

BUILD

WITH

BUS



WASHINGTON BUS EDUCATION FUND

**BUILD
WITH
BUS**

2023 IMPACT REPORT

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello Bus Supporters,

2023 was a year of reconnecting with our roots at the Washington Bus! We hit the road again with Bus Trips to Yakima and Spokane to turn out the youth vote for progressive candidates, and even brought back our annual Victory Fund fundraiser to fuel our electoral and political work. In total we reached out to more than 43,000 young people across Washington State making an impact in local elections.

As you know, there's no such thing as an "off year" at the Bus because every election matters. But our work goes beyond just turning out youth voters;

it's about building the political power of young people to create a better world for all of us, and cultivating youth leaders along the way. That's why, in 2023,

we doubled down on base-building and power-building programs – and we'll keep resourcing and scaling them up. March of 2023 marked my third anniversary leading this movement, and I'm energized about the transformation we're driving.

We're proud to have championed and passed our first legislation this session, making online voter registration more accessible. During the peak of COVID-19, we had to pivot to virtual classroom presentations and rely on the online process. But we quickly realized that students without a state ID, permit, or driver's license couldn't register online. Our new law tears down that barrier, ensuring young people, immigrants, and our unhoused neighbors can register to vote online.

2024 holds immense opportunities for youth power. We're ready to win on the Youth Agenda, defend our state against regressive initiatives, elect more champions for our cause, and deepen our base of young people. Check out the rest of our report to see how we're building youth power every day. Whether you are new to the Bus or have been a steadfast supporter, thank you for your continued support.

In solidarity,

Cynthia Illan-Vazquez
Executive Director, Washington Bus

STAFF

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Janelle Kono
Jazmine Smith
Mehar Singh
Tai Yang-Abreu
Edgar U. Espino
E. Bailey Medilo

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Operations Manager
Political Manager
Development Manager
Youth Organizing Manager
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TO BEST FULFILL OUR MISSION, "THE WASHINGTON BUS" HEADER CONSISTS OF TWO SEPARATE ENTITIES: **THE WASHINGTON BUS**, A 501(C)4 SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION, AND **THE WASHINGTON BUS EDUCATION FUND**, A 501(C)3 PUBLIC CHARITY. THIS REPORT INCLUDES HIGHLIGHTS FROM BOTH ORGANIZATIONS AND THE **WASHINGTON BUS POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE**.



THE BUS IDENTITY

We believe in people. We believe in participation. We believe in policy. The Bus meets young people where they are and mobilizes them to build a more progressive and representative Washington. We run large civic engagement campaigns, educate our peers on civic issues and train the next generation of leaders in Washington State

The Washington Bus is the political home for young people ages 15-35 in Washington State. We support a rising generation of leaders in addressing systematic and economic barriers holding young people back from civic leadership. We remove barriers to political participation so that our generation can realize its full political power. We invest in people of color, low-income, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, and other historically disenfranchised young leaders to build a more accessible, equitable, and representative Washington State — and it's working.

The Washington Bus focuses on engaging young people in all levels of the civic process, meeting young people where they are across the state – in high school classrooms, at music festivals and events, and through partnerships with community-based organizations. We organize and mobilize our generation to put capacity behind issues young people care about in the legislature and on the ballot.

The Washington Education Fund focuses on leadership development and civic education. We train young leaders with the skills and tools to make real change in their communities, register thousands of people to vote each year, educate the public about issues on their ballot, and work to make sure everyone votes in every election!

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

amplifying youth voices at and beyond the ballot box

We organize hubs of young people throughout the state who turn up and turn out their communities all-year round, not just during elections. Those efforts include our Campus and Vote Lead initiatives, which entail targeted peer-to-peer GOTV programs to turn out young people in priority regions with significantly low turnout. Combined with our youth-led endorsement process, the Bus continues to lead the way for youth voter engagement in Washington State.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

empowering leaders to grow, fight, and win

We empower young leaders across Washington State to grow, fight, and win on issues that matter to them through year-round training, mentorship, and leadership opportunities. Bus programs equip participants with the skills and tools necessary to champion issues they care about and to make real change in their communities. Find out more about the impacts of our high school and college internship and fellowship programs in this report.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

eliminating structural barriers for young people

We build, champion, and sustain youth-led efforts dedicated to eliminating structural barriers holding young people back from civic participation and leadership. We move the dial on issues critical to young people, including:

- **Voting Rights Expansion.** A healthy democracy requires ensuring everyone who can vote does so.
- **College Equity.** Increasing higher education access for everyone ensures a better future for young people.
- **Progressive Taxation.** Everyone should be able to make ends meet, and we're committed to turning our state's regressive tax system around.



