

What You Can Do

To Help Revive Democracy and Revoke Corporate Power!



ReclaimDemocracy.org

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RESOURCES

The New Rules Project
1313 5th St. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
612-379-3815
newrules.org

**Community Environmental
Legal Defense Fund**
2859 Scotland Rd
Chambersburg, PA 17201
717-709-0457
celdf.org

**Women's International
League for Peace and
Freedom**
1213 Race St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-563-7111
wilpf.org

Alliance for Democracy
760 Main St.
Waltham, MA 02541
781-894-1179
thealliancefordemocracy.org

ReclaimDemocracy.org primers cited here as references are available for download from the "primers" section of our website. We'll also mail them (free) on request.

More and more people are saying "I'm fed up with the status quo and ready to act; what can I do?" In response, we've compiled these ideas and resources for both group and individual actions one can take to effect change.

This primer will be continually updated and improved (see our website for updates and a hyper-linked edit), so please share your suggestions and new ideas with us!

Individual Actions

Don't underestimate the power of living by example--your daily actions rub off on others. (And it feels good to act on your values!)

Do business with your neighbors--patronize independent community-based businesses. Set specific goals, such as buying half of your seasonal produce from local farms. See our online "Independent Business" page for more.

Get important books and independent media sources into your local library where they can be read by more people. Most libraries rely on patron requests to determine their publication orders. Our "Recommended Readings" primer has a concise listing, and www.100fires.com has a huge collection of relevant materials.

Write letters to the editor or commentaries for your local publications. Contact us for a tip sheet on effective letter writing. For skilled and committed persuasive writers, we will work with you on breaking into larger publications.

Become an expert on an issue relating to the larger struggle for democracy, then develop relationships with your government representatives, the editorial board of your local newspaper, and other media outlets to generate public debate.

Shift your financial support to organizations that strive for systemic change, rather than those focusing solely on damage control. They typically do more with less and have limited grant possibilities. Organizations listed on our primers are among those worthy of your consideration.

Run for local office or get involved in politics. Whether you choose to help build a minor party or shift the dominant ones, you can raise vital issues ignored in most campaigns.

Volunteer your time and talents. Volunteers are essential to many grassroots organizations that lack the budget for many staff positions--maybe you can provide needed help.

Sharpen the focus of organizations to which you belong. Large groups, especially those with locally-controlled chapters, can become more effective agents of change with your work and engagement.

Consciously use democratic language. By calling attention to language that marginalizes citizens (e.g. inappropriately referring to us as "consumers"), personifies corporations (McDonalds said...) or misleads ("free trade" where *corporate controlled commerce* is the accurate term), you can help awaken others to our daily immersion in propaganda. This is especially true if you discuss or write about it publicly via letters to the editor, local talk radio, etc.

Give someone you know a sample of our newsletter (or any other publication), and consider a gift subscription. We'll send a free copy to anyone at your request. We hear from a *lot* of people saying "I never really thought about it in this way until my friend sent me your...". It works!

Group Initiatives: Educational and Movement-building

Effective grassroots education is action. Don't be discouraged if you don't yet have a group to organize a targeted campaign; build a base of support through initiatives such as these:

Start a democracy discussion group. A guided group is a great vehicle for bringing together interested people and providing a foundation for local action. WILPF (see sidebar) provides a 10-session study guide, *Challenging Corporate Power, Asserting the People's Rights*, online (free, pdf) or \$15 for hard copy. Many of primers are great for this purpose too (see our Primers web page).

Present a film series in your community. Presenting issue-oriented films with accompanying discussion can be a great outreach tool. In our home base, we teamed with our public library to establish a monthly event. Our "Recommended Resources" primer provides a few film ideas, but Free Speech TV (FSTV.org) is a more complete resource.

Organize a local event. Do you have a University or organization that could sponsor a presentation or *Rethinking Democracy* workshop? **Sponsoring debates**, whether political or purely informational, can broaden discussion beyond and build a base of support for more result-oriented action. See our Speakers Bureau page for ideas.

