

Building Local Power Fighting Corporate Control



Letter from the Co-Directors

Dear Friends,

We are incredibly proud of ILSR's accomplishments over the last year and thrilled with the collaborations we've had with so many diverse partners. It's exciting to see signs that the pro-bigness, neoliberal framework is losing its grip on U.S. policy and thinking after 40 years.

We see progress with a solar company bringing competition to the monopolized energy market in California, contending for the right to deliver energy directly to customers. We see progress with the DC District Court blocking the merger of two giant publishers, signaling that harm to workers, suppliers, and competitors will be considered in cases as the law intends. We see progress when residents of Holland, Michigan, vote to construct a citywide, open-access fiber-to-the-home network, bringing reliable Internet to an area neglected by the telecom giants. And we see progress with a new bill to fund critical infrastructure for waste diversion in Maryland that supports community solutions, including distributed composting.

Together, we can do more. Our initiatives to build local power target some of the largest and most powerful corporations on the planet, with deep pockets and substantial political power. With your support, we can continue to galvanize the public and policymakers to unite in the best interests of the communities they serve, and of the small businesses at the heart of our economy.

We can advance new state and federal policy, we can demand aggressive action by federal agencies, and we can continue developing the research and intellectual frameworks to support antimonopoly thinking and solutions at the local level. In all of this work, we are better positioned than ever to support our growing small business, labor, and farmer alliances that are key to enacting real checks on corporate power and critical for creating durable racial and economic equity across America.

We can't thank you — our individual donors and foundation partners — enough. With your help, we can continue our progress toward equitable, thriving communities in 2023!



Stacy Mitchell and John Farrell
Co-Directors

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WE SEND OUR SINCERE APPRECIATION TO OUR TERRIFIC COLLEAGUES WHO MADE MOVES THIS YEAR:

Sophia Hosain • Virgil McDill • Jessica Del Fiacco • Henry Holtgeerts • Jericho Casper • Dozmen Lee • Maren Machles • Mary Timmel • Neil Seldman • Revati Prasad • Tessa Eidelman

WE THANK ALL OUR INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS:

Ethan Winter • Shiva Patel • Megan Matthews • McKenzie Diep • Jade Boehmer • Ibrahim Ahmed • Alondra Sierra • Aarushi Sen • Angel Ornelas • Hannah Henderson • Charnow • Alexia Briones • Nicole Annunziata • Hanane Idhoum

AND A BIG THANK-YOU TO OUR SUPERB ACCOUNTING TEAM:

Studio501: Mary Cleary, Tori Burggraff & Allison Poullard

Removing Barriers to Growing Community

We know that food insecurity spiked for Hispanic families during the pandemic. We also know that landfills and incinerators are disproportionately located in neighborhoods more heavily populated by Black and Latino residents. What we did not know was how successful we could be at producing composting workshops in Spanish to meet a goal of making our programs more inclusive.

Piloting these efforts in the DC area, we believed these workshops to build the Latino composting community in DC were not just an opportunity for participants to play an individual role in reducing the very real harms of food insecurity and environmental injustice, but also a space to reconnect with the environmental habits that are part of many Latino ancestral traditions. In trial runs partnering with the DC Department of Public Works and as a part of a joint DC, Maryland, and Virginia Food Recovery Week, we were encouraged by participation that mirrored what we typically see from our workshops in English!

Along the way, we learned some valuable lessons that will make us better as we continue to remove barriers to building local power and fighting corporate control. Finding a great partner to be the lead trainer for the workshop was key. Daniela Ochoa Gonzalez has a magical mix of passion, experience, and connection with the work and the culture making her partnership invaluable. And not relying on people to come to us, but rather doing the work



▲ Daniela Ochoa González, is Owner/Founder of Regenerative Solutions.

of going to where the communities were and providing resources in formats that were useful to them made all the difference. While we know we have more learning and work to do to achieve true equity in our programs, these were steps to be proud of.

Back in Business, Back to Basics

Stagnant wages, sky-high prices, struggling family farms, and shuttered local businesses are not accidents of American capitalism. These are direct results of government policy actively encouraging corporate concentration for decades. But with a new regime of regulators taking charge in the Biden Administration, we're seizing the opportunity to recenter the antimonopoly conversation on foundational principles and laws that gave birth to and nurtured vibrant middle-class communities.



▲ Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison delivers remarks at the Midwest Forum on Fair Markets.

