

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2020



CAMPAIGN GOALS

We the People—PA is a proactive issue advocacy campaign that aims to change the narrative about politics in Pennsylvania from one that focuses on cutting taxes for the rich, spending for everyone else, and holding wages down to one that puts people first. The Keystone Research Center and the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center drew on our strengths in research, communications, advocacy, and organizing to plan, launch, and advance this campaign to ensure that everyone can thrive, no matter whether they are Black, brown, or white; native-born or immigrant; Asian or Latinx; poor or rich, or live in cities, suburbs or rural areas.

Our campaign began in 2018 with a narrative and agenda generated by 13 community conversations we held around the state, KRC and PBPC's policy proposals, our steering committee's ideas, and two statewide polls. We used community meetings, social media, and our partners' grassroots efforts to advance our ideas. We trained legislative candidates, and our agenda was endorsed by 122 of them. Our c4 affiliate, We The People—PA Action, supported some candidates. After 16 challengers that endorsed WTP—PA took their seats, 58 members of the General Assembly in January 2019 were supporters of the campaign.

In 2019, WTP undertook a major campaign in support of raising the minimum wage in partnership with 37 different groups. After 73 legislative candidate meetings or community events, and an extensive digital campaign, a modest bill to raise the minimum wage passed the Senate but, despite WTP's intensive efforts, never received a vote in the House.

PREPARING THE 2020 CAMPAIGN

In advance of our 2020 campaign, We The People—PA made a critical decision to broaden our leadership structure to ensure that grassroots advocacy organizations that represent or are led by people of color—and that played a major role in the campaign to raise the minimum wage—would have a much larger voice in leadership. The leadership team now includes CASA, For Our Future, Make The Road, One PA, PA/ Pittsburgh United, PA Stands UP, POWER, SEIU State Council, and the State Innovation Exchange (SiX). Their involvement is reflected in our narrative and agenda's greater focus on racial and gender equity and our new emphasis on [affordable housing](#).

We decided early on to focus our efforts on six main policy goals: securing a fair return to work; giving our kids a great education; providing health care to all; ensuring affordable housing for all; making sure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes; ensuring public safety for all; and guaranteeing that every voice is heard and every vote is counted.

We also decided to fully embrace the race / class narrative, which meant focusing much more explicitly on how the policies we support benefit people of all kinds and, also, on directly fighting back against efforts to divide us based on race, immigration status, and gender. We helped create and worked closely with, the We Go Together working group to ensure that this approach is shared by most progressive advocates in the state.

ADAPTING TO 2020

Our plan for 2020 to use the spring legislative session to advance our agenda was upended by the global pandemic of COVID-19. The We The People–PA campaign adjusted quickly and refocused our narrative around the economic inequality exposed by the pandemic and released [a new narrative and agenda](#) that [promotes fair and just relief and recovery](#).

The murder of George Floyd by the police created another shift in the campaign and led us to add a public safety plank to our short platform and weave it together with the emphasis on racial justice already in the narrative and agenda. These events, as well as our commitment to the race / class strategy, led us to develop a new policy paper on [structural racism and economic policy](#) and to revise our paper on [structural racism and public safety](#). With our support, one of the endorsers of the We The People–PA campaign, introduced a number of bills to reform police practices in the state and a few were subsequently enacted.

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

The pandemic also required us to develop a new approach to organizing. The We The People–PA campaign was an early adopter of virtual organizing, which enabled us to almost match the effort of 2018 despite COVID-19 restrictions. We held a total of 29 virtual community conversations and candidate forums in every part of the state, five “Just Recovery” press conferences early in the year with legislative leaders, and a virtual kick-off rally with over 600 participants in May.

CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS

We again devoted substantial resources to candidate training. We held two in-person candidate trainings before the pandemic began and seven virtual ones afterwards. We also made three presentations on COVID-19 and the state budget to which we invited candidates.

One hundred and forty-seven House and Senate candidates—25 more than in 2018—including the leaders of the Democratic Party in both the House and Senate, endorsed the We The People–PA agenda in the General Election. For the first time, a few Republican candidates endorsed the agenda before the Primary Election and two members of the Green Party embraced it before the General Election. The candidates who endorsed the campaign were diverse: 109 were white, 25 Black, 3 Latinx, and 2 Asian American; 69 were women; and 76 were men. They also represented diverse geographies from across the state.

Not only did candidates endorse the campaign but they used our policy ideas in their own campaign materials, in speeches, and during debates. Their understanding and their commitment to the agenda—and to the race / class narrative—was far deeper than in 2018. As Representative Mary Jo Daley put it at one of our endorsement events, “We The People–PA is a policy roadmap that would

improve the lives of Pennsylvanians and is of particular importance, as we continue to confront the COVID-19 pandemic and work on a recovery that focuses on our values.”

