



STRONGER TOGETHER:

THE STORY OF THE EFFORTS
OF COALITIONS AND NETWORKS
IN THE WEALTH AND INCOME
ADVOCACY LANDSCAPE

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wealthincomeequity.org



Contributors

The **Center for Study and Advocacy to Reduce Wealth and Income Inequality** commissioned this report to highlight the efforts, strengths, and challenges of networks and coalitions working on the Wealth and Income Inequality landscape. **The Center is a registered US nonprofit** with a mission to research, educate and advocate for change related to income and wealth disparity.

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Abbreviations

ATF – Americans for Tax Fairness
BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, and Other Persons of Color
CBA – Community Benefit Agreements
CUFFA – Churches United for Fair Housing
CPEHN – California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
CSO – Civil Society Organization
DC – District of Columbia
ESSA – Every Student Succeeds Act 2015
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
HJFA – Housing Justice for All
ESSA – Every Student Succeeds Act 2015
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
HSTPA – Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act
IASP – Institute on Assets and Social Policy
IMF – International Monetary Fund
JWJ – Jobs with Justice
KC – Kansas City
LMIC – Lower and Middle-income communities
MEJA – Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance
NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCH – National Coalition for the Homeless
NCRC – National Community Reinvestment Coalition
NEA – The National Education Association
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NLIHC – National Low Income Housing Coalition
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SMADC – San Mateo Anti-Displacement Coalition
SNAP – Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program
UBI – Universal Basic Income
USFWC – United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives
VHJC – Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition
WIE – Center for Study and Advocacy to Reduce Wealth and Income Inequality

Executive Summary

This report, the second of a three-part series commissioned by the Center for Advocacy and Study to Reduce Wealth and Income Inequality (WIE), focuses on networks and coalitions working in the wealth and income inequality advocacy landscape to spotlight their efforts, successes, and challenges.

The study examined the websites, reports, and public statements of over 60 organizations that identify as networks and coalitions and found that many of them were doing remarkable work in several focus areas, including Universal Basic Income, Access to Healthcare and Education, Debt Cancellation, Advocacy for progressive taxes, advocacy for minimum wage, etc. The study also found that these networks and coalitions preferred several strategies, including research, lobbying, policy and legislative advocacy, campaigns, and awareness raising.

These strategies have resulted in significant successes across several issue areas. Notable among these successes are the following:

- * Push through legislation and ballot measures in 25 states to raise wages and end subminimum wage in **25 states**, including California, Massachusetts, NY, DC, Michigan, Illinois, and Maine.
- * Advocate for states to adopt a **\$15** minimum hourly wage in twelve states and Washington, DC.
- * Deploy research to increase awareness about the current tax system, combat misinformation about the effects of a progressive tax reform agenda, and provide information about policy decisions and their effects on citizens.
- * Lobbying for the passage of a paid leave law that allows workers to take five days of paid time off over 12 months for no reason.
- * Offering expert testimony to Congress on tax reform legislation
- * Mobilize communities to support propositions that improve education, housing, and critical social services investment.



the study finds that when organizations come together, it offers them leverage to improve their bargaining power, and mobilize effectively on an issue

These are just a few successes recorded by networks and coalitions in the wealth and income advocacy landscape in the United States. Beyond the successes, however, the study finds that when organizations come together, it offers them leverage to improve their bargaining power, mobilize effectively on an issue, bring that issue to public

attention, build cohesion and inclusivity among diverse groups in the community and harness resources to build resources and raise funds. In terms of operation, the study found that networks operated at multiple levels, particularly at the district/county level, the state level, and the Federal level.

As regards challenges, distinct challenges that networks and coalitions face include the following:

- * The efforts to pass legislation and policies that enhance wealth and income inequality. Examples include legislation or policies that reduce access to healthcare, education, and social security for marginalized groups.
- * Another challenge is the proliferation of corporate lobby groups to oppose, hinder, or slow down the passage of bills and policies that reduce wealth and income inequality. For example, one of the reasons Proposition 15 failed to pass in California legislation was the activities of lobby groups.
- * Related to the above is the historic investments in Federal, State, and local elections to influence the election of candidates whose political stance aligns with those of corporations or the ultra-wealthy. According to an analysis from Americans for Tax Fairness about the 2022 election cycle, donors pumped over \$1 billion into election campaigns, with billionaires contributing more than 73%. In many instances, these donations went to candidates who favored tax cuts for the wealthy.
- * Other challenges recorded are more operational, including the decline in members' commitment, funding challenges to sustain the network over an extended period, and logistical challenges in conducting multi-location and multi-issue campaigns

Purpose of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

i. Identify existing advocacy efforts whose mission is to target systemic structures to reduce the disparity in wealth and income.²

II. Target organizations, associations, and governmental entities whose mission is to directly enact change in the disparity as opposed to organizations, associations, or government entities whose primary purpose is to document such disparity or organizations whose primary purpose is to mitigate the consequences of disparity versus impacting the systems and structures that enable such disparity.

For this study, the efforts targeted will include the following:

- a. Efforts to unionize.
- b. Efforts to establish universal basic income.
- c. Efforts to establish a right to housing.
- d. Efforts to organize renters to engage in a rent strike.
- e. Efforts to facilitate renters' efforts to assume ownership of tenement structures collectively.
- f. Efforts to reverse trends in tax policy (state or national) that advantage individuals in the top quintile of wealth or income.
- g. Efforts to facilitate the formation of worker-owned and governed cooperatives.
- h. Efforts to establish universal third-party, e.g., government, access and total subsidy of health care services.
- i. Efforts to establish a right to free higher education or skill training beyond secondary school.
- j. Efforts to reduce and reallocate the transfer of intergenerational wealth

III. When possible, the study will offer data and other perspectives that characterize the extent and impact of the above efforts.

IV. The study will determine to what degree these efforts are within their targeted focus, e.g., unionization, collaboration, or cooperation with similar organizations. Similarly, the study will endeavor to determine to what degree these efforts are collaborating or cooperating across target silos, e.g., are unionization efforts working with worker cooperative formation efforts.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Provide a report containing the following:

- I. Provide an evidence base of efforts to reduce income and wealth inequality in the United States, especially with the mission to target systemic structures to reduce the disparity in wealth and income.
- II. Provide a database of organizations engaged in efforts targeting systemic structures to reduce wealth and income inequality.
- III. Provide an evidence base of collaborative and cooperative efforts of organizations focused on systemic structures to reduce wealth and income inequality.
- IV. Provide evidence of the extent and impact of systemic efforts to reduce wealth and income inequality.

Methodology and Limitations

This study is the second of a three-part study documenting advocacy and institutional efforts to reduce wealth and income inequality in the United States. Part II focuses on collecting data about Networks and Coalitions working on systemic efforts to reduce income and wealth disparity.

The research question includes:

- a. Are there existing networks coordinating systemic efforts to reduce wealth and income disparities in the United States?
- b. Do these efforts work collaboratively with each other?
- c. What are the significant successes of network efforts in the past three years?
- d. What are the challenges they face?

The research questions here focus on identifying the successes of these systemic efforts to reduce income and wealth inequality. Additionally, the study during this phase will identify existing gaps and challenges in the work of these organizations. Furthermore, it will seek to identify cooperative and collaborative efforts among these organizations.

The data collection method adopted for this study is two-fold. First, we did a data scrubbing, scouring the websites of over **60 organizations** identified as networks and

coalitions in the first study. During the scrubbing, we identified their stated goals and missions, areas of focus, geographic spread, network members, and successes they recorded over the past years.

Then, we analyzed this information and identified particular themes, especially regarding the successes and activities of the networks. We identified specific categories for these themes: research, advocacy, lobbying, etc. Then, we used these themes to develop headings for the activities—a second level of analysis involved identifying the successes of these networks.

Here, we developed themes around the systemic efforts identified in the first report and the scope of work, such as efforts to unionize, universal basic income, access to healthcare, debt cancellation, progressive taxation, etc. The objective was to ensure that successes recorded in this report focused on systemic efforts since so many other successes were achieved by networks that were not systemic, such as donating relief materials to unsheltered people. While these efforts are commendable and necessary, they do not fall under the purview of this study.

For a more compelling narrative, we did a literature review on wealth and income inequality and civil society networks to provide a backdrop for the data analysis sections.

Limitations

Overall, this study scrubbed data from over **60 websites** of organizations identified as networks and coalitions working on the wealth and income inequality landscape. These networks operated at several levels – National, state, and local and the study focused specifically on organizations whose work included different areas of income and wealth inequality, including rent control, homelessness, universal basic income, unionization, worker cooperatives, tax reforms, universal health access, education, housing, etc.

An obvious limitation is that many other networks and coalitions are doing remarkable work in this space, and we did not map or scrub information from their website. That could be the subject of another study. The purpose was to use the organizations mapped in the study's first phase to answer specific questions relating to network and coalition efforts, their successes, and challenges.

Consequently, the extent to which this study can be generalizable to the whole wealth and income advocacy landscape is debatable. We have provided a snapshot of these organizations' efforts, highlighting their successes and challenges.

Another limitation here concerns decisions regarding the particular successes, activities, and

challenges to highlight in this report. It was not possible to focus on the work of all **60 organizations**. Consequently, we took the liberty to focus on organizations whose work traversed the breadth of systemic efforts identified in the scope of work. Because of space limitations, there are numerous other impressive efforts and successes that this study could not report on.

Lastly, while there are theoretical differences between networks and coalitions, for this study, we use both concepts interchangeably and define them as "loosely structured organizations (mainly membership-based) working with other organizations with similar objectives to address a specific issue related to wealth and income inequality, such as healthcare, housing, facilitating worker cooperatives, etc."³ *The study differentiates networks and coalitions from the more encompassing term - membership organizations, which refer to organizations that require individuals or organizations to register as members, either with monthly fees or not, to become part of their activities. Examples of these organizations are worker cooperatives, advocacy organizations that require memberships, unions, and networks/coalitions.*"⁴

Endnotes

¹ https://americansfortaxfairness.org/wp-content/uploads/BILLIONAIRE-MONEY-REPORT-11_2.pdf

² For the purposes of this effort, “structural and systemic” are defined as projects targeting broad efforts designed to modify the substantial differences in entities where one entity acquires and maintains more resources than other groups in their interactions.

