

Perhaps the question is whether or not we are taking CAOC seriously. Perhaps there is a view advocating involvement, despite the disinvitation of ACORN to Chicago, and assumes that organizing in Massachusetts would shut that door potentially.

I believe we are taking CAOC seriously, but it is unclear at this point what we can do to impact on the organization positively. As far as potential participation or something else, time will tell. If the organization and ACORN have common ground on which to work and fight common enemies, then I would guess that it would be possible to work with them if this turned out to be the case, regardless of Massachusetts.

Fundamentally, we are dealing with an embryonic outfit, which mainly formalizes relationships between five organizations which have been working closely in the past. It is hard to say in the first month of their existence that they are, or are not something we will deal with. It is impossible to make any determination on ACORN policy passed on this fledgling effort, no matter what it may yield in the future.

4. What factor should "moral superiority" be in the Massachusetts question?

It is important to realize and remember that "moral superiority" is an organizing principle, not a religious tenet. As an organizing principle moral superiority has a role, we like to believe, in winning issue campaigns, our ability to establish that we are correct and our memberships ability to fight and prevail with this conviction, assists in bringing home the bacon and we hope in convincing the broad public to support our demands. Moral superiority doesn't win campaigns, but it helps.

The concern expressed in this question is that we will be painted as aggressors in Massachusetts, that some will argue we are attempting to start and engage in a turf war.

It is unclear how moral superiority translates from actions against the enemies to questions of internal perspective and constituency territory. In questions of turf, the pivotal premise has always been that people will vote with their feet. People, after all, finally determine the question of moral superiority as well as everything else. The board feels no qualms on this issue. I don't even feel any qualms of this issue. Outside of the organization and our membership, no one concedes our moral superiority in any area of our endeavor: issues, constituency, territory, or anything else. Looking at other situations where we organize with other groups in the same city or neighborhoods, this seems to be an artificial issue. Our membership in Denver, Houston, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Bridgeport, etc., simply believe that they are part of ACORN, that ACORN is good, that everyone else isn't bad, but that they are better. This comes from the organizing itself, not from how we came to be organizing in that city or state. As Tom Leahy from Bridgeport said at the October meeting of the board, "We don't know how you decided to come and organize Bridgeport, but we want to tell you how glad we are you're there!"

In actual organizing, where Fair Share has organized and delivered in its memberships perception, we will not organize. We will not, because we can not. Where they have a loyal, active membership in any neighborhood, we won't organize an ACORN group. We couldn't if we wanted to after all. As somebody on the staff used to say, those are the "true facts."

Where our constituency is unorganized, we can and will organize ACORN groups. That is not an anti-Fair Share initiative, but a pro-low and moderate income initiative, as all of our organizing has been.