

MEDIA MATTERS

2012

A THREE-YEAR CAMPAIGN

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Letter from our Leaders

Five years ago, *Media Matters* was founded with a few staffers dedicated to a singular, and daunting, goal: restoring accountability and integrity to American journalism after both had been systematically eroded by decades of conservative attacks. Until then, no progressive organization had been solely dedicated to this crucial task, allowing the right-wing media machine to run roughshod over one of our democracy's most vital institutions. The consequences were obvious, as lies, smears, and misinformation proved instrumental in electing George W. Bush not once but twice, and in building public support for his radically conservative agenda.

Since then, our researchers have documented over 21,000 instances of conservative misinformation infecting all reaches of our national media, and are currently producing an average of over 200 new research items per week. The impact of their work has been profound. The mere knowledge of a group like *Media Matters*, let alone its work, has produced greater attention to detail and accuracy among mainstream journalists, and our constant fact-checks have resulted in a growing awareness of the true nature of conservative media outlets.

In the past five years, *Media Matters* has grown dramatically. While media criticism remains our core mission, we now engage in a broad array of activities and group initiatives. The work of our 501(c)(3) is now complimented by that of our 501(c)(4), the *Media Matters Action Network*. MMAN, re-launched in May, confronts conservative misinformation at its source, exposing the interconnected financial and political infrastructure of the right, and detailing the connections between the conservative media and the Republican offices and right-wing policy shops that have traditionally wielded such unchecked influence in Washington.

The past year has seen especially rapid growth for both groups, along with an accompanying increase in our impact. We led progressive coalitions which produced advertiser boycotts of both Fox's Glenn Beck and CNN's Lou Dobbs. Eighty corporate sponsors dropped Glenn Beck, costing Fox over \$600,000 per week. And after nearly 30 years on the network, CNN forced out Lou Dobbs, whose anti-immigrant hate-speech and conspiracy rumors will no longer be legitimized by the "most trusted name in news." *Media Matters* was able to rapidly respond to conservative smears of administration officials, effectively quashing homophobic attacks against Department of Education official Kevin Jennings before they gained momentum. And we were the first progressive organization to highlight the transformation of Fox News into a purely partisan political operation, and to expose its role in the promotion of the Astroturf Tea Party "movement," triggering a sea change in the public's perception of both.

2009 also saw the launch of the Progressive Talent Initiative, an ambitious and unprecedented media training and booking center that is discovering and developing the next generation of progressive media talent. We also began engaging in a new degree of news creation, using video trackers to follow and confront prominent conservative figures, as we did with Rupert Murdoch, catching him in a fallacious on-camera denial after he had amplified Glenn Beck's charge that President Obama is "a racist."

These victories represent just a small portion of our work throughout 2009. Furthermore, they serve as a strong reminder of the immense challenges that lay before us. The next three years are crucial, as the right-wing will do everything it can to break the momentum progressives have been building throughout the country. We must fight back. For *Media Matters for America*, that will of course involve the continuation of our core function of debunking conservative misinformation across media outlets and aggressively working to derail the right-wing smear machine. We will enhance our existing capacity by creating new research units devoted entirely to monitoring the media's coverage of specific issues, such as the environment and immigration, and we will enlarge our new media training operation. At the same time, the *Media Matters Action Network* will expand its core operation of squashing conservative misinformation at its source, as well as track an increasing number of conservative events, capturing outrageous, offensive, and incorrect statements made by right-wing politicians and their allies. MMAN will use the information discovered to author and publish long-form narratives and books exposing the truth behind top conservative political figures, and undertake paid media campaigns where appropriate in order to maximize the effect of our research on the public and on the mainstream media.

But our work won't stop there. Over the last year, the Fox News Channel has distinguished itself as the heart of the conservative movement, picking its targets, setting its agenda, and engaging in the organizing and propagandizing that discredited conservative institutions and leaders no longer can. No matter what issue you care about, if you want to fight for it, if you want to be part of the struggle for a progressive future, you have to fight Fox.

Media Matters wants to take this, the single greatest threat to the progressive agenda, head on. We aim to launch ambitious new initiatives specifically designed to counteract Fox News, using every tool at our disposal to publicly expose the network as the dangerous, corporate-backed, and unprecedented 24/7 political campaign it is. Video tracking, opposition research teams, grassroots activism, and even litigation initiatives will be employed.

As our capacity expands, we will increasingly be able to not merely defend progressives and the progressive agenda, but to put the conservative infrastructure on the defensive to a degree never before seen. And as always, it will be your generous support which will make such a reality possible. The following pages will detail the wide array of plans we hope to enact between now and 2012. If the next three years prove to be anywhere near as productive and transformative as the last, we can look forward to the creation of an even stronger, more progressive America.



David Brock
Founder and CEO



Eric Burns
President

Executive Summary

Media Matters for America

In 2004, *Media Matters for America* (MMFA) emerged as a vital new actor in the growing progressive movement by developing the capacity to hold the media accountable to the progressive movement. Since then, the Media Matters team has built a highly effective and respected media watchdog whose rapid-response, but rigorous research and strategic communications operations keep the media honest, strengthen journalistic integrity, and level the media playing field for progressives.

Last year, the work of MMFA's expanded research and communications operations resulted in numerous high-profile instances of impact as well as less-publicized positive influence on media coverage. But there was also a distinct negative lesson reinforced by our work: without a growing, well-resourced progressive infrastructure to expose them, Fox News will continue to lead the right-wing media machine's effort to poison public debate, support conservative candidates, and sabotage efforts to address the enormous challenges faced by the nation. In 2010, MMFA is continuing its core work debunking conservative misinformation while expanding capacity into critical areas of progressive media activism. We are taking the offensive against conservative misinformation, specifically targeting Fox News to thoroughly discredit it as a news organization and derail its efforts to shape the media and political landscape.

Impact on the Media in 2009

Media Matters for America's work in 2009 paid off in several broadly significant achievements:

- We applied direct pressure to those who advertise on programs supporting hate speech and extreme rhetoric and pushed them to drop their financial support of high-profile conservative pundits, leading to a mass advertiser exodus from Glenn Beck's show and the resignation of Lou Dobbs from his influential perch at CNN.
- Utilizing our increased rapid-response operation, we were able to more swiftly and effectively push back against conservative smears aimed at progressive programs and administration officials.
- As FOX News engaged in activities far more characteristic of a political organization than a news outlet, MMFA systematically exposed the network's true agenda and highlighted for the media and the public the disastrous consequences of Fox News and the right-wing media being given the power to set the debate.
- We launched the Progressive Talent Initiative, the first full-service media training and booking center, founded specifically to identify and cultivate new, highly-skilled voices to advance a progressive vision and message in the media.

Strategies and Growth for 2010-2012

- We will continue our core function of debunking conservative misinformation across media outlets, aggressively working to derail the right-wing smear machine as it kicks into overdrive in 2010.

- We will enhance our existing capacity by creating new research pods devoted entirely to monitoring the media coverage of specific issues that will be the focus of the media and legislative debate in 2010 (including topics such as the environment and immigration).
- We will launch ambitious new initiatives specifically designed to push back against Fox News' partisan tactics, using every tool available to publicly expose Fox News as a coordinated, corporate-based, 24/7 political campaign unprecedented in scale and reach – not a legitimate news source. These initiatives include creating video tracking and opposition research teams, calling out advertisers on the misinformation and hate-speech they are supporting, engaging partner organizations to mobilize grassroots activism, and more.
- We will expand our Progressive Talent Initiative media training operation, providing numerous intensive general training sessions as well as several issue-specific trainings. We will also provide resources, training, and support for communications staffs at partner advocacy organizations to help maximize their effectiveness in responding to and working with the media.

Media Matters Action Network

In May, *Media Matters for America* unveiled our expanded 501(c)(4) organization, the *Media Matters Action Network* (MMAN), which is dedicated to cutting off conservative misinformation at the source before it reaches the media and poisons the public debate. With conservative organizations emboldened in their new role as political opposition, it has never been more important for progressives to monitor conservatives and the special interests their media machine serves. As we move into 2010, MMAN will continue to expand, increasing its effectiveness and re-focusing its operations in response to the evolving political climate.

MMAN Impact in 2009

MMAN quickly became an important ally for progressives, as evidenced by our accomplishments over the last six months:

- Our hard-hitting research quashed misinformation at the source, exposing and correcting statements made by conservative members of Congress and their allies and prompting the media to criticize the tone and content of these remarks.
- MMAN has launched an extensive and easily utilized public database to expose the money behind the conservative movement. Using research compiled in this database, MMAN has been highly effective itself in exposing the interconnected web of special interest groups, funders, leaders, and advertisers who support the right-wing smear machine.
- We launched Progressive Media, a joint project with the Center for American Progress Action Fund, to serve as the research and communications “war room” for advancing a progressive policy agenda.

MMAN Strategies and Growth for 2010-2012

- We will continue MMAN's core function of stopping misinformation at the source, quashing falsehoods from conservatives before bad facts seep into the media.

- We will place even greater emphasis on hard-hitting, campaign-style opposition research that will increase our impact on the political landscape.
- We will expand an ambitious video tracking program in which our trackers will attend conservative events and capture outrageous, offensive, and incorrect statements made by politicians and their allies.
- In light of the Supreme Court's ruling that corporations may spend freely in election campaigns, we will expand our monitoring of the financing behind the conservative movement to include tracking the money spent by powerful corporations to influence elections and public policy. Working with partner organizations, we will utilize this data to create a multitude of public relations challenges for corporations that make the decision to meddle in political campaigns.
- MMAN has launched Email Checker, which counters conservative misinformation in viral emails by providing our readers with ready-made fact-based responses to the most common and most egregious email memes. Over the next several years, as new policy debates absorb Washington, we will continue building Email Checker to effectively rebut false conservative claims aimed at derailing the progressive agenda.
- MMAN has also added a foreign policy component, focusing initially on Middle East issues with plans to expand the scope of this work in the future. We have debuted a twice-weekly email publication called Foreign Policy Matters that is designed to offer the progressive take on American policies toward the region.

Organizational Overview

Operating in “war room” style and using our websites – mediamatters.org and mediamattersaction.org – as our principal communications vehicles, *Media Matters* documents and corrects conservative misinformation (i.e., news or commentary that is not accurate, reliable, or credible and that forwards the conservative agenda) wherever it exists. We publish rapid-response research every day, in every news cycle, as well as longer analytic reports that create their own media buzz. Our research corrects not only right-wing outlets such as Fox News, but also sources like CNN and *The Washington Post*, nationally syndicated and local talk radio hosts and columnists, as well as misinformation originating with right wing think-tanks, funders, activists, and leaders. In addition, we strategically counter right-wing claims of “liberal media bias” while pulling back the fig leaf on the shadowy and interconnected right-wing infrastructure. We have developed a nationwide reputation for total integrity, accuracy, and transparency in our work.

Our efforts are divided between two organizations: *Media Matters for America*, a 501(c)(3) group, and *Media Matters Action Network*, a 501(c)(4) group.

Media Matters for America (MMFA)

MMFA works daily to notify journalists, pundits, progressive activists, and the general public about flawed media reports, providing them with the information to rebut false claims and the tools to take direct action against offending media institutions. Since our launch, almost twenty-four million unique visitors have visited our website. We have leveraged our research--more than 21,000 pieces of original media analysis and counting--into White House press briefings, onto the floor of the U.S. Congress and into legislation; it has formed the basis for news reports on all seven broadcast and cable news channels, in more than 500 print outlets nationwide (including all of *Editor & Publisher's* “Top 50 Daily Newspapers”), and by thousands of websites and blogs. To date, more than 144,000 activists have registered to receive MMFA’s materials via email, including Action Alerts, and our readers have posted more than 781,000 entries in our discussion forums.

MMFA passed its five-year anniversary in 2009. In that short time, we’ve accomplished the following critical goals:

- MMFA has evolved into the foremost progressive media watchdog and media research institute in the United States.
- MMFA has demonstrated to the media that both sides are now watching, empowering progressives to balance out 30 years of right-wing claims of liberal media bias, thereby strengthening journalism and democracy.
- MMFA now regularly secures corrections from major news organizations, and our research – combined with our aggressive outreach strategy – often results in changes in how stories are covered by the national media.

- MMFA has successfully built and sustained a fully functional, strategic piece of progressive infrastructure in a critical space where there was virtually no prior progressive capacity. We continue to introduce new initiatives that plug remaining gaps in the progressive movement, such as a full-scale media training and booking service for progressive pundits.
- MMFA provides a necessary foundation of research and activism that adds tremendous value to progressive investments in media, think tanks, and advocacy organizations by leveling the media playing field.
- Each piece of research we post to our website comes appended with contact information for the offending media institution. We encourage consumers of news to avail themselves of our information and the on-line tools we provide to directly contact the media and register their concerns.
- With fewer resources, MMFA provides a level of proficiency and accuracy that makes it more than competitive with long-established right-wing media-watch organizations.

Media Matters Action Network (MMAN)

MMAN's mission is to initiate actions that promote progressive thinking and policies in the media. We partner with progressive organizations and policy makers to implement effective techniques for refuting conservative misinformation, coordinate activism that pressures media decision-makers to address the concerns of the progressive community, and engage in other activities at the confluence of progressive thought, policy, and media.

- MMAN has quickly evolved into a leading progressive watchdog and research institute in the United States, fact-checking policy-oriented misinformation spread by elected officials and conservative groups before it seeps into the media. We also capture video of noteworthy statements (i.e., outrageous, inaccurate or offensive) made by conservatives and disseminate them to an ever-growing audience, often resulting in apologies or corrections.
- MMAN has demonstrated to the right wing establishment that they are being watched, empowering progressives to balance out 30 years of right-wing claims of accuracy and exposing the incestuous funding and messaging establishment of right-wing groups, leaders, and media.
- MMAN exposes the false smears spread by conservatives attempting to halt progressive change, thereby impeding the conservative media's witch-hunt against prominent progressives. As many of these smears originate on the Internet, we have introduced a fact-checking website devoted to debunking the smears born in viral e-mails.
- MMAN empowers progressives by giving them the tools to fight back against conservative misinformation. We provide progressive allies with the advertising information necessary to undertake action campaigns against chronically problematic

media figures, and have established direct advertiser pressure campaigns as an effective tool against the right-wing media.

- Progressive Media, our joint project with Center for American Progress Action Fund, has become the research and communications “war room” for advancing a progressive policy agenda by coordinating messaging, uniting allied organizations, and providing top-notch research that helps frame the debate on issues ranging from health care to the economy.

Long-term Goals

Media Matters for America and *Media Matters Action Network* strengthen American democracy by ensuring a healthy balance in media coverage of politics and policy—making it more conducive to progressive messages and messengers and less conducive to right-wing messages and messengers.

MMFA pursues strategies that:

- Increase awareness in the American public that conservative misinformation in the media is a significant problem.
- Develop a capacity to proactively drive media coverage of progressive issues.
- Enhance the visibility and impact of diverse, progressive voices across all media channels, including on the Internet.
- Reverse the mainstreaming of right-wing extremism in the media.
- Seek to neutralize Swift Boat-type media smear campaigns.
- Leverage progressive criticism of the mainstream media to build audiences for alternative progressive media.
- Strengthen the media reform movement by marrying its structural critique to a progressive critique of media content.
- Empower progressive activists at the national, regional, and local levels to proactively influence media microclimates, especially online.
- Expand progressive voices in the media by providing a full range of resources, including media training and booking services, to assist the larger progressive community by creating and disseminating progressive information and views.

MMAN pursues strategies that:

- Ensure accuracy, appropriate balance, and accountability in the media through targeted public action campaigns.
- Build working coalitions of progressive leaders, individuals, and organizations to develop, coordinate and aggressively deliver progressive messages and activist campaigns.
- Increase awareness that conservative members of Congress and their allies at right-wing think tanks and advocacy groups frequently advance misinformation when communicating with the public.
- Create in the minds of the American public both skepticism and suspicion of flawed conservative messages and messengers.
- Expose and seek to neutralize the shadowy and interconnected web of conservative special interest groups that are behind efforts to influence public opinion and legislative outcomes.
- Make the mainstream media less susceptible to conservative framing, jargon, and spin across a range of progressive issues.
- Convene partner organizations to create an echo chamber amplifying progressive messaging to the public.

MEDIAMATTERS
FOR AMERICA



2012

A THREE-YEAR CAMPAIGN

Media Matters for America

Media Matters for America's Impact in 2009

In 2009, *Media Matter for America* (MMFA) continued its signature function of identifying, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation in the media. We also expanded our core work into new areas, aggressively fighting back as the out-of-power right-wing noise machine sunk to new lows in trying to derail the progressive agenda.

2009 Highlights

Creating a Culture of Corporate Accountability: MMFA waged several successful advertiser-targeted campaigns in 2009, proving that by highlighting the damage that certain media outlets and individuals do to political discourse and the opportunity for reasoned, accurate, and informed debate, we can prevail on advertisers, the media, and the public to act in the public interest. For example, after Glenn Beck called President Obama a “racist” who has a “deep-seated hatred of white people,” MMFA was the first organization to expose and disseminate his comments. Using information provided by MMAN, the organization Color of Change led an effort that caused over 80 advertisers to stop buying time on Fox News’ Glenn Beck Show, and resulted in the loss to the show of every national company that had previously advertised on Beck (including Wal-Mart, GEICO, and General Mills.) We pursued a similar strategy in the Drop Dobbs campaign, which called attention to Lou Dobbs’ extremist anti-immigrant rhetoric as well as held CNN accountable for providing a platform for such hate speech. As a result, major companies including Wal-Mart, Toyota, and Honda stopped advertising on Dobbs’ television show. Moreover, Dobbs’ show tanked in the ratings and multiple pundits began to criticize CNN for providing a platform to the most vitriolic anti-immigrant speaker on the air. Under pressure from multiple fronts, Dobbs resigned from his CNN show in November, and the conservative movement lost a high-profile megaphone for its most famous anti-immigrant talker.

Stopping the Witch Hunt: Following President Obama’s inauguration, the right-wing media wasted no time in trying to take down nominated or elected officials in the administration. MMFA challenged this witch hunt at every turn, and our research stopped the smear machine in its tracks on repeated occasions. For example, after President Obama nominated Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court, conservative pundits hurled sexist and racist attacks at Sotomayor, distorting her comments to accuse her of being everything from a radical activist to an affirmative action pick. We published over 400 pieces of research on this deplorable media coverage. As a result, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *the Los Angeles Times*, to name a few outlets, acknowledged the facts on Sotomayor instead of pushing the fiction. The smear campaign was proven a total failure upon Sotomayor’s confirmation to the Supreme Court in August of 2009. The viciousness of the attacks against Sotomayor set the standard for the tone of the campaigns waged against other prominent progressives. When the right-wing, led by Fox News, targeted Obama education official Kevin Jennings for attack, MMFA stopped the fraudulent smear machine once more. In particular, we conclusively debunked the right-wing media claim accusing Jennings of having concealed a statutory rape of one of his students

21 years ago. In the face of our evidence, the right-wing media dropped the false allegations against Jennings, and Fox News was forced to add corrections to several slanderous articles.

Exposing the Political Transformation of Fox News: MMFA has led the progressive response to Fox News over the last year, revealing example after example of the network's transformation from partisan news outlet into right-wing political advocacy group. As our reporting revealed, like all major political entities, Fox News is now coordinating grassroots (or, more accurately, astroturf) political activities, lobbying for or against legislation, and fundraising for conservative causes. We even posted footage of a Fox News producer coaching marchers before a live "report" from the 9/12 rally in Washington, which in itself was the work of Glenn Beck's 9/12 Project. The video tracking footage proved embarrassing enough to Fox that the network punished the producer and during the next round of tea party protests, the network chose not to air any live coverage at all. As we continued to document example after example of Fox News' blatantly political activities, the criticism of Fox News exploded—even the White House bluntly called Fox "either the research arm or the communications arm of the Republican Party." Our aggressive pushback against the organization led Fox News' Bernie Goldberg to say nervously, "If they repeat this long enough and often enough -- that Fox News is not a real news organization, it's an arm of the national Republican Party, it's not to be taken seriously -- if they say that long enough, it might become part of the bloodstream of the American culture."

2009: The In-Depth Story

To assess how we are accomplishing our mission of reducing the influence of conservative misinformation in the media, MMFA has adopted a system to track instances of our media impact in six discrete major categories. As of December 7, 2009, we had tallied 1,492 total instances of impact. By comparison, in 2008, MMFA tallied 1,196 instances of impact in total. These numbers give us new benchmarks to assess performance in 2010.

What follows are brief descriptions of the different categories, and an illustrative example of impact for each.

Squashing incipient story lines

This metric measures our ability to quickly stop a provably false or misleading story line that has just been reported and is gathering momentum and may take hold in the national media.

- In October, MMFA conclusively debunked the right-wing media claim that education official Kevin Jennings "covered up statutory rape" 21 years ago by not reporting to authorities a conversation he had with a student who told him about being involved with an "older man." We exclusively obtained the Massachusetts drivers' license of the student confirming that at the time of the incident, he was at least sixteen years of age - the legal age of consent in Massachusetts. The former student then contacted MMFA, providing us with a statement that confirmed his age and criticized the right-wing "noise machine" for misrepresenting the nature of his exchange with Jennings. The media widely used our reporting to debunk the blatantly homophobic attacks on Jennings, and our reporting also forced Fox News to append an Editor's Note to multiple articles on Jennings. The *Atlantic* recognized our impact, saying that "thanks to" MMFA, "Jennings seems to have evaded the conservative attack machine."

