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TITLE PAGE

BUILD TO WIN. BUILD TO LAST.

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LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

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INTRODUCTION

In every election cycle, the two major parties and hundreds of outside groups invest enormous resources and energy trying to define the terrain for voter choice. What happens at the Presidential level certainly impacts down-ballot contests, yet candidates across the ballot in both parties will still seek to define choices for voters in their specific elections. From those choices, the voters decide which choice is most resonant. One party declares itself the winner, and the other party declares that the fight is far from finished.

Effective parties, understanding history rarely repeats itself, it does often rhyme, make it a point to study electoral outcomes after each cycle to identify potential improvements to every aspect of their campaigns. John Adams argued “Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right...and a desire to know.”

This desire to know, to understand what is going well and needs to be maintained, along with understanding what is not working and needs to evolve, is at the heart of any substantive effort to evaluate the relative impact of strategies and tactics tied to a specific election cycle and specific candidate matchup in order to generate insights about what happened. A thorough review can provide a blueprint for future campaigns, establishing a series of “lessons learned” to drive continuous improvement in future efforts.

In this regard, the 2024 election was no different from any other. There were many dramatic moments framing the narrative of the national campaign, thousands of candidates seeking support from voters, and billions of dollars spent across the ballot and throughout the electoral ecosystem to advance particular interests.

There are many books already written, and many more to come, presenting analyses of “what happened” for both sides, the efficacy of the strategies advanced, decisions made, and actions taken during the presidential campaign. These analyses, in order to present a thorough picture of the will of the people and the choices they made, must extend beyond the presidential campaign to include those strategies, decisions, and actions taken by other federal, state, and local candidates on ballots nationwide to examine why so many were able to succeed where others came up short.

Understanding that “little d” democracy is the will of the people and “Big D” Democracy represents the systems and structures in place to advance or inhibit the will of the people, there must also be a review and analysis of the systemic and structural issues – some going back more

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than a decade – which have impacted electoral outcomes at every level. These issues can inhibit the evolution of Democracy, and limit the reach and success of the Democratic Party.

Unfortunate reductions in support and training for our state parties, consequential shifts in voter registration, a loss of partisan organizing capacity, and a persistent inability or unwillingness to listen to all voters has provided the other major party with opportunities for advancement at the expense of Democratic growth, evolution, and ability to find common ground with seemingly disparate groups of voters from coast to coast, and the heartland Democrats tend to ignore.

Historically, Democrats have held the advantage in each of these areas. The Democratic Party has always tried to be seen as the party of the people, the party of workers, fair play and civil discourse. The party's connections with working Americans and their families were forged through decades of organizing and engagement, the development of a vibrant and inclusive party infrastructure, and a relatable agenda which helped us connect in homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods across the country.

This report explores with depth and breadth how we lost these relationships by examining both candidate-specific circumstances and the overall trending away from effective and accountable politicking, and seeks to expound upon the combination of strategic, tactical, and organizational improvements Democrats need to form an effective and durable Majority Party Strategy.

Why Now?

Democracy is a very old institution, and yet what keeps democracy going is the ability of those who seek to lead to look at the data and determine the source of success as well as setbacks. This after-action report specifically aims to identify and elaborate upon the **actions** the Democratic Party must take **after** what happened in the 2024 cycle. The report identifies the programs and priorities for consideration and implementation to build our Party to win over the next ten years, and to again become the party of the people well into the future.

This report includes a thorough evaluation of voter behavior in the context of the individual-level collection of voter contact data and localized demographic data. The analyses aim to identify gaps in participation, determine the correlation between the frequency and distribution of partisan voter contact, and declare the urgent steps needed to reclaim our strength in engaging voters across the nation.

In simple terms, this report follows the money, identifying the top spenders and vendors in both parties, offering insights into where the money went, including who benefited and what issues

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were prioritized. From there, it presents an exploration of the context and composition of campaign spending for each office, the roles and impact of allied spending, and the volume of independent expenditures in the ecosystem.

To examine the reach of the Party, this report evaluates comparative and competitive media spending, the mix of broadcast and digital investment, and the need for greater innovation and experimentation in sharing the Democratic story with more voters and to greater effect and impact.

Finally, this report assesses the state of data and technology – with recommendations to ensure the security and resiliency of our critical infrastructure, and opportunities to improve tools and tech to meet the needs of modern, vibrant campaigns. A relevant and modern party must imbue its operations with resilient and robust digital operations to effectively present a unifying declaration to voters - “We the People” is not a new idea, but an enduring philosophy meant to include each generation and every available innovation in its design and operation.

Methodology

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

The report analyzes a range of publicly and commercially available data to identify actual investments, actions, and eventual voter behavior. The analysis also includes qualitative data obtained in the form of in-person and virtual interviews with more than 300 organizations and individuals who were promised confidentiality to encourage their participation and candor.

Most participants were eager to share their recommendations for how Democrats can improve strategies, decision-making, and infrastructure.

In parallel to this report, the DNC and ASDC have conducted more than 1200 interviews to assess the health of our 57 state parties – in every state, district, or territory.

While some participants may agree in part and disagree in part with portions of this report, we thank all participants for their candor and contributions, and their enduring commitment to the oldest continuing political party in the United States.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ELECTORAL LANDSCAPE

Ten Years for a Stronger Future

While combating an increasingly autocratic and authoritarian government lies at the forefront of the Democratic agenda, our Democratic Party must also develop a plan to carry itself and America beyond 2028. It is essential the Democratic Party develop, organize, and implement a 10-year strategic plan to align the infrastructure, partnerships, and people we need to win. The only way this can be done is if we build to win and build to last.

Democrats need a new, forward-thinking electoral strategy focusing on more than who or what is on the ballot, and addressing how Democrats can reconnect with Americans at every level across our country. We must organize everywhere to **Win Anywhere**.

Winning Anywhere means providing for a renewed focus on the voters of Middle America and the South, who have come to believe they are not included in the Democratic vision of a stronger and more dynamic America for everyone. Millions of Americans are suffering from poor access to healthcare, manufacturing and job losses, and a failing infrastructure, yet continue to be persuaded to vote against their best interests because they do not see themselves reflected in the America of the Democratic Party.

We can do this, because we've done it before.

In 1989, after losing three straight presidential campaigns, our party refocused the conversation around policy and purpose to reclaim the vital center of American discourse. Understanding the center is where most people live, then-DNC Chairman Ron Brown led Democrats out of the political wilderness by supporting candidates putting people first, prioritizing the economy, and offering America hope. It was Ron Brown who understood every corner of America was hurting and proclaimed his tenure would be less about race and more about "the races we win."

Ron Brown also challenged the Democratic Party to think and be different. He focused less on pie-in-the-sky narratives and asked the party to "get real about the politics of success[i]." Chairman Brown was relentless in his party-building, and his optimism inspired others to unify and focus on the end goal, winning the White House again in the face of three consecutive defeats leaving many Americans with a distaste for Democrats and politics in general. Brown was idealistic and practical, and he fought for his beliefs while challenging those who argued it could not be done.

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Under this future-focused directive, Democrats were able to win governor’s races in Virginia, mayoral races in New York City, and elect Bill Clinton into the White House in 1992, turning the tide of defeat and ushering in a new era of political achievement. In the ultimate sign of recognition of Ron Brown’s unifying visions, it was President Barack Obama who acknowledged he was president, in part, because of Ron’s vision for the future, “because of the example he set, because of the organization that he brought to the Democratic Party.[\[ii\]](#)”

Finding our way back to this level of success will not be easy, and it will not happen overnight. But the reason we will win is twofold. The first is that we do not plan to advance alone. Winning Anywhere is the shared mission and purpose of the DNC and its partners. We will do the hard work to reassess our strategies, our messaging, and our targets, and challenge our partners, including Labor and other progressive organizations, to hold us accountable as we move through the next ten years and beyond.