BUS YOUTH STAY WINNING ON POLICY

LEGISLATIVE RECAP

Our 2023 was full of big wins. 6 of our priority bills passed the legislature, including our signature bill that we drafted! This is the culmination of the hundreds of emails sent, testimonies given, and times signed in pro.

One of our biggest victories was our incredible Capitol Takeover,

we collaborated with Latino Community Fund to send a massive group of young people to the state capitol, where they heard from representatives and senators on legislation that deeply impacts the future of our state and had their own opportunities to lobby legislators on issues that we have identified that were critical legislation that needed to pass to improve the

living conditions of young people in our state.

We were honored to meet with Rep. Sharlett Mena, Senator Yasmin Trudeau, and also meet dozens of lobbyists who were running around, advocating for their own issues.

Our organizing showed that young people care about legislation, policy, and our state.

THE WASHINGTON BUS PASSED OUR 2023 SIGNATURE BILL: **UPDATING ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION**

1. FREE SCHOOL MEALS
2. CHILDCARE FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS
3. PRIVATE DETENTION CENTER CONDITIONS
4. AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION
5. MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND PEOPLE'S COLD CASE UNIT

THE YOUNG ARCHITECTS OF WASHINGTON STATE'S FUTURE

A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH A 2023 WINTERSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Every year, during the short session in the winter, the Washington Bus recruits young leaders in their communities who are invested in advocacy, policy, and legislative work to join our Winternship—a legislative-focused internship that builds their hard organizing skills and their soft social skills.

We sat down with Sophia Hernandez, a Winter Legislative Intern, to talk about their experiences with this program.

How did it feel to be in the halls of the legislature and see the work that happens at the state level?

SH: Being at the legislature made me feel empowered and inspired to want

to pursue a career in politics.

Whether through education, policy, or law, it was such an impactful opportunity to visit a place that has always felt so far away from my community and I.

What were some impressions you had of our state's elected officials before and after meeting with them?

SH: I had some impressions that young people would have to fight for basic respect from state officials just because of the general political climate that doesn't value youth voices as greatly.

However, a handful of these officials were very attentive during our meetings and made me feel that

there is a possibility to center the voices of marginalized people.

What is an issue you learned about during the Winternship that you continue to organize around and how?

SH: The Winter Legislative Internship showed me how to navigate the intricate processes of the Washington State legislature.

Now that I have the skills to track and advocate for bills, I am still continuing to stay informed with a multitude of issues that go through the legislature like housing, education, and citizenship.



BUILDING THE POLITICAL LEADERS OF TOMORROW

BUILDING WASHINGTON'S NEXT SLATE OF POLITICAL LEADERS

A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH A 2023 SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Every year during the Summer's primary season, the Washington Bus brings together a cohort of summer fellows to teach them how to become bonafide political organizers.

We spoke with Kenzie Knapp, a graduate of the Summer Fellowship Class of 2023

What were your impressions of electoral and issue organizing prior to the Fellowship?

KN: Prior to this fellowship, my experience with electoral and issue organizing consisted of interactions that seemed more disconnected such as receiving a few flyers in the mail, on my doorstep, or seeing large names on political campaign yard signs. However, during the fellowship I was so thrilled to interact and connect with voters during our canvassing efforts. From door to door, I heard many personal stories about what issues mattered to those voters and then had the chance to

connect them with the policies on the ballot that would benefit them and our community.

What was something you learned from your experiences in the Fellowship that has stuck with you to this day?

KN: During the fellowship we had a classroom session where we reviewed the political process of legislation writing, reviewing, tracking, and voting at the state level. This was very helpful for me as a student interested in political advocacy, whereas I have been taught this process in the past, but to review it was very helpful for zooming out and visualizing where our canvassing and political advocacy fits into the larger picture of city and state-wide legislation.

Why is it so important to make politics and political spaces accessible to young people and how did the Bus help achieve this?

