

2026

ANNUAL REPORT

Forging new paths for lasting impact

just zero

Changing the system means finding a different way forward.

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MISSION



Just Zero **provides expertise** to communities, advocates, and policymakers nationwide to **advance solutions that reduce harm** to people and the environment from waste.

APPROACH

We're forging a better way to advance the right policy solutions that reduce and divert toxic, polluting waste.



Education

We use written and visual resources, educational events, and conversations to spread awareness about Zero Waste initiatives and to push back against dangerous false solutions to our waste crisis.



Policy

We draft legislation, review proposals, work with lawmakers and community leaders to support comprehensive Zero Waste practices, and advocate before regulatory agencies faced with important waste-related decisions.



Community Engagement

We work directly with community groups, grassroots organizations, and coalitions to give them the tools and resources to protect their environment and blaze their own Zero Waste trails.

2026 IN REVIEW

A year forging new paths for lasting impact

In 2026*, our supporters helped us forge new paths toward a more just and sustainable future. Your generosity helped us raise nearly $1.2 million, giving our team the resources to lend our expertise to more than 30 initiatives across the country. We engaged with more than 6,000 social media followers, hosted webinars, and published resources that educated and inspired advocates and policymakers alike.

Throughout the year, we broke new ground while building momentum around some of our most important work. We helped set the standard for protecting communities and farmland from PFAS-contaminated sewage sludge, advanced the next generation of Bottle Bills, and pushed plastic policy beyond recycling and toward prevention. We also expanded into new territory, launching the Healthy Textiles Coalition to build a movement for safer, more sustainable textile systems.

At the same time, we continued working alongside advocates and communities to turn ambitious ideas into meaningful change. We challenged polluting waste infrastructure, helped develop stronger state and federal policies, and stayed engaged after laws were passed to ensure they deliver the waste reduction and environmental protections they promise. Across every initiative, we brought legal, policy, and communications expertise to the people working to create lasting change.

None of this progress happens alone. Our supporters make it possible for us to take on emerging challenges, pursue bold solutions, and keep pushing the boundaries of what Zero Waste policy can achieve. Because of you, we created new paths in 2026 – and built a stronger foundation for the work still ahead.

Thank you, as always, for your steadfast support of our mission. We're proud of how far we've come together, and excited to keep progress in motion.

**All mentions of 2026 in this report refer to our 2026 fiscal year (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).*



Just Zero Staff Attorney, Vanessa Zapata, in front of the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. to meet with legislators about sustainable solutions to plastic pollution.

Photo: via Just Zero

IMPACT | *Milestones along the way*

Setting the standard for PFAS sludge protections

This year, Just Zero continued to establish what meaningful action on PFAS-contaminated sewage sludge looks like. We worked closely with advocates and affected communities in Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York to develop legislation that would restrict or prohibit the spread of sewage sludge on land.

We drafted legislation and amendments, developed advocacy materials, provided legal and policy analysis, prepared testimony, educated lawmakers, and participated in coalition strategy meetings. When proposals in Maryland and New Hampshire were weakened, we helped lead the opposition – explaining why concentration thresholds and monitoring are not substitutes for preventing further contamination.

These campaigns built new coalitions, elevated the issue nationally, and established Just Zero as a leading voice on the dangers of sewage sludge.

Building the next geneartion of bottle bills

Despite being the country's most successful recycling policies, only 10 states currently have Bottle Bills, and no state has adopted a new program in more than two decades.

In 2026, our team provided expertise to advocates in Massachusetts, Hawaii, and New York who are working to strengthen existing programs. We also supported campaigns for new Bottle Bill legislation in Maryland, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Across these efforts, we provided model legislation, legal drafting, amendments, policy research, testimony, coalition participation, advocacy materials, and strategic guidance.

Through this work, Just Zero is creating a national framework for high-performing Bottle Bill systems that reduce litter, increase collection, support closed-loop recycling and refill, and move beverage packaging away from a disposable model.

Shifting plastic policy from recycling to prevention

We're urging policymakers to look beyond recycling toward policies that reduce unnecessary plastic production and use. In Colorado, we helped advocates protect the state's packaging reduction and recycling program by opposing industry-backed methods that enable misleading recycled-content claims. We also supported passage of the Plastic Pellet-Free Waters Act, which prohibits facilities from discharging plastic pellets and other preproduction plastics into waterways.