Secondly, once we win, we will ensure our newly elected and re-elected officials move consistently and decisively to instill faith and confidence in the American voting public. The rage of the voters, stoked daily by information silos, talking heads, and even politicians, has contributed to most Americans having a lack of confidence in both parties. Democrats must accept it is more important than to deliver on what they promise and then make sure our constituents are aware we are fighting for the things they care the most about.

We have to meet this moment with creativity, purpose, and openness. We must align our values with our investments to maximize the impact of our year-round efforts. We must reform our party’s structure and practices as the means to rebuild and reposition our party to re-earn the trust and confidence of everyday Americans.

Assessing the State of the Party

There are always hot takes after an election – but hot takes will lead to mistakes if we do not take the time to thoroughly explore what occurred, what worked well, and what should have been done better. We must be careful to draw the right lessons from this experience, and not miss opportunities to identify and build upon some of the positives from the 2024 cycle.

Yes, many are deeply angry with the outcome of this most recent national election. They feel cheated, abused, and taken advantage of by a broken system. At the same time, we must acknowledge how close the margins actually were. 7,309 votes across three districts decided control of the US House of Representatives. 327,557 votes across four states decided the US

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Numbers appear inaccurate based on public data.

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Senate. And 270,607 votes across four states decided the Presidency – around two-tenths of one percent of all ballots cast for President.

The 2020 cycle was also very close – a narrow win for the Presidency, a narrow Democratic majority in the House, and a tie in the Senate based on a runoff in Georgia.

The 2016 cycle was also close at the presidential level – with a split between the popular vote and Electoral College (with seven faithless Electors).

This demonstrates a basic truth – we have been and remain a nation divided. It is not unique to the 2024 election

These hair-splitting margins of defeat may lead some to argue Democrat leadership and candidates may need less changing of their message and approach and more massaging of their ideas for widespread adoption. The arguments have run nonstop since November 2024 – with a better political climate, or advancing slightly different policies, or with a different candidate, victory could have been assured. This kind of thinking – denialist at its core – prevents the Party from seeking real accountability, and from making the changes we need to deliver on our promises to the American people.

To grow, we must admit and accept some hard truths about our Party. Since the high point of the 2008 Obama landslide, when he received nearly 10 million more votes than John McCain, the Democratic Party has vacillated between stagnation and retrogression. In doing so, we have lost the confidence we once received from everyday Americans – and election results show it.

In the sixteen tumultuous years since that historic election, Democrats have lost ground at every level of government. These losses are the direct result of missed opportunities to invest in our states, counties, and local parties and candidates.

This remains true even in the face of the “Blue Wave” in the most recent elections. 2025 gubernatorial and mayoral wins in Virginia, New Jersey, New York City, Detroit, and elsewhere may lead to a false sense of security and a belief the Democratic Party has again found ways to bring the voters back to the booth with their messaging. While these wins are welcome and point to the optimism entrenched in the Majority Party Strategy, a dive into the details shows some of these elections were tighter than Democrats should be comfortable with, and point to room for improvement in future efforts.

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2008 – Change We Can Believe In



The 2008 election cycle was the high point for the modern Democratic Party. With a landslide in the Electoral College, a 9.5 million popular vote advantage for President, and wins in the House, Senate, and in the States, Democrats were poised and positioned to lock in those gains for a generation.

For the first time since the 1964 election of President Johnson, Democrats gained seats in both chambers while winning the White House. Democrats expanded their House majority to 257 seats, gaining 21 seats, and grew to 60 seats in the Senate, with wins in New Hampshire, Virginia, North Carolina, Minnesota, Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, and Alaska.

In the states, Democrats flipped six legislative chambers, while Republicans flipped four. Democrats retained the governorships in New Hampshire, Delaware, West Virginia, North Carolina, Montana, and Washington, and flipped Missouri.

These gains did not last long – as Democrats failed to capitalize on the economic disaster of the Bush presidency by cementing a relationship with working Americans.

2010 – The Rise of the Tea Party

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The 2010 midterms, converging with lingering economic stresses and resentment towards Wall Street, the rise of the Tea Party, and metastasizing birtherism resulted in sweeping losses for Democrats. The simultaneous disinvestment in state Democratic parties at the start of the Obama presidency contributed to this 2010 mid-term “shellacking.”

Democrats lost seven seats in the Senate (including President Obama’s former seat in Illinois), and 63 seats in the House, giving Republicans the majority, six governors, and twenty state legislative chambers.

The losses in the states – coinciding with the decennial Census – have had lasting repercussions. With many Republican trifectas in place, Democrats were on the wrong side of severe partisan gerrymandering at the state legislative and federal levels in 2012. Subsequent federal court decisions have enabled and encouraged partisan gerrymandering, stripping even the idea of competitiveness out of the broader electoral and civic ecosystem. Consequently, Democrats have invested less and less in what is now seen as non-competitive terrain, compounding and reinforcing partisan disadvantages in many states and jurisdictions.

Worse, Republicans have been relentless at the state policy level, reversing worker protections, enacting restrictions on voting, gutting essential services that Americans have paid for and depend on for their quality of life, and denying pathways of opportunity to and advancement to those most in need. While state legislative Democrats combat these changes when and where they can, in too many states they lack the legislative numbers to stop Republicans.

Voters in these states may see Democratic policy as the preferable alternative to Republicans authoritarian advancement, but the inability to offer any substantive effective electoral opposition impacts perspectives and opinions about the party.

2010 also saw federal court decisions enabling a tsunami of “independent” spending and the easing of restrictions that facilitated the injection of dark money into the political ecosystem. In 2010, there was approximately \$500 million in outside spending, with super PACs spending \$62.6 million. This has now grown to \$4.5 billion in outside spending on federal campaigns in 2024, with \$4.1 billion from super PACs and hybrid PACs.

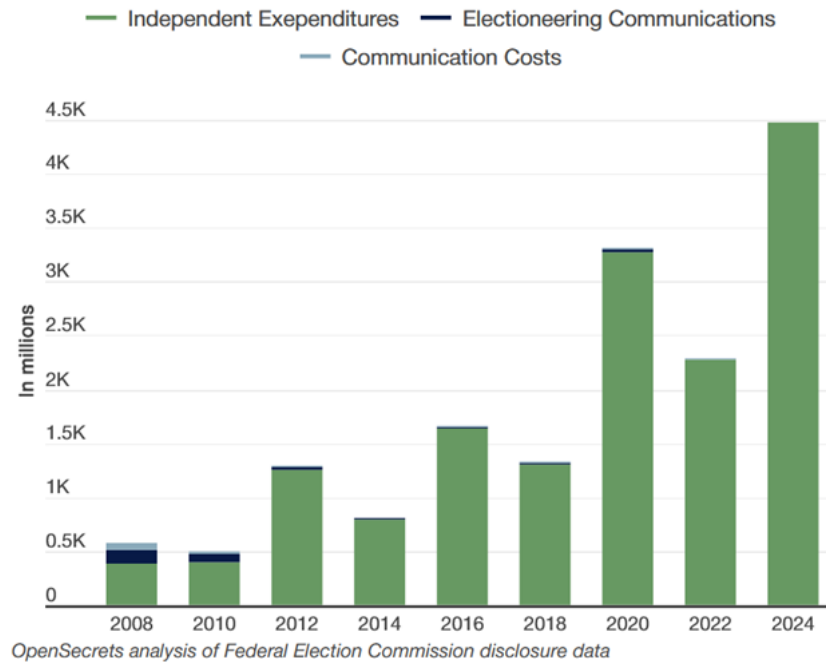
No evidence provided for this claim.

