“As ILSR celebrates its 40th birthday — the exact span of my own broadcast journalism — I can think of no other citizen’s group whose work and witness during these four decades has done more to spark the courage, clarity, and conviction needed to save our social contract from the behemoths and bullies who would shred it.”

Bill Moyers, journalist, host of the PBS show “Moyers & Company,” former White House press secretary
2014: BY THE NUMBERS

40
The birthday ILSR celebrated this year.

1,225,000
Annual tons of garbage that will not be burned, thanks to ILSR’s help defeating three incinerator projects.

150,000
Number of local businesses represented by the Advocates for Independent Business, co-founded by ILSR.

10,000

50
Media stories this year that referenced ILSR’s Community Broadband Network map. The map itself has been viewed more than 150,000 times.

80,000
Homes that will be powered by solar in Minnesota, because of ILSR’s work passing the state’s 2013 solar energy standard.

500
Unemployed and under-employed workers trained in the art and science of deconstruction through ILSR’s Waste to Wealth initiative.

32
Number of cities that, together with ILSR, founded Next Century Cities.

0
Number of chain pharmacies allowed to open in North Dakota.

ILSR staffers Brenda Platt, Bobby Bell, and Leigh Crenshaw (center) with our summer interns Ursula Chrobak (left) and Linus Platzer (right).
2014 marks ILSR’s 40th anniversary.
It’s been a year of both looking back and looking forward. We are heartened to reflect on the impact ILSR has had, often with the support and collaboration of many of you reading this.

Even more heartening is what lies ahead.
We have reached a remarkable moment. Local self-reliance seems to have come into its own as a broadly embraced vision and strategy.

This year saw the formation of Next Century Cities, a coalition of cities, big and small, liberal and conservative, that all embrace the principal of community self-determination and the right to pursue public ownership in order to provide their citizens with next-generation broadband networks. We not only helped found the coalition, but our years of research also helped lay the foundation for its core principles and aims.

This year, we co-convened, with Dēmos, a meeting that brought together a unique and potentially powerful combination of leaders from the local business movement together with progressive organizers and policy thinkers. Over two days, participants laid the groundwork for a shared state and local policy agenda to create a more democratic and community-sustaining economy.

This year, thanks to the shifting dynamics of rooftop solar, our vision for a decentralized renewable energy system, which we’ve been promoting since the 1970s, emerged as a fully viable and competitive option to centralized electricity generation. We are now working, alongside many allies, to ensure that the economic benefits of this revolutionary transition are as widely shared as possible.

This year, we became a leading proponent of community-scale composting over distant large-scale facilities and launched a new composter-training program, Neighborhood Soil Rebuilders, with our partner ECO City Farms. Locally based composting not only reduces urban garbage but also enhances soil fertility, addresses food security issues, creates local jobs, and reduces climate pollution.

Advancing self-reliance is like that. It is a crucial common thread for addressing a diverse range of issues. Across all of our initiatives, we both fight concentrated power and provide effective policies and models that enable communities to take charge of their resources and realize a more equitable and sustainable future. As Naomi Klein noted this year, ILSR “is one of the few research institutions that devotes significant energy to spreading the word on real-world success stories and we need much more of that.”

As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, we’re proud to have had an impact within each of our initiatives, and even prouder that our collective work reflects and validates the concept of local self-reliance. We believe it is a concept whose time has come.

Sincerely,
Stacy Mitchell & Brenda Platt
Co-Directors

P.S. Our deepest thanks to those of you who wrote to congratulate us on our longevity and impact. Your comments burst our organizational buttons. You can read what others had to say on the occasion of ILSR’s 40th anniversary – and add your own comments – on our website – www.ilsr.org/40th-anniversary
“While researching my last book, I became a huge ILSR fan. Its work played a significant role in my education on the dual economic and ecological mess we’re in, not only offering muck-raking take-downs of the big-box stores, banks, and utilities standing in the way of progress but also crafting a stirring, profoundly useful vision of how local communities can lead the way to a new economy. It is one of the few research institutions that devotes significant energy to spreading the word on real-world success stories and we need much more of that. Happy 40th ILSR, with much gratitude!”

