

## PICO's 2012 *Land of Opportunity* Voter Engagement Program

### Overview

During 2012 PICO National Network organized a large-scale voter engagement program designed to bring religious voters to the polls around an agenda of racial and economic justice and to increase voting rates among infrequent voters. Our approach was to run an electoral program that was **volunteer-led, data-driven, values-based** in its messaging and orientation, and **integrated into a year-round community organizing** strategy. Although PICO's 60 local federations and state networks interact with tens of thousands of people each year, and have experience working on many local and state ballot measures, 2012 was the first election cycle in which PICO supported a network-wide voter outreach effort. This document summarizes the key outcomes and highlights from our experience

### Direct voter contact from trusted neighbors and friends

The research on civic engagement is clear that direct contact at the door and over the phone increases the likelihood that people will vote, and that the most effective contact comes from well-trained people who are neighbors and friends. All together PICO organizations tracked **654,578 face-to-face and on the phone contacts with voters**. Much of this contact occurred during the days leading up to the election when it makes the most difference. We estimate that in the four-day period prior to November 6, PICO organizations made 2.4 million dials and had more than 200,000 GOTV contacts with voters.

PICO organizations in a number of states ran large-scale phone programs using predictive dialer systems. The phone program made it possible for volunteer phone bankers to engage in conversations with large numbers of voters, which was especially useful in the states that ran ballot fights and used modeling to target voters. For example, PICO United Florida - which relied most heavily on phone banking and put a lot of time into training leaders and staff to use the predictive dialing system - averaged 56 connected phone conversations per volunteer during each shift. During the course of the year PICO organizations made 3.5 million phone calls to voters. PICO organizations also knocked on more than 200,000 doors and had more than 60,000 conversations at the door, primarily in neighborhoods with very low voting rates.