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Total Outside Spending by Cycle

Outside spending involves three categories: independent expenditures, electioneering communications and communication costs. The 2010 election cycle saw the rise a new form of political action committees known as an "independent-expenditure only committee," or more commonly as a "super PAC." Those organizations can raise unlimited sums from corporations, unions, other groups, and individuals.



open secrets
Following the money in politics.

This fundamental shift in campaign financing has profoundly weakened our democracy by reducing election transparency, preventing any sense of accountability, and eroding trust in the political process and the elected officials who uphold it. And yet, Democrats have so far remained competitive, even as we find ourselves seemingly unable to pull ahead.

2012 Re-election

President Obama won re-election in 2012, with 332 electoral votes and a nearly five million popular vote advantage.

Democrats picked up two seats in the Senate and eight in the House – on the new lines after reapportionment. Democrats also lost the gubernatorial election in North Carolina, but won

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seven legislative chambers - including the first Minnesota trifecta since 1991, while losing six chambers (a net gain of one chamber).

2014 – Shellacking 2.0

The second mid-term “shellacking” of 2014 had the lowest midterm turnout (36.4 percent) since 1942. Democrats lost nine Senate seats to give Republicans control of the chamber, and dropped 13 seats in the House, giving Republicans their largest House majority since 1928. Democrats also lost more ground in the states, losing two more governors, and ten legislative chambers.

Of greater consequence is how the 2014 Republican gains featured the election of increasingly radical Republicans – which made normal governance nearly impossible. Republican primary losses – including House Majority Leader Eric Cantor to a Tea Party challenger – were symptoms of accelerating shifts towards radicalism within the Republican Party.

John Boehner announced his resignation in fall of 2015, not 2014.

The inability of Republicans to manage these forces culminated in **the early resignation of Speaker John Boehner in 2014**, the elevation of Speaker Paul Ryan, and presaged the escalator ride and subsequent election of Donald Trump.

2016 – Divisions and Distractions

With an open seat in the presidential campaign, both parties engaged in deeply polarized contests for their nominations. The Democratic nomination was not fully resolved until the Democratic convention in Philadelphia – 104 days before the November 8th election. After years of disinvestment in state parties, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton inherited a party in turmoil, an acting national chair, and little effective infrastructure she could rely on both in the states and within the national party.

A series of dramatic events, massive election interference, and poor strategy cost Democrats what many assumed to be a history-making Presidency. Despite a popular vote win, the so-called Blue Wall collapsed.

Democrats picked up Senate seats in New Hampshire and Illinois, with narrow, painful losses in Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, and gained six seats in Congress. Democrats won the gubernatorial race in North Carolina, but lost in Missouri, Vermont, and New Hampshire, and Republicans netted control of one legislative chamber.

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2018 – Resistance and Return

The post-2016 aftermath was an enormously important time for Democrats. The national party was deeply in debt, and internally divided in the aftermath of the Presidential loss.

Thankfully, a surge of resistance (and the utter incompetence of the federal Republican trifecta) gave Democrats the opportunity to regain voter support. A wave of new energy, grassroots fervor, and new candidates came to the fore and Democrats were able to reclaim the House of Representatives with a gain of 40 seats.



No House Democrat was defeated, while 29 Republican incumbents lost. Republicans flipped three open seats while Democrats flipped 14.

Democrats were able to win Senate seats in Nevada and Arizona, but lost seats in North Dakota, Missouri, Indiana, and Florida. By protecting Democratic incumbents in Michigan, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and West Virginia (all states Trump had won in 2016), Democrats kept the Senate margin close, and were positioned to regain the Senate in 2020.

2020 – A Democratic Trifecta

Democrats were able to build on wins from 2018 and leverage anti-incumbent sentiment to win the Presidency and reclaim the Senate. 2020 was the highest turnout election since 1900, and with 158 million votes cast, the highest participation election in US history.

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Joe Biden won the Electoral College with 306 votes and the popular vote by more than 7 million. Democrats won four seats in the Senate, flipping Colorado, Arizona, and both seats in Georgia, while losing Alabama. This created a tie in the Senate, with Vice President Kamala Harris giving Democrats control. Republicans gained 13 seats in the House, but Democrats retained control with a five-seat advantage.

In the states, Republicans flipped the Montana governorship and won both chambers of the New Hampshire legislature.

However, no mention of the 2020 election can ignore the abject insanity of the January 6th insurrection and the chaos it wrought throughout the entire political firmament. **Nearly 3,000 people stormed the United States Capitol Building, leading to the deaths of five people, including one Capitol Police officer who was beaten to death by the insurrectionists.** 1,575 people were charged in connection with the attack, 1,270 were convicted and all but 14 were pardoned immediately when Donald Trump took office on January 20, 2025, avoiding any meaningful accountability for the attack on the Capitol and the Republic. The ongoing disinformation and denialism orchestrated by Republicans about the events of January 6th is ongoing large-scale gaslighting designed to undermine our entire civic ecosystem.

*Claim
contradicts
public
reporting.*

2022 – The Fake Red Wave

Despite legacy media handwringing and a barrage of cherry-picked partisan polling from the right, Democrats beat back historical precedent of the party in the White House losing midterm elections. Democrats staved off the purported (and over-reported) red wave.

Instead, Democrats gained a seat in the Senate, winning Pennsylvania, with narrow losses in North Carolina and Wisconsin. Republicans were able to net nine seats and take the House due to aggressive partisan gerrymanders in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas, and overperformance in California and New York on commission or court-drawn maps.

In the states, Democrats flipped the governorships in Arizona, Maryland, and Massachusetts, while losing Nevada. 2022 was also the first midterm since 1934 where the President's party did not lose a state legislative chamber, as Democrats flipped both chambers in Michigan, the Minnesota Senate, and Pennsylvania House. The legislative lines, drawn in Michigan by an independent commission, gave Democrats their first governing trifecta since 1985.

2024 – The Second Republican Trifecta

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Aside from the near sweep across the Presidential battlegrounds and Republicans winning a plurality of the popular vote at the Presidential level, Democrats lost Senate seats in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Montana. Democrats netted two seats in the House, flipping ten seats from the Republicans while losing eight.

Data appears to be inaccurate and contradicts public reporting.

For the first time since 2011, there were no changes in partisan control of governorships, with Democrats retaining Delaware, North Carolina, and Washington. At the state legislative level, Republicans flipped the Michigan House, and moved the Minnesota House into a tie.

Recap

Analysis not supported by publicly available data.

Every election cycle since 2008 has reflected an increasing polarization in our national politics, with narrowing margins determining control in each successive cycle. Democrats have experienced substantial and meaningful losses across these 16 years, and need to recommit to effective messages and methods to regain trust and the support of our people.

	2009	2025	Change
Senators	60D, 40R	47D, 53R	+13R
Congress	256D, 178R	215D, 220R	+41R
Governors	28D, 22R	23D, 27R	+5R
State Legislators	4082D, 3223R, 17 O	3250D, 4020R, 116 O	+832R
State Trifectas	17D, 9R, 23S	17D, 22R, 10S	+13R

What the chart shows is the impact of successive narrow losses. The cumulative effect of the relatively small losses that Democrats have experienced in each election has led to an outsized amount of power being held by a group thriving on division and disinterest.

This trend needs to be reversed. While what was lost in 16 years will not be gained back overnight, this after action and the Chair's 10-year strategic plan will set the foundation for reinvigorating the Democratic Party, redefining its purpose, and regaining what it has given up over the years due to improper planning and execution.

It's The Future, Stupid

No sourcing provided for several claims in this section.

The sad truth is Democrats have lost ground at every level from inconsistent messaging and improper planning, even as the policies the Party advances continue to earn voter support at the ballot box. Ballot measures for Medicaid expansion, nonpartisan redistricting, wage increases,

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Appears to conflate family and sick leave.

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family leave, and reproductive freedom have passed in states where Democrats remain locked out of statewide offices.

