

# Flash!

A NEWSLETTER FROM **MAPLight.org**

ISSUE 04 / SPRING 2008

## IN THIS ISSUE

From the Executive Director  
A Webby Nomination and More  
Shining a Light on MAPLight.org  
Our Research Data in the News  
Researcher Spotlight:  
Chris Clark  
Fundraising Corner: Mapping  
Money and Politics

## OUR ORGANIZATION



### WELCOME PAMELA!

MAPLight.org welcomes Pamela Heisey, our new Communications

Director. Pamela brings 17 years of marketing and public relations experience to MAPLight.org. Her experience brings the insight of a seasoned professional to our media strategy. Already she has overseen a marked increase in media coverage of MAPLight.org's research.

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Pamela Heisey, Communications Director  
Susannah Nadler, Research Coordinator  
Andrew Page, Associate Director  
Sean Tanner, Research Director

### RESEARCH INTERNS

Natalie Adona  
Chris Clark  
Tiffany Hsieh  
Megan Luecke  
Kaileigh McCrea  
Joey Nolan  
Adam Potischman  
Changrui Xiao  
Lechuan Zhou

## 1st Anniversary Party – You're Invited!

We're thrilled to celebrate the first anniversary of our new name, "MAPLight.org," and the launch of our flagship U.S. Congress website. Join us at our Open House in Berkeley, California on Tuesday, May 20th from 4 to 7 pm. For the address and directions, call us at 510-868-0894 or email [susannah@maplight.org](mailto:susannah@maplight.org).

## From the Executive Director

Wow, just one year? It's hard for me to believe that we launched our flagship website for U.S. Congress in May, 2007, less than a year ago. We've broken new ground in government transparency, won international awards and earned coverage of our unprecedented data by preeminent news outlets.

Just a few weeks ago we were named a Politics nominee for a Webby, the "Oscars of the Internet." I am proud to see our website honored with the likes of NPR.org and the Pew Forum on Religion and Politics. At the same time, our mission is unlike that of any other group represented in the Webby "politics" category. We are not simply providing information; we are illuminating how our money-dominated political system is broken, in order to build momentum for change.

Thank you for your role in building MAPLight.org. Our success is your success.

## A WEBBY NOMINATION AND MORE

MAPLight.org is a finalist or nominee for awards in three contests that will be determined in May.

We are one of 20 finalists in the Public Administration category of the Stockholm Challenge, an international contest for the best public-benefit technology projects that attracted 1,400



entries from around the world. We are a featured Project of the NetSquared Chal-



lenge, where we will win at least \$2,000 in late May, and maybe much more. Last year we won first prize, and \$25,000. (For more information

about our NetSquared Challenge entry, see *Fundraising Corner: Mapping Money and Politics*, next page.) Finally, we have been nominated for a Webby Award, one of five nominees in the politics category.

The Webby Awards are the "Oscars of the Internet," in the words of the New York



Times. Other nominees include NPR and the Pew Forum on Religion and Politics. It is extraordinary that an organization as small as ours has earned the admiration of such a wide audience.

## SHINING A LIGHT ON MAPLIGHT.ORG

MAPLight.org received 21,335 website visits in March 2008. You can find this statistic, along with fundraising and budget information, in the newly updated "About Us" section of our website. By publishing our site statistics and financial information, we're seeking to set a tone of transparency that we hope other organizations will adopt too.

We've also added a "Take Action" page, in the "Participate" section of our site, with things you can do to communicate the problems with money and politics.

If you haven't already done so, please take a moment to renew your support of MAPLight.org today by filling out the enclosed envelope, or going to:

[www.maplight.org/donate](http://www.maplight.org/donate)

Thank You!

## OUR RESEARCH DATA IN THE NEWS

Since bringing our money and politics data up to real time and hiring Communications Director Pamela Heisey, MAPLight.org's data has started earning the press attention it deserves. Some highlights of our recent media coverage:

### HR 1424 (House Mental Health Parity Bill)

**NationalJournal**

The **National Journal Group** featured

MAPLight.org's data in a Congress Daily article about the bill: "Groups that opposed a mental health parity bill that passed the House Wednesday gave five times the amount of campaign contributions to lawmakers

**CongressDaily**

than proponents over the past two years, according to data from MapLight.org, a nonprofit organization that tracks campaign money and members' votes." 85% of the 9,600 Congress Daily readers work for the Federal government.

