin, director of Campus Progress, said, "It's no secret we've been in discussion with them [Democracy Alliance]." Currently, Campus Progress has speaking programs in place at 60 colleges, funds 14 student-run publications with grants of \$300 to \$1500, and operates a website that gets nearly 20,000 hits a day. "We're doing what people on the right have been doing better until now," Halperin said. "We're developing and communicating ideas and finding, promoting and creating new leaders."

People Behind the Democracy Alliance

Name	Function	Background
Rob Stein	Founder/director	Former chief of staff to Clinton Commerce Secretary Ron Brown
Andrew Rappaport	Founder/investor	Silicon Valley investor
Simon Rosenberg	Founder	President, New Democrat Network
Mike McCurry	Spokesman	Former White House press secretary
Steven Gluckstern	Chairman	Retired investment banker
Ann S. Bowers	Board member	Founding trustee of Noyce Foundation, widow of Intel founder
Albert Yates	Board member	Former President, Colorado State University
Marc and Susie T. Buell	Board members	Mrs. Buell is founder of Esprit de Corps
Anne Bartley	Board member	President, Rockefeller Family Fund
Alan Patricof	Donor	Co-founder, Apax Partners
Bren Simon	Donor	Wife of Simon Property Group co-chairman Mel Simon
Chris Gabrieli	Donor	Boston-based venture capitalist
Rob Reiner	Donor	Director/actor
George Soros	Donor	Financier
Peter Lewis	Donor	Chairman, Progressive Corp.

Miss Carpenter was formerly a congressional correspondent & assistant editor for HUMAN EVENTS. She is the author of "[The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy's Dossier on Hillary Rodham Clinton](#)," published by Regnery (a HUMAN EVENTS sister company).

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