In New Jersey, we partnered with environmental groups on legislation to slash single-use plastic packaging and phase out the use of toxic chemicals in common packaging used for our food, cosmetics, and products.

At the federal level, we helped develop the Truth in Labeling Act to prevent companies from marketing products and packaging as recyclable when they are not actually recycled.

Together, these efforts are establishing stronger, transparent standards for plastic reduction, recycled content, and environmental marketing claims.

IMPACT | *Milestones along the way*

Launching a movement to transform textile systems

Just Zero expanded its work this year into one of the most overlooked contributors to the waste and plastic pollution crises: textiles. Though a major source of plastic pollution, toxic chemical exposure, microplastics, overproduction, and waste, the textile industry has received little attention from federal and state policymakers.

That's why we launched the Healthy Textiles Coalition, an alliance of designers, farmers, manufacturers, researchers, nonprofit organizations, and other experts working to advance climate-friendly, nontoxic, and regenerative soil-to-soil textile systems.

We are also working to develop California's first-in-the-nation textile responsibility law regulations so that they center reuse, upcycling, and sustainable clothing choices. At the same time, we began developing new policy approaches to phase out plastics and hazardous chemicals in clothing and other textiles.

Building community power against waste pollution

We continued providing legal, policy, and communications support to communities confronting incinerators, chemical recycling facilities, and other polluting waste infrastructure.

In Philadelphia, we supported a community-led campaign to stop the City from sending its waste to a nearby incinerator. We participated in a local coalition, provided testimony, public comments, and advocacy materials, drafted Zero Waste resolution language, and spoke to city officials.

Our team also supported Maryland legislation that would prohibit the permitting of chemical recycling facilities. The campaign educated lawmakers about the health and environmental risks of chemical recycling and challenged the plastics industry's attempt to market it as a solution to plastic pollution. This work builds on our success in Maine, where our advocacy helped secure the nation's first ban on these facilities.

Turning waste policy into real-world results

Throughout the year, we worked with advocates and regulators across the country to turn newly adopted producer-responsibility, recycling, and food-waste policies into effective programs.

In Maryland, Minnesota, Illinois, and Hawaii, we advised on the development of laws designed to improve recycling and reduce unnecessary packaging waste. Drawing on lessons from other states, we helped policymakers avoid common implementation pitfalls and build stronger programs from the start.

In Maine, we advised regulators and legislators on implementing the State's new food waste diversion and recycling law. And in California, we worked with partners to shape the State's first producer responsibility law for textiles, while ensuring it doesn't include false solutions like chemical recycling.

By staying engaged after laws are passed, we see to it that policies deliver measurable waste reduction and environmental benefits, rather than be weakened by rulemaking or industry influence.

NATIONAL REACH

Forging pathways to change

In 2026, Just Zero brought policy expertise to federal campaigns with Congress, 15 states, and Washington, D.C.

Working with advocates and partners, we helped turn policy ideas into action – drafting first-of-its-kind legislation, strengthening state regulations, preparing testimony, developing advocacy resources, building coalitions, and supporting community-led efforts to fight polluting facilities.

This work deepened partnerships and expanded relationships with communities across the country, connecting broad policy solutions with the knowledge and leadership of those most affected.

These partnerships have helped turn national policy expertise into action grounded in community needs, advancing policies that prevent waste and pollution while building momentum for a Zero Waste future.

Federal Work

At the federal level, Just Zero worked to advance stronger policies on plastics and recycling. We helped develop legislation to combat misleading recyclability claims and plastic pollution, supported policies to reduce plastic production and use, and opposed industry-backed proposals that would undermine stronger state laws or allow companies to make deceptive recycled content claims.