This divergence means the Party and our candidates have lost the confidence and trust of voters. In the face of misinformation and disinformation, our candidates have proven incapable of projecting strength, unity, and leadership, and voters have drifted away.

Indeed, many of our critical Democratic wins can be attributed to negative partisanship – where Republicans have nominated deeply flawed candidates, and we have been able to convince some Republicans and most Independents to support Democrats in those contests.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the 2022 Georgia Senate election, where Republicans supported Herschel Walker to take on incumbent Democratic Senator Raphael Warnock. Despite a series of false and unverifiable claims by Walker, as well as the near-complete absence of a comprehensive policy agenda, endorsements by Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell were enough to take the senate race to a runoff when neither candidate was able to claim 50% of the vote in the first round

In 2022, Joe Biden was president.

This was a blatant attempt by the Republican power base to take advantage of name recognition and tough economic conditions to push through an unqualified candidate whose job would have been little more than rubber stamping the president's agenda. Walker's inability to muster even a shred of credibility precluded him from winning the election in one of the most polarized states in the nation.

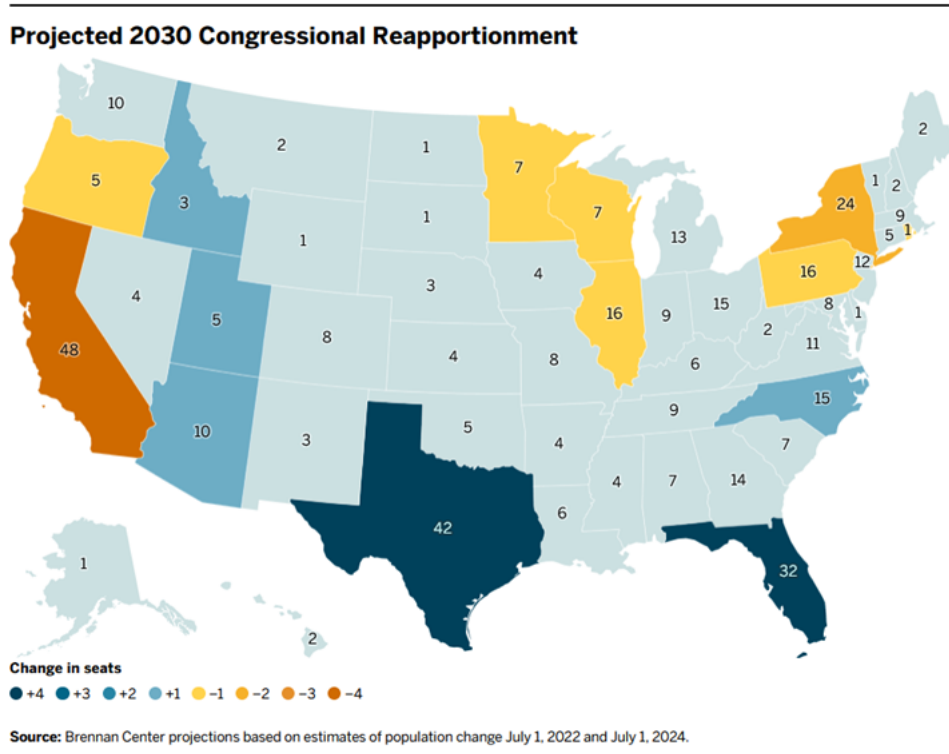
Democrats cannot count on Republicans continuing to nominate deeply flawed candidates, and certainly need to think through how to nominate strong and ethical leaders. Regaining trust and confidence in the Party – where voters have an affirmative reason to support Democrats – will take a comprehensive strategy and considerable effort over multiple cycles. Democrats need to do it and do it right now, because the future could become even more difficult.

Demographic and population projections indicate an accelerating population shift away from traditionally Democratic states. As the Brennan Center has reported, and as seen in the figure below, it is possible for up to 12 Congressional seats (and Electoral Votes) to shift from states like

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California, New York, and Illinois to Texas, Florida, Utah, and Idaho in the next reapportionment after the 2030 Census¹.



2

With radical midterm redistricting efforts underway, the writing is on the wall, and the call is coming from inside the House. We either adapt to the changing conditions of the arena, or history will leave us behind.

Hoping for national tides to change or historic trends to shift and help Democrats win is not a strategy. Waiting for a strong national nominee to emerge in 2028 ignores the need to prepare the Party to best support our nominees whenever and wherever they run. The job of the whole part - from leadership and volunteers to elected officials and even former Presidents - is to think bigger and work harder. To recruit, train, listen, organize, and engage at scale.

If Democrats keep tinkering around the margins, and expecting better outcomes, it's a missed opportunity to reclaim the responsibility to offer a better direction for America. It's imperative

¹ Michael Li & Gina Feliz. "How Congressional Maps Could Change in 2030." Brennan Center for Justice. brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/how-congressional-maps-could-change-2030.

² Michael Li & Gina Feliz. "How Congressional Maps Could Change in 2030." Brennan Center for Justice. brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/how-congressional-maps-could-change-2030.

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Democrats meet the moment – by identifying and preparing the leaders and organizers who will deliver positive change for America.

The losses in the states are the key trend Democrats need to reverse. They are the foundation for moving states back into our column, and the potential bench of candidates for higher office.

With the party refreshed and reinvigorated in the aftermath of the 2025 elections, this is the time to Build to Win and Build to Last. Democrats must organize everywhere to win anywhere through Majority Party Strategy focused on everywhere, cohesively, strategically, and decisively.

A new Majority Party Strategy is a prerequisite for success in winning back voters, boosting the party, and aligning the vision of everyone involved to ensure the United States reflects the will of the people and not of the powerful.

[i] https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/ron-brown-and-michael-a-brown-amid-a-fathers-legacy-a-sons-own-path/2011/03/26/AFD3Fh5B_story.html

[ii] https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/ron-brown-and-michael-a-brown-amid-a-fathers-legacy-a-sons-own-path/2011/03/26/AFD3Fh5B_story.html

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WHAT HAPPENED (ELECTORAL REVIEW)

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Introduction

PENDING

This section was not provided by author.

National Overview

PENDING

This section was not provided by author.

Battleground State Outcomes

All three of these states voted for Trump in 2016.

On Election Night, the world watched the Blue Wall crumble to return Donald Trump to the White House. States which had consistently and reliably voted for Democratic candidates, including Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, voted for Trump, along with Nevada, Arizona, and Georgia, which had all gone to Biden in the previous election. Every swing state and District Democrats focused on holding onto all swung right, allowing Donald Trump to become the first Republican presidential candidate to win the popular vote since George W. Bush in 2004.

Even in the midst of this fundamental shift in the electoral map, there are key takeaways Democrats should consider as they invest in the Majority Party Strategy.

The first is despite winning the popular vote, Trump won the election by a little more than 2 million votes in the popular vote, meaning the election was swayed by .15 percent of the votes cast across the country in the election.

Analysis not supported by the data.

Claims contradict public reporting.

The second is the margin of defeat for Kamala Harris was among the smallest in American history. Under the structure of the Electoral College, a handful of swing states are generally determinative in the outcome, meaning the margins of victories in those states are the key to the overall outcome. Tens of thousands of votes in a handful of states returned a Republican to the White House. Identifying where the fight needs to be focused in the future - in these battlegrounds and others is a critical early step for the Party.

Governors

The most positive takeaway for gubernatorial races in 2024 is that no governor's office changed partisan hands. The office of governor was on the ballot in 11 states: New Hampshire, Vermont,

Appears to be missing Delaware.

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West Virginia, Indiana, Missouri, Utah, North Dakota, Montana, Washington, and North Carolina. Republican governors were elected in 8 of those states, while Democrats were able to hang on and win in only two: Washington and North Carolina.

Correct number is 3, not 2. Appears to be missing Delaware.