Right in our front yard of Downtown Minneapolis, ILSR joined forces with Open Markets Institute to host the **Midwest Forum on Fair Markets**, which explored new federal and state action to reinvigorate our antitrust policies and support small businesses, family farms, working people, and communities. It was our first in-person public event since the start of the pandemic, and it was energizing to be back together creating the space for such consequential conversations to take place.

The event featured keynotes by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and FTC Commissioner Alvaro Bedoya, along with panel discussions by people on the frontlines fighting for reform. Together, they laid out a path for creating an economy in which power and prosperity are widely distributed and progress is easier to achieve, and Commissioner Bedoya's speech in particular is poised to go down in history as a pivotal moment in the antimonopoly movement.

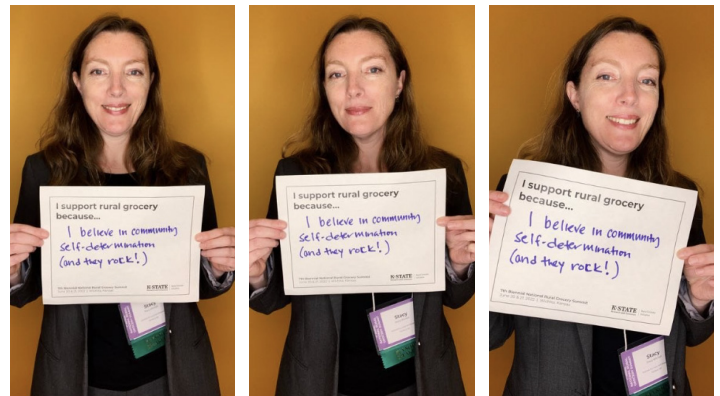


Building Local Power

As the world moves faster and the problems get bigger, the power of creating solutions at the local level becomes increasingly evident. Small businesses, advocates for clean, locally controlled energy, champions for universally accessible, affordable, and reliable Internet service, and crusaders for a zero-waste economy all recognize that when they claim their power, their communities grow richer, stronger, and more sustainable. We continue to work alongside these communities, providing the ground-breaking research, resources, and training necessary to build local power.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- Drawing on our resources and assistance, **more than 30 communities rejected chain dollar store proposals** in the last year. A growing number have passed permanent bans or limits on store developments, which increasingly target Black neighborhoods.
- The Community Broadband team continued a partnership resulting in five **Tribal Broadband Bootcamps** in 2022. These events help people from Native Nations learn to build their own wireless and fiber optic networks, offering both training and startup network technology that allow the Tribes to meet growing needs for better broadband.
- More than 1,000 city officials and civic activists enthusiastically participated in our **webinar** that guided communities on how to use their federal rescue plan funds to support the growth of locally-owned businesses.
- Our Independent Business Initiative convened Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, White House Advisor Tim Wu, and a panel of leading advocates for a **strategic discussion** about including small business in the fight for racial and economic justice.
- Our **30 Million Solar Homes** campaign helped shift policy toward local and equitable solar this year as part of the federal Inflation Reduction Act. The coalition of over 300 organizations estimates that as much as half the campaign goal will be met by the new legislation.
- We launched the **Affordable Connectivity Program dashboard** to help advocates for universal broadband access better understand where federal funds through the program are benefiting communities most, where eligible households are facing enrollment challenges, and provide a starting point for analyzing how to close these access gaps.



▲ ILSR Co-Director, Stacy Mitchell, galvanized more than 200 small-town grocery store owners and community development practitioners with her **keynote address** at the Rural Grocery Summit in Wichita, Kansas.

- The number of organizations formally joining our **Community Composter Coalition** grew to 225 with organizational members in 42 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and seven other countries.
- Our **On-Farm Composting & Compost Use webinar series** engaged more than 260 urban and rural farmers, featuring world-class presenters who highlighted composting as a critical tool for building soil health and supporting farm profitability.

