

# THE WASHINGTON BUS IMPACT REPORT



2020





# MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Dear friends,

The Bus turned obstacles into opportunities this year.

While the adoption of a co-director model in early 2020 positioned the Bus to increase capacity, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges to our fieldwork. These pressures, along with the surge of young people wanting to participate in politics through the Bus during the presidential election and #BlackLivesMatter uprisings, inspired us to develop new strategies to meet the needs and opportunities of the times.

**In other words, we threw down in 2020.**

This report presents this year’s impact as evidence of the importance of investing in the political leadership of young people from underrepresented communities. These wins include:

- Making 14,462 phone calls to voters (a 32% increase from 10,897 calls completed in 2019);
- Sending 351,703 text messages to voters (a 1,600% increase from 20,830 text messages delivered in 2019);
- Hosting 35 volunteer-led outreach events (an increase of over 400% from 8 events in 2019); and
- Engaging young people to Get Out the Count for the 2020 Census.

These wins make it clear that the Bus continues to set the precedent for creating opportunities for young people from underrepresented communities to lead the way towards a more equitable Washington State.

We appreciate how staff, Board members, and the Bus family had our backs in 2020. While what 2021 holds remains unknown, we must continue to turn obstacles into opportunities that allow us to build the world we need.

Onward,

**Cinthia Illan-Vazquez**  
Co-Executive Director for  
Policy and Program



**Liam Dale**  
Co-Executive Director for  
Operations and Development



## The Washington Bus Mission

The Washington Bus makes politics engaging, effective and fun. The Bus puts young Washingtonians in the driver’s seat and gives them the tools to be organizers, legislators and leaders. We catalyze the energy and enthusiasm of young people to create sustainable, positive change in Washington State through civic education, voter engagement, and leadership development.

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To best fulfill our mission, “The Washington Bus” header is comprised of two separate entities: The Washington Bus Education Fund 501(c)(3) and The Washington Bus 501(c)(4). This report includes highlights from both organizations and the Washington Bus Political Action Committee.



# PUTTING YOUNG VOTERS FIRST

**FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, VOTER ENGAGEMENT IS ABOUT WHO THEY ARE CONNECTED TO.**

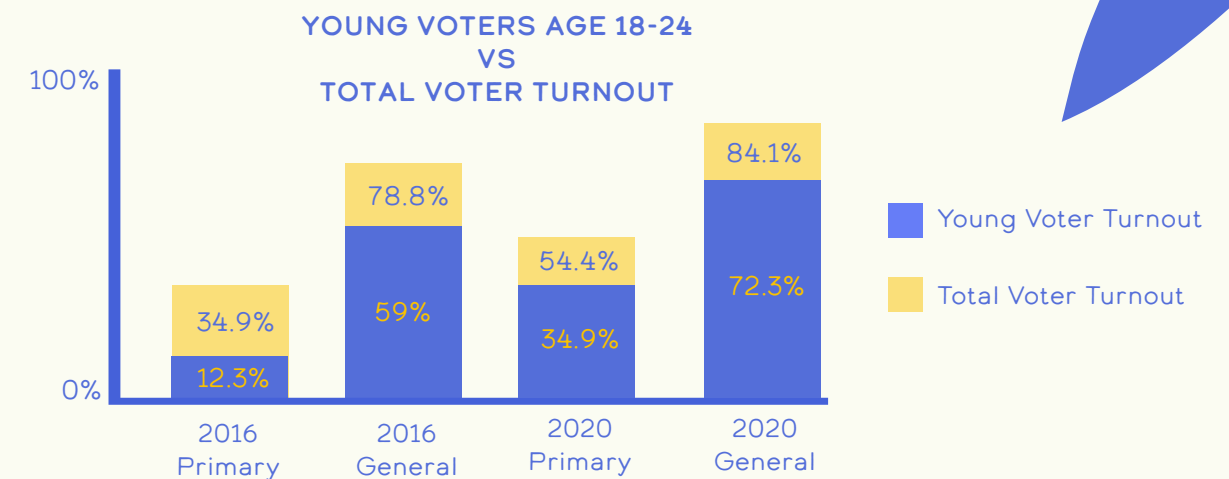
The Bus made sure young people turned out to vote in record-setting numbers in 2020. We held 35 outreach events to mobilize volunteers, graduated 15 Bus Fellows, and hosted our biggest Fall intern cohort ever. The Bus is building a leadership pipeline that drives progressive change at every level of politics.

