



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

Politically Effective or Just Good at Campaigns?

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In the last decade, grassroots organizations have adopted the 501(c)(4) structure as an effective mechanism for engaging directly in politics. Within their IRS-designated social welfare mission and unlike 501(c)(3) counterparts, 501(c)(4)s can participate in unlimited advocacy and lobbying. They can endorse candidates and issues, and advocate with and for their member constituencies. Behind the successful Fight for 15, the victory over Amazon in New York City, the 2018 passage of Amendment 4 in Florida, and the decades-long tenacious battles for comprehensive immigration reform are sophisticated infrastructures that combine the rigor of community organizing with the incisive strategies of electoral campaigns. High functioning 501(c)(4) organizations with powerful leaders in executive positions have been crucial to the robustness of these infrastructures.