KN: Making political spaces accessible to young folks is essential

because young voters are one of the largest yet most underrepresented voting blocks in the United States and with the most progressive potential. The Washington Bus practiced making the voting sphere accessible by meeting young people where they are at while canvassing in the literal sense. This looked like attending the capitol hill block party: while there were many folks not interested in interacting there were also people who had been meaning to update their voter registration, and in seeing a convenient opportunity to check this task off their to-do list, we got to speak more with them about their experience in the Seattle political sphere, their interests and challenges with local policies, and them as a person. Being available and visible canvassing at events such as these to lower propensity voting blocks made registering them to vote much more accessible and simplified, all while building community and raising awareness of the Washington Bus' work in the process.



8865

VOTERS CONTACTED FOR PRIMARY ELECTION GOTV

145,763

YOUTH TURNED IN THEIR BALLOT STATEWIDE

11

GET OUT THE VOTE EVENTS HOSTED

45

HOURS OF FELLOWSHIP CLASS TIME

25

CLASSES & SPEAKERS HEARD BY FELLOWS

9

FELLOWS GRADUATED FROM OUR PROGRAM

4

CAMPAIGNS RAN AND SUPPORTED BY FELLOWS

2023 FELLOWSHIP RECAP

Each summer, we bring on a cohort of young people onto our fellowship, and bring them on a journey of transformative growth and advocacy—mentoring them into bonafide political organizers, putting them on a path to become future leaders of Washington's political scene. Under our staff's leadership, we built a rapport of power building.

The specific goals and objectives of this fellowship revolve around building hard skills, cultivating their networks through connecting like-minded youth and seasoned organizers, on top of building their leadership qualities.

In practice, we saw their growth through our field work—registering youth to vote for a historically low-turnout primary at high traffic events like Day In Day Out, Capitol Hill Block Party, and our own exciting candidate forum: Candidate Survivor. At those events and more development-focused ones like Bus Bash, our C3 Fundraiser, we saw fellows build networks and connect with other leaders who aligned with their interests and values. And lastly, our fellows went through a comprehensive political education process, going through dozens of classes. They heard from leaders such as Tacoma City Councilmember Olgy Diaz, WSA Executive Director Nancy Canales, Contract Lobbyist Adan Espino, and dozens of other multidisciplinary political leaders who imparted critical wisdom and knowledge upon our fellows.

We look towards building more capacity for our fellowship. We do the hard work of mentoring youth across WA, and we want to bring these young leaders together more often for more events. We're proud of the efficient return to hybrid organizing post-lockdown, and our goals moving forward require funding for more trainings, activities, and events.



BUILDING A LASTING YOUTH VOTING BLOC

REMAKING A STATEWIDE POWER-BUILDING BUS

Getting youth involved in political organizing is essential, of course. But getting youth to spaces and places where they can get involved in political organizing is an overlooked, but equally essential component to building political power for young people in our state—it’s where we get our name! The Bus exists to bridge the access gap for young people in organizing.

After a long pandemic, we brought back our in-person bus trips, and brought our young people to all corners of this state, canvassing for candidates and engaging youth voters where they were, no matter who they are, and where they lived.

YOUNG LEADERS TAKING THE LEAD ON LOCAL ELECTIONS

A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH A 2023 FALL GOTV INTERNSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Every year during the general election, the Washington Bus brings together a team of GOTV interns to turn out youth ballots.

We spoke with Treveon Parish, a graduate of the Fall GOTV Internship Class of 2023

In the campaign space, what were some conceptions you entered with and what are some realities you left with?

TP: In the campaign space as one of the youngest in the room, I never thought that getting out the vote would look anything like what we were doing. I thought that it would be more of a suit and tie space with no space for youth. I was wrong. Through all the experiences and memories made in youth civic engagement with the Washington Bus, the reality of it was that all

communities where we traveled loved the youth and seeing young people get involved in our future. Spaces for civic engagement were made for young people!

During this internship, your cohort knocked on hundreds of doors. How did you learn from this on-the-ground experience and what has stuck with you?

TP: At first, the illusion of an immense learning curve was always floating above me when doing youth civic engagement. Having a mentor to foster leadership skills along with struggling through it with other young people who, like me, wanted a better future for everyone, it was an on-ground experience that I will never forget. The courage and grit of my peers and the want to do “just one more door” even when we didn’t have to, From knocking on hundreds of doors in different areas across

Washington state, from hearing different stories from a wide range of people, what stuck with me is the need for more youth to get involved and do the same.