³ see page 47; WIE report. <https://irp.cdn-website.com/27cd2990/files/uploaded/THE%20WEALTH%20INEQUALITY%20REPORT.pdf>

⁴ see page 37; WIE report. <https://irp.cdn-website.com/27cd2990/files/uploaded/THE%20WEALTH%20INEQUALITY%20REPORT.pdf>

01

Wealth and Income Inequality in the United States

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Introduction

Economists, researchers, and activists have raised alarm over the persistent wealth and income inequality in the United States. This concern has persisted for over three decades, and studies show that the problem's severity continues to rise. In a 2009 study, researchers found empirical evidence of a continuous increase in wealth inequality in the United States over 39 years.⁶ Today, there is more wealth and income inequality in the United States than in any developed country.⁷

This presents a worrying concern because besides being one of the most prosperous countries in the world – with an impressive GDP of 23 trillion dollars⁸, possessing 29% of the global wealth⁹ - the country is home to the highest number of billionaires and millionaires in the world^{10,11}. Even more worrying is that a paradox lies in the middle of this prosperity – amid the fancy restaurants and the gleaming skyscrapers representing affluence, power, and wealth - the country also hosts the poorest people when measured against 26 OECD Countries¹².

This study – the second in a 3-part series – attempts to paint a narrative of some of the roots and intersecting factors that feed wealth and income inequality in the United States. However, that is not the main aim of

this study's second phase. We use this narrative to explore the concept of networks and coalitions and their importance in wealth and income advocacy in the United States. We look at the networks and coalitions identified in [part one](#) and attempt to make sense of how coalitions and networks are necessary for activists in combating the multiple overlapping factors that continue to make wealth and income

Historical Perspective

Understanding wealth and income inequality requires a historical lens. One can trace the roots of this issue back to the Gilded Age when disparities between the rich and poor first became glaring due to the phenomenal rise in technological advancement that aided industrialization.

During this period, which historians project as stretching from the 1870s to the early 20th century, there was a combination of rapid economic growth and the rising fortunes that followed it¹³.

During this period, America witnessed groundbreaking innovations such as the railroad, the steamship, and the mass

“Domestically, a bevy of economic expansion programs expanded the middle class, provided educational opportunities, and contributed to a more equitable distribution of wealth.

production of steel¹⁴. Combined, these inventions catalyzed enormous opportunities for economic growth and heralded rising wealth levels in the country.

The Gilded Age exemplified extreme wealth and conspicuous consumption juxtaposed against widespread poverty. Industrial magnates like Carnegie and Rockefeller amassed fortunes unparalleled in history, creating a chasm between the wealthy few and the struggling many. Economic inequality reached staggering heights, sparking social unrest and labor movements¹⁵. Some researchers have attempted to compare these disparities to the ones experienced in this period – a time economists have dubbed the New Gilded Age¹⁶.

The great depression, occasioned by the 1929 stock market crash, plunged the nation into economic hardships and exposed the vulnerabilities of an unbridled capitalist system¹⁷. The economic fallout was severe, leading to unprecedented levels of poverty. Some authors have argued that the enormous levels of income inequality may have precipitated the depression¹⁸. During this time, Americans saw a slew of policies rolled out by the administration in an attempt to alleviate the destructive impact of the depression on the public. Examples of these policies were Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies, including social welfare programs and labor reforms, aimed to address inequality by redistributing wealth and providing a safety net for the

vulnerable. It was at this time that the Social Security Act was passed¹⁹.

The aftermath of World War II marked a period of economic prosperity, often hailed as the "Golden Age of Capitalism." After World War II, the United States emerged not just as a political hegemon but as an economic one unhindered by the economic recovery most allied countries had to contend with domestically. It used this influence to institute an economic order that aided international trade and provided opportunities to advance American business interests internationally²⁰.

However, the prosperity enjoyed during this period was limited to particular groups. A combination of Jim Crow laws and economic discrimination laws across the country ensured that demographic groups such as African Americans continued to face systemic barriers to economic advancement. The effect of these systemic barriers is still evident in minority groups in the 21st century²¹.

In the late 20th century, the world witnessed the advent of globalization and rapid technological advancements. While these forces drove economic growth in many developing countries, they also contributed to a widening gap between skilled and unskilled labor. Jobs moved offshore, and automation displaced workers, further accentuating income disparities^{22,23}.

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When news of the 2008 financial crisis broke, it heralded a period known as the Great Recession -marked by a harsh economic downturn with attendant consequences for most Americans. But that was not the whole story; just as in the 1930s, the crisis revealed the fragility inherent in an economic system built on reckless financial practices. While the crisis affected Americans across the economic spectrum, the subsequent recovery disproportionately benefitted the wealthy²⁴. Bank bailouts and monetary policies aimed at stabilizing the economy exacerbated income inequality inadvertently.

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Causes and Drivers

Numerous factors contribute to the growing gap between the wealthy and the rest of the population. Researchers from economics and politics have provided differing theories on the drivers of inequality in the United States and the rest of the world. For example, economic literature highlights the



significance of globalization, technological advancements, and changes in labor markets as significant drivers of inequality²⁶. Political economists also analyze how policy decisions and regulatory regimes influence wealth accumulation and create inequality²⁷.

“ *In the United States, these innovations have ushered in a new age- the New Gilded Age – characterized by the rapid proliferation of technological companies and wealthy capitalists with disproportional influence on global and domestic politics and net worths competing with some developing countries' GDP.*

Technological Innovation

Technological advancement has changed the world in significant ways. It has provided efficient ways of manufacturing, improved information access enormously, transformed the fields of medicine, security, and agriculture, and changed the means of travel²⁸. In the United States, these innovations have ushered in a new age- the New Gilded Age – characterized by the rapid proliferation of technological

companies and wealthy capitalists with disproportional influence on global and domestic politics²⁹ and net worths competing with some developing countries' GDP³⁰.

However, none of these have been without cost. The rapid evolution of technology has reshaped the American workforce, contributing significantly to income disparities. Economists argue that technological advancements and innovation disproportionately favor skilled workers, leading to a growing wage gap between those with high and low levels of education and expertise^{31,32}. Others have argued that the technology boom has created a wealthy class benefitting large companies and driving further inequality in the country³³.



Tax policies and Regulatory Frameworks

The design of tax policies and regulatory frameworks shapes the wealth distribution³⁴. The subject of tax policies and wealth distribution has stirred contentious debates in United States politics in the past; it continues to do so, with whole groups defining part of their political identities around the topic of wealth distribution³⁵. Contemporary debates on wealth and income inequality often center around tax policies. Studies have shown that tax cuts for the wealthiest and lax regulations contribute to wealth accumulation among the top-income earners³⁶. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which reduced corporate tax rates, has been critiqued for exacerbating income disparities³⁷. Scholars argue for progressive taxation and closing loopholes to address these disparities³⁸.

Educational Disparities

Another driver of inequality is the disparities in educational opportunities. Numerous policy experts and researchers have argued about the role of educational disparities in perpetuating inequality. While the relationship between education and wealth inequality is not linear, it provides sufficient insight to understand how education, or the lack of it, influences wealth and income inequality. Quality education, researchers have argued, has significant long-term outcomes and influences long-term social capital and family stability³⁹.

Additionally, research has correlated parental wealth as an influential factor in children's educational attainment⁴⁰. In the United States, family wealth provides access

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Additionally, research has correlated parental wealth as an influential factor in children's educational attainment⁴⁰. In the United States, family wealth provides access to good school districts, the ability to pay for private tutoring, and opens opportunities for Ivy League education. Furthermore, parental wealth ensures that kids are not burdened with student loans after college.

Student loans, according to a study by the Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP), Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University student debt is a huge barrier to economic mobility and is associated with lower levels of wealth building in the United States⁴⁰. This situation is worse in students from minority groups where huge debt experience barriers to building their net worth⁴¹.

Globalization

Globalization, while fostering economic growth, has also been a driving force behind income inequality. The issue of globalization as a driver of income inequality has triggered academic and policy debates, especially as many low-income countries have taken advantage of globalized trade to move into middle-income status. Research studies show that economic globalization, especially concerning finances, impacts income inequality in developed and developing countries. A standard narrative about globalization and inequality is that globalization shifts jobs and other economic opportunities outside a country, resulting in the loss of jobs in developed countries with higher labor costs. Researchers emphasize how trade policies prioritizing globalization can lead to job displacement in specific industries, contributing to wage stagnation and income inequality. This effect is that states have little tax revenue to finance social welfare programs, perpetuating more inequality⁴³. Another argument is that the gains of globalization benefit the wealthy disproportionately and, therefore, concentrate immense capital in their hands, resulting in more inequality⁴⁴.

However, economists have warned that several political and social factors intertwine with globalization to cause inequality within a country. Therefore, it is vital to consider the big picture at the country level in correlating globalization to inequality⁴⁵.



“ However, inequality also creates vulnerabilities, which lowers resilience in the face of other shocks. A significant example here is the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, where minority and vulnerable groups in the United States bore the brunt of the pandemic, experiencing record numbers of deaths, person-to-person transmission, and descent into poverty as a result of the inability to work and earn an income.

Impact on American Society

Wealth and income inequality are not just economic issues; they have profound social implications. High levels of inequality have contributed to social and political unrest in many countries⁴⁶. Wealth and income inequality in the United States are not merely economic phenomena; they cast a long and formidable shadow over the nation's social fabric. Rising and persistent wealth and income inequality have impacted American Society in multifaceted ways, touching on social mobility⁴⁷ and education⁴⁸, health⁴⁹, social cohesion⁵⁰, and political influence^{51,52}. In the United States, inequality has also manifested in racial disparities, erosion of unions, and collective

bargaining⁵³. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), increasing income inequality can affect social unrest, especially when there is low wealth redistribution and social transfers⁵⁴.

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To address these impacts, many of which legislation has been slow to address or where existing legislation has become obsolete, advocacy organizations in wealth and income inequality step in to fill the gap. In the succeeding sections, this study will examine networks and coalitions' efforts in filling these gaps and ensuring systemic solutions to wealth and income inequality in the United States.



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02

Networks and Coalitions and the Wealth and Income Inequality Landscape

“ We know we can't build power alone, and strategic collaborations with statewide partners—civil rights, labor, faith-based, human service, and other groups— are a critical element to our strategy. Creating change will take many organizations working together statewide over multiple years to build a movement and the collective strength we need to achieve our goals.

California Calls.

“ The collective power of civil society networks contributes to normative shifts in societal attitudes. Issues that were once marginalized or ignored gain prominence through sustained advocacy efforts, leading to changes in public opinion and, eventually, cultural norms

Civil society networks and coalitions play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of societies worldwide. In an era of interconnectedness, networks and coalitions become collaborative structures and powerful agents of change that foster cooperation, amplify voices, and address complex issues. In this study, we adopt the definition of Networks and Coalitions as "loosely structured organizations (mainly membership-based) working with other organizations with similar objectives to address a specific issue related to wealth and income inequality, such as healthcare, housing, facilitating worker cooperatives."⁵⁶ Although academic literature attempts to distinguish between coalitions and networks⁵⁷, this study follows conventional practice and uses those terms interchangeably.

