



Our Earth Is Worth Fighting For

2021 RACIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY REPORT

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND BOARD CHAIR

At the League of Conservation Voters (**LCV**) we strive to embed racial justice and equity in all of our work to fight climate change and protect the environment. We influence policy, hold polluters accountable, and win elections to help build a world in which tackling the climate crisis, confronting environmental injustice, and strengthening our democracy lead to cleaner and healthier communities, good, well-paying jobs, and a just, equitable, and sustainable future for all. We believe that centering racial justice and equity is the best way to build the social, political, and economic power necessary to protect our democracy and avert climate catastrophe.

To this end, since 2015, LCV has committed to and engaged in an organizational change process designed to support our ability and efforts to help save the planet for people while centering equity and racial justice in how we approach this important work.

This process has translated into us helping to elect climate champions who more accurately represent the diversity that exists within localities and across our nation — because meaningful representation in our democratic process is a right for all people in this country, including communities of color who are often the most impacted by climate change and environmental degradation and regularly targeted by voter suppression. Meaningful representation also applies to our staff, board, and partners, and over time, they too have come to better reflect the racial diversity of our nation. These are some of the tangible ways LCV has turned a stated commitment to centering racial justice and equity in our work into action.

Our progress in turning that commitment into action is the subject of this report. For many decades, the conservation movement, including LCV, did far too little to disrupt systems of White supremacy and other interlocking forms of injustice and exclusion. We have not always been a strong ally for racial justice and equity. Correcting that history will not happen in one or even a few years. But we are intentionally working to do better every single day.

The convergence of threats to the environment, to Black lives, and to voting rights has further strengthened our resolve to build a multi-racial, intersectional movement to save our democracy and our planet.

The following is **LCV's inaugural Racial Justice & Equity annual report**, which details our progress during the pivotal year of 2021. In 2020, LCV signed a Collective Bargaining Agreement, thus establishing a unionized workforce. We pivoted from relying heavily on working in person and holding in-person events, and we learned from our colleagues who had been working remotely how to effectively operate as a 100% virtual workplace during a pandemic and one of the most consequential presidential elections of our lifetimes. And we further operationalized our vision for the future by finalizing our organization's **2021-2024 Strategic Plan**. This strategic plan intentionally centered racial justice and equity in our work in ways that previous strategic plans had not achieved.

This report is an evaluation of our progress in centering racial justice and equity in LCV's work during the first year of our current four-year strategic plan. It is divided into the following sections, corresponding to our strategic plan goals, with a grounding section on the strategic plan as a whole:

- Strategic Planning
- Advocacy and Elections
- Fundraising
- Internal Structures
- Partnerships

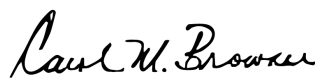
As you will read, throughout 2021, we built significant organizational infrastructure that will serve as the foundation of our racial justice and equity efforts for years to come. Staff at every level and across many departments engaged in tough conversations about how to build a more just and equitable organization. We got uncomfortable, learned new ways of thinking about the world, wrote equity into our work plans, participated in anti-racism trainings, and formed new cross-departmental teams. These are just some of the ways we approached continuing to progress in how we intentionally embed equity, inclusion, and racial justice into our work. We did not always get it right, and there were some stumbles along the way. But we are proud of the LCV team for the commitment and resilience shown on this journey.

Thank you for your commitment to our work.

Sincerely,



Gene Karpinski
President



Carol M. Browner
Board Chair

CENTERING RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

Every four years, LCV develops a new strategic plan that becomes the roadmap for our work. Our strategic plan sets goals that determine the organization's direction and investment priorities for the four-year period and lays out measurable objectives and benchmarks. While our 2016-2020 plan highlighted our commitment to racial justice and equity, **the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan more intentionally centers racial justice and equity in all of our work and elevates our commitment to anti-racism as a core organizational value.**

In developing the current plan, we were intentional about including more key stakeholders who are representative of our staff, board, and partners in the planning process (see below). Combined with a strong commitment from LCV leadership to centering racial justice and equity (**RJE**) in our work, this inclusive process helped shape a plan that more directly articulates our commitment to racial justice and equity and embeds this within specific goals. Below are some highlights of the planning process as it relates to RJE.

SUCSESSES: HOW CENTERING RJE HELPS US WIN

LCV's strategic plan for 2021-2024 was in development during one of the most challenging years in recent history. In 2020, our nation faced a deadly pandemic that eventually claimed more than a million lives in the U.S. and disproportionately impacted Black, Latinx, and other communities of color. Deadly police violence sparked a global movement for change, and we experienced the worst year yet on record for climate-related extreme weather and disasters. The most anti-environment president in U.S. history was seeking reelection, and his supporters engaged in dangerous efforts to intimidate voters, suppress voting rights, and subvert election results.

In 2020, when we began the 2021-2024 strategic planning process, the global pandemic and ongoing racial justice protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd made clear to the organization the **urgent need to better operationalize and act upon our commitment to centering racial justice in how we achieve our mission.** The final plan reflects this need, and in contrast to previous strategic plans, the 2021-2024 goals explicitly outline an intention to achieve "just and equitable" policy outcomes, elect "racially diverse" candidates, and build "anti-racist" campaigns and programs.

For the first time ever, we created a staff working group to shape and inform the planning process. Team members on the working group were intentionally chosen to ensure majority representation from Black, Indigenous, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latinx, and other communities of color. The group also included representation from LCV management and members of our Union. The working group created an inclusive planning process to enable robust, equitable input from all staff, which included generative discussions at a staff retreat, as well as staff focus groups and surveys. This information was supplemented by surveys and interviews with state affiliates, board members, and other external stakeholders.

In addition, recognizing that our nation will not be able to secure a healthy and equitable environmental future without fair and equitable voting systems, LCV significantly elevated our work on democracy issues, with a focus on addressing the systemic exclusion and disenfranchisement of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and other communities of color, as well as low-wealth communities. As the strategic plan notes, meaningful progress on climate change will

be more difficult to achieve in the absence of a just and equitable democracy that is responsive to all people. Voting rights rollbacks are fundamentally unjust and have wide-ranging consequences, including unchecked environmental injustices. And the communities most affected by climate change, pollution, and environmental injustice are the same communities that our country has systematically excluded from the democratic process.