The Democratic candidates in both states, Bob Ferguson of Washington and Josh Stein of North Carolina, were each able to win with approximately 55% of the vote. The North Carolina race featured an incumbent Democratic Attorney General Stein running against Republican incumbent Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson.

While Stein was able to keep the governor's office under Democratic control, it is concerning how Robinson was able to capture 45% of the state's vote even after his repudiation of equal rights for everyone and proudly and loudly asserting he was a "Black Nazi".³

Claim contradicts public reporting.

Robinson's performance must be a wake-up call to Democrats - even without the support of Trump and major organizations, extreme right-wing candidates can still leverage the conservative media ecosystem to engender support and momentum for their platforms.

Stein's pathway to victory, in contrast, should encourage others to do the same: focus less on abstract issues and identity politics, and connect with voters on the issues they say matter most, including the economy, disaster relief, and addressing housing affordability.

The same held true for Bob Ferguson in Washington state. Running on a platform of housing affordability, reducing costs for families throughout the state, and improving public safety allowed him to easily capture the governor's office.

His message resonated with voters concerned about how "Bidenomics" failed to lower the cost of eggs, and how the Trump Administration would gut avenues of education and upward mobility.

Stein and Ferguson - notably both then-incumbent attorneys general for their states had a definitive strategy to approach voters. Their wins provide a blueprint for candidates in other states seeking to align themselves with their voters. Their wins prove when Democrats focus on pressing issues for voters, it's fighting the right fight. And when we fight, we win.

³ "NC gov. Candidate Mark Robinson declared himself 'Black Nazi' on porn site: CNN. [axios.com/local/raleigh/2024/09/19/mark-robinson-cnn-report-nc-scandal](https://www.axios.com/local/raleigh/2024/09/19/mark-robinson-cnn-report-nc-scandal).

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NORTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR

The Results:

- Stein (D): 54.8% | Robinson (R): 42.7%
- Harris in NC: 47.7% | Trump: 51.1%
- **Stein ran 7.8 points ahead of Harris**

What Happened

Mark Robinson's campaign imploded, running significantly behind Trump statewide. His inflammatory statements about LGBTQ+ individuals, the Holocaust, and slavery made him toxic. Approximately 6.8% of NC voters cast their ballots for Trump-Stein, mostly college-educated suburban women over 45.

But Stein didn't just win by default. He addressed the exact problems Harris did not:

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Public reporting and data contradict several claims.

Men: Won 51% vs. Harris's 40% (+11) Stein's substantially better performance with men suggests his campaign found ways to connect with male voters. His gender gap was notably narrower than Harris's. The national campaign appeared to struggle with male voter engagement; Stein's results suggest a different approach is needed.

Rural voters: Stein 38% vs. Harris 29% (+9) Harris essentially cratered in rural North Carolina. The in-state Stein team understood the path to victory lay in limiting margins in rural North Carolina. The seemingly nonpartisan focus on Stein's record as Attorney General leveraged his record on fentanyl and consumer protection credentials as attorney general.

Contradicts claims elsewhere in the report.

White non-college voters: Stein 50% vs. Harris's 43% (+7) **Harris's focus on college-educated suburbs widened the education gap.** Stein's better performance with non-college voters suggests more balanced messaging.

New voters: Stein 56% vs. Harris's 48% (+8) Stein's success with irregular voters suggests his campaign treated them as persuasion targets, not just mobilization targets. Harris fell below 50% with new voters for the first time in modern Democratic history.

The Geographic Formula. Stein succeeded everywhere:

- In urban cores, Stein was +5 vs. Harris (maintained enthusiasm)

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- In the suburbs, Stein was +4 (won moderates)
- In rural North Carolina, Stein was +9 (limited losses)

Democrats need to hit on all three to win statewide races in North Carolina (and in most states). Harris underperformed in rural areas and struggled in the suburbs.

Metro Area Performance. Stein's best performance relative to Harris was in the major metro areas:

- Raleigh (Wake County): +8 points
- Charlotte (Mecklenburg County): +8 points
- Durham County: +7 points
- Greensboro (Guilford County): +8 points

The Robinson Effect. Robinson ran dramatically behind Trump statewide, particularly in college-educated suburbs.

In precincts where Robinson performed worse relative to Trump, Stein significantly overperformed Harris. Voters were willing to split their tickets for governor when faced with unacceptable choices, but voters returned to their partisan corners at the presidential level.

The Lesson. Robinson imploded, but Stein's results suggest a fundamentally different campaign approach to address the weaknesses the national campaign struggled to fix: stronger performance among male voters, improved competitiveness in rural areas, early messaging, and more balanced coalition-building.

NEW HAMPSHIRE GOVERNOR

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Public reporting and data contradict several claims.

The Results:

- Craig (D): 47.2% | Ayotte (R): 52.8%
- Harris in NH: 52.9% | Trump: 46.4%
- **Craig ran 6.4 points behind Harris**

What Happened. Craig underperformed Harris by 5-7 points across every demographic group.

Kelly Ayotte was a strong candidate - as a former Senator with high favorable ratings and a moderate profile.

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About 8.5% of NH voters went Harris-Ayotte (highest ticket-splitting rate of the three top-funded gubernatorial states). These were New Hampshire's traditional moderate Republicans: college-educated, suburban, and older voters who consistently vote.

No Geographic Floor. Craig underperformed everywhere:

- In urban areas, Craig was -7 vs. Harris
- In the suburbs, Craig was -6 vs. Harris
- In Rural New Hampshire, Craig was -4 vs. Harris

The Definition Problem. The campaign never established what Craig stood for beyond "not Ayotte/Trump."

No evidence provided for this claim.

This mirrored the national campaign's struggles with Harris. Both campaigns faced the same challenge: difficulty defining the candidate and opponent, building enthusiasm, or making a compelling case. Harris' win in NH may be more an anti-Trump than pro-Harris outcome.

Craig Underperformed Harris in key areas:

- Portsmouth suburbs (Rockingham County): -8 points
- Manchester/Nashua (Hillsborough County): -7 points
- Concord area (Merrimack County): -7 points

Even in Democratic strongholds like Manchester and Nashua, Craig ran 7 points behind Harris.

It's an enthusiasm and persuasion problem and again, likely anti-Trump sentiment.

No evidence provided for these claims.

The Lesson. Strong opponents matter, but Craig's execution problems were determinative.

When you can't define yourself and can't generate enthusiasm, you lose even when your party's presidential candidate wins the state.

No evidence provided for these claims.

WASHINGTON GOVERNOR

The Results:

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Public reporting and data contradict several underlying assumptions.

- Ferguson (D): 56.3% | Reichert (R): 43.7%
- Harris in WA: 59.5% | Trump: 39.2%
- **Ferguson ran 3.7 points behind Harris**

What Happened. Ferguson won comfortably, but underperformed Harris. Younger, diverse voters voted in the Presidential race but skipped the governor's race.

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Ferguson underperformed Harris in Democratic strongholds:

- Seattle (King County): Ferguson -5 vs. Harris
- Tacoma (Pierce County): -4
- Olympia (Thurston County): -4
- Everett (Snohomish County): -4

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Public reporting and data contradict several underlying assumptions.

Harris underperformed with voters of color by several points, and new/irregular voters showed the same pattern.

One Bright Spot. Ferguson outperformed Harris in rural areas. His attorney general background and public safety credentials likely helped limit losses in conservative areas opposed to the top of the ticket. Ferguson – similar to Josh Steim was able to build credibility on his record and background even as the national campaign struggled to a similar profile around Harris's prosecutor background.

