

STATE OF ADVOCACY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ACTION**
Phone2Action.com

It was a turbulent year for the nonprofit sector. The extreme currents caused by a global pandemic, massive racial protests and a divisive election in 2020 impacted everything from programming and membership to fundraising. There was no playbook for this.

Yet amid the chaos, advocacy shined. Scores of nonprofits embraced change, adapted quickly and recast their strategy to make a huge impact. They expanded their lists, moved thousands of people to action and became a positive force in industries from consumer protection to environmental justice.

Phone2Action's State of Advocacy data, which is based on thousands of campaigns launched by hundreds of organizations using the Phone2Action platform, showed that many new records were set.

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—**JEB ORY**

CEO, PHONE2ACTION

Advocacy Boom

Never has America seen more digital activism than it did in the first six months of 2020. At its height, 52,000 people were taking action every day—36 people every single minute. Nonprofits, associations and companies drove serious numbers:

- **Activity.** More than 14 million actions (email, phone calls and social media posts) were taken on the Phone2Action platform from January to June, a record by any measure. That was 8 times the number in 2016, the last presidential election.
- **Participation.** Nonprofits, companies and associations recruited more new advocates in the first half of 2020 than ever before, bringing a whopping 3.4 million people into the process for the first time. That's a 306-percent increase over 2016.
- **Connections.** More connections were made with elected officials in the first half of 2020 than in any other period since Phone2Action began collecting data. More than 12.6 million connections were made, a 952-percent increase over 2016.

The COVID Effect

The COVID-19 pandemic is unique in American history, and so was its impact on advocacy. During the COVID Effect period, March 13 to May 30, nearly every meaningful metric shot skyward:

- **More than 2.3 million people took action,** a 56-percent increase over the same period in 2019. This represents activity driven by nonprofits, associations and companies.
- **A majority of those were new advocates.** New advocates on the Phone2Action platform increased to almost 2 million, a 41-percent increase over 2019.
- **Conversion rates almost tripled** from 6 percent before March 13 to 16 percent between March 13 and May 30.
- **More than 7 million total messages were sent** to elected officials and decision makers at the federal, state and local level, a 41-percent increase over the same period in 2019.

ELECTION TURNOUT

More than
10 million people
interacted with Civic
Action Centers run by
Phone2Action clients
throughout 2020, with
60 percent
of that activity taking place
in the 60 days before the
election.



Acquisition

From March 13 to May 30, more than 2.3 million people took action on advocacy campaigns. More than 81 percent—almost 2 million people—were new advocates (or acquisitions, as they are sometimes called), meaning people not previously involved in advocacy using Phone2Action.

Mobilization

More than 4.8 million people took action when asked by nonprofits, associations and companies from January to June. That includes emailing, calling and tweeting lawmakers; signing petitions; and registering as advocates. The average campaign mobilized 1,015 people in the first half of 2020, which is up 21 percent over the year before.

Importantly, there was no major jump in the number of campaigns created during that period. In total, organizations launched more than 4,800 campaigns, about five percent more than last year. That means the increase in mobilization was not simply because organizations were conducting more campaigns. It was caused by an environment in which people were moved to take action and organizations launching better, more effective campaigns.

Nonprofit Mobilization

Nonprofits using the Phone2Action platform mobilized almost 2.9 million people in the first half of 2020—more than associations and companies combined. Their advocates sent almost 7 million messages to public officials.

Though COVID-19 and racial injustice dominated the national conversation, environmental nonprofits were extremely active, accounting for four of the top organizations in terms of the number of advocates mobilized. Together, the League of Conservation Voters, the Environmental Defense Fund, EarthJustice and the National Parks Conservation Association mobilized a collective 530,000 advocates across 146 campaigns.

MEET THE ‘NEW CITIZEN’

The spike in protests and grassroots advocacy this year is undeniable, but it begs an important question: Who are the activists making so much change?

Dr. Ximena Hartsock, co-founder of Phone2Action, studied protests around the globe in 2019 and found the answer to that question.

“I believe these protests reflect the emergence of the New Citizen, a new type of political actor,” she wrote.

To learn more, read the [State of Advocacy 2020](#).