



REPUBLICAN STATE LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

Memo: Outlook for New Jersey and Virginia in 2025

To: Interested Parties

From: Edith Jorge-Tuñón, President, RSLC

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RE: Why 2025 Doesn't Need to be 2017 in New Jersey and Virginia

INTRODUCTION

The 2025 state legislative elections in New Jersey and Virginia will present significant challenges for Republicans, reminiscent of the complex political landscape of 2017, the last odd-year election Republicans had full control of Washington. Riding the momentum of the 2016 presidential win, Republicans in 2017 were caught off guard as Democrats successfully nationalized local races, linking GOP candidates to federal dysfunction. The result: historic Democratic gains, a flipped Virginia House of Delegates, and an expanded majority in New Jersey's Legislature. Now, Democrats are aiming to recreate that same dynamic in 2025.

In New Jersey this year, Republicans are up against a predominantly Democrat electorate and a deeply entrenched liberal money machine. In Virginia, Democrats are already leveraging their extensive donor base to saturate the airwaves in contested districts made competitive through liberal-led redistricting efforts. With Democrats and their high-powered donors entering the race thinking they have the same type of momentum following November 2017, we are sure to see all-in efforts from the radical left to make substantial gains in VA and NJ this November and nationwide in 2026.

The strongest defense against the complete down-ballot takeover Democrats are planning this cycle will require defying expectations in 2025. We must force the liberal money machine to think twice about how easy it will be to win in 2026 and question whether it will be the wave election they are hoping for. Holding our ground in Virginia and New Jersey this year will be essential to our efforts and critical for setting the tone in 2026.

While the 2025 races in Virginia and New Jersey will be challenging, we have the opportunity – and strategy – to avoid a 2017 relapse. Republicans are better prepared, more unified, and strategically focused unlike eight years ago. We have learned from our past experiences and are ready to fight smarter. With the right resources, we can break through Democrat strongholds, make strides in key districts, and disrupt the Left's plan to gain unchecked momentum heading into 2026.

DEMOCRATS ARE HOPING THAT THIS WILL BE A REPEAT OF 2017

Democrats are moving through 2025 expressing increased confidence with their strength at the state level, making it clear they believe having President Trump back in the White House will be a recipe for success.

- In Virginia, party leaders [point](#) to a robust recruitment effort, with Democrats contesting 92 of 100 House districts. As state party chair Susan Swecker noted, this breadth reflects a motivated base and a rejection of what she called "Donald Trump's disastrous policies and his attacks on our economy and workforce."
- Heather Williams, president of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC), sees these [trends](#) as compounding the GOP's vulnerability, which will help state Democrats stating, "yes, Trump is responsible for this, Elon Musk is responsible for this, but local Republicans are also complicit," she said. "They are falling in line with a reckless approach to government and a reckless political party with Donald Trump at the helm. They don't get off the hook."
- Williams also emphasized the broader messaging opportunity for Democrats to capitalize on building momentum stating, "Elon Musk may excite the MAGA base, but he's out of step with the daily concerns of suburban and swing voters. Republicans are tying themselves to unpopular billionaires and deep cuts to public services—it's a losing message," she [said](#).
- Williams is also bullish about Democrats' ability to come back and have success this election cycle because of President Trump making a return to the White House, [saying](#), "With Trump back in the White House, grassroots donors are now using their energy to support our fight in state legislatures. They know our statehouses stand as a counter to the GOP agenda and will work to make progress for Americans."
- Democratic leaders in the states like Virginia House Speaker Don Scott [say](#) Republicans' alignment with Elon Musk could further alienate moderate voters. "I think Republicans are begging him to come to Virginia because they have not gotten the memo from Wisconsin and Florida and Pennsylvania that voters don't like the policies," he said. "Because they haven't gotten the memo yet, they continue to embrace him and they will not tell him to go away because he's out of touch. They're going to find out, I believe, in November how out of touch they are in Virginia."
- National leaders echo this sentiment. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer [emphasized](#) that Trump's moves since returning to the political spotlight are not an anomaly but the beginning of what he views as a helpful pattern, stating, "I didn't know he'd screw up so soon... This is going to be a pattern." Democrats see this as an opportunity to contrast their own policy agenda with Trump's record.

With President Trump returning to the White House, Democrats are licking their chops and not being shy about it. They are confident that his comeback will bolster their efforts to change the power dynamics, positioning 2025 as a pivotal moment for a significant political realignment. **It's up to us to prove them wrong.**

WHY 2025 WILL BE DIFFERENT FOR REPUBLICANS

We have seen this strategy before: Democrats using Trump to nationalize an odd-year election to overshadow local issues. This time, however, Republicans are prepared. We understand what to expect, have adapted our strategy, and are better equipped to combat their tactics while maintaining our focus on what truly matters to voters.

As we navigate 2025, Republicans are demonstrating a level of strategic focus and message discipline distinct from what we saw in 2017. In both Virginia and New Jersey, GOP leaders are emphasizing the failures of Democrats to deliver on their promises, setting the stage for a campaign centered on accountability, competence, and public trust.

In Virginia, Republicans are highlighting a consistent pattern of broken promises from House Democrats, who claimed they would cut taxes, improve public safety, and boost economic prosperity. Instead, we are rightfully [pointing out](#) how Democrats have blocked sensible legislation on [tax relief](#), [crime prevention](#), and [parental involvement](#) in education, despite clear public support for these initiatives. Democrats have prioritized partisan politics over practical solutions, leaving working Virginians to face higher costs and growing concerns about community safety.