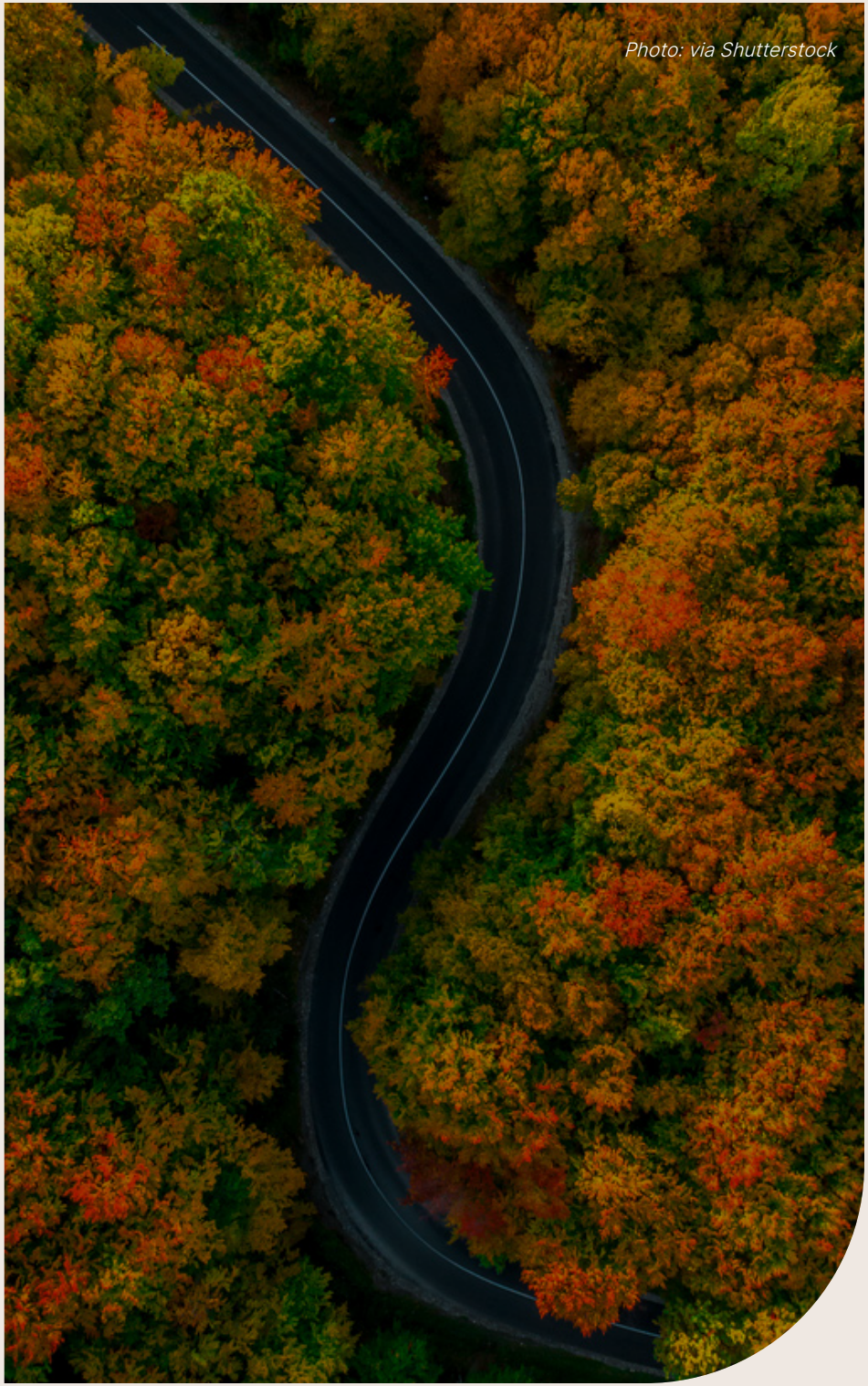


Photo: via Shutterstock

State Action, National Impact.