For young people, voter engagement is about who they are connected to. That's why we used digital and peer-to-peer organizing to equip young people in the Bus community with the tools to get engaged and stay engaged in politics.

## HOW DO WE DO IT?

Through our targeted outreach ahead of the November election, over 400 young people in the Bus universe pledged to become Vote Captains and remind three friends to vote. Building a culture of civic engagement requires peer to peer organizing, and our initial estimates show that our Vote Captains turned out at a higher rate than their peers.

## YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT IS INCREASING

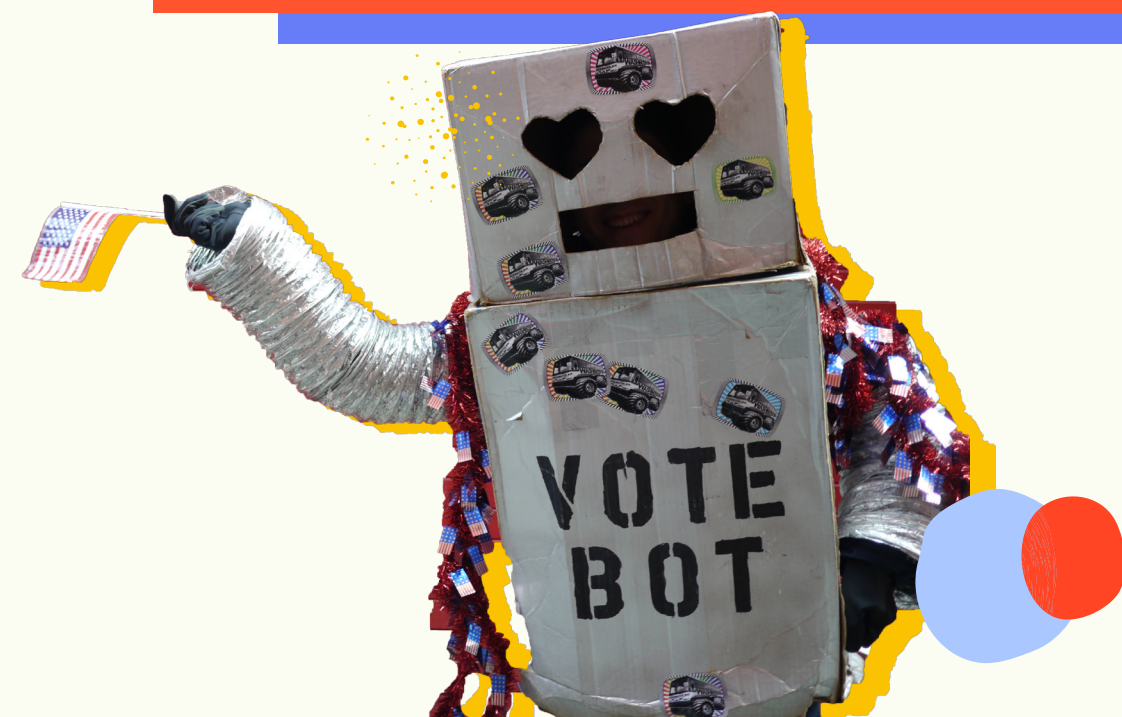


## AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION IS WORKING

The gap between registered and unregistered young people continues to close since the Bus helped pass Automatic Voter Registration in 2019.

- At the time of the 2018 General, voter registration for 18-24 year olds was 56.4%. That rate has surged to approximately 68.9% of 18-24 year olds registered to vote today.
- There are currently over 27,000 16-17 year olds pre-registered to vote. That's 15% of 16-17 year olds in WA.

**THE BUS HAS REGISTERED 72,404 YOUNG PEOPLE TO VOTE SINCE OUR INCEPTION IN 2007.**





# ELECTION YEAR: BUILDING BIG WINS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS WASHINGTON



CHECK OUT STAFF AND FELLOWS TURNING IN THEIR BALLOTS  
AHEAD OF THE AUGUST PRIMARY!