## Nurturing a culture of civic engagement

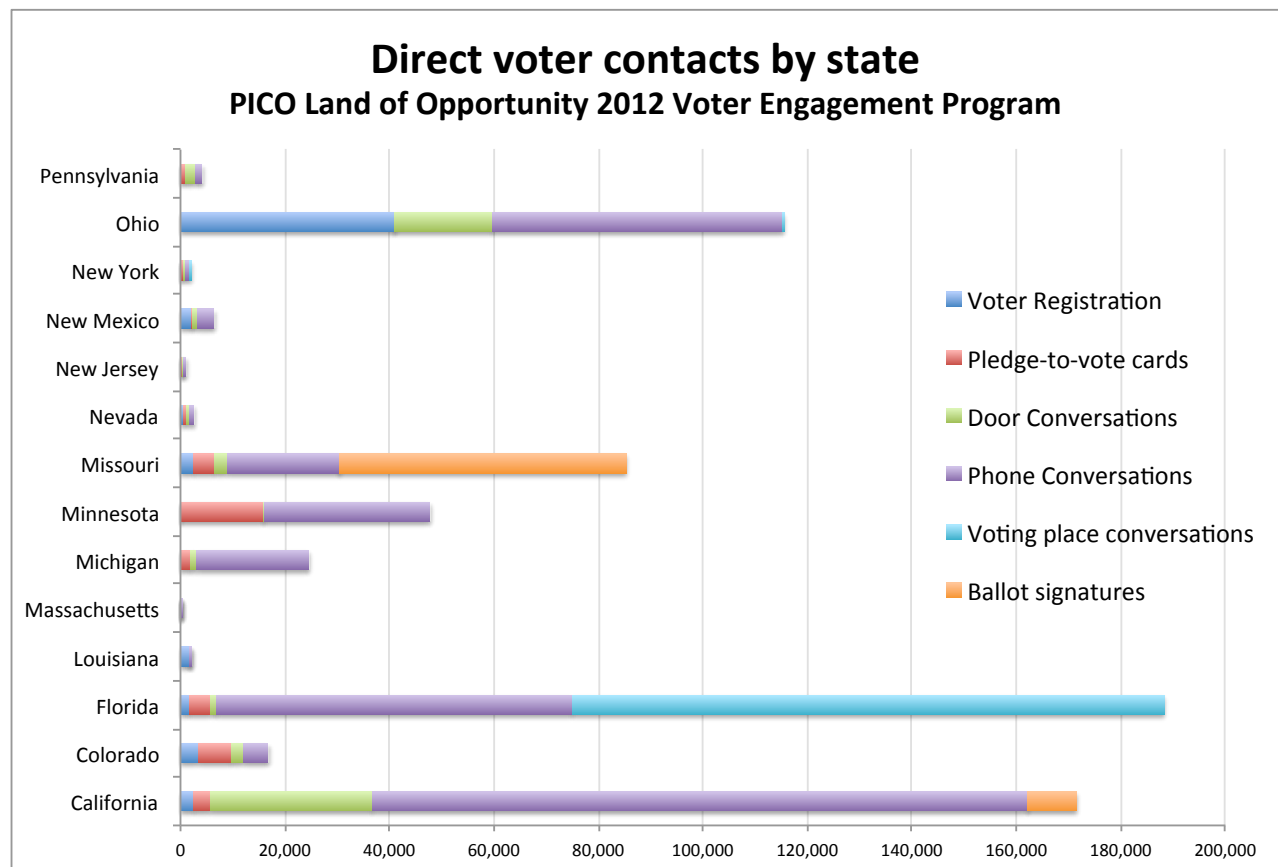
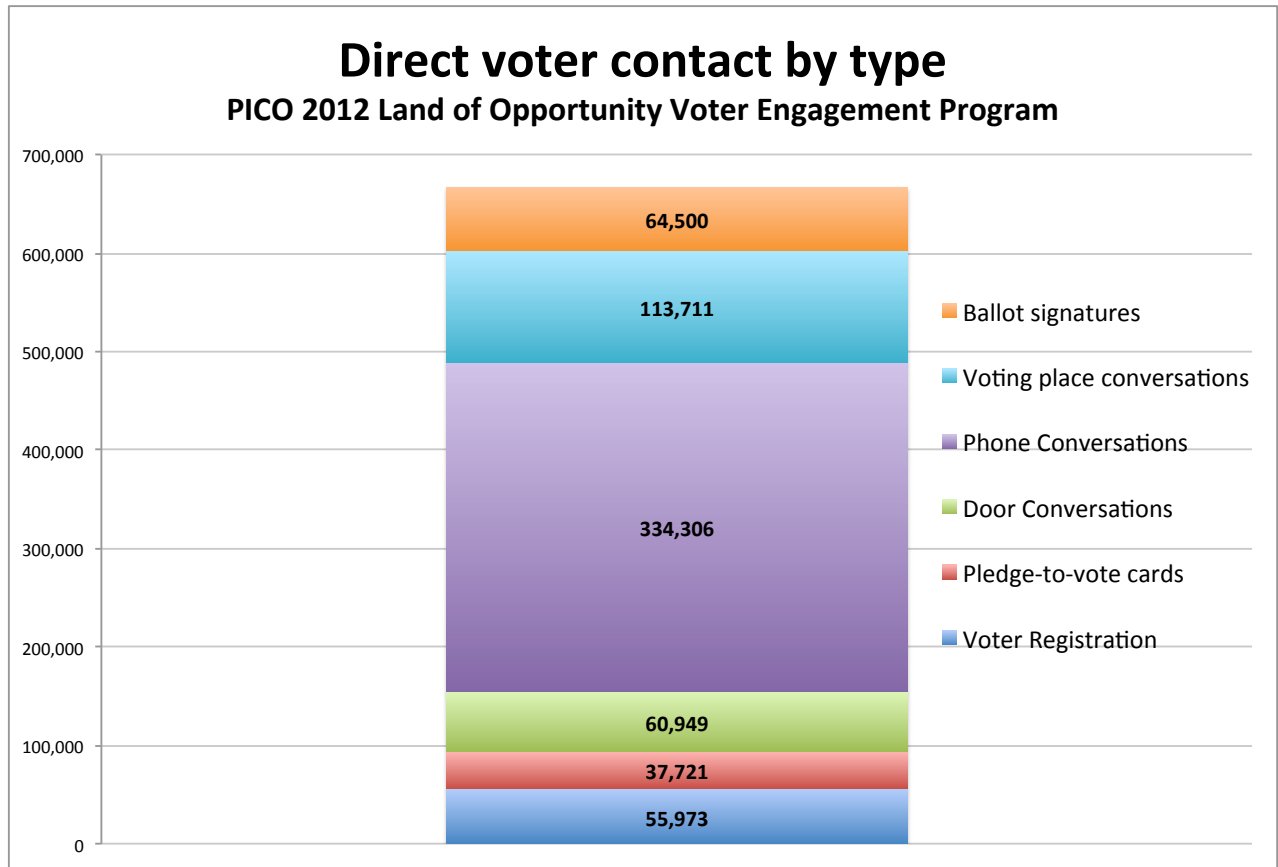
Like big banks, candidates and political parties have written off many of the communities in which PICO organizes. When candidates do invest resources in our neighborhoods, it is often through a combination of hiring local residents at low wages and parachuting in outside staff and volunteers. In many cases, the culture of autonomous political organizing, particularly in African-American and Latino urban communities, has withered.