Affecting coverage

There are moments in the public discourse when important information about a key developing story is left out of media reports, or the false characterization of an issue or event threatens to color its coverage across the national stage. In these and similar instances, MMFA uses its research to pressure the media into changing or correcting the way the story is being reported in the national press.

- When President Obama nominated Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court, he sparked a flurry of attacks from the right. Conservative pundits accused her of racism and of being an affirmative action pick; Fox News hosts insisted she was a radical activist. They continually misrepresented the “wise Latina” remark that Sotomayor made in a speech, claiming that she suggested that Latina judges are obviously better than white male judges. Other prejudiced attacks were leveled at her by the likes of Rush Limbaugh and Pat Buchanan. Our efforts—over 400 research items on our website—forced the media to acknowledge the facts on Sotomayor instead of pushing the fiction, leading to a concrete change in coverage. For example, when MMFA fact-checked Sotomayor’s position in the controversial *Ricci* case, two of the nations most read newspapers, the *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*, echoed our research word for word in bringing to light Sotomayor’s actual position on the issue. Faced with our aggressive push-back, the conservative media’s attack eventually fizzled, failing to impede Sotomayor’s confirmation process.

Changing corporate behavior

Unfortunately, high journalistic and decency standards are not always in sync with corporate style, profit-based media decision-making. Lower standards have, at times, allowed bigoted commentary to be aired, severely diminishing the quality of public debate. In these instances, MMFA seeks changes in corporate media behavior.

- In July, MMFA was the first to uncover Glenn Beck claiming on *Fox & Friends* that President Obama is a “racist” who has a “deep-seated hatred for white people.” Following this research, media figures including Joe Scarborough, Joan Walsh, Chris Matthews, Mika Brzezinski, Mike Barnicle, Chuck Todd, and Rachel Maddow all blasted Beck’s comments. MMAN collaborated with Color of Change, the largest African-American online political organization in the country, providing them with contact information for the advertisers sponsoring Beck’s television and radio shows and helping them launch an action campaign urging these companies to cut off advertising. This collaboration with Color of Change led to a mass exodus of advertisers from Beck’s show. Over 80 companies stopped advertising on Beck, including AT&T, Bank of America, GEICO, Johnson & Johnson, Verizon Wireless, and Wal-Mart. Several additional companies dropped their commercials from Fox News altogether. Reportedly, this advertiser exodus is costing Fox News \$600,000 per week.

Corrections and apologies

Promoting higher journalistic standards and apologies, MMFA has become proficient in seeking out and getting corrections from major news organizations on factually incorrect or otherwise irresponsible reporting.

- In May, MMFA ignited a barrage of protests against CBS golf analyst David Feherty's comment, "If you gave any U.S. soldier a gun with two bullets in it, and he found himself in an elevator with Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, and Osama bin Laden, there's a good chance that Nancy Pelosi would get shot twice, and Harry Reid and bin Laden would be strangled to death." *Media Matters* President Eric Burns immediately responded, demanding that Feherty apologize. By that evening, Keith Olbermann had named Feherty the "Worst Person in the World" for suggesting that "any U.S. soldier" would kill Pelosi and Reid. The CBS Sports senior vice president of communications responded to the brewing controversy over Feherty's comments, calling his column "an unacceptable attempt at humor." Pressure for an apology mounted as the Associated Press and the *New York Daily News* ran stories noting the criticism leveled at Feherty. That evening, Feherty issued an apology to Pelosi and Reid for his disturbing comments. In the aftermath of this apology, MSNBC's David Shuster noted that Feherty's comments were first "caught by *Media Matters* and brought to a lot of people's attention."

Triggering "meta-coverage" in a major national outlet

MMFA seeks to harness our research to create news coverage about how a questionable, false or misleading story is being reported on the national stage, thereby educating Americans about how the media work, or don't work, in a given situation. This coverage can force those in the media to reexamine how they go about reporting a story, promoting better journalistic practices. This is called triggering "meta-coverage."

- In February, the *Washington Post's* George Will used his nationally syndicated column to make numerous distortions about global warming. Despite the obvious errors in the column, the *Post* refused to issue a correction. MMFA pushed our research on both Will and the *Post* far and wide, and media outlets and environment advocacy groups joined us in demanding a correction. Prompted by the tidal wave of protest, the *Post* ombudsman, Andy Alexander, penned a column entitled "The Heat From a Global Warming Column" which noted the role MMFA played in pushing back against the Will column and described our "orchestrated e-mail campaign in which thousands demanded that *The Post* correct Will's 'falsehoods.'" Alexander criticized the *Post's* fact-checking process and admitted that readers would have been better served if the *Post* had more quickly addressed the falsehoods. Sen. John Kerry also took note of our work, praising us for "demonstrating so thoroughly" the problems in Will's column. After MMFA triggered the initial reaction, the criticism snowballed, as *Post* writers including Eugene Robinson, Juliet Eilperin, and Andrew Freedman all spoke out against Will's shoddy reporting.

Generating "fingerprint" coverage

Because MMFA is a media watchdog organization, news outlets are not always quick to publicly credit our organization with impacting their coverage of a certain issue; our research is often included in news reports as fact, without attribution, one of the most common ways MMFA impacts the news and affects the tone and quality of coverage in the media.

- In July, CNN host Lou Dobbs gave increasing credence and airtime to the so-called "birther" theory that Obama is not a native-born U.S. citizen on his television and radio

shows, fanning racist and xenophobic hatred of Obama with his irresponsible and paranoid reporting. MMFA forced the media to dismiss Dobbs' fear-mongering and unequivocally debunk the "birther" theory. *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, among others, published articles on Dobbs' ill-founded obsession with Obama's birth certificate. Pundits including Contessa Brewer and Rachel Maddow joined the growing number of voices demanding that Dobbs stop validating a fringe conspiracy theory. Even staunch conservatives Bill O'Reilly and Ann Coulter criticized Dobbs. When Dobbs resigned from his CNN show, multiple outlets, including *The Washington Post*, cited Dobbs' birther obsession as evidence of the pundit's growing isolation from the rest of CNN and a factor in his eventual departure.

Program Capacity/New Outputs in 2009

In order to enhance our impact and prepare for the inundation of political coverage surrounding the upcoming election cycle, in 2009 MMFA expanded its capacity and output in several ways.

Management and Administration

MMFA added several members to our management team in 2009 as part of an overarching restructuring effort to further integrate different departments. We hired Tate Williams to the position of Chief of Staff in February, and promoted Marcia Kuntz to Senior Vice President and Ari Rabin-Havt to Vice President of Communications and Research in October. By deepening our managerial bench, we made our operations more efficient and have created a more dynamic and accountable work environment.

Research and Editorial

This year, we updated our research and editorial process to make it more efficient and effective. Our researchers now operate on a "Four Team" system. These teams are organized around shifts: we have a shift starting at 5 am; one starting at 7 am; one starting at 9 am; and one starting at 4 pm. In effect, this means that we are monitoring the news media from 5 am until 1 am every day. With this system, no misinformation goes undetected, and researchers from different shifts are able to pool their knowledge and warn their successors of the right-wing talking points and emerging narratives of the day. Moreover, as a result of our new longer hours, we have been able to post more research in real time, ensuring that our work reaches the media during the same news cycle. For example, we have been able to live-monitor the evening network news shows and cable shows and produce articles and audio and video clips that same evening. This has been especially important in addressing and nipping in the bud misinformation on nightly news programs, which have large audiences and which often air stories that are covered again in the next day's morning shows. Through our increased use of video and audio clips, we were able to keep pressure on CNN by documenting in real-time Lou Dobbs' "birther" drumbeat.

Long-Term Research

Our research team released 15 hard-hitting special research reports in 2009, each sparking debate in the press. These studies are important tools in advancing MMFA's foundational narratives. Two of these reports are detailed below:

- **REPORT: Economists comprised only 6 percent of guest appearances discussing stimulus on cable news, Sunday shows**

This spring, instead of giving President Obama's economic agenda the substantive examination it warranted, the media featured the usual talking heads and partisan surrogates to speak on the economy. A MMFA study found that of the 681 people who appeared as guests on cable news and Sunday morning talk shows over a period of three weeks, only 6 percent were economists. The Associated covered the subject in over 50 media outlets.

- **REPORT: ACORN OBSESSION: Beck, Hannity obsess over ACORN while virtually ignoring major corruption scandals**

As Fox News' Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity devoted massive amounts of airtime to a supposed corruption scandal involving ACORN, MMFA released a study pointing out that these pundits have virtually ignored well-documented political scandals and instances of corruption by companies that have received thousands of times more money from the government than ACORN has in the past 15 years. In addition to other outlets, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Hartford Courant*, *The Courier News*, and *The Washington Times* all utilized our research to discuss the disparity in Beck and Hannity's scandal coverage.

Strategic Communications

Our strategic communications team was restructured at the start of 2009 in order to improve efficiency, management, and morale. The result was a leaner, meaner team that launched several ambitious strategies and new programs increasing the organization's reach and impact.

Video Production

This year MMFA greatly diversified our output of communications products. In particular, we substantially expanded our production of short, edgy, narrative-building videos. These innovative videos package our research in new, more visual ways, extending our reach to new audiences. In 2009, over twenty of these videos garnered more than 50,000 views on YouTube. Eight videos garnered more than 100,000 views. In comparison, in 2008, only one video on YouTube cracked 50,000 views—and none had over 100,000 views.

Advertiser Pressure Campaigns

As discussed above, MMFA engaged in several successful advertiser-targeted campaigns this year. Our communications team played a large role in the success of these campaigns. For example, MMFA reached out to our many progressive allies to enlist major Latino organizations and members of Congress to join the Drop Dobbs Coalition. Our new media and print teams also triggered an onslaught of critical coverage on Dobbs and CNN, tipping the balance against the pundit until he was forced to depart from CNN.

Collaboration

MMFA has built a rapid-response progressive communications network, partnering with external actors and key organizations to amplify our work and react quickly and efficiently to key opportunities. Our efforts this year have resulted in increased participation and engagement by members of Congress and key progressive leaders and organizations on the media coverage of a variety of topics, including the environment, health care, the economy, immigration, and more. We also worked with groups focused on advocating for historically disadvantaged groups on issues ranging from race to gender to sexual orientation.

We work with over a hundred groups, including:

- Economic Policy Institute
- The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
- Service Employees International Union
- National Organization of Women
- Women's Media Center
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- National Association of Black Journalists
- The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
- The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
- Human Right's Campaign
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
- National Council of La Raza
- America's Voice
- National Jewish Democratic Council
- Faith In Public Life
- Sierra Club
- League of Conservation Voters
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- Health Care for America NOW!
- National Partnership for Women and Families
- National Security Network
- Move On
- Vote Vets

A case study of our work with one of these organizations follows:

Women's Media Center (WMC)

We collaborated with the WMC, which combats sexism in the media, on multiple occasions in 2009. When Bill O'Reilly made sexist and ageist comments about legendary White House reporter Helen Thomas, we alerted partner organizations of the disparaging remarks. The WMC immediately called on their members to join them in demanding that O'Reilly apologize. Their action alert noted, "This kind of verbal degradation in the guise of humor is unacceptable, and as *Media Matters* has documented, it's part of an on-going pattern where he's targeted Thomas." A WMC representative, Courtney Martin, appeared on O'Reilly's Fox show to challenge his comments. The WMC continued to feature our research as the year progressed by criticizing the sexist media coverage of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Supreme Court

nominee Sonia Sotomayor. The group also co-signed our letter to *The Washington Post* ombudsman holding the paper accountable for a sexist online skit targeting Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. As a result of this campaign, the *Post* cancelled the web series.

Technology

To improve our online presence, for the first time since 2005 we executed a full website redesign that integrates a wide range of organizational goals and needs into a cohesive and informative user experience. This redesign also provided us with a fresh new look for the website and a vastly improved information architecture. The new website was undoubtedly a contributing factor to the steady increase of traffic to our website in the months since the redesign in May. We had 3.9 million page views in June, and 5.1 million page views in November.

We also launched a new mobile version of the website in July. Specifically made for mobile devices including iPhones and Blackberries, the site makes it substantially easier to read and navigate through recent MMFA content on a mobile device.

Organizational Metrics

Our traffic data reflects what a banner year this has been for MMFA. All of our numbers measuring web traffic in 2008 were met or exceeded. The number of visitors was up 18% from 2008. Page views were up 45% and visitors spent 29% longer per visit perusing the site. The website currently serves more than 526,932 unique visitors a week, up 86 percent from 2008. These numbers are particularly impressive when one takes into account that most politically-minded sites suffer a decline in traffic in the year after election. MMFA bucked this trend.

Currently, we have 144,901 subscribers who receive our research or other products by email, while at the end of 2008, we had 101,339 subscribers, representing an increase of 43%. MMFA gives subscribers the option to sign up to receive each item individually; a daily report with that day's items; a weekly e-publication; and alerts when we issue a call to action. The following chart reveals the growth of the last two lists over 2009:

	<u>Dec. '08</u>	<u>Dec. '09</u>	<u>%Δ</u>
Weekly Report	92,872*	137,751*	+48.32%
Action Alerts	91,591*	138,022*	+50.69%

** These numbers contain significant overlap with the other figures in this chart, as our users tend to sign up for multiple products.*

***After initially signing up to receive all our online products many subscribers further refine their preferences over time, favoring one type of email update over others.*

In 2009, we increased the reach of our online activism, particularly on social networking sites. We far exceeded our 2009 goal of doubling the number of "followers" we have on Twitter and "friends" on Facebook. In fact, we increased our Twitter "followers" and Facebook "friends" twenty-fold, representing an increase in followers of over 2000% on each site. In addition, we exceeded our 2009 goal of increasing from 7 to 10 percent the traffic driven to our website from social networking sites: more than 10.5% of our total site traffic now comes from social networking and bookmarking sites.

Our presence in the media continued to grow this year. We have met our 2009 goal of accumulating at least 1231 news pieces that mention MMFA in the Google News database with a total of 3,178 citations. This represents an increase of 210% from our total Google News hits in 2008. We were also credited--by name--on television 60 times, up 58% from our TV mentions in 2008. Members of Congress and progressive groups utilized our work as well this year: Congressional members highlighted our research 158 times and progressive groups did so 814 times (compared to 312 times in 2008.)

Representatives from MMFA increasingly contribute to the debates on television and talk radio. In 2009, MMFA made 23 television appearances and 672 radio appearances. In contrast, in 2008 MMFA made 17 television appearances and 575 radio appearances.

MMFA Opportunities for Growth

Maintaining our Core Functions

The organizational impact described above represents *Media Matters for America's* (MMFA) core work of debunking conservative misinformation across news outlets. Smears and lies must be disproved and counter-argued, fighting fire with water, if for no other reason than to send a strong message every day that we care about truth, while the right wing cares only about advantage. We must also continue our efforts to contain the damage being done by conservatives by cutting bad information off at the pass and monitoring the mainstream media for conservative misinformation. We plan to continue carrying out these core functions over the next three years at the following cost:

Year	Total Cost
2010	\$10,148,153.08
2011	\$10,720,312.01
2012	\$11,240,424.09

Please see the MMFA Appendix on page 86 for a more detailed breakdown of our core budget over the next three years.

Pursuing New Opportunities

However, with the out-of-power conservative movement now playing an all-offense game like never before, throwing sand in the gears of governance and targeting progressive individuals and organizations for elimination, we too must go on offense. That is why MMFA proposes to undertake multiple growth initiatives over the next three years to expand and strengthen our impact:

- **Fighting Back against Fox News:** We propose to implement a new set of initiatives that will severely restrict Fox News' campaign against the progressive community and agenda. These strategies include:
 - Developing Market Expertise: *Media Matters* will use a pollster, surveys, focus groups and a message consultant to conduct a benchmark study of the Fox News audience and public views of the network to craft a successful persuasion

campaign strategy and then monitor and adapt strategy and tactics based upon quarterly follow-up studies.

- Coordinating Grassroots Activism: *Media Matters* will harness widespread resentment of Fox News into grass and netroots activism by engaging partners into issue based coalitions to conduct targeted micro-campaigns against Fox News' advertisers, personalities, and hold demonstrations at network sponsored events to reduce its revenue and perceived popular support, as well as create a conundrum for shareholders investing in this controversial business enterprise.
- Fox SWAT Team: *Media Matters* will create a team of rapid-response reporters and researchers who will discredit Fox News' integrity by going to the source: re-reporting bad stories on Fox News, interviewing victims of the network's one-sided hit jobs, and shining a spotlight on its use of illegal and unethical tactics, as well as the inaccurate product and collateral damage of such tactics. In essence, challenging their journalistic integrity on every level.
- Opposition Research: *Media Matters* will create a team of investigators and opposition researchers who will collect and develop comprehensive and innovative research materials that will be used to identify vulnerabilities within Fox News on-air personalities and key decision makers as well as discredit Fox News attacks quickly while simultaneously providing a counter-narrative.
- Video Tracking: *Media Matters* will send aggressive staffers armed with high quality video and sound equipment to attend conservative events and tape all speeches and presentations by Fox News employees and key conservative actors to expose the political nature of their activism and capture any "gotcha" moments. This footage will be strategically disseminated through multiple media channels.
- Litigation Team: *Media Matters* will engage a team of attorneys that will, when appropriate, represent individuals who may have a legal cause of action as a result of the activities of right-wing activists and media like Fox News, and seek regulatory relief against offending individuals and entities in order to assist those harmed by its conduct and bring significant financial and regulatory pressure in order to modify its behavior.
- Online Headquarters: *Media Matters* will create an online action center and clearing house for Fox News related research, reporting and commentary which will serve as the hub for the overall campaign. The site will be used to connect Americans opposed to Fox News through special social networking and event planning tools to bring the campaign into communities throughout the country.
- Elite Persuasion: *Media Matters* will target political and media elites in key markets with aggressive advertising and individual outreach designed to sour conventional wisdom and the media elite's positive opinions of, misplaced journalistic solidarity with, and its tendency to follow or defend Fox News.
- Public Persuasion: *Media Matters* will conduct an aggressive media campaign, using some paid media to garner earned media across radio, cable news, select broadcast television, print media and the internet, as well as doing street and phone canvassing, direct mail and more, to recruit people to our effort and sway the opinions of those who have not yet made up their minds about Fox News.

- **Research Issue Pods:** We will enhance our impact on the media coverage of progressive priorities by creating new pods of researchers devoted entirely to the monitoring the media coverage of specific issues. We will create research pods for the following topics:
 - Environment/Climate Change
 - Economy
 - Immigration
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues
 - Gun Violence
 - Reproductive Rights

These new initiatives are detailed below. Please see the Appendix for a detailed master budget of our growth plans over the next three years.

Fighting Back against Fox News

THE PROBLEM

As exposed by *Media Matters*, the Fox News Channel has abandoned their role of years past as a reliably conservative news outlet to serve as the research and communications arm of a leaderless conservative movement and Republican Party. Moreover, the network has transformed into a partisan political entity that is waging a war aimed at destroying the Obama administration and its progressive agenda. Fox's Glenn Beck said so himself, predicting that he aimed to "take the administration down."

The evidence supporting Fox News' transformation into a purely political entity is overwhelming. To begin with, Fox News CEO Roger Ailes has described his station's confrontation with the Obama administration as "the Alamo." Fox News senior vice president Bill Shine said Fox was "the voice of opposition." In other words, the entire operation has an explicit political agenda, not just a few hosts. There is also no separation between Fox News' "opinion" programming and its "news" programs. Bret Baier's *Special Report*, the closest show Fox News has to a straight newscast, portrays Obama in a negative light 77 percent of the time, according to a recent study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs.

But the story goes well beyond the conservative bias Fox News has historically reflected. Like all major political entities, Fox News is now coordinating grassroots (or, more accurately, Astroturf) political activities, lobbying for or against legislation, and fundraising for conservative causes. The network called April's protests against the Obama administration "Fox News Tea Parties." It encouraged people to attend town halls last summer and then broadcast only the statements of those who opposed Democratic health care proposals. The 9/12 rally in Washington was the work of Beck, who claimed that 1.7 million people showed up (it was actually closer to 70,000). A video soon emerged of one of the station's producers coaching marchers before a live "report" from the scene.

Fox News routinely implores its audience to call Congress and oppose progressive legislation. Fox's Dick Morris and Mike Huckabee have both used Fox News airtime to encourage donations to conservative political action committees. These are unambiguous campaign activities, not the work of a news organization. It is no wonder that Fox's new website, FoxNation.com, has repeatedly cheered legislative developments it favors as a "Fox Nation Victory!"

Indeed, Fox News relishes its newfound activism. "The conservative media is winning now," Bill O'Reilly said on September 17. "They're damaging the president of the United States." But the damage Fox News causes isn't just political. Every day, it undermines serious journalism, misleads millions of Americans, and distorts our national discussion on crucial issues. Fox News represents an attack on democracy itself.

Much of the channel's "reporting" takes the form of obsessive and factually inaccurate efforts to smear progressive organizations and discredit Obama administration officials. To give you a sense of priorities: over a three-year period, shows hosted by Sean Hannity and Beck

mentioned ACORN 1,502 times, saying it was a corruption scandal. By contrast, their programs mentioned Halliburton, KBR, Blackwater, Jack Abramoff, and Bob Ney 109 times *combined*.

