

Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition 2011 Annual Report

As 2011 comes to an end, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to each of you, and to reflect on what we've accomplished together over the past year.

These are challenging times for our communities. In the face of Congress's utter failure to make sense of our nation's immigration laws, policymakers at the state level continue to push misguided policies with devastating consequences for our families, local economies, and basic American values. We've already seen the spread of Arizona copycat laws in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina, and in Tennessee some legislators have gone even further by proposing legislation that specifically targets Muslims, people still learning English, and individuals who have come to the US as political refugees.

But thanks to your support, we're holding the line. Our organizers are crisscrossing the state, working side-by-side with grassroots leaders in all three regions to bring folks together to fight back against policies that criminalize and further marginalize hardworking immigrant families. In March, over 150 leaders from throughout the state participated in our 5th annual New American Day on the Hill, building relationships between elected officials and their immigrant constituents and putting a human face on the issue of immigration. Our youth leaders began to lay the groundwork for a powerful statewide youth network, and during the last legislative session they helped stop several attempts to further restrict access to K-12 and higher education for immigrant kids. Our Muslim organizing committee helped mobilize over 1000 community members to the legislature during the final weeks of the session, meeting with sponsors of the anti-Muslim bill, holding lawmakers accountable for their rhetoric, and ultimately amending the bill to the point where the final version had almost no practical effect.

We're lending a hand to our neighbors. Immigrant communities are growing more rapidly in the South than in any other region of the country, and Southern states are responding with some of the most blatantly discriminatory laws since the time of Jim Crow. Because we know what it takes to build a grassroots coalition for immigrant rights, and because we understand that our work in Tennessee is directly affected by harmful legislation elsewhere in the region, for the past five years we have played a convening role in the Southeast Immigrant Rights Network, a regional collaboration designed to build the capacity of new coalitions in places like Alabama and South Carolina, and to develop regional strategies to change the politics of immigration in the South.

And we're on reality TV! Seriously. This year we had the honor of participating in Iniciativa Mexico, a televised international merit competition to highlight social entrepreneurship in Mexico and in Mexican communities in the US. Our rural organizing and know-your-rights campaign was selected as a finalist from more than 57,000 submissions. Lead Organizer Leticia Alvarez represented us brilliantly in multiple television appearances in Mexico, and we finished in the top 25!

Our coalition is stronger than ever before, but we need your help to stay on this path. In November, we held our 9th annual Membership Convention in Nashville, electing eight new members to our governing Board of Directors, and identifying several priorities for 2012:

- Develop strong immigrant leadership throughout the state and conduct issue campaigns fully led by members of directly affected communities;
- Foster ethnic and religious solidarity among our members, articulating with a unified, statewide voice our vision of One Tennessee where all people can live, learn, work and worship in peace;
- Engage policymakers directly and defeat any measure that makes it more difficult for immigrants and refugees to fully participate in all aspects of our communities;
- Strengthen relationships with allies in business, faith, and minority communities, lifting up new champions for a welcoming and inclusive state; and
- Enhance our citizenship program and nonpartisan voter engagement, raising the visibility and impact of the New American vote in this historic election year.

On behalf of the board, staff and members of TIRRC, please accept our sincerest appreciation for your continued support, and best wishes for a wonderful new year.



Stephen Fotopulos
Executive Director

The Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC) is an immigrant and refugee-led collaboration whose mission is to empower immigrants and refugees throughout Tennessee to develop a unified voice, defend their rights, and create an atmosphere in which they are recognized as positive contributors to the state. TIRRC envisions a society in which immigrants and refugees are powerfully engaged as leaders in the civic, political and cultural life of the community; the human rights and dignity of all people are respected, and diversity is welcomed and valued; people are free from discrimination and oppression; and immigrants and refugees are joined with others in a broader grassroots movement for religious freedom and social, racial and economic justice.

> Community members in East Tennessee gathered for an open house to celebrate the new year, a new field office in Knoxville, and the new East Tennessee Regional Organizer, Miguel Carpizo.



> Members learned about lobbying and met with over 30 legislators as part of our 5th annual New American Day on the Hill.



< Leaders from across the state participated in an intensive two-day training on the theory and practice of community organizing.



< Over 1000 Muslims convened at the state legislature to show their opposition to a bill that would have unfairly targeted their communities.

Staff

Stephen Fotopulos
Kasar Abdulla
Leticia Alvarez
Miguel Carpizo-Ituarte
Anahí Gutierrez

Rebecca Hall
Lindsey Harris
Mónica Hernández
Megan Macaraeg
Gaby Marquez-Benitez

Priscilla Norman
Amelia Post
Sara Jane Saliba

Board of Directors

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Katherine Esquivel, Secretary
Fran Ansley
Julio Fernández
Patricio Gonzalez
Drost Kokoye
Alfredo Peña
Nathaly Perez
Avi Poster
Gatluak Thach

Incoming members (2012):
Daoud Abudiab
Arely Bravo
Cristina Condori
Elizabeth Crews
Alysa Medina
Will Roberts
Cesar Bautista Sanchez
Zulfat Suara

Outgoing members (2011):
Abdishakur Mohamed
Mauricio Calvo
Miguel Gonzales
Angel Ibarra

Advisory Board

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Charles Bone
Marilyn Brown
Stewart Clifton
David Esquivel
Billy Fields