PODCAST HIGHLIGHT

"If you look at the six cities in the nation that arrived at 100 percent renewable electricity first, those six places were all served by consumer [owned] utilities." — Seth Berry, *Our Power*, from *Local Energy Rules Podcast*, **Public Power Pt. 1: Why Take Over?**



Fighting Corporate Control

Despite the growing momentum in developing local solutions to global challenges, or perhaps as a reaction to it, the forces on the side of expanding corporate control in our economy and democracy grow ever more fierce. Yet ILSR's continued work in this space over the past year is a testament to the public's desire for a new way forward—a path that dismantles the power of corporate monopolists and returns that power to the people.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- Our pioneering research on Amazon was repeatedly cited by major publications and top antitrust regulators and policy-makers, leading to Baron, a policy strategy firm, including ILSR Co-Director Stacy Mitchell on its list of 10 "**Antitrust Super Influencers.**"
- ILSR hosted the inspiring event **Democratizing Power**, where proponents of community-controlled clean energy discussed their efforts to challenge the monopoly electric utilities thwarting progress.
- ILSR continued co-leading Athena, a grassroots coalition of 50+ worker, small business, and advocacy groups that center racial justice in its fight to break Amazon's power and abuse.
- We published survey findings revealing that among the **900+ independent businesses** surveyed nationally, concentrated corporate power is seen as the biggest threat to their survival.
- We've persisted in elevating the voices of local store owners through **Small Business Rising**, a coalition of 30+ small business groups representing more than 100,000 independent businesses. The coalition serves as a counterweight to messaging by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other lobbyists intent on blocking action to rein in corporate power by the Federal Trade Commission and Department of Justice. *The Hill* reported that Small Business Rising "is playing a pivotal role in high-profile debates over antitrust."



▲ *Small Business Rising members Gina Schaefer (left) and Emily Bell (right) talk about how small, independent businesses make up the social and economic fabric in communities across the nation.*



▲ *ILSR Co-Director, John Farrell, delivered the keynote address at the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair and inspired the crowd to fight against monopoly utilities that are threatening the expansion of local renewable energy.*

SCAN THE QR CODE

Watch a special conversation with our initiative directors discussing the impact of this work, the momentum it has created, and how we continue to make progress.



- Aided by ILSR research, policy advocacy, and coalition support, reformers won a significant victory with passage of the **21st Century Antitrust Act** in the New York Senate. This marked a major step in the bill becoming law in New York and also serves as a model for other states.
- ILSR submitted public comments to the Federal Trade Commission and Justice Department for developing new merger policy, making an empirical **case for guidelines designed to de-concentrate the economy and weigh the local impacts of a merger.**

PODCAST HIGHLIGHT

"The price hikes that we're seeing now are building on decades and decades of disinvestment, corporate consolidation, and deep deregulation." — Rakeen Mabud, The Groundwork Collaborative, from the *Building Local Power* Podcast, ***Inflation: The True Monopoly Story***



In the Media

ILSR was cited in **2,227 stories** in more than **1,100 media outlets** in 2022.

The New York Times

"Third-party sellers are a key part of Amazon's business. **A recent report by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance**, a think tank critical of Amazon, showed that the fees they pay are Amazon's fastest-growing major source of revenue: The company pocketed \$121 billion in fees from sellers in 2021, up from \$60 billion in 2019. Given its market dominance, those fees are a revenue stream that Amazon could most likely turn up. The report also noted that the average seller now gives Amazon a 34 percent cut of every transaction, up from 19 percent in 2014."

The Washington Post

"Biden touted new commitments by AT&T, Comcast, Verizon and 17 other providers to provide discounted high-speed Internet service to low-income customers. [...] **Christopher Mitchell, a director at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance**, likened the commitments to a "bad Band-Aid" and called it "very frustrating" to "have the president talking about this while those companies are slandering his nominee for the FCC."



"When people buy a Roomba...They don't want a spinning, all-seeing robot, roving around taking stock of their house and everything in it, and then beaming that information to the world's most powerful retail monopolist." — **ILSR's Ron Knox** on *NewsNation Prime*

Vox

"As for what goes out of your apartment, consider composting. Food makes up almost 22 percent of all the waste generated in the country, and 24 percent of the waste that goes into landfills. When it gets there, that food and other organic products start emitting methane – an incredibly potent greenhouse gas. Landfills are one of the largest sources of methane in the United States, **"so we really need to be doing a better job of keeping these materials out of landfills and incinerators,"** said **Linda Bilsens Brolis**, senior project manager for the Composting for Community Initiative at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a nonprofit that advocates for local businesses and grassroots organizations."

ILSR had **8 prominent broadcast media hits** in 2022.