To take another example, Fox is currently conducting a witch hunt against administration members. After green jobs official Van Jones resigned, Hannity told a crowd, "We got rid of one, and my job starting tomorrow night is to get rid of every other one." Hannity next falsely reported that Department of Education official Kevin Jennings had concealed the "statutory rape" of a high school student. *Media Matters* soon revealed that the student was 16 at the time (the age of consent), and by his own account had not engaged in sexual activity with his fictitious assailant. Fox retracted the story.

Fake stories like these are what Fox News is built on. Health care reform will create death panels? False. Cass Sunstein believes in mandating that people become organ donors? False. John Holdren advocates for "compulsory abortion and sterilization," as Hannity put it? False. Fox reported them all as fact -- and the list goes on. Fox News even breathlessly reported claims that an ACORN employee had murdered her husband without confirming the story. It wasn't true.

Never in American history has a media organization this powerful been so willing to misrepresent reality in order to achieve a political goal. The right-wing press ran a similar campaign targeting Bill Clinton in the 1990s, but for most of that time period, it lacked the national, real-time reach and impact Fox now possesses.

The impact of Fox News' long campaign of misinformation should concern any citizen. Fox has repeatedly misinformed its viewers on everything from the non-existent connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda to the contents of health care reform legislation. Such misinformation can have serious consequences, and Fox News should be held accountable for propagating it.

Despite such overwhelming evidence of Fox News' political advocacy and dishonest tactics, during a recent press conference, ABC's Jake Tapper asked Robert Gibbs how Fox News -- "one of our sister organizations," as he put it -- is different from any other network. His question indicates the pervasive unwillingness among members of the media to officially kick Fox News to the curb of the press club. By legitimizing Fox News as a news organization, reporters and commentators are enabling the network to continue conducting a massive conservative political campaign under the guise of journalism. In the process, they are permitting Fox News to dominate the national discussion by spreading smears and lies -- smears and lies that become conventional wisdom. They are also defending an organization that has nothing but contempt for journalistic standards -- hence undermining their own profession and the public interest at the same time.

Criticizing Fox News has nothing to do with criticizing the press. Fox News is not a news organization. It is the de facto leader of the GOP, and it is long past time that it was treated as such by the media, elected officials, and the public.

THE SOLUTION

In addition to continuing our work as the singular progressive organization chartered to fight the right-wing media machine, successfully harnessing progressive institutional, campaign, and media resources to derail the machine while subjecting it to journalistic and public scrutiny, we must launch new initiatives specifically designed to push back against Fox News' partisan tactics.

While there is a tremendous need for the campaign we propose and an opportunity to engage and defeat Fox News, we must acknowledge that there is much we have yet to learn about the network, its audience, and position in the public consciousness. Accordingly, a significant portion of our resources must be devoted, in the beginning, and throughout the campaign, to learning what we don't know, and crafting our strategy and tactics based upon the results in order to make the wisest, most effective use, of our resources. It would be foolish to take on the multi-billion dollar Fox News Channel without conducting market and messaging research.

Like any presidential-style campaign, a substantial share of resources raised should be spent on paid media to advance our core message and sway the public's opinion. Much time and money will also be spent on efforts to grow our base of support, harnessing the members of other progressive organizations and expanding our own loyal following to stand in opposition to Fox's campaign.

These efforts are unlike any ever undertaken by *Media Matters* to date. Our tremendous growth over the past five years has been largely organic, built on the strength of our reputation, word of mouth, earned media exposure and modest ad campaigns focused not only on Fox News but on other outlets and media personalities.

Every dollar spent in this endeavor will increase our impact and likelihood of success.

Without additional resources to fund a new, comprehensive, coordinated and focused set of initiatives, the progressive movement is ill-equipped to deal with Fox News' current campaign. The right-wing cable network has repositioned, adapted and doubled-down in response to evolving political and media dynamics, and so must we. Thus, *Media Matters* is planning to lead a new campaign of our own to strike at the heart of Fox News, with the goal of disabling it.

We intend to use every tool available to publicly expose News Corp, Fox News Channel and the entire right-wing noise machine for what they really are: a coordinated, corporate-based, 24/7 political campaign unprecedented in scale and reach – not a legitimate news source.

Overall Objectives and Measures of Success

Objective 1: Convince political and media elites that Fox News is a political operation and an illegitimate news source.

Measures of Success: A decrease in the aggregate number of Fox News generated anti-progressive stories repeated in other media outlets; an increase in negative descriptions or discussions of Fox News in other media outlets.

Strategy: As part of our aggressive outreach strategy, we will seek to influence the opinions of media and political elites – the key to shaping conventional wisdom about Fox News. Rather than circling the wagons when the conservative network is under attack, we want them to join the fight. We will measure our success for this objective in two systemic ways: 1. We will study the saturation of Fox News generated stories and scandals in other mainstream outlets looking for a decrease over time; 2. We will study the language used by mainstream outlets to cover scandals and news industry media reports on Fox News over time specifically looking for a more critical tone over time – we want them covered as a partisan political operation by competing outlets.

Objective 2: Convince progressives and swayable independents to turn off Fox News.

Measure of Success: A decrease in Fox News' audience among these two groups as illustrated by polling data.

Strategy: At the beginning of our campaign we will conduct an extensive benchmark poll which will determine, in part, the current makeup of the Fox News audience. Once we have determined the key demographics that make-up that audience, why they watch, and the appropriate messaging required to turn those swayable against Fox News, various aspects of our campaign will be geared towards convincing that swayable audience to turn away from the conservative network and seek their news elsewhere. We will measure our success for this objective in two systemic ways: 1. Quarterly polling to measure shifts within the Fox News audience; 2. Any notable decline in Fox News ratings over time.

Objective 3: Convince those who do not watch Fox News that the network is unreliable.

Measure of Success: Growth of the number of non Fox News viewers who have a negative opinion of the network according to poll data.

Strategy: The initial benchmark poll will provide us with various data. Along with determining the current Fox News audience, we will also measure the views of those that do not currently watch the network – otherwise known, at least in part, as potential future Fox News consumers. The goal here is to turn them off from the outlet before the outlet turns them on. Specifically, we will determine who within the non-Fox News audience has no opinion one way or the other about the network and what messaging is required to convince them that Fox News is not legitimate or reliable. We will measure our success for this objective in two systemic ways: 1. Quarterly polling to measure the views of non-Fox News viewers over time; 2. Any notable stagnation or decrease in Fox News ratings.

Objective 4: Decrease Fox News' impact on public perception of key issues.

Measures of Success: A decrease in Fox News misinformation in public consciousness about specific issues looking for a marked decrease over time according to poll data; fewer news outlets repeating Fox News' misinformation according to media monitoring over time.

Strategy: Fox News covers issues and policy with a notable conservative bent that routinely makes its way into mainstream outlets – this poses a grave threat to the progressive legislative agenda and related progressive partner organizations. Working with allied organizations we will push back aggressively against the spread of this misinformation. We will measure our success for this objective in two systemic ways: 1. Quarterly polling to measure the saturation of Fox News misinformation about specific issues looking for a marked decrease over time; 2. Use media monitoring to produce case studies on a variety of issues illustrating our success in inoculating other news outlets from Fox News' misinformation.

Objective 5: Affect a change in Fox News' by decreasing its audience and advertising revenue.

Measures of Success: Changes in Fox News programming devoted to smears, misinformation, activism, and fundraising.

Strategy: Through coordinated grassroots activism campaigns designed to affect a change in corporate behavior by reducing the amount of advertising revenue to individual Fox News programs and the network as a whole and shareholder outreach in concert with increased negative perceptions of the network and lower elite and public opinions of Fox News, we will affect Fox News business model and force a change in its behavior. We will measure our success for this objective in four systemic ways 1. Actual dollar value decreases due to advertisers dropping Fox News; 2. Lower rates charged by Fox News for advertising on individual shows or across the network after successful actions. 3. A programming change represented by a reduction in the spreading of misinformation by an individual host or the network. 4. A departure of a personality or programming change.

Overview of Strategy & Tactics

Our ambitious plan to eliminate the ability of Fox News to continue shaping and poisoning the national political debate will consist of the following proposed initiatives which will complement one another and feed on each others work and success:

- **Develop Market Expertise:** *Media Matters* will use a pollster, surveys, focus groups and a message consultant to conduct a benchmark study of the Fox News audience and public views of the network to craft a successful persuasion campaign strategy and then monitor and adapt strategy and tactics based upon quarterly follow-up studies.
- **Coordinate Grassroots Activism:** *Media Matters* will harness widespread resentment of Fox News into grass and netroots activism by engaging progressive partners into issue

based coalitions to conduct targeted micro-campaigns against Fox News' advertisers, personalities, and hold demonstrations at network sponsored events to reduce its revenue and perceived popular support, as well as create a conundrum for shareholders investing in this controversial business enterprise.

- **Fox SWAT Team:** *Media Matters* will create a team of rapid-response reporters and researchers who will expose Fox News' lack of integrity by going to the source: re-reporting bad stories on Fox News, interviewing victims of the network's one-sided hit jobs, and shining a spotlight on its use of illegal and unethical tactics, as well as the inaccurate product and collateral damage of such tactics. In essence, challenging their journalistic integrity on every level.
- **Opposition Research:** *Media Matters* will create a team of investigators and opposition researchers who will collect and develop comprehensive and innovative research materials that will be used to identify vulnerabilities within Fox News on-air personalities and key decision makers as well as discredit Fox News attacks quickly while simultaneously providing a counter-narrative.
- **Video Tracking:** *Media Matters* will send aggressive staffers armed with high quality video and sound equipment to attend conservative events and tape all speeches and presentations by Fox News employees and key conservative actors to expose the political nature of their activism and capture any "gotcha" moments. This footage will be strategically disseminated through multiple media channels.
- **Litigation Team:** *Media Matters* will engage a team of attorneys that will, when appropriate, represent individuals who may have a legal cause of action as a result of the activities of right-wing activists and media like Fox News, and seek regulatory relief against offending individuals and entities in order to assist those harmed by its conduct and bring significant financial and regulatory pressure in order to modify its behavior.
- **Online Headquarters:** *Media Matters* will create an online action center and clearing house for Fox News related research, reporting and commentary which will serve as the hub for the overall campaign. In addition the site will be used to connect Americans opposed to Fox News through special social networking and event planning tools to bring the campaign into communities throughout the country.
- **Elite Persuasion:** *Media Matters* will target political and media elites in key markets with aggressive advertising and individual outreach designed to sour conventional wisdom and the media elite's positive opinions of, misplaced journalistic solidarity with, and its tendency to follow or defend Fox News.

Public Persuasion: *Media Matters* will conduct an aggressive media campaign across radio, cable news, select broadcast television, print media and the internet, as well as doing street and phone canvassing, direct mail and more, to recruit people to our effort and sway the opinions of those who have not yet made up their minds about Fox News.

Each of these components will work hand-in-hand and feed one another. For example, information uncovered by opposition research may guide efforts of the SWAT Team in its investigative reporting or uncover a potential claimant for the litigation group or the proper focus for a coalition campaign. The synergistic effect of these tactics, over time, will result in changed public and elite opinions, reduced advertising dollars, and changes in corporate behavior that will severely restrict Fox News' campaign against the progressive community and agenda.

STRUCTURE

Media Matters is already leading the challenge to Fox News' political activities. With the execution of the initiatives described herein, we will be able to take this further, serving as the coordinator, hub, and nerve center for the progressive movement's response to Fox News.

These initiatives are not free-standing. Much like our existing model, the different teams will work synergistically: pooling knowledge, sharing research, coordinating activities, etc. The creation of a centralized structure focused on neutralizing Fox News will ensure strong, unified, and consistent activity and messaging, which in turn, will help promote our objectives in the national debate. We have designed a phased implementation of our campaign adding components and expanding components over a period of three years through 2012, to husband resources, measure, and maximize effect:

Phase One – Building a Coordinated Effective Campaign

In the first year, *Media Matters* will focus on building a strong foundation for the entire campaign, developing market expertise, create the "Fox SWAT Team," undertake opposition research and video tracking, begin to persuade elites and the public, build a litigation team capable of initiating appropriate legal action and have in place the core components of our ability to coordinate grassroots activism to build several issue based coalitions for immediate action. We expect to begin to show results at the close of this phase.

Phase Two: Engagement on All Fronts

In the second phase of our campaign, *Media Matters* will conduct follow up surveys to ensure that all initiatives are designed for success, expand grassroots activism coordination, ramp-up elite and public persuasion campaigns, take legal action, and increase the gathering and use of opposition research and video tracking. It is critical that we show significant results by the close of this phase and have all tactics fully developed, deployed, and working effectively in order to make maximum use of them in the next phase.

Phase Three: Bringing the Full Weight to Bear

Based upon our experience in 2008 and the transformation of Fox News since the Inauguration of a progressive president, in the critical year of 2012, all efforts must be fully staffed and funded in order to have a meaningful effect on neutralizing Fox News efforts in such an important year.

In the ensuing pages we detail how each of the initiatives will be structured, implemented, staffed and budgeted.

Developing Market Expertise

OBJECTIVE

To identify the composition and characteristics of the Fox News audience, as well the network's brand strength and vulnerability in the marketplace in order to develop messages, themes, and tactics to deploy in an effort to sway public opinion against the network, limit its impact, and affect its brand, ratings, and revenue.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

After five years of monitoring Fox News 24/7, *Media Matters* has a comprehensive understanding of its programming and tactics. However, there is much we have yet to learn about the network's audience and brand strength in the marketplace. Before we can develop a detailed plan for a broader persuasion campaign against the network, we need market data of the type sought and used by every major political campaign and Fortune 500 Company. This data is necessary to make the most effective use of resources spent, including paid media. Without this data, we cannot describe what an effective persuasion campaign would say, to whom it would be directed, through what mediums, or the times and locations that should be our focus.

Unfortunately, this type of information is not freely available or easily obtained. Very little is known about the Fox News audience and general perceptions of the network in any level of detail that would suit our purposes. For example, the Pew Charitable Trust released a poll on October 29, 2009, revealing that nearly half of Americans think that Fox News as "mostly conservative." However, they did not ask follow up questions regarding whether the participants believed that the ideological bent affected the accuracy of the news reporting or the importance of that, if any, to the consumers. While some polls have looked at the general political makeup of the audience, what that audience knows about a limited selection of issues and how they vote *after* an election, these questions only scratch the surface. Too often, they are asked as an afterthought in a poll about an entirely different subject. This is precisely the type of detailed information that any public persuasion campaign needs in order to craft and carry out an effective strategy.

It would be a fool's errand to embark on a campaign with only a superficial understanding of the target audience. We must understand the center of gravity, i.e. the audience, in order to wage an insurgency against Fox News among its own viewers and in the general public. Without doing so, the successful use of any paid media to persuade those not already pre-disposed against the network would be the result of luck rather than a winning marketing strategy. *Media Matters* must have the ability to conduct the same market analysis and polling every transnational corporation and large political campaign has done for decades in order to maximize the effect of its marketing dollars.

A strong foundation for this campaign based on quantifiable data and extensively tested messaging would be composed of the following:

- **Benchmark Survey:** Conduct a benchmark survey to dig deep into audience demographics, political aptitude, motivations and other pertinent information.
- **Focus Groups:** Conduct focus groups using the benchmark survey data to test potential messaging for use on different demographics.
- **Message Formulation:** Build a messaging strategy specifically tailored for various audience demographics based on focus groups and benchmark survey data utilizing marketing and messaging professionals of the highest caliber.

Thereafter, the campaign must have the ability to test its tactics against the touchstone of public opinion and adapt accordingly, changing dynamics and tracking progress over time. Periodic testing and monitoring would include:

- **Quarterly Surveys:** Conduct quarterly analyses to determine changes in the Fox News audience, saturation of messages used and the success of campaign messages and initiatives at swaying public opinion.
- **Regular Focus Groups:** Continue to refine and test messages for specific demographics as the political landscape and Fox News demographics change over time.

Without undertaking such an initiative it is likely impossible to determine the demographics of those already opposed to Fox News, those in the persuadable middle who can be swayed against Fox News, and how best to inoculate the general public from the idea that Fox News is a trustworthy, legitimate news source.

RISKS

The data we discover may not support our assumptions. We could conceivably discover through our polling that a substantial percentage of the population already has a negative view of Fox News, its motivations, and accuracy, and thus already tunes it out. We aim to deal with this possibility by re-assessing our outreach in order to engage this segment of the population in our campaign by redirecting our persuasion campaign toward the recruitment of those already displeased with Fox News eventually turning them into vocal activists engaged against the network. These new recruits will play a major role in the success of our planned campaigns. Additionally, such data would be a valuable tool to persuade media elites to tune Fox News out as well, thus significantly aiding our efforts to prevent them from feeling compelled to repeat misinformation originating on the conservative network. Similarly, this data will assist us in exerting pressure on both advertisers and shareholders. Reliable data may convince the network's investors that its conduct, while successful with a small percentage of the population, really inhibits their ability to grow their ratings, market share, and advertising rates.

The polling and focus groups may not provide us adequate data to guide our actions. Polling, even done by the best professionals, often leaves many questions unanswered that are not apparent until after the results are in. This is precisely why we must have the ability to conduct regular follow up surveys in order to not only monitor changes in opinion, but also to adjust the surveys to make sure we obtain the most useful data to allow us to maximize our impact.

The messages we develop may not be effective. Again, it is possible that we do not craft the perfect message the first time out of the gate. As with the surveys, the ability to monitor our progress through regularly conducted focus groups provides us with the flexibility to adapt our tactics to be more effective. The worst thing that we could do is conduct an initial survey, develop a set of messages, strategies and tactics, and not have the ability to monitor their impact and change accordingly. We cannot assume we will get everything right the first time or that the initiatives will not need to change to make the most of the successes we achieve throughout the campaign.

Coordinating Grassroots Activism

OBJECTIVE

To create and deploy coalitions of likeminded partner organizations to hold Fox News accountable through direct advertiser and shareholder pressure created by the threat of or actual boycotts, rallies, demonstrations, shame, embarrassment, and other tactics on a variety of issues important to the progressive agenda, thus enlarging the community of those willing to take direct action to hold Fox News accountable.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

In short, our goal, through coalition action, is to make Fox News pay a financial price for its political activity and convince them that it is less expensive for Fox News to modify its behavior than it is to continue the status quo. *Media Matters* has had success building and coordinating individual coalitions of likeminded progressive organizations in a variety of successful media action campaigns against conservative media figures. In 2009, alone, *Media Matters* has effectively coordinated sustained campaigns against Fox News' Glenn Beck and CNN's Lou Dobbs:

- In July, after Fox News host Glenn Beck said President Obama was a "racist" with "a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture," *Media Matters* joined forces with Color of Change, an online African American progressive organization. In an effort to force accountability on Beck and his network bosses, *Media Matters* supplied strategic guidance, research, and advertising data for his Fox News program to Color of Change which then mounted an online campaign to convince Beck's sponsors to drop their support of his show. Thus far at least 80 advertisers (including major corporations like AT&T, Bank of America, and Wal-Mart) have dropped Beck, substantially cutting into the show's revenue, while several advertisers (including Waitrose, Diageo, and Metropolitan Talent Agency) have dropped their sponsorship of Fox News Channel altogether. In mid-September – before even more companies had pulled their ads – it was estimated that the sponsorship boycott of Beck's broadcast was costing Fox News nearly \$600,000 per week.
- CNN's Lou Dobbs was long a thorn in the side of the progressive movement, particularly those fighting on behalf of the immigrant community. In order to focus widespread

resentment of Dobbs into an effective campaign for accountability, *Media Matters* built a coalition of more than thirty organizations (including America's Voice, National Council of La Raza and Southern Poverty Law Center to name only a few), launching the Drop Dobbs campaign. Working together, the coalition launched social networks on Twitter and Facebook and an online action center (DropDobbs.com) to chronicle Dobbs misinformation and mistreatment of the immigrant community, encourage direct pressure on Dobbs' sponsors and raise awareness of CNN's lack of a meaningful response to its Dobbs problem. Specifically, the coalition sought to encourage those concerned with Dobbs anti-immigrant hysteria to contact his sponsors and ask that they spend their advertising dollars elsewhere. The coalition took to the airwaves to hammer that message home, announcing a television ad blitz on CNN and other cable news networks resulting in a great deal of attention-grabbing coverage for the effort -- more so after CNN refused to run the ads sparking further coverage and criticism. As a result of our efforts, major corporations including General Motors, Honda, Toyota, Bank of America, Johnson & Johnson and Proctor & Gable cut ties to Dobbs program. Finally, on November 11, 2009, Lou Dobbs resigned. No doubt a response to the palpable pressure put on Dobbs, CNN, and Klein himself – a conclusion echoed in numerous media reports crediting *Media Matters* and the coalition with Dobbs' abrupt departure.

In each of these instances, *Media Matters* took advantage of widespread progressive discontent, which in some instances had been in place for some time, providing coordination, organization, strategic and tactical guidance, and financial and human resources to bring about real results. We provided the strategy to achieve a particular end – advertiser pressure- and then the actual advertiser information, communication strategies, web design and support, advertiser pressure tactics, email products, paid media products, and logistical support that were central to the success achieved. Without our leadership, guidance, and resources, both campaigns would have been far less likely to succeed.