The Lesson. Even in safe blue states, lower-profile races need affirmative cases for candidates, not just opposition to Trump. When Trump wasn't in a competitive environment, enthusiasm dropped.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

NORTH CAROLINA ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Results:

- Jackson (D): 51.4% | Bishop (R): 48.6%
- Harris in NC: 47.7% | Trump: 51.1%
- Stein in NC: 54.8% | Robinson: 42.7%
- **Jackson ran +4.2 vs. Harris but -3.4 vs. Stein**

What Happened. Jackson fell between Harris and Stein on virtually every metric. He had real advantages — three terms in Congress, strong digital presence, name recognition, but could not match Stein's success.

Jackson Performed Between Harris and Stein.

- Men: Jackson improved significantly over Harris but didn't match Stein
- Rural voters: Better than Harris, not as strong as Stein
- New voters: Outperformed Harris, underperformed Stein
- White non-college voters: Similar pattern

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Jackson's support across demographics consistently placed him in the middle - better than the struggling presidential campaign, but not matching the exceptional gubernatorial performance.

Why Jackson Underperformed Stein

Lower race visibility: AG races get less attention than gubernatorial races. Even engaged voters know less about AG candidates.

Robinson effect was concentrated: Extraordinary ticket-splitting from Robinson's collapse primarily benefited the governor's race. Lower races didn't benefit as much.

Less clear contrast: Dan Bishop was a conventional Republican. The quality contrast that drove Trump-Stein voters wasn't as stark for AG.

Resource constraints: Jackson couldn't match Stein's fundraising or media presence. The gubernatorial race dominated coverage.

Jackson Overperformed Harris in NC Metros

- Raleigh area: +5 points
- Charlotte area: +4 points
- Durham: +4 points
- Chapel Hill area: +3 points

*No evidence provided for many claims in this section.
Methodology appears internally inconsistent.*

Jackson's overperformance was concentrated in the same urban/suburban areas as Stein's but at lower magnitudes.

The Value of Congressional Experience. Despite underperforming Stein, Jackson's 4-point overperformance versus Harris is significant. His three terms in Congress gave him credibility and name recognition generic Democratic candidates wouldn't have.

His digital presence - millions of followers across platforms - also helped, particularly with younger voters, where he came close to Stein's performance.

The Lesson. Jackson's performance demonstrates both the opportunity and limits of down ballot success in 2024:

The opportunity: Even in Attorney General races with lower visibility, strong candidates with established records can outperform the top of the ticket.

The limits: Extraordinary circumstances, such as Robinson's collapse, create opportunities for the whole ticket, but campaigns still have to close the deal. While Jackson outspent Bishop, it was

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not to the same magnitude as Stein outperforming Robinson. Further, Bishop was not Robinson. Jackson benefited from Robinson's implosion but couldn't replicate Stein's success because the intensity of the controversy was focused on the gubernatorial race.

The implication: Candidate quality and name recognition matter for all down ballot races, but some dynamics don't transfer uniformly across the ballot. Campaigns need to build their own contrast and definition.

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Public reporting and data contradict several claims.

The Male Voter Problem. Every down ballot Democrat did better among men than Harris:

- Stein: +11 vs. Harris
- Jackson: +6
- Ferguson: +4
- Craig: +5

Even Craig, who lost in New Hampshire, still did 5 points better with men. This suggests the national campaign had a specific problem with male voters. Stein outperformed the rest of the candidates because of the specific weaknesses and rejection of Robinson.

Young men of color—Harris's steepest losses: Harris saw dramatic drops in support among young Latino men and young Black men compared to Biden's 2020 performance. However, Stein recovered significant ground with both groups, suggesting his campaign found effective ways to reach these voters.

Stein's results suggest it's possible to win women AND compete with men with the right approach.

Education Polarization. White voters showed substantial education gaps across all races, with college-educated voters supporting Democrats significantly more than non-college voters.

But Stein hit 50% with white non-college voters vs. Harris's 43%. This is a math problem: Democrats can't lose non-college voters by massive margins and make it up elsewhere when non-college voters are a majority of the electorate. **Harris's focus on college-educated suburbs left gaps at unwinnable levels.**

Contradicts claims elsewhere in the report.

Education polarization appeared mostly among White Voters - Black voters show minimal education gaps, Latino voters show moderate gaps, while White voters show the most significant splits.

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Irregular Voters: The Biggest Miss

New voters (first-time participants in these four election cycles):

- Harris: 48% (first time Dems fell below 50%)
- Stein: 56% (+8)
- Jackson: 53% (+5)
- Ferguson: 57%
- Craig: 50%

Irregular voters are disproportionately voters of color, younger, non-college, male, and urban - the voters Democrats need and where the Harris Campaign struggled the most.

Josh Stein won them decisively, suggesting his campaign treated them as persuasion targets and engaged them throughout the campaign. It helped to run against a self-described Nazi most voters would never support, but Stein converted where Harris did not.

No evidence provided for this claim.

The national campaign appears to have assumed irregular voters would turn out AND vote Democratic at Obama-era rates. Both assumptions proved wrong.

Ticket-Splitting. Ticket-splitting rates:

Contradicts claims elsewhere in the report.

- New Hampshire: 9.7% (mostly Harris-Ayotte)
- North Carolina: 8.5% (mostly Trump-Stein)
- Washington: 4.2%

Ticket splitters are overwhelmingly college-educated, suburban, and older voters who vote consistently. They're small (under 10%) but decisive. And they evaluate candidates individually.

What This Reveals

In North Carolina, engaged educated voters went Trump-Stein—they rejected both Harris and Robinson but voted for Democrats down ballot. The problem wasn't Democratic policy or party brand. It was specifically about how Harris as a candidate

No evidence provided for this claim.

The national campaign appears to have assumed Trump was so unacceptable that persuadable voters would automatically vote Democratic. North Carolina's results suggest otherwise.

GEOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

Urban Cores

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- Stein (NC): +5 vs. Harris (maintained enthusiasm)
- Jackson (NC): +2
- Ferguson (WA): -5 (turnout problem)
- Craig (NH): -7 (enthusiasm collapse)

Suburbs (decisive terrain)

- Stein (NC): +4 vs. Harris (won swing voters)
- Jackson (NC): +2
- Ferguson (WA): -3
- Craig (NH): -6 (lost moderates badly)

Rural (sets the floor)

- Stein (NC): +9 vs. Harris (limited losses)
- Jackson (NC): +5
- Ferguson (WA): +2
- Craig (NH): -4

The Formula

Winning requires a strong urban performance + competitive suburbs + limited rural losses. Stein achieved all three. Craig failed at all three. Harris lagged in rural areas nationally, which proved to be insurmountable in swing states.

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LESSONS FROM THE STATE CAMPAIGNS

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Data inconsistent with public reporting and contradicts several underlying assumptions.

1. Going Negative Works (Especially if Voters Know You). Stein spent early to credential himself as a fighter and advocate. When the Robinson story broke, Stein was a known factor and alternative for voters. Pounding the negative on Robinson ensured Stein would never break through.

No evidence provided for these claims.

The national campaign did not effectively drive Trump's negatives, and the White House did not effectively support Vice President Harris over three and half years to improve her standing before the candidate switch. The retrospective job approval for Trump was too high and the campaign and allies failed to remind voters of his incompetence. The idea Trump's negatives were "baked in" is a major failure of analysis and reality - given how his favorability has cratered less than a year into this term.

No evidence provided; contradicts claims elsewhere in report.

2. The Male Voter Problem Was Solvable. Stein won 51% of men while Harris won 40%. That 11-point gap suggests fundamentally different approaches to male voter engagement.

The Harris campaign appears to have focused heavily on women. Stein's results show some candidates can appeal strongly to women AND compete effectively with men.

3. Rural Miscalculation. Stein's strong rural performance in NC shows these areas remain competitive with the right candidate and approach. Harris wrote off rural America, assuming urban/suburban margins would compensate.