Why You Spend So Much Money Using Amazon Prime | CNBC

"So basically [Amazon is] mining all the good ideas and innovations of these small companies, copying it and using it for its own advantage and a small company can't protect itself because it has to be on Amazon." — **Stacy Mitchell**

Is Amazon Good For Small Business? | NPR Intelligence Squared U.S. Debate

"I believe that anyone who wants to start a business should be able to succeed on their own merit; that their ability to ply their trade should not be subjected to the whims and dictates of a company with outsized market power." — **Stacy Mitchell** partnered with *business journalist Rana Foroohar* and won this debate

ILSR published **24 commentaries** in media outlets in 2022.

The Atlantic

"The iRobot deal follows a known Amazon strategy, one that Jeff Bezos has admitted to in the past: using mergers to buy its way to dominance. Several companies make and sell robotic vacuums, including brands like Shark and others. But Roomba is the household name, so ubiquitous that it's shorthand for every other robot vacuum available. By simply taking over the company that makes the most popular product in the industry, Amazon can grow its monopoly without actually having to out-innovate and out-compete its rivals." — **Ron Knox**

ILSR's podcasts were **streamed more than 118,000 times** in 2022.



"We want our young people to not live on a planet, but live with the planet. Not take from the planet, but share with the planet. So whatever we take, we give back. That was embedded into our roots – the African, Black, Caribbean, Tainos, Arawaks, and Mayans." - **Nando Rodriguez**, *The Brotherhood Sister Sol* from the *Composting for Community Podcast*, **Composting Connects Black and Latinx Youth to their Roots**

Income & Expenses

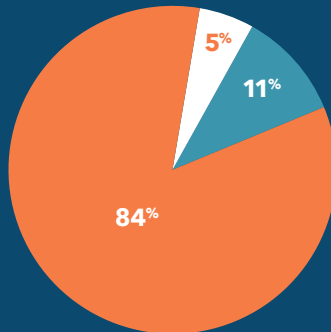
Fiscal Year 2022

July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022

We send our sincere gratitude to the individuals and foundations that have supported our work over the last 48 years.

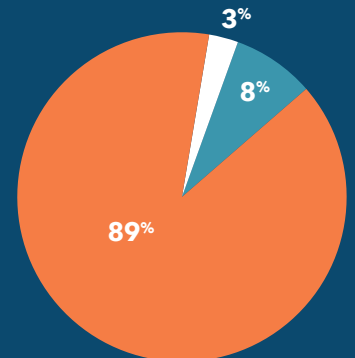
INCOME

- Grants
\$3,550,633
- Contracts, Honoraria, & Misc
\$229,298
- Contributions
\$451,331



EXPENSES

- Program
\$3,767,308
- Fundraising
\$121,564
- Management & General
\$342,390



PLEASE SUPPORT ILSR BY DONATING TODAY! [ILSR.ORG/DONATE](https://www.ilsr.org/donate)

Tribal Broadband Bootcamp Participants



ILSR Welcomes our New Staff Union



We're proud to announce that after about a year of negotiations, ILSR and our new Staff Union have agreed to our very first collective bargaining agreement. The ILSR Staff Union is represented by the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 12 AFL-CIO and includes more than half of our staff.

"This contract is a major win for the staff of ILSR and the organization as a whole," said Ron Knox, a senior researcher at the Institute and a negotiating committee member. "This contract not only ensures better pay and benefits for staff, but it allows the Institute to reflect its mission of building vibrant, democratic institutions and ensuring that we all have power over our lives."

ILSR Co-Directors John Farrell and Stacy Mitchell added, "Completing this step is a significant milestone in our organization's history. It reinforces ILSR's commitment to the well-being of its staff and ensuring that everyone who works here feels a true sense of place, purpose, and belonging."

"Skipped class today to hear @keithellison talk about the importance of Antitrust legislation and creating fair & just markets. Thanks to @stacyfmitchell and @ilsr for creating the opportunity and for their work." — @MAKeliher via Twitter



About ILSR

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) is a national nonprofit research and educational organization founded in 1974. ILSR has a vision of thriving, diverse, equitable communities. To reach this vision, we build local power to fight corporate control. We believe that democracy can only thrive when economic and political power is widely dispersed. Whether it's fighting back against the outsize power of monopolies like Amazon or advocating to keep local renewable energy in the community that produced it, ILSR advocates for solutions that harness the power of citizens and communities. Find out more at www.ilsr.org.

Members of ILSR's Independent Business Initiative enjoy some in-person strategy discussions. From L to R: Katy Milani, Stacy Mitchell, Kennedy Smith, Ron Knox, Susan Holmberg, and Luke Gannon

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