In order to replicate this success and have a lasting impact on Fox News, it is vital that such efforts with coalition groups become ongoing, cover a variety of issue areas, and involve a larger segment of the progressive community. Increased support will enable *Media Matters* to eclipse its previous successes simultaneously creating and coordinating a number of coalitions across multiple areas. Specifically, *Media Matters* will build coalition groups capable of effective action around the following initial issue areas: labor/economy, environment/climate change, discrimination (LGBT, race and gender), reproductive rights, and immigration. Each will necessitate the ability to deploy a number of tactics to increase membership, awareness, and effectiveness of each campaign:

- **Joint Actions:** Collaborating with existing grass-roots activism networks in the progressive universe such as organized labor, major progressive organizations and other issue advocacy groups with large memberships to build coalitions and work together to launch internet and other action campaigns on particular issues against News Corp, Fox News and the network's sponsors. These coalitions may sign onto open letters, circulate petitions and send emails to their membership to make them aware of *all* actions, other coalitions and upcoming events. This model allowed *Media Matters* to expand the coalitions in both the Beck and Dobbs campaigns harnessing additional, smaller organizations and several million people to our efforts. More importantly, this model

brings a large number of groups and individuals *within a particular market segment* to bear against all aspects of Fox News.

- **Direct Advertiser Pressure:** In the context of each coalition campaign, we will collect and analyze data regarding Fox News and its associated companies' advertising revenue. Doing so will help identify targets of opportunity and points of vulnerability, allowing coalitions to have a focal point for their campaigns while simultaneously pressuring the company economically to extract real costs for its conduct by convincing advertisers to reduce or eliminate their ad buys on individual Fox News programs or across the network as appropriate. This pressure may take the form of joint letters or petitions as described above, or strategic paid media and other tactics described below in greater detail. We must exert pressure adequate to convince an advertiser who wishes to sell its goods or services to a particular market and avoid negative publicity therein, that advertising on Fox News is a liability to their brand, thus undermining the very purpose of its advertising effort. To date, *Media Matters* has had tremendous success petitioning advertisers to drop their sponsorship of specific programs – the previously illustrated cases of Glenn Beck and Lou Dobbs demonstrate the effectiveness of this tactic.

- **Strategic Paid Media:** Each coalition must be able to conduct targeted television, radio, and print advertising campaigns designed to garner free and earned media because of their content. These may target an individual advertiser, network, or host. They will be strategically placed low dollar ad buys that produce media coverage of the ads and bring maximum pressure on the target of the ad – thus resulting in enhanced awareness and maximum effect at the lowest possible cost, when possible. However, each coalition must have the flexibility to conduct more expansive campaigns to bring pressure to bear against a target when initial efforts fail. For example, as part of the *Drop Dobbs* campaign, *Media Matters* produced and was prepared to run an advertisement against Ford Motor Company on Spanish Language stations in Houston, San Antonio, and other cities targeting its top selling product, pick-up trucks, in its top truck buying markets. Had the initial small buy been unsuccessful, a substantially larger buy was considered to bring additional pressure to bear on the company. However, this ultimately proved unnecessary as the company quit its advertising prior to Dobbs' abrupt departure from CNN.

- **Corporate Accountability:** Utilizing street protest, strategic paid media, direct mail, and voting share purchases with petition rights, coalitions will engage in a campaign to influence shareholders of News Corp seeking accountability for Fox News' reporting and journalistic ethics by demanding change from practices that have brought public shame and humiliation on the company while driving down revenue and share value. Additionally, we will use coalitions to pressure talent management firms to drop representation of Fox News personalities. Each of these efforts will use the results of all of our initiatives, including our surveys and advertising pressure campaigns, as a means of convincing our targets that Fox News practices are a liability to the company or public image of the personality.
 - **Sample Shareholder Campaigns:** Washington Mutual Bank faced an intense progressive campaign to persuade the company not to develop a pristine stretch

of land in the Santa Monica/Malibu wetlands of California. This campaign, led by Hollywood director Rob Reiner, included protests at shareholder meetings; distributing materials to shareholders; offering resolutions at shareholder meetings; lobbying individual major shareholders; and running ads targeting shareholders in financial publications. Eventually, Washington Mutual relented, selling the land to the state for a major state park.

- **Past Talent Management Campaign:** *Media Matters* has already pushed one prominent agency to drop a conservative personality from its roster. In 2007, Creative Artists Agency (CAA) dropped its representation of radio host Michael Savage two days after announcing that it had signed him as a client. CAA's decision to drop Savage followed a rant on February 28, first highlighted by *Media Matters*, over singer Melissa Etheridge's Academy Awards acceptance speech, in which she thanked her wife. Savage said, "I don't like a woman married to a woman. It makes me want to puke. ... I want to vomit when I hear it. I think it is child abuse." On March 1, the website TMZ.com reported that CAA had signed Savage and noted Savage's smears, linking to *Media Matters'* research. After Savage was dropped by CAA, he blamed *Media Matters* on his radio show.
- **Public Events:** Sponsor major pre-existing conferences (Netroots Nation, CAF's America's Future Now, Free Press' Media Reform Conference, etc.) and deploy teams responsible for recruiting attendees throughout the year to bring awareness to our cause, coalitions, and campaigns. Additionally we would coordinate other events, including counter-rallies at Fox News sponsored events and personality appearances designed to bring attention to specific action campaigns. Other events may include press conferences, expert panel discussions, mini-conferences, and perhaps a bus tour modeled after Fox News' support of the Tea Party Express which traveled the country attacking Obama throughout the summer and fall. Increasing the awareness and prominence of our coalitions and campaigns in the progressive and public arena will lend them more weight, credibility, and members, thereby increasing their impact and odds of success.
- **Online Advertising:** Run ads year-round on first and second tier progressive and media related blogs, news, and social networking sites, designed specifically to attract new recruits to our coalitions and update blog readers on the latest news and actions related to our efforts. Making such an investment in the blogosphere will also help us engage with bloggers who will then become vocal supporters of our various coalition campaigns which will increase its prominence, attract new recruits to the campaigns, and garner earned media.
- **Social Networks:** Using social-networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and YouTube we will actively engage these communities to build a following for each coalition, engaging users and recruiting additional members to our coalitions. To date, *Media Matters'* has been able to recruit tens of thousands of members on its own social networks through dedicated paid staff time that then spurs organic growth – members inviting friends - providing an important avenue of communication for those that get

their news and information on these ever evolving technological mediums. In particular, this allows us to effectively engage the 18-35 demographic, many of whom obtain most of their news and information on-line and through social networking, and once engaged, remain active, thus allowing us to harness an entire generation.

- **Street Teams:** Working with coalition partners, we will deploy street teams in various progressive cities throughout the country at specific venues likely to be frequented by our target demographic, such as coffee houses, organic grocery stores, festivals, concerts, and political rallies. These street teams will be charged with signing up new recruits for our efforts and distributing informative literature about our campaign. This is a tactic that will not only recruit individuals to our initiatives, but raise awareness and prominence of the campaign.
- **Mobile Text Messaging:** We will utilize mobile text messaging technology to recruit new members and engage them week-to-week with informational messages and calls to action. Mobile text messaging is the next frontier in political organizing especially when it comes to the 18-35 year-old demographic. Run by a member of the online team, we will actively pursue the cell phone numbers of those we recruit while also making a specific effort to have people sign-up to support our efforts using their cell phones. This has been a successful tactic used by political campaigns at all levels and entertainment programming, such as *American Idol*, for vote casting. This allows us to engage members on a consistent basis using the means of communication most readily available to them.
- **Smart Phone Applications:** Running parallel with our mobile text messaging campaign will be the creation of free to end user smart phone applications for the iPhone, Google Android, Verizon, MSN and Palm networks. This will result in new members and enable us to provide up to the minute information and details on important actions all in the convenience of a personal mobile device.
- **Direct Mail/Phone Banking:** Using demographic information obtained from our benchmark poll, follow up studies, information from partner groups, and publicly available data, we will embark on a sustained, highly targeted direct mail and phone banking campaign to those likely to join our cause. This contact will have a recruitment and informational message which will result in new members while also increasing knowledge of our effort with those in the activist base.

These and other efforts will be utilized to grow the community of each coalition and campaign and increase its overall effectiveness. And, as this community grows, so will our capacity to challenge Fox News. *Media Matters* will create each coalition and coordinate its activities, providing central leadership and funding as we create opportunities for the members to take action both online and off.

RISKS

Large coalitions are difficult to manage into any unified action. We recognize that in order to be effective, the coalitions must have a number of groups collectively representing a large constituency which, of course, have their own ideas, interests, and priorities. However, by

providing the coordination, resources, and support, as well as a proven track record in leading these types of efforts, *Media Matters* will exert a level of influence over the direction and timing of the efforts to achieve success. We recognize that this will require extraordinary outreach staff who have the skills and time to navigate these turbulent waters, which is precisely why we must have the ability and resources to recruit and retain the best people. Our light touch in both the *Dobbs* and *Beck* endeavors empowered many coalition partners to sincerely promote their own role in the successes achieved. In order to lead effectively, we will continue to allow each partner to be an important player and claim their share of the spotlight and credit.

With many simultaneous coalitions, progressives will develop coalition or campaign fatigue. Simultaneously coordinating multiple coalitions among a particular segment of the population may cause people to grow weary of engaging in more than one at one time. However, we believe that by building our efforts around particular interest groups we will avoid exhausting our supporters. The progressive movement is wide and diverse enough that persons who are deeply committed to a particular cause or actively involved in one of our partner organizations may not necessarily be active in one involved in another coalition. Additionally, continued success is likely to spur additional participation. By reaching out not to just the same prominent national organizations, but to the state, local, professional, and academic arenas, we can create broad coalitions of unique groups and avoid exhausting the progressive space or causing the targets of our efforts to discount their influence on account of repetitious demands.

A large amount of “blowback” or negative publicity is likely to occur. It is true that Fox News and conservatives will not sit idly by while coalition after coalition exerts pressure on its advertisers, personalities, and audience. We recognize that Fox News has a thin skin and will publicly and privately strike out at its critics. This is nothing new and will only serve to underscore our point that Fox News has, in fact, been waging war on progressives for some time. The public nature of any reaction, itself, and awkward protests by the network that it is not partisan, political, or dishonest, will further prove our point and provide ample opportunities for further engagement. We welcome the debate – and the publicity it will provide, thus putting the focus on the network just as we saw after White House Communications Director, Anita Dunn’s criticism of the network.

Advertisers will recognize our strategy and discount its impact. It is important to remember that advertisers support the network to sell a product. Fear that their brand will be tainted in a large segment of their market or general public will motivate them to drop Fox News. By creating unique coalitions representing a broad set of individuals, rather than the same handful of groups over and over again, supported by the polling data we obtain, we increase our chances to convince particular companies that the danger to their product is in a broad segment of the population, not just a select few who despise Fox News.

There will always be other companies, immune to progressive criticism, willing to advertise on Fox News. This is true. But, it is important to note that our goal is not to eliminate all advertising from Fox News, but to cause the network to pay a financial price significant enough to affect its behavior. As advertisers drop individual programs or the entire network, it becomes harder for the network to charge a premium for its air-time in a particular market, thus affecting revenue. Additionally, it incurs increased costs in marketing itself to replace the

advertisers and revenue it has lost, be it through additional staff time, increased commissions, or having to change its own marketing tactics. Declining revenues, the loss of prominent advertisers, and increased costs will get internal Fox News and News Corp attention.

Fox News is immune to progressive pressure. Maybe, but it's not immune to financial pressure. According to the News Corp annual report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, the conglomerate lost approximately three billion dollars. Its U.S. cable network operations and particularly Fox News was a uniquely profitable enterprise. According to its own annual report, Fox News' advertising revenue increased primarily due to higher pricing and volume. This trend has been consistent across several fiscal years. By decreasing these two variables, as described above, we can affect the profitability of one of the most profitable components of News Corp.

How can you be sure that any change in behavior is a result of your actions? If certainty is based upon a public acknowledgement that any change in Fox News is a result of our efforts, we can't. We can however, eliminate other reasons. Fox News has evolved into the ever increasing partisan political arm of the conservative movement over time because it achieved a particular business goal – increased audience, increased advertiser volume, and increased revenue. A retreat from the network's current campaign in close proximity to declining audience or advertising revenue would be a coincidence extremely difficult for Fox News to explain.

Fox SWAT Team

OBJECTIVE

To widen the perception that Fox News *is* the story by exposing both the misinformation and unethical reporting tactics used by the network.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

Although *Media Matters* currently monitors and rapidly responds to Fox News on a daily basis, we are limited in our bandwidth by resources and the breadth of the remaining media landscape, both conservative and mainstream, which we must also cover. With additional funding, *Media Matters* will increase its internal rapid-response capacity by developing an expanded 24-7 ability to capture, monitor, and expose false or distorted content on the Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, Fox News Radio, Fox News websites, and related feeder sites through the creation of a dedicated "Fox SWAT Team." This team will go beyond the fact-checking and exposing of extremist rhetoric that the current *Media Matters* model specializes in. It will include an investigative journalism component that will report not only on the misinformation itself, but on the way Fox News produces that misinformation. *Media Matters* has had recent and astounding success investigating and defending attacks against administration officials. Additional resources and commitment will allow us to expand these activities and make them a permanent fixture within our organization.

Our "Fox SWAT Team" will pick apart bad reporting by re-reporting bad stories; interviewing victims of one-sided hit segments and posting their accounts; recording "counter-punch" answer-back videos to Fox News attacks; and aggressively covering the network's reporters as

they cover stories in public settings. As we have done in the past, we will uncover and publicize previously unknown facts that shut down whatever distortion Fox News is pushing. Crisis communications experts will work with targets of attacks to develop effective message and rebuttal points to new controversies and strategically distribute. We will disseminate this research, in real time, across all media outlets, trumpeting our findings exposing Fox News' tactics.

CASE STUDY

Earlier this summer, Fox News falsely reported that the Obama administration had suppressed the report of an Environmental Protection Agency "whistleblower" who dissented from the agency's finding that carbon dioxide, in its capacity as a greenhouse gas, poses a risk to public health. The story was effectively refuted by the blog TalkingPointsMemo.com, which conducted an interview with the "whistleblower" and got him to acknowledge that the EPA had not commissioned his report, that the Bush administration also ignored his climate science work, that his background was primarily in economics, and that his report was full of "errors" because he had rushed it. The TPM story formed the basis for a subsequent New York Times story that showed the suppression claim to be phony. This approach should be taken to every major new story Fox breaks.

And when Fox set its sights on Obama's education official Kevin Jennings, *Media Matters* stopped the smear machine in its tracks with our investigative rapid-response reporting. We conclusively debunked the right-wing media claim that Jennings "covered up statutory rape" 21 years ago by not reporting to authorities a conversation he had with a student who told him about being involved with an "older man." We exclusively obtained the Massachusetts drivers' license of the student confirming that at the time of the incident, he was at least sixteen years of age -- the legal age of consent in Massachusetts. The former student then provided *Media Matters* with a statement that confirmed his age and criticized the right-wing "noise machine." The media widely used our reporting to debunk the attacks on Jennings. The Advocate, NPR, Politico, Salon, CNN's Jessica Yellin, Talking Points Memo, AMERICAblog and many, many more all highlighted our research in their coverage. Our reporting also forced Fox News to append an Editor's Note to multiple articles, admitting that the student was 16 years at the time of the conversation with Jennings. *The Atlantic* recognized our impact as well: "Thanks to that one legal fact [about the student's age]--and the efforts of Media Matters in digging it up and pushing it out--Jennings seems to have evaded the conservative attack machine."

Successes like these are crucial to changing the mainstream media's and public's perception of Fox News. While they were once the province of traditional shoe leather journalism, as budgets have uniformly declined nationwide over the past decade, the ability and willingness of the for-profit media to do this type of critical work has disappeared. Accordingly, combining this type of reporting with our existing tried and true monitoring, research, and publishing, is a natural step for *Media Matters* to increase its effectiveness and impact.

RISKS

Expanding from media criticism to investigative journalism will hurt *Media Matters* brand. We recognize that to many, *Media Matters* is taking a huge step by introducing original

reporting to its standard brand of media criticism. In fact, this is nothing new to us and is really just a natural evolution that must be made to more effectively perform our core mission of ferreting out conservative misinformation and holding those accountable who continue to traffic in such specious claims. Remember, at times, *Media Matters* has produced original reports based on tips passed on to the organization. Additionally, our research, video/audio clips, columns and communications products often create or become news stories in their own right within the mainstream press. Unfortunately, this, like all of our work, is in large part necessary only because the media has failed to police itself.

We are not traditionally investigative journalists. As noted above, we have had success in precisely this area. Moreover, many members of our staff are former reporters and editors from newspapers and television networks. Everyday we receive resumes from job-seekers fleeing the carnage of the American news industry. With our current staff and strong hiring practices, we expect to have little trouble forming a top notch “Fox SWAT Team” of experienced reporters and researchers dedicated to our core mission and the objectives of this campaign.

Opposition Research

OBJECTIVE

To place conservative media and political actors, institutions and organizations under heavy scrutiny, uncover and expose vulnerabilities and place them on the defensive.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

One consequence of former White House Communication Director Anita Dunn’s comments about Fox News this fall was that the network went to great lengths to defend itself on and off the air. Each minute of air-time spent justifying its own existence and bolstering its own credibility is one less minute of air-time Fox News hosts spend coordinating communications and activism for the conservative movement. This is further illustrated by the amount of time Bill O’Reilly spent defending himself during his nightly program in the past when accused of sexual harassment by a former employee and of making racially charged comments about an African American owned restaurant in Harlem. In short, we have learned that Fox News and its on-air personalities are thin skinned. The claims against O’Reilly, past claims against Roger Ailes, and the recent Salon.com profile of Glenn Beck indicate that there is much to discover about the network and its hosts for anyone motivated and able to discover it.

Media Matters proposes to create an opposition research team that will collect and gather in-depth opposition research on News Corp, the Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, Fox News’ websites and the right-wing websites that feed it, as well as the key employees and personalities thereof. Progressives urgently need this type of research, as Fox News and its allies have become more and more aggressive in attacking its leaders and agenda.

Take the example of Peter Thiel, an early founder of PayPal and San Francisco hedge fund investor who directly funded, through a small government group, prior racist attack videos by

James O’Keefe, the right-wing operative who staged the recent ACORN video sting. Thiel’s role in funding such attacks has gone completely unremarked and largely uninvestigated.

An opposition research team will serve to hold Thiel and others like him accountable which is precisely why we propose the implementation of long-term, ongoing research that will focus on the backgrounds, connections, operations and political and financial activities of the individuals carrying out or sanctioning attacks – executives, anchors, reporters, senior staff, web proprietors, activists, financiers/donors, and more. We will conduct extensive public records searches and compile opposition books on individuals; trace the networks and the money behind them for potential unethical or illegal activities; create a mechanism for the airing of grievances by disgruntled News Corp and Fox News employees and ex-employees, and more.

Preliminary targets for this opposition research would include, but by no means be limited to:

- Websites that feed Fox News such as WorldNetDaily, BigHollywood.com, NewsMax, and BigGovernment.com.
- Conservative think tanks and organizations such as Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, and Cato Institute.
- Key figures at News Corp. such as Rupert Murdoch, Chase Carey, David DeVoe, Lawrence Jacobs, and James Murdoch.
- Financiers and donors such as Peter Thiel, Richard Mellon Scaife, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the John M. Olin Foundation, and the Koch Family Foundations.
- Prominent Fox News executives such as Fox News CEO Roger Ailes, senior vice president of news Michael Clemente, vice president of news Sean Smith, vice president of news editorial product Jay Wallace, and Fox Business Network executive vice president Kevin Magee.
- Prominent Fox News personalities such as Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity, and Bill O’Reilly.
- Senior production and corporation staff such as *Hannity* executive producer John Finley, *On the Record* executive producer Meade Cooper, *O’Reilly Factor* senior executive producer David Tabacoff, and *Fox & Friends* executive producer Lauren Petterson.

Again, this, like our other initiatives, will work hand-in-hand and feed one another. For example, information uncovered by opposition research efforts may guide efforts of the SWAT Team in its investigative reporting or uncover a potential claimant for the litigation group or the proper focus for a coalition campaign.

CASE STUDY

Successfully leveraging opposition research will be critical in pressuring those involved to cease activity, as well as changing the public perception of Fox News. *Media Matters* has already had success in this field. Earlier this year, anti-health care donor and activist Rick Scott was the subject of intense background research by *Media Matters* and others. We exposed his involvement in a large fraud case arising from his time as head of a hospital chain, and Scott was effectively discredited and marginalized as a result of the bad publicity. For example, in a disastrous interview with CNN’s Rick Sanchez on August 6, 2009, Scott attempted to defend himself by pointing out that other health care providers also had to pay large fines, to which

Sanchez responded: “How much more wrong can you be than what you just said? Not only has your company screwed up, and you just admitted to it. But you're saying, ‘And look at all the other companies, they did the same thing.’ ... It doesn't sound to me like a sterling system that we have, does it?”

RISKS

We may not uncover anything useful. Every campaign knows that there is always something *there* – you just have to look for it long enough. This endeavor will be no different. Our ability to turn over useful information will be directly proportional to our ability to hire talented staff with experience in this area of work. It could take weeks to find that first useful nugget – that first truly amazing tidbit that leads to coverage from the mainstream press. That single piece of research may well be worth the weeks needed to uncover it. This of course is not the likely scenario. In all likelihood we will produce volumes of useful data week after week.

