

Guest Post from Executive Director Nick Rathod: Unveiling a New Strategy and Approach to the States

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Today, we are thrilled to announce a major expansion of progressives' work in the states.

Through a ramping up of [SiX Action](#), the advocacy arm of the State Innovation Exchange (SiX)—the organization I lead—we will be investing aggressively in key state legislative battles across the country, including critical races in 2017 and 2018, and then following that work up with ideas and trainings to move a progressive agenda forward and rebuild power in state capitols nationwide.

This new effort goes into effect immediately and brings together leaders from every facet of the progressive movement to organize around a common strategy, win back state legislatures, provide better tools to influence and promote progressive policymaking, and ultimately better position ourselves for redistricting, which will be occurring in just a few years.

For those who aren't familiar with our organization, SiX was launched in 2014 to advance progressive policy and build progressive power in state legislatures around the country. Until that point, progressives did not have much of a consistent presence or infrastructure that supported the work of state legislators around the country. Meanwhile, conservatives—through groups like ALEC and the State Policy Network (SPN), and funded by individuals like the Koch Brothers—have been building their influence for over 40 years in the states. This has had enormous consequences for the Democratic Party and the progressive movement, and as the dust settled after this election, progressives found themselves not only out of power in Washington, but also out of power in most of the country. Currently, conservatives enjoy historic control of governorships (33), state legislatures (69), and state attorneys general (29). They also have a firewall across the South; with the loss of the Kentucky House, Democrats do not control one legislative chamber in the entire region, and the number of statewide elected officials can be counted on one hand.

It's against this backdrop that for the past two years SiX has been working to build a deep and lasting presence in states throughout the nation. Since our launch, SiX has grown its infrastructure, operating in all 50 states. But as we have been building, it has become apparent that support is necessary throughout the entire life cycle of the state legislators we work with so that we can better protect and support them in their efforts to do the right thing for their constituents.

That is why we have decided to focus on a strategy that some have referred to as “run-govern-run.” It allows us to be actively supportive in every phase of an elected official's career—from the moment they decide to run for office, through the critical work of governing, and then again when they run for re-election. We have seen this approach pay dividends in states like Nevada and Oregon, and if fully resourced, we are convinced that it can help us win back state legislative chambers, rebuild our bench of progressive leaders, and influence policymaking at the state level.

We intend to work, just as we have over the last few years, as strong partners with both state and national groups. In a POLITICO article about SiX Action's expansion that ran last night, these efforts were unfortunately mischaracterized as somehow in competition with groups like the National Democratic Redistricting Committee. That could not be further from the truth. There will be no competition among our groups—that was never the intention, and we will do everything in our power to be strong partners with former Attorney General Holder and others working to rebuild progressive power in the states. In fact, one of our primary goals throughout the process has been to work in close alignment with all of the groups in this space to ensure we're being as strategic and thoughtful as possible, while also leveraging resources in the best way we can and not duplicating efforts.

We are not the only ones lining up behind this strategy. Powerful leaders across the progressive movement have agreed to serve on the SiX Action board in order to help us fully operationalize these efforts. American Bridge 21st Century Chairman David Brock and former Texas legislator Wendy Davis, who also founded Deeds Not Words, will serve as board co-chairs. We understand that Brock has at times been a controversial figure. However, he has also built some of the most effective institutions on the Left, and alongside his willingness to help us raise the millions of dollars needed to compete with conservative forces, SiX Action will funnel the opposition research, tracking, and rapid response resources of his existing organizations to serve as critical assets for progressives in the states.

Wendy Davis is an icon among legislators, with a history of standing up for what's right and fighting groups like ALEC in the states. We intend to draw upon her experience and brilliant mind to outpace the well-funded conservative infrastructure. Others on the board include former Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, state activists like Denise Cardinal and Tory Gavito, organizers like Karine Jean-Pierre and Rashad Robinson, vital connectors to state and national donors like Gara LaMarche and Scott Anderson, representatives from organized labor like Michelle Ringuette and Brian Weeks, and senior figures within the Sanders, Clinton, and Obama worlds including Richard Pelletier, Marlon Marshall, Buffy Wicks, and Sky Gallegos.

This is an incredibly powerful group of individuals who have teamed up because they understand what our work means for the future of the progressive movement. And it's an exciting and critical time in the resistance. SiX Action's expansion represents a crucial next step for progressives, and the comprehensive strategy you'll be seeing in the weeks and months ahead will allow us to go on the offense and take the fight to conservatives in the states.