

2013

# ANNUAL REPORT

**O•VER•SIGHT**

*noun* \ō-vər-sīt\ 

**A:** WATCHFUL AND RESPONSIBLE CARE

**B:** PROVOKING ACCOUNTABILITY

**POGO**

PROJECT ON  
GOVERNMENT  
OVERSIGHT

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## DEAR FRIENDS,

At a time when distrust in government is running high and powerful special interests are wielding inappropriate influence on policymaking, POGO is forging ahead, making progress with people both inside and outside Washington and on both sides of the aisle who are determined to fix our government. Our successes demonstrate that when we work together we can make the government more open, accountable, ethical, and effective.

Sometimes our victories earn accolades, such as those we recently received from a journalism organization that cited our work exposing (and closing the loophole that allowed) the revolving door between Wall Street and the agency that regulates it. Other times we take satisfaction knowing that our work behind the scenes helped shape critical legislation, such as a law Congress passed that increases protection for whistleblowers.

Throughout this annual report you will see examples of how we are helping to make the government work. Our challenges are clearly enormous, but we are building steam. It is gratifying to see that not only is POGO's work having an impact on public policy, but that the organization itself is thriving.

There are different ways to gauge an organization's strength. You'll notice that the number of donors supporting POGO has increased by almost 700 percent when compared to just five years ago. That's an outstanding testament to how many people share our deep commitment to fixing our government.

However, that's just one piece of the big picture.

What you won't see is the tremendous growth we've also had in the number of people who give small amounts—\$5, \$10, \$25, whatever they can afford.

And our donors come from different parts of the country—we have donors from every state—and from all walks of life. Some write checks that they send us through the mail, while others make donations through our website.

Not only are all of us at POGO grateful for those donors, we're also extremely proud of them. Their contributions are a constant reminder that POGO's work has never been about pleasing powerful special interests but about harnessing the power of the American people.

But beyond our increase in the number of individuals who give to POGO each year, we've also seen an increase in the number of what we call sustaining givers. These are people who sign up to make automatic donations of a specified amount each month.

I can't tell you how important those sustaining gifts are to a small organization such as POGO. Knowing that we can count on a steady stream of contributions each month means we can respond to unanticipated projects—from the Wall Street crash to the revelations of NSA surveillance activities.

An organization is truly only as strong as the people behind it. If you have not yet joined our army of good government advocates, I hope this annual report will persuade you to do so!

Sincerely,



Danielle Brian  
Executive Director





## ABOUT POGO

The Project On Government Oversight is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that champions good government reforms. POGO's investigations into corruption, misconduct, and conflicts of interest achieve a more effective, accountable, open, and ethical federal government. We focus particularly on those areas where moneyed interests have skewed national budgetary priorities, and where transparency would provide significant benefit.

POGO has earned a solid reputation for uncovering deep-rooted systemic problems which threaten the integrity of the federal government. By working effectively with whistleblowers and other expert insiders, and conducting in-depth investigations, POGO is able to provide accurate and reliable information, findings, and recommendations

that are trusted by policymakers, the media, and the public.

POGO also focuses on improving how government conducts oversight and ensures accountability. If those areas can be strengthened and improved, it is far more likely that the integrity of the government can be ensured. From offering such programs as monthly training sessions for congressional staff in the art of oversight, to working to strengthen both the independence and accountability of the Inspectors General system, POGO is working toward a better federal government that works in the interest of the American public.

# HOW POGO WORKS

The following are the guidelines by which POGO determines which projects we pursue. They do not present rigid criteria, but provide us with a consistent way to evaluate our priorities.