The math doesn't work. You can't lose rural areas by overwhelming margins and make it up elsewhere when rural voters are a significant share of the electorate. If Democrats are to reclaim leadership in the Heartland or the South, candidates must perform well in rural turf. Show up, listen, and then do it again.

4. The Definition Problem. Stein had a clear definition: Attorney General with a strong record. Voters knew what he'd done and what he'd do.

Harris struggled with definition beyond "not Trump" and "prosecutor vs. felon." The truncated campaign timeline didn't help, but the campaign did not quickly resolve on how to tag Trump and define Harris.

5. Irregular Voters Weren't Feeling it. Harris fell below 50% with new voters. Stein won 56%. The Harris campaign's re-engagement targets appear to have both not shown up and voted more for Trump than expected.

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Massive media investments weren't matched by equally robust organizing. Result: lower turnout and lower support for the top of the ticket.

No evidence provided for these claims.

6. The Enthusiasm Gap Was Predictable. Ferguson's underperformance in Seattle and Craig's collapse in Manchester demonstrate anti-Trump sentiment alone was insufficient to motivate voters.

No evidence provided for these claims.

The Harris campaign appears to have relied on Trump being unacceptable rather than building an affirmative case for Harris. Base voters needed reasons to vote FOR Harris as well as against Trump. Without an effective contrast with a difficult (and unaffordable) status quo, the obvious contrast with Trump was not a sufficient motivator, especially since there was not sufficient negative messaging about how horrible Trump was (and still is) for and to most Americans.

No evidence provided for this claim.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Data inconsistent with public reporting and contradicts several underlying assumptions.

For Democrats:

Male voters require direct engagement. The gender gap can be narrowed. Deploy male messengers, address economic concerns, and don't assume identity politics will hold male voters of color.

The Rural "strategy" is mathematically indefensible. Compete everywhere. Limiting losses matters. Recruit candidates with rural credibility and show up.

Anti-Trump sentiment has limits. Build affirmative cases for candidates to drive enthusiasm instead of relying on reductive messaging.

Irregular voters are swing voters. They need mobilization AND persuasion. Year-round engagement matters more than October GOTV.

Definition is essential. Voters need to know what you'll do and why you're running. Clear accomplishments and concrete plans matter more than vibes.

Geographic formula is non-negotiable. Strong urban + competitive suburbs + limited rural losses. You need all three.

Demographics aren't destiny. Latino voters shifted Republican nationally but Democratic in NC with the right candidate. Context and execution matter.

State parties matter. Built infrastructure wins even when presidential candidates struggle.

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Voters are sophisticated. The 8-10% who split tickets are decisive. They evaluate candidates individually.

Same Challenges, Different Responses. Young voters, men, voters of color, and irregular voters all trended Republican compared to 2020. The difference was how campaigns responded.

Stein's results suggest effective strategies to mitigate these losses. **Harris's campaign appears not to have made similar adjustments.** Candidate quality and campaign execution matter enormously, even in nationalized environments.

No evidence provided for these claims.

The Bottom Line

Elections remain winnable with the right candidates and strategies, even in difficult environments. Demographics are tendencies, not destiny, and voter support is impacted - good and bad - through campaign choices.

The North Carolina battleground demonstrates the power of a strong and early investment in supportive media to define the candidates for Governor and Attorney General. Early investments by the DGA and DAGA enabled the candidates to introduce themselves on their terms, and take the high ground when circumstances allowed.

The late switch to Harris limited messaging and organizing options and produced predictable results. Down ballot Democrats who took different approaches performed significantly better. Defining the opponent works best if the candidate driving the message has already introduced themselves to voters through an effective framework. Will future campaigns learn from successes like Stein and Jackson, or repeat similar errors?

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THE SENATE

No evidence provided for many claims in this section. Public reporting and data contradict several underlying assumptions.

The 2024 Results: Who Won Where

No methodology provided for selection of these states or exclusion of WI.

There were 34 Senate races in 2024. In reviewing the results of **the six key races**, there are several patterns. Here are the specific margins shaped current conditions:

Pennsylvania (Trump +2.1%): David McCormick (R) squeaked past Bob Casey (D) by just 0.2 percentage points (48.8% to 48.6%). This was the narrowest Senate race in the country. Casey ran 1.9 points ahead of Harris.

Ohio (Trump +11.2%): Bernie Moreno (R) defeated Sherrod Brown (D) by 3.6 points. Brown won 120,000 more votes than Harris in Ohio, while Moreno got 320,000 fewer votes than Trump. **Brown outperformed Harris by 7.6 points and still lost.** His decades of fighting for Ohio workers gave him credibility Harris couldn't match, but Brown could not overcome gravity.

Michigan (Trump +1.4%): Elissa Slotkin (D) beat Mike Rogers (R) by 0.34 percentage point. **Rogers got 4% fewer votes than Trump, while Slotkin matched Harris's numbers.** Slotkin's strong working-class credentials and presence in manufacturing communities helped her minimize losses in Trump territory.

Nevada (Trump +3.1%): Jacky Rosen (D) won by 1.4 points. **Sam Brown got nearly 10% fewer votes than Trump.** According to the Nevada Appeal's analysis, some Trump voters literally just skipped the Senate race entirely. Rosen's strong organizing operation and deep roots in the Nevada service economy helped her overcome Trump's margin.

Arizona (Trump +5.5%): Ruben Gallego (D) won by 2.4 points, running nearly 8 points ahead of Harris. Gallego's working-class background and authentic connections to everyday Arizonans helped him maintain support across diverse communities.

Montana (Trump +20.0%): Tim Sheehy (R) defeated Jon Tester (D) by 7.5 points. **Tester won 19% more raw votes than Harris but faced an insurmountable Trump tsunami.** Tester's deep Montana roots helped him dramatically outperform Harris, but the state's political transformation proved too much to overcome.

What the Campaigns Said

Personal Brands Still Matter

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Sherrod Brown spent decades building a reputation as a working-class fighter who'd look out for Ohio. Jon Tester was the "three-fingered dirt farmer" from Big Sandy. Brown held rallies where he knew people would vote for Trump but might still vote for him. He'd been there for decades building trust and relationships. Tester made an aggressive pitch about the billions in infrastructure money he'd secured for Montana, talking up his work with Trump when it helped the state.

Brown got 120,000 more votes than Harris. Tester massively outperformed her. In a "normal" election year, their performance would have been enough to eke out victories. Trump's margins were simply too large. Even a former Ohio Republican Party chair admitted after the election: "*I really believe Sherrod Brown ran the best race he could... I don't know he could have won that race in the time that Donald Trump was on the ballot.*"⁴

Strong Ground Games Make the Difference

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

The Rosen campaign shared how they built a year-round organizing operation beyond the typical late-cycle push. Rather than relying on paid canvassers from out of state, her campaign developed deep community relationships and deployed authentic local voices. The model worked through several key elements:

Year-round presence: Rosen's operation maintained constant engagement with voters. This built trust and familiarity that paid off when it mattered.

Community-based organizing: The campaign partnered with established community organizations, particularly in Latino neighborhoods and working-class communities.

Member-to-member outreach: Rather than having strangers knock on doors, the campaign deployed people from within communities to talk to their neighbors. A hospitality worker talking to another hospitality worker about kitchen-table issues carried more weight than any paid consultant.

Bilingual and culturally competent: With Nevada's diverse population, the campaign conducted outreach in Spanish and integrated cultural understanding into every aspect of organizing.

⁴ https://www.google.com/url?q=https://signalcleveland.org/why-u-s-sen-sherrod-browns-track-record-with-working-class-voters-wasnt-enough/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1762851387509158&usq=AOvVaw055teCQogCF_UX1d9QrAit

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Specific issue connection: The campaign connected workplace concerns like healthcare costs, scheduling stability, and wage protections directly to political choices.

This approach helped Rosen outperform Harris by 4.5 points, proving strategic grassroots engagement can still move votes even in a Trump-heavy environment. Or ads on the Sphere.