Our efforts may encourage conservatives to do opposition research on us. We have been the target of media conservatives for years. “Reporters” and columnists for conservative media outlets, blogs and allied organizations have already done their best to attack *Media Matters* with half-baked accusations and outright lies to little or no success. Few are as prepared as we are for any impending storm of controversy. Organizationally, we have anticipated potential lines of attack from the right and stand ready to respond. Additionally, it is far easier to police the activities of our modest staff than it is for a multi-billion dollar media empire to monitor its own.

In a mid-term year, we may not be able to find talented people to do the work. Typically it can be difficult to recruit talented staff in a mid-term year because so many campaigns are hiring. This is not a typical mid-term year however. Every day we receive applications from qualified researchers ready to work who have landed in Washington, DC with hopes of working in the Obama White House. Thousands have arrived for scant few jobs in the administration. Additionally, this effort is much more than the 6-8 month political gig typically found on the campaign trail. Our effort will be more appealing in no small part due to its breadth of activity and length – things won't be ending in 2011, they'll only be ramping up.

Video Tracking

OBJECTIVE

To systematically track Fox News personalities producing video of private and public events to further enhance the message of Fox News as a blatantly partisan political organization.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Media Matters proposes to hire and deploy a top-notch video and audio tracking team that will stake out private and public events with Fox News anchors, hosts, reporters, prominent contributors and senior network and corporate staff. This tracking staff will be based in Los Angeles, New York and Washington, DC to make certain we have boots on the ground

whenever we discover that a Fox News personality will be speaking at or participating in a public or private event not directly related to their work within the network. The trackers will also attend major political news events to record those associated with Fox News as they conduct their work.

The resultant footage will be used by both our Fox SWAT team and our opposition-research team to shine a light on, discredit and neutralize Fox News.

CASE STUDY

The power of a thirty-second clip of video is perhaps the most potent weapon at our disposal, as our previous experience with video tracking illustrates. Last year, *Media Matters Action Network* teamed up with the Center for American Progress Action Fund to form Progressive Accountability, coordinating progressive messaging and demanding accountability on the media coverage of Sen. John McCain's record. As part of this project, over six hundred McCain/Palin events were captured live by Progressive Accountability trackers, resulting in more than five hundred hours of footage. In conjunction with this substantive stockpile of footage, we released a series of "mini-movies" on YouTube to drive home our research on conservative policies. For example, when McCain said that staying one hundred years in Iraq would be "fine" with him, Progressive Accountability seized the moment, first recording and then broadly disseminating the clip and finally pressing the media to cover it. And cover it they did. Among many other outlets, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New Yorker* and even the conservative *The National Review* all eventually covered McCain's controversial comments, as did cable news, poking hole after hole in the maverick persona constructed by the media in year's past.

The impact of video tracking footage is by no mean limited to presidential candidates. In September, *Media Matters* posted behind-the-scenes footage of a Fox News producer coaching marchers before a live "report" from the so-called "9/12 March on Washington" – a protest organized in part by Glenn Beck's 9-12 Project, which described itself as "a place for you and other like-minded Americans looking for direction in taking back the control of our country." After *Media Matters* posted the footage, media big and small immediately began to question Fox News' already-shaky journalistic integrity. For example, CNN's Rick Sanchez blasted Fox News for "telling the crowd when to cheer." Mediaite.com added, "The interaction between producer and crowd is completely out of bounds" and noted "*Media Matters* was the first to post the video." The video tracking footage proved embarrassing enough to Fox News that the network punished the producer and during the next round of tea party protests, on October 17, the network chose not to air any live coverage at all.

Already we are seeing success with tracking News Corp executives and Fox News personalities in some initial trial runs aimed at gauging viability.

On November 9, Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News Corp., the parent company of Fox News, agreed with Glenn Beck's assertion that the President was a "racist", because, in Murdoch's words, Obama made a "very racist comment." Of course, no one knew what "very racist comment" Murdoch was referring to. Fox News was forced to clean up the boss's mess issuing a statement saying that Murdoch "does not...think the president is a racist" regardless of what he may have otherwise said. Statements and spin aside, it still wasn't clear what "very racist

comment" Murdoch was talking about. In an effort to clean up the matter once and for all, *Media Matters* staked out and then confronted Murdoch on Capitol Hill the following week asking that he clarify his comment. Rather than offer additional spin, Murdoch denied outright that he'd ever said such a thing. The obvious factual conflict, captured on tape by *Media Matters* staff, found its way all over the internet and eventually to the airwaves of MSNBC where Keith Olbermann named Murdoch a "Worst Person in the World."

Next up, *Media Matters* followed Fox News host Glenn Beck to a retirement community in Florida for what was being billed as one of a series of upcoming rallies across the country with the right-wing talker. Armed with video equipment, a *Media Matters* tracker captured video of Beck making one outrageous claim after another – the need for a "Constitution czar," some climate change science denial, some big scary sounding numbers and some kudos to Ronald Reagan. Beck then pressed on, telling the crowd that he'd assembled a "shadow cabinet" to create "a 100-year plan for America" because "we need to start thinking like the Chinese." This of course was all a prelude to the real purpose of the rally – to sell a yet to be written book about his "100-year plan" and tell those in attendance to join him in Washington, DC "at the feet of Abraham Lincoln" next August on the anniversary of Martin Luther King's famous speech. The *New York Times* took note in a write-up of the event quoting a spokesperson for **our** organization cutting through the spin to the heart of the matter: " 'He might just be trying to sell books, but there are much simpler ways to sell books,' said Ari Rabin-Havt, a vice president at *Media Matters*, the liberal media monitoring group. He said Mr. Beck "sounded more like a presidential candidate than a pundit."

RISKS

We may spend hundreds of man-hours and not obtain enough useful video to justify the expense. It is true that many hundreds of hours may be spent filming events with no useful video being obtained. However, given our experience in monitoring media and staff experience conducting video tracking in other jobs, it is more likely we will find something useful every time we turn on the camera, even if it is video that is held to be used in conjunction with video from other events to show a pattern of behavior. Moreover, one "gotcha" moment, such as the "maccaca" clip that sunk Sen. George Allen's re-election campaign in 2006, that garners national attention and significantly damages the Fox News brand or a related personality, may be worth the expense of the entire initiative.

Video trackers may be barred from certain events. On occasion this happened in 2008 with our trackers but for the most part, they are able to gain entry to most public and ticketed events that they sought admission to. Trackers rely on creativity and their own experience garnered from attending dozens of events to gain access; it is unlikely that they will be barred from many events. They will be trained by seasoned experts adept at gaining entry, how to handle and work around rejection, etc.

Video trackers may be subject to violence and/or attack. Trackers are trained to blend into the crowd for precisely this reason. They aren't attending these events to harass or be noticed, they are there simply to gather audio and video. If something violent in nature does occur, trackers will be trained to exit to safety and file a police report never ceasing the recording of audio and video which could then be used to build a legal case.

Litigation

OBJECTIVE

Bring litigation against Fox News and its feeders holding them accountable for illegal and tortious actions.

CONTEXT

The right-wing noise machine has relied upon both an expansive view of legal precedent protecting the freedom of the press, and the progressive movement's own commitment to the First Amendment, to shield it from any accountability for their actions that deceive the public, smear progressives, and undermine an agenda of reform.

For example, *Media Matters* has catalogued a shocking array of slanderous attacks on progressives by conservative pundits. As part of the ongoing witch-hunt against members of President Obama's administration, Fox News' Glenn Beck recently declared that former environmental czar Van Jones is a "convicted felon ... who spent, I think, six months in prison after the Rodney King beating." In fact, Van Jones has never served time in prison nor been convicted of a crime. It is statements like these – clearly false by any objective standard, clearly damaging to the recipient – which the right-wing media throws out with impunity.

These attacks by the right-wing media are not limited to public officials. *Media Matters* recently exposed Fox News pundits 'reporting' on a numbers of stories about the progressive group ACORN employee. Two conservative activists trying to humiliate ACORN with a "gotcha" videos secretly videotaped an encounters with a ACORN employees. In several of these encounters, state wiretapping laws may have been violated. Specifically, Maryland law is alleged to have been violated in the creation of a video at ACORN's Baltimore office. As a consequence, ACORN and two of its former employees filed a lawsuit against the activists alleging violations of Maryland's wiretapping law seeking the specific damages and injunctive relief provided by the statute and other relief. The law makes it unlawful for anyone to "willfully intercept, endeavor to intercept, or procure any other person to intercept or endeavor to intercept, any wire, oral or electronic communication." The law also prohibits disclosing the contents of an illegally intercepted communication. In addition to the statutory damage, the lawsuit, claims the video damaged ACORN's reputation and asks for an injunction prohibiting further broadcast or distribution. An attorney for the plaintiffs said the emotional distress claim "is not an exaggeration," according to a September 24 Associated Press (AP) report. "They're doing their best not to watch television. They've sort of been prisoners in their own homes," Freeman said. "While everyone, including them, agrees that some of the things they said were dumb, in Maryland we have a right to say dumb things in the privacy of our homes and offices without fear of being taped and without fear of being splashed all over the Internet."

This "gotcha" use by the right-wing media of secretly taped encounters is by no means limited to ACORN. A conference call with the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) was recently recorded by one of the participants without disclosure, and the conservative media (including Glenn Beck and the *Washington Times*) immediately used the tape to allege that the NEA broke laws against lobbying and electioneering during the secretly taped call. These allegations once

again had no basis in fact. The transcript of the conference call contains no evidence of illegal electioneering or lobbying by government officials.

But as these revelations of secretly recorded visits to ACORN offices and the undisclosed recording of an NEA conference call suggest, conservatives are willing to potentially violate state criminal wiretapping and recording laws and commit tortious acts hiding behind the First Amendment, the courts, and progressives own commitment to a free and lively press. And, encouraging this behavior, Fox News is giving them a platform for publication of these smears.

Conservatives are unwilling to yield even to minimal restrictions placed upon the press and speech by our laws as they have embarked on a well-coordinated, well-financed campaign to hurt progressives, smear their names, misrepresent their words, invade their privacy, defeat their candidates, and destroy their policy proposals. That is why *Media Matters* seeks financial support for the creation of a progressive infrastructure – the first of its kind – to support litigation and related communication and public education efforts in appropriate circumstances.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

We propose the creation of a team of attorneys and support personnel for the coordination and active legal defense of individuals and organizations within the progressive community. The team would be available to assist and, when appropriate, represent individuals who may have a legal cause of action as a result of the activities of right-wing activists, Fox News and other conservative media, and seek regulatory relief against offending individuals and entities. Initial research has shown that there are at least five types of litigation that could be pursued: defamation, false light, invasion of privacy, deceptive trade practices, and campaign finance violations.

The last thing Fox News wants on its hands is a law suit – especially one where it could be on the hook for legal damages or an admission of culpability.

CASE STUDY

This approach has a proven track record for progressives. During the 2004 presidential campaign, the Democratic National Committee filed an FEC complaint against Sinclair Broadcasting Corp alleging that its plan to air an anti-Kerry hit video a month before the election was an illegal campaign contribution to the Bush campaign. *Media Matters* underwrote a threatened shareholder lawsuit claiming the adverse publicity around Sinclair's plans was causing its stock price to drop and therefore the company had breached its fiduciary responsibilities. The combined actions caused Sinclair to cancel its plans.

RISKS

We have no organizational experience in litigation. While this initiative would be a new step for *Media Matters*, we have a number of attorneys on staff with litigation experience and, properly, funded, the ability to hire and create a top-notch team of lawyers and support staff to direct and conduct our efforts. We recognize that this will take time and that is why we do not

anticipate any significant commencement of activity for some time while we create the institutional capability to perform this work.

The regulatory agencies are reluctant to police the media. We acknowledge that the odds of either the Federal Election Commission or Federal Communication Commission sanctioning Fox News or its hosts are long, at best. However, that is not to say that there are not legitimate complaints to be made, which may, themselves, either through the investigative process itself or attending publicity, affect a change in corporate behavior, regardless of the ultimate disposition of the action. Remember, campaigns often employ such tactics with little likelihood of success simply for the larger media picture it generates against an opponent. Fox News knows this. Perhaps that is why they've seen fit to file Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests against the Obama administration – which were denied by the courts – but never managed to lift a finger for such requests during the Bush administration.

We may not find a Plaintiff with a valid claim willing to sue Fox News. This is true, however unlikely. It is more true if we do not look or make it known that we are willing to assist those who may have a legitimate cause of action. Too often, potential plaintiffs against media entities are unable or unwilling to seek redress because of the high bars imposed by landmark cases such as *New York Times v. Sullivan*, which make it unlikely that many attorneys will take these cases on a contingency basis. By providing counsel or litigation costs we may open the doors of the courthouse to many who otherwise would not have come forward.

Website

OBJECTIVE

Build an online headquarters that serves as a repository of Fox News research, reporting, action campaigns and activist tools and social networks.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

We will build a massive website dedicated to taking Fox News head-on – a one-stop-shop for all things Fox News if you will. The website will brand our overall campaign and serve as the information hub for our coalition partners and those looking to challenge Fox News. It will be prominently featured on all individual campaign sites, literature distributed in person or public events, in paid media, and on action alerts and other communications sent out to our subscribers, the media, and through all tools used by the grassroots coalition campaigns coordinated by *Media Matters*.

Our army of activists will find the new website both informative and interactive as it will encourage their involvement within specially designed social networks geared toward self-organization – Students Against Fox, Women Against Fox, San Antonians Against Fox, etc. – and provide them with the ability to interact with other like-minded activists, recruit new members, etc.

Using the website as our primary messaging device and as the public face of the Fox News campaign, we will launch regular calls to action against the network providing simple-to-use

tools enabling swift participation by those motivated to get involved thereby expanding our audience and coalitions.

Features of this online hub will include among other things:

- **Original Research/Reporting:** All research and original reporting done as a part of the broader campaign will be archived in a clear, easily searchable database enabling activists, bloggers, reporters and others to easily review the mounting case against Fox News. The latest news and research will be featured on the mainpage and throughout the site to keep those visiting the website informed of ongoing narratives and opportunities for action.
- **Fox News Blog:** A blog providing commentary about Fox News and related coalition campaigns will be updated daily enabling those visiting the website to actively engage in the discussion. The blog will also house guest postings from progressive leaders and coalition partners, inform readers of developing or breaking stories and, when appropriate, offer a humorous take on news surrounding the conservative network.
- **Video:** Online videos – including tracking and creative viral content – will be displayed throughout the site and in an overall archive as well allowing users to embed the content on their own blogs and personal websites.
- **Action Tools:** The website will be equipped with the latest in online action tools including email sends, petitions, letters-to-the-editor and phone banking tools, online polls, story, video and photo sharing tools for contests and more.
- **Social Networks:** In addition to taking advantage of existing social networks like Twitter and Facebook, the website will deploy a social network of its own connecting members, allowing them to offer comments on posted material, enabling them to self organize in their communities, on their campuses and by specific issue or interest groups (i.e. LGBT, Women, African Americans, Latinos, Students, etc.) Users will also be able to start their own pages or profiles to recruit friends, family and co-workers to the cause. The resulting enlarged community will be used to harness the creative input of members with online polls, votes on specific ads, special contests and more.
- **Coalition Campaigns:** As a central part of the overall campaign, the various issue focused coalitions will be prominently displayed throughout the website along with links to any separate issue-specific micro-websites created for specific calls to action.
- **Online Store:** An online store will be featured on the website selling t-shirts, hats and other attire as well as buttons, yard signs, bumper stickers and other materials carrying our message against Fox News – sales will generate new recruits.
- **Organic Recruitment:** Other efforts discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this plan such as earned media, public events, paid television/radio/print advertising, etc. while not necessarily intended for recruitment will inevitably result in new members, a larger audience, and more engaged activists.

RISKS

We may reduce traffic from our main page or vice versa. This year *Media Matters* has partnered with a variety of organizations to push coalition campaigns against Lou Dobbs and Glenn Beck, each with its own issue specific website. At the same time *Media Matters'* website

traffic has nearly doubled in the past year. This could lead one to assume that Media Matters main website will not be hurt by traffic to another website pushing similar issues. Additionally, the main Media Matters website will push traffic to the new Fox centered website and vice-versa further enabling both sites to grow in size and audience.

The Site will be repetitive with the MMFA page. Remember, this new website will focus specifically on Fox News and related outlets while *Media Matters* will continue to monitor and correct conservative misinformation throughout the media so repetition shouldn't be a major issue of concern. Additionally, the new website will host initiatives not currently regular features on the main *Media Matters* like original reporting, video tracking and corporate accountability so the new website's overall flavor will be considerably different.

We may not be able to generate sufficient traffic to have an effect. Because we will be working with a variety of coalitions on this project we will likely have several already existing websites, email lists and other audiences tuning in to the new website. Also, we will be utilizing a variety of tools to build an audience for this new site, including online advertising, list growth, social networks and mobile text messaging – each will help build and enhance the number of people regularly visiting the website. Thus far there is no indication that previous coalition websites have suffered because of lack of interest – all signs point to a progressive movement hungry to take Fox News on directly.

Elite Persuasion

OBJECTIVE

Mold a new conventional wisdom against Fox News among elite political and media opinion leaders who shape the public perception of the network.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

In order to neutralize Fox News, it is critical that we engage elite opinion leaders in both political and media circles on our mission to hold Fox News accountable. *Media Matters* will target political and media elites in key markets with aggressive advertising and individual outreach designed to sour conventional wisdom and the media elite's positive opinions of, misplaced journalistic solidarity with, and its tendency to follow or defend Fox News. By investing these influential leaders, we will create a waterfall effect, growing our numbers and power while also further removing Fox News from the table of those engaged in civil political discourse.

This effort will take various forms including the implementation of an aggressive paid media campaign with television ads run each weekend on the all-important Sunday morning political talk shows (except Fox News) in New York, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Atlanta – these cities house the bulk of important media and political leaders. Additionally, we will engage these leaders in a highly targeted direct mail campaign designed to sway or reinforce their opinions about Fox News while also bringing awareness to our overall efforts. We will also consider other television, radio and print advertising, targeting programs and publications that these elites regularly watch, listen to and read like Comedy Central's *Daily Show*, WTOP news

radio and *Politico*. All paid media will creatively push our message that Fox News is an increasingly aggressive and vicious political organization, further making the network illegitimate in the eyes of elite news consumers.

An on-going out-reach effort, with presentations on the nature and scope of the problem, will also be undertaken to engage progressive leaders and opinion influencers in DC and selectively around the country. We will also organize public forums in key markets, journalism symposia, and panels at progressive conferences around our new, tested Fox News message. These efforts may also include invitations to roundtable discussions, panel discussions, and symposiums on the emerging role of journalists in a changed media environment inviting media critics from prominent organizations and publications such as the *Columbia Journalism Review* and prominent journalism professors nationwide such as Robert McChesney from the University of Illinois and Christopher Martin of Occidental College who recently authored a significant study of coverage of the ACORN scandal.

Additionally, *Media Matters* staff will submit articles for publication in prominent publications such as the *Columbia Journalism Review*, industry publications like *Media Week*, and engage with industry bloggers such as The New York Times Media Decoder Blog.

As part of that education effort we will create a documentary on the “Victims of Fox News” – which happens to include many of these political and media elites -- that will educate and invest these important leaders in stopping Fox News. The documentary will be rolled out in a way that maximizes earned media and resultant recruitment. It will also be an important tool for our viral online “public” education and direct mail campaign.

We may also consider pushing prominent progressives to stop appearing on Fox News. As we continue to educate the public on Fox News’ transformation into a political organization, we could urge Democratic elected officials, pundits, organization and other leaders to demonstrate their refusal to buy into Fox News’ pretense as a news organization by declining to appear on all Fox News programs. Towards that end, we could consider posting a list of Democrats and progressives that have appeared on Fox News each day on our website to put pressure on those still participating to end their relationship with Fox News.

CASE STUDY

Reaching out to VIP’s is nothing new. Political campaigns have been doing it for generations. Presidential contenders expend considerable resources in the early stages of their campaigns to court and land the endorsements of not only influential political leaders but also the approval of media elites as well. They run targeted ads, send targeted mail, hold public events to show their breadth of support and much more. The key for these campaigns is reaching these elites where they are – so too will be the thrust of this effort. Ads on television and radio programs watched by these elites, direct mail to show the seriousness of the issue, public events to show the breadth of support – all of these techniques will be deployed to sway the opinion of these key leaders who shape the conventional wisdom that drives public opinion every day in this country.

RISKS

Elites will resent our efforts to influence them and defend Fox News. This may be the case, that is why great time and effort will be made to carefully craft our message and ensuing contact with these audiences. Private meetings are all the more important for recruiting people within this universe so that they feel well thought of and so that messages can be finely tailored to each pitch. Additionally, our outside campaign (television, direct mail, precinct walking etc.) will only serve to emphasize the popularity of our mission and the dedication of those involved – another good selling point for some within this core elite group.

Elites' minds are already made up about Fox News. It is likely that many in the elite class have already made up their mind when it comes to Fox News – however, it is also likely that their private opinions do not match what they say publicly. Talk to any elite reporter and they will argue that Fox News does have real reporting. Equate the quality of the reporter you are talking with to Fox News and they'll be offended. Our goal here then is to make sure that the personal feelings members of these audiences have are reflected in the views they choose to make public.

