Flash!

**Voter’s Edge expansion begins with new candidate pages, more states**

In 2012, MapLight’s Voter’s Edge site proved itself a popular and powerful source for pre-election research on ballot measures. To build on that success, and further combat the influence of large campaign donors on our elections, MapLight has begun an ambitious project to expand Voter’s Edge into a true one-stop, nonpartisan resource for voters in all 50 states.

We kicked off our expansion project this past fall by adding sites for four new states with 2013 elections: Colorado, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington. Our tech team revamped Voter’s Edge with a sleek new redesign allowing each visitor to input her address and instantly access the guide to her ballot.

We also launched innovative new pages profiling state and federal candidates to stand alongside our existing ballot measure pages. Our Voter’s Edge candidate pages feature everything you need to know to decide your votes on candidates: videos of their speeches, their funding sources, and biographical information including political and professional experience and education.

In the three weeks preceding the 2013 ballot, Voter’s Edge informed more than 30,000 unique site visitors about the influencers vying to sway their votes. In addition, more than 150 outlets cited Voter’s Edge data in election news stories, including CBS.

**Wall Street writes its own laws; MapLight follows the money**

Last year, MapLight’s research was featured in a New York Times exposé on the money driving a slew of financial deregulation bills designed to roll back protections instituted by the Dodd-Frank Act. As the Swaps Regulatory Improvement Act—notorious for being written almost entirely by Wall Street lobbyists, with 70 of its 85 lines coming from Citigroup’s recommendations—advanced from this pack, MapLight followed the money behind it.

We found that co-sponsors of the bill received, on average, 17 times more money from Citigroup than other members of the House. Furthermore, Democrats voting in favor of the Swaps Regulatory Improvement Act received, on average, 2.5 times more money from banks, securities companies, and other supporting interests—and eight times more money from Citigroup alone—than Democrats voting against the bill.

Our research was picked up by Forbes, U.S. News & World Report, Mother Jones, the Huffington Post, the Chicago Tribune, and more and was highlighted by an anti-corruption campaign. In total, our findings on the river of influence moving this bill reached 3.5 million people.

Credit: TonyTheTiger/Wikimedia Common
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Voter’s Edge Expansion

News, CNN.com International, Bloomberg Businessweek, the Huffington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Chicago Tribune, the Baltimore Sun, and more. Through the media, our nonpartisan voter information reached over 1.6 million people.

At MapLight, we couldn’t be more thrilled about these early results – or more committed to our goal of making Voter’s Edge a resource for every citizen, in every state, in time for this year’s key congressional contests. Special thanks to the Kaphan Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the Rita Allen Foundation for making this work possible.

Voter’s Edge now has a location-based navigation system that allows users to enter their city of residence and then quickly find the information relevant to their city, county, and state ballots. To see more of the site’s redesign, visit http://votersedge.org.

SPOTLIGHT: New MapLight team members

Jakada Imani, Advisory Board Member, is the Director of the Center for Spiritual and Social Transformation at the Pacific School of Religion. Previously, he served as Executive Director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, where he led some of the Center’s most high-profile campaigns, including four successful statewide ballot measure campaigns, and launched their effort to reduce the U.S. incarceration rate by 50% in ten years. Jakada is the Board Chair of Oakland Rising Action and serves on the board of the OneLife Institute.

Laura Curlin, Researcher, builds MapLight’s bill research data set. Laura received a B.A. from Brown University with concentrations in Political Science and Middle East Studies.

Philip Minnitte, Administrative Manager, provides logistical and operational support to the President and staff of MapLight. Philip holds a B.A. degree in Psychology from Boston University.

Justin Riddiough, Web Developer, supports MapLight’s web operations. He has over fifteen years of experience in working directly with technology and end users and seven years focused on web development.

Dorothee Royal-Hedinger, Communications Associate, assists with editorial content and strategic communications. She received a B.A. with Honors in Political Science from the University of Chicago.

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U.S. Congress contributions data provided by the Center for Responsive Politics (OpenSecrets.org) and the Federal Election Commission (FEC.gov) and legislative data provided by GovTrack.us. California contributions data provided by the National Institute on Money in State Politics (FollowTheMoney.org) and the California Secretary of State (Sos.ca.gov). Wisconsin contributions data provided by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign (WisDC.org).
MapLight helps CREW shine light on industry influence

MapLight’s analysis of federal campaign contributions proved integral to two recent reports from Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington that shed new light on patterns of influence in Congress.

“Natural Cash: How the Fracking Industry Fuels Congress” tracks the rising influence of the hydraulic fracturing industry. The report reveals that between the 2004 and 2012 election cycles, the fracking industry increased its contributions to Congress by 180%, outpacing the entire oil and gas industry. Industry contributions to congressional candidates from non-fracking areas rose by 131%—while contributions to candidates from districts and states home to fracking activity rose by 231%.

“Funds for Favors II: Exposing Donors’ Influence on Committee Leaders” analyzes the current of legalized bribery flowing through congressional committees. Key findings include that between 2010 and 2012, current House committee leaders saw a 10% increase in their total campaign contributions but a 24% increase in money from the industries they oversee. In addition, after Republicans took control of the House in 2010, industry contributions to Democrats demoted from chairmen to ranking members of associated committees dropped—while the money to Republicans who ascended from ranking members to chairmen in these committees rose.

CREW’s in-depth reports have been covered by the Wall Street Journal’s MarketWatch, Business Wire, Yahoo! Finance, the Huffington Post, and more.

To read them yourself, visit http://maplt.org/IfmtUA and http://maplt.org/1cysZAS.

MapLight hosts AMA on McCutcheon v. FEC

MapLight assembled a cohort of money and politics experts for a Reddit AMA (“Ask Me Anything”) to discuss looming threats to what’s left of anti-corruption campaign finance regulations, including the McCutcheon v. FEC Supreme Court case that could increase the power and influence of the richest campaign donors exponentially. Great thanks to our participants: Trevor Potter, President of the Campaign Legal Center and former FEC Chairman; Liz Kennedy, counsel at Demos; David Donnelly, Executive Director at Public Campaign Action Fund; Paul Ryan, senior counsel at Campaign Legal Center; Melanie Sloan, Executive Director at Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington; Jonathan Soros, Senior Fellow at the Roosevelt Institute; Fred Wertheimer, President of Democracy 21; and Zephyr Teachout, professor of law at Fordham University.

To check out the archived discussion, visit http://maplt.org/GYpQiQ.
What is the cost of a seat in California?

It costs a lot of money to win a seat in the California State Legislature, but how much exactly? MapLight conducted an analysis of money raised by members of the California State Legislature who won election in 2012. On average, during the 2012 election cycle:

- California State Assemblymembers each raised $708,371—an average of **$970 every day**.
- California State Senators each raised $1,041,537—an average of **$1,427 every day**.

Want to dig deeper into the data? View our customizable, interactive graph (pictured below) that breaks down the money by party, chamber, and individual legislator at http://maplt.org/1e8LVdm.