Our affiliated c4, We The People–PA Action, held 13 regional press conferences across the state and one statewide event at which candidates endorsed the campaign. Some of them received press coverage. We created Facebook Live and other videos of these events, each of which reached between 10,000 and 20,000 people. Many candidates also announced their endorsement of the WTP agenda on their campaign website or Facebook pages.

CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

We The People–PA used **earned and digital media** to get our message to people throughout the state.

Considering the We The People–PA branded material and KRC/PBPC’s policy and advocacy work on issues raised in the campaign, we have **written and posted 4 policy reports, 37 blog posts, 7 op-eds, 40 Facebook Live videos, and had over 11 radio/TV hits.**

We have reached a huge number of people by means of digital media. In the six months before the election, 1.4 million people received 3.1 million impressions

of our paid social media content, focused on our agenda as well as the state’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis it created. In the last six three weeks before the election we did even more. With our affiliated c4 organization, We The People–PA Action, we developed mail and digital pieces for seven House district and two Senate districts that lifted up key issues on our agenda (via our c3), and held legislators accountable for their votes while publicizing candidate endorsements of our agenda (both via our c4). Our digital ads about the campaign agenda were seen 1.8 million times by 467,712 people. Our digital ads holding legislators accountable for their votes were seen 1.9 million times by 491,008 people. And our endorsement ads were seen 471,294 times by 142,303 people. We sent two direct mail pieces to 187,694 voters in these same districts. We also prepared a c4 [video ad](#) that ran in 19 House and 4 Senate districts reaching 995,741 voters, about half through Google display ads and half through Facebook.

In keeping with our goal of creating a tool for advocacy, the We The People–PA agenda was used by other organizations and candidates in their work in 2019 and 2020. Our grassroots partners consistently used our materials in their virtual meetings and their phone banking.

IN THE SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTION, 1.4 MILLION PEOPLE RECEIVED 3.1 MILLION IMPRESSIONS OF OUR PAID SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT, FOCUSED ON OUR AGENDA AS WELL AS THE STATE’S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IT CREATED.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2019, **we conducted 30 in-person meetings with community partners across the state.** At those meetings we conducted presentations on the We The People–PA agenda to help train partners on how to advocate for their priorities. In 2020, we converted all our work to digital meetings and **we held 24 virtual community conversations.**

ELECTORAL RESULTS

In Pennsylvania, as in every other state in the country, progressives struggled in down-ballot races. So we did not see new House or Senate members who supported We The People–PA elected to office. Yet all but one of more vulnerable freshman endorsers of We The People–PA were re-elected. And the appeal of our campaign clearly grew. The number of supporters of the campaign in the General Assembly that takes office in January 2021 will be 73, 15 more than in January 2019. Eleven of the twelve Democratic leaders in the House and the Senate have now endorsed the campaign, four more than in 2019. Among them is the new, dynamic House Democratic leader **Representative Joanna McClinton.**

While these concrete electoral successes are enormously important, our efforts, together with events and movements in the larger political world, helped challenge the corporate-sponsored narrative that has been dominant in Pennsylvania for many years. The “cut taxes for the rich” agenda was no longer the only one heard by voters and, even more importantly, Republican candidates for the House and Senate all over the state began embracing parts of our narrative. This is a critical indicator that our message is resonating with voters.

WHAT COMES NEXT

The We The People–PA campaign has helped create a new energy in Harrisburg. Both new and established legislators are moving forward with initiatives that reflect the principles of our agenda. PBPC and KRC are drawing on our past research as well as new projects to work closely with those legislators in framing or revising proposals on our agenda. Since the election, House and Senate leaders have reached out to us, seeking ways to work more closely to bring our agenda to the people and to move it forward in Harrisburg.



***SAY NO TO DRASTIC
BUDGET CUTS***

If a budget agreement is not reached by 11/30, the state will not be able to carry out critical tasks or pay state workers. Education and human services will suffer.

We The People—PA is working closely with, and raising funds for, grassroots advocates from new and established organizations. We are one of ten state campaigns working together to launch a major organization to provide new funding for issue advocacy in the states. And that will give us the resources to do more community conversations, town halls, and house parties; to keep building our base; to develop new policy proposals; and to advocate and mobilize in support of legislation in the General Assembly.

Moving those proposals forward will make our new narrative clear, and thus the stakes of Pennsylvania’s political choices. This work is critical to our continuing effort to create a state government that responds in a way it has not in the last twenty years—to we the people of Pennsylvania.