Civil society fills that vacuum between the state and the individual, comprising non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, advocacy organizations, and other entities that operate independently of the government. Civil society networks and coalitions go further by bringing together diverse organizations with shared interests and goals. Civil Society Networks and Coalitions act as a force multiplier, allowing distinct entities to pool their resources, expertise, and influence to address persistent issues plaguing a section of society and offer opportunities for collective impact.

The collective power of civil society networks contributes to normative shifts in societal attitudes. Issues that were once

marginalized or ignored gain prominence through sustained advocacy efforts, leading to changes in public opinion and, eventually, cultural norms.

Take, for example, the issue of debt relief. Previously banished to a peripheral issue in American political discourse, through the efforts of civil society networks such as Strike Debt⁵⁸ and Debt Collective⁵⁹, the issue of debt relief has become a front-burner issue, informing one of the cornerstone policies of current President Joe Biden⁶⁰ and provoking huge debates across the political spectrum in U.S. Congress and American society⁶¹.

“ These networks generate novel solutions to complex problems by bringing together diverse perspectives. This innovative spirit contributes to developing sustainable and inclusive approaches to societal challenges.

The collaborative nature of civil society networks fosters creativity and innovation. These networks generate novel solutions to complex problems by bringing together diverse perspectives. This innovative spirit contributes to developing sustainable and inclusive approaches to societal challenges. For example, the student debt crisis⁶² is a persistent issue that plagues many American households, particularly minority people⁶³. Arguments for and against the issue range across the insightful and the absurd. Amid these challenges, however, organizations like A Continuous Charity⁶⁴ provide innovative solutions such as interest-free student loans.

“ *Civil society networks and coalitions facilitate cross-state solidarity in an increasingly interconnected world with intersectional issues and challenges. Shared challenges such as housing, homelessness, and access to healthcare necessitate collaborative efforts.* ”

Civil society networks and coalitions facilitate cross-state solidarity in an increasingly interconnected world with intersectional issues and challenges. Shared challenges such as housing, homelessness, and access to healthcare necessitate collaborative efforts. These entities become conduits for inter-state cooperation, transcending boundaries for the greater good. For instance, the **National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH)**, a national network comprising activists, advocacy organizations, and faith-based organizations, engages in cross-boundary advocacy to address homelessness in the United States. NCH engages in campaigns, provides access to research and data on housing and homelessness trends across the country, and organizes conferences to share lessons and improve awareness of the issue of homelessness in the country⁶⁵.

“ *Civil society networks and coalitions catalyze civic engagement and empowerment. These structures amplify the impact of individual advocacy groups by providing a platform for diverse voices to converge. This amplification is crucial for marginalized and historically underrepresented communities, whose voices might be drowned out in the broader societal discourse.* ”

Civil society networks and coalitions catalyze civic engagement and empowerment. These structures amplify the impact of individual advocacy groups by providing a platform for diverse voices to converge. This amplification is crucial for

marginalized and historically underrepresented communities, whose voices might be drowned out in the broader societal discourse. Besides, these groups may not have the resources to confront the structural barriers they face. While mapping organizations for this study, we discovered a host of civil society networks and coalitions dedicated to confronting the systemic challenges that marginalized groups face. Take, for instance, the **California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN)**,⁶⁶ whose mission involves bringing together and mobilizing communities of color to advocate for public policies that advance health equity and improve health outcomes in our communities. Network building is at the heart of CPEHN's work, a value they have espoused for over three decades. Through the collective strength of a network, these voices become more resonant, leading to increased visibility and influence in shaping public policies. Among the benefits civil society networks offer are access to research and knowledge materials from diverse members, the opportunity to pool financial and human resources together to achieve goals, legitimizing voice, strengthening bargaining power, and ensuring broad-based support for programs.

Civil society networks come in various forms and kinds. Some CSO networks are formed to exist for the long term. For instance, the **National Coalition for the Homeless** (has existed since 1982⁶⁷). Others may be for a short term, such as the Occupy Wall Street Movement, formed to protest inequality in 2011⁶⁸. Similarly, some networks may prefer a more formal



agreement among their partners with well-articulated agreements detailing the boundaries of their partnership, including vision, objectives, strategic interventions, membership, and leadership. Others may go for less formal or loose arrangements without well-defined documentation. Still, others emerge on a need basis mainly to address a specific issue(s) and only exist while the issue(s) is active. For example, the **Strengthen Social Security Coalition**⁶⁹ was formed to enhance protections for social security and Resource Generation, which organizes young people among the wealthiest top 10% of individuals or families in the U.S. to become transformative leaders and work towards distributing wealth and power⁷⁰.

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influence in shaping public policies. Among the benefits civil society networks offer are access to research and knowledge materials from diverse members, the opportunity to pool financial and human resources together to achieve goals, legitimizing voice, strengthening bargaining power, and ensuring broad-based support for programs.

Roles and Functions

Civil Society networks and coalitions provide functions and roles across a broad spectrum. These roles and functions are entrenched in the objectives and missions of the network and coalition. We discovered that civil society networks engage in various functions during the mapping exercise for this study. Many of these roles and functions are conducted with different strategies, including campaigns, legislative and policy advocacy, research, and public interest litigation. We turn to some of these roles and functions in the following sections.

Advocacy and Lobbying

Civil society networks and coalitions serve as influential social and political change advocates. By leveraging collective voices, they influence governments and other stakeholders to address pressing wealth and income inequality issues. Their advocacy

ranges from housing and homelessness to healthcare and labor rights. These issues are among the most pressing to the wealth and income inequality advocacy landscape in the United States. Often, these issues span multiple states, demographics, and constituencies. The mapping exercise identified several networks whose primary strategy is using advocacy through campaigns to influence legislation and policies. For instance, Homes for All Mass is a network of housing justice groups in Massachusetts. The network aims to halt the displacement of unsheltered people and to increase community control of lands. Through advocacy, Homes for All Mass is sponsoring two legislations to the Massachusetts legislature. One of the bills intends to repeal the state ban on rent control and enable municipalities to enact local rent control ordinances. The other bill establishes a statewide foreclosure prevention program⁷².

Sometimes, for some of these network organizations, the purpose of advocacy campaigns includes raising awareness of the importance of a particular issue area.

California Calls is a coalition of over thirty grassroots organizations that uses advocacy campaigns to mobilize voters to reflect the diversity in the state. With the support of other organizations, California Calls put the Local Communities Funding Act (AKA Proposition 15) on the November 2020 ballot. The purpose of Proposition 15 was to raise property taxes on the rich to fund public schools in the State of California⁷³. Although the ballot was unsuccessful, the efforts of California Calls and other advocacy organizations in the state raised significant awareness of the polarizing yet urgent issue of underinvestment in the state's public education system.

This study found that advocacy was one of the most popular strategies for networks and coalitions. Out of 60 organizations identified as networks and coalitions, **80% adopted advocacy campaigns or legislative or policy advocacy to accomplish their objectives.**

Social Cohesion and Inclusivity

Civil Society Networks promote social cohesion and inclusivity. These networks often bridge gaps between different segments of society, fostering dialogue and understanding. Through collaborative efforts, they work to reduce social inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion, creating a more cohesive and just community. In particular, civil society networks that focus on diversity bring a unique and encompassing lens to social issues that transcend the binary perspectives entrenched within racial and class cleavages. Consider, for example, the work of Churches United for Fair Housing (CUFFH), a network of faith-based grassroots advocacy organizations that not only fosters dialogue between citizens and their political leaders but also organizes working-class BIPOC communities around issues of housing, immigration, social, and economic justice⁷⁵. **Community Change Action**, a national organization that mobilizes marginalized people to participate in the electoral and democratic process, is another example of a network working to improve inclusion. Their efforts in the 2022 election cut across 12 states, leading to record turnouts of voters from communities of color in those states⁷⁶.

“ Without the capacity-building and learning resources networks provide, many grassroots advocacy organizations may be overwhelmed by the enormous resources and knowledge required to pursue their advocacy efforts.

Capacity Building

Civil society networks provide a platform for capacity building within member organizations. By sharing knowledge, best practices, and resources, these networks empower individual entities to enhance their effectiveness. Whether it is understanding how to organize campaigns, providing access to data for effective advocacy, or providing lessons on fundraising and legislative protocols, civil society networks contribute to the overall growth and sustainability of the wealth and income inequality advocacy space.

This study cannot emphasize enough the importance of capacity building to wealth and income equality advocacy. Without the capacity-building and learning resources networks provide, many grassroots advocacy organizations may be overwhelmed by the enormous resources and knowledge required to pursue their advocacy efforts. Understanding its significance, many networks provide several capacity-building opportunities to local advocacy organizations that are their members. For example, **ChangeLab Solutions** supports local advocacy organizations for various issues, including policymaking and influencing legislation. Through their Housing Solutions Collaborative in Oakland County, they helped create a dedicated county-wide trust fund to help incentivize, create, and maintain affordable housing. In Chesterfield County, the ChangeLab team is providing support to boost the supply of affordable housing in the area⁷⁷. Similarly,

Action Network provides tools to advocacy organizations to assist in mobilizing supporters, raising funds, and organizing campaigns of various scales⁷⁸.



“ *Civil Society Networks Coalitions attempt to balance that playing field through accountability. In particular, they play a crucial role in monitoring the actions of governments, corporations, and other powerful entities.* ”

Monitoring and Accountability

The power of civil society networks lies in their ability to address specific issues and their capacity to hold governments and institutions accountable. The collaborative nature of these networks enables them to scrutinize policies, monitor implementation, and advocate for transparency and accountability. In doing so, civil society is a crucial check on governmental power, ensuring that political officeholders make decisions with the public's best interests in mind. In the United States, many advocacy organizations have raised alarm about the influence of big money in U.S. politics at various levels⁷⁸. Reports indicate monumental increases in financing candidates' campaigns in recent elections. The objective is that such candidates would advocate for policies that benefit them⁸⁰. The implication is that besides candidates' loyalties shifting from the people to the donors⁸¹, it tilts the playing field in favor of the candidates receiving huge donations⁸².

Civil Society Networks Coalitions attempt to balance that playing field through accountability. In particular, they play a crucial role in monitoring the actions of governments, corporations, and other powerful entities. By holding these entities accountable, coalitions contribute to the establishment and maintenance of transparent, accountable, and responsive governance structures. For example, the New Economy Project⁸³, a network of community groups, focuses its campaigns on challenging corporations whose policies harm communities. Comparably, other

networks like the New York Communities for Change focus on ensuring governance structures that enhance "*a healthy New York.*"⁸⁴ Also noteworthy here is the work of the *Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency Coalition (FACT)* - a non-partisan alliance of more than 100 state, national, and organizations working toward a fair tax system that addresses the challenges of a global economy and promoting policies to combat the harmful impacts of corrupt financial practices⁸⁵.



