

Indivisible

Anti-Trump organizers in Portland are borrowing tactics from an unlikely source: The Tea Party

BY ELIZABETH BUELOW
STAFF WRITER

On a dark and drizzly Tuesday afternoon in February, a group of 40 plus Portlanders huddled together in the Doubletree Hotel near Lloyd Center to strategize how to bring down the president of the United States. They had buttons and signs, hot coffee and pink hats.

Speaking in hushed and urgent tones, they passed around detailed flyers with the day's agenda for their weekly meeting with staffers from U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden's office. The flyers said: 1. Delay the Supreme Court hearings for Trump's nominee, and 2. Support a bi-partisan, transparent, public investigation into Trump's ties to Russia, which includes the disclosure of his tax returns. Once the program was settled and talking points were established, the group trekked the block over to Wyden's office, where additional activists gathered under their multi-colored umbrellas awaiting the appearance of one of Wyden's staffers or, better yet, the senator himself.

This is Indivisible Oregon, one of the thousands of groups of activists that have sprung up in recent months to resist the presidency and agenda of Donald Trump. The group has more than 6,200 Facebook followers, and those that materialize at the weekly meet-ups are predominantly women and retirees, likely reflecting the time of day (noon) of the meetings. In addition to Indivisible Oregon, there are 5,000 other verified Indivisible chapters across the country, at least two in every congressional district, including Alaska and Hawaii, all united around one document – the group's own constitution – the Indivisible Guide.

At 26 easy-to-read pages, the guide has been downloaded more than a million times since it was uploaded as a Google document in mid-December. Its popularity boils down to one easy message: Just say no to Donald J. Trump and his agenda, no matter what.

If that sounds oddly familiar, it's because this isn't the first time that strategy has been deployed. The guide was written by former congressional staffers who witnessed the rise of the Tea Party in 2009 and, though in disagreement with their opinions, came to admire the smart strategies employed by the anti-Obama activists. The Indivisible Guide is the gathering place of these lessons and tactics, condensed down to help citizens understand what works and what doesn't when it comes to their members of Congress.

"The policy is so easy: resist everything," said Andrea Platt, a founding member of Indivisible Oregon who lives in Portland. "Progressives can unite. We can agree to



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INDIVISIBLE OREGON

stop Trump. People don't realize the power they have as citizens – this guide helps us realize it."

And according to Wyden staffer Grace Stratton – who came out to address the crowd on Tuesday – it's working. "We love Indivisible; it's nice that they always come with a clear and united message. The senator responds to that."

After Tuesday's meeting, Stratton followed up with Oregon Indivisible with an emailed document (which was also issued as a press release) regarding Wyden's urging Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) to use his authority to allow members of the committee to privately review the president's tax returns. She also shared two memos on the Affordable Care Act and Congressman Ryan Zinke's confirmation as Secretary of the Interior. A statement on Indivisible from Wyden's Press Secretary Hank Stern compliments the activists: "It's clear from Indivisible members' enthusiastic turnout for Senator Wyden's town halls this year throughout our state – and from their ongoing conversations with his field staff – that these Oregonians are smart and effective advocates for participatory democracy. Their impact is strongly felt from the power of their voices and their determination to speak out and push back against the regular outrages emanating from Trump's White House."

Origins

"The Trump agenda does not depend on Trump. It depends on every individual member of Congress signing off. Constituents are reminding their members that they work for the people," said Gonzalo Martinez de Vedia, a human rights advocate and contributor to the original Indivisible Guide. The guide was written between Thanksgiving and Christmas – before Trump had been sworn in – by a group of a dozen or so individuals who spent the days and weeks after the election commiserating in bars and friends' living rooms trying to figure out the next step.

"We kind of looked around and realized that we had a good number of folks who were former congressional staffers, which gave us unique experience," said Martinez de Vedia. So they got to work on a tool that they knew would give people the information to influence their members of Congress. It was rough going at first.

"We learned Google docs has a limit to the people who can view it at one time," Martinez de Vedia laughed. "And the first draft had a lot of typos."

When the number of people clicking to view the document crashed the servers the night it went live, the group fixed the typos, converted it to a PDF, and threw together a website, indivisibleguide.com. The website functions as the hub for every Indivisible group in the United States, with an interactive map where it's easy to find your nearest group or to create one of your own. Currently, 96 groups are registered within 20 miles of Portland, from the Mississippi-Williams group to the Multnomah Village People (MVP), and all the way out to Our Indivisible Revolution in Sherwood.

The guide's thesis statement is focused on citizens acting locally in order to create resistance: to make calls, show up at town halls, and demand answers (in oftentimes creative ways) from their members of Congress. When the Tea Party enacted this strategy in 2009, it led to devastating losses to Democrats and the stable establishment of the hard right Freedom Caucus in the House of Representatives. According to Martinez de Vedia, "We're ready to say that the Indivisible movement has gone way beyond what the Tea Party could have dreamed of, just by way of numbers alone. We have a vocal majority, using the same Tea Party tactics to get results."

And the results are, seemingly, in. With the massive defeat of Trump's health care bill, the American Health Care Act (AHCA), on March 24, the resistance can claim its first decisive victory. Due to immense pressure from citizens across the country, Republicans in the House came up short on

Members of Indivisible Oregon gather for a demonstration against President Donald Trump outside of the Jackson County Courthouse in Medford. The group holds regular Tuesday rallies at the courthouse.