Why is it so important to make politics and political spaces accessible to young people and how did the Bus help achieve this?

TP: Youth in politics is more important than ever. The youth rarely get the opportunity to express nor cultivate skills relating to political organizing. The youth are treated as though they don’t matter because they are not of voting age yet. Getting more young people informed, getting more voices heard, giving more opportunities for young people in politics is important for us to decide our future and not get headed a broken one. Through organizations like the Washington Bus, involving youth in political work makes the balance of voices in the system fair and the future brighter for us all.



BURIEN

In Burien, our team of young people canvassed for City Council candidates Cydney Moore, Krystal Marx, and Patricia Hudson.

TACOMA

In Tacoma, our organizing helped get Jamika Scott and Olgy Diaz elected and re-elected to the City Council.

SPOKANE

In Spokane, our organizing tipped the scales towards a progressive majority city council by canvassing for Paul Dillon, Lindsay Shaw, Betsy Wilkerson, and Kitty Klitzke for the City Council.

YAKIMA

In Yakima, we canvassed for Dulce Gutierrez and Soneya Lund for City Council.

BELLINGHAM

We canvassed for Eamonn Collins, Liz Darrow, and Jace Cotton for City Council!

WHATCOM

For County Council, we supported Jackie Dexter!

STATEWIDE

Throughout Washington, we had a complete digital presence—textbanking and phonecalling youth across all counties to turn them out to vote in these critical elections.

2700

DOORS
KNOCKED

21

ENDORSED
CANDIDATES

230,125

YOUTH
TURNED
IN THEIR
BALLOT
STATEWIDE

32,122

PHONECALLS
& TEXTS
MADE



OUR VOICES, OUR VOTES PUTTING YOUTH—BACKED CHANGEMAKERS IN OFFICE



WE ENDORSED TWENTY-ONE CANDIDATES IN 2023

OUR “WHY”

We invest in young, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ candidates in elections because their voices are essential for forging an inclusive and representative political landscape.

As Washington State undergoes demographic shifts with a rising presence of young people, people of color, immigrant & refugee populations, low income, and LGBTQIA+ individuals in the constituency, it is imperative to amplify the perspectives of those historically marginalized.