Endnotes

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03

Networks and Coalitions Efforts

“ *This study found a wealth of networks and coalitions working on wealth and income inequality in the United States. Many of these networks and coalitions focus on various issues, including housing and homelessness, health, education, Universal basic income, tax reforms, labor rights, etc.* ”

This study found a wealth of networks and coalitions working on wealth and income inequality in the United States. Many of these networks and coalitions focus on various issues, including housing and homelessness⁸⁶, health⁸⁷, education⁸⁸, Universal basic income⁸⁹, tax reforms⁹⁰, labor rights⁹¹, etc. The strategies these networks adopt are as varied as the issue areas they focus on. These strategies include policy and legislative advocacy, campaigns, research, and public education. In a world where the wealth and income inequality gaps persist, labor laws and health and education policies discriminate against marginalized and underserved communities; these networks serve as conduits for information sharing, strategic planning, and joint action.

By fostering synergy among different organizations, civil society networks enhance the overall effectiveness of advocacy efforts and initiatives. This section concentrates on the efforts of these civil society networks, particularly those working in wealth and income inequality. These strategies are as follows:

Research

Research is a vital component of advocacy. It is a powerful tool that amplifies the impact of voices seeking change. It provides a solid foundation of evidence, transforming passionate beliefs into compelling arguments that resonate with a broader audience. In advocacy, where the goal is often to influence policies, attitudes, or behaviors, research provides the evidence that pushes activists to make informed and strategic decisions and take action.

“ Whether advocating for debt relief, rent control, minimum wage increase, or the expansion of social security, thorough research allows wealth and income inequality advocates and activists to anticipate counterarguments, strengthen their positions, and engage in constructive conversations.

Nowhere is this more significant than in the wealth and income inequality advocacy space where many of the indicators of wealth and income inequality are burning issues, the subject of socio-economic contentions intertwined with political identity on a national and state level. In this kind of space, passion is not enough. Activists need to know an issue's socio-political and economic dimensions to convince citizens who are apathetic to their cause and those who oppose it. Whether advocating for debt relief, rent control, minimum wage increase, or the expansion of social security, thorough research allows wealth and income inequality advocates and activists to anticipate counterarguments, strengthen their positions, and engage in constructive conversations.

In the first of these three reports developed by WIE, we found that out of the 357 organizations mapped, a significant number used research as a crucial strategy in carrying out their objectives⁹². In particular, the networks and coalitions identified in the mapping exercise had various research documents as key outputs of their campaign or advocacy activities. For example, the **National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH)**⁹³ - a national-level network of organizations with the mission to prevent and end homelessness – deployed research as a critical tool in analyzing the issue of homelessness and its multifaceted dimensions. Whether it is understanding the causes of homelessness in general or looking at how homelessness intersects with race, domestic violence, or unemployment, NCH provides resources for members to take informed action.

Similarly, the **Stronger California Advocates Network**⁹⁴ – a network comprising over 65 advocacy groups seeking to promote policy reform in California – research is not just a tool they use; it is a cornerstone of their work. The network, housed by Equal Rights, utilizes research to engage policymakers and other stakeholders on critical issues like the gender and racial wage gap.

In the case of **One Fair Wage** - a national coalition addressing the exploitation of workers through subminimum wage - research has been instrumental in dispelling myths, half-truths, and propaganda about the supposed adverse effects of paying a minimum wage to tipped workers^{95,96}.

Furthermore, research empowers advocates to craft data-driven narratives that resonate with policymakers, making it difficult to ignore the urgency of their cause.

“ In a world saturated with propaganda, sound-bites, and misinformation, research provides credibility and reinforces the legitimacy of advocacy efforts to inspire trust among stakeholders and decision-makers.

In a world saturated with propaganda, sound-bites, and misinformation, research provides credibility and reinforces the legitimacy of advocacy efforts to inspire trust among stakeholders and decision-makers. The preceding is particularly true for an organization called **Restaurant Opportunities Centers United**. The organization is a coalition of restaurant workers with chapters in 10 states whose mission is to improve restaurant workers'

lives by building worker power and uniting workers of various backgrounds around shared goals and values⁹⁷.

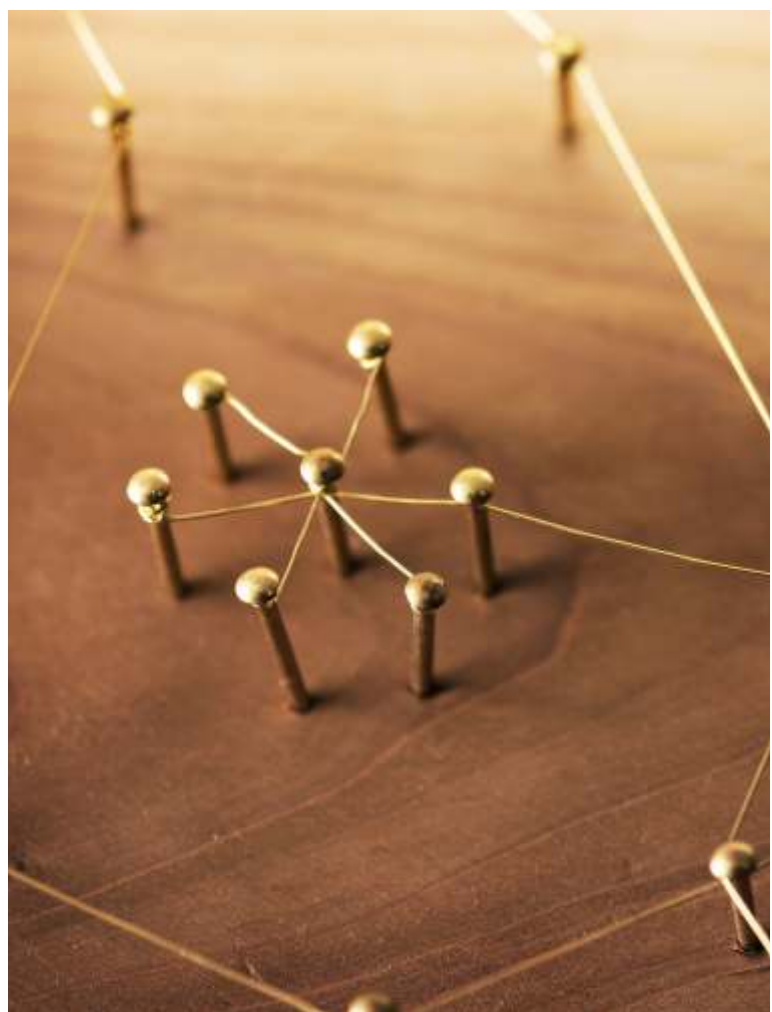
Critical to the achievement of this mission is advocacy to fight wage theft by restaurant owners and the exploitation of restaurant workers who rely on tipped wages. This mission puts them in the crosshairs of the **National Restaurant Association (NRA)**, an influential advocacy group of restaurant owners nationwide. According to a New York Times report, the NRA – also known as the other NRA⁹⁸ – lobbies Congress against increasing the minimum wage for restaurant workers⁹⁹. The Restaurant Opportunities Centers United has used its extensive publications to buoy its advocacy campaigns, securing valuable wins in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Nevada, Montana, and Minnesota. These states have established a full minimum wage rate for all workers.

Another interesting case study is the organization **Americans for Tax Fairness (ATF)**. ATF comprises more than **400 organizations** that aim to push for comprehensive tax reforms that are not skewed toward billionaires and corporations. Historically, tax reforms have been a contentious issue in American politics, mainly because they touch on the issue of wealth distribution¹⁰⁰. This topic has defined the political identities of many voting-age Americans. Divisions in American politics define people's beliefs and convictions about wealth distribution – taxation being a vital part of that system¹⁰¹.

In this political climate, Americans for Tax Fairness fight for progressive tax reforms - i.e., tax reforms that take more from the wealthy and distribute to the poor through social welfare spending such as investments in public education, social security, etc. This uphill task is made more difficult given the

humongous spending that the wealthy make to maintain the status quo¹⁰². Through misinformation campaigns¹⁰³, lobbying of Congress¹⁰⁴, and donations to political campaigns of elected representatives¹⁰⁵, benefactors of the current tax system muddy the waters of information to keep voters in the dark.

Faced with this arduous task, ATF uses research to increase awareness about the current tax system, combat misinformation about the effects of a progressive tax reform agenda, and provide information about policy decisions and their effects on citizens. An example of a research output of ATF is their analysis of billionaire spending to influence key congressional races in the 2022 mid-term elections, amounting to more than \$1 billion¹⁰⁶.



“ However, translating the ideals that fuel advocacy into impact requires more than passion. Sometimes, it demands a strategic approach to shape and influence policies.

Policy Influencing

At its core, advocacy is about championing a cause, whether that cause relates to social justice, racial equity, or civil rights. However, translating the ideals that fuel advocacy into impact requires more than passion. Sometimes, it demands a strategic approach to shape and influence policies¹⁰⁷.

The reason for this is simple – policies shape society. Policies at various levels govern every modern society. Whether it is legislative or executive policies, the grease of policymaking churns the wheels of society. As much as creating an awareness of an issue is critical, awareness creation sometimes can be a means to an end. People must decide to turn that undesired situation into a desired one. And the means for accomplishing that in modern society is through policies¹⁰⁸. By engaging policymakers, activists attempt to shape the laws and regulations governing society in alignment with their values¹⁰⁹.

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For many activists, influencing policies holds a more existential meaning. It is an opportunity to ground changes into the fabric that governs society to address root causes and foster lasting change¹¹⁰.

Through effective lobbying, research, and collaboration with decision-makers and stakeholders, advocates can influence policies that address systemic issues, leaving an enduring imprint on society. Policy influencing for advocates, therefore, becomes a tool to turn impassioned rhetoric into sustainable change.

It is essential, however, to state that the aim of all advocacy work isn't necessarily to change policy. On several occasions, the work of activists may terminate successfully at raising awareness of an issue or elevating a peripheral issue to national discourse¹¹¹. That in itself is successful advocacy work. Not all advocacy organizations have the material or human policies to engage policymakers, and the purpose of this study is not to indicate that their work is any less impactful or crucial than those organizations that influence policymakers. Sometimes, the nature of the advocacy issue dictates the extent of the advocacy efforts.

The civil society networks and coalitions mapped in this study understand the importance of exerting significant influence on policymaking processes. An emphasis on the crucial role of policy influencing in the work of networks and coalitions working in the wealth and income inequality advocacy space is evident, with over 80% of networks indicating policy and legislative advocacy as their preferred strategy¹¹².

Through effective advocacy and the mobilization of public support, these networks attempt to shape policies that

“ *The network has successfully supported several influential bills in the California legislature, such as Senate Bill 975, which protects vulnerable populations from coerced debts.*”

reflect the needs and aspirations of the communities they represent. For example, the work of the Stronger California Advocates Network involves a significant amount of policy influencing. According to their objectives, the organization advocates for policy reform in income support, fair pay, and access to quality healthcare¹¹³.