While LCV, along with our sister organization, LCV Education Fund, and our 30+ state affiliates (collectively, the **Conservation Voters Movement or CVM**) have long worked on democracy issues, LCV's increased commitment to strengthening our democracy is reflected in our current four-year strategic plan, which, for the first time ever, elevates this as a standalone organizational goal — a priority on par with addressing climate change. Our plan through 2024 seeks to advance pro-democracy reforms, defend against voter suppression, and counter misinformation as central to winning on climate change and securing a just and equitable future.

Among its five core goals, LCV's 2021-2024 Strategic Plan also includes one focused specifically on developing and improving internal structures and systems and attending to our organizational culture. Our cross-departmental Operations team is the backbone of our organization, ensuring that we have the policies, procedures, and systems in place to support our programmatic work to fulfill our mission to build power for people and the planet. Our internal programming also helps nurture an organizational culture that supports staff as they work to embed racial justice and equity in their external-facing work and in how we all work together by living out and modeling our core organizational values.

LCV VALUES

ACCOUNTABILITY	We believe true accountability means living by our values; living up to the promises we make to our members, partners, allies, staff, and the planet; acting with transparency; and taking responsibility for the consequences of our actions or inactions.
ANTI-RACISM	We value being part of an organization that centers and advances racial justice and equity in all of our work, including our external climate and democracy work and our internal policies, practices, and structures. Our efforts to protect the environment and engage in the political process must be rooted in an understanding of environmental, racial, and social justice — all on their own and in how they intersect — and how that understanding informs our actions.
COMMUNITY	We value being part of a community defined by a desire to bring about change. We also understand that trust is integral to fostering a sense of community, both in our external and internal work, and that living up to our values will help engender trust from our staff and our external partners. Joy is also an important component in creating and supporting community. Being able to approach our work with a sense of solidarity, internally and externally, will lead to greater individual and organizational joy and the expansion of a movement committed to building power with and for people and the planet.
INNOVATION	We value thinking and acting boldly to achieve our goals while living up to all of our other values. Innovation also means ensuring that every member of staff is included as a thought partner in driving us to be bold while staying true to the organizational culture our values are designed to cultivate and maintain.

LEARNING	We value taking risks in our work and supporting a culture of creativity. That means having the space to make mistakes and opportunities to learn from them. We value listening and learning in all its forms: learning from and with communities, our staff, partner organizations, and science. Learning means consuming data and media critically in order to help us make informed decisions that center people in attaining our goal of saving the planet.
SUSTAINABILITY	We believe protecting the planet and its people is long-term work requiring strong partnerships with communities most impacted by the climate crisis and an organizational culture and infrastructure that creates the space for our staff to do their best work and live their best lives. This requires a commitment to planning that intentionally considers and includes the involvement of all relevant stakeholders throughout the planning process.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Several aspects of the 2021 strategic planning process serve as lessons to inform future work. First, while the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan outlines overarching goals around "just and equitable climate change policies" and "just and equitable voting laws," the plan is less explicit about *how* we measure progress and/or how we evaluate whether new policies and laws are just and equitable. Additional work is needed to define meaningful criteria to ensure the policies LCV supports are truly just and equitable and to establish more reliable methods of evaluating progress.

Second, while the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan does a good job of more explicitly centering RJE than ever before, it is ultimately only an expression of intent waiting to be transformed into action. Given the day-to-day urgency we often face with our work, including a constantly-changing political and policy landscape, and with limited staff resources and capacity, we must remain committed to implementing the strategies outlined in the plan in just and equitable ways to ensure that we can achieve its stated goals. This includes creating and/or improving existing infrastructure and processes for evaluation, reflection, and continuous improvement. Without additional internal policies, staffing, and other resources, it may be difficult to meet the goals as outlined by the end of 2024. The intentional and tactical commitment to center racial justice and equity in our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan goals should be celebrated. And achieving those goals must drive critical resource decisions in every corner of our organization in the future.

CENTERING RJE IN OUR ADVOCACY AND ELECTIONS WORK

LCV has long been one of the most effective environmental advocacy organizations in the country. We recognize that to achieve truly transformational policy outcomes and live up to our organizational values, we must do more to focus our advocacy work — at every level of government — on efforts that prioritize communities most impacted by climate change and environmental degradation, in part through soliciting their feedback and supporting their leadership in combating the climate crisis.

People, communities, and all life on our planet are increasingly threatened by the impacts of climate change, while polluters and their allies continue to oppose action in order to protect their profits. Our democracy — its institutions and processes — has been overtaken by interests that benefit from the

exclusion and disenfranchisement of low-wealth, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color.

To address these interconnected crises, LCV mobilizes and builds grassroots power in communities, partners with and supports the CVM and allies, endorses and works to elect candidates who share our values, advocates for strong policies, and works with and holds elected officials accountable. By implementing these core strategies and putting power in the hands of people, we are working to solve the climate crisis, defend and strengthen our democracy, and confront racial injustice — and secure a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for everyone.

No single strategy is enough to combat these crises, but when joined together, these core strategies uniquely position LCV and our network of state affiliates to achieve lasting, transformational change.

SUCCESSES: HOW CENTERING RJE HELPS US WIN

Building Grassroots Power

Protecting our environment requires massive popular support to overcome powerful opposing interests that place profit over people and the planet. That's why grassroots advocacy and community organizing have long been cornerstones of LCV's theory of change. LCV is investing in long-term community-building and partnerships with organizations led by and serving Black, Indigenous, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latinx, and other communities of color, as well as immigrant, youth, and low-wealth communities. In 2021, we made progress in building power and growing our diverse and inclusive movement through the following initiatives and programs:

Conservation Voters Movement (CVM)

Leadership across our network of 30+ state affiliates in the CVM centered racial justice and equity in their planning processes by intentionally asking, "How can we better center racial justice and equity in our work?" Leaders discussed ways to design campaign activities to strengthen relationships with environmental justice organizations, labor unions, low-wealth communities, and people of color-led organizations over the long term. Staff committed to ensuring that short-term objectives did not supersede long-term processes to build equitable partnerships.