Pass an ordinance or resolution rejecting corporate personhood. The city council of Point Arena, CA adopted such a resolution as a statement of resistance to corporate power. Citizens in Arcata, California used a similar process called Measure F. Then, in December 2002, Porter Township, Pennsylvania set national precedent as the first community to make a binding law denying corporations constitutional "rights" (the effort also was replicated in a second PA community. Related initiatives were launched in San Francisco and Arizona in early 2003. Our web site has stories or links for all of these initiatives.

"Tabling." All you need is good information and a capable spokesperson do local outreach. Distribute literature, generate discussion, raise funds and perhaps organize a local working group. Find an appropriate event or location and set up a table. We're happy to send newsletters, brochures or bumper stickers. Our downloadable primers (such as this one) also are great tools. We can customize them with your local contact information.

Group Initiatives: Results-driven

Most of these actions involve a higher level of commitment. Please see the referenced sources for specific steps toward achieving these goals. Consider which issues can bring together a broad coalition of groups in your community or state.

Propose a "Corporate Accountability Code" in your state. Help your state rein in illegitimate corporate privilege. Contact us for models for building citizen authority over corporations.

Prevent corporate subsidies from ripping off your town. Citizens in Gary, Indiana generated an ordinance mandating that corporations meet all projections for job creation and other promises as a condition for receiving any form of public subsidy. See the "governance" page at NewRules.org.

Prohibit criminal corporations from doing business in your community... See Wayne Township Environmental Protection Ordinance at CELDF.org or request a print copy **...or your state.** We drafted model legislation for state-level "Three Strikes" initiatives to revoke the charters of recidivist corporations. Activists in California have since improved on it. Learn more at www.corporate3strikes.org or contact us.

Preempt corporatization of public services with a local or state initiative. Washington D.C. virtually halted the corporatizing of public services simply by requiring solid evidence that such a move would save enough money (10%) to justify the costs. It also gives public employees the chance to bid to do the work themselves. See the "governance" page at NewRules.org.

Stop commercialism of schools. Corporations are invading our public schools via sponsorships, exclusive vending deals, free "educational" materials, and other tactics to market themselves to a captive, lucrative audience: our kids. You can work at the school district level to pass proactive commercialism policies. See our *Corporations & Our Schools primer* or our links page for more resources. See also Commercial Alert (sidebar).

Work for local or state electoral reform. Many states and localities have enacted spending caps, public financing and other important reforms. Our electoral reform primers provide strong background. The National Civic League also is a great resource (NCL.org). See PublicCampaign.org for public financing information. Common Cause and League of Women Voters chapters often play active roles, but be aware that they typically favor modest incremental reform rather than seriously challenging the status quo. Contact us for further resources, including our 5 page CFR primer.

Promote legislation to preserve family farms. At least ten townships in Pennsylvania have passed ordinances banning corporate farm ownership. Nine states have passed such laws. See CELDF.org for model legislation or contact us for state initiative references.

Organize to prevent corporate chains from undermining your community. Independent businesses of all types are being displaced by corporate chains, but successful campaigns have emerged to change this trend toward centralization of power. **Independent Business Alliances** unite locally owned businesses to educate, pool resources and create a culture of support for community-based business. The American Independent Business Alliance (initiated by ReclaimDemocracy.org) helps to launch such alliances and serves as a networking hub for the sharing of resources and ideas. Contact us for a detailed information packet.

With or without an IBA, you can support community businesses through actions such as: banning or limiting the size of "big box" developments, capping chain businesses, or enacting local purchasing preferences. See NewRules.org for details and models on these and other initiatives to support local self-reliance.



ReclaimDemocracy.org

More Resources

Commercial Alert
2226 SE 55th Ave
Portland, OR 20009
503-235-8012
commercialalert.org

Free Speech TV
2945 Center Green Court
South, Suite G
Boulder, CO 80301
303-442-8445
fstv.org

Online Database
www.dbsst.org is a searchable clearinghouse of successful organizing strategies covering a wide range of issues--many ultimately involving struggles against corporate power.

American Independent Business Alliance
AMIBA.net

We're happy to send full contact information for any other group mentioned.

ReclaimDemocracy.org is a non-profit (501c3) educational organization working to inspire citizens to revoke illegitimate corporate power and revive grassroots democracy. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Use our primers for local outreach!

We can send a master with your local contact information here.