Mary K. Friskics-Warren
Mary Griffin
Jerry Lee
Tom Lee
Charla Long
Tom Negri

Gregg Ramos
Allan Ramsaur
Floyd Shechter
Hedy Weinberg

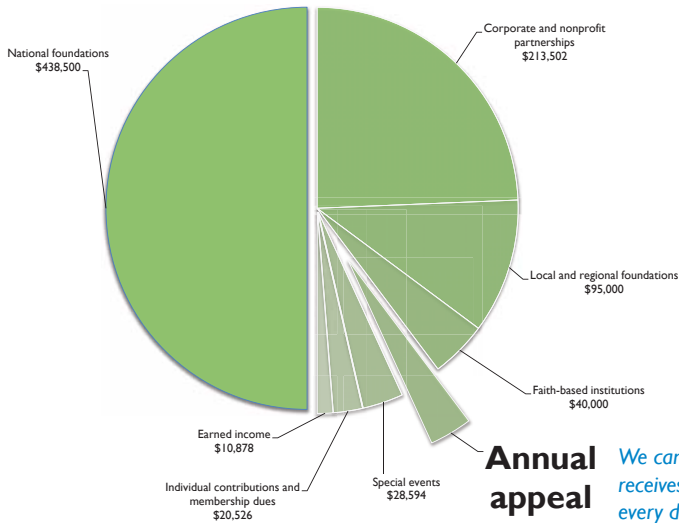
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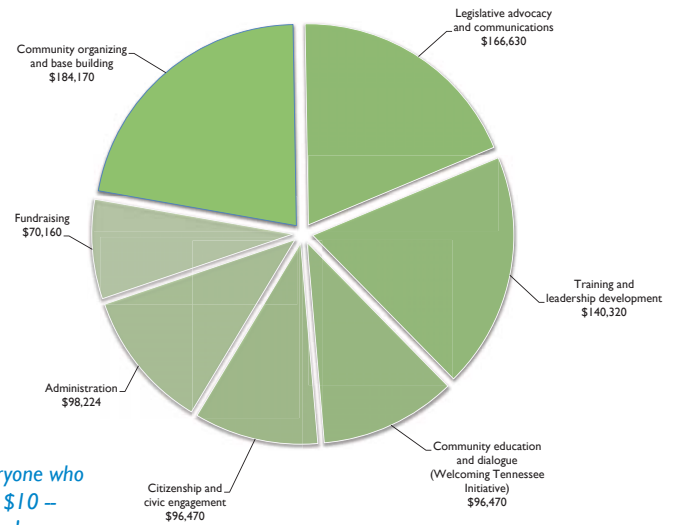
Fifth Third Bank
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Salahadeen Center
The Pakistani American Association of Nashville
Southeast Laborer's District Council

2011 Projected Revenues \$877,000



Annual appeal \$30,000
We can reach this goal if everyone who receives this appeal gives just \$10 – every dollar makes a difference!
Can you do your part today?

2011 Projected Expenses \$877,000



The holidays are just around the corner, but our work isn't done until we raise our budget for the year, and this year more than ever **we need your support** to get there. We've raised over 96% of the funds to keep us going and growing in our efforts **to build a strong, inclusive and welcoming Tennessee**, a place where people of all walks of life are free to live, learn, work and worship in peace. Please consider making a gift today to help us reach our goal of \$30,000 before the end of 2011. With your support we can go that last mile and start 2012 on the solid financial footing we need to sustain our work at this critical time.

Two easy ways to give:

- Use the enclosed form and envelope to mail us a check (see reverse for address); or
- Visit us at www.tnimmigrant.org to make a secure online donation with a debit or credit card.

> Members came together to formalize a new statewide leadership assembly to more fully engage leaders at the grassroots level in setting the organization's course.



> Lead Organizer Leticia Alvarez was a finalist in *Iniciativa Mexico*, a prestigious Mexican reality TV competition designed to highlight social entrepreneurship in Mexico and in Mexican communities in the US.



< Three outstanding community leaders were recognized with the Johnny Hayes American Dream Award, the Welcoming Tennessee Award, and the inaugural Face of Courage Award at our 4th annual American Dream event.



< Over 300 leaders attended our 9th annual Membership Convention and joined in our theme of "Telling Your Story," which focused on the role of arts and culture in building a movement for social change.

A letter from Mercedes:

Dear friends,

I want to thank all of you for your support over the past six months. As you may know, I've lived in Tennessee since I was 11 years old, but last May I was arrested while driving home from church and I've been fighting deportation ever since. I have some very exciting news to share: because of our hard work together, my deportation has been officially cancelled! Thanks so much to each one of you for saving my dreams: to graduate high school and stay with my family. Together with the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, Justice for Our Neighbors of Tennessee and United We Dream, we made this happen. I will never have enough words to express my gratitude for everything that was done for me. My life has changed completely. I learned so many things during this rough time: I learned that there are good people, like you, who care about others and I learned that when you feel most alone there are people who will give you a hand, when you least expect it. Unfortunately, families are still being separated. I know that injustice continues. Please continue to support us as we make sure that other Tennessee students have the opportunity to stay with their families, and as we demand that President Obama stop these deportations. Let's keep fighting together!



God bless you,
Mercedes Gonzalez

Working with national partners and led by our youth members, we have stopped the deportations of several immigrant students and their families, making it possible for kids like Mercedes to finish high school, go to college, and build their futures in the place they call home.

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