THREE EXAMPLES OF OUR CVM PARTNERS' RJE LEADERSHIP	
1	In partnership with Conservation Voters Pennsylvania, LCV organized and conducted door-to-door canvassing in Western Pennsylvania where communities have long borne the brunt of fossil fuel industry pollution. And we located Climate Action organizers in Philadelphia and Chester County to increase our organizing reach in Black communities.
2	Conservation Voters of New Mexico worked with the Navajo Nation to collect resolutions of support for the clean energy and environmental provisions of the Build Back Better Act.
3	Georgia Conservation Voters and LCV collaborated on an art activation and community mural in the East Point community in Atlanta. This predominantly Black community has faced historical energy injustices like disproportionately high utility bills, which was the driving force behind the mural designed by local artists calling for "Energy Justice Now."

Chispa and Democracy for All

LCV's Community & Civic Engagement team includes Chispa's grassroots community organizing and Democracy For All's civic engagement and advocacy strategies. In 2021, the team held a series of planning meetings to improve program integration and cross-departmental collaboration, identify strategies to create a more diverse and inclusive culture, and increase accountability for centering racial justice and equity in this work.

Chispa (Spanish for 'spark') is an LCV program that seeks to create healthier environments in Latinx communities and other communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by lax, often destructive environmental policies. In 2021, Chispa established its Florida program and laid the groundwork for the Chispa Texas office in Corpus Christi, which opened in 2022. Today, Chispa has 16 full-time organizers and more than 20,000 volunteers working across six states.

Democracy For All, one of the largest and most innovative civic engagement programs in the country, builds power in communities to ensure that every voice in historically excluded communities is included in the electoral process. In 2021, Democracy For All developed a new organization-wide plan to guide our pro-democracy work within immigrant, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other communities of color.

Climate Action

Climate Action is an issue-advocacy organizing program that is a partnership of LCV and state affiliates, with teams in Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Climate Action programs advance our values by building authentic and equitable partnerships with organizations led by people of color and by educating and empowering community members to advocate for state and federal climate policies that advance racial and economic justice. In 2021:

- Climate Action staff completed a four-part racial justice and equity training in partnership with SHIFT Culture, deepening our staff's toolbox for centering equity in our internal and external work. The workshops focused on identifying and dismantling White supremacy in the workplace, unpacking racial capitalism, and centering a culture of care within the team.
- Climate Action teams maintained and deepened partnerships with over 250 organizations, 30% of which are led by and serve youth and Black communities in the five program states. Building these relationships has enabled us to identify more ways to support local advocacy efforts and dedicate resources to bringing volunteers into the fold.
- In North Carolina, Climate Action hosted an organizing workshop with Moñeka De Oro, Indigenous Chamoru and Filipina from the Micronesian Climate Justice Alliance.
- LCV and our state affiliate, Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania, launched Climate Action PA with organizers in Chester and Delaware Counties and Philadelphia — all new organizing areas for the CVM. Field organizers established new partnerships with organizations, including Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living, a local environmental justice organization, to fight against legacy air and water pollution.

Winning Elections

Electing leaders who champion just and equitable policies to safeguard our environment and democracy at all levels of government is critical to building power for people and the planet. Throughout 2021, and in preparation for 2022, our state affiliates, with support from LCV Victory Fund

and LCV Action Fund¹, worked to elect pro-environment and pro-democracy candidates who share our racial justice and equity values. Highlights of that work include:

LCV state affiliates invested nearly \$4.4 million in state and local elections across the country in 2021. Funds were invested in races of 69 candidates of color and 88 women. Key victories include:

- Reelecting New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, who signed into law sweeping protections for environmental justice communities in 2020.
- Investing in mayoral and city council races that helped a large number of young, diverse leaders win historic victories. This includes Michele Wu, the first woman of color to serve as mayor of Boston, Massachusetts; Aftab Pureval, the first Asian American mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio; and Abdullah Hammoud, the first Arab-American, Muslim mayor of Dearborn, Michigan.
- Although our state affiliate was unsuccessful in the Virginia governor's race, Virginia LCV-PAC worked in partnership with New Virginia Majority and BlackPAC to increase voter turnout among the state's Latinx, Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and youth communities.

In addition, LCV made significant investments in developing the success of the next generation of diverse pro-environment candidates. In 2020, LCV launched our **Candidate Academy** with the ambitious goal of making our nation's elected leadership more reflective of our country. The Candidate Academy recruits environmental champions to run for local and state office, diversifies the candidate pool, and provides training that is welcoming and inclusive to people who have often been systematically locked out of leadership roles, including candidates of color, young people, LGBTQ+ people, and women. Working with BIPOC-led re:power, some of the best campaigners in the country, this program provides future leaders with the tools and training they need to run winning campaigns to represent their communities. In 2021, LCV trained pro-environment, pro-democracy candidates to run in down-ballot races, including 40 racially and geographically diverse candidates from across the CVM. We also hosted a popular candidate recruitment and training webinar on "How to Talk about Race and Racial Justice on the Campaign Trail" and partnered with organizations led by people of color to launch a Progressive Governance Academy to train newly elected officials.

Influencing Policy and Holding Politicians Accountable

Building grassroots power and winning elections are important steps in securing the policy changes we need to protect our democracy and our planet. Additionally, we must hold leaders accountable to ensure that the laws and policies they enact realize our vision of racial justice and equity. Here are examples of how racial justice and equity informed LCV's policy and accountability work in 2021:

For the past several years, LCV has been part of efforts to center racial and environmental justice in the climate and other policy outcomes we want to see passed by Congress and the administration. A cornerstone of this work has been the **Equitable & Just National Climate Platform** that LCV helped develop with a number of environmental and environmental justice partners. Through the advocacy of LCV and others, this platform helped directly inform the recommendations of the House Democrats' Select Committee on the Climate Crisis' Climate Crisis Action Plan, the Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis' report, and President Biden's Build Back Better plan as a candidate and as president. One of the most tangible outcomes was that the Biden-Harris

¹ LCV Victory Fund runs independent campaigns to influence competitive federal races where our involvement and issues can be decisive for pro-environment, pro-democracy candidates who reflect the racial and gender diversity of our country. LCV Action Fund identifies and endorses environmental champions who will address the climate crisis and advance a more equitable clean energy future.

administration established the **Justice40 Initiative**, which aims to deliver at least 40 percent of the overall benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy to environmental justice communities that are overburdened by pollution.