Affecting reporters and hosts attitudes about Fox News may not translate to different coverage in their news rooms. This may be true. Of all the changes we seek, affecting the coverage on Fox News may be the most difficult, but it is not without hope. In late November, Media Bistro posted a Fox News memo acknowledging "a series of mistakes on FNC in recent months" and pledging to "quality check everything before it makes air, and we never having [sic] to explain, retract, qualify or apologize again." The memo added that "[m]istakes by any member of the show team that end up on air may result in immediate disciplinary action" and "jobs are on the line here." This after *Media Matters* and others caught the network red handed trying to pass off video of a 2008 McCain/Palin rally as footage of a Palin book signing event in Michigan depicting the turnout as massive. Other cable news outlets and industry trade websites and publications pounced on the "error" which ultimately resulted in the internal memo that was later obtained by Media Bistro. Perhaps, repeatedly embarrassing the network may be just the recipe needed to affect real, lasting change at Fox News.

Public Persuasion

OBJECTIVE

Persuade a broad cross-section of Americans of the dangers posed to journalism and civil society by Fox News' attacks and the wider right-wing onslaught.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

Of course, we cannot limit our persuasion to media and political leaders alone. We must seek to persuade a broad cross-section of the American people of the illegitimacy and danger to democracy posed by Fox News. As discussed previously, there is a knowledge deficit about Fox News viewers and its place in the market that we must overcome. By way of analogy, we need to know what Pepsi learns about Coke before it releases a new product or launches a new

advertising campaign. Before we can take any action, we require sophisticated market and messaging research and development.

Using the results of the elite persuasion campaign, market data and message testing, our communications staff will work to secure news articles, opinion columns, newspaper editorials, blog posts and radio and television segments critical of Fox News. In addition to an aggressive earned media strategy, we will deploy a major, targeted television, radio and print persuasion campaign designed to sway public sentiment against Fox News. We will focus on programs and publications that attract the key demographics we seek to influence. It is imperative that we implement this type of coordinated communications strategy in order to maximize our impact. A recent missed opportunity illustrates the necessity of such a pro-active and aggressive approach to bringing attention not only the products of our own work, but that of others as well. This fall, as previously mentioned, two Occidental College professors released a sophisticated content analysis survey of the long-running right-wing media campaign against ACORN, which provided important context to the recent revelations from credible scholars. It appears the study happened by accident, appeared at just the right time, attracting some small measure of media coverage. Had this non-partisan study been the result of a coordinated communications effort, it would have garnered more attention and had the potential, using Fox News' biased, inaccurate coverage of this supposed scandal, to discredit the network. With proper coordination, planning, and publicity we could cause such studies to be undertaken and give them the attention they deserve to affect public perceptions of Fox News. Accordingly, we will engage academia to perform its own research and analyses of Fox News' conduct and its impact on the viewing public and political discourse and then promote the work through a combination of paid and earned media to maximum effect.

CASE STUDY

In the fall of 2009, CNN's Lou Dobbs put his non-stop onslaught of misinformation targeting the immigrant community on hold in favor of a new topic: President Obama's birth certificate. Long the conspiratorial fascination of far-right fringe activists, Dobbs began "reporting" on purported questions surrounding Obama's place of birth – of course, the president was born in Hawaii. Concerned that the long-ago debunked conspiracy was now making its way onto a legitimate mainstream cable news outlet, *Media Matters* took action calling out CNN for trafficking in such garbage. After CNN president Jon Klein defended Dobbs' coverage, *Media Matters* took things to the airwaves buying ad time critical of Dobbs, Klein and CNN on cable networks including CNN. The initial ad buy received considerable media attention – more so after CNN refused to run the ad sparking further coverage and mainstream press criticism. In the weeks that followed, Dobbs would be reigned in on the subject – he did not return to the matter until after his abrupt departure from CNN in November.

RISKS

People's minds are already made up about Fox News. Yes, many people already have solid opinions of Fox News which is why our initial benchmark poll is so important. We need to know who has an opinion (negative and positive), who of those with positive opinions can be swayed and how, and who hasn't made up their mind. This is essential especially when considering this

initiative. It is unlikely that we will find that most of the American people have firm opinions that are unswayable when it comes to Fox News.

Is changing attitudes about Fox News really enough? Changing attitudes about Fox News alone is not enough but it is a vital part of this campaign. Without swaying political and media elites as well as large swaths of the public against the network, they will be impossible to contain. The success of these goals will be reflected in surveys and other studies that show declining viewership, lessening impact on other outlets etc. In order to truly be effective however we can't simply contain Fox News' influence. We need to make Fox News such a poisonous brand that it becomes a liability to the progressive movement. That is precisely why this larger public persuasion campaign is so important. Such an initiative allows us the flexibility to not just contain Fox News' influence but to use Fox News against its own interests both on the business and political end.

Media outlets will refuse to run exposes on Fox News. This may be true. We know that Fox News will likely refuse to run any stories critical of the network or related News Corp outlets. Generally speaking, news outlets competing with News Corp businesses will go after stories that are well researched and likely to create drama – they really are no different than any other story. Experienced communications staff will work reporters daily to place stories and when they are having difficulty, there are always online progressive outlets like Huffington Post or TPM to turn to.

Request for Support

If Fox News' activities are not checked, they will continue to pose as objective non-partisan purveyors of current events while continuing to mislead American voters about the nature of public policy proposals, progressive and public institutions, as well as the integrity and conduct of public servants and private individuals, influencing their voting decisions at the great expense of the American people.

The stakes involved for the country could not be higher. The nation is quickly approaching the 2010 midterm elections. As we near this crucial moment, it is likely that Fox News will engage in even more aggressive conduct disguised as journalism that is, in fact, little more than a campaign commercial for a given candidate.

In light of Fox News' fierce and coordinated attack on progressives, and at a time of shrinking available resources, a new progressive infrastructure to fight back urgently needs to be created and funded. Hanging in the balance is our ability to prevent the corruption of our democracy through a misinformed electorate.

With your support, we will be able to greatly expand our operational capacity to directly confront the unrestrained corruption of Fox News. We thank you for taking the time to review our proposal, and we hope to have you with us on the *Media Matters* team as we work towards a healthier media and a stronger America.

Research Issue Pods

OBJECTIVE

To expose and, where appropriate, correct in real time issue-related misinformation in national, state, and local media.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

In order to most effectively correct, analyze, and debunk conservative misinformation in the media, we propose to enhance our existing capacity by creating new research pods devoted entirely to monitoring media coverage of one specific issue. Each team will be responsible for exposing and, where appropriate, correcting in real time issue-related misinformation in national, state, and local media.

We propose to create research pods for the following issues:

- Environment/Climate Change
- Economy
- Immigration
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues
- Gun Violence
- Reproductive Rights

In addition to monitoring the national media, each research team will be responsible for monitoring an expanded selection of local print outlets and radio stations for misinformation relating to their issues. By identifying and helping to quash falsehoods and smears in regional media, we will stop misinformation on issues important to each issue community from taking flight into an intense media environment.

We will also call attention to the danger of the vitriol spewed by local radio hosts, as their comments normalize hate speech and poison the national dialogue as well as serve as a key component of an echo chamber for conservative talking points and falsehoods. This research initiative will serve to much more deeply penetrate the media landscape and its treatment of various progressive priorities.

With respect to regional media, we will identify specific jurisdictions where issue-related policy debates in a given time period are likely to occur – including states in which ballot referenda are being considered – and give particularly attention to the state and local media’s coverage of the matter.

CASE STUDY

When the resignation of Judge David Souter from the United States Supreme Court was announced, we immediately formed a research and communications team within MMFA to

begin to research potential nominees, monitor media coverage, and work with our progressive partners to prepare for and engage in the battle over the vacancy on the high court. Because of this team's hard work, we stood virtually alone in correcting misinformation about the nominee from the time she was named, prepared with research and communications strategies that were then reused and broadcast by progressive partners, administration officials, and large media outlets including *The New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, and *the Los Angeles Times*. Our success in beating back the attacks on her were critical in the first seventy-two hours after her nomination and the materials we had *already* produced were re-used again and again, together with new products throughout the entire process.

Progressive Talent Initiative

For decades, conservatives have understood that the media is the bridge between policies and public opinion. The right-wing has used this knowledge to its considerable advantage. As of now, conservatives rule the airwaves, using well-funded platforms such as Fox News and an army of conservative talking heads to dominate the media landscape and advance falsehoods on a variety of issues. They have spent years utilizing resources like the Leadership Institute, a permanent, sustainable piece of conservative infrastructure where right-wing pundits are given professional media training.

By comparison, there has never been a centralized progressive structure to turn out progressive talkers. As a result, reporters and bookers have to search harder for progressive voices, and even after they have found them, these individuals are often forced to prepare for their media appearances without assistance. Many have never had any formal training on how best to present their ideas.

Progressives simply cannot afford to yield the advantage of professional pundit training to conservatives any longer. Accordingly, in 2009 *Media Matters for America* (MMFA) launched a full-service media training and booking center called the Progressive Talent Initiative (PTI). The ambitious goal of PTI is to level the media playing field by teaching progressives how to speak persuasively and effectively on radio and television about progressive priorities. This program is the only one of its kind and represents the first systematic progressive effort to recruit, train, and place progressive talkers in the media landscape.

How PTI Works

PTI works to create a team of progressive pundits ready to deploy at a moment's notice to have an impact on media coverage of multiple issues important to progressives. By having cohesive messages, an in-depth understanding of what messages impact public opinion positively, and on-going support with research and booking, progressive voices on issues important to progressive community are both strengthened and amplified. The unique PTI process is further broken down below:

Recruitment

We first identify a diverse group of promising trainees who have both knowledge on the complicated issues at play and the communications skills to deliver messages effectively. To find trainees, MMFA looks to relevant partners, to the larger progressive community, and to community leaders from across the nation working on issues affecting diverse populations.

Messaging Research

In addition, before the training begins, we conduct a comprehensive study to develop/update progressive messages on current progressive priorities (such as the economy, health care, and immigration.) Using focus groups and other surveying tools, we identify the progressive messages that test the strongest when compared to strong conservative talking points. This way, we will have the most up-to-date research in hand and will know which narratives have been proven to resonate most with the media and work the best on the public, as well as which messages to avoid. This testing provides invaluable information to PTI trainers and participants when discussing how to approach multiple topics. Armed with the results of our message testing, the training works to ensure strong and consistent messaging, which in turn helps to change the story line in the national debate on the topic.

Training

In our trainings, the top media trainers in the field today work with PTI talent to teach on-air skills, and participants receive intensive training in a variety of media settings – round table/panel discussions, satellite remotes and one-on-one interviews. PTI also utilizes cutting-edge communications strategies which incorporate new ideas in progressive messaging. For example, one of our trainers is cognitive scientist Drew Westen, who discusses with participants the roles and importance in communication of emotion, values, stories, and neural networks. This training gives the students the critical media training they need to be effective communicators on television and radio – arming them not only with effective messages and basic media skills, but with tactics for controlling the conversation, staying on message, and dealing with interruptions and hostile interviewers.

Ongoing Feedback

PTI is also unique in the substantive amount of ongoing feedback we give to participants. After the students complete the program, PTI works to book graduates on television and the radio, and we continually provide them with up-to-date research to help them prepare. Graduates are connected to a PTI alumni list so that they can maintain contact with one another and provide peer reviews and feedback. We do periodic conference calls with all PTI alumni, in addition to in-office “sparring sessions,” so graduates can constantly invigorate and hone their skills, especially in regards to how to handle aggressive interviewers. In order to ensure that the lessons learned at the PTI training are enhanced rather than lost over time, continued feedback and further training – including up-to-date issue-specific training – will also be made available to our alumni.

Initial PTI Impact

In August 2009, we completed our first PTI training, an intensive and dynamic multi-day event for a select group of participants. The session featured in-studio practice interviews and training on a wide variety of topics, including technique, tactics, style, and presentation. The PTI training served as a platform for individuals to share past successes and failures, and to discuss the best ways to message on specific issues – especially contentious ones like immigration and abortion.

This initial PTI training was very well received, and participants expressed a great deal of interest in maintaining a connection to the program in the future. We found that participants were overwhelmingly happy to have 1-on-1 feedback. They especially appreciated critiques of their style, personality, and presentation, all of which is as important as providing them with up-to-date talking points. Participants also told us that they liked the small class size, which provided a high level of personal attention and personal interaction.

We had great success in converting our participants from trainees to actual pundits by supporting them with booking assistance and helping to get them on-air to spread progressive messages right away. Since our August training:

- 9 of our 10 participants have been booked on TV or radio.
- 7 of our 10 participants have been booked on at least one of the major cable networks.
- There have been over 40 separate bookings of our first class of participants since the training.
- One participant has signed a contract with MSNBC to provide on-air commentary.
- Two participants have had auditions for Joy Behar's new CNN program with the assistance of *Media Matters'* booker.
- One participant is in conversations with BET about working on a new Sunday morning program they are putting together.

Taking into account feedback from our initial training, we held our second PTI session in November. This training was structured differently than the first session in that it split participants into issue pods, depending on their field of expertise, and trained them on messaging for that specific issue. The four issue areas were: national security, energy and the environment, the economy, and civil rights. Participants got even more on-camera training than in the first session, and received in-depth issue-specific message training.

The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Sample quotes from participants include: "This is the greatest thing I have ever been involved with in the progressive movement"; "The program took media training to a different level" and "This was the most comprehensive program I've seen."

Our November participants have also experienced booking success in less than a month since the training's conclusion:

- 10 of our 14 participants have been booked on TV or radio.
- 7 of the 14 have been booked on at least one of the major cable networks.
- There have been over 30 separate bookings of our class since the training.
- One of our participants has been contacted about appearing in a special about energy efficiency.
- One participant reported greater ease and effectiveness while giving Senate testimony on banking regulation.

One of the major goals of PTI is to greatly add to the diversity of pundit voices in the media (of whom the great majority are white males.) To this end, we have placed, and will continue to place, a high priority on diversity in selecting participants for PTI. In fact, half of the participants in our first PTI training were women, and half were ethnic minorities.

The second PTI training was also diverse. Out of the three participants in our national security pod, one was a woman; out of the four members of the energy pod, one was a minority and one was a woman; out of the four members of the economic pod, two were women; and out of the four members of the civil rights pod, three were minorities and one was a woman. These numbers are encouraging, but it will continue to be a priority to recruit diverse participants and create a pundit class that is more representative of the American public.

PTI Opportunities for Growth

PTI's media training program is off to a tremendous start. The first two trainings have been incredibly well received and we now have twenty-four trained graduates taking to the airwaves. Over the next three years, we will enlarge our core media training operation as well as expand into brand new training and communications areas. This expansion will encompass five separate but related programs:

- PTI Media Training: An expansion of our current media training program.
- Progressive Communications Initiative (Communications Hub): A web based tool for coordinating message throughout the progressive community.
- Progressive Research Initiative (Message Research & Testing): A project to systematically develop, test, and update successful message and talking points for the progressive community.
- Communications Boot Camps: Training for press and communications staffers of various allied organizations.
- Communications Consulting Practice: A strike force designed to go on-site to organizations looking to improve their communications department infrastructure.

These initiatives are detailed below.

PTI Media Training

Over three years, we plan to expand the media training and booking operation substantially, we are planning on hosting a minimum of five trainings in 2010 with the capacity to increase to ten

trainings with increased funding. Our goal will be to add ten additional trainings per year until we are conducting thirty trainings annually, including regional and issue specialists while simultaneously dramatically increasing our follow up and booking capacities.

Phase 1: 2010

We would like to see a rapid expansion of the PTI media training program in 2010. Based on our success with the program to date, we believe we can provide immediate benefit to the progressive movement with each and every additional PTI graduate.

In 2010 we hope to conduct 10 trainings of approximately 12 participants each for a total of 120 new pundits trained by the end of the year.

Three of these trainings will be our classic “generalist” trainings to increase the number of trained pundits who can go on and speak about a wide variety of issues from a political standpoint, a strategic standpoint and a policy standpoint. These are the most highly sought after pundits by the cable networks. These trainings will be held in Washington, DC.

We have already received funding to conduct two specialty trainings for pundits who are going to participate in the immigration reform debate. Training will focus on what messaging works for progressives to win the immigration issue (even in Red States) as well as practical and tactical nuts and bolts media training that PTI has perfected. One of these trainings will feature participants from faith based organizations and will be conducted in conjunction with the allied organization Faith in Public Life.

Other possible topics for specialized sponsored trainings that have been discussed are: Youth, Environment/Climate Change, LGBT issues, gun violence, and stem cell research.

Possible areas of expansion trainee-wise would be to hold smaller trainings for elected office holders and other government officials. Certain legal requirements will have to be undertaken to assure we don't violate any Federal election law or do anything to endanger our 501(c) 3 tax status. We are looking into these requirements and will have a structure proposed by early 2010.

Booking Support:

The independent booking operation we hired is doing an extremely good job of getting our graduates placed on television. As of early December they were already able to place six of our November graduates. We will need to extend their contract to ensure continued success in booking.

Graduate Support:

In 2010 we would like to expand and better systematize the process for supporting our graduates when they are going to be appearing on television. One way to better support our graduates will be through the PCI web site (discussed below). Another will be to retain our lead trainer to a more extensive services contract and contract with him to provide both pre- and

post- interview sessions with all PTI graduates. The cost of this will be very small compared to the impact on the graduates and their performances.

Phase 2: 2011

While it is hard to forecast exactly what we want 2011 to look like, we know we want to make 2011 a year of significant expansion. We'd like to see the number of trainings move from 10 to 20 with a total number of trainees to move up to 240 people for the year.

The two independently sponsored trainings (economists and immigrations) discussed in 2010 are the best examples of trainings we can put on if we want to see the desired growth of the training. We could probably find the capacity to put on two to three trainings per month if all had independent sponsors who would take responsibility for 90% of the candidate recruitment. This is by far the most time consuming and labor intensive part of the project. As PTI becomes better known it will be easier to recruit, but it is hugely advantageous to have a partner who will carry the load on this.

Basically, the plan will be to do a regional training once a month and a DC based training once a month (the holiday months excepted). The DC training would either be focused on producing more generalists or on a specific specialty area. The regional trainings would target cities where the challenge of battling conservative misinformation is most acute, for example: Denver, Columbus, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Las Vegas.

In 2011 we might also have to begin looking into a process to be able to expand the training team we currently have. While proper scheduling will allow the current training team of KNP Communications and Drew Westen to do all 20 trainings, if we wish to see another doubling of the project in 2012, it will be necessary to add some trainers. This will of course run some risk of diluting the product, but if we want to grow, it will have to occur. Creating a second or third training team will have to start in 2011 so they are ready for 2012.

Phase 3: 2012

2012 would bring another expansion of our work. We'd hope to do 30 trainings around the country. Almost one every single week. These trainings would be broken into the same three types of trainings, but would start to be altered slightly:

Classic generalist trainings held in Washington, DC. These trainings would continue to be led by the original KNP training team of John Neffinger, Matt Kohut and Seth Pendleton. We would continue to make these trainings very competitive and only allow in the best of the best applicants. The classic generalist training would continue to be the lifeblood of the ongoing PTI pundit pipeline.

Specialty trainings. With an expanded training team and an expanded budget, we'll be able to hold trainings for almost every conceivable mainstream specialty area. Every major issue that will come to the floor of the Congress can be advanced by a class of pundits on that specific issue. Some of these classes would be taught by the original training team (the issues that will

garner the most network coverage); some would be taught by the new staff. Specialist trainings would continue to be held in DC.

Regional. We'd go through the country and do new classes in all of the cities and regions we did through the first two years. We'd also be able to add on even more 2nd tier cities covering approximately another 10 cities bringing our total to close to 25 cities in the three years. Overall we are looking to conduct 60 trainings over the course of the three years. By the end we will have trained 744 new progressive pundits. That number will have a real and significant impact on the state of cable and broadcast news as we know it, with that many trained voices, it will become almost impossible to not see a PTI graduate on television every day of the year on every major cable network.

Progressive Communications Initiative

With all of the newly minted pundits PTI will be cranking out over the course of the next three years, we are desperate to create a system for them to be able to get solid talking points into their hands and onto the airways. The Progressive Communications Initiative (PCI) will be the key to getting this information to our pundits. PCI is a new approach to an old problem. Instead of a centralized machine cranking out talking points, PCI will be an organic engine for the creation, examination, discussion and dissemination of talking points from progressive messengers

2010 will be the year PCI is built and refined. The overall goal will be to take PCI to a place where it is fully operational and tested in the crucible of the fall political season.

The proposed timetable for PCI development and rollout is as follows:

June

- PCI soft launch on the new *Media Matters*.
- Populate forums with existing Drew Westen research and other basic talking points.
- Start posting all *Media Matters* research to PCI.
- Select members of the initial review board – all PTI graduates would be included
- Goal for # of initial users/reviewers would be 35 people
- Create briefings for *Media Matters* senior staff for how they can help the development of PCI.
- Hire staffer to moderate forum and facilitate content generation and discussion

July

- Refine look and feel of PCI based on review board feedback.
- Continue to push content onto the site from *Media Matters*.
- Look to find 3-4 partner organizations to also push content to the site.
- Develop all processes and rules for access to PCI when it expands.
- Goal to expand user list to 50 people.
- Continue to solicit user input.

