

Get the Facts: Congress' Attacks on ACORN

ACORN v. United States of America

Who is ACORN?

The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) is the nation's largest and most successful community organization of low and moderate income families, with more than 500,000 members organized into over 1000 neighborhood chapters in 75 cities across the country. Since 1970 ACORN has been building solidly rooted and powerful community organizations that are committed to social and economic justice, and have taken action and won victories on thousands of issues of concern to our members.

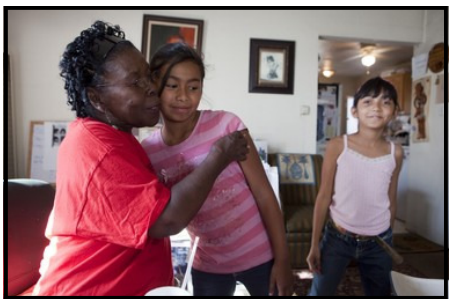
ACORN's priorities include: decent and affordable housing, for first time homebuyers and tenants; living wages for low-wage workers; an end to predatory financial practices; public schools that work for all students; and a path to citizenship for new immigrants to this country. ACORN achieves these goals by building community organizations that have the power to win changes – through direct action, negotiation, legislation, and voter participation. ACORN and its members have:

- Helped over 2 million people register to vote since 2003;
- Raised the minimum wage to a living wage in dozens of communities across the country;
- Fought predatory lending and to stop foreclosures; and
- Helped over 150,000 people file their tax returns.

"We have due process in this country, and our Constitution forbids lawmakers from singling out a person or group for punishment without a fair investigation and trial."

—Jules Lobel
*Center for Constitutional Rights
(CCR) Vice President and ACORN v.
USA Cooperating Attorney*

The de-funding of ACORN



AP: Los Angeles ACORN member Millicent Hill

In September 2009, hidden-camera videos were released showing ACORN employees giving misinformation regarding housing opportunities and tax preparation to Conservative activists posing as potential clients. Upon this discovery, ACORN promptly terminated the employees involved; additionally, the former Attorney General of Massachusetts was hired to conduct an internal investigation.

Several Congressmembers accused ACORN of being a criminal enterprise, and shortly thereafter, Congress de-funded ACORN by adding a paragraph into a law that set a temporary budget for all government programs. **The law bars ACORN—a community organization—and any allied or affiliated organizations—from receiving any federal grants or funds or from participation in federal programs.** As a result, all pre-authorized federal funds were frozen or withdrawn and many ACORN programs that were operating on federal funds were abruptly discontinued.

The Facts

Though **no ACORN corporation has been ever been convicted on any state or federal criminal charges**, members of Congress, such as Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA), have repeatedly made bogus allegations that ACORN has engaged in fraud, criminal conspiracy and laundering. To date:

- Congress has *never held a hearing* on ACORN; and
- Congress has *never authorized any investigation* into ACORN.

Congress de-funded ACORN in large part due to a **public relations campaign orchestrated by political forces that have persistently attacked and defamed ACORN and similar community groups or social justice organizations**. These forces are motivated by their hostility to ACORN's tireless commitment to registering voters, particularly average Americans who have been consistently disenfranchised and excluded from the American political system.

"Congress bowed to FOX News and joined in the **scapegoating** of an organization **that helps average Americans** going through hard times to get homes, pay their taxes and vote."

—Bill Quigley
Center for Constitutional Rights
(CCR) Legal Director

So what's being done about it?

ACORN v. United States of America is a civil action filed on November 12, 2009 by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) on behalf of ACORN, ACORN Institute, Inc. and New York ACORN Housing Company, Inc. in the U.S. District Court Eastern District of New York.

CCR filed a Complaint for Injunctive and Declaratory Relief, which would stop Congress from punishing ACORN by cutting its federal funds. The complaint claims that Section 163: 1) violates the U.S. Constitution because it is a Bill of Attainder (See CCR Factsheet: "What is a Bill of Attainder?"); 2) violates plaintiffs' First Amendment rights to freedom of association; and 3) violates the plaintiffs' Fifth Amendment right to due process guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

The complaint also states that Congress bypassed federal regulations that govern how Congress should address federal contractors or grantees who are accused of fraud or misconduct. **Instead, Congress singled out ACORN and the other plaintiffs without a hearing before deciding to de-fund the organizations.**

What YOU can do to help:

Call your Congressperson *today* and tell them Congress can't be the judge, jury and prosecutor.

Everyone has the right to due process.

To learn more about **ACORN v. U.S.A:**
Visit www.CCRjustice.org

CCR is dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Founded in 1966 by attorneys who represented civil rights movements in the South, CCR is a non-profit legal and educational organization committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change.