In 2021, LCV worked tirelessly to pass transformative climate, jobs, and justice legislation in Congress via the Build Back Better Act (the legislation was ultimately passed by Congress and then signed by President Biden as the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022). Despite tremendous pressure to get a climate bill "done," LCV consistently worked to demand that commitments to environmental justice were not sacrificed in pursuit of victory. Through advocacy, lobbying, grassroots organizing, and more, we worked to keep members of Congress focused on passing legislation that would address the climate crisis in ways that tackle racial and economic inequality.

LCV's federal advocacy extended beyond our support for Build Back Better, including efforts to ensure that every person in this country has access to clean, safe drinking water. Water crises in majority-Black cities like Flint, Michigan, and Jackson, Mississippi, have shown in stark terms the failure to invest in safe water infrastructure in communities of color. LCV is proud to play a leadership role in the **Clean Water for All coalition** working to ensure that a person's race or zip code does not dictate whether they can rely on their drinking water to be safe. We also continued and deepened our commitment to more equitable access to the outdoors and to making sure our public lands are inclusive of all communities and cultural histories in this country. One of our first conservation wins during the Biden-Harris administration was helping secure the restoration of protection for the full Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, which is co-managed by five tribal governments, after the Trump administration shrunk the monument by 85%.

LCV took a stronger position than ever before advocating for the voting rights protections that were included in H.R. 1/S. 1, the For the People Act. For the first time in our history, we called for the elimination of the filibuster in the U.S. Senate in service of passing S. 1. We also took the unusual step of telling senators that this vote would definitely be included in the 2021 *National Environmental Scorecard* because of its importance, and in our letter to the Senate, we noted that "some of the arcane rule's most notable uses have been to block legislation that would benefit people of color and other underserved communities across the country."

LCV advocated for the confirmation of many of President Biden's historic executive and judicial nominees, including Michael Regan, the first Black man to serve as EPA administrator, and Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, the first Native American Cabinet secretary. After four years of former President Trump trying to reshape the federal judiciary by nominating mostly younger, White men as judges, LCV and our coalition partners successfully pushed the Biden-Harris administration to prioritize racially, professionally, and otherwise diverse judicial nominees beginning immediately in 2021.

We also made changes to LCV's signature accountability tool, the **National Environmental Scorecard**. Each year, the *Scorecard* evaluates how every member of Congress votes on the most important issues before the House and Senate, and it serves as the gold standard for the public to hold legislators accountable and distinguish who is working to protect our environment and democracy. In LCV's 2020 *Scorecard*, (which was published in 2021), for the first time, we scored racial justice votes: a House bill to remove Confederate statues from the U.S. Capitol and a Senate vote on an inadequate policing reform bill. In 2021, half of the House votes scored — a proportionately large number — were justice- and democracy-related votes, including voting rights bills. We also expanded the number of

organizations that are part of the *Scorecard* Advisory Committee, which recommends votes to be scored, adding representatives from a number of our environmental justice partners as well as the BlueGreen Alliance, a coalition of environmental organizations and labor unions.

In the states, LCV's **Democracy For All** program fought back against widespread and dangerous voter suppression laws primarily targeted at Black voters and other voters of color. The CVM organized for equitable and representative redistricting maps in California, Florida, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington and countered legislative voter suppression efforts in Georgia, Michigan, and Wisconsin. We successfully helped secure permanent vote-by-mail elections in Nevada and supported a modern automatic voter registration system in Maine.

We also won new state-level progress through **Clean Energy for All**, our network-wide campaign in 30+ states to mobilize grassroots power to demand that state and local leaders respond with urgency, science, and justice to confront the climate crisis. Thanks to the work of this campaign, 40% of people in the United States now live in places committed to 100% clean energy. In 2021, our movement achieved a major victory, when after years of advocacy by the Illinois Environmental Council and a coalition of other groups within the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, including Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, People for Community Recovery and Southeast Environmental Task Force, Illinois passed the most comprehensive clean energy bill in the nation with a strong focus on racial and economic justice. When the Illinois state Senate tried to gut the equity provisions in the final bill, our climate justice coalition held strong and delivered the message, "no equity, no deal."

In coordination with the Conservation Voters Movement Racial and Economic Justice Policy Campaign Task Force, LCV completed four policy papers providing policy guidance around centering racial justice within state and local climate policy.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

While we made significant progress in centering racial justice and equity in our 2021 programs, we recognize that we must do far more to deepen and expand this work. True success will come from investing in extensive and sustainable anti-racism and equity education and systems change within every department of our organization and across our movement. Only then will we have the capacity to build deep and authentic partnerships within Black, Indigenous, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latinx, and other communities of color, as well as immigrant, youth, and low-wealth communities. Here are some of the key lessons learned in 2021:

To win on climate and protect our democracy, we must **grow political power in ALL communities**. We need strong leaders and strong partnerships with organizations within communities of color, low-wealth communities, and among young people.

We must also do more to secure voting rights and equitable ballot access. Since 2021, the backlash to record levels of voter turnout in the 2020 elections, especially by voters of color and young people, has been swift and severe, with many states moving to restrict voting or subvert free and fair elections. A critical challenge going forward will be sustaining our investment in **defending and strengthening democracy and voting rights** to fight this backlash. We must commit to sustained — and increased — investment in efforts to protect voting rights and expand civic participation in communities of color and low-income communities where needed and welcomed.