## YOUNG PEOPLE TURNED OUT

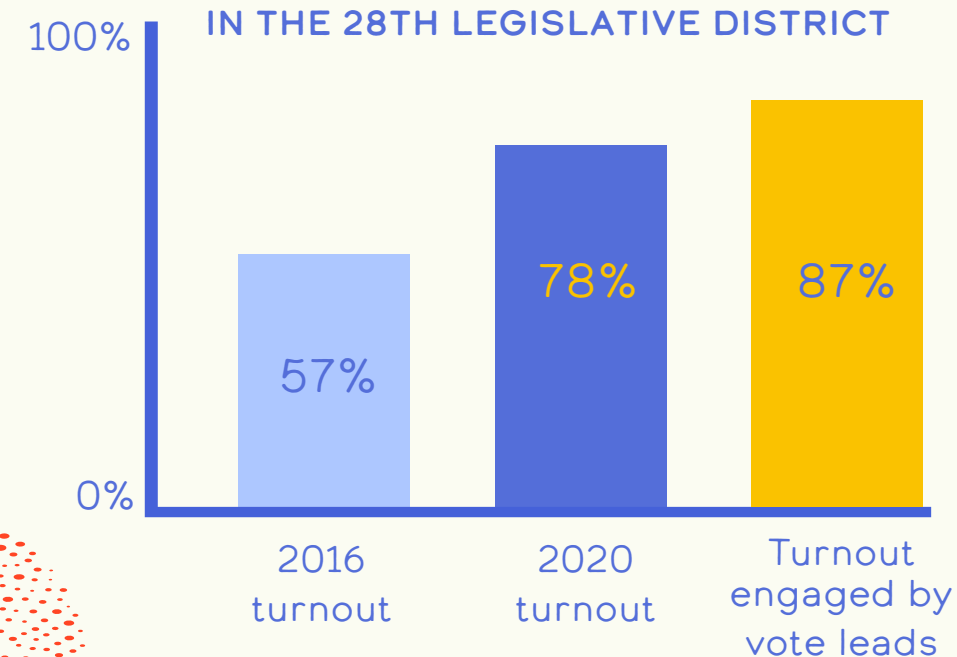
The population of 18-year-olds eligible to vote in the November election totaled 46,171. An astounding 83% of them voted in this year's historic election.



# PEER TO PEER ORGANIZING IN TIME 28TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

THE WASHINGTON BUS POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE RECRUITED 24 VOTE LEADS IN THE 28TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT TO HELP BOOST YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT AND FLIP THE SEAT BLUE. THE MAJORITY OF VOTE LEADS IDENTIFIED AS HIGH SCHOOLERS OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO HAD NEVER ENGAGED IN ELECTORAL ORGANIZING BEFORE THE BUS. THROUGH A PLEDGE TO REMIND THREE FRIENDS TO VOTE, THE VOTE LEAD PROGRAM USED PEER-TO-PEER ORGANIZING TO ENGAGE OVER 1,000 YOUNG VOTERS WITH A PERSONAL REMINDER TO VOTE.

YOUNG VOTER TURNOUT (AGE 18-34)  
IN THE 28TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



“The Vote Leads program was an amazing experience that left me feeling fulfilled and passionate about voting in my community.”

— Angee Pogosian



“The Vote Leads program allowed me the opportunity to engage with my community in getting out the youth vote while volunteering with an AWESOME, like-minded team!”

— Kateryna Koltunova



# THE POWER OF THE YOUTH VOTE

This is the year that young, BIPOC voters decided elections. We made sure to organize across Washington State, bringing in Interns from Bellingham to Ellensburg, and endorsing candidates from South Seattle to Yakima. In 2021, we're looking forward to continuing to engage across Washington State.

## JEFFERSON COUNTY CANDIDATE FORUM

Our candidate forum, What's a County Commissioner Anyway? reached over 1,000 people through Facebook Live.

## ORGANIZING IN CENTRAL WASHINGTON

Libby, our Colleges and Community Engagement Coordinator road-tripped to Central Washington University (CWU) to speak with their MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chinano/o de Aztlán) chapter about the importance of voting. Our fall intern cohort included three CWU students with experience in organizing and activism on their campus.

## BLACK WOMEN REPRESENT

The Bus took action and helped to TRIPLE the amount of Black women in the Washington State Legislature.

## BUS ENDORSEMENTS

We endorsed statewide!