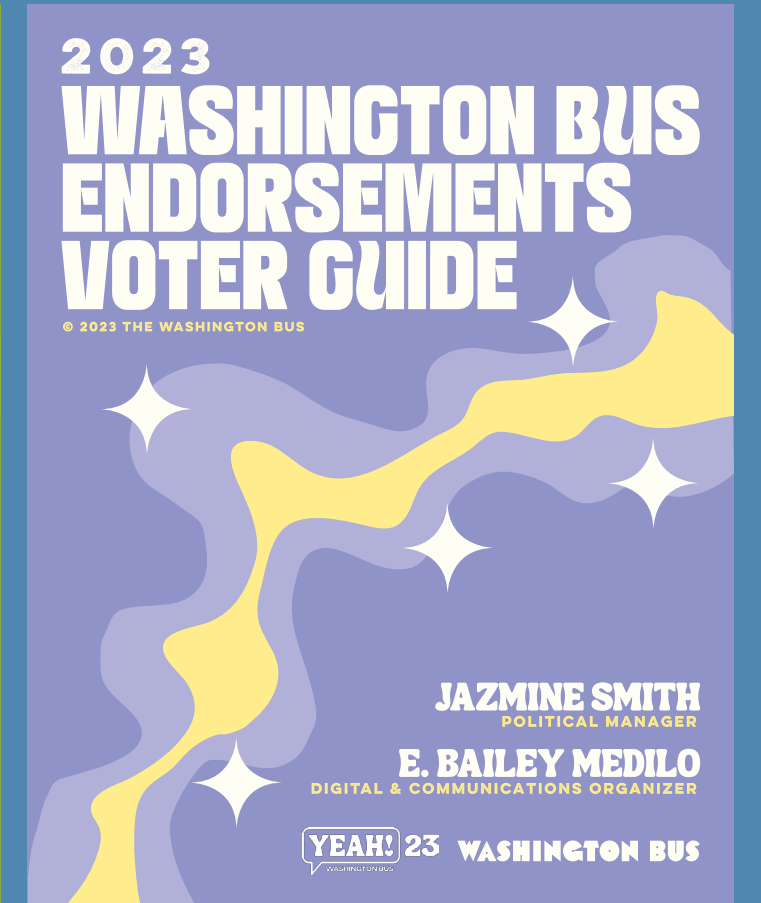
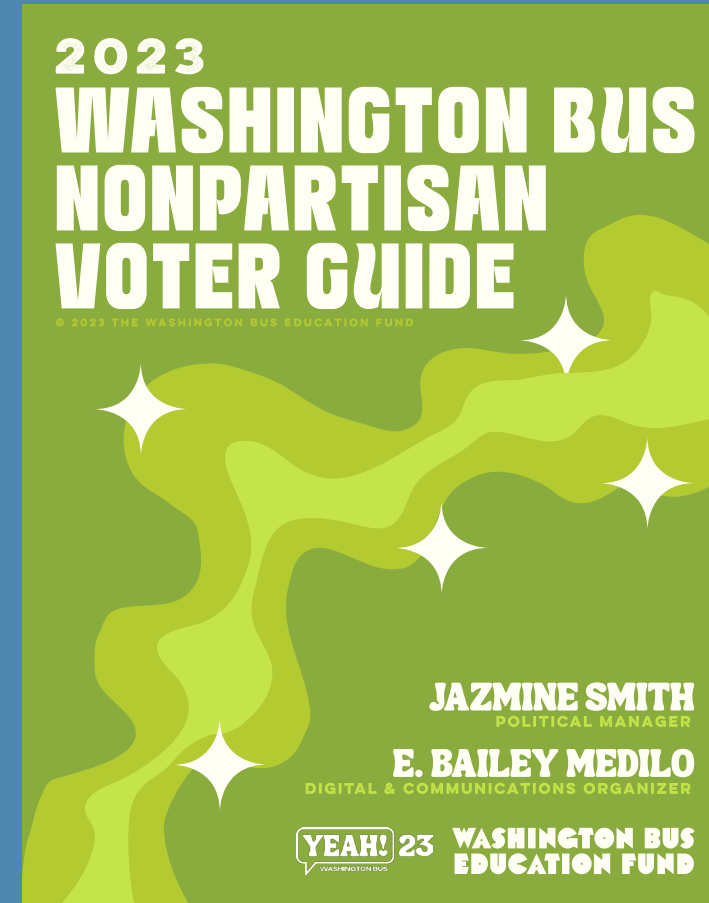
By supporting candidates from these communities, we not only ensure diverse representation but also promote policies that resonate with the broader population. Investing in the leadership of young, historically marginalized individuals is an investment in fostering a more equitable and just society, as their lived experiences uniquely equip them to address the multifaceted challenges faced by our communities.



THE PARTISAN & NONPARTISAN VOTER GUIDES

An incredible collaboration between the Program and Communications Teams. We sent almost a hundred questionnaires out to often overlooked local races across Washington State, and compiled two comprehensive guides based on the candidates’ responses.

We created two voter guides: one completely non-partisan voter guide led by our Education Fund that shared all the responses and races we sought out in our survey, and another that highlighted the impactful responses by candidates the Washington Bus decided to back. Between both guides, we produced 87 pages of pure candidate research.



OUR BUS LEADERSHIP CLASS OF 2023



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CREATES CHANGEMAKERS

We believe that long-term change must be driven by the communities most impacted, and that means we need strong leaders at the helm of our movement. During 2023, we zero-ed in and worked to perfect our leadership programs. The Bus provided comprehensive, paid leadership development programs that equipped and empowered **19 young leaders** to organize on the issues they are passionate about. Our program participants went on to become student leaders, campaign managers, and nonprofit and government leaders.

THE BUS FORMULA IN PRACTICE: OUR ALUMNI IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

THE LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Over the years, we've cultivated a massive network of alumni who contribute to the long-term, community-driven change by being leaders at the helm of our movement. Though our organization has changed throughout the years, we have continuously seen young people who go through our programs transition into incredible leadership positions in their communities.

Here's a few that we want to highlight that demonstrate our formula in practice.