PICO believes that rebuilding an effective social justice movement in the United States hinges on nurturing a culture within working-class White, African-American, Latino and Asian communities in which people have the skills, motivations and organizational networks to stand up and fight for their interests. We designed our 2012 Voter Engagement program to recruit and train enough community leaders to have volunteers contact large numbers of their neighbors, congregation-members and friends.

During 2012 PICO organizations reported holding 280 training events during which they **trained 3,150 community leaders in civic engagement**, including in the skills necessary to effectively phone bank, door knock, collect ballot signatures and register people to vote. PICO organizations (outside of Ohio, which was the one state in our network that ran a large-scale paid program) report having filled **12,816 phone banking and door knocking shifts**. Of these **71 percent (9,145 total) were filled by volunteers**. Each person who we trained worked on average three shifts (generally a 3-4 hour period of time).

Young people, in particular immigrant youth, drove many of the most effective voter engagement programs in the PICO network. For example, in the four weeks leading up to November 6, 350 youth leaders from PICO's Inland Congregations United for Change spoke to more than 15,000 voters about the importance of voting for the Prop 30 revenue measure on the state ballot. On election night clusters of 3 to 4 young people sat at laptops refreshing their browsers every minute or so as the California Secretary of State website updated the ballot results. The day after Prop 30 passed California State University rescinded a planned tuition increase, making the connection between the election and the lives of young people tangible and immediate. One of the important results of PICO's 2012 voter program was training a new generation of youth leaders in the arts and sciences of organizing and civic engagement.







## Ballot fights

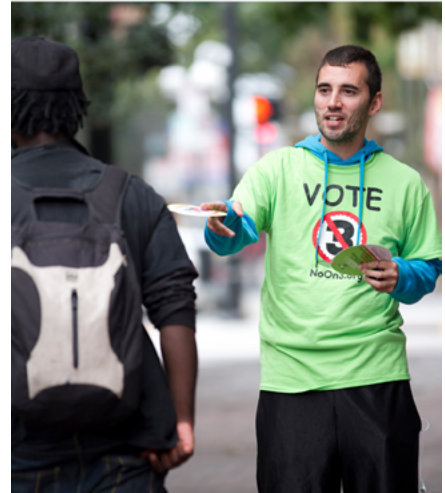
As part of PICO's effort to integrate voter engagement into our overall organizing strategy, where possible we encouraged organizations to organize their voter work around important ballot fights.