August

- Soft roll out of the system to get additional users. This could be communications professionals at allied organizations.
- Goal to expand to 150 users.
- Implement all policies and procedures governing the list.

September

- Final refinement and testing.
- Launch final refined version for 2010 political season.
- Expand user list to over 300 known users.

Progressive Research Initiative (Message Research & Testing)

Underlying both PTI's support for its graduates and PCI's long term mission to become a central message distribution hub is a need for up to date, objectively tested research. Being able to distribute messages quickly and effectively is worthless if you are distributing the wrong message. The Progressive Research Initiative (PRI) would fulfill the need for up to date messaging.

Building off of the work Drew Westen has already completed in order to create his Progressive Messaging Handbook we currently use for PTI, PRI would create the funding structure for regular annual updates on every major issue progressives need to be talking about.

Creating a funding structure to fund continual research would allow us to update the core issues on a regular basis and have openings to fund research on different issues of the day. The core issues we would continually update would be:

- The Economy
- Taxes
- The Role of Government
- National Security
- Immigration
- Guns
- Abortion
- Health Care
- Energy & Environment

The results of this testing would then be disseminated to all PTI graduates and all members of the PCI web forum.

Utilizing the research in this way could become the center of messaging for the progressive movement.

Alternate Plan: We are looking into developing this into a model for this program as a for-profit, LLC based subscription service.

Communications Boot Camps

Understanding only a small percentage of progressive communications professionals end up on television, we also need to expand our training program to improve the skill sets of everyday communications staffers throughout the progressive community.

We propose a series of PTI style boot camps focused on developing the skills necessary to running an effective communications operation: developing a press team, developing press lists, working with reporters, pitching stories, booking yourself or your team, creating on-line communities, getting op-eds placed, developing a letter to the editor program, creating a web-site, setting up a rapid response center, dealing with crisis communications, etc. The training would create a set of best-practices to be followed in all communications work and with enough trainees could be influential in doing more to coordinate progressive message efforts than any other initiative.

We propose two pilot boot camps for 2010 to judge the feasibility of the project. We would hire a trainer to develop the exact curriculum and conduct the trainings managed by *Media Matters* staff in the same way PTI is conducted now.

If the test programs go well we see rolling Communications Boot Camps out across the progressive movement as broadly as our media trainings. We'd like to see all allied organizations go through the training, we'd like to host regional trainings across the country, we would like to start programs for college students, for recent college graduates, for elected officials and any all others who are interested in entering the field of communications.

The timeline for program development in 2010 would most likely be as follows:

June -- July

- Search for Communications Trainer, interviews, reference checks etc.

August

- Selection of Trainer
- Discussions with trainer about curriculum and trainees
 - How long will the trainings be?
 - How many trainees will be trained in each class?
 - What topics will be covered?
 - What materials need to be prepared?
 - What resources will be needed from *Media Matters*?
 - What does an ideal trainee look like?
 - What are the goals for each trainee?

September

- Outreach to allied organizations for participants
- Selection of trainees
- Development of Curriculum

October

- Pilot Training
- Review of Training

November

- Outreach to allied organizations for participants of training #2
- Refinement of curriculum

December

- Selection of trainees

January 2011

- Pilot Training #2
- Review of Training
- Development of program for 2011 and beyond.

Communications Consulting Practice

Thirty years ago, building a successful communications program for a progressive organization would have been a much less complex assignment. Back then, advocacy communications was a far more forgiving enterprise: there were a limited number of outlets, and reasonable levels of competence tended to produce more than reasonable returns.

The picture today is much more complicated, thanks to a variety of factors, including the dominance of 24 hour cable networks, the transition of newspapers online, and the never-ending thirst bloggers have for new stories. The barriers to entry to the media are lower, and the competition between progressives and conservatives is becoming fiercer all the time. Moreover, the need for message clarity is more pressing, and the penalties for poor execution more severe. Given all these factors, no progressive organization should undertake a full scale communications program lightly.

Despite these difficulties, there are powerful reasons for a progressive organization to create a competitive communications program:

- If successful, a communications program will galvanize supporters, helping build a more active membership.
- When attacked by conservatives, a robust, coordinated and nimble communications program will allow an organization to respond quickly and effectively.
- A successful communications program will magnify the effects of the organization's work, making their impact seem bigger and more influential to outsiders.
- The very act of creating a communications program engages an organization in the discipline of sharpening its message, clarifying its mission, and better understanding its place in the world.

Organizations find a number of different paths to communications success. Some focus on developing relationships with reporters from national news organizations. Others eschew the national media and seek out local and state based coverage. Others still focus on new media. However, beyond these distinctions, there are important common features shared by almost all organizations that run successful communications programs:

- They speak with a clear voice and have a firm grasp of their values.
- They make an emotional connection.
- They operate within a defined market, i.e. there is a developed audience for their message.
- They own all or part of the “franchise” on their issue, i.e. they’re one of the organizations that comes to mind when the issue area is mentioned or they operate in an area which no one has yet claimed the franchise.
- They leverage all aspects of communications to drive towards a common narrative.

Over the last five years, *Media Matters* has created a rapid-response communications team that is unmatched in the progressive infrastructure. We construct a mini-campaign for every piece of research published by our staff and strategically distribute this work to an ever-growing audience of journalists, editors, pundits, activists, and concerned citizens. The three prongs of our communications shop (press, new media, and external affairs) then unite to produce a mounting awareness of the issue at hand, forming progressive coalitions that trigger even more interest. In this way, our mini-campaigns come to be amplified into major ones.

Our communications team garners powerful results. In 2009 alone, we prompted the media to issue over 37 corrections and apologies. We worked with over a hundred partner groups in campaigns that resulted in, among other things, Lou Dobbs’s sudden departure from CNN and a mass advertiser exodus from Glenn Beck’s Fox News show. We were mentioned in Associated Press articles that were picked up in hundreds of outlets and made over 500 appearances on radio and television. Thanks to our communications team, *Media Matters* has been branded as the premiere media watch dog in the country, known for the accuracy as well as the aggression of our work.

Now we want to help other progressive organizations have the same type of communications impact. It is more important than ever for the progressive movement to have this capacity. The well-oiled conservative communications machine went full-throttle against the progressive agenda in 2008, turning the health care debate into charges of “death panels” and worse. We cannot afford to stand still while this machine goes into overdrive in 2010. That is why we propose to bring our coordinated approach to communication to other progressive organizations, providing advice, tips, and best practices on:

- Creating a more cohesive and vibrant communications structure
- Streamlining processes to allow for more rapid response communications
- Recommending new structures in order to maximize coordination between the departments

Within this initiative, we will help create communications products that can drive a progressive organization’s message, including:

- Recommending communications products the organization can deploy to maximize media attention
- Creating a vetting process that both improves the product and moves quickly
- Ensuring the right products reach the right reporters

We will advise the organization on how to best use research to help drive communications goals, including:

- Ensuring research products are linked to communications goals
- Using research to drive press
- Building a rapid response research operation

And we will assist the organization in formulating a new online strategy:

- Ensuring online communications are integrated into the entire organization
- Assisting in making the organization’s website more user/activism friendly
- Helping create online activism that engages, including
 - List growth and advocacy strategy
 - Purchasing online ads
 - Outreach to national and local bloggers
 - Developing static, dynamic, and multimedia content

Some of the changes we recommend may include:

- The creation of a centralized structure, ensuring that all research and communications products, regardless of channel (online, print, radio, TV, speeches) serve the goals of the organization.
- Changing the ways in which the organization creates communications products for both and media and its members.
- Reorganizing departments to better meet communications needs.
- Rethinking which staff are the “on the record” spokespeople, representing the organization in the media.
- Redirecting the goals of the online and research departments, to help meet communications needs.

Structure: We will offer three different types of engagement to the organization: baseline, medium-term, and long-term.

Baseline Engagement - One Month:

Working with the organization, we will assess existing communications operations:

- *Assessment execution.* Embed our staff for two weeks inside the organization who will assess the communications, research and online departments. Our team will sit in on all organizational meetings and review products as they are produced. We will observe how tasks are assigned and work in completed. We will also review the quality of all products.

- *Presentation.* Working with the organization, we will share our findings and build a presentation for the senior leadership team. This will include recommendations and specific steps to execute changes within the organization to improve the organizations communications.

Medium Term Engagement -Three Months, all products above plus:

Following our recommendations, we will embed staff members in senior positions in the organization's existing communications, research and online departments:

- Our embedded staffers will work alongside the organization's staff every day to implement the changes suggested in the baseline engagement.
- The organization's staff, along with our embedded staff, will report every two weeks to senior staff on progress being made implementing changes noted above.
- Our embedded staff will coordinate among departments to make sure old silos are not interfering with solid communications strategy.
- Our embedded staff will also work with department leaders to draft a long term strategic communications plan.

Long Term Engagement - 6 months, all products above plus:

Our embedded staff will remain within the organization for six months, implementing the strategic communications plan:

- Our staff will work with the organization's staff to design and execute campaigns that raise the organization's profile and show its full communications potential.
- Our research staff will assist the organization in designing and executing long-term research products that further the organization's mission.
- Throughout the six month period, we will review the work being produced and make changes as necessary to ensure the organization reaches its full potential.

Note: We will request donations from progressive organizations to cover the cost of these services. However, not all progressive organizations that would benefit from our communications consulting practice have the financial ability to fully fund the cost of this assistance. Accordingly, it is important for the improvement of the progressive infrastructure that we are able to offer this service, regardless of an organization's ability to pay.

MEDIAMATTERS
ACTION NETWORK



2012

A THREE-YEAR CAMPAIGN

Media Matters Action Network

Media Matters Action Network's Impact in 2009

Media Matters for America's 501(c)(4) sister organization, *Media Matters Action Network* (MMAN) has hit the ground running since its expansion this April. In only six months, MMAN has become an indispensable ally for progressives as it analyzes and corrects conservative misinformation coming from politicians and advocacy groups.

2009 Highlights

Stopping Misinformation at the Source: MMAN conducted hard-hitting research directed at cutting off misinformation at the source: members of Congress and their allies committed to maintaining the failed conservative status quo. These fact-checks led to changes in media coverage on topics ranging from health care reform to energy and the economy. For example, after we fact-checked Rep. Michele Bachmann's erroneous suggestion, on the House Floor, that if health care reform passes, the nation's schools might begin offering abortions to students, the media went into an uproar over her comments. Several other new initiatives also contributed to cutting off misinformation at the pass before it poisoned the national conversation. Our e-mail fact checker shut down the lies found in viral emails, and our new Smear Buster website fought back against the conservative witch hunts on prominent progressives, forcing the attack dogs to abandon their prey.

Holding Conservatives Accountable for Outrageous Statements: MMAN also focused on calling attention to offensive statements made by elected officials. These are the statements that aren't merely inaccurate: these are the bigoted comments; the racist and sexist remarks; the casual remarks inviting violence on progressives. For example, after we caught Rep. Virginia Foxx dishonoring Matthew Shepard's death on the House floor, we quickly posted the video, leading to a barrage of coverage on her remarks. Over 200,000 people viewed the captured footage on YouTube. Our research sent a strong message that such hate speech would no longer be tolerated, especially by people elected to serve and represent the public interest.

Exposing the Money Behind the Movement: We implemented two new database projects that helped to arm the progressive movement against the right-wing smear machine. The Conservative Transparency database monitors the financing and activities of the conservative infrastructure and media machine, allowing progressives to track the finances of new and existing right-wing groups. The Pressure Points database serves as a warehouse for the progressive community of all the publically available information about the media outlets we monitor, including the advertisers, allowing progressives to hold these companies responsible for sponsoring conservative misinformation. These databases fill in crucial holes in the progressive infrastructure and give progressives the tools they need to neutralize right-wing misinformers. We have already used the Pressure Points database in a campaign to get advertisers to stop sponsoring Glenn Beck's television show: to date, over 80 sponsors have dropped their support.

2009: The In-Depth Story

Our most notable activities and accomplishments for the first six months since this expansion (i.e., April to November) follow.

Fact Check

In May, we launched a new project dedicated to correcting conservative misinformation before it seeps into the media. From distorting statistics, to spreading false information about progressive organizations, to outright lying about the contents of legislation, conservatives feed dozens of bogus stories to the press every day. The goal of this initiative is to fact-check these items before they become news and prevent them from ever reaching the wider public. An example of our impact follows:

- *Fact-checking NRCC energy ads:* In July, MMAN fact-checked a series of ads produced by The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) and revealed that the ads contained false information about the American Clean Energy and Security Act, notably that it would “destroy jobs” and “cost middle-class families \$1,800 a year.” We corrected the misinformation, pointing out that the bill would create jobs in every state and help America become more energy independent, all for the price of a postage stamp per day. Our research quickly created coverage on the NRCC’s misleading advertisements. Among other outlets, *The New York Times’* politics and government blog, *The New Mexico Independent*, Greg Sargent of the *Washington Post*, and Think Progress all utilized our research to challenge the NRCC energy ads.

Smear Buster

This fall, we unveiled SmearBuster.org, a website dedicated to fighting back against the right-wing smear machine's witch hunts against prominent progressives. Conservatives have launched a war against progressives such as Cass Sunstein, Carol Browner, Mark Lloyd, John Holdren and Van Jones. Through SmearBuster.org, MMAN exposes the false smears spread by conservatives attempting to halt progressive change. The Huffington Post highlighted the debut of SmearBuster.org on the front page of its Politics website under the headline “*New Media Matters Site Defends Progressives Against Witch Hunts.*” This site has already gotten results:

- *Debunking the Smear that Anita Dunn’s Hero is Mao Zedong:* After right-wing conservatives suggested that outgoing White House Communications Director Anita Dunn's hero is dictator Mao Zedong, we pointed out that just because Dunn mentioned Mao in a speech, that in no way means she condones the way he governed. Learning about and discussing the writings and philosophies of influential historical figures is a common practice. In fact, conservatives including John McCain and George W. Bush have all referred to Mao in a similar matter. *The New York Times’* The Caucus, CNNPolitics.com, *Chicago Tribune’s* The Swamp, *Newsweek’s* The Gaggle, and AMERICAblog were among the many websites that highlighted MMAN’s research. Faced with this onslaught, conservatives stopped pushing the smear.

Email Checker

In September, we launched a site to counter conservative misinformation gone viral via widely forwarded e-mails. The website provides users with ready-made responses to the most

common and most egregious email memes. *The New York Times'* health care blog, *Politico* and *The National Journal*, among other outlets highlighted the website's launch, with the latter noting that we "set up an e-mail checker page that provides easy-to-copy-and-paste text responses to the most popular viral e-mail[s]." We have so far corrected misinformation on topics including health care reform and President Obama's past.

Video

One form that our rapid-response research takes is quickly posting audio or video clips in which we capture noteworthy, outrageous or offensive statements made by conservatives. These videos often highlight a particularly egregious statement made by a Republican elected official on the House floor. An example of the impact of one of these clips follows:

- In November, MMAN highlighted a group of House Republicans -- led by Rep. Tom Price (R-GA) -- attempting to stop the Democratic Women's Caucus from making their arguments about how the health bill would benefit women by screaming over them. We quickly disseminated a video clip showcasing Price repeatedly screaming "I object!" over his female colleagues. The video was viewed on YouTube over 139,000 times in less than a week. Our video was also very popular on the blogosphere, as progressives criticized the Republican tactics for delaying and derailing the debate. For example, Crooks & Liars commented, "Those uppity females in Congress. Who do they think they are, trying to participate in our democracy on one of the biggest bills in front of Congress?" Daily Kos, The Huffington Post, The Daily Beast, MyDD, and Think Progress all embedded the clip as well.

Conservative Transparency

In November, MMAN launched ConservativeTransparency.org, a new online database that allows users to track the money flowing into the coffers of conservative groups from the nation's largest corporations and ideologically extreme organizations. The launch of [Conservative Transparency.org](http://ConservativeTransparency.org) caused considerable interest in the media. The *Washington Post* covered the new database in an article entitled, "Liberal group eyes conservatives' connections." Reporter Dan Eggen explained, "For example, the Web site's listing for FreedomWorks Inc., which has helped organize anti-tax and anti-health reform protests, shows the group brought in more than \$4 million in 2007, much of it from wealthy conservative donors such as the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation." Other media outlets covered the launch of the Action Network's database as well, including the SEIU's blog, *National Journal's* *Under the Influence* and *Washington Monthly's* *Political Animal*.

Pressure Points Database

MMAN developed a database that is used to identify "pressure points"— such as decision makers, journalists, and advertisers from major news organizations —which can quickly be targeted and allow for an action campaign to commence immediately. Developing a database of this size and scope provides the progressive movement as a whole with the information necessary to quickly correct misinformation, to remove a chronically problematic media figure, or to preempt programming that grossly misinforms the public. In the past, when major media campaigns needed to be launched, it took incredible amounts of time and resources to identify the network's pressure points. The Pressure Points Database reduces that time to minutes. This allows MMAN and our allies to take swifter action and increase the likelihood of success in

stopping or effectively countering conservative misinformation. The most prominent example of the success of this project is the campaign that, using this database, resulted in 80 advertisers dropping their support of Beck's show. A second example of the impact of this database follows:

- *Stopping Rick Scott and his anti-health reform group:* Our research on former hospital executive Rick Scott and his anti-health reform group, Conservatives for Patients Rights, formed the backbone of the progressive response to Scott. We publicized the \$1.7 billion fraud Scott's former company was found guilty of, leading reporters to question his credibility – even Megyn Kelly of Fox News. After Scott falsely claimed in a fundraising email that Comcast had pulled an ad by Health Care for America Now (HCAN) highlighting his sordid history, we followed up. Using the Pressure Points Database, we were quickly able to determine that their buy had simply run its course. Armed with our research, Comcast refuted Scott's claim.

Progressive Media

This spring, we joined forces with the Center for American Progress Action Fund (CAPAF) for a joint project, Progressive Media, which created a powerful research and communications war room for progressives. PM coordinated with allied groups, the administration and Hill staff to keep them informed with the latest news and research, creating our own progressive echo chamber. Within this initiative, we framed the debate on health care, climate change, and a host of other issues, by getting our message in front of the most influential reporters, television hosts, and bloggers by combining top-notch research with aggressive communications.

Our work made a difference in 2009, driving several events, including:

- A hearing held by Congress on the smear lobby tactics of Bonner and Associates, a firm hired by the coal industry to stop energy reform.
- Dick Armev ending his contract with DLA Piper, a lobbying firm working for the health industry, after increased exposure about his anti-health care activities.
- The pulling of RNC's anti-energy attack ads from the air after lawyers used one of our published fact checks to make the case that the ads were factually incorrect and misleading.

A few other examples of PM's impact are detailed below.

- *Creating Analytical Work to Advance Messaging:* PM pushed out a study done by CAPAF that demonstrates the urgency for health care reform by showing that 14,000 Americans lose their health coverage every day. President Obama used this statistic speaking at a health care town hall, in an email to millions of supporters and, in his health care address to a joint session of Congress. This study was also cited by members of Congress including Chris Dodd, Dick Durbin and Bob Casey. Rahm Emanuel, Kathleen Sebelius, and Anna Burger (SEIU) are among others who used the statistic on television and in the press.
- *Demonstrating the need for health care reform:* Progressive Media, partnering with SEIU, created talking points on some extreme practices by health insurance companies

against women. These materials were used by prominent women leaders such as first lady Michelle Obama, Senators Mikulski and Klobuchar, and Rep. Wasserman-Schultz. In addition, the research we promoted was cited in coverage covered by the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, MSNBC and CBS.

- *Coordinating messaging among progressive groups:* One MSNBC anchor who we've worked with commented, "When I get liberal criticism, it is all on the same topic. It hits all the same points. Can I thank this [Progressive Media] conference call for the coordinated email responses?"
- *Video tracking:* Aggressive staffers armed with high quality video and sound equipment attended conservative events and taped speeches by key conservative actors. This footage was strategically disseminated through multiple media channels. Among other things, we captured Sen. Grassley claiming President Obama's health care bill contained "death panels" and captured the hypocrisy of Rep. Cantor attacking the stimulus and then touting it at home as a "jobs fair."

Program Capacity/New Outputs in 2009

As signified by MMAN's expansion, all of the activities detailed in the previous pages were implemented for the first time this year. The successes enumerated above are a result of perhaps our most valuable new asset: the MMAN team, assembled earlier this year.

Management and Administration

Media Matters hired Ari Rabin-Havt to oversee MMAN's expansion earlier this year. Before taking a leadership position with MMAN, Rabin-Havt served as Deputy Director of Progressive Accountability, where he was responsible for, among other things, producing a feature length documentary focusing on the similarities between John McCain's and President Bush's policies. In his current position as *Media Matters* Vice President of Research and Communications, Rabin-Havt continues to oversee MMAN's strategic vision.

Research and Strategic Communications

Media Matters employed Chris Harris as Communications & Research Director and Melinda Warner as Director of Outreach and Deputy Research Director to lead MMAN's day-to-day operations. Harris and Warner, under Rabin-Havt's strategic direction, work with a small staff to create and push out MMAN's research.