The network has successfully supported several influential bills in the California legislature, such as Senate Bill 975, which protects vulnerable populations from coerced debts. This legislation offers protections to vulnerable persons such as verified victims of domestic abuse trapped due to their financial situations from creditors¹¹⁴.

Another bill that the network successfully supported is Senate Bill 1162, which requires employers to openly list salary ranges on all job postings and provide salary ranges to existing employees upon request. It also increases pay transparency by requiring employers with 100 or more employees hired through labor contractors to submit pay data reports to the Civil Rights Department broken down by sex, race, and ethnicity. This legislation prevents large corporations from skirting existing equal pay laws in California. Equal pay is an issue that the network has included as one of its vital advocacy issues¹¹⁵.

Another interesting example of the successful use of policy influencing by an advocacy network working in the wealth and income inequality space is the work of the **California Pan-Ethnic Health Network**. In a country with

the most complicated healthcare delivery system in the developed world¹¹⁶, a country where universal healthcare faces the most significant obstacles¹¹⁷, the healthcare of underprivileged and marginalized populations such as persons of color is easy to overlook¹¹⁸. ***CPEHN centers racial justice, builds courageous coalitions, and boldly champions policies that will make the biggest difference in the health of communities of color***¹¹⁹.

Policy advocacy is one of the coalition's strategies to address this issue. CPEHN advocates for a commonsense healthcare policy agenda at the Federal, State, and Local levels. This approach involves concentrating energies on legislative, budget, and administrative policies. The coalition has successfully supported legislation to this effect. For example, SB 1152, signed into law in 2018, requires hospitals to include a written homeless patient discharge planning policy and process within the hospital discharge policy, as specified. The bill, among other things, aims at preventing hospitals from releasing homeless patients into inclement weather¹²⁰.

One fair wage, mentioned earlier, dedicated to ending subminimum wage for workers, is employing an advocacy strategy to move legislation and ballot measures in 25 states to raise wages and end subminimum wage in 25 states. Legislation to abolish subminimum wage is before lawmakers in California, Massachusetts, NY, DC, Michigan, Illinois, and Maine¹²¹. Fight for

\$15 story is another example of an organization using legislative and policy advocacy effectively. Fight for \$15 is a national coalition dedicated to improving workers' lives by raising the state minimum wage. According to the organization, twelve states and Washington, DC, have adopted a \$15 minimum hourly wage through their advocacy efforts comprised of strikes, lobbying, and dialogues¹²². Worthy of mention

here is the State of Hawaii, which has approved an \$18 minimum wage to be phased in by 2028¹²³.

These efforts are immensely significant to the wealth and income inequality advocacy landscape. Studies have shown that raising the minimum wage for low-earning workers and abolishing tipped wages would positively affect the economy.

These effects include the following:

- Reduce government expenditure on social welfare programs such as the Supplemental **Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)**¹²⁴
- Generate over \$100 billion in higher wages¹²⁵ and increase worker spending to stimulate the economy¹²⁶.
- Close the existing pay gap, particularly for women and women of color¹²⁷.
- Contributes to reducing inequality among marginalized groups such as people of color¹²⁸.

This report does not argue that increasing the minimum wage is the silver bullet for addressing growing wealth and income inequality in the United States. Substantial research shows that the road to wealth and income equity requires consistent policies that address the complex branches of that phenomenon. However, the evidence shows that putting more money in workers' pockets by raising the minimum wage is a step in the right direction.

Lobbying

Lobbying is a form of government-centered advocacy; compared to community or grassroots advocacy, it is a more direct approach to influencing policy outcomes through engagement with policymakers¹³¹. This practice is crucial because it ensures that diverse voices are heard in the corridors of power¹³². Advocacy alone may not suffice

in bringing about meaningful change if those in power are not attuned to the concerns of all constituents. Lobbyists act as intermediaries, translating the needs of the people into a language policymakers understand. By doing so, they break down complex issues and make them accessible, fostering a more informed decision-making process¹³³.

When done rightly and with the proper motives, lobbying can be a mechanism for experts and advocates to contribute their specialized knowledge to legislative processes. In a world of increasing complexity, decisions on healthcare and taxation require a nuanced understanding. Lobbyists, often experts, provide valuable insights that can shape effective and well-informed policies¹³⁴.

Many networks and coalitions in the Wealth and Income inequality landscape have used lobbying effectively to pursue their objectives and agenda. Sometimes, they do this by positioning themselves as expert voices, often appearing before Congress as subject matter experts. Other times, they use their enormous resources to lobby members of Congress or other policymakers. The Center for American Progress is an example of an organization in the former category. The organization's roster comprises experts in various fields frequently called up before policymakers to provide their input on influential legislative agendas. In 2018, American Progress Senior Fellow Seth Hanlon testified before Congress on the benefits of tax reforms to the energy sector¹³⁵.

In 2023, Senior Fellow Trevor Higgins testified to the House oversight committee on the ***Inflation Reduction Act***¹³⁶.

Similarly, the Strengthen Social Security Coalition is another organization that uses its expert knowledge to testify before Congress. In 2020, Nancy Altman of the Strengthen Social Security Coalitions testified before the Social Security Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee on the importance of social security to millions of Americans¹³⁷.

In the latter category, organizations like the ***Patriotic Millionaires*** devote enormous resources to lobby members of Congress on specific issues, such as increasing taxes for the wealthy. Through their sponsored ***OLIGARCH ACT***¹³⁸, the coalition of millionaires seeking to reform the U.S. economy to generate equality have presented proposals to Congress for a Wealth Tax levied on the ultra-wealthy.

Similarly, the ***National Education Association*** - a coalition of more than 3 million people—educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends – has

a team dedicated to lobbying efforts in Congress to represent the interests of educators and students¹³⁹. One of the fruits of these lobbying efforts is reflected in the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act ESSA Act 2015¹⁴⁰.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge the potential pitfalls of lobbying, such as the risk of undue influence by powerful interest groups. With the increasing influence of powerful business interest groups in U.S. politics, lobbying can also be used to make decisions that favor a few over the collective, thereby excluding critical voices¹⁴². It can also serve as an avenue for corruption and monetary gains for policymakers¹⁴². Striking a balance between representing diverse perspectives and guarding against the undue influence of monied interests remains a challenge.



“ Similarly, campaigns and outreaches can build partnerships, grow a groundswell of support on an issue, and foster community engagement.

Campaigns and Outreach

Campaigns and outreaches are other powerful strategies that civil society networks and coalitions employ. Campaigns and outreaches amplify voices, mobilize communities, and raise awareness about an issue. Although campaigns and outreach may not necessarily involve policy influence, they are practical tools for bringing to public attention the nuances of a particular issue and influencing public sentiment toward that issue.

Campaigns and outreaches amplify marginalized voices or issues that might otherwise be ignored. This amplification is especially critical for marginalized communities and individuals who often face systemic barriers to addressing their concerns. For example, race and gender intersect many wealth and inequality issues that networks and coalitions engage with. Sometimes, the correlation of an issue such as debt relief or universal basic income with race and gender may not be apparent.

However, through campaigns and outreaches, advocacy networks and coalitions continually bring these intersections to public attention.

Consider, for instance, the work of the **National Coalition on School Diversity**. Through State and local campaigns, this network of civil society organizations and activists continually pushes for K-12 integration in schools, guided by the belief that integration at the elementary level is necessary for building a more equitable American society¹⁴³.

Through targeted messaging and strategic outreach, campaigns can elevate the voices of those affected by social injustices, spotlighting their experiences and perspectives and raising awareness of their issues. This study found that campaigns and outreaches were preferred advocacy tools for most organizations identified as networks and coalitions¹⁴⁴.

Campaigns and outreaches serve their purpose of amplifying voices best when they leverage channels such as social media, traditional media, and grassroots mobilizing to reach diverse audiences. Media use has become a central piece in advocacy campaigns and outreaches rather than just tangential to it. Networks and coalitions invest enormous resources into using the media to amplify the issues they engage with. A good example here is the work of Jobs with Justice (JWJ), a network invested in workers' rights across the country. JWJ has allowed many of its movements and campaigns to grow organically while providing the necessary support to maintain momentum. Whether supporting migrant workers' rights to safe working conditions, unionizing workers in big corporations hostile to unions, or campaigns against tipped wages, JWJ supports these movements by amplifying them through social and traditional media¹⁴⁵.

Similarly, campaigns and outreaches can build partnerships, grow a groundswell of support on an issue, and foster community engagement. In November 2023, California launched its first-ever guaranteed income pilot program. The program provides unconditional and regular case payments to former foster youths for 18 months¹⁴⁶.

Guaranteed Basic Income for poor populations has been controversial in American political discourse despite studies showing its net positive effects on various aspects of the beneficiaries' lives, such as childcare, improved nutrition, upskilling, etc¹⁴⁷. However, through the *campaigns mounted by networks* like the Mayors for Guaranteed Income, more programs across the United States have been introduced recently.



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04

Stories of Impact

“ This study adopts a framework consistent with its purpose: to *"identify systemic efforts to reduce disparity in wealth and income."*

“ *Civil society networks working in this space have contributed immensely to shifting policy, changing societal norms and beliefs, building a political bridge, and advancing human rights by harnessing the collective power of individuals and organizations.* ”

The transformative impact of civil society networks in the wealth and income inequality advocacy space is evident and impressive, given the systemic and institutional barriers to achieving wealth and income equity in the United States. Civil society networks working in this space have contributed immensely to shifting policy, changing societal norms and beliefs, building a political bridge, and advancing human rights by harnessing the collective power of individuals and organizations.

This section documents some of these success stories and the organizations that achieved them. It is noteworthy that some of these successes have been emphasized in previous sections and, for emphasis, might be repeated here. In highlighting these successes, this study adopts a framework consistent with its purpose: to “identify systemic efforts to reduce disparity in wealth and income¹⁵⁰.” This approach implies that networks and coalitions have achieved commendable and impressive successes in the wealth and income inequality advocacy landscape. However, many of those efforts may not be highlighted here.