From statehouses to communities across the country, we're helping build a new way forward. In 2026, Just Zero provided legal, policy, advocacy, and communications expertise across 15 states and Washington, D.C. – helping partners advance stronger policies, defend hard-won progress, and tackle some of the most pressing waste and pollution challenges facing their communities. Below are the areas where we provided subject matter expertise:



CALIFORNIA
- Plastics
- Producer Responsibility
- Textiles



COLORADO
- Chemical Recycling
- Plastics
- Producer Responsibility



CONNECTICUT
- Food Waste
- Incineration
- Plastics



HAWAII
- Bottle Bill
- Producer Responsibility



ILLINOIS
- Food Waste
- Recycling



MAINE
- Chemical Recycling
- Food Waste
- Producer Responsibility



MARYLAND
- Bottle Bill
- Chemical Recycling
- Producer Responsibility
- Sewage Sludge



MASSACHUSETTS
- Bottle Bill
- Plastics
- Sewage Sludge



MINNESOTA
- Producer Responsibility



NEW HAMPSHIRE
- Producer Responsibility
- Sewage Sludge



NEW JERSEY
- Bottle Bill
- Plastics
- Producer Responsibility



NEW YORK
- Bottle Bill
- Producer Responsibility
- Sewage Sludge



PENNSYLVANIA
- Incineration



RHODE ISLAND
- Bottle Bill
- Producer Responsibility



WASHINGTON, D.C.
- Bottle Bill



WISCONSIN
- Producer Responsibility

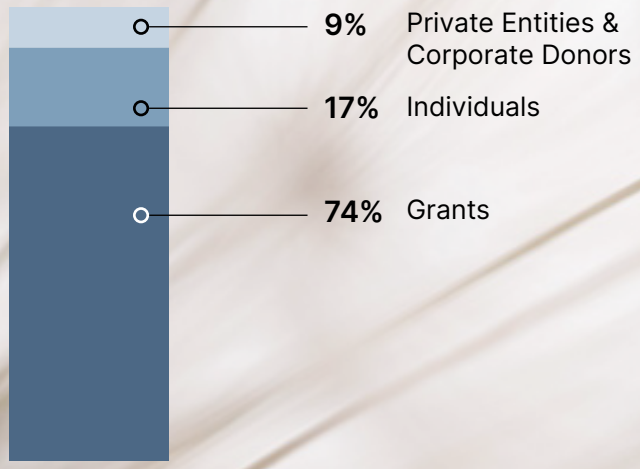
FINANCIALS