Sharing power is a critical next step. Environmental justice and racial justice organizations have pursued solutions to environmental and equity problems for decades. Yet White-led organizations continue to have greater influence in local, state, and federal policy decisions. It is not enough to 'include' the communities that are most burdened by environmental racism; we must also understand when we should follow their lead. And we must continue to invest in the leadership of activists and organizations within low-wealth and Black, Latinx, and other communities of color.

We have work to do to ensure that our public-facing **communications** are inclusive and anti-racist. Language constantly evolves; to reduce harm and create inclusive communications that resonate with our audiences, LCV must invest in communications infrastructure that can support and adapt to this constant change. Similarly, for our paid media, we conduct a lot of message testing and polling to determine what is most effective. For the last few years, poll and ad messages that specifically highlight racial justice and equity in the context of environmental policy have tended to not perform as well in terms of engagement and influence as some of the other messages we test. Therefore balancing effectiveness of messages and their reflection of our commitment to racial justice and equity can prove challenging, but it is a challenge we continue to navigate.

Finally, as we work to build a more inclusive and diverse movement, the burden of prioritizing racial justice and equity in our work still too often falls to Black, Latinx, and other staff of color. A greater internal commitment to ongoing planning and training can help ensure that all staff embrace and can embed RJE in every aspect of their work.

In these and other ways, LCV will continue to transform our advocacy and electoral campaigns to better center racial justice and equity in our work internally and with our external partners.

CREATING AN ANTI-RACIST AND EQUITABLE FUNDRAISING MODEL

Money influences movements, and ours is no exception. Traditional philanthropy has historically centered the needs and desires of wealthy White people. By following this model, LCV's fundraising efforts, like those of many other non-profit organizations, have often lagged behind broader RJE progress within our organization. To both sustain our organization financially and build an anti-racist fundraising model requires us to build a larger, more inclusive movement with far more small-dollar donors and more donors at every level who agree with our commitment to racial justice and equity. To this end, our full fundraising team worked through 2021 to create anti-racist fundraising principles and craft guidelines for embedding them into how we approach our work. Below are some of the ways we moved forward with those principles in 2021:

SUCCESSES: HOW CENTERING RJE HELPS US WIN

Diversifying Funding Sources

Starting in 2021, LCV's Fundraising department began to take steps to significantly diversify our donor base as a means of supporting a movement that reflects the true diversity of pro-climate, pro-democracy individuals and communities across the nation who share our commitments to centering racial justice and equity in how we pursue our mission.

In an effort to be less reliant on any one large funder who may exert influence, we have been working to increase investment in unrestricted fundraising and elevate the power of large numbers of

small-dollar donors — vs. a small number of ultra-wealthy donors — through membership acquisition, monthly giving, and planned giving. For example, in 2021, we doubled the number of donors who left a legacy gift to LCV in their will, trust, or by beneficiary designation. We have also worked to racially diversify our major donor portfolios, and this is already resulting in the emergence of new major donors of color.

Investing in Staff Recruitment and Training

In 2021, we invested in the racial justice and equity competencies of our fundraising staff. A career coach worked with members of the fundraising team on many areas, including leadership development, trust building, and how to have crucial conversations about culture and inclusion. In addition, we established an Anti-Racist Fundraising Team Task Force, which is working to elevate anti-racist fundraising priorities within our organization and hold the Fundraising department accountable for achieving those goals.

LCV helped to establish the Conservation Voters Movement (CVM) Development Racial Justice and Equity Working Group. The Working Group is committed to creating broad consensus across the CVM for adopting anti-racist fundraising practices and creating and sustaining anti-racist fundraising principles to help support those practices, while also effectively raising funds to sustain our individual organizations and the CVM as a whole. In its first year, the group completed a draft plan for advancing justice and equity across the CVM through our fundraising practices. That plan includes recommendations for exploring community-centric principles for fundraising, upstander intervention trainings to help staff develop the skills to effectively interrupt instances of bias and harm we encounter in our work, and training to explore power-sharing.

Reframing the Case with Donors

As fundraising staff worked to grow our own racial justice and equity competencies, we realized that we must also do more to support our donors in their ability to understand how the success of the environmental movement is tied to issues of equity and racial justice. We began communicating more consistently with donors about the intersectional nature of climate change, threats to democracy, and systemic racism, and why these must be addressed in tandem.

Part of this work involved analyzing our existing marketing communications and making adjustments to center racial justice in email and mail communications, including highlighting the disproportionate harm that climate change and toxic pollution cause to Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other communities of color. Further, we began communicating in more holistic ways — emphasizing the need to support the broad range of our organization's work — and its collective impact — rather than highlighting discrete programs, which can contribute to inequitable investment in projects.

We will continue engaging with our donor base and inviting their participation in defining a new funding model for the movement. Our donors have shown interest in walking this path and learning with us. In some cases, the renewed emphasis on racial justice and equity inspired substantial increases in giving from those who share that commitment.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Our work to transform fundraising at LCV is not without challenges. For hundreds of years, philanthropy has been neither inclusive nor anti-racist. Changing a large, established profession is a

large task that cannot be accomplished by one organization. Yet we are committed to changing our own practices and becoming leaders across the profession in inclusive, anti-racist fundraising.

Furthermore, the nonprofit sector has few models for how to disrupt traditional philanthropy. To succeed, we must invest in continuous learning for our staff and across the broader movement. Another challenge is that even as we work to transform our fundraising model for equity, we must continue to fundraise within traditional structures to fuel our organization's mission. This can be mentally taxing and confusing for staff who must meet ambitious short-term and annual revenue goals in today's landscape even as we pursue better long-term models.

We believe we can build a massive fundraising base that reduces the power of any one donor and welcomes donors from communities of color and low-wealth communities to join the Conservation Voters Movement in our fight to build a cleaner, safer, more equitable planet. Key to our success will be retaining and educating existing donors while scaling the acquisition of new donors, with a special focus on diversifying our donor base. Our Anti-Racist Fundraising Overview describes how we are disrupting philanthropy and building an anti-racist fundraising program.

TRANSFORMING INTERNAL STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS AND CULTURE

To achieve our long-term racial justice and equity goals, LCV is making significant investments in the internal structures, systems and culture of our organization and the Conservation Voters Movement. As noted above, for the first time ever, one of the five goals delineated in our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan focuses on internal structures and systems:

GOAL: Develop internal structures and systems that support people, and a culture that centers our core organizational values.