Efforts to Unionize

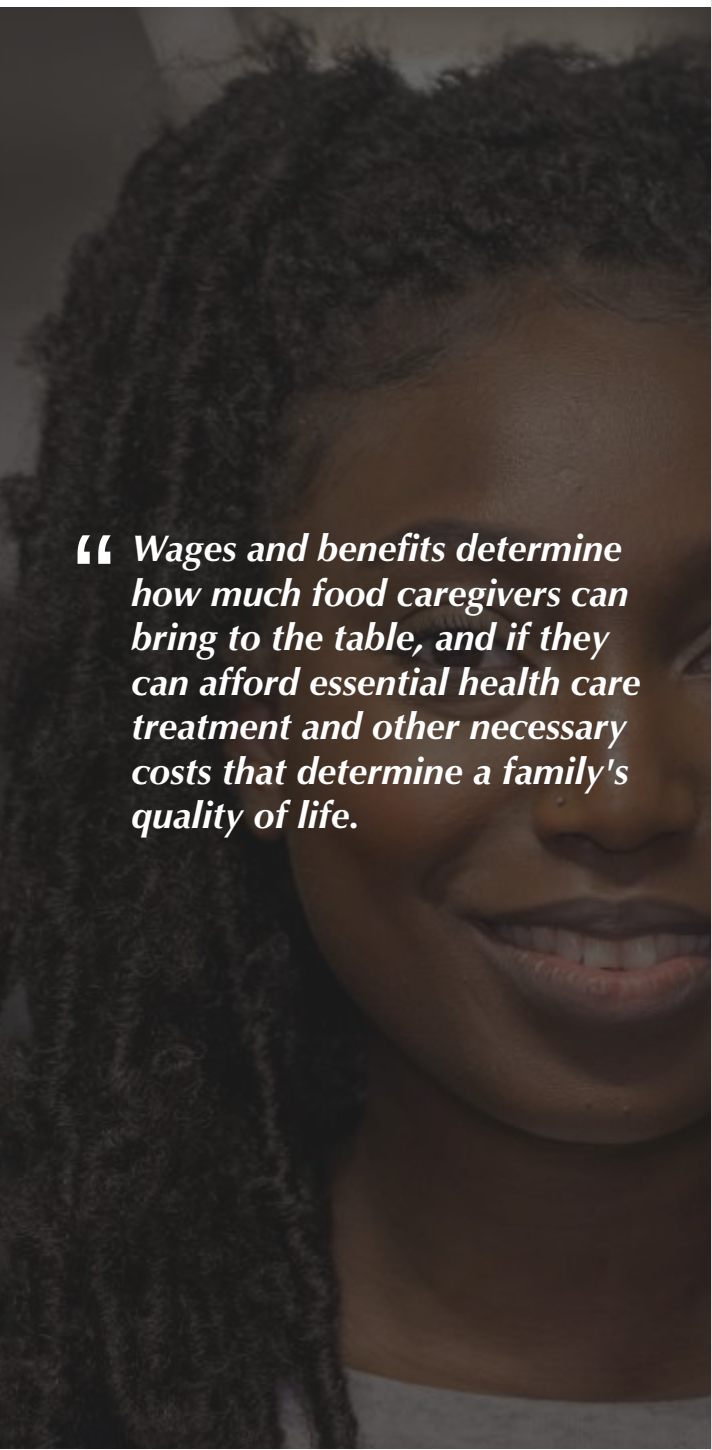
Unions are essential for advocating for workers' rights, fair wages, and safe working conditions¹⁵¹. In an increasingly globalized and capitalist world, where workers' worth is reduced to numerical outputs documented on spreadsheets, it is easy for employers to exploit workers¹⁵². Unions, therefore, counterbalance the power of employers and corporations, allowing workers to influence policies that affect

them¹⁵³. Furthermore, studies show that unions reduce wealth and income disparities through negotiations for livable wages and safe working conditions¹⁵⁴.

While networks and coalitions within the context of this research do not qualify as unions, they, however, have engaged in significant advocacy efforts to improve the working conditions of workers. For example, **One Fair Wage** has sponsored legislation in California, Massachusetts, New York, and three other states, including Washington, DC, to abolish sub-minimum worker wages. Similarly, through advocacy strategies, including organizing strikes and lobbying, another coalition – **Fight for \$15** has successfully pushed twelve states to adopt a \$15 minimum wage¹⁵⁵.

The Shriver Center on Poverty Law coordinates a network of public interest lawyers based in Illinois¹⁵⁶.





“Wages and benefits determine how much food caregivers can bring to the table, and if they can afford essential health care treatment and other necessary costs that determine a family's quality of life.”

Through the efforts of this network, the Center contributed to the passage of SB 208 in March 2023, a paid leave law that allows most workers in the state to take five days of paid time off over 12 months for no reason¹⁵⁷.

With this law, Illinois became one of only three states - along with Maine and Nevada - to give such rights to workers. The successful efforts of the Shriver Center also extend to the passage of HB 3129, a law that mandates employers with 15 or more employees to include the pay scale for a position in any job posting. The non-inclusion of pay scale in job postings is partly responsible for income disparities that disproportionately affect persons of color and women¹⁵⁸.

Former Illinois Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas said of the bill's importance: "Wages and benefits determine how much food caregivers can bring to the table, and if they can afford essential health care treatment and other necessary costs that determine a family's quality of life. *"Transparency is essential to ensure employees are not misled when accepting a role with wages that cannot support them or their family."*¹⁵⁹

Efforts to Establish Worker Cooperatives

On the other hand, worker cooperatives ensure that the interests of the workers are at the front and center of business enterprises. In an increasingly neoliberal world, where shared spaces for workers' benefits and business profits are decreasing, worker cooperatives put decision-making in workers' hands rather than the Corporation. According to the Democracy at Work Institute (DAWI), ownership and representation are two central components of worker cooperatives. In the former, workers own the business and are beneficiaries of its success, and in the latter, workers make strategic and managerial decisions by voting on the board of directors¹⁶⁰.

In the United States, several networks bring worker cooperatives together. These networks have had varying degrees of success in furtherance of their objectives. A prominent network for worker cooperatives is the **United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC)** - a national grassroots membership organization for worker cooperatives and democratic workplaces. USFWC membership includes over **370 business and organizational members**, representing **1,000 worker co-ops** and **10,000 workers** nationwide.

In 2015, USFWC supported the passage of California's AB816, a new bill authorizing the establishment of worker cooperatives in California. Today, the state has become a leader in worker cooperative-owned enterprises with 100 active worker cooperatives, amounting to 20% of known worker cooperatives in the country¹⁶¹.

Similarly, in 2018, USFWC supported the successful passage of the Main Street

Employee Act, the first Bi-partisan Federal legislation that spotlights worker cooperatives; the Act makes worker cooperatives eligible for Small Business Administration loans. The Act also creates viable retirement opportunities for entrepreneurs, provides more employees a stake in the businesses they work for, and expands technical assistance to those businesses nationwide¹⁶².

Another success story regarding worker cooperative efforts is the launch of the Evergreen Fund for Employee Ownership. An initiative of the Evergreen Cooperatives Corporation, the fund leverages capital to acquire small and medium-sized businesses, converts them to employee ownership and supports them over the long term¹⁶³. Based in Cleveland, the Corporation was launched in 2009 and has acquired over 10% stake in multiple cooperatives in the state, employing 320 people – a significant growth for an organization that started with **12 employees**¹⁶⁴.



“According to OXFAM, a 5% tax on the world’s multi-millionaires and billionaires could raise \$1.7 trillion annually, enough to lift 2 billion people out of poverty.”

Progressive Tax Policies

Here, we see the efforts of coalitions like the *Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency (FACT)* - a non-partisan alliance of more than 100 state, national, and international organizations working toward a fair tax system that addresses the challenges of a global economy and promoting policies to combat the harmful impacts of corrupt financial practices. FACT's work in the United States cuts across pushing for policies that include ownership and tax transparency, closing tax loopholes that the wealthy repeatedly take advantage of, and fighting tax evasion¹⁶⁵.

Similarly, the work of the Strong Economy for All Coalition is also instructive here. The coalition, comprising New York's unions and community organizations, fights for fair taxes, fair budgets, and investments in education and higher education¹⁶⁶. Earlier, we mentioned the efforts of Americans for Tax Fairness (ATF).

“Through research, ATF uses its publications and reports to create awareness about the influence of the billionaire class in U.S. politics and advocates for progressive tax policies that increase burdens on the wealthy

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We also mentioned the impressive work of Patriotic Millionaires, a network of progressive-minded millionaires devoting their resources to advocating and lobbying for increasing taxes on the wealthy.

Worthy of mention here are the efforts of Jobs with Justice Massachusetts and a coalition of like-minded organizations such as the Black Economic Justice Institute, Cambridge Residents Alliance, and Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness. These organizations successfully put on the November 2022 ballot a constitutional amendment to tax **4% of annual incomes** for residents in the state who earn more than a million dollars¹⁶⁷.

The push for tax reforms related to wealth and income inequality stems from the principle of wealth redistribution. According to Oxfam's 2023 report, *Survival of the Richest* – “a **5% tax** on the world's multi-millionaires and billionaires could raise **\$1.7 trillion** annually, enough to lift **2 billion people** out of poverty¹⁶⁸. To be fair, merely increasing tax burdens on the wealthy does not automatically improve the lives of the underprivileged. Many other factors have to be put in place.

Through research, ATF uses its publications and reports to create awareness about the influence of the billionaire class in U.S.

“ Through its Affordable Housing Incentive Project, Homes for All Coalition has helped over 150 individuals move out of homelessness and into affordable housing.

Affordable Housing

In the first part of this 3-series report, we asserted that homelessness is a major advocacy issue for many organizations working on the wealth and income advocacy landscape¹⁶⁹. This assertion is corroborated by the sheer number of states in the U.S. that have a housing crisis¹⁷⁰. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, roughly 18 out of 10,000 people experienced homelessness in the United States in 2022¹⁷¹. To address this gap, many coalitions and networks have concentrated on providing affordable housing, advocating for rent control, or organizing renter's unions. Some of these efforts include the work of the Stronger California Network, which advocated along with other organizations for the successful passing of SB 1017.

SB 1017 "expands California's existing eviction protections for survivors of abuse to include survivors of violent crime. It also closes loopholes in current eviction protections, increasing documentation options for domestic violence survivors, and expands the situations survivors can present to access this crucial protection and avoid eviction and homelessness for themselves and their families¹⁷²."

Six wins for Social Equity Network – a coalition representing labor, environment, faith-based, tenant-organizing groups, and policy advocates in California's Bay Area—successfully advocated for a regional action plan that invests in tenant protections, affordable housing, good jobs, and a healthier environment in July 2017¹⁷³.

Similarly, the Homes for All – A coalition of activists focuses on increasing access to affordable housing and reducing eviction rates and homelessness. Through its Affordable Housing Incentive Project, Homes for All Coalition has helped over 150 individuals move out of homelessness and into affordable housing.

Through coalition building, networking, and effective partnerships with shelters and referral agencies, the organization moved over **110 individuals** into permanent housing. It partnered with landlords to enroll **57 affordable housing units** into its program¹⁷⁴. Its sister network, **Homes for All Mass**, is working with other advocates to sponsor bills in the Massachusetts legislature to enable cities in the state to enact rent control ordinances and to establish a statewide foreclosure prevention program¹⁷⁵. In 2022, in Missouri, Jobs with Justice knocked on **50,000 doors** to secure a vote on the ballot for a **\$50 million** bond to ensure safe and affordable housing for lower-income people¹⁷⁶.

