

# A New Approach to Political Engagement

Too many Americans have lost faith in their power to shape their government.

Information networks are critical, but information does not directly challenge the helplessness and hopelessness so many Americans feel.

One approach: Invest in creating a digital platform and a set of support services that could revolutionize political engagement, echoing Alberto Alemanno's vision of citizen-driven lobbying.<sup>1</sup>

We need to engage people **between** elections in a way that enables them to demonstrate to themselves, and to their fellow Americans, that people power is not just about the power to vote.

Progress is powered by a feedback loop of hope and action. Citizen engagement in the information age has stressed information over action. Let's change that.

The platform/services needed could take many forms. Some thoughts for discussion:

- Clear guiding principles for activities promoted. Principles grounded in our shared values, including the principle that it is Un-American to pass laws that impose religious beliefs on others who do not share those beliefs.
- Promote “projects” as an organizing principle, where a project includes specific actions that advance a short-term goal connected to a longer-term strategy. Make it simple to report results (or provide staff support for writing quarterly or monthly newsletters). Too often people feel their efforts or money have been tossed into a black hole. Providing feedback that gives people a sense of accomplishment that inspires further action is essential.
- A curated catalog of organizations/groups with connected projects (archived and current). It should be simple for a person to find a way to take action to advance something they care about. The inclusion of organizations/groups/activities that directly engage people affected and their supporters would be prioritized.
- Consulting services to organizations and ad hoc groups to help them develop projects to be promoted on the platform that move them toward their goals.
- Highlight inspiring stories. Focus on at least two “wins” at the end of each month.
- Sponsor original projects that engage people in lobbying for reforms that reflect common values that are not being addressed by an existing organization.



The above is intended to provide a glimpse into an approach my partner and I were working on before his death in 2011. I think we were onto something. I'd welcome an opportunity to share details.  
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<sup>1</sup> Lobbying for Change: Find Your Voice to Create a Better Society, Alberto Alemanno