- Capacity to make a unique contribution
- Opening for positive systemic change in the federal government
- Ability to broaden public awareness
- Urgency for action
- Availability of inside sources and/or documents



7. Strives for a more **EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE, OPEN, AND ETHICAL** federal government



6. Works with government officials to **IMPLEMENT SYSTEMIC POLICY IMPROVEMENTS**



5. **EDUCATES MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC** of findings and **EMPOWERS THE PUBLIC TO ACT**



4. Recommends **COMMON-SENSE SOLUTIONS** for positive change



3. Conducts **RESEARCH** and works with whistleblowers and other insiders to investigate tips and document findings



2. Launches independent **INVESTIGATIONS** into cases that meet POGO guidelines

1. **IDENTIFIES** systemic corruption, undue influence, or other misconduct impacting the federal government



# HOW POGO IS HELPING MAKE GOVERNMENT WORK

The task of making the government work better takes more than issuing reports, meeting with policymakers, and working with the media. It also takes building a community of advocates, journalists, organizational partners, and policymakers who care about good government. POGO is helping to build that community through a variety of initiatives.

On Capitol Hill, POGO works directly with lawmakers of all stripes to put more accountability into legislation, and helps to develop a broader network of congressional allies through briefings and trainings. Off the Hill, POGO works with policymakers at the federal agencies as well as at the

White House to educate them about our findings and encourage good government reforms.

POGO also serves on the steering committees for the Make It Safe Coalition and OpenTheGovernment.org, and on the Congressional Transparency Caucus Advisory Committee. Last but not least, POGO continues to cultivate a burgeoning community of online advocates. Through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and a host of other social networks, POGO has spread the “provoke accountability” message far and wide. We’d love for you to get involved.



# SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2013

## → **POGO WINS BATTLE: TAXPAYER BURDEN TO PAY CONTRACTOR SALARIES AND BENEFITS REDUCED.**

In 2013, we finally achieved our goal of reducing the cap on excessive contractor compensation packages, which are funded with taxpayer dollars. For years, POGO had urged Congress and the White House to reduce the cap, and they finally listened. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2014 and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 included cuts to the cap, and the more

cost-efficient cap in the Budget Act became law. The contractor compensation cap is now set at \$487,000. Government estimates have found that the reduced cap will save approximately \$200 million taxpayer dollars per year. The new cap is about half of the previous cap announced by the Office of Management and Budget (outrageously set at \$952,308).



➔ **MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS AND WHISTLEBLOWERS ARE NOW BETTER PROTECTED.** Thanks to efforts led by POGO, a newly passed law will protect military whistleblowers and victims of sexual assault against retaliation. This law will help protect service members who make the difficult and brave decision to come forward and report sexual assault or other misconduct. POGO fought hard for passage of these reforms to upgrade the disgracefully broken whistleblower protections for our troops. That said, all the protections in the world won't help if the people in charge aren't likely to enforce them. And exactly this sort of person was put in charge of sexual assault prevention until POGO stepped in. A November 2013 POGO letter to Secretary Hagel asked for the removal of Major General Patton from his post as head of sexual assault prevention due to an investigation that found him guilty of violating the Military Whistleblower Protection Act. The letter resulted in news coverage of the issue and over 2,500 letters to the DoD from POGO supporters. A mere four weeks after POGO's letter, the Pentagon announced Major General Patton's plan to retire. A congressional staffer close to the issue told POGO that the impetus for Patton's retirement was the unwelcome attention from POGO.

➔ **REVOLVING DOOR EXEMPTION AT THE SEC REVOKED.** A report by POGO spotlighted an ethics exemption that had allowed certain employees at the Securities and Exchange Commission to lobby the agency immediately after leaving instead of staying on the sidelines for a year or more, as employees at other federal agencies must do. After POGO's report was published, the SEC asked the Office of Government Ethics to revoke the exemption. The OGE agreed to the request. The change in ethics rules—revoking a longstanding exemption for some SEC officials—was a rare stand against the revolving door at an agency that has long blurred the lines between regulator and regulated.



➔ **POGO RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTRACTING REFORM FEATURED IN NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL.** In a harsh critique of federal contracting rules, *The New York Times* editorial board cited POGO's recommendations as a solution to the current practice of contracting out vast swaths of government work indefinitely. This indefinite contracting out, which is done with little to no attempt to develop the needed technical and managerial expertise within the government or to enforce labor standards, has created a bloated federal-contractor sector in which the public good is often subservient to profit.

