

Executive Summary

Target San Diego analyzes efforts by the conservative movement to drive its infrastructure down into America's major metropolitan areas through a case study of a key battleground city. Having created an extensive, well-funded network of integrated media capacities, think tanks, funding networks and political operations over the past three decades, the right is now seeking to break the hold of mainstream and progressive governing coalitions in traditionally "blue" northern urban areas; and to contest the rise of a new wave of progressive organizing of America's fast growing metropolitan areas in the south and west.

The purpose of this strategic initiative is to split the electoral and demographic base of mainstream-progressive coalitions and nip in the bud efforts to reinvigorate progressive politics in the metro areas and beyond. This would enable the right to implement its agenda of radically cutting back government revenue and services, permanently weakening organized labor, resisting community empowerment and responsible development initiatives, and feeding conservative domestic policy ideas and strategies into the national debate about the future of America's metropolitan regions.

To accomplish this strategic goal, the right is using its extensive network of national and state level think tanks and policy organizations as a springboard for generating ideas, campaigns and leaders in the battle for political control of the metro areas. New think tanks, such as the Performance Institute in San Diego, are being set up to pursue these objectives, and existing policy and action organizations such as the Manhattan Institute and the Reason Foundation are being radically scaled up and diversified. Significant resources are being poured into these efforts by the major funding organizations of the right, such as the Koch, Bradley, Scaife and Hume foundations.

The report contains sections covering the national, state and metro levels. Among the key findings are:

- National level organizations such as the Americans for Tax Reform, FreedomWorks and the American Legislative Exchange Council are deepening their ties with state legislators and policy organizations; while the State Policy Network strengthens existing state think tanks by developing their organizational structures, development operations and grassroots mobilization efforts.
- State level organizations such as the Project for California's Future, Pacific Research Institute, Claremont Institute and Reason Foundation are linking the national conservative infrastructure with the right's urban think tanks, corporate interests and party political structures.
- By developing a substantial independent media and research capacity, urban think tanks such as the Performance Institute in San Diego have developed an ability to drive policy debates, shape political campaigns and influence government decision making.

After presenting the case for the seriousness of the right's challenge, *Target San Diego* recommends a concerted national effort by progressives to mount an adequate and strategically appropriate response including:

- Making long term investments to create and scale up the progressive metropolitan infrastructure of *multi-issue* think tanks and policy action centers capable of developing ideas, rapid media responsiveness, training new leadership, as well as the ability to flexibly

respond to short term opportunities and challenges. This regional capacity is a vital piece of any successful national progressive infrastructure and is needed to:

- Develop timely, high quality, accessible and media-usable research geared to a wide range of issues in specific metropolitan areas.
- Produce innovative governing ideas and issue support for labor and community-based organizations and political leaders.
- Develop a thorough and ongoing understanding of the conservative infrastructure and its current activities in each of their metro areas.
- Breaking down single issue “stovepiping” by developing greater idea alignment around fundamental visions of the role of government and progressive economic strategies while motivating message coherence through real-time, permanent networking and building capacity to operate at the nexus of policy and political strategy.
- Building capacity for a radically scaled up campaign to promote *sustainable* and politically potent forms of civic engagement rooted in diverse constituencies.