KAMAU CHEGE
Executive Director, WA
Community Alliance



HANNAH SABIO-HOWELL
Communications Director,
Working Washington



OSTA DAVIS
Political Director, WA
State Labor Council



ARETHA BASU
Political Director,
Puget Sound Sage



ADAN MENDOZA
Youth Coordinator, League of United
Latin American Citizens



MÓNICA MENDOZA-CASTREJON
Co-Chair, Kent for Districts &
Law Student

Bus Bash

In June, the Washington Bus Education Fund hosted our 10th annual Bus Bash to celebrate our incoming class of Fellows! In true Bus fashion, we had an epic party with music, food, dancing, and of course, a theme - "2010s Throwback". We had incredible DJs who played every 2010's hit imaginable, from Ke\$ha to Pitbull.

The amazing Rep. Darya Farivar gave the keynote speech telling her inspiring story and highlighting the importance of the work that the Bus does to mobilize and engage young people, and we awarded Senator Yazmin Trudeau for legislative excellence and her leadership in including youth in the political process. In total, we raised \$45,000 for our Summer Fellowship program!

We want to express our sincerest gratitude for everyone who made this event possible, including our amazing sponsors.

Victory Fund

For the first time since 2019, the Washington Bus hosted Victory Fund at the beautiful AXIS Pioneer Square. Friends old and new gathered to learn about our legislative and electoral work and take a peek at the Bus's incoming work for the pivotal 2024 election. We are so grateful to our sponsors as well as our impactful guest speaker, Renton City Councilmember Carmen Rivera, for making this event possible.



PHOTOS BY
CHE SEHYUN
& XANDRA
YUGTO

The Washington Bus and the Stranger Present...

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CANDIDATE SURVIVOR 2023

Who Can Take The Heat?



CANDIDATE SURVIVOR RECAP

L ed by Drag Queen Miss Texas 1988, and hosted by yours truly, the Washington Bus, alongside The Stranger, after years of absence we brought back Candidate Survivor—a spectacular, wacky, yet policy-focused and youth-led candidate forum for this year’s Seattle City Council races. With an exciting program that included candidate talent shows, lip-syncing for life, and a spicy showdown at the end, we at the Bus hoped to truly reach and encourage young people to vote in this upcoming local election.

This year, candidates came through with a harmonious musical of instrumental prowess. Performing on the

guitar, keyboard, bongos, and harmonica, District 2 candidates Tammy Morales and Margaret Elisabeth, alongside D4 candidate Ron Davis, D5 candidates Nilu Jenks and Shane Macomber, and finally D3 candidate Joy Hollingsworth all played music for the crowd. We saw incredible ad-libs and remixes from Joy, Tammy, Nilu, and Ron as they sang lyrics that rang true to their districts and their constituency. D1 candidate Maren Costa wowed the crowd with a disappearing trick-turned twins that juggle trick while D1 candidate Stephen Brown recited presidents in order, almost getting to all of them before hitting time. Andrew Ashiofu of D3 brought forth an incredible spoken word poetry performance while D6 candidate Dan Strauss instigated a lutefisk

eating contest (that he actually ended up losing...) And last, but not least at all, candidates Andrew Lewis of D7 gave a mean tweets presentation while ChrisTiana ObeySumner of D5 slayed the talent show down with an incredible Burlesque performance of Separate Ways by Journey.

Moving into the lip-sync round— District 1 candidates fought in lip-sync combat performing 9 to 5 by Dolly Parton while District 2 ran the show with an incredible performance of Run the World (Girls) by Beyoncé. District 3 came through with a lip-sync performance of Run This Town, and then the scrappy candidates of Districts 4, 6, and 7 all competed with each other to perform Lizzo’s Truth Hurts...

PHOTOS BY CHE SEHYUN

...better than the others. And finally, District 5 threw down with Hey Ya! by Outkast. With all these acts coming together, the audience finally chose the final five to move on to our Spicy Election—voting with their voices. Then, the illustrious Miss Texas 1988 interpreted the roaring electorate, and sent Maren Costa of District 1, Tammy Morales of District 2, Andrew Ashiofu of District 3, Ron Davis of District 4, and ChrisTiana ObeySumner of District 5 to the final round.