➔ **SEVERAL KEY WATCHDOG VACANCIES FILLED.** In 2013 a number of important Inspector General vacancies were filled—including at the Department of Defense, Department of Justice, and Department of State—after POGO highlighted the issue with its website tracking all IG vacancies, and advocated filling them through blog posts and meetings with policymakers. Our work also resulted in increased oversight by Members of Congress. Although we are pleased about the vacancies that have been filled, there are still agencies, such as the Department of the Interior, in need of a strong permanent Inspector General. POGO will continue working to ensure those vacancies are filled.

# CENTER FOR DEFENSE INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

POGO's Center for Defense Information/Straus Military Reform Project was kept busy this year. One major topic of attention was the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. CDI/SMRP's activities included writing articles and blogs about the F-35, conducting media interviews, meeting with activists, and speaking with congressional staff about development problems, cost growth, and capability gaps between the F-35 and current aircraft programs. The F-35 has come to represent all that is wrong with the Pentagon's acquisition process, and CDI/SMRP has raised public awareness about the cost and performance problems that have plagued the program. For instance, all versions of the F-35 are having problems meeting their already modest range requirements, their all-important computer software is way behind schedule, and none of them are living up to reliability expectations.

CDI/SMRP has also long been concerned with Air Force efforts to prematurely retire the A-10 "Warthog" aircraft. The Air Force has been pushing to retire this aircraft in part to justify the F-35 (a less capable and far more expensive aircraft than the A-10). CDI/SMRP held an all-day seminar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in which the extraordinary performance and unique capabilities of the A-10 were discussed. The seminar featured presentations by former A-10 pilots as well as troops whose lives had been saved by the A-10 during the war in Afghanistan. The seminar was so compelling that congressional staffers requested a similar briefing on the Hill. Also following the seminar,

CDI/SMRP worked with the office of Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) to include language in the National Defense Authorization Act preventing the Air Force from retiring the A-10 fleet in 2014. The Air Force will undoubtedly make additional attempts to mothball the A-10 during this year's budget process, and CDI/SMRP will continue to fight those attempts.

The other significant activity for CDI/SMRP in 2013 was the creation of a website to provide information that continues the conversation on how to secure a far more ethical and professional military and civilian leadership at significantly lower costs. You can find information on the website about military reform; the defense budget; weapons; military people and ideas; Congress; and what our military personnel need to prevail in and after combat.

You can also sign up to receive all of the latest postings to this website via email so that you never miss out. Learn more about Pentagon reform and join the conversation!

Go to <http://bit.ly/RtGFaW/> or search the Internet for "Straus Military Reform Project."



U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. William Greer





## DONOR SPOTLIGHT:

# PHIL STRAUS



The Straus Military Reform Project was created to honor the late Phil Straus, Sr., for his extraordinary twenty-year service on the Center for Defense Information board. Thankfully, his son, Phil Straus, Jr., ably and enthusiastically continued the family legacy when CDI and SMRP moved their home to POGO. POGO recently caught up with Mr. Straus to find out why.



➔ **When did you first hear of POGO?**

My oldest memory of actual contact with POGO was when POGO and the Center for Defense Information teamed up to help stop the development of the F-22 aircraft. We had an F-22 wake, and that's when I met Danielle Brian. I gave her 22 dead roses to celebrate the demise of the F-22.

➔ **What made you choose POGO as the new home for CDI/SMRP?**

The first reason was the fine teamwork in the F-22 fight. More than that, POGO has been deeply involved in Pentagon spending oversight for decades.

➔ **What's your favorite part about POGO's mission?**

Making open windows through government and contractor smokescreens.

➔ **This might be related, but why do you give to POGO/CDI?**

Might be? Definitely! I give to POGO/CDI to help make this country be what it could be—a strong, moral country that uses its resources to support its people.