Naomi Klein, 
Author of This Changes Everything and The Shock Doctrine

“ILSR was my first job in 1978... They were ahead of the curve even then. My first mentor was Harriet Barlow. She was a tall force of nature... There was also Tessa Huxley... Hats off to the ladies over the years, including Brenda Platt, whose mighty vision has kept pace with the co-founders for 26 years.”

Leslie Tolf, President of Union Plus

“Talk about ahead of the curve and right on the money - somehow ILSR figured out 40 years ago where the world needed to go, and it’s been bending our systems in that direction ever since. High ambition matched by high achievement makes them a unique crew, in place with the solutions a puzzled world is starting to realize it badly needs.”

Bill McKibben, 
Author, Environmentalist, and Co-Founder of 350.org
We expanded our network of activists and organizations on the ground significantly, enabling us to be much more effective in countering the incumbent utilities and helping communities maintain their authority over these critical “fiber roads” of the future.

Our visibility and reach went global. As the internationally recognized expert in municipal broadband issues in the United States, Initiative Director Christopher Mitchell was invited to speak at three overseas conferences in Belgium, Sweden, and Turkey.

We reached a new audience by creating a compelling short documentary about the first community broadband network in the country, in Glasgow, Kentucky.

2015 AND BEYOND: For years, community networks were considered a niche market or curiosity. With our hard work and strategic efforts, there is a growing view that local governments have an essential role in ensuring that their communities have fast, affordable, and reliable Internet access. We will continue to support communities that want to invest in their future by identifying and publicizing model community-broadband programs and stepping in to defeat attempts to create barriers to their formation. Our research will grow to highlight a wide range of ancillary benefits that these networks provide to cities and regions.

IMPACT STORY: In one of the most powerful moments of our work this year, we helped launch Next Century Cities (NCC), a city-to-city collaboration of local governments from across the country. The collaboration has 32 founding partners, ranging from liberal to conservative places and encompassing major cities, such as Boston and Los Angeles, as well as smaller communities like Leverett, MA, and Ammon, ID. Without our work legitimizing and popularizing the results of smart local broadband policies, this collaboration of diverse cities would likely not exist. Indeed, ILSR has deep ties with most of the founding partners, having given them advice, helped build their networks, and helped block powerful cable companies from shutting them down. ILSR’s Community Broadband Initiative Director, Christopher Mitchell, is serving as the Policy Director for NCC.

“In 2009, when I began work on the National Broadband Plan, I looked for sources of information on what was happening with broadband in the United States that was not filtered through the normal DC Beltway lens. I am very grateful someone pointed me toward the Institute for Local Self-Reliance’s Broadband Page and the work of Christopher Mitchell. I always found the data to be reliable, the insights important, and the commentary thought-provoking.”

Blair Levin, Chairman Gig U
Throughout the year, ILSR’s high-profile reporting on Walmart put the company on the defensive and helped propel concerns about its impact to the front pages. In November, we released *Walmart’s Dirty Energy Secret*, a ground-breaking analysis of the company’s heavy reliance on coal-fired electricity and unwillingness to make a real investment in solar and wind, despite nearly a decade of promoting itself as a leader on climate. At a press event, leaders from 350.org, Green for All, and Sierra Club joined ILSR in releasing the report and calling for change.

As coordinator of the Advocates for Independent Business (AIB), ILSR helped grow the coalition to 14 national organizations representing about 150,000 locally owned businesses. In February, AIB conducted a national survey of 2,600 businesses, which provided new information on the top policy issues affecting small businesses, including declining access to bank loans, tax policies that favor big companies, and planning policies that undermine neighborhood commercial districts. Over the course of the year, AIB’s member organizations worked together to mobilize their members on these issues. AIB was able to bring new independent business voices to the media coverage of these issues.

