

Flash!

A NEWSLETTER FROM **MAPLight.org**

ISSUE 05 / SUMMER 2008

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OUR ORGANIZATION



WELCOME EMILY!

MAPLight.org welcomes Emily Calhoun, our new Research Director.

Emily has extensive research and project management experience that draws from academia (economics research), media (television news coverage and documentary films), and business (a foreign language translation service start-up). Her broad experience is a major asset as MAPLight.org expands to cover more legislatures and reach more newsdesks.

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- Pamela Heisey, Communications Director
- Susannah Nadler, Research Coordinator
- Andrew Page, Associate Director

RESEARCH INTERNS

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Sarah Ames | Maya Perelman |
| Anna Costello-Dougherty | Danny Rogers |
| Lynn Fang | Joel Schlachet |
| Danielle Fitts | Drennen Shelton |
| Joey Isenstadt | Milan Sundaresan |
| Tim Kahn | Peter Volberding |
| Navid Khajenajafi | Eusebius Wong |
| Spencer MacColl | Michael Yu |
| | Angela Xu |

You're Invited!

Save the Date! Come to our House Party in Menlo Park, CA on Sunday October 5th. Join us for a demonstration of our new tools for money and politics transparency and a discussion of our plans for the future.

For details contact Andrew Page at andrew@maplight.org or (510) 868-0894.

From the Executive Director

At the end of June, MAPLight.org's data on the 94 Democrats who changed their position on telecom immunity for wiretapping became a key part of national coverage of this issue. We showed that Representatives who changed their position received much more, on average, than those who maintained that the telecom giants should have to defend their actions in court. Reporters and bloggers used our information to show that there was more at issue than balancing civil liberties and national security. Our fast response on this issue ensured that Representatives had to face the music about their motives for changing their positions, while the issue was still in the news.

Our MAPLight.org team changed this summer as Emily Calhoun joined us as research director, and former research director Sean Tanner moved on to pursue a Masters in Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. Those of you who have had the pleasure to meet or work with Sean during the last three years will understand that we are sorry to see him go, and we wish him all the best in his career ahead.

WARRANTLESS WIRETAPPING, MONEY AND POLITICS

On March 14, 2008 213 Democrats voted for an amendment that rejected language granting retroactive immunity for telecom companies that participated in the government's warrantless wiretapping program. On June 20th, 94 of those Democrats reversed their position and voted for a bill that includes retroactive immunity.



"It's okay honey, Congress says they're heroes."

Illustration by Hugh D'Andrade

Four days later, MAPLight.org issued a report showing that the 94 House Democrats who changed their position received, on average, \$8,359 in campaign contributions from AT&T, Verizon and Sprint PACs. Our findings ignited a firestorm of criticism of Congress' big money ties. Our data was cited in more than a dozen newspapers, on public television and radio, more than 100 blogs, and over 700 radio and television stations that broadcast Democracy Now.

Here's a sampling of the media coverage: public radio stations in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Washington, DC; 1110 Newstalk in North Carolina; International Free Speech TV; Democracy Now!; CBS News website; The Inquirer (UK); Wired News; Media General News Service - DC Bureau; Daily Kos; The Hill's Blog Briefing Room; Huffington Post; MichaelMoore.com; Washington Independent; Colorado Independent; the Kansas City Star; Hartford Courant; Denver Post; Moderate Voice; Time.com; Village Voice; and Politico.

W-MU89.1

POLITICO

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National News in Context

MAPLIGHT.ORG RECEIVES KNIGHT-BATTEN JOURNALISM AWARD



We are honored to receive an Honorable Mention in the 2008 Knight-Batten Awards for Innovations in Journalism. The award judges had this to say about MAPLight.org:

"Every taxpayer should take a hard look at this site. Never before have citizens been able to so easily track the influences on their elected officials."

AN INTERVIEW WITH MELISSA DYRDAHL MAPLight.org Supporter

Melissa Dyrdaahl is a former executive of a large software company in Silicon Valley. Her personal opinions about public policy are her own and do not reflect the opinions of her former employer. Melissa is currently the CEO and Co-founder of Bring Light, Inc., a website for social change that connects donors and charities for more informed and effective online fundraising.