**Prop 30 Revenue Measure in California:** PICO California and the PICO federations in that state played an important role in building public support for Prop 30, which raised \$6 billion for schools and public services through a tax on high earners and a small temporary increase in the sales tax. PICO California had direct contact with 167,166 voters and positively identified 102,141 Prop 30 supporters, who they drove to the polls, contributing a significant share of the votes that helped win the campaign. Prop 30 ultimately passed by a 54/46 margin.

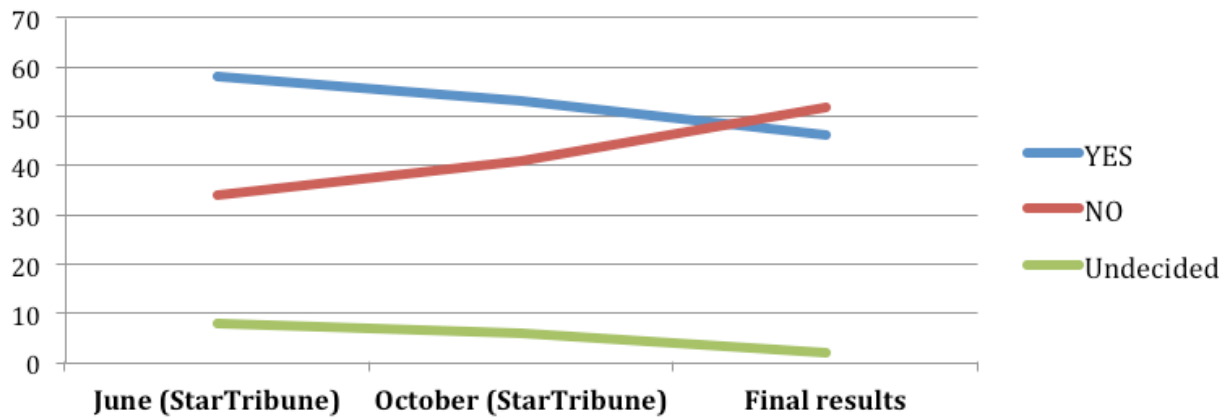
**Defeating TABOR in Florida:** In Florida, PICO United Florida led the ballot fight that defeated by a 58/42 margin a TABOR measure that would have decimated public education and social services in the state. The TABOR measure began with a wide margin of support, according to a poll we commissioned from Hart Research at the start of the campaign. However, with support from allies in Florida and the Center on Budget Policy and Priorities, PICO United Florida helped reshape public opinion on revenue in the state. They built the No on 3 Ballot Committee and led the grassroots No on 3 campaign which participated in more than 100 public events, made 710,000 calls to undecided voters and had conversations with 110,000 voters at early voting sites and polling places.

**Defeating Voter ID in Minnesota.** By a 53/47 margin Minnesota voters rejected a constitutional Voter ID amendment that would have restricted voting in the state. PICO's state federation ISIAH worked closely with Take Action Minnesota (an affiliate of National People's Action) on a massive grassroots public education campaign that reversed public opinion on a measure that started off with high public support and many people assumed would pass. By Election Day ISIAH had contacted 48,875 Minnesota voters, including more than 30,000 persuasion phone conversations with moderate religious voters.