**COMMUNITY-SCALED ECONOMY**

**2014:** ILSR’s Community-Scaled Economy Initiative expanded its impact this year as more policymakers, allied organizations, and other stakeholders embraced our vision for creating an equitable and sustainable economy by curbing corporate concentration and structuring business to be locally rooted and responsive to community needs. Through a series of workshops and a national convening, we made significant strides in our effort to advance a shared policy agenda for building a new economy. Meanwhile, our hard-hitting research on the consequences of concentrated corporate power, particularly in the retail and banking sectors, continued to influence the public debate and helped our labor, small business, and community allies achieve campaign goals. Several top publications cited our analysis this year, including *The New Yorker*, *Time*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, while *The Atlantic’s CityLab* ran a profile of Initiative Director Stacy Mitchell, describing her as “the national champion of local business.”

**SELECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

- In November, informed by ILSR’s research, North Dakota citizens voted 59 to 41 to keep the state’s Pharmacy Ownership Law. Enacted in 1963, this forward-thinking policy bars corporations from operating pharmacies in the state, stipulating that all pharmacies must be owned by pharmacists. Walmart, backed by other national chains, spent over $3 million trying to overturn the law. But an analysis by ILSR made a compelling case for keeping it. Covered widely by local media, ILSR’s report found that North Dakota, with its 177 locally owned pharmacies, outperforms other states on every key measure of pharmacy care, from cost to access to quality.

- As coordinator of the Advocates for Independent Business (AIB), ILSR helped grow the coalition to 14 national organizations representing about 150,000 locally owned businesses. In February, AIB conducted a national survey of 2,600 businesses, which provided new information on the top policy issues affecting small businesses, including declining access to bank loans, tax policies that favor big companies, and planning policies that undermine neighborhood commercial districts. Over the course of the year, AIB’s member organizations worked together to mobilize their members on these issues. AIB was able to bring new independent business voices to the media coverage of these issues.

**2015 AND BEYOND:** In the coming year, ILSR’s Community-Scaled Economy Initiative will produce new research to advance the campaigns of our labor, small business, and community allies. As part of our ongoing work on the impact of big retailers, we will open a new strategic focus on Amazon, a company at the center of pivotal questions about both the future of work and the purpose of antitrust regulation. We will also take major steps forward in our policy work by making the case for deeper change, producing new policy research and tools to aid our allies, and organizing independent business owners in support of this agenda.

**IMPACT STORY:** In September, ILSR partnered with Dēmos to co-host a convening on *New Economy Transformation: Building a Policy Agenda*. This two-day meeting brought together about 30 policy experts, small business leaders, and organizers to collectively forge a state and local policy agenda for restructuring the economy and building a more equitable, democratic, and sustainable future. Among the convening’s key achievements, participants defined a shared vision for a new economy and identified several high-impact policy priorities in the areas of community energy, banking, land use, local enterprise development, cooperative ownership, and public infrastructure. This vision and policy framework will guide ILSR’s Community-Scaled Economy Initiative going forward as we develop policy initiatives and collaborate with our allies to advance this agenda.

“Working with ILSR has been critical for the Making Change at Walmart Campaign. ILSR brings a different and important perspective to the public discourse that would be missing if this wonderful organization did not exist.”

Daniel Schlademan, United Food and Commercial Workers Union
Democratic Energy

2014: In many ways, this year marks the turning of the tide on distributed solar and local ownership. Solar was the nation’s number one source of new power in the first half of 2014. Initiative Director, John Farrell, pushed out numerous innovative policy documents, presentations, and vivid infographics that illustrated a vision for a 21st century electric utility that prioritizes energy savings and distributed power. ILSR played a leading role as Minneapolis, MN, adopted a first-in-the-nation city-utility clean energy partnership – a replicable model for many communities seeking more control over their energy future. Our Democratic Energy Initiative resources continued to be critical for journalists nationwide and our thoughts and work on the future of solar and other distributed energy technologies resulted in countless mentions in major news outlets, articles and reports. With some key help from our friends on social media, our online presentation, The Future of Solar Economics and Policy, went viral and was viewed over 10,000 times.

Select Accomplishments:

- We continued our leading role in Minneapolis’s new city-utility clean energy partnership, a potential template for how cities can leverage their authority over corporate, monopoly energy utilities.
- Our report, Energy Storage: The Next Charge for Distributed Energy, provided an in-depth look at how advancements in storage could change the electricity system over the next 10 years as fundamentally as distributed renewable energy has over the past decade.
- ILSR produced a much-anticipated report, Advantage Local: Why Local Energy Ownership Matters, quantifying the enormous economic and political benefits of a decentralized energy economy.

