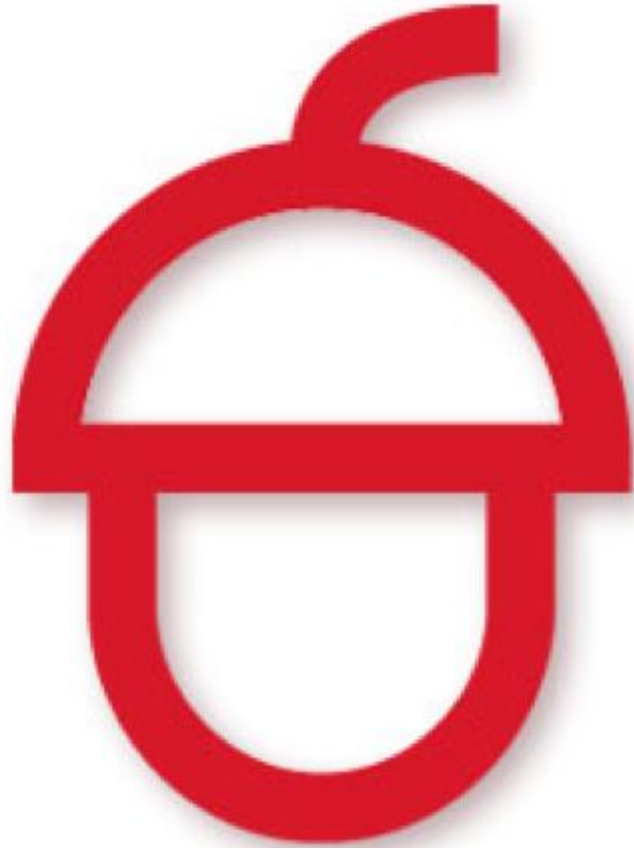




The Roots of ACORN

Founded by a Massachusetts community organizer named Wade Rathke in 1970, he started in the state of Arkansas, because Boston did not have enough welfare dependents, and Arkansas did. ACORN is now based in New Orleans, and works through hundreds of front organizations to do its work and collect tens of millions of dollars from dues and government stipends yearly. Rathke started as a community organizer applying the techniques of avowed radical Saul Alinsky in a group called National Welfare Rights Organization, and built ACORN to large size, until he was forced out this year due to financial scandals.



The John Birch Society began to expose this group as early as 1979, in its publication *The Review of the News*. In a cynically titled article, "Sam Brown, Carter Clown," author John Rees explained how ACORN was able to shake loose millions of dollars from Carter-administration agency boss Samuel Brown, who ran a government boondoggle called ACTION, which doled out hundreds of millions of taxpayer money to VISTA, (Volunteers in Service to America), the Peace Corps, and groups like ACORN. Brown displayed his Marxist leanings by wearing a button, "Robin Hood Was Right!"

ACORN had figured out early on how the Washington money game was played. It got ACTION to pay one of its subsidiaries called the Midwest Academy to train VISTA volunteers, who then worked for ACORN projects on the taxpayers' tab. It also got direct grants to pay for salaries of its own staff. Author Rees calls the leftist Saul Alinsky's organization "positively rightwing by comparison," which is saying quite a bit. In an article by David Walls, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Sonoma State University, he stated,

Around 1970 several national networks began to coalesce and develop systematic and distinctive approaches to community organizing. These include [Alinsky's] Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), ACORN, Citizen Action, National People's Action, PICO, DART, and the Gamaliel Foundation. Each was indebted, in greater or lesser degree, to Alinsky and his early organizing programs in Chicago through IAF.



Written by [Denise Behreandt](#) on October 29, 2008

Over the years, ACORN grew into an organization with fairly well-defined goals. It runs a large voter-registration effort, which claims to have registered 1.3 million new voters during this election cycle. It agitates for so-called "living wages" and union organizing, with Wal-Mart as a frequent target. It pushes for banks to lend to low-income borrowers on a large scale, which almost certainly was instrumental in the recent financial crisis. It also does a smorgasbord of other big-government advocacy, such as pushing for government intervention in healthcare, housing, utility regulation, and the like.

Their recent aggressive voter-registration practices have crossed the line of legality, and landed them in hot water in over a dozen states, for registering voters such as Mickey Mouse, or entire professional sports teams who don't exist. Barack Obama has utilized ACORN and its affiliates to register 150,000 new voters in Chicago for his 1994 state senate election, which likely provided the margin of victory. During this election, his campaign paid an ACORN subsidiary \$800,000 for get-out-the-vote services.

There is some controversy about Barack Obama's connection to ACORN. In 1992, Barack Obama worked for "Project Vote" for about seven months, another radical organizing group often linked to ACORN. According to Lynn Sweet, a columnist at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Project Vote and ACORN have wrapped up a voter-registration drive targeting battleground states, registering sufficient voters to propel Obama into the White House.

ACORN is an organization that claims to fight for the "little guy," but its policies often harm the very people they claim to want to help. While fighting for so-called "living wages" and voter rights, they have often not paid their own workers a living wage, and steadfastly refused to allow their own employees to organize a union. Their own organization would likely suffer the attacks they dole out to others, if it was not able to use government to dampen any repercussions. ACORN is always on the side of bigger government, without seeing the damage it routinely does to the poor, with its harsh taxation and its policies that enrich the connected at the expense of the common man.

ACORN's own leadership has profited handsomely from the poverty racket. An August 2008 lawsuit filed by two board members accuses ACORN founder and former chief organizer Wade Rathke of either concealing or failing to properly report that his brother Dale embezzled around \$948,000 from the organization. Now, researchers have uncovered millions of dollars in unpaid federal income and local property taxes, with 230 tax liens filed against many of its affiliates around the country. Almost none of the recent exposure of ACORN has come through the establishment media but through alternative news sources.

A research study by Capital Research Center concludes that ACORN "aims to give America change that socialist can believe in by any means necessary." Given its importance to the current political scene, this article is the first installment in a series that will look more closely at ACORN, its programs, its funding, its connections, and its impact on the impending elections.

This article is the first installment in a four-part series on ACORN. The other articles are:

[ACORN: War on the Poor](#)

[ACORN: Disenfranchising Voters](#)

[ACORN: No Business Like Poverty Business](#)



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