# GETTING INVOLVED WITH POGO

Part of POGO's goal is to make the government more accountable and accessible to the public. And we practice what we preach. This year, we made POGO's content more accessible than it has ever been. We've continued to print our quarterly newsletter, and have beefed up our website. We also have a new mobile website, which means our content is easily available wherever you go—you can take action against corruption or read the latest blog post while you're on the bus or waiting at the doctor's office. The Center for Defense Information/Straus Military Reform Project at POGO, which focuses on military reform, also has a quarterly publication, and boasts a brand new website that is also mobile-friendly.

Subscribers to our emails get exclusive POGO content delivered to their inboxes, in addition to a weekly reader that wraps up the week's most interesting and important stories. They can also take action against bad policies and practices by sending letters to their Members of Congress or signing petitions. POGO supporters can also interact with us through our Facebook, Twitter, Google-Plus, LinkedIn, and Tumblr pages, which are adding fans and followers daily.

There are many ways to get involved with POGO. With your help, through many different channels, POGO's reach and impact are growing tremendously.



# STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

## REVENUE

GRANTS	\$ 1,807,957
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$ 434,846
INVESTMENT INCOME	\$ 250,145
CONTRIBUTED GOODS AND SERVICES	\$ 51,788
PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER INCOME	\$ 124,103
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 2,668,839</b>

84%

PROGRAMS

## EXPENSES

<b>PROGRAM SERVICES</b>	
GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY	\$ 569,798
CONTRACT OVERSIGHT	\$ 318,918
CDI/STRAUS MILITARY REFORM PROJECT	\$ 282,096
NUCLEAR WEAPONS INVESTIGATIONS	\$ 207,795
NATIONAL SECURITY	\$ 167,404
ENERGY AND RESOURCES INVESTIGATIONS	\$ 164,635
FINANCIAL SECTOR OVERSIGHT	\$ 122,147
WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS	\$ 102,737
PUBLIC HEALTH INVESTIGATIONS	\$ 97,340
EMERGING PROGRAMS	\$ 46,570
CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT TRAINING	\$ 25,656
DIRECT AND GRASSROOTS LOBBYING	\$ 48,672
TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	\$ 2,153,768
<b>SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>	
DEVELOPMENT	\$ 266,875
GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE	\$ 136,795
TOTAL SUPPORTING SERVICES	\$ 403,670
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 2,557,438</b>

ADMINISTRATIVE

DEVELOPMENT

5%

11%

## OVERVIEW

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 111,401
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 2,209,787
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$ 2,321,188

\*This statement of activities from January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2013, has been audited.

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- ▶ CS Fund
- ▶ Open Society Foundations
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➔ **A commitment we will always keep to our supporters—large and small—is that we practice what we preach. We diligently search for ways to both stretch our dollars and expand our impact.**

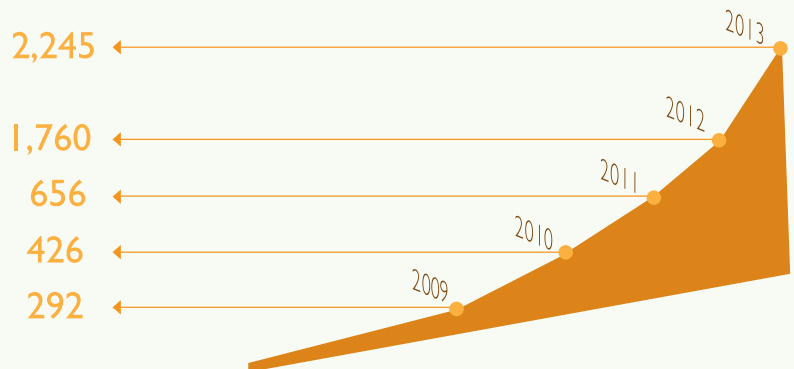
**In order to preserve our independence, POGO does not knowingly accept contributions from anyone who stands to benefit financially from our work. POGO does not accept contributions from the government, labor unions, or for-profit corporations exceeding \$100, and limits contributions from law firms to less than 1% of POGO's operating budget. POGO does accept employee-directed contributions and donor-matching funds.**



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In addition to general support donors to POGO, this list also includes those who donated to POGO's Center for Defense Information/Straus Military Reform Project and to our Beth Daley Memorial Impact Fund.

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