Legislative Districts: 5, 11, 17, 23, 25, 28, 30, 37, 40, 42, 43, 44

**IN WASHINGTON  
STATE, 18-YEAR-OLD  
VOTERS TURNED OUT  
AT A RATE OF 83%.**



## REFERENDUM 90

We gained a BIG win for progressive organizing in Washington State when Referendum 90 for Comprehensive Sex Education passed with 65% of the vote! The Bus proudly supported Referendum 90 and sent over 25,000 text messages to voters about the initiative.

The win on R90 means that young people in Washington have the tools they need to feel empowered and make informed decisions about their lives and bodies.

**"Progressive organizing works when young people lead and engage with the issues that matter to their lives. The win on R90 means that young people in Washington have the tools they need to feel empowered and make informed decisions about their lives and bodies."**



— Gabbi Nazari (Bus Fellow, 2018) worked on Ref 90 as the Organizing & Partnership Manager at NARAL Pro-Choice.

THE BUS IS  
BUILDING A LEADERSHIP  
PIPELINE THAT  
DRIVES PROGRESSIVE  
CHANGE AT EVERY  
LEVEL OF POLITICS.



# GET ON BUS!

## VOLUNTEERS HITCH A RIDE

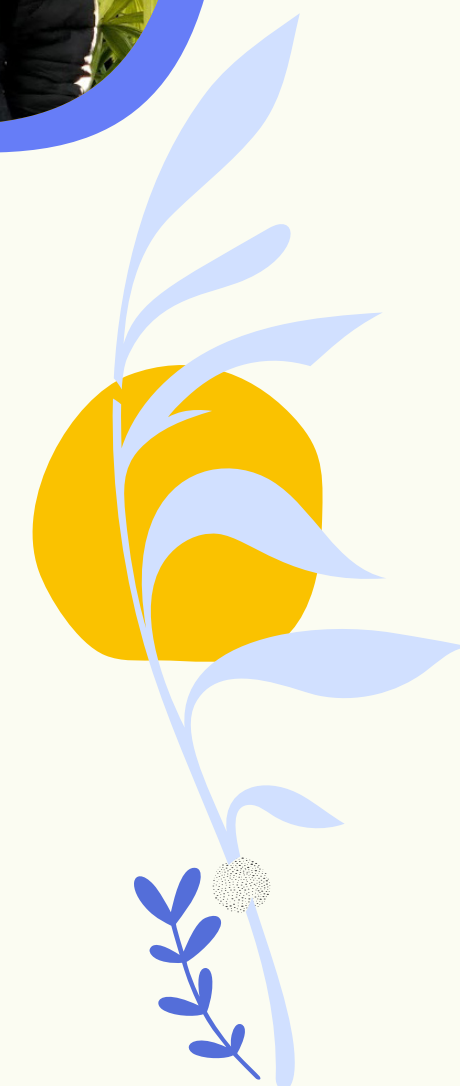
The Bus provides a fun and welcoming environment for young people to make a difference and engage in politics. Volunteers come to the Bus to take their first step toward sustainable, lifelong civic engagement, and this year we tripled our volunteer engagement. We're grateful that so many young people chose the Bus as their political home in 2020.

- 100% of Bus volunteers told us they learned more about the importance of the youth vote through volunteering.
- Volunteers told us the welcoming, inclusive atmosphere was one of their top reasons for continuing to engage with the Bus.
- 194 individual volunteers filled over 500 volunteer shifts engaging young voters this year.
- The median age of a Bus volunteer is 19.

“Volunteering at the Bus has taught me not only to care for local politics, but to also be a better listener, advocate, and ally for those in my own community. Thank you to The Bus for instilling confidence in me and for challenging me to make a difference in my community!”

— Miki Kusunose,  
Senior at Newport High School

Miki attended 15 volunteer events and wrote several articles for the Bus Blog.





# 2020 ADVOCACY WINS

## THE VOTE ACT

The Bus joined partners from the Washington Voting Justice Coalition and state lawmakers to pass the Voting Opportunity Through Education Act (VOTE Act) during the past legislative session. The VOTE Act allows 17 year olds to vote in primary elections if they will turn 18 years old before the general election. It also expands automatic voter registration to preregister 16 and 17-year-olds, and creates “student engagement hubs” on public university campuses across Washington State. Student engagement hubs allow tens of thousands of students to update their voter registration and make their voices heard.