In 2022, the **National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)** facilitated seven community benefits agreements with banks that committed **\$205 billion** in loans, investments, and philanthropy to underserved communities and the organizations that serve them.

NCRC also completed community benefits plans with **22 banking groups** that will put a combined **\$590 billion** into underserved communities. NCRC's community benefit agreements (CBAs) open doors for **lower and middle-income communities** (LMIs) and

“*Tenant organizing is especially significant in a political climate where research shows the increase of corporate landlords with considerable pockets to influence local policies for their benefit.*”

increase lending and philanthropy opportunities for under served communities¹⁷⁷.

Through its GROWTH program, NCRC has built or rehabilitated **138 homes**, representing an investment of **\$40.1 million**, and sold **85%** of the homes to LMI buyers and within LMI communities¹⁷⁸.

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Besides providing affordable housing, networks and coalitions have made successful or significant strides in helping tenants organize to fight against policies that place undue hardships on them. Tenant organizations or associations also use their power to advocate for favorable policies with the government or to negotiate contract terms with landlords that favor them. Take, for example, the case of the **Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition (VHJC)** – a program of urban habitat. Urban Habitat is an organization in California's Bay Area that supports movements to build power and advance equitable policies¹⁷⁹. In 2019, when two buildings owned and managed by Corporations doubled their rents, VHJC organized the tenants to fight for an emergency anti-rent gouging ordinance when it was about to expire and push for renewal. Similarly, during the COVID pandemic, VHJC organized tenants to push for a moratorium on rent increases in Solano County, thereby

protecting families from rent increases at the height of the pandemic¹⁸⁰.

Tenant organizing is especially significant in a political climate where research shows the increase of corporate landlords with considerable pockets to influence local policies for their benefit.



This inevitably leads to the disengagement of low and middle-income earners from local politics and, by doing so, abandon the power to influence policies¹⁸¹.

Against this backdrop, tenant organizations help put power in the hands of the local population. Tenant organizations lobby policymakers, use their negotiating power to negotiate favorable terms with landlords¹⁸³, and break down government policies into digestible bits for the benefit of their members¹⁸⁴.

Another example of efforts to successfully organize tenants is the **San Mateo Anti-Displacement Coalition (SMADC)** – another program of Urban Habitat that advocates for tenant protections and anti-displacement policies in San Mateo County in the Bay Area. In 2016, SMADC mounted a campaign to pass rent control ordinances in San Mateo, Burlingame, and Pacifica. Although the ordinance didn't pass, the organization asserts that its efforts contributed to the statewide Tenant Protection Act (AB 1482) passed in 2019¹²⁵.

In Kansas City, Kansas, K.C. Tenants is a city-wide organization of tenants led by a diverse and multiracial group of leaders. K.C. Tenants have pushed to disrupt eviction proceedings in a city where 42 evictions are filed daily¹⁸⁶.

The organization has organized thousands in protests at the Kansas City courthouse to disrupt proceedings, often chaining themselves to the courthouse doors where eviction proceedings were supposed to be held¹⁸⁷. However, tenant organizing by coalitions and networks transcend local and state levels. Renters Rising is a national alliance of renters organizing renters against corporate landlords, wealthy real estate developers, and hedge fund managers. Renters Rising provides resources to its members to fight evictions, information about

their rights, and easy-to-understand guides on defending against eviction in the law courts¹⁸⁸.

In New York, **Housing Justice for All (HJFA)**, a coalition of renters and the unhoused, organizes its members to fight against the state's real estate industry. Founded in 2017, the coalition has made significant successful strides in its efforts to organize renters. In 2019, the coalition and others won a resounding victory when the Kingston City Council passed the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act (HSTPA). The legislation afforded significant protections to tenants in the state, including expanding on existing ones¹⁸⁹. In 2021, the coalition saw its efforts and those of other organizations come to fruition with the passing of the Emergency Tenant Protection Act, making Kingston the first upstate city in the state to pass rent stabilization legislation¹⁹⁰.

An interesting point about these victories is the significance of their impact and the fact that they are secured on the back of collaborative efforts among several networks and coalitions that constantly share strategies and resources and support each other. For example, **the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)** is a nationwide umbrella coalition that acts as a clearing house for information and houses an impressive database presenting figures about housing deficiencies for most U.S. states. This support offers activists on the ground sufficient information and resources to drive their campaigns¹⁹¹.

Education

In the education space, where there are significant challenges to funding, diversity and inclusion networks and coalitions such as the Stronger California Advocates Network have successfully supported the Building a Better Early Care and Education Act (AB 378) to support high-quality¹⁹².

Recognizing the value added that a quality education brings to the job market, Jobs with Justice, Massachusetts and other activists fought against police budget increases and secured more funding for public education.

Still, in Massachusetts, *coalitions like the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA) successfully advocated for and got the governor to fund the Student Opportunity Act in the proposed 2024 budget completely. The budget included a "record \$6.58 billion appropriation for Chapter 70 local school aid, a 9.8 percent increase over the current FY23 budget"*¹⁹³.

The National Education Association (NEA) comprises more than **3 million people**—educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends—with affiliate organizations in every state and more than **14,000 communities** across the United States¹⁹⁴. The coalition has recorded many victories in its advocacy efforts, including pressuring the Biden administration to announce a student debt cancellation plan and the Temporary Public Service Loan Forgiveness Waiver, which delivers more than **\$24 billion** in debt forgiveness for more than **360 public service workers**¹⁹⁵. The alliance also claims the passing of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act as evidence of its advocacy efforts to increase school safety.

We also consider the efforts of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This professional membership organization promotes high-quality early learning for all young children, from birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. The association comprises nearly **60,000 individual members** of the early childhood community and **52 Affiliates**, all committed to delivering on the promise of high-quality early learning. NAEYC offers accreditation

programs and skill training for current and intending professionals interested in educating young children¹⁹⁶.

The efforts of the *New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)*, a federation of more than **1,200 local unions**, are also worthy of mention. In October 2023, the NYSUT joined the New York State Executive to announce two legislations to guarantee children's online safety. Both legislations, the SAFE for Kids Act and the New York Child Protection Act, put the onus on social media companies to reduce the addictive effects of social media on children and to protect the sale of personal data for children under 18¹⁹⁷.



“ Experts at the Stanford Basic Lab argue that although UBI exists in several forms, it contains several essential characteristics, including "universality, unconditionality, and individual and regular cash payments

Universal Basic Income

Universal Basic Income (UBI) has gained traction as a radical policy response to income inequality. Proponents like Yang¹⁹⁸ argue that providing a guaranteed income to all citizens can serve as a transformative measure, ensuring financial security and mitigating the impact of economic disparities. Underlying the concept is the principle that a share of the wealth produced by all should be redistributed to the most vulnerable. Eminent personalities that have advocated for UBI are Martin Luther King Jr., James Boggs, Andrew Stern, former President of the Service Employees International Union, and Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor¹⁹⁹. Experts at the Stanford Basic Lab argue that although UBI exists in several forms, it contains several essential characteristics, including ***"universality, unconditionality, and individual and regular cash payments"***²⁰⁰.

Jobs With Justice, Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, Fight for \$15, The Strong Economy For All, and One Fair Wage are examples of the many coalitions and networks that have successfully advocated for Universal Basic Income in the United States.



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05

Stumbling Blocks

“ One of the challenges is passing legislation or creating policies that enhance wealth and income inequality. Across the nation, governments are passing legislation or attempting to shore up existing legislation that will maintain disparities in wealth and income.

Networks and Coalitions operating in the wealth and income advocacy landscape also face significant challenges to their work. Some of these challenges exist because networks and coalitions bring diverse people together with differing interests and values. Other challenges exist because of the political landscape in which networks and coalitions operate.

Political Landscape

A primary focus of networks and coalitions is to engender an enabling environment that reduces wealth and income inequality. This is particularly the case for networks and coalitions working on systemic issues – the main focus of this study. A significant step by which networks measure their success in enabling such an environment is passing legislation or enabling policies that reduce wealth and income inequality. Such legislation can range from establishing an hourly minimum wage, expanding social security to include marginalized groups, improving investments in access to education, instituting rent control, or enhancing opportunities for workers to organize into unions. The assumption is that the successful passing of legislation represents one of the sustainable ways to enshrine long-term changes to the system to address income inequality. This assumption aligns with the view of Nobel Prize-winning Economist Joseph Stiglitz, who argued that policies and laws engender rising income inequality in the United States²⁰¹.

Unfortunately, networks and coalitions face significant challenges in creating this enabling environment. One of the challenges is passing legislation or creating policies that enhance wealth and income inequality. Across the nation, governments are passing legislation or attempting to shore up existing legislation that will maintain disparities in wealth and income.

“ Another challenge that networks face is the proliferation of corporate lobby groups who oppose, hinder, or slow down the passage of bills and policies that reduce wealth and income inequality.

For example, the state legislature passed a bill in Florida that stopped deducting union dues from workers' pay. The bill also calls for decertifying unions whose members do not make up to **60%** of due-paying members²⁰².

In South Carolina, a bill was introduced to censor education in public schools²⁰³. In Louisiana, state lawmakers rejected efforts to raise the minimum wage to \$10/hour²⁰⁴. In 2023, the House Ways and Means Committee presented a tax package that prioritizes cuts to the wealthy²⁰⁵. These are just a few policies and legislative decisions that maintain the wealth and income gap.

Another challenge that networks face is the proliferation of corporate lobby groups who oppose, hinder, or slow down the passage of bills and policies that reduce wealth and income inequality.

Across the United States, corporations and the wealthy are investing vast sums of money in lobbying groups to influence legislative or policy decisions in their favor. According to a study, Corporations receive over \$200 in gains for every \$1 spent on lobbying²⁰⁶. While lobbying is a legitimate political activity, the massive investment in lobbying campaigns poses significant challenges to the wealth and income inequality advocacy landscape. It creates an unlevel field where organizations with the deepest pockets influence decisions most. Other potential pitfalls for lobbying are that it can favor a few over the collective²⁰⁷ and serve as an avenue for corruption and monetary gains for policymakers²⁰⁸.

However, amid this challenge, networks still record successes. For example, despite massive opposition from lobbying groups, Massachusetts passed a ballot to raise taxes for the ultra-wealthy, enabling the state to provide free lunches for K-12 students in public schools²⁰⁹. Similarly, lobbying groups were instrumental in the failure of the Local Communities Act or Proposition 15 to pass. The purpose of Proposition 15 was to raise property taxes on the rich to fund public schools in the State of California²¹⁰.

