



# ACORN

## A SUMMARY HISTORY OF ACORN

### 1970

Arkansas Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) founded in Little Rock (June).

"Furniture for Families" campaign conducted by six local groups succeeds in establishing a program to supply free furniture, appliances and clothing to welfare recipients in Pulaski County (Sept.).

ACORN files first lawsuit in the nation to force implementation of new school lunch regulations and wins reforms in school lunch programs in Little Rock, North Little Rock and Pine Bluff, Arkansas (Oct.).

### 1971

First statewide meeting and first issue of the ACORN News (April). Successful campaign for better health care at the University of Arkansas Medical Center. (June).

ACORN forms Unemployed Workers and Vietnam Veterans Organizing Committees (UWOC and VVOC) (Sept.). UWOC gets agreement from the Labor Department to investigate private employment agency practices (Oct.) and VVOC wins Governor's support for free tuition for veterans (Nov.).

### 1972

First Arkansas regional office opened in Fort Smith (March).

"Save the City" organizing drives begin in Little Rock's central residential neighborhoods (June). Oak Forest Property Owners Association attacks blockbusting in the neighborhood with yard signs: "We Like It Here -- This House Is NOT For Sale" (Sept.). Centennial Neighborhood Association wins a new park for the neighborhood (Oct.).

An action against tax loopholes makes front page news in the Wall Street Journal, ACORN's first national press exposure (July).

ACORN begins organizing against the proposed route of the Wilbur D. Mills Expressway which would slice through central Little Rock neighborhoods. (Dec.).

### 1973

ACORN Service Center opens in North Little Rock, housing a food buyers cooperative, meeting facilities, counseling and diagnostic medical

### **Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now**

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services (Jan.).

Major neighborhood organizing effort begins in Pine Bluff (February).

ACORN Tax Tour of Pulaski County spotlights gross inequities in tax assessment practices (May).

Fort Smith ACORN members win free bus service for school children where previously there had been no bus service at all (June).

ACORN research exposes irregularities in the State Assessment Coordination Division of the Public Service Commission (July).

Northwest regional office opens in Fayetteville (Sept.).

Protect Our Land Association (POLA) and Save Our Health and Property (SHAP) organized in rural area southeast of Little Rock to challenge Arkansas Power and Light's plan to build a giant coal-fired generating plant at White Bluff (November). Groups ask the utility to put up a "deposit-in-reverse" to cover potential damages to livestock and crops from plant emissions. ACORN seeks help from Harvard University, a major stockholder in the parent utility, in securing environmental safeguards for the plant (Dec.).

#### 1974

ACORN efforts scuttle an \$8 million convention center plan in Pine Bluff; the city agrees to consider a less expensive facility (Jan.).

ACORN challenges proposed ARKLA Gas Company rate hike on grounds that the rate structure discriminates against residential customers and wins a 47% cut in the requested increase (May).

195 ACORN members and supporters are elected to the Pulaski County Legislature, giving ACORN nearly half the seats on that body (May).

Property tax equalization campaign is renewed, with the Pulaski County Tax Assessor taking the heat (August).

ACORN files suit to block the Mills Freeway (August).

Statewide "pass the buck" campaign asks Arkansas Power & Light customers to protest electric rates by withholding a dollar from their bills (Sept.).

ACORN wins the George S. Mitchell award from the Southern Regional Council (Nov.).

#### 1975

First ACORN office outside of Arkansas opens in Sioux Falls, South Dakota (January).

ACORN members of the Pulaski County Legislature walk out of legislative session in dispute over the vote tally on a key budget resolution (Jan.).

Hot Springs, Arkansas office opens (Jan.).

Arkansas state legislature approves a generic drug pricing bill sponsored by ACORN (March).

In the wake of "Turn-off ARKLA Day," a statewide protest against high and inequitable utility rates, the Arkansas Public Service Commission slashes an ARKLA rate increase and moves in the direction of equalized rates (April).

ACORN groups in Little Rock, North Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Hot Springs, Fort Smith, Stuttgart, Conway, Rogers and Springdale launch simultaneous campaigns to establish "Lifeline" electric rates in their cities (July).

Organizing begins in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex (August).

ACORN members in rural Lawrence County (northeastern Arkansas) file suit to equalize property taxes statewide (Sept.).