**CHECK OUT OUR FIELD DIRECTOR, DANNY, AND OUR COLLEGES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR, LIBBY, TESTIFYING IN SUPPORT OF THE VOTE ACT.**



## Already a success:

**Registered 780 new voters; Provided replacement ballots for 386 voters; and Updated voter registrations for 370 voters.**

## GET OUT THE COUNT: THE CENSUS

A full and fair Census count is critical to a representative democracy and to ensuring that communities receive the resources they need. With support from Seattle Foundation’s Regional Census Fund and WA’s Office of Financial Management, the Washington Bus Education Fund joined a coalition of partners spreading the word about the importance of completing the Census and counting every Washingtonian.

With our deep connections to college campuses, high school students, and youth organizations we were able to organize dozens of Census outreach events and volunteer phone banks, and send over 100,000 text messages to mobilize young communities and Get-Out-The-Count.

**“The Washington Bus Education Fund was hugely impactful in reaching out directly to young communities and undercounted communities to ensure a full and fair Census count.”**

— Lisa McLean, 2020  
Census Coordinator at Office of Financial Management



# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, THE BUS WAY

## OUR WINS:

LAUNCHING OUR  
FIRST EVER DIGITAL  
FELLOWSHIP,  
WITH 15 FELLOWS

BRINGING ON OUR  
BIGGEST FALL  
INTERN COHORT  
EVER TO LEAD  
THE WAY TO THE  
GENERAL ELECTION

ENGAGING RECORD  
NUMBERS OF  
VOLUNTEERS  
TO SEND OVER  
350,000 TEXTS TO  
YOUNG VOTERS

## FELLOWSHIP REVIEW

Our Summer Fellowship serves as our signature leadership development program. It brings together 15 young people eager to learn how to engage in politics and social justice organizing. This year's Bus Fellowship went #HellaDigital and dove into hands-on digital organizing work. Fellows led seven text and phone banks before the August primary election and planned three peer-listening sessions on the topics of Climate Justice, Housing for All, and Criminal Justice. They captured community insights and their personal reflections in the first-ever Youth Agenda Policy Report, which will guide our 2021 legislative advocacy.

100% of Fellows strongly agreed that Fellowship strengthened their anti-oppression and social justice framework, and gave them the ability to see a place for themselves in politics.

**DID YOU KNOW? FELLOWS GOT THE CHANCE TO LEARN FROM OVER 45 EXPERTS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY AND POLITICAL ORGANIZING FROM ACROSS WASHINGTON.**

"It's so rare that you get to be with a large group of people that share your values and want to learn how to empower themselves and their communities."

— Rachel Izuagbe,  
2020 Fellow

"I am so glad that I had this group of people to help me dive more into myself and my identity as well as to help me to learn more about things I didn't have much experience with."

— Megan Thao,  
2020 Fellow

"I will always cherish the relationships I've made with the fellows and staff!"

— Zawadi Chege,  
2020 Fellow





## FALL INTERNSHIP

This Fall we brought on eight paid college interns to boost our organizing efforts. Our intern class was statewide, and represented the University of Washington, Western Washington University, Central Washington University, and Pacific Lutheran University. They planned and facilitated What's On My Ballot? events for their peers on campus, and ran Get Out the Vote phone and text banks for the Bus community.

**CHECK OUT OUR INTERNS CASTING THEIR BALLOTS! FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: SEBASTIAN, STEPHEN, NICK, AND ANNALISA**



"I've learned so much about voting through my internship with the Bus. I learned about races and measures on my ballot, I learned about congressional and legislative districts, and I learned about voting deadlines. I learned about resources available to voters and how to get out the vote to increase voter turnout. Voting for the first time felt so empowering because I was able to make my voice heard and personally contribute to the results of the election."

— Saba Mir, Fall Intern and UW Seattle



WE BELIEVE  
IN ACCESS,  
NOT APATHY





# ADVOCACY, ACTIVISM, AND OUTREACH

THE BUS PARTNERED WITH 15 OTHER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN 2020. THOSE PARTNERS INCLUDED THE WASHINGTON STUDENT ASSOCIATION, YMCA IMPACT CENTER, YOUTHCARE, SOCCER WITHOUT BORDERS, WASHINGTON CONSERVATION VOTERS, SUNRISE TACOMA, AND MORE!