A similar theme is emerging in New Jersey, where Republicans are tapping into [voter frustration](#) with state-level Democratic leadership. In the Garden State, we are [relentlessly holding Democrats accountable](#) for being disconnected from everyday issues like affordability, public safety, and education.

Unlike 2017, when Democrats dominated by nationalizing state races and capitalizing on anti-Trump sentiment, Republicans in 2025 aren't just standing idly by trying to play defense. They are going on the attack and portraying state Democrats as ideological and ineffective, while positioning themselves as the party that offers practical solutions, by messaging on kitchen table issues most important to their districts. It is also important to note that this year the Democrat Party is polling at an [all-time low](#), 16 points less favorable than they were rated at this point in 2017. This dynamic suggests Democrats are not gaining the political advantage the party out-of-power historically receives going into the first odd-year election after a presidential election.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FOR NEW JERSEY AND VIRGINIA IN 2025

We are now better positioned, better organized, and more focused than eight years ago in both Virginia and New Jersey which gives us a significant advantage.

New Jersey: Although New Jersey continues to lean Democrat, Republicans have made notable gains since 2017, including flipping key legislative seats and strengthening our presence in swing districts. With Democrats holding a legislative trifecta, we view 2025 as a pivotal opportunity to increase representation and compete in critical districts for future success. Our goal in New Jersey will be to hold our ground while also showing tangible proof that Republican ideas can resonate even in traditionally challenging areas. In the [2024](#) presidential election, President Trump lost New Jersey by only six points, a notable improvement from his 17-point loss in [2020](#). This shift indicates that state Republicans have a real opportunity to gain traction in this traditionally liberal stronghold.

Virginia: The 2021 House of Delegates victory demonstrated that Republicans can win in Virginia despite strong Democratic fundraising and national challenges. As we approach November 2025, Republicans will face renewed pressure from Democrats and outside groups. However, the GOP enters this election cycle with a sharper message, far better organization, and with a popular and powerful governor campaigning alongside our candidates, helping the cause. These were all things Republicans did not have in 2017 when they lost 15 seats and control of the House majority. Republicans are now leveraging recent successes, expanding their ground game, and executing a focused, issue-based strategy—not only to defend key districts but also go on offense in competitive districts.

TACTICS TO WIN IN VIRGINIA AND NEW JERSEY IN 2025

Republicans are entering the 2025 election cycle with a proven record for navigating challenging situations. Our strategy focuses on early investments, targeted digital outreach, and voter turnout programs that have already proven effective in recent elections.

Virginia: Digital Investment + Turnout Innovation:

In Virginia, the RSLC PAC in coordination with the House Republican Campaign Committee in Virginia, already [launched](#) two six-figure digital ad [campaigns](#) this year as part of a larger strategy to define Democrats early and emphasize their legislative shortcomings on critical issues such as taxes, crime, and education. These ads effectively reached voters in digital spaces—online and on mobile devices—where opinions are shaped and reinforced. From now until Election Day this November, the RSLC PAC will continue to engage in campaigns like these that are tailor made to deliver our message to the people of the Commonwealth.

Equally important is continuing one of the GOP's most effective strategies: a robust absentee ballot (AB) and early voting (EV) program. In [2023](#), this initiative surpassed expectations statewide. By innovatively reaching out to low-propensity Republican voters, the GOP maintained its position and prevented Democrats from expanding their legislative majorities. As a result, Republicans secured victory in 13 districts that Joe Biden carried in 2020 and seven districts that congressional Democrats won in 2022, demonstrating that strategic tactics can overcome inherent disadvantages.

New Jersey: Strategic Investment + AB/EV Ground Game:

In New Jersey, where Democrats have complete control of the legislature, we are going to be implementing a similar strategy with increasing success. In [2023](#), we invested nearly \$1 million in absentee ballot mailings, follow-up mail, and early voting mail across the state. Digital advertisements and direct voter text messaging supplemented these efforts. This multi-channel approach helped boost Republican engagement in a challenging political climate and established a strong foundation for competitive performance in key battleground areas. As we navigate the tough political climate that is ahead of us, we will look to replicate this same approach that will lead to higher turnout and positive results for down-ballot Republicans. In 2025, we believe we can contest state House districts 3, 8, 11, and 30—seats we lost in 2023—by deploying these targeted voter contact tactics.

CONCLUSION: THE ROAD AHEAD

The RSLC enters the 2025 election cycle with a clear understanding of the challenges ahead. Gaining ground in Virginia and New Jersey will be difficult, but Republicans are far better positioned than we were in 2017. We recognize the Democrat's strategy: to nationalize these odd-year elections to overshadow local issues and generate enthusiasm from outside sources.

However, this time we are prepared. Republicans know what to expect and have adapted our approach accordingly. We have sharpened our message and built a stronger infrastructure to counter Democratic tactics while keeping the focus on what truly matters to voters. In 2025, holding the line and preventing the Democrats from expanding their majorities in Virginia and New Jersey is of the utmost importance.

That's why the Republican State Leadership Committee (RSLC) and its affiliated PACs are making substantial investments in both states—not just to maintain our positions but to prevent Democrats from gaining the momentum they will need to pose a serious challenge in 2026. Every seat we contest and every message we communicate this year is significant. The effort to avoid a repeat of 2017-2018 has already begun—with a smarter, more prepared Republican Party ready to succeed in 2025 and beyond.

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