

# ORGANIZING THE MIDWEST

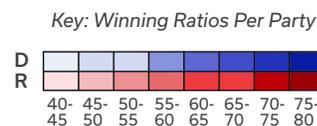
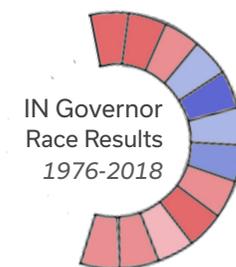
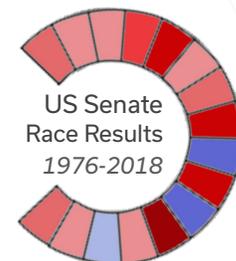
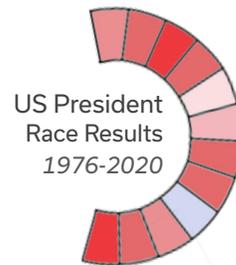
## DISRUPTING MYTHS AND BUILDING MULTIRACIAL GOVERNING COALITIONS

### Indiana Addendum

Despite a conservative policy environment at the state level, progressive advocates have won significant victories through grassroots organizing. For example, the Indiana State Teachers' Union won a massive investment in public schools and Faith in Indiana brought civilian oversight to the notorious Indianapolis police department. Grassroots community organizations also worked together to end Medicaid work requirements, protect immigrant rights, and reform criminal justice.

The backbone for these efforts is Indiana Voices, a coalition of 14 partners representing more than 400,000 Black people, immigrants, teachers, women, workers, farmers, faith leaders, and environmentalists across the state. Indiana Voices is building the leadership of Hoosiers who have been left out of the public dialogue, particularly low-income people and people of color. These organizations are leading the fight for equity and public investment in a state that has aggressively slashed public spending and privatized public services at the expense of low-income communities, people of color, and other vulnerable communities. Indiana Voices is also working to close the turnout gap: voters in the most progressive counties vote at rates well below the state average. Encouraging year-round participation in the public arena and civic engagement in elections will strengthen grassroots democracy. To succeed in 2022 and beyond, Indiana progressives must execute the four part strategy laid out in the Organizing the Midwest analysis:

- 1 Invest strategically to organize Black, immigrant, and young leaders
- 2 Organize conflicted white communities with new and proven strategies
- 3 Advance a Race Class Narrative in Indiana
- 4 Establish electoral programs through independent state ecosystems



**4,751,370**

IN Registered Voters, 2020



#### KEY ISSUE

##### Climate Justice and Environment

We cannot address

climate change without closing Indiana's super-polluting factories and coal plants. Our state is one of the nation's worst polluters, particularly in northwest Indiana, an epicenter of environmental racism. Hoosier Environmental Council, Earth Charter Indiana, Just Transition NWI, Solar United Neighbors, Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter, and Hoosier Action are building community power to advance climate justice, create green jobs, and replace fossil fuels with renewable energy.



#### KEY ISSUE

##### Criminal Justice Reform

The State of

Indiana incarcerates people at a higher rate than any democracy on earth, with the majority of those incarcerated suffering from mental illness or substance abuse. Faith in Indiana is working to reform our criminal justice system and build crisis centers where people in need can get help, not handcuffs. The organization has won local crisis centers in Indianapolis and Sound Bend; next, they will pursue other local fights and seek state funding for a robust crisis response system from call to care.



#### KEY ISSUE

##### Equitable Education

Indiana's public

schools are one of the last remaining public institutions in a state that has led the nation in privatization. Conservatives in state government are trying to shift resources to charter schools – at the expense of rural and urban schools where many students are English language learners, come from low-income families, or need individual education plans. The Indiana State Teachers' Association is leading a campaign to win a funding formula that embeds equity in education spending.

# STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVESTMENT IN INDIANA

## INVEST IN BLACK, IMMIGRANT & YOUNG LEADERS

Central and northwestern Indiana are the state's power centers; they are also home to the majority of Indiana's people of color. Indiana Voices members are working on issues with resonance in Black and immigrant communities, including police reform and immigration justice. In the last ten years, Faith in Indiana has run the state's largest non-partisan, all volunteer voter engagement program focusing on Black residents. The NAACP is advancing environmental justice in northwest Indiana; the African-American Coalition of Indianapolis is active in the central part of the state; and the Indiana Muslim Advocacy Network is organizing the emerging Muslim Arab and Southeast Asian community in Hamilton County. These organizations need long-term investment to continue building relationships in Black, immigrant, and Muslim communities.



**\$1.9M**  
needed



**\$1.2M**  
needed



**\$480K**  
needed



**\$3M**  
needed

## ORGANIZE CONFLICTED WHITE COMMUNITIES

Indiana is 85 percent white, so winning tangible change depends on multiracial solidarity. Grassroots community organizations must engage conflicted white Hoosiers, particularly around issues like the opioid epidemic and basic economic security. Hoosier Action is hosting deep canvassing conversations that engage with voters on difficult issues like racial justice and immigrant rights, while acknowledging the economic difficulties they face and providing space for conflicting views. Faith in Indiana engages white congregations of Catholic and mainline Protestant churches, a crucial onramp to broader engagement in communities where progressives do not generally hold sway. Labor partners, including SEIU Healthcare, UNITE Here Local 23, and ISTA, represent working people from diverse backgrounds.

## ESTABLISH A RACE CLASS NARRATIVE IN INDIANA

Indiana was one of the first three states to participate in the Race Class Narrative project, a research-backed strategy developed by communications expert Anat Shenker-Osorio. In 2020, leaders and staff from more than 70 Indiana organizations deployed the We Make Indiana narrative, making use of shared branding, messaging, guides, and open-source digital media assets. With support, Indiana Voices plans to build on this partnership to turn We Make Indiana into a Race Class Narrative hub for the state. In preparation for the state budget fight in 2023, Indiana Voices will collaborate in communications strategies that advocate for public investments benefiting all of us, not just a wealthy few.

## STRENGTHEN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL ECOSYSTEMS

Recently, Indiana began developing the infrastructure needed to support coordinated advocacy campaigns. Indiana Voices is a vehicle to help progressives win state and local issue campaigns and – for the first time ever – execute strategic integrated voter engagement plans to close the turnout gap. As we collaborate to win changes that are beyond the reach of individual organizations, partners like Rise NWI and Indianapolis Young Women's Task Force are reinvigorating local democracy with nonpartisan civic engagement work. Organizations like Planned Parenthood reach and engage people across the state to encourage voting and participation in the civic conversation.