

Religious leaders announce vote campaign

by [Lauren Markoe](#) and [David Gibson](#)

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William Barber (right front) at a Moral Monday rally in North Carolina. [Some rights reserved](#) by [twbuckner](#)

Faith leaders who sit to the left in U.S. politics say they won't let the religious right claim the moral mantle in the elections of 2014.

In September they announced a campaign to boost voter registration and encourage voters, particularly in poor and immigrant communities, to go to the polls.

Ted Strickland of the Center for American Progress Action Fund, a Methodist minister and former governor of Ohio, said he and others will go door to door and church to church to press their message: that people of faith should pursue fair and just public policy.

William Barber, pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro, North Carolina, and leader of the Moral Monday movement, which has protested actions by the state's conservative legislature, quoted Isaiah 10: "Woe to those who make unjust laws."

The coalition plans to use social media and traditional methods of voter mobilization.

The PICO National Network has launched Let My People VOTE, an initiative aiming to register nearly 50,000 new voters in counties with rapidly growing Latino populations and large racial gaps in voter registration.

It also hopes to collect 187,000 signatures to place on the ballot measures on minimum wage, paid sick days, early voting, sentencing reform, and voter re-enfranchisement.

Also part of the effort is Faith in Public Life.

“The Christian right often had voter mobilization and contact tools and text campaigns that were well financed,” said Jennifer Butler, CEO of Faith in Public Life and coleader of Iona Conversations in Washington, D.C., connected to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). “This is one of the first times that progressive religious leaders, or leaders that are working toward more social justice, have had these kinds of massive voter contact strategies and capabilities, and I think that changes the landscape for the future.”

Another coalition member is a group of Catholic sisters taking a monthlong Nuns on the Bus tour to promote voter registration and campaign against the influence of outside money on politics.

The spigot for undisclosed donations, which can be made by unions as well as corporations, was opened by the 2010 *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision. That was followed by another 5-4 ruling in April, *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*.

The Nuns on the Bus tour, the third led by Sister Simone Campbell, who heads Network, a Catholic social justice lobby, includes canvassing low-income neighborhoods to rally voters to cast ballots November 4.

“We want to say the 100 percent are welcome to the table,” Campbell said. “But leave your moneybags outside the door.” —Religion News Service

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