



ACLS LEADING EDGE FELLOWSHIP

Project:	Private vs. Public Interests: Sheriffs' Elections and Mass Incarceration
Organization:	Common Cause
Location:	Washington, D.C. [Fellow will work remotely]
Stipend:	\$60,000 per year, plus health insurance and professional development funding

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Common Cause is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to create an open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest; promote equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all; and empower all people to make their voices heard in the political process.

Common Cause has an innovative, pragmatic, and comprehensive pro-democracy agenda. We lead and define the democracy reform movement, promoting solutions already succeeding in some communities to shift power to the people. Together with our sister organization, the Common Cause Education Fund, we employ a powerful combination of grassroots organizing, coalition building, research, policy development, public education, lobbying and litigation to win reform at all levels of government. To learn more about Common Cause visit <https://www.commoncause.org/>.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Common Cause is embarking on a project that will shed light on the role of sheriffs in the country's growing mass incarceration, those who fund their campaigns, and how these interrelated issues have taken on particular significance amid the COVID-19 crisis. During the pandemic, sheriffs' offices have failed to safeguard the health of detained and incarcerated individuals. In mid-April 2020, an [epidemiological study](#) conducted by the ACLU and university researchers found that keeping people out of jail saves lives—both inside the jail and in the surrounding communities. And while, nationally, jail populations have [decreased](#) much more than state prison populations, not all states are taking this call to decarcerate jails seriously. As of mid-July 2020, there were more than 64,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in correctional facilities among inmates, and more than 12,000 confirmed cases among staff. Incarcerated individuals have been infected by COVID-19 at a rate 5.5 times higher than the general U.S. population.

The Leading Edge Fellow will work closely with Common Cause's mass incarceration program manager to investigate and expose who donates to sheriffs' political campaigns, and why. Common Cause's preliminary research has shown that, too often, it is the very corporations that donate to sheriffs which ultimately serve to benefit the most from prisons and jails not adopting appropriate decarceral measures or implementing virus mitigation measures. During a pandemic, when lives are dependent on being distant from the general population, locking up potential offenders in jails, seems particularly egregious. The fellow's research will educate voters on the impact of "pay-to-play" politics in their communities, and help grassroots organizers advocate for public financing of local elections. The fellowship tenure is 12 consecutive months, with an expected time commitment of approximately 40 hours per week.

This position is *only* available through the Leading Edge Fellowship program.
You may *not* contact the host institution to inquire about this position.

Responsibilities and tasks:

- Work closely with the Mass Incarceration Project Manager, other key staff members, and partner organizations including the Campaign Finance Institute, to develop a database that will track how much money traditionally goes into sheriffs' races in seven key states, as well as the specific industries that are contributing to sheriffs' races
- With guidance from the project manager, develop a narrative around the key themes that arise after analyzing the data
- Lead the writing of a 20-page report summarizing and analyzing the findings, which will be designed, printed and promoted by the organization and list the fellow as one of the authors
- Draft a series of reports, briefs, and short pieces relating to this research and analysis, for use internally, as well as in external program communications and outreach

Qualifications:

- PhD in any field of the humanistic social sciences, so long as the applicant's research contributes to the scholarship and understanding of religion, theology, or ethics. Read more about eligible fields [here](#).
- Project management experience
- Strong ability to write for the general public
- Interest in democracy, justice reform issues, and public policy
- Ability to conduct and synthesize research, including from online sources
- Ability to analyze complex public policy issues and distill them into easily understandable summaries
- Excellent organizational, interpersonal, written and oral communication skills
- Knowledge of political process, including understanding the connection between grassroots campaigns and the legislative process

Preferred:

- Work or volunteer experience with a nonprofit organization

APPLICATIONS

- Information on the Leading Edge Fellowship Program: <https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships>
- All applications must be submitted through the ACLS Online Fellowship Application System (ofa.acls.org)
- Application deadline: 9pm EST, November 2, 2020

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