Foreign Policy Matters

In the fall, we hired our first Senior Fellow, M.J. Rosenberg, who specializes in foreign policy. In addition to writing for the website, Rosenberg has already made a number of radio appearances, as well as been published in media outlets including The Huffington Post. He also recently debuted a weekly column for the site focusing on promoting a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that offers security, sovereignty, and justice to Israelis and Palestinians.

Organizational Metrics

MMAN's web content exploded this year. In the six months since the expansion, we posted over 1,300 pieces of original analysis (574 research items and 772 blog posts) fact-checking the statements made by conservatives in the public eye. We also posted 51 fact-checks of viral emails and 34 pieces busting the smears made about prominent progressives.

Our many videos highlighting outrageous statements made by conservatives also proved a popular resource for progressives. In the past six months, we posted 243 videos to our YouTube account and 121 to our website. 60 of these videos were viewed over 1,000 times; 19 were viewed over 10,000 times; and 2 were viewed over 100,000 times. These promising statistics give us benchmarks for 2010.

This growing interest in our work is demonstrated by our traffic data: in the last six months, we have had over 610,581 unique visitors, over 799,451 total visits, and the site was viewed over 1,231,260 times.

Our communications team also has increased MMAN's visibility and impact. For example, in 2009 we created a presence on progressive radio, making over 25 radio appearances. We also placed five editorials in newspapers. As the year progressed, the media, with increasing frequency, began to use our research to form a foundation for their coverage. We generated 419 instances of the media using our work (with or without direct attribution) in print and online. Our research also formed the basis for 23 segments on television.

Conservative Transparency, our database exposing the interconnected web of special interest groups that fund the right, continues to grow in scope. Currently, the database has information on 5,894 people; 12,833 organizations; and 65,286 grants. Moreover, this database allows users to track over \$5,042,841,358 in grant money.

MMAN has also focused on engaging and investing others in our activities. We engaged with allies in over 500 conference calls; attended over 73 meetings with allied groups; and spoke at 11 panels and conventions.

MMAN Opportunities for Growth

Expanding our Core Functions

The *Action Network's* core work of debunking misinformation from conservatives before it seeps into the media must continue. Whether by combating the lies found in viral e-mails, busting the smears aimed at prominent progressives, fact-checking statements made by conservatives in Congress, or using our research to coordinate action campaigns, we are committed to implementing actions that hold the right-wing accountable for advancing misinformation.

MMAN plans to continue carrying out these core functions, as described in this document, over the next three years—at a heightened intensity. Make no mistake: conservatives are ramping

up their campaign to destroy the progressive agenda; progressives cannot afford to simply maintain the status quo. In order to respond most effectively and aggressively to the increasingly reckless right-wing noise machine, we will enhance our existing capacity by adding eight more Researchers over the next three years. These researchers will monitor, analyze, and correct misinformation made by politicians and their allies across multiple platforms, including print, television, and the Internet. Specifically, we plan to add three researchers in 2010; two researchers in 2011; and three researchers in 2012. With this additional capacity, we will be able to increase the number of smears that we neutralize and the amount of misinformation that we correct before it reaches the wider conversation. Our budget over the next three years is outlined below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Budget</u>
2010	\$839,410.00
2011	\$1,007,374.00
2012	\$1,251,179.20

Please see the MMAN Appendix on page 88 for a more detailed breakdown of our budget over the next three years.

Pursuing New Opportunities

MMAN has ambitious plans for enhancing our impact over the next three years. We are already gearing up for 2010, and the opportunities and challenges the changing political landscape will bring. These initiatives include:

- **Opposition Research:** MMAN has quickly become a progressive leader in rapid response and fact checking. As we continue to grow and our capacity increases, we will place more emphasis on hard-hitting, campaign-style opposition research.
- **Video Tracking:** MMAN will launch an ambitious tracking program in order to more effectively respond to and push back against conservative misinformation propagated by politicians and their allies.
- **Books:** After investing time in long-term research, MMAN will have the capability to write and publish books exposing the truth about conservative political figures. These books will maximize our impact in the progressive community.
- **Issue Advocacy:** As MMAN continues to grow, we will take to the airwaves in order to maximize the effect of our research. Hard-hitting television ads will amplify the work we do every day by increasing our audience and boosting the amount of attention the media pays to our work.
- **Corporate Transparency:** As MMAN continues to grow, we will build a database to track the reach of corporate money in politics. Using this information, we will work with progressive allies to expose the influence and corrosive effects of corporate money spent in opposition to a progressive agenda.

These initiatives meet the compliance responsibilities laid out by the Internal Revenue Service for a 501(c)(4) organization. Specifically, these activities comply with the requirements and restrictions of applicable federal and state election law, including not engaging in express

advocacy for or against a political candidate. In addition, the proposed campaign activities and expenditures for electioneering do not constitute MMAN's primary purpose activity.

The new initiatives are detailed below.

Opposition Research

OBJECTIVE

To place right-wing figures under heavy scrutiny as well as put them on the defensive by highlighting and exposing vulnerabilities.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

The Action Network proposes to create an opposition research team that will collect and gather in-depth opposition research on the conservative actors, institutions, and organizations that will be splashed across tomorrow's political headlines. Moreover, additional staff will enable us to improve our rapid-response operation and engage in the long-term research required to find optimal lines of attack against conservative political leaders.

Progressives urgently need this type of research, as conservatives have become more and more aggressive in attacking progressive leaders and agenda. We cannot afford to wait, either: as the political climate heats up in 2010, the out-of-power right-wing will undoubtedly sink to new lows as they seek to squash the progressive agenda.

We now propose to create an opposition research program to prepare for the oncoming political onslaught in 2010. Preliminary targets for this opposition research would include, but by no means be limited to:

- Conservatives challenging Democratic seats in Congress (such as Carly Fiorina)
- Conservatives seeking to keep Republican seats in Congress (such as David Vitter)
- GOP Leadership (such as Minority Whip Eric Cantor, House Minority Leader John Boehner, and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell)
- Conservative elected officials with a propensity for making offensive statements (such as Michele Bachmann and Steve King)

An opposition research team will serve to hold conservatives accountable as they mount aggressive attacks against progressives in 2010, which is precisely why we propose the implementation of long-term, ongoing research that will focus on the backgrounds, connections, operations and political and financial activities of the individuals carrying out or sanctioning attacks against progressives. We will conduct extensive public records search and compile opposition books on individuals; trace the money behind them for potential unethical or illegal activities; create a mechanism for the airing of grievances by disgruntled employees and ex-employees, and more.

Like our other initiatives, our opposition research will work hand-in-hand with other projects. For example, information uncovered by opposition research efforts may guide the efforts of the video trackers in their investigative reporting, or help uncover a potential idea for a book or a TV ad.

CASE STUDY

MMAN is experienced in pushing out opposition research on conservative public figures and changing the national debate. In 2008, MMAN and *Center for American Progress Action Fund* (CAPAF) joined forces, forming a joint project, Progressive Accountability. By harnessing the combined communications and policy expertise of MMAN and CAPAF, Progressive Accountability forced the facts into the public domain and illuminated and defended the progressive policy agenda. We deployed a top-notch policy, research, video and audio tracking team that uncovered facts about the failed record of conservatism and conservative leaders and provided hard-hitting critique of conservative policy ideas. Through our work, we created a real “echo chamber” in support of progressive policies and values. As we armed progressive voices for battle, our work did not go unnoticed, causing The Huffington Post to say that “Progressive Accountability [is] producing some of the hardest opposition research on McCain this cycle.”

RISKS

We may not uncover anything useful. Every campaign knows that there is always something *there* – you just have to look for it long enough. This endeavor will be no different. Our ability to turn over useful information will be directly proportional to our ability to hire talented staff with experience in this area of work. It could take weeks to find that first useful nugget – that first truly amazing tidbit that leads to coverage from the mainstream press. That single piece of research may well be worth the weeks needed to uncover it. This of course is not the likely scenario. In all likelihood we will produce volumes of useful data week after week.

Our efforts may encourage conservatives to do opposition research on us. We have been the target of media conservatives for years. “Reporters” and columnists for conservative media outlets, blogs and allied organizations have already done their best to attack *Media Matters* with half-baked accusations and outright lies to little or no success. Few are as prepared as we are for any impending storm of controversy. Organizationally, we have anticipated potential lines of attack from the right and stand ready to respond. Additionally, it is far easier to police the activities of our modest staff than it is for a multi-billion dollar media empire to monitor its own.

In a mid-term year, we may not be able to find talented people to do the work. Typically it can be difficult to recruit talented staff in a mid-term year because so many campaigns are hiring. This is not a typical mid-term year however. Every day we receive applications from qualified researchers ready to work who have landed in Washington, DC with hopes of working in the Obama White House. Thousands have arrived for scant few jobs in the administration. Additionally, this effort is much more than the 6-8 month political gig typically found on the campaign trail. Our effort will be more appealing in no small part to its breadth of activity and length – things won’t be ending in 2011, they’ll only be ramping up.

Video Tracking

OBJECTIVE

To systematically track conservative politicians and their allies at private and public events, capturing damning footage that will be disseminated to advance our messaging and discredit the right-wing noise machine.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

By placing one of our own behind enemy lines, MMAN will be in the unique position to correct misinformation and highlight outrageous statements in advance of mainstream media coverage. This footage will be strategically disseminated through multiple media channels.

We will dispatch employees armed with audio/video equipment to town hall meetings, campaign appearances, tea party protests, and public events attended by conservative figures. This tracking staff will be based in Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC to ensure that staffers will be quickly deployable across the country.

The potential for this initiative is limitless. One “gotcha” moment, such as the “macaca” clip that sunk Sen. George Allen’s re-election campaign in 2006, that garners national attention and significantly damages a conservative personality, may be worth the expense of the entire initiative.

The video tracking will work in concert with other initiatives. Without a doubt, footage we capture will form the basis for in-depth opposition research, as well as help craft messaging for paid media buys and book proposals.

CASE STUDY

MMAN’s successful use of video trackers earlier this year demonstrates the potential impact of a killer video clip. In September, we sent a video tracker to the 9/12 Rally in Washington D.C. Our wily video tracker located Orly Taitz, one of the infamous leaders of the “birther” movement, and a fervent promoter of a number of other conspiracy theories both related and unrelated to Obama. The video tracker engaged Taitz in conversation, and captured Taitz insisting that she could have Obama “out of office in 30 days.”

We quickly disseminated clip of Taitz’s outrageous comments, and the response was impressive. The video clip of Taitz got over forty-thousand views on YouTube in a matter of days. Our quick dissemination of the clip helped to further discredit Taitz, as well as underscore the extremism of the birther movement.

RISKS

We may spend hundreds of man-hours and not obtain enough useful video to justify the expense. It is true that many hundreds of hours may be spent filming events with no useful

video being obtained. However, given our experience in monitoring media and staff experience conducting video tracking in other jobs, it is more likely we will find something useful every time we turn on the camera, even if it is video that is held to be used in conjunction with video from other events to show a pattern of behavior.

Video trackers may be barred from certain events. On occasion this happened in 2008 with our trackers but for the most part, they we are able to gain entry to most public and ticketed events that they sought admission to. Trackers rely on creativity and their own experience garnered from attending dozens of events to gain access, it is unlikely that they will be barred from many events. They will be trained by seasoned experts adept at gaining entry, how to handle and work around rejection, etc.

Video trackers may be subject to violence and/or attack. Trackers are trained to blend into the crowd for precisely this reason. They aren't attending these events to harass or be noticed, they are there simply to gather audio and video. If something violent in nature does occur, trackers will be trained to exit to safety and file a police report never ceasing the recording of audio and video which could then be used to build a legal case.

Books

OBJECTIVE

To write and publish attractive books that expose and discredit conservative political figures and institutions.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

The *Action Network's* proposed investment in opposition research and video tracking, as well as the enhancement of our core function of stopping conservative misinformation at its source before it seeps into the media, will provide us with a comprehensive body of research on the right with which to write and publish books exposing the truth about conservative political figures.

With an increased capacity, MMAN will produce numerous books in the coming years, to maximize our impact in the progressive community. Books will either be based on the conservative movement's record and attitude toward a specific issue, or the overall record of a specific politician or conservative advocacy group

Book release dates will be timed with the policy debates of the day, ensuring their relevance and maximizing media interest. Communications staffers will aggressively book *Media Matters* fellows and allied experts on radio and TV to promote the books and spread the messages contained within.

CASE STUDY

We already have experience in the creation of hard-hitting books of this type. In the heat of the 2008 presidential campaign, MMAN provided support for two books on John McCain that

each contained research and messaging that helped quash the myth of McCain as a straight talking maverick: *Free Ride: John McCain and the Media* by David Brock and Paul Waldman; and *Third Term: Why George W. Bush (Hearts) John McCain* by Paul Begala. *Free Ride* made *The Washington Post's* Bestsellers List for Nonfiction Paperback, and the book was reviewed in prominent outlets including the *New York Review of Books*, *Newsweek*, and *Washington Post World of Books*.

RISKS

It will be difficult to write & publish books “in the moment.” One advantage of having a full time research staff who monitor, write, and publish every day, is that not only are we staffed with consummate professionals, but much of our books will write themselves using information and research that is already at our fingertips. This, combined with external partners, and a commitment from our publisher to rush publication, we believe will allow us to get works out while they are still able to affect a specific national dialogue.

We may not be able to interest a credible publisher with adequate distribution networks for our books. So long as we produce a quality work, which we are confident in our ability to do, we have the means to publish, market, and sell any book written. We already have a book contract with a leading publishing house who will both publish, market, and distribute our books such that they are available in all leading book stores and on-line. Moreover, MMAN has strong relationships with leading book agents, editors, and others in the publishing community. Beyond the publishing community, the MM brand is such that any book published will garner a significant amount of earned media as well as cross promotion by our progressive partners.

Issue Advocacy

OBJECTIVE

To educate and persuade elites and the public through timely hard-hitting targeting paid media that expose opponents of the progressive agenda, limit their influence, and taint their credibility.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

As MMAN continues to grow, we will use our growing issue-based research not only to correct conservative misinformation but also to disseminate accurate information to voters, thus increasing our scope of influence in national and local politics. We will ensure voters have a full and accurate picture of the issues at play through a variety of tactics. One capacity we would like to have, fund, and use, in an appropriate circumstance includes creating and disseminating hard-hitting television ads that amplify our work. These advertisements will increase our audience and boost the amount of attention the media pays to our work. In many instances a small targeted buy may garner much more earned media.

The types of television advertisements we would create would include, but by no means be limited to:

- Ads highlighting progressive views of specific issues
- Ads attacking conservative views.
- Ads revealing the hypocrisy of conservative politicians.
- Ads attacking votes/quotes of conservative politicians

Advocacy pieces pertaining to a specific politician will be aired in targeted markets (i.e., in the politician's state or district) while those with a broader focus will likely air in Washington DC and on national cable. The content will be derived from the opposition research and video tracking conducted by MMAN staff. This might also be an opportunity to partner with our progressive allies, jointly shouldering costs as we work to get media attention paid to our messaging.

CASE STUDY

In the fall of 2009, numerous opponents of health care reform, including Rick Scott, head Conservatives for Patients' Rights and backed by numerous historical and financial connections to the health insurance industry and other conservative infrastructure, engaged in a mass campaign to misinform public into taking a policy position against their own interest. While several prominent television personalities eventually challenged and revealed Rick Scott's personal history, including that he is the ex-CEO of a hospital group that defrauded Medicare for \$1.7 billion, the progressive community was slow to react. The counter-offensive against Scott used, in no small measure, MMFA and MMAN's research. While our research was published on our site and shared with our partners, we would have been more effective in preventing Scott or his associates' misinformation from gaining traction in the public had we the capability to mount our own paid media campaign on the same airwaves he was poisoning in targeted markets.

RISKS

We may not engage the right issue at the right time in the right way. We recognize that given the ambitious progressive agenda and the long nature of these campaigns it may be hard to determine where and when to engage, but 2009 has shown us that there are typically only one or two major legislative initiatives pending at any given time. Through our progressive partners, careful monitoring, and diligent research, we typically know when and how initiatives will begin and who the opponents will be. We also are, through our core work and opposition research, familiar with the arguments that will be used and the people who will make them. Working with our experienced staff through programs described elsewhere in this strategic plan, and outside consultants, we are confident that we will be able to engage on the most critical issues in a timely manner with an attractive, persuasive message.

Effective Issue Advocacy is expensive. Yes. However, in part, the goal of effective Issue Advocacy is to change the conversation and destroy the credibility of opponents to a progressive agenda. We don't need to say everything everywhere to accomplish this goal. Good advertisements in targeted markets will take on a life of their own, gaining traction with both media and political elites, who will then follow our example. We need to make conservative messengers such a poisonous brand that it can be used as a political weapon. That is precisely why this larger public persuasion campaign is so important. Such an initiative

allows us the flexibility to not just contain their influence. In some cases larger paid media campaigns may be necessary to reach directly to our fellow Americans.

Media outlets will refuse to run our ads. This may be true. However, we welcome this as our experience has been that advertisements that are refused will generate their own media and we get a larger conversation at a much lower cost. Experienced communications staff will work reporters daily to place stories and when they are having difficulty, there are always online progressive outlets like Huffington Post or TPM to turn to.

Corporate Transparency

OBJECTIVE

To expose the corporate special interests behind the inevitable blitz of business-funded campaign advertisements in the wake of the *Citizens United* decision.

BACKGROUND

Last fall, *Media Matters Action Network* launched *Conservative Transparency*, an online database tracking billions of dollars flowing to conservative foundations and advocacy groups. In the course of assembling the database, we recognized the need to also explore corporate funding of the conservative movement. In the fall, we began work to launch Corporate Transparency, an easy-to-use, searchable database to track the money spent by powerful corporations to influence public policy -- not just through PACs and lobbying disclosures, but also nonprofit filings.

On January 20, 2010, the Supreme Court overturned decades of precedent by allowing corporations to use their resources to openly support or oppose political candidates. It will now be more important than ever. This creates an environment where corporations will be able to spend unlimited quantities of money on elections. With the average American's influence over their government under assault, it is more important than ever to expose corporate special interests behind the inevitable blitz of business-funded campaign advertisements. If we do not aggressively push back now, the consequences for progressive policy will be catastrophic.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

We will expand our efforts to cover direct independent expenditures made by corporations. When corporations make political disbursements within 60 days of an election, they will be legally required to submit independent expenditure reports to the Federal Elections Commission within 24 hours. Staff members will systematically review the independent expenditure reports provided to the FEC and enter the information into the online database. The database will also include ideological C3 and 4 contributions made by the corporations (based on 990 filings, annual reports and other information), lobbying expenditures and corporate PAC contributions.

Using the data in Corporate Transparency, *Media Matters Action Network* will create a multitude of public relations challenges for corporations that make the decision to meddle in

political campaigns. Working with allied organizations, we will utilize the database's information to provoke backlashes among companies' shareholders, employees, and customers, and the public-at-large.

The data in Corporate Transparency will enable progressives to clearly see which candidates corporations want in office. When businesses back candidates, *Media Matters Action Network* will portray it as a complete endorsement of everything that given politician has said or done. With conservatives increasingly spewing hateful rhetoric and voting against the needs of everyday Americans, it will be easy to frame their corporate backers as out of touch with their consumers.

The data in Corporate Transparency may also be used to launch shareholder resolution campaigns to prevent corporations from making these types of expenditures. Working with partner organizations such as yours, we will help to make the case that political spending is not within the fiduciary interest of publically traded corporations and therefore should be limited. In fact, our efforts to expose spending will enable us to make the case that a corporation's political efforts have the potential to irreparably damage its brand and bottom line.

As a specific example of how Corporate Transparency may work in action: ACME runs television ads on behalf of Rep. John Doe, who once voted against an appropriations bill containing funding for special education programs. *Media Matters Action Network* will track all ACME campaign expenditures in its database and may aggressively attack ACME, or provide the information to progressive partners to attack ACME for supporting policies to cease funding education programs for children with special needs. Simultaneously, *Media Matters Action Network* or its allies will reach out to ACME leadership and/or shareholders to hold the decision makers accountable for its political activity that has damaged the public image of the company.

These campaigns, whether conducted by *Media Matters Action Network* directly or in alliance with progressive allies may use both earned and paid media, including TV, online and print advertising. Over time, we believe these efforts will dissuade corporations from interfering in our democracy.

RISKS

Corporations may not support or oppose candidates often. Yes. There is much we don't know about how corporations will actually behave in this new less restrictive environment. However, it is important to have the ability to monitor, track, and react to their political activity when they do. Building the database is the first, most critical step. It adds a significant tool to the progressive infrastructure that can be used as often and appropriately as necessitated by unfolding events. Without the information, one cannot easily determine the extent and nature of the activity, let alone comment or react.

Counter-Campaigns are expensive. Yes. However, in part, the goal of any efforts to expose and react to corporate support of or opposition to candidates is to change the conversation, expose the corrosive effects of corporate money in elections, and undermine the credibility of opponents to a progressive agenda. We don't need to say everything everywhere to accomplish this goal. Strong messages in targeted markets will take on a life of their own,

gaining traction with both media and political elites, who will then follow our example, and hopefully, educate the public about the corporate interests at work in their democracy.

Media outlets will refuse to run exposes. This may be true. However, we welcome this as our experience has been that stories and advertisements that are refused will generate their own media and we get a larger conversation at a much lower cost. Experienced communications staff will work reporters daily to place stories and when they are having difficulty, there are always online progressive outlets to turn to.