Investing in the path forward

2026 REVENUE

$1,179,437

BY SOURCE



NET ASSETS

2026: **$655,347**

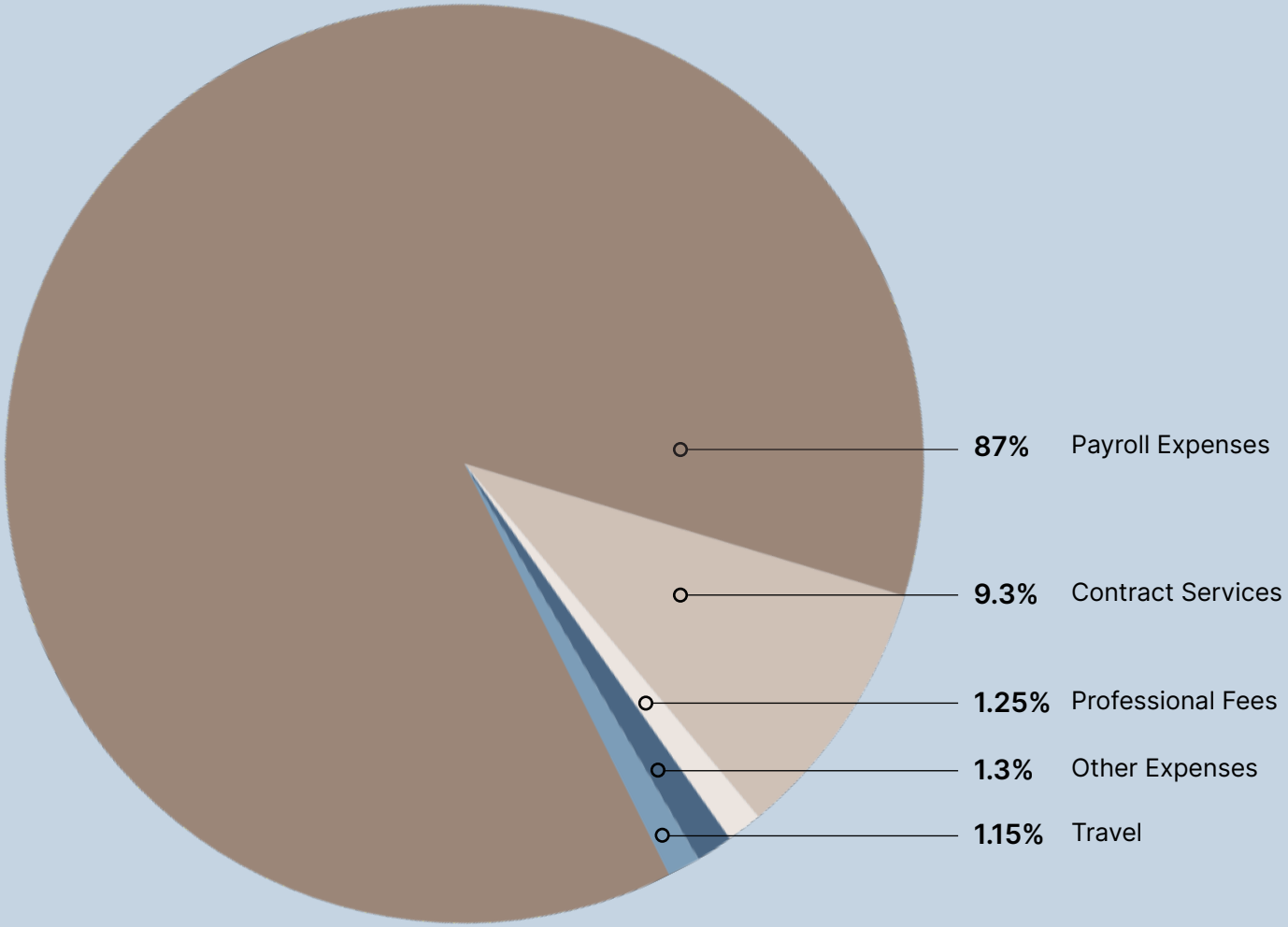
2025: **$576,451**

Photo: via Shutterstock

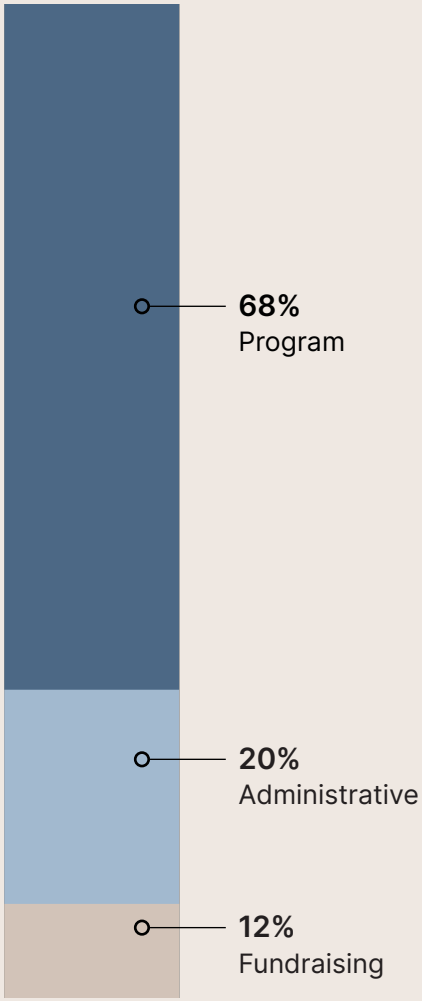
2026 EXPENSES*

$1,100,541

Categorical Breakdown



Functional Breakdown

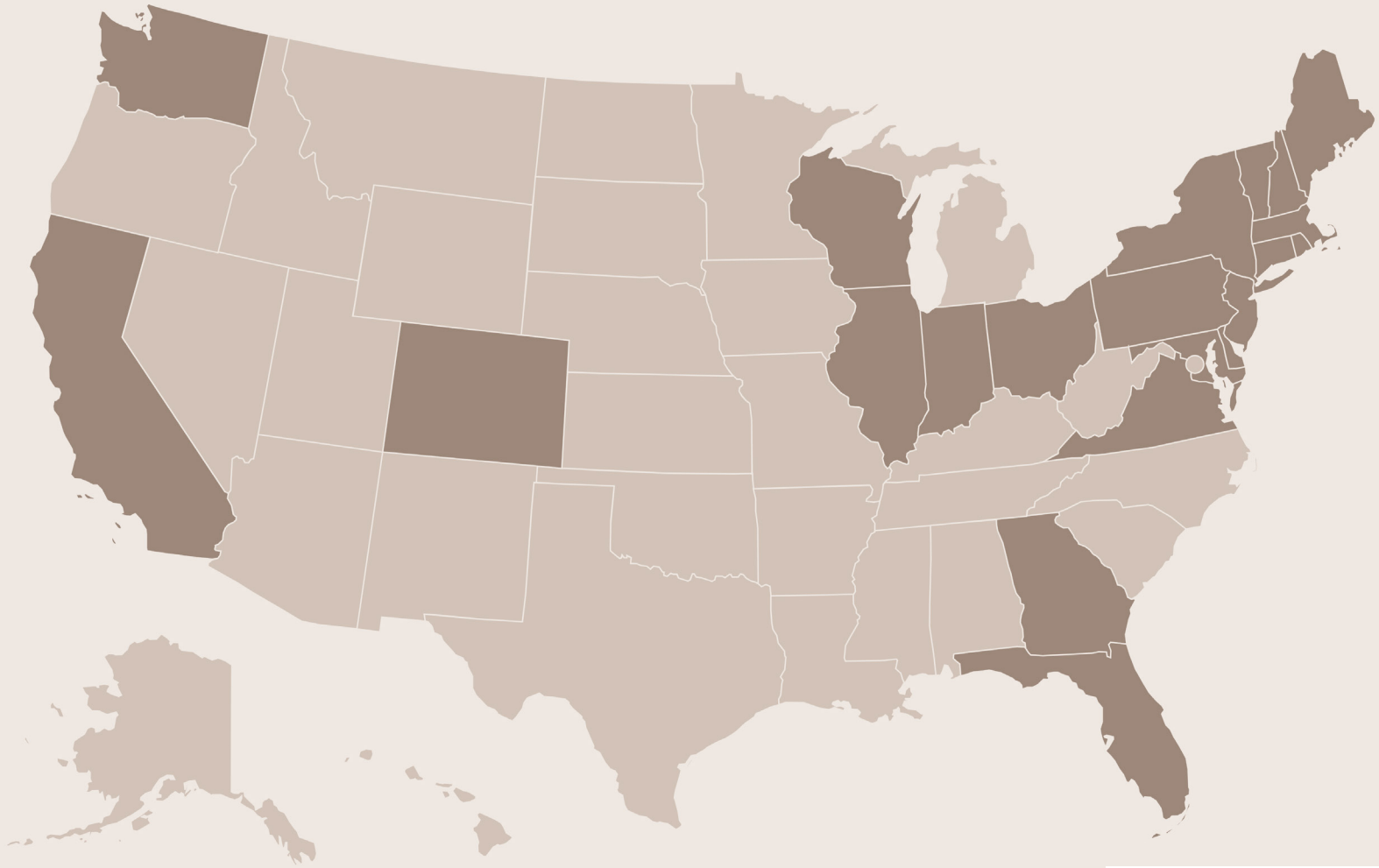


** 0.6% of our total expenses fiscal year 2026 were lobbying related.*

OUR CHAMPIONS

The people who make progress possible

No lasting change is forged alone. Our champions make it possible to challenge the status quo, pursue ambitious solutions, and build a future where communities and the planet come before waste.



2026 donor locations.