The internal operations of an organization are the foundation on which all of its staff and programs rely. Without a well organized, well resourced, and well staffed operations team, an organization is at constant risk. And to successfully execute the strategies laid out in our strategic plan, we need internal structures and systems that support the people who implement them and an organizational culture that centers inclusivity, transparency, sustainability, and accountability.

The culture of an organization informs how we approach our work, how we work together, and how our allies, partners, vendors, and the rest of the outside world views us. Our intentional efforts to co-create a culture by supporting staff in understanding and implementing our core organizational values in our work and how we work together helps staff operationalize what it means to center equity, inclusion, and racial justice across the organization.

In the first year of the strategic plan, LCV worked to socialize our values across the organization. We also made investments in financial tools, technology infrastructure, employee well-being, and other systems to increase efficiency and equity across the organization and help our staff thrive. Here are a few highlights of our progress in 2021:

SUCCESES: HOW CENTERING RJE HELPS US WIN

Recruiting Diverse Team Members

LCV is committed to helping create and support a truly multiracial, multiethnic, geographically diverse movement to combat climate change and uphold our democracy. That includes ensuring that our staff reflect and represent that commitment. To help attract diverse candidates for employment, we continued to conduct targeted outreach within Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, and Pacific Islander communities using messaging that emphasizes LCV's commitment to racial justice and equity.

As a result of these efforts, LCV has reached a staff demographic of 54.8% White and 45.2% staff of color (Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander and other communities of color).

Internal Systems and Structures

LCV has experienced exponential growth over the past 10-12 years. As such, we have had to think critically about whether our existing systems are fit to purpose and where necessary, introduce entirely new systems, structures, and technologies to support staff in more efficiently and effectively navigating our Finance, Human Resources, and Legal policies and procedures.

Some of the work conducted in 2021 to improve our systems and structures include:

- Our Finance team conducted an assessment of our grant accounting process. With the help of a women-led, racially diverse consulting firm, we examined the LCV grant program through a racial justice and equity lens and reviewed all financial procedures and systems. The firm's recommendations helped us think through how to best change our departmental structure, add staffing capacity, and find ways to use technology to help the department support the accounting and budgeting needs of our organization, which has grown significantly in number of staff and revenues over the past decade.
- Our Human Resources team, with support from our Finance and Legal teams, made significant progress on creating and maintaining systems to support our organizational values of accountability and sustainability, including adopting a new Human Resources Information System that allows staff to more effectively complete multiple administrative tasks and access information related to payroll, benefits, etc.
- As part of meeting our strategic plan's internal goal, we are working both to ensure that these systems are efficient and that staff feel confident engaging with them. We are working to ensure that 95% of staff across the organization are effectively using the internal systems provided by our Human Resources, Administration, Finance, and Legal teams by 2024.

Core Organizational Values

While departments and individuals had their own equity goals in 2021, our guiding, meta-level organizational RJE goals were to:

- Create an organizational culture designed around and to support racial justice and equity.
- Sustain an organizational culture that lives up to our racial justice and equity values.
- Create and sustain an organizational culture designed to uphold our values internally and externally.

In 2021, LCV undertook an organization-wide process to develop and create consensus around core organizational values. Members of our staff-led RJE Working Group collaborated with our Communications department to identify six core values that would shape our organizational culture

and help us lean into the “how” of centering racial justice and equity in our work. We held sessions during our 2021 virtual all-staff retreat, multiple weekly all-staff meetings, and a town hall that led to the adoption of the following core organizational values: **Community, Learning, Accountability, Anti-Racism, Sustainability, and Innovation**. These values will be used as an effective lever for helping staff create a culture that supports our ability to effectively center racial justice and equity in our external work and in how we work together.

Once these core values were agreed upon, we worked at the organizational and departmental levels to begin socializing them and to develop and provide tools and resources to help staff and departments translate those values from the conceptual level to practice in our individual and team work.

Learning and Development

Learning is one of the core organizational values LCV leaned into in 2021. LCV has made substantial financial investments in group learning for staff and partners. This includes skills development, leadership, and RJE trainings provided at the organization-wide, departmental, and team levels. In 2021, we leaned into Bystander and Upstander Intervention Training, beginning at the organization-wide level with Collective Action for Safe Spaces. We then proceeded with departmental and team trainings, designed by Defend Yourself, to help fundraisers across the organization intervene appropriately when confronted with instances of bias and harassment, both internally on their teams and externally with donors, members, and other stakeholders.

We also worked to further institutionalize and normalize deepening our knowledge of and celebrating racial justice and equity by establishing and funding a new working group — the Fun, Learning, Education, and Growth Opportunities (**FLEGO**) League. FLEGO works with our Chief Officer for Racial Justice and Equity and our Learning and Talent Development Director to support organizational capacity for identifying and delivering learning content for events and programs designed to build community. This includes our monthly Cafecitos, which include optional learning opportunities for staff to engage with planning around Heritage Months and panel discussions with subject matter experts both internal and external to the organization.

We launched our Pilot Mentorship Program on March 30, 2021. As part of our Collective Bargaining Agreement, the organization, led by our Learning and Talent Development Director, developed and implemented a Mentorship Program that provides a formal mentoring structure to enable a culture of learning and staff development. The mentorship program aims to promote:

- A shared responsibility for community and relationship building across the organization.
- Leadership development and career advancement.
- Staff engagement, support, and development, particularly of junior staff and staff of color.
- Guidance in navigating our organizational structure and culture.

The Pilot Mentorship Program included a total of 42 participants, with 18 mentors and 24 mentees from across the organization. The makeup of participants included; 78% women, 22% men, 51% White staff, 49% staff of color, 40% management, 60% LCV Union, and 60% staff of color from the LCV Union.