Related to the above is the historic investments in Federal, State, and local elections to influence the election of candidates whose political stance aligns with those of corporations or the ultra-wealthy. According to an analysis from Americans for Tax Fairness about the 2022 election cycle, political donors pumped over \$1 billion into election campaigns, with billionaires contributing more than 73%²¹¹. In many instances, these donations went to candidates who favored tax cuts for the wealthy. For example, in 2022, a New York Times report revealed a secret transfer of \$1.6 billion to a political group to influence political developments in the United States, including blocking government regulations²¹². These political influences engender an environment that stymies efforts to reduce wealth and income inequality²¹³.

“ One notable hurdle is the potential for internal conflicts and diverging interests among member organizations. Balancing a coalition's diverse perspectives and priorities requires adept leadership and a commitment to a common cause.

Operational/ Institutional Challenges

Differences in organizational cultures, funding sources, and strategic approaches can strain the cohesion of a coalition if not managed effectively²¹⁴.

Additionally, civil society networks grapple with issues of sustainability and resource allocation. Many organizations within these networks operate on limited budgets, relying on grants and donations. The competition for resources among member organizations can create tensions and hinder the collective impact of the coalition. The dependence on external funding sources may compromise the autonomy and independence of these networks, raising questions about their ability to remain true to their mission in the face of financial constraints.

Civil society networks and coalitions face other operational challenges, such as the decline in members' commitment. Bringing together different organizations and activists with divergent interests can have immense impacts. However, it can also have its drawbacks. While front-burner issues can energize activists, keep them engaged in campaigns, and draw support from communities, keeping this passion and engagement in the long term can be challenging. Public and donor attention on an issue can wane, making it harder to mobilize resources to keep campaigns going. This can result in a decline in the commitment level of members, especially where more resources are required to keep

campaigns going. This decline also occurs when a campaign issue or major event has been accomplished, the network is between funding opportunities, or there is a lull in network activities.

Activists' networks can be consumed by internal strife and politics. In many instances, networks are loosely formed around an issue without long-term strategies and agreements delineating roles and responsibilities for members. In the absence of these governmental structures, internal strife can set in. Factions can arise, pitching members against each other, destroying the network from within, or rendering it comatose²¹⁵.

Funding can also be a challenge for networks and coalitions. Donor organizations may be willing to fund particular events and campaigns, especially if there is significant social capital to be gained from it. However, funding to sustain a network over an extended period can be challenging to access. While relevant, funding sources for maintaining a secretariat and keeping administrative staff may not provide tangible results compared to issue campaigns or policy changes.

Significantly, networks face can face logistical challenges, especially in conducting multi-location and multi-issue campaigns, where they have to rely on members in a particular location to provide the legwork. Member capacities are never equal, and some organizations are run mainly by volunteers with time commitments elsewhere. The ability to maintain uniform momentum on campaigns

or advocacy work where members have unequal capacity, unequal resources, and a divergent political landscape can be an enormous challenge to networks and coalitions.

Civil society networks and coalitions have demonstrated resilience and adaptability despite these challenges. The digital age has provided new avenues for communication and collaboration, enabling these networks to overcome geographical barriers and connect globally.



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06

Conclusion and Recommendations



The challenge of wealth and income inequality is enormous, requiring multi-pronged strategies to address and, in most cases, demanding enormous resources, various skill sets, and coordination across several locations.

This study provides several lessons and key insights from the wealth and income inequality landscape in the United States. First, it highlights the distinct and impressive work of networks and coalitions. However, it further shows how networks and coalitions are essential in addressing the myriad issues of wealth and income inequality in the United States. The results are evident whether these efforts are concentrated within a particular geographic location, across multiple levels, issue areas, and regardless of the preferred strategy.

The preceding raises an important point –how can we make more organizations collaborate in their advocacy work against wealth and income disparities in the United States?

The challenge of wealth and income inequality is enormous, requiring multi-pronged strategies to address and, in most cases, demanding enormous resources, various skill sets, and coordination across several locations. This is a task that very few organizations can handle alone. Besides, working in isolation robs the landscape of the potential to build bridges across divides, build capacity in local communities, and ensure that the people affected by wealth and income inequality are engaged in combating it.

Another critical point is that action to address structural inequality involves transforming the systems through legislative and policy change. In the previous report, we observed that the pace of inequality seems to be outpacing the efforts of organizations working on wealth and income inequality.

“ However, systemic change takes a long time to come by. It involves a long-term strategy, playing the long game, sometimes waiting for the political tide to change, and building mass support to mobilize on an issue.

Another critical point is that action to address structural inequality involves transforming the systems through legislative and policy change. In the previous report, we observed that the pace of inequality seems to be outpacing the efforts of organizations working on wealth and income inequality.

Fortunately, many organizations realize this and have demonstrated the resilience and tenacity to push through an issue, sometimes successfully and sometimes unsuccessfully. These efforts must be recognized and applauded as they sometimes are the difference between whether a family has a home to live in, warm food on their table, and whether to access healthcare. To this end, the following recommendations are necessary:

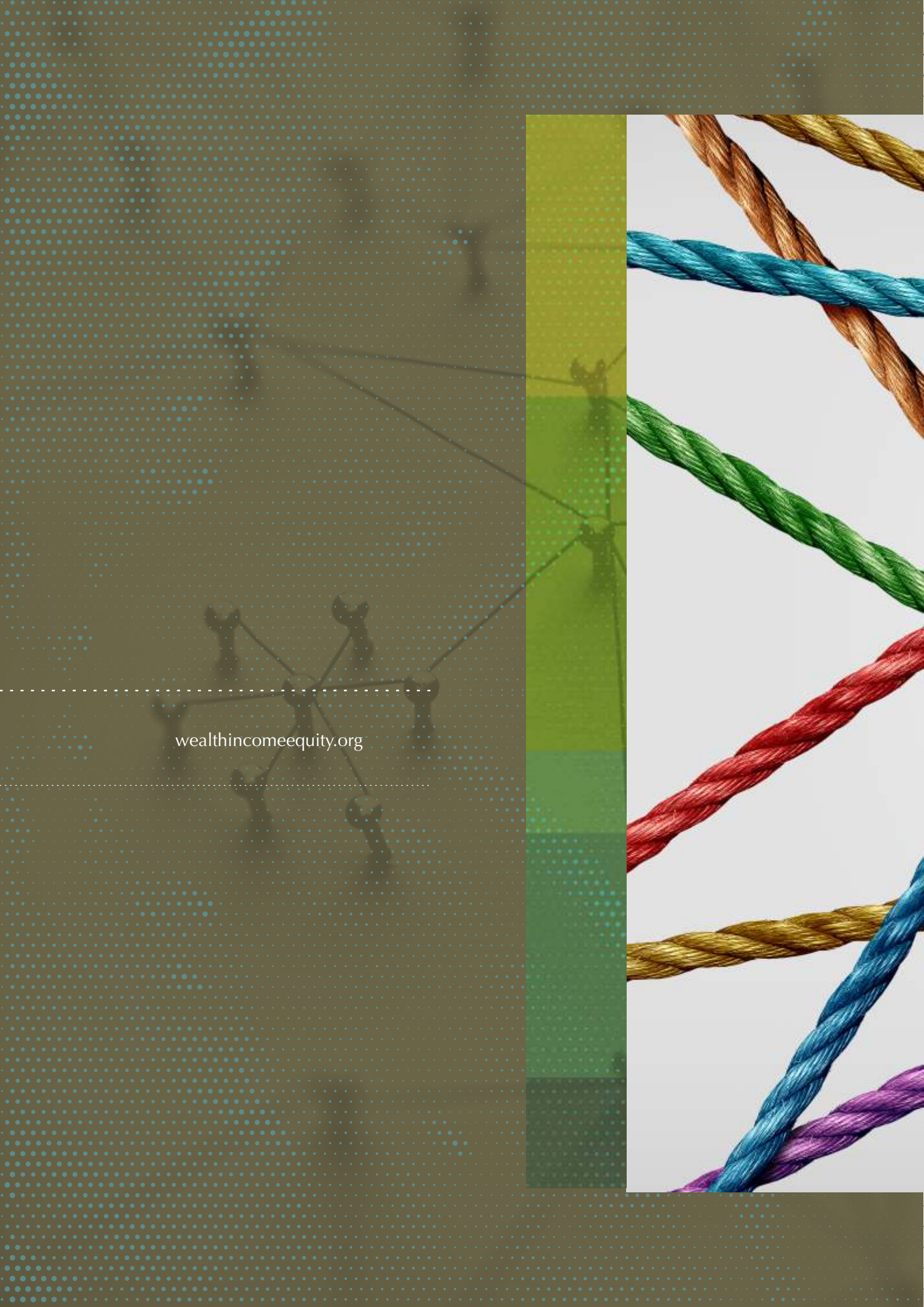
General Recommendations

I. Philanthropic organizations need to adopt a shift where the focus of their funding strategies is informed by the prevailing issues that networks and coalitions prioritize. In other words, the issue areas should influence the funding strategy, and the philanthropic organization should not use its strategy to dictate work on the ground.

II. There is a need for more forums where networks and coalitions working in the wealth and income advocacy landscape can share their experiences and challenges. As stated, there is an impressive number of networks doing significant work. However, it is essential for cross-network learning, experience sharing, and collaboration. Networks can also work in silos, ensconced in their bubble and immune from learning from the work of other networks.

Specific Recommendations for the Center

- I. As a nascent organization entering the wealth and income inequality landscape, WIE has an opportunity to develop a strategy that supports organizations whose work involves legislative and policy change in its focal areas. Support could include fundraising, facilitating learning, and sharing forums or roundtables to enable cross-network learning.
- II. Second, networks have recorded many successful campaigns and secured legislative and policy victories. Sadly, there have been unsuccessful ones. WIE can highlight key learning from campaigns and legislative advocacy regardless of whether they are successful or not. These lessons could be gleaned from evaluation studies focusing on the factors contributing to these activities' success or lack thereof. These key learnings can be valuable for strategy planning for future advocacy activities.
- III. Also related to WIE's research objectives is the importance of evaluating and broadly disseminating the implementation of pilot programs, particularly those programs that touch on contentious political issues. For example, findings from guaranteed income pilot programs at the county, district, or city levels can incentivize other cities or districts to implement them. Or incentivize activists to push for their implementation in other locations,
- III. There is an opportunity for WIE to contribute to raising the next generation of activists against wealth and income inequality. Through facilitating internships with networks working with College departments to evaluate programs, WIE can increase interest in these issues from the undergraduate level and help raise socially conscious young activists.
- V. Lastly, WIE can play a broader advocacy role in convincing donors and philanthropic organizations about the importance of investing in networks and coalitions to push systemic change in the wealth and income inequality landscape.



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