Throwback! In 2014, the Bus was proud to endorse Seattle's Prop 1: Yes for Transit. We were proud to help pass this measure again in 2020

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Washington Bus Political Action Committee recruited 24 Vote Leads in the 28th Legislative District to help boost youth voter turnout and flip the seat blue. The majority of Vote Leads identified as high schoolers or community college students who had never engaged in electoral organizing before the Bus. Through a pledge to remind three friends to vote, the Vote Lead program used peer-to-peer organizing to engage over 1,000 young voters with a personal reminder to vote.

## HIGH SCHOOLS

The Washington Bus Political Action Committee recruited 24 Vote Leads in the 28th Legislative District to help boost youth voter turnout and flip the seat blue. The majority of Vote Leads identified as high schoolers or community college students who had never engaged in electoral organizing before the Bus. Through a pledge to remind three friends to vote, the Vote Lead program used peer-to-peer organizing to engage over 1,000 young voters with a personal reminder to vote.

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

### UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON BOTHELL'S ACHIEVING COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

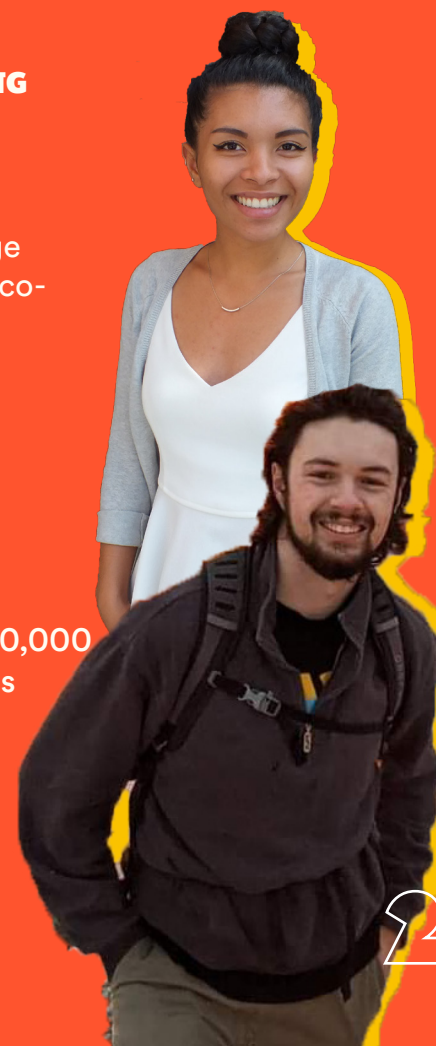
"The Bus has been an amazing partner to ACT this year, providing us with the training and support to be able to confidently facilitate classroom presentations with college students and participate in voter engagement, as well as co-hosting multiple text and phone banks."

**Shauniece Drayton**  
Civic Engagement Program Manager at University of Washington Bothell

### WASHINGTON STUDENT ASSOCIATION

"This year, Washington Student Association engaged 100,000 students and young people in the 2020 election. The Bus acted as an integral partner in this work, collaborating with us to host nonpartisan voter engagement events that felt fun and impactful."

**Riley Dolan**  
Statewide Student Engagement Coordinator for Washington Student Association





# EVENTS RECAP

## BUS BASH

Bus Bash is our biggest fundraiser of the year. It supports the Washington Bus Education Fund (501)(c3) and our Summer Fellowship. Our community generously raised a record-setting \$34,000 from 212 individual donors.

We extend immense gratitude to our Bus Bash sponsors: SEIU WA State Council, Lucky Seven Foundation, SEIU 775, The Harry Truman Fund, Abracadabra, CD Strategic, Emily Murphy, JLL, Libby Sinclair and Bob Crittenden, Mollie Price and Dennis Kim, NWP Consulting, Summit Strategy, The Goss Family, and The Vera Project.



## WASHINGTON BUS VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Our virtual summit highlighted the Bus's vital role in promoting youth engagement and participation in politics across the state. The event raised \$3,100 in support of the Washington Bus (501)(c4) and we were honored by the presence of King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay.

## THE BUS IS PROUD TO SIT ON THESE IMPACTFUL COALITIONS

**The Washington Voting Justice Coalition** is a group of community organizations dedicated to voting rights and access in Washington State. Our recent achievements include automatic voter registration, same-day registration, and pre-registration for 16 and 17 year olds.

**Our Votes Count** focuses on winning big races by spending energy and resources on voters that traditional campaigns often overlook: young voters, first-time voters, BIPOC voters and low-income voters. This year, the Washington Bus PAC received funding to engage young voters in the 28th Legislative District.