After a brief intermission, candidates returned to a set-up reminiscent of a “Hot Ones” challenge, where Bus & Stranger staff asked spicy questions while candidates ate spicy vegan nuggets. Candidates who advanced to our spicy final round faced questions that challenged their progressive values with topics like reparations and corporate taxation. In the end, after various superlatives were awarded and audience cheering was calculated, Andrew Ashiofu of District 3 emerged victorious—grasping Candidate Survivor victory through an incredible spoken word poetry act, an intensive lip-sync showdown, and his even spicier answers to our spicy questions.

Throughout the exciting night, our Fellows at the Washington Bus canvassed the crowds in order to make sure everyone attending had a plan to vote in this upcoming election. Candidate Survivor—though a spectacle on the stage and a night event filled with colorful lights and funny quips...

“Politics is usually really buttoned-up and bland and there’s a lot of preparation that goes into it...and so [Candidate Survivor] just felt so authentic and goofy, which is such a rarity when it comes to elections.”

Vaughn Jones, KUOW



“Candidate Survivor 2023 provided voters with a unique opportunity to learn more about the various candidates running for the upcoming Seattle City Council election through an informative and chaotic public forum unlike any other.”

Marian Mohamed, GZRadio



...is primarily a Get-Out-The-Vote event, where we engage younger voters in the political process and encourage greater turnout. At the Bus, we’re proud of the amazing work our staff and program participants have been doing in order to build political power for youth, and Candidate Survivor supports this by bringing accessibility for younger voters—engaging them where they are in a language and environment that excites them. Together, with our candidates, partners at The Stranger, and the amazing youth who turned out for our event, we continue to prove that young people give a damn about local elections.

We want to express our gratitude to all of you, our supporters, for making events like these possible. Your continued dedication to empowering youth and promoting positive change in our community fuels our work! With your support, we hope to host many more Candidate Survivors and countless other electoral events for years to come. Let’s make our voices heard, because young people give a damn about local elections.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

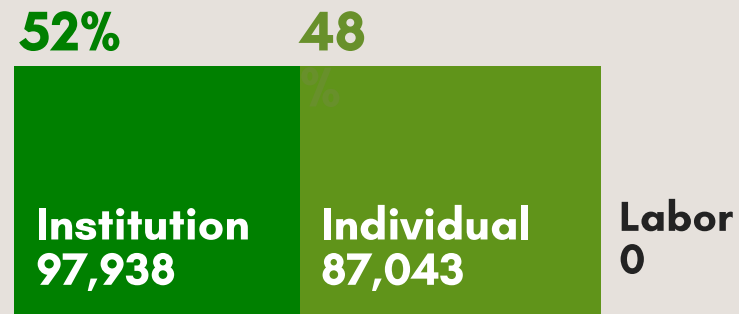
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REVENUE

501 (c)(3) TOTAL
\$420,793



501 (c)(4) TOTAL
\$184,981

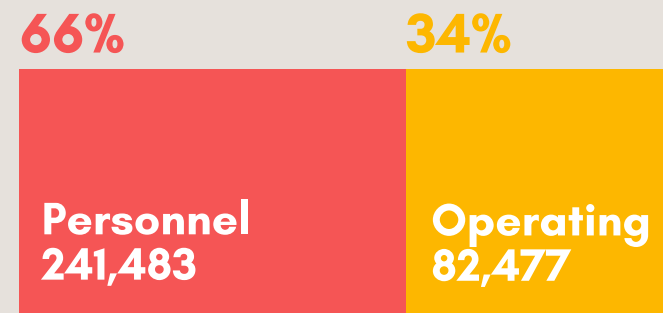


EXPENSES

501 (c)(3) TOTAL
\$545,524



501 (c)(4) TOTAL
\$241,483



THE WORK WE DO IS MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU!

We can't do it without sustainers like you. We are incredibly grateful for the generous support from foundations, labor unions, businesses, and individuals who fuel the Bus. Your support allows us to equip young leaders to build a more progressive and representative Washington State.

WASHINGTON BUS EDUCATION FUND SUPPORTERS

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BUS FRIENDS FOREVER

Our Bus Friends Forever program is our amazing base of monthly supporters! BFFs support our work year-round making sure that our leadership development programs, voter mobilization, and advocacy efforts are fueled.

We are incredibly thankful for our 40 BFF supporters who are our steady lifeline throughout the year!

