A Message from our Board Chair: 2012 (and some 2013) in Review

What a great year Jewish Community Action has had! We have so many reasons to feel pride in our accomplishments as a grass roots organization: two great ballot victories, legislative successes, an unprecedented growth in our membership, enhancement of our active volunteer leadership, and growth, as well, in our financial resources. And that is not all. We forged some great new partnerships, hired new staff, and, on top of all that, have received much appreciated recognition for our work. Of course, we have had some losses, too, given the still difficult political climate, but this reality still does not stop us from saying it again. 5773 was a great year!!

Here are some of the highlights – since our last report – of the successful campaigns in which our Jewish voice had a key role:

**The Marriage Amendment.** Beginning in early 2011, after the state legislature placed on the November 2012 ballot the constitutional amendment to limit marriage equality, JCA was one of the very first organizations to begin organizing to defeat the amendment. By the end of the campaign, our skilled staff and well trained volunteers had donated thousands of hours to fight for marriage equality. Right up to the last hours the polls were open on Election Day 2012, JCA kept up a sustained effort to offer amazing leadership and the voice of the Jewish community, and the marriage amendment was defeated.

**“Photo ID” Amendment.** During the spring of 2012, we also took a hard look at a second ballot measure proposing to limit voting rights in a manner that seemed designed to increase racial and economic injustice. It is not in our makeup to stand by, and so we took on this fight, too. JCA was one of the only organizations to work to defeat both amendments at once! Although we had been warned that this fight would be a futile one, very hard work paid off: this amendment, too, was rejected by the voters in the 2012 election.

As soon as the 2013 legislative session began, we were ready. We again took on a major role in a number of different legislative initiatives and, to our great joy, more successes followed.

**Financial Justice.** In collaboration with the Northside Community Reinvestment Coalition and St. Paul Fair Lending Coalition, we expanded our existing campaign of assistance to and advocacy for individuals seeking to save their homes to the state legislature to work toward the passage of the Homeowners’ Bill of Rights, establishing strong, comprehensive protections for homeowners facing foreclosure.

**Freedom to Marry.** Success in the ballot box did not end our advocacy on this issue, and we joined a number of other groups, including OutFront Minnesota and Minnesotans United for All Families, to gain the votes needed in the legislature to make marriage equality the law in this state. Same sex marriage is now sanctioned by law!

**Immigration Reform.** The rights of immigrants have always been close to our hearts, since we Jews have been immigrants and because justice so demands. During the 2013 legislative session, we helped to make higher education accessible to
immigrant students by the passing of the DREAM Act. We also enjoyed another noteworthy annual Immigrant Seder, well attended and inspiring as we honored marriage equality this time. This year, too, we participated in the fifth anniversary of the Postville gathering in support of victims of an ICE raid, just as we had had a major role five years ago, and we are part of a national partnership advocating for immigrant rights on the federal level.

**Gun Violence Prevention.** In this area, we worked in partnership with Protect Minnesota and the National Council of Jewish Women to press the legislature to require background checks and ban assault weapons. Tragically, the legislature refused to step up. Nevertheless, we have reason to be encouraged. By our presence at hearings, rallies, press conferences, we did attract attention and did gain endorsement at the committee levels. Subsequently, this past July, JCA was invited to speak during a visit of the Mayors against Illegal Guns as part of the No More Names project touring the country. At a public rally, we, along with other local groups, politicians and individuals read the names of people who have been killed by gun violence in the past year. The event was compelling and moving, as each reader repeated the refrain, “NO MORE NAMES.”

Besides advocating directly with our partners for gun violence prevention, we worked on several other campaigns, including Safe Schools for All and Drivers Licenses for All, the first campaign against bullying and the latter an immigrant rights measure. While neither of these campaigns moved as far in the legislature as we had hoped, we built stronger relationships with our allies and gained the experience that will serve us well when we revisit these issues next session.

Internally, it was also a busy and productive year. We completed our first Tzedek Institute, providing high level organizing training and leadership skills through a Jewish lens to a talented group of congregational and independent leaders who have since returned to their congregations or communities to lead JCA issue campaigns. This fall, after a summer of planning and recruitment, our new cohort began the institute.

Our staff and board had the pleasure of hosting a brunch with Senator Al Franken in August 2013. He gave us his time and attention as we presented our history and current campaign work and talked with him about how we might work together on issues that matter to us.

We formed a new partnership with another national organization, Bend the Arc, a Jewish Partnership for Justice. More than simply working together on issues such as immigration and gun violence, we agreed to a formal affiliation. Two JCA board members now represent JCA on the Bend the Arc board, and we look forward to exciting collaborations in the years to come. Vic Rosenthal, JCA’s Executive Director, also continued his participation in the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable and thereby has continued to give us a national presence and national recognition.

We have four new staff members, including Gabe Kravitz, Community Organizer, Ari Kiener, Communications and Membership Associate, Nora Kassner, who came as a volunteer and has stayed as an intern as she completes her college education, and Shyrisse Tisdle, who has joined our foreclosure prevention efforts as a community organizer in St. Paul. You can read more about them on our website. We also very sadly said our goodbyes to Senior Organizer Adele Brown and Organizer Jesse Rothman for their amazing work.

Finally, check out our new website (www.jewishcommunityaction.org) and our new logo. The website will give you additional information about our great staff and board, some history, important events, both past and future, and the campaigns on which we are now engaged going forward in our mission of Tikkun Olam, as we seek to do our part to heal the world.

Andrea Rubenstein, JCA Board Chair
2012 Financial Highlights

2012 Financial Information
Total Income $751,560
Total Expense $645,965

2012 Income by Category
Grants $458,303
Grassroots $287,983
Other $5,274

2012 Expense Allocations
Program Service $503,897
Management and General $ 74,777
Fundraising $ 67,291

Thank You – JCA Board of Directors
Special thanks to Julie Plaut and Richard Chase who served on the board for more than 6 years each and for each serving as chair of the JCA board for a full term, and to Nancy Kleeman and Seymour Mansfield for their many years of leadership on the JCA board and within the organization. We welcome Jacob Smith and Geri Katz, who joined the JCA board in 2013.

Thank You – JCA staff
Special thanks to Adele Brown for more than eleven years of powerful community organizing with JCA, including leading our work on congregational organizing and our work to defeat the marriage amendment in 2012. Thanks also to Dave Snyder for more than seven years leading JCA’s work on foreclosure prevention and helping to build the Northside Community Reinvestment Coalition. Thanks to Velva Stewart for leading the National Neighbor Silver program for two years as well.

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Name(s) (as you’d like it to appear on roster and acknowledgment)

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Your membership is important to us. Any contribution, regardless of size, is welcomed.

Your membership is tax-deductible.
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JCA’S MISSION: TO BRING TOGETHER JEWISH PEOPLE FROM DIVERSE TRADITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND TAKE ACTION ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ISSUES IN MINNESOTA.

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