Five hundred people attend a public hearing on Lifeline in Hot Springs (Oct.).  
The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, a multi-state umbrella organization is formed in Little Rock by representatives from ACORN groups in Arkansas, South Dakota and Texas.

### 1976

ACORN members in Pine Bluff block the Ohio Street project, a four-lane street expansion slated to run through their neighborhood (Jan.).

Organizing begins in New Orleans (Feb.).

ACORN files suit to overturn the ban on eyeglass advertising in Arkansas (Feb.).

ACORN members in nine Arkansas counties ask local assessors to put \$4 billion worth of untaxed bank assets -- intangible property such as stocks, bonds and deposits -- on the tax rolls (March).

ACORN offices open in St. Louis and Houston (May).

The Missouri Tax Reform Group, an ACORN affiliate, submits 165,000 petition signatures to place an initiative to end the sales tax on food and medicine on the ballot (June).

Organizing begins in Memphis (July).

ACORN groups in six Arkansas cities submit petition signatures to place Lifeline electric rate propositions on their local ballots (August/September). Legal maneuvers by the opposition keep Lifeline off the ballot in four cities. Voters approve Lifeline in Little Rock (Nov).

Texas ACORN wins a reduction in the basic monthly charge for residential telephone service (Dec.).

### 1977

In response to a suit brought by ACORN, a federal judge in Texas rules that low and moderate income consumers are vastly under-represented on the local Health Systems Agency (HSA) board (March).

Florida ACORN is founded (April).

Customers of the Redfield, Arkansas Telephone Company organize and demand that the company's franchise be revoked (May).

An ACORN bill to curb insurance redlining is signed into law in Missouri (June).

Colorado ACORN is founded (July).

The Arkansas Optometrists Association agrees to drop its opposition to eyeglass price advertising (August).

ACORN members in Houston win property tax reassessments after disrupting a Board of Equalization meeting (August).

Nevada ACORN begins organizing in Reno (August).

Arkansas ACORN begins petition drive to end sales tax on food and medicine (Sept.).

Organizing begins in Philadelphia (Sept.).

Jefferson Park Community Organization/ACORN in Denver pickets Mile High Stadium during Bronco football games to protest parking conditions in their neighborhood which is adjacent to the stadium (Oct.).

ACORN actions in Jacksonville, Florida win a "Customers Bill of Rights" from the Jacksonville Electric Authority (Oct.).

Iowa ACORN is founded (Oct.).

Two hundred ACORN members block rush hour traffic in Memphis to win a stoplight at a busy intersection (Oct.).

Acceding to a four-year-old ACORN demand, the chief executive of Pulaski County, Arkansas orders a complete equalization of property assessments in the county (Nov.).

ACORN members attend Agricultural Association rallies in support of the national farmers' strike (Dec.).

ACORN Jobs Action Council leads 200 unemployed workers in a march on Memphis City Hall to demand jobs on local public works projects (Dec.).

## 1978

ACORN Organizing and Support Center opens in New Orleans (Jan.).

Houston ACORN groups win increased property tax exemptions for senior citizens (Feb.).

The Lincoln Park Community Organization in Memphis wins \$2 million in Community Development Block Grant funds for neighborhood improvements (Feb.).

The Manchester-Tower Grove Community Organization in St. Louis challenges the merger of a local neighborhood bank with an outside bank holding company and wins first Federal Reserve Board hearing under the Community Reinvestment Act (March).

South Dakota ACORN puts a Lifeline electric rates initiative on the state-wide ballot (April).

The franchise of the Redfield Telephone Company is revoked by Arkansas Public Service Commission (April).

In response to ACORN lobbying efforts, the Missouri legislature passes a bill to end the sales tax on medicine (April).

Organizing begins in Michigan and Oklahoma (May).

Crowds of up to 1200 unemployed teenagers demanding jobs descend on City Halls in Denver, Philadelphia and New Orleans in a series of actions organized by ACORN as part of the national "Jobs and Justice" campaign (May/June). The city of Philadelphia agrees to create a new \$2 million youth jobs program (July).

Arkansas ACORN puts a statewide initiative to end the sales tax on food and medicine on the ballot by collecting more than 110,000 signatures (July).

Tenants organized by ACORN in Reno win six month rent freezes and revised leases (July/August).