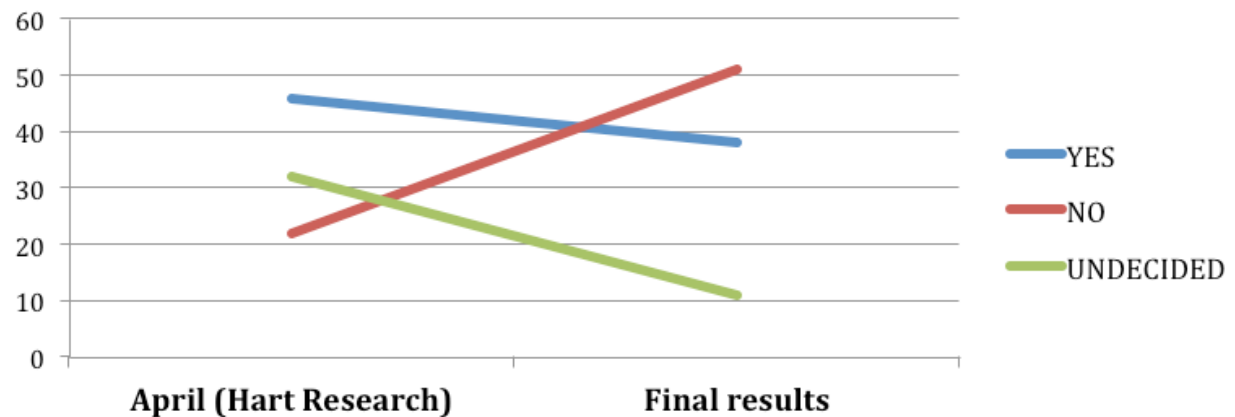
**Blocked on Pay Day and Minimum Wage in Missouri.** PICO's Communities Creating Opportunity (CCO) in Kansas City and statewide Missouri Faith Voices collected 55,000 signatures, as a part of the Missouri Organizing Collaborative campaign that gathered 350,000 signatures to place two measures on the Missouri ballot, one that would have raised the minimum wage and the other that would have capped the rate of pay day lending. Unfortunately, St. Louis threw out more than half the signatures that were submitted to it, including thousands of valid signatures. The campaign tried but failed to win in court to recapture these signatures, defeated by a Pay Day lending industry that was willing to spend a virtually unlimited amount of money to keep the Cap the Rate measure off the ballot. Despite not making it onto the ballot, CCO and Missouri Faith Voices ran a voter program that reached 86,000 voters.



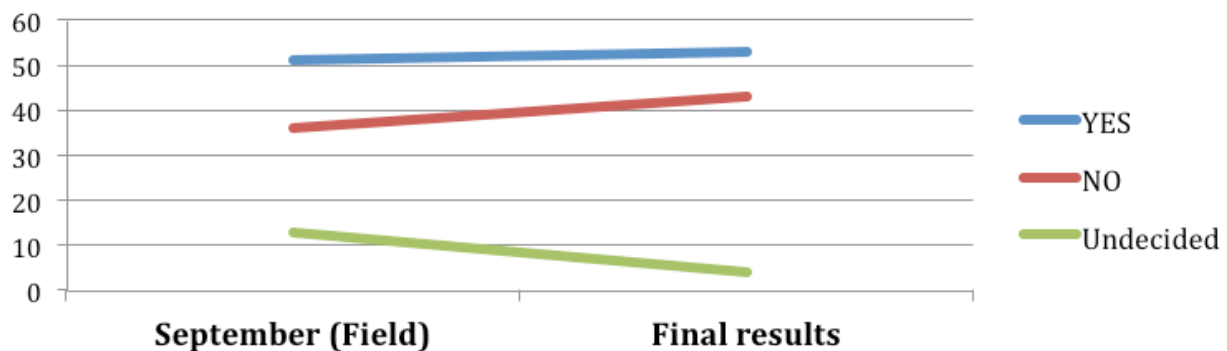
## Minnesota Voter ID Constitutional Amendment Defeated 53/47



## Florida Constitutional Amendment 3 (TABOR) Defeated 58/42



## California Prop 30 Revenue Measure Passed 55/45



PICO organizations also used their voter engagement efforts as an opportunity to help pass local ballot measures, including a minimum wage hike in San Jose and a multi-Parish transportation revenue measure that passed by 16 votes in the New Orleans Metropolitan region.

### **Integrated voter development and capacity building**

As part of their voter engagement programs, PICO organizations held 207 public events attended by 14,370 people. These events ranged from large town hall meetings to events with candidates to press conferences and marches. PICO organizations used their voter engagement work to build their organizational power and influence, as well as their internal capacity. For example, in Philadelphia POWER used their voter outreach program to build support for its airport jobs campaign; as they talked to voters about the importance of voting, they also asked them to sign a jobs petition to City Council.