How did your work with your previous employer bring you in direct contact with the world of DC politics?

One part of my team led a cross-functional strategy to combat software piracy--this included marketing efforts, technological innovation, as well as public policy work. I was often the 'company executive' (one needed a title to secure a meeting with higher ranking government officials) who traveled to Washington, DC to meet with Senators and members of Congress. This role provided me with a unique window into world of DC politics.

Can you give me an example of the challenges you faced while in DC?

I once met with a very influential Congressman who was the Chair of a Committee that had a lot influence on intellectual property policy issues. We talked, I explained my company's position, I told him I'd appreciate his support, and we determined that he was, in fact, aligned with my company on the policy at issue. Then, a week later, I was called by someone in his office who asked me to make a financial contribution to that said Congressman's campaign (I live in another state than the one this Congressman represented). Since my company didn't have a PAC, the Congressman obviously assumed that I would personally make a contribution to his campaign.

Did you notice any operational differences between Silicon Valley and Washington, DC?

Silicon Valley, for the most part, is egalitarian. We place value on innovation,

staying ahead of the competition, measuring results — there is a sense of urgency to everything we do. It requires focused and efficient teams to deliver results.

In DC, a Congressperson's importance can be judged by the location of his or her office. Success is measured by influence, connections, and ability to work the system. There are also two layers at work in DC, the elected official or "temporary worker" and the people who are there making sure the government infrastructure operates 365 days a year, even when the elected officials pack up and leave at the end of their term. And, just as with a corporation, the larger an organization gets, the greater its complexity, and harder it is to put process around it. I noticed there's a fossilization that occurs with the layers of bureaucracy in DC that creates inertia. It's easy to get tangled in a web of bureaucracy.

If you could make one change to our political system what would it be?

The electoral college for presidential elections is an antiquated system and no longer meets the needs of the voters. Now — through television, the web, and jet travel — candidates have the ability to reach a vast number of voters during their campaigns and don't need to rely on electors who supposedly will have greater wisdom than voters. Each candidate should be elected based on the number of individual votes they receive, and every voter should feel that their vote counts when they cast it.

What prompted you to support MAPLight.org?

Shortly after a meeting in Washington DC I went to a MAPLight.org house party and I thought, this is really great, a logical, easily accessible way to make the facts available. I was delighted to see something that gives the common person a window into the inner-workings of our government. I thought, this organization could quite possibly catalyze much-needed change in our government.

FUNDRAISING CORNER: Host a MAPLight.org House Party!

Our little organization has been taking big strides in the world of online government transparency. Our work could excite a wide audience who might never know about us if they didn't hear about MAPLight.org through their friends and associates.

MAPLIGHT.ORG IS COMING TO LA!



Coming in 2009: a MAPLight.org site tracking money and votes for the Los Angeles mayor and city council. This project will set a new standard for government transparency for cities and towns. We are deeply grateful to the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation for the financial support that has made this groundbreaking project possible.

MAPLIGHT.ORG ON THE ROAD: NETROOTS NATION



MAPLight.org staff Sean Tanner and Emily Calhoun at the Netroots Nation bloggers conference in July in Austin, Texas. Thousands of bloggers learned about MAPLight.org's powerful research tools and website widgets.

MAPLIGHT.ORG LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE FEATURES

MAPLight.org rolls out a new Website. The new design features Hot Topics, Current Bills in Congress, and a Comments Section to encourage interaction with visitors. Our site enhancements also include our newest transparency tool, the Committees Tool, that reveals the river of money that flows through all bills in Congress and a "Take Action" page, in the Participate section of our site. Our current action is urging the Senate to pass S. 223 and start filing their campaign contributions electronically.

If you haven't already done so, please take a moment to renew your support of MAPLight.org today by filling out the enclosed envelope, or going to: www.maplight.org/donate

By hosting a house party you can expand the circle of people who know of MAPLight.org and our work.

To learn more about hosting a house party please contact Andrew Page at andrew@maplight.org or (510) 868-0894.

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1474 University Ave, Suite 105
Berkeley, CA 94702
EMAIL info@maplight.org TEL (510) 868-0894
WEB www.maplight.org

MAPLight.org
MONEY AND POLITICS: ILLUMINATING THE CONNECTION