Solar IS Top New Energy Source In First Half Of 2014!

- Natural Gas
- Solar > 1 MW
- Non-Residential Solar < 1 MW
- Residential Solar
- Wind
- Other

Impact Story: What is the value of solar energy? Hard to believe but it wasn’t until Minnesota adopted its value of solar formula in early 2014 — as a result of a policy that ILSR helped design in 2013 — that any state had an objective and universal formula for determining the value of customer-owned solar energy to a utility, their customers, and society. The policy ILSR helped craft in Minnesota promises to set a standard for how legislatures, regulatory commissions, and utilities around the country value distributed solar energy for years to come, and use that formula to accelerate the deployment of solar power.
2014: Through a series of provocative and widely read essays, ILSR’s Public Good Initiative engaged questions central to reinvigorating a democracy capable of solving the complex problems we face. Where should the locus of decision-making reside? How do we recapture trust in the exercise of collective authority? What is the “public good” and what are the most effective policies that can promote it? What is the relationship of the private to the public? How can we effectively promote a generous and responsible “we” in a country consumed with the irresponsible and selfish “I”? How can we defend humanly scaled economies and strong self-governing communities while avoiding parochialism and the stifling of innovation? More than 50 essays, both short and long, have been published on ILSR’s web site and in a variety of media outlets including Salon, Common Dreams, Alternet, On the Commons, Huffington Post, and daily newspapers.

SELECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:
- We tackled the issue of preemption and devolution within the U.S. by highlighting the debate over the FCC’s authority to promote telecommunications competition and the rights of states.
- We took a historical look at the impacts of forty years of both Democrat and Republican governments efforts to deregulate expanding sectors of the economy. One widely read piece covered the empirical evidence of the impact of deregulation in a key transportation sector was the essay, “Airline Deregulation: A Triumph of Ideology Over Evidence.”
- Several essays explored the role and efficacy of public enterprise: “Debating the Role of Government in Somerset, Kentucky”; “To Save the Internet We Need To Own The Means Of Distribution”; “Will Labor Solidarity Save the Post Office?”
- We took the national media to task when they falsely marginalized the role that public enterprises and cooperatives play in the economy, as we did in the essay “David Brancaccio Lets Us Down.”
- We challenged the notion that significant social problems can only be addressed by state or national governments in the essay, “Can Cities Tackle Inequality?”

2015 AND BEYOND: In 2015, ILSR’s Public Good Initiative will produce a variety of articles and resources that address two key questions: What level of government should have the authority over which issues, and how should that authority at all levels of government be exercised in order to maximize the public good? We will engage in public forums, publish an e-book, launch a more frequent newsletter, and build a library of resources that policymakers and citizens can use to spark debate and discussion about the value of public institutions and the exercise of collective decision-making.
This year, the Waste to Wealth Initiative maintained its unmatched record of stopping proposed garbage incinerators. We succeeded in Carroll and Frederick Counties, MD, Fredericksburg/Stafford County, VA, Normal/Bloomington, IL, and Transylvania County, NC. ILSR’s success is based on close relationships with local officials and with civic, environmental and small business networks. Our Composting Makes $en$e project issued two major reports, State of Composting in the US and Growing Local Fertility: A Guide to Community Composting. These resources underscore the benefits of composting and the need for locally based composting to create jobs, improve soil vitality, reduce stormwater run-off and erosion, cut waste, avoid landfill methane emissions, and store carbon. The second national Cultivating Community Composting Forum, which ILSR co-convened with BioCycle, brought together community composters around the country to network and share lessons learned. A unique advantage of composting is its ability to be small scale and local. We are now a leading voice calling for more focus on community-scale systems.

SELECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:
- ILSR helped citizen, environmental, and small business groups stop 3 garbage incinerators with combined daily capacity for burning 3,500 tons of garbage (1,225,000 tons/yr). This also avoided $1.5 billion to $2 billion in bonded debt for local governments.
- ILSR partnered with Saint Vincent de Paul, Lane County, OR, to replicate its West Coast network of reuse businesses on the East Coast. We introduced SVDP senior staff to new partner groups to form reuse companies from Bedford, MA, to Orlando, FL. These enterprises are owned and operated by social service agencies that create jobs and support their mission of providing life-saving support to residents of low-income communities.
- With our help, Washington, DC became the first city in the Mid-Atlantic to ban styrofoam and to pass a waste modernization act that calls for a zero waste plan to achieve 80 percent waste diversion. We also worked directly with the City of Takoma Park (MD) to pass the Young Activist Act of 2014, which bans styrofoam and other types of polystyrene used in foodservice citywide. ILSR co-leads the Young Activist Club, which has been pushing for these restrictions for six years. Our efforts have spurred Montgomery County, the largest county in Maryland, to introduce similar legislation.
- ILSR developed and launched the first Neighborhood Soil Rebuilders advanced composter-training course in conjunction with ECO City Farms. This course is directly training community leaders to start composting at urban farms and community gardens in order to produce fertile soil to grow food.

2015 AND BEYOND: One focus will be strengthening community-scale composting capacity and providing national support to the growing community composting movement. We will continue our collaboration with ECO City Farms to expand the Neighborhood Soil Rebuilders composter-training program, replicate it in at least three other communities, and produce a training toolkit. ILSR has documented a menu of local and state policies to drive recycling and composting infrastructure, and we will strive to get those enacted in a variety of places. We will also accelerate our outreach on the crucial role of composting to protect the climate by cutting methane emissions and sequestering carbon in soil.

IMPACT STORY: This year we were effective in advancing a composting legislative agenda in Maryland. HB878, sponsored by Del. Dana Stein (and cross filed as SB814 by Sen. Jamie Raskin), was signed into law by the Governor on May 5th and became effective July 1st. This bill, which ILSR wrote, promotes the use of compost for landscaping and as a recycled material in highway construction projects and requires the State Highway Administration to develop specifications for compost-based products as best management practices for erosion and sediment control and for post-construction stormwater management. We also continued our support for new composting permitting regulations, which are expected to go into effect in early 2015. As a key member of the technical committee, we worked for performance-based requirements and special exemptions for farmers and other small-scale composters.

“ILSR’s data-driven analysis and policy guidance have been invaluable… From struggles against waste-to-energy plants, landfills, and demolition, in favor of reuse, recycling, composting, and deconstruction, to analysis of tax policy and depletion allowances, ILSR has assisted the fight to replace the ‘flush mentality’ with a value-conserving, job-creating, mindful approach to resource management.”

Tom Padia,
Recycling Director of
StopWaste.org/Alameda Co
“I can’t think of any other organization that has done more than ILSR to advance both the theory and practice of local self-reliance. From energy to banking to broadband to vibrant Main Streets, the Institute thinks and acts with originality and pragmatism. They are an essential counterweight to the forces of bigness. May they thrive for another 40 years.”

Peter Barnes, co-founder of Working Assets (CREDO), author of With Liberty and Dividends for All

“Who else but ILSR to teach the rest of us how to be boldly visionary and intensely practical at the same time? Who else has created more paths forward for cities that lead us in a transformative direction? We celebrate four decades of collaboration with, and brilliant work by, ILSR.”

John Cavanagh, Director, Institute for Policy Studies
STAFF & BOARD

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Walter Wuthmann
Research Assistant, Community-Scaled Economy Initiative

2014 INTERNS, FELLOWS, AND VOLUNTEERS

Thomas Anderson
Urszula Chrobak
David Milavetz
Linus Platzer
Jacob Rounds
Elizabeth Whittlesey

INCOME & EXPENSES

INCOME
Fiscal Year 2014
July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

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EXPENSES
Fiscal Year 2014
July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

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OUR MISSION

The Institute’s mission is to provide innovative strategies, working models and timely information to support environmentally sound and equitable community development.

To this end, ILSR works with citizens, activists, policymakers and entrepreneurs to design systems, policies and enterprises that meet local or regional needs; to maximize human, material, natural and financial resources; and to ensure that the benefits of these systems and resources accrue to all local citizens.