**The Voter Education Fund** is a cohort of 39 organizations, funded by the Seattle Foundation and King County Elections, that work to remove barriers to voting in underserved and underrepresented communities. The Voter Education Fund allowed us to expand our youth-focused voter registration, education, and outreach efforts while simultaneously sharing best-practices with other organizations.

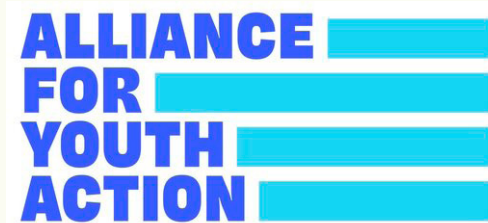
We loved partnering with the Vera Project on several GOTV and advocacy concerts this year, both in person and virtual!



# A BIG BUS THANK YOU

## THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH ACTION

As many of you know, The Washington Bus is one of ten affiliates across the nation that make up the Alliance for Youth Action – the country’s premier youth organizing network. We deeply appreciate the Alliance for their shared guidance, tremendous community, and nonstop dedication to building young people’s political power.



## WIN|WIN: OUR STATE VOICES TABLE

Transitioning the Bus’ expansive field work to a socially-distant and virtual approach proved to be no easy task. We want to offer a special shout-out to our friends at Win Win for their expertise, patience, and support throughout 2020.

## BUS FRIENDS FOREVER

We call our monthly donors “Bus Friends Forever” because they help sustain the Bus’s crucial organizing and voter mobilization efforts all year long. Thank you!



## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS 2020 FUNDERS:

**Washington State Office of Financial Management**

**Seattle Foundation Regional Census Fund**

**Seattle Foundation Voter Education Fund**

**Grousemont Foundation**

**Progress Alliance**

**Open Society Policy Center**

**Satterberg Foundation**

**The Alliance for Youth Action**

**The Alliance for Youth Organizing**

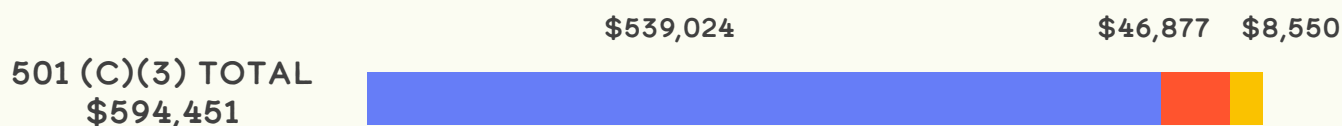


# FINANCIALS

NOT YET AUDITED. BASED ON NOVEMBER 2020 FINANCIALS.

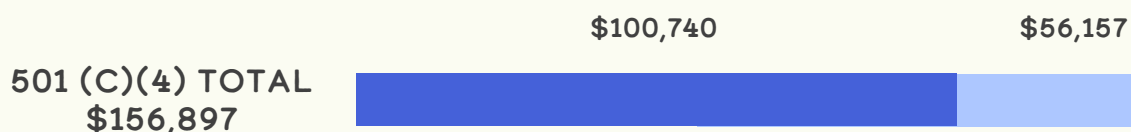
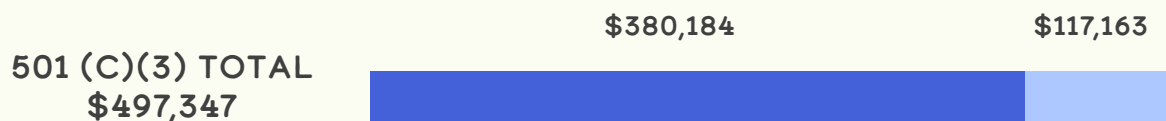
## REVENUE

■ INSTITUTION ■ INDIVIDUALS ■ LABOR



## EXPENSES

■ PERSONNEL ■ OPERATING



### WASHINGTON BUS STAFF

Liam Dale - Co-Executive Director for Operations and Development  
Mo Pannier - H.S. Engagement and Leadership Development Coordinator  
Danny Villars - Field Director  
Libby Watson - College and Community Engagement Coordinator  
Leila Reynolds - Communications and Outreach Coordinator  
Cinthia Illan Vazquez - Co-Executive Director for Policy and Program

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