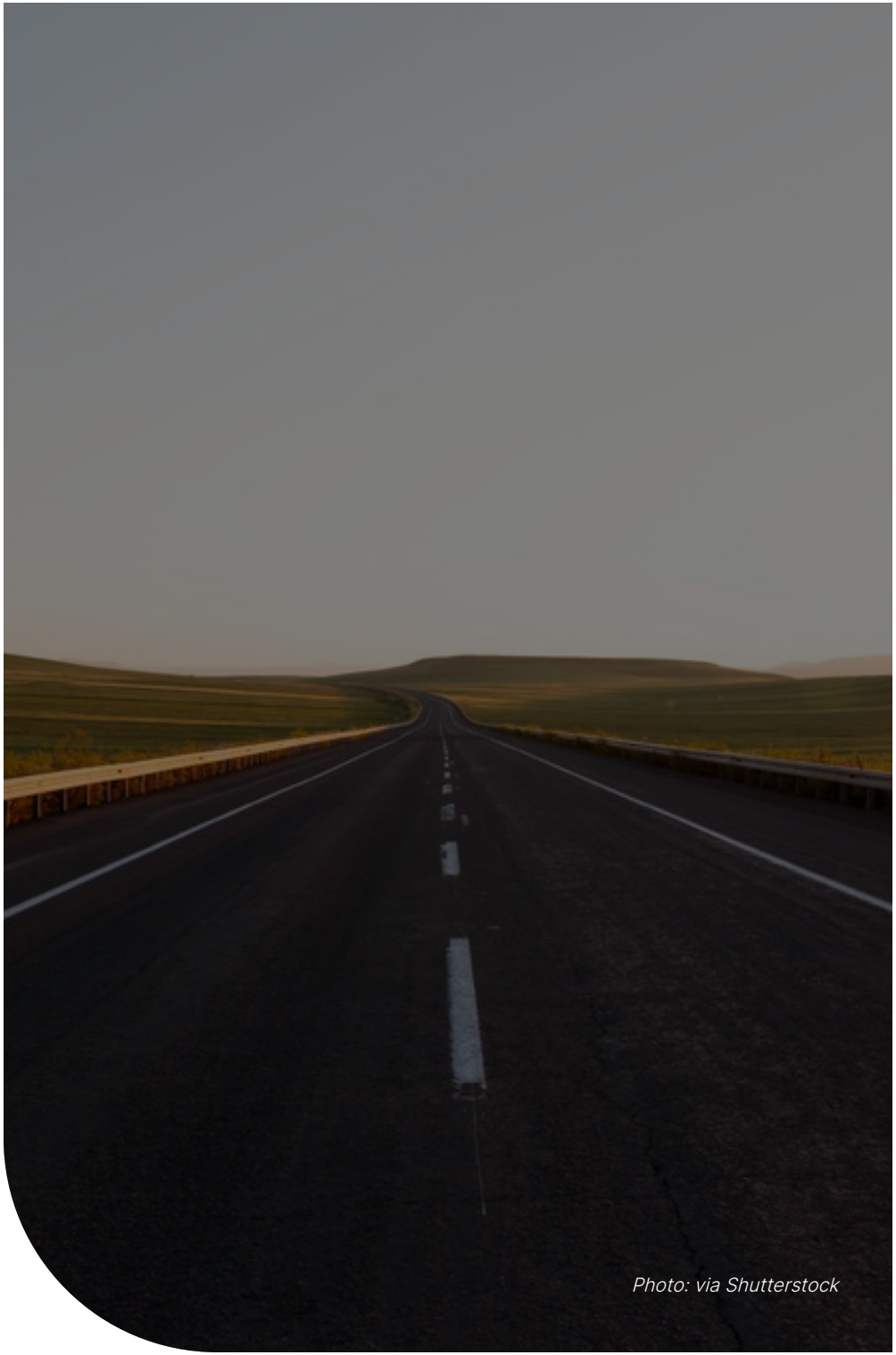


Photo: via Shutterstock

PLANNING AHEAD

The path to lasting change is one we forge together

2026 showed us that lasting change requires more than following the paths already laid before us. It means challenging false solutions, pushing for stronger protections, and finding new ways to tackle the waste and plastic pollution crises at the source. This year, Just Zero helped advance change across the country – building new coalitions, expanding into emerging areas of Zero Waste advocacy, and bringing our expertise to communities and policymakers working toward a healthier, more sustainable future.

In the year ahead, we'll build on that momentum. We'll continue setting the standard for strong Zero Waste policies, from protecting communities and farmland from PFAS-contaminated sewage sludge to reducing plastic production and transforming our textile systems. We'll strengthen partnerships, help communities stand up to polluting waste infrastructure, and work to ensure that hard-won policies deliver meaningful results. And as industry pushes false solutions and attempts to weaken environmental protections, we'll be there to push back.

The path ahead won't always be easy. But with you beside us, we'll keep forging new paths, turning bold ideas into lasting progress, and building the healthy, safe, Zero Waste future we all deserve.