Protests by ACORN members block \$46 million in Community Development funds to the city of Memphis pending a HUD investigation of irregularities in the program (Aug.).

Texas ACORN wins statewide approval of "Lifeline" telephone rates (Aug.).

Organizing begins in Arizona (Sept.)

Statewide initiatives sponsored by ACORN in Arkansas and South Dakota are defeated at the polls despite very strong showings in ACORN precincts in South Dakota (Nov.)

Detroit ACORN wins \$800,000 in relocation assistance for residents of New Center area being redeveloped by General Motors (Nov.).

Philadelphia ACORN members tie up rush hour traffic by blocking busy intersections and city trolley barn to protest administration of city housing programs (Nov.).

St. Louis ACORN negotiates with State Farm Insurance to stop insurance redlining (Nov.).

Iowa ACORN wins strict shut-off regulations from Iowa Commerce Commission (Dec.).

First national ACORN Convention in Memphis adopts a People's Platform and marches to the Democratic Party's national mid-term convention (Dec.).

250 ACORN members in Lake Charles, Louisiana march on City Hall and win an agreement to pave all streets in North Lake Charles (Dec.).

1979

Carolina Action in North Carolina and Georgia Action vote to affiliate with ACORN (Jan.).

Hard-hitting actions on ArkLa Gas headquarters in Little Rock result in new rules on shut-offs from the Public Service Commission (Jan.).

ACORN kicks off anti-inflation campaign demanding that corporations pledge to comply with voluntary price guidelines. Actions in 20 cities on oil company headquarters, gas stations and supermarkets (Feb.).

Colorado ACORN negotiates strong shut-off policy from Public Service Company (Feb.).

Citizens Action League in California votes to affiliate with ACORN (Mar.).

ACORN actions in Star City, Arkansas force a laundromat owner to remove a "Whites Only" sign and admit blacks (Mar.).

Sioux Falls ACORN members win free bus service for school children (Apr.).

Carolina Action/ACORN wins citywide referendum in Greensboro on election of school board members by district (May).

Memphis ACORN blocks demolition of the city's only public hospital (June).

Georgia Public Service Commission adopts experimental Lifeline telephone rates in response to Georgia Action/ACORN pressure (June).

1500 ACORN members meet in St. Louis to ratify the People's Platform (June).

Plans to use \$8.5 million in public money for a downtown parking garage are scuttled by Des Moines ACORN (July).

Drexel Chemical Company agrees to stop producing toxic chemicals at a plant in an ACORN neighborhood in Memphis (July).

Carolina Action/ACORN wins first Nuclear Regulatory Commission ruling banning transport of nuclear waste through Charlotte (July).

Detroit ACORN demands that public money being spent on the 1980 Republican National Convention be matched with funds for neighborhood improvements (July).

Philadelphia ACORN members begin squatting in abandoned houses to force the city to clean up administration of its Gift Property program (July).

Carolina Action/ACORN begins organizing in Columbia, South Carolina.

Connecticut ACORN opens in Bridgeport and Pennsylvania ACORN expands to Pittsburgh (Aug.).

Philadelphia water commissioner lowers residential rates in response to ACORN pressure (Aug.).

CAL/ACORN beats an attempt to repeal Lifeline utility rates in the California state legislature (Aug.).

Austin City Council rejects Overall Economic Development Plan after ACORN protest over displacement of low and moderate income people and lack of citizen input (Aug.).

Tulsa ACORN files formal complaint with HUD against the city's Community Development Block Grant proposal and holds its own public hearing attended by 100 members and HUD officials (Aug.).

Arizona Public Service agrees to negotiate with ACORN to head off a challenge of its franchise renewal with the city (Aug.).

ACORN members in Dayenport and St. Louis personally deliver the People's Platform to President Carter (Aug.).

2500 Laclede Gas customers in St. Louis begin withholding payment of utility bills demanding a rebate of money the company will save during a gas workers' strike (Sept.).

WMNF, a non-commercial FM radio station affiliated with ACORN, goes on the air in Tampa, Florida (Sept.).

Georgia Action/ACORN beats ballot referendum to increase the sales tax in Atlanta (Oct.).

Federal Reserve Board rules that Landmark Central cannot acquire a suburban bank until a joint agreement on community reinvestment is reached with St. Louis ACORN (Oct.).