The Pilot Mentorship Program was evaluated by participants based on the following metrics using a 1-5 rating scale:

	<i>The overall quality and usefulness of the mentorship program highly met my expectations</i>	<i>I feel more engaged and valued at LCV'</i>	<i>I have more awareness about LCV's organizational culture and I am experiencing a greater sense of community</i>	<i>I increased and gained new leadership skills and capabilities</i>	<i>I gained greater clarity and support in my career development and advancement</i>
Mentors	4	3.4	3.4	3.9	3.4
Mentees	4	3.6	3.7	3.7	4

Policies and Procedures

If values are the foundation for building an organizational culture that supports our ability to embed racial justice and equity in our work, policies and procedures act both as guides for how we bring that culture to life in our actions and behaviors and supports for helping us do so. Key policy and procedure work in 2021 designed to support our organizational change efforts around racial justice and equity included:

- Our Human Resources team, in collaboration with our Legal and Executive teams, created a more robust and inclusive *Policy and Procedures Regarding Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation, and Workplace Culture*. The purpose is to ensure that all staff have a shared baseline knowledge to help support a culture of inclusive behavior practice, including updated mechanisms of accountability to support the implementation and monitoring of these new policies and procedures.
- Human Resources, along with our Executive team, worked to significantly increase levels of trust and transparency across the organization to help shift organizational culture change. This included adding questions to our annual staff engagement survey to collect baseline measures of trust and transparency across the organization. We also assigned members of our Executive team as “owners” of tasks laid out in our cross-departmental RJE Working Group’s 2021-2022 Annual Work Plan, with the goal of ensuring that staff experience greater levels of trust and transparency as measured by 2022-2024 annual staff engagement surveys.

Community Building

Before COVID-19 shut down much of the world in 2020, much of LCV’s culture and community-building work relied on in-person events and meetings. To be sure, the reliance on in-person community building was not ideal for staff who had long worked remotely as part of the organization. It also meant that LCV would have to pivot and learn from remote staff how to cultivate a sense of closeness even as we were all necessarily physically distant. As a result, LCV leaned into thinking through more inclusive, innovative ways to build community internally and externally. We had to figure out how to co-create a sense of shared community for tenured LCV staff and those who joined amidst the pandemic.

As such, we leaned into our value of community (see above), in large part through programming from the FLEGO League, to create spaces for building community through learning and joy. FLEGO hosted book clubs, Heritage Month celebrations, and organization-wide quizzes and competitions.

FLEGO League also spearheaded the creation of an **Employee Assistance Fund (EAF)** to provide support to employees who are facing financial difficulties in a world that has become increasingly difficult to navigate without significant resources and assets — financial, social, or otherwise. As wealth inequity and inequality increase across our nation, we recognized that some people who work in our organization have limited access to support in times of financial crisis. This can lead to increased stress and even health problems. These challenges surfaced during an organization-wide community-building event, and staff who were present overwhelmingly pushed to establish the EAF.

The EAF collects voluntary contributions from staff who wish to donate funds along with up to a \$10,000 annual organizational match. Throughout 2021, we were able to set up the systems needed to make the EAF possible and socialize the EAF across the organization. We also collected enough funding to ensure that staff who apply for funds through the EAF are able to do so anonymously and access funds to address short-term and emergency needs in a timely manner.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

We made significant progress in centering racial justice and equity in our internal structures, systems and culture in 2021, but we recognize that far more must be done. Here are some of the challenges and lessons learned.

In 2021, we evaluated progress toward embedding racial justice and equity goals in all departmental planning. While many programs have included racial justice and equity for years, others have yet to center RJE in their planning. Our Fundraising department went through a rigorous and often difficult process to think through how to embed racial justice and equity in its work. While organization-wide trainings and workshops help ensure we are aligned across LCV around language, values, and strategic plan goals, it is truly at the departmental level that theory is put into action. While some departments leaned into RJE workshops and trainings that would help develop the specific competencies and skills to center racial justice and equity in their work, not all departments have leaned into that opportunity, and it is hoped that in 2022 more departments will feel ready to do so.

While LCV has many long-standing **vendor relationships**, these legacy vendors do not always possess the racial justice and equity competencies that our long-standing commitment to RJE and our new organizational values require. In 2021, we reexamined all vendor relationships through a racial justice and equity lens. In addition, we actively sought partnerships with people of color-led companies and those with specialized RJE expertise. In the future, we hope to advance progress both organization-wide and at the department level in how we select our vendors and maintain long-term relationships with them, based on effective delivery of products and services that align with our diversity, equity, inclusion, and racial justice commitments.

In order to support this work, LCV must continue to build internal capacity, including further building out our Human Resources, Finance, and Legal teams to ensure we have the staffing needed to support this work. Internal investments must match the growth of our external programs and campaigns to prevent staff and volunteer burnout, improve staff retention, and accomplish the goals outlined in the strategic plan.

In our growing commitment to transparency and collaboration, we have also experienced an increase in meetings that make it difficult for staff to complete their work without working extra hours. This has

led to many staff feeling overworked and burned out. We are working to find the right balance between ensuring staff are informed and included while reducing overall time spent in meetings. This includes developing new reporting and communication structures that can improve information flow, increase transparency, and free up staff time.

In addition, staff interviewed for this report acknowledged the importance of RJE commitments yet reported struggling at times to manage those tasks with already full workloads. Steps must be taken to **integrate RJE tasks more fully within departmental work plans** and to periodically assess individual workloads. Addressing capacity and workload challenges may require a more stepped-up approach to helping staff, both individually and at the department levels, articulate how to implement RJE within staff work plans. It may also require additional staff to help ensure we can effectively meet these challenges as we seek to fulfill our organizational mission.

In these and other ways, LCV will continue to transform our organization, our systems, and our staff development to center racial justice and equity. If we are to build a broad-based movement to save our democracy and our planet, we must ensure that staff are supported and adequately resourced to fully integrate racial justice and equity into individual and departmental priorities.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND SHARING POWER

With each passing day, climate-related disasters result in an increasing loss of lives, livelihoods, quality of health, and public safety. And communities of color and low-wealth communities bear the greatest burdens of the climate crisis: often located closer to polluting industries, in low-lying areas, and in heat islands, these communities are more likely to experience the impacts of air pollution, devastating floods, and extreme heat. We need climate solutions that center racial justice and equity, and we need them now.