### HR 3373 (House FISA Bill)

**Wired.com's Threat Level** blog cited MAPLight.org's data in an article about AT&T, Sprint and Verizon PAC donations given to legislators:



"Political action committees for telecoms being sued for privacy violations gave more than \$10,000 on average to each Congress member who voted to give amnesty to telecoms being sued for illegally helping the government spy on Americans, according to an analysis done by MapLight.org, an organization devoted to using new technology to show the influence of money on government."

eWeek, a technology publication with over a million readers, reported: "During the Watergate scandal that eventually toppled President Richard Nixon, confidential source 'Deep Throat' advised two enterprising Washington Post reporters to 'follow the money' to uncover the scandal's ringleaders. Now MAPLight.org, a small, not-for-profit company, is developing a database and application mashup that will allow the public to follow another money trail—the connection between campaign contributions and the way lawmakers vote." eWeek also featured our new upcoming project "Mapping Money and Politics."



The **Sacramento Bee** published an editorial protesting, "Nothing is simple when it comes to public information and the California Legislature." The editorial criticizes the California Legislature's refusal to share a database of its votes with MAPLight.org, which makes it difficult and time consuming for our research team to collect voting data.

One of our favorite placements for our Presidential Money Race Widget can be found on the **Huffington Post's** FundRace page, <http://fundrace.huffingtonpost.com/>

If you would like to receive MAPLight.org's **press alerts** with breaking news and new research, drop a note to Pamela, [pamela@maplight.org](mailto:pamela@maplight.org), and she will add you to our distribution list.

## RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT CHRIS CLARK

Meticulous researcher Chris Clark has volunteered at MAPLight.org for nine months. His current assignment, laying the groundwork for our planned project to track votes in Congressional committees, is crucial for the project's success. As always, he is up for the challenge.

Currently, MAPLight.org data relies on Congressional floor votes to knit money and politics data together, but it is in



the cloistered atmosphere of committees that powerful special interests are able to quietly kill or alter legislation that affects us all. Chris is investigating how MAPLight.org can make key committee votes publicly available in our web database. His work will help us make MAPLight.org exponentially more powerful.

"Navigating all of the various committees and subcommittees is daunting," Chris admits, but he remains steadfast. "If any aspects of our government lack transparency, that's a problem... if MAPLight.org can illuminate the relationship between campaign donations and committee action in a clear, accessible way, then journalists, activists, and concerned citizens would have a powerful tool at their disposal."

Chris's work at MAPLight.org has given him hope for real reform. "I was excited by the freshness of MAPLight.org's approach, and it's made me realize just how powerful the Internet can be as a tool for social change."

## FUNDRAISING CORNER: MAPPING MONEY AND POLITICS

Our entry for the NetSquared Challenge this year is Mapping Money and Politics, a "mashup" showing campaign contributions on a map. It creates a new and appealing way of understanding money and politics.



Consider what these two maps show about the giving of special interest groups.

In the map on the left, the pink and red colors show the source of Oil and Gas interests' campaign contributions. The map on the right shows campaign contributions from Pro-Environment interests. Darker-colored states indicate more money given from that state. Oil and Gas campaign contributions come predominantly from two states, Texas and California, while contributions from environmental interests come from many states across the country.

In a different example, the top three maps on the right show contributions from the Sugar Industry leading up to a key vote

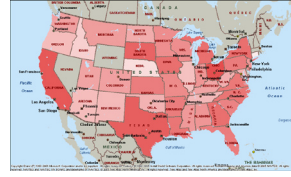
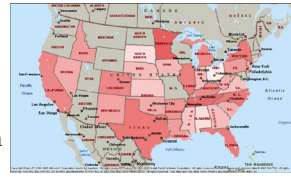


on sugar subsidies in July 2007. These maps show increasing contributions from the Sugar Industry to members of Congress,

during January 2007, April 2007, and June 2007. The darker the color, the more money contributed to members of Congress in that state.

After the subsidies bill passed, the money flow stopped, as shown in the map on the bottom right depicting contributions from the Sugar Industry during August 2007. (Source for contribution data: Center for Responsive Politics.)

Looking at the country through the lens of campaign contributions helps you see the distorted



terrain our legislators work in. It's no wonder they can't take straight action on the serious problems facing our country.

We are so excited about incorporating these mapping tools into MAPLight.org that we have already hired a programmer to make it happen. We hope that some of the cost will be offset by being a featured project of the NetSquared Challenge, and you can help, too. The Mapping Money and Politics project will cost \$50,000. Help us place Money and Politics maps in newspapers and blogs across the country.

To learn more about the project, see our three-minute video at: [www.maplight.org/mapping\\_money\\_and\\_politics](http://www.maplight.org/mapping_money_and_politics)

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**MAPLight.org**  
MONEY AND POLITICS: ILLUMINATING THE CONNECTION