In August 2012 PICO purchased 54 ten seat predictive dialer phone banks and distributed these across our network. Organizations will be able to continue to use these systems to support their organizing campaigns year round. With help from State Voices we also trained 280 PICO staff to use the VAN/Catalist voter tool and provided them with user accounts as part of the Tools for All Fund. PICO organizations tracked their voter contacts in the VAN and PICO's daily soft-reporting tools, which provided us real time updates to adjust PICO's technical support and resource investment.

In 2011 PICO created a C4 organization – the PICO Action Fund – which proved to be particularly helpful in support ballot fights in Florida and California.

### **Data modeling**

PICO organizations used sophisticated voter modeling to target their contact most efficiently. In Florida, we modeled the entire state voter file to identify voters who were undecided on TABOR and who were open to persuasion based on our key messages. This allowed us to target our phone-calling program effectively in a state with 12 million voters. In Minnesota, we used the Faith in Public Life religion model to deliver faith-based persuasion messages to moderate religious voters, allowing us to work a more moderate to conservative universe than our partners.



### **Let My People Vote**

African-American churches in PICO led a high profile campaign to organize against efforts to suppress the vote. Black clergy in Colorado began Let My People Vote as a way to combat efforts by the Colorado Secretary of State to make it harder for Colorado residents to vote. Churches across the country took up the campaign, which generated local and national media coverage. More than 315 churches participated in Voter Registration and GOTV activities, including large-scale Souls to the Polls events in Florida and Ohio. In Ohio, Colorado, Florida and other states, PICO organizations worked with allies to stop policies designed to restrict voting. Massive turnout among African-Americans, a string of losses in the courts, and voters rejecting the voter restriction effort in Minnesota all demonstrated that Americans want to make it easier not harder for people to vote.





## I am a DREAM Voter

Another important highlight of our 2012 voter work was PICO's partnership with United We Dream and the New Organizing Institute on the I am a DREAM Voter campaign. As part of this campaign PICO and United We Dream trained hundreds of DREAMers in civic engagement skills. They in turn walked neighborhoods and made phone calls to Latino voters in Arizona, Texas, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico and other states and communities with high numbers of Latino voters. DREAMers from PICO had more than 18,000 conversations with infrequent Latino voters about the importance of voting in order to support immigration reform. The I am a DREAM Voter program was closely integrated with a strategy of maximizing the number of Dreamers applying for Deferred Action. Working closely with United We Dream, PICO organizations held 83 community education events and clinics on the new policy, attended by 13,305 people. Organizing by Dreamers to win Deferred Action, make the initiative successful (more than 300,000 people have applied to date and 50,000 applications have been approved and use it to energize Latino voters has helped breath new life into the movement for immigration reform that would provide a pathway to citizenship for 11 million new Americans.



## Conclusion

African-American, Latino and lower-income voters voted at high rates in 2012 and voters of all races clearly rejected the politics of austerity, inequality and voter suppression. Through our non-partisan voter program PICO organizations were proud to be part of this historic election. Just as important, we learned to use a set of tools and practices that will strengthen our organizing campaigns. And we have a platform of experience to apply in 2013 and 2014 as we work to make the electorate reflect the population of eligible voters.

## Selected Media coverage

Pensacola News Journal, 10/29/12: [Pensacola churches help faithful cast ballots with Souls to Polls](#)

Orlando Sentinel, 10/27/12: [Souls to the Polls carries on Sunday tradition](#)

Miami Herald, 10/27/2012: [Thousands heed call of 'Souls to the Polls' in Miami, statewide](#)

The Columbus Dispatch, 10/28/12: [Fast. Pray. Vote. Campaign asks Christians to take a break from election noise](#)

The Philadelphia Daily News, 10/1/12: [Mother Bethel congregants reschedule worship for a different kind of service - registering voters](#)

Associated Press, 10/1/12: [Churches using 'souls to polls' to rally vote](#)

USA Today, 5/20/2012: [Churches tread lightly on politics in 2012 election](#)

LA Times, 4/25/12: [Faith-based organization seeking to promote economic equality](#)