Responding to this urgent moment requires bold action. At LCV, we recognize that no single institution can achieve the scale of change that is needed to overcome powerful opposition to achieving our mission. That is why we are building partnerships with climate justice, environmental justice, and people of color-led organizations, as well as labor unions, across the nation. We also intentionally leaned into partnerships at the state and local level across the CVM. But forging genuine, authentic partnerships that last beyond one election cycle requires us to think and act differently than we have in the past about what is required to be in these partnerships and how to nurture them. Here are some of the ways we made power building and partnerships a priority in 2021:

SUCCESSES: HOW CENTERING RJE HELPS US WIN

In 2021, to increase the leadership and capacity of the Conservation Voters Movement to advance equitable policy progress, we added a new **State Equity Policy Director** position. This position focuses on helping our state affiliates center racial and economic justice within their state policy campaigns. State by state, we are creating strong, long-term relationships with organizations on the front lines of the climate crisis and helping them build power for lasting change.

For example, we partnered with the Brown Grove community in Richmond, Virginia. This historically Black community was working to oppose a 1.1 million square foot Wegmans distribution center in their rural area. The Virginia League of Conservation Voters joined in coalition with the Brown Grove

community to oppose the distribution center. Although the campaign was unsuccessful, our willingness to join the effort deepened trust within the community and helped establish a partnership for future campaigns.

To build deeper partnerships across the country, we added a new **Director of State Partnerships** position to the State Capacity Building team. This critical role provides targeted leadership to our state affiliates in California, Maryland, and South Carolina and builds cross-partner collaboration for our Clean Energy for All partners. LCV also invested \$880,000 in capacity grants for Indigenous and other people of color-led organizations across six states: California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, and South Carolina.

We are also thinking differently about how we organize at the state and local levels. Our newly-created **State Implementation Program** is supporting state affiliates in developing long-term advocacy goals. Beyond short-term wins, we are asking, "How do we build authentic, long-term relationships with leaders and organizations in communities most affected by climate change and environmental racism?" We invested \$400,000 in state grants towards these goals in 2021.

Also in 2021, a cross-departmental team came together to begin laying the groundwork to develop a comprehensive, organization-wide partnership plan with shared definitions, values, and priorities, and to include a strategy of supporting state affiliates' partnerships with communities directly impacted by environmental inequality.

These are just some of the ways that LCV and our state affiliates are prioritizing partnerships and coalition building as a key part of how we build an anti-racist movement.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Any organizer will attest that working in coalition requires exemplary skills in communication, power sharing, and consensus building. And it is not always easy. As a national and historically White-led environmental organization, we have not always shown up as true partners. To overcome that legacy, we are working to build trust within low-wealth communities and communities of color.

Working in partnership often requires navigating genuine disagreements about policy decisions and tone of communications, among other issues. As we work to be more intentional about our language and our approach related to race, gender, income disparities, and other forms of inequity, we realize it can be difficult when working in coalitions to reach consensus on our positions and the ways we communicate those positions. In addition, we must do more to make our movement accessible to communities for whom English is not the primary language. Stronger investment is needed in multi-lingual staffing and translation strategies to reach our audiences in their primary languages.

A critical component of building truly authentic partnerships is sharing power. Too often, primarily White-led national organizations continue to have more influence over national policy direction. It is not enough to invite partners to "join" *our* campaigns; we must also support and join the fights that they deem important within their own communities. We cannot do this effectively without being intentional about strengthening many of our existing partnerships, and nurturing new ones, understanding that authentic relationships require honesty and thoughtful interactions.

As we expand the Conservation Voters Movement locally and nationally, LCV must continue to invest in strong partnerships. We are committed to identifying the right partners and investing in their capacity when needed and welcomed to achieve our shared goals.

THE PATH FORWARD

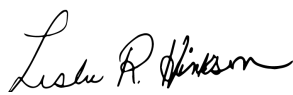
With 2020 in the rearview mirror, many skeptics believed that the “racial reckoning” inspired by the horrific murder of George Floyd would slowly peter out, and with that, the commitments made across virtually every sector to becoming a more racially just nation would quickly be forgotten. As this report hopefully highlights, in 2021 LCV continued apace to embed the principles of equity, inclusion, and racial justice in our climate and democracy work and in how we work with partners and one another. These were important steps forward in work that the organization committed to in 2015.

In 2022, we will continue to build on the progress we’ve made towards becoming an anti-racist organization by attending to the lessons learned and addressing the challenges identified above. Critically, we must pursue opportunities to advance to the next level of organizational change by further embedding racial justice and equity into our organization’s DNA. While we as an organization have become quite good at articulating **why** we center racial justice and equity in our work, we need to become better at aligning on **what** it means to center racial justice and equity at LCV. This will require all staff further developing critical thinking skills through shared learning and open, honest dialogue. In 2021, we worked to cultivate increased trust within LCV and with our partners. While trust and relationship building will continue in 2022 and beyond, we believe we have cultivated the right amount of trust and a sense of community to support such dialogue.

Additionally, we must develop new ways to further operationalize **how** we center racial justice and equity in our work. The 2022 CVM Equity and Racial Justice Organizational Self-Assessment tool will be ready to launch, along with a new self-assessment tool designed specifically for boards. The first time LCV and our state affiliates conducted the Organizational Self-Assessment was in 2019. This comprehensive tool requires significant staff resources across the CVM, and its outcomes provide individual roadmaps of sorts for organizations to follow as each one charts a path of continual progress towards becoming anti-racist, and as we collectively evolve as an anti-racist movement.

The results of the Self-Assessment support our ability to get to the **how** of centering racial justice and equity in our work and provide another lever of organizational change we will explore in 2022. This will require work at the organizational level, as well as a tailored approach to meeting department-level needs. We will remain intentional about our racial justice and equity commitments and work as an organization to define and live up to those commitments.

Thank you to everyone in the LCV family of organizations and beyond who has supported and is invested in this important work. Here’s to 2022!



Leslie R. Hinkson
Chief Officer for Racial Justice and Equity