Where Organizing Efforts Fell Short in 2024

No evidence or sourcing provided for many claims in this section.

Despite significant resource investments, Democratic organizing faced unprecedented challenges:

The Leadership-Voter Gap. Even with strong organizational endorsements, Democratic candidates struggled with rank-and-file voters increasingly willing to split their tickets. In Pennsylvania, voters who supported Democratic priorities on workplace issues still voted for Trump by significant margins. The credibility gap between organizational leadership and everyday voters has widened.

Late Engagement. Many organizing efforts didn't begin serious mobilization until Labor Day or later, ceding the summer months to Republican messaging. Resources were concentrated in Presidential swing states, leaving voters in states like Ohio feeling ignored.

Messaging Misalignment. National Democratic messaging under the White House's stewardship, created tensions with key constituencies. Climate change and green energy transition messaging created anxiety among workers in traditional industries worried about job losses. The focus on social issues over economic issues alienated socially conservative voters who prioritized kitchen-table concerns. The "Bidenomics" framing emphasized macro statistics rather than the micro realities voters experienced daily and specifically tied President Biden - by name - to actual economic anxiety.

Republican Inroads with Working-Class Voters. Trump's campaign targeted working-class households with economic populist messaging his anti-worker record. Working-class men, particularly in manufacturing and construction, saw Trump as more aligned with their cultural values than Democratic candidates.

Organizational Decline in Key States. Shrinking investment in industrial states has reduced Democrats' organizing capacity. Ohio's organizing density dropped significantly as manufacturing declined. Younger members of organized groups show less partisan loyalty than previous generations.

The "Losing Better" Strategy

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Elissa Slotkin in Michigan had a strategy political operatives call "losing better." Instead of just trying to run up the score in Detroit and Ann Arbor, she focused on cutting her losses in Republican areas. **She outperformed Harris in 68 of Michigan's 83 counties. In suburban Oakland County, she won by 12 points while Harris won by 10.5. In GOP-friendly Macomb County, Harris lost by 14 points but Slotkin only lost by 10. Those four points made a difference.**

Critically, the Slotkin team worked to minimize losses in working-class communities. She emphasized her support for manufacturing jobs and made explicit commitments about protecting the auto industry. While she still lost some working-class voters, she ran significantly better than Harris among the same demographic.

Localization Beat Nationalization

No evidence provided for many claims in this section.

Rosen's campaign said they won by localizing the race - emphasizing her Nevada roots, her bipartisanship, her work on issues Nevadans cared about. This approach helped insulate her campaign from flawed national messaging. Her strong community organizing infrastructure was essential to this success, providing local credibility that national Democratic campaigns couldn't replicate.

In Ohio, Bernie Moreno ran a campaign drenched in Trump. His rallies featured Donald Trump Jr., Lindsey Graham, and constant Trump imagery. Sherrod Brown took the opposite approach. He avoided talking about national Democratic figures and focused relentlessly on Ohio-specific issues, once again, pivoting away from the flawed national messaging.

Brown focused on standing up to China, fighting for good jobs, and his history of bipartisanship. **His campaign produced ads showing him in manufacturing communities and at community events - specific and visceral reminders of his decades fighting for Ohio.** It wasn't enough to win, but he outperformed Harris significantly and probably could have won in a different cycle.

The "Trump but not Moreno" Phenomenon. Moreno's campaign identified 580,000 "Trump but not Moreno" voters in Ohio. These were people who either actively preferred Brown or just didn't know enough about Moreno to vote for him. This massive group of voters represents a critical insight: Trump's personal appeal doesn't automatically transfer to down-ballot Republicans. These voters came out specifically for Trump, suggesting Republicans may struggle to recreate his coalition in 2026.

Sourcing not provided.

Having Kamala Harris on the ballot actually helped down-ballot Democrats maintain part of their base support. Had Biden remained on the ballot, down-ballot Democrats might have faced even steeper challenges.

The Latino Vote Shift

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The 2024 election revealed a seismic shift in Latino voting patterns Democrats cannot ignore. Trump improved his performance with Latino voters by double digits compared to 2020, particularly among Latino men. This shift was most pronounced in:

Nevada: Trump won Latino men by 12 points, a complete reversal from 2020. Rosen's strong community organizing and bilingual outreach helped her maintain better Latino support than Harris, but the erosion is undeniable.

Arizona: Trump cut Democrats' margin with Latino voters from 24 points in 2020 to 8 points in 2024. Gallego's personal story and consistent presence in Latino communities helped him buck this trend, winning Latinos by approximately 20 points - 12 points better than Harris. Gallego's working-class background, military service, and authentic community connections gave him credibility with Latinos the national campaign could not replicate.

Texas: The Rio Grande Valley continued its rightward shift. Starr County, which is 97% Hispanic, flipped to Trump - voting Republican for president for the first time since 1892.

Democrats can no longer assume Latino voters, especially younger Latino men, are a reliable part of their base. The party needs a complete rethink of its Latino outreach strategy, moving beyond traditional approaches like Spanish-language ads and late-cycle surrogates.

Successful candidates like Gallego and Rosen showed how year-round presence, economic messaging, and addressing cost-of-living concerns resonate more than identity politics. **Organizations with significant Latino membership - particularly service sector Labor groups - need to be central partners in this recalibration, as they maintain the year-round infrastructure and community credibility to effectively reach these voters.**

Working-Class Coalitions

Both Jon Tester and Sherrod Brown had a history of strong support from working people. They stayed consistent in their messaging, avoided getting mired in "80-20" issues, and maintained working-class credibility through constant presence at community events and genuine relationships built over decades.

Ohio's manufacturing communities voted for Obama in 2008 and 2012, but have been economically hollowed out and decisively shifted to Republicans. Good manufacturing jobs disappearing and being replaced by lower-wage service work has fundamentally altered the political landscape. Brown and Tester could not overcome the gravity of double digit Harris losses.

Abortion as a Crosscutting Issue

No evidence provided, contradicts public reporting.

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Brown hit Moreno hard on abortion in the final weeks, noting how 57% of Ohio voters had just enshrined abortion rights in the state constitution. Slotkin ran a multimillion-dollar ad campaign hammering Rogers on his abortion voting record. This issue allowed Democrats to peel off suburban women and moderate Republicans who might have been open to voting Republican down-ballot.

When Trump's Not on the Ballot

The historical pattern is clear: Trump drives turnout in ways that help him but don't always help other Republicans. The 2018 and 2022 midterms showed this—Republicans underperformed expectations both times. The question for 2026 is whether Trump in the White House but not on the ballot creates a different dynamic and opportunity for Democrats.

Labor implications: Union households historically vote at higher rates in midterms than non-union households, giving organized labor disproportionate influence when overall turnout is lower. If Trump's absence from the ballot depresses Republican turnout (particularly among irregular voters who came out specifically for Trump), unions' superior turnout operation could be decisive in close races.

THE HOUSE

This section was not provided by author.

[PENDING - NEED TO ADJUST FOR A FEW NEW HOUSE LINES]

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STATE OF MEDIA & COMMUNICATION

Sourcing not provided for many claims in this section.

In the current media ecosystem, Republicans own and Democrats rent. Democrats pay for seasonal access to the networks, stations, platforms, and newspapers owned by Republicans or right-wing entities, to advertise and communicate with voters.

A major share of Democratic fundraising comes from individuals and low-dollar contributions. Within the current approach to paid media, Democrats are essentially raising billions of dollars from retirees, activists, working Americans, and organized labor, and transferring most of it to the pockets of legacy and digital media oligarchs. In a sense, Democrats are funding right-wing media to buy more properties and expand their ability to drive partisan perspectives.

With a free and fair press, Democrats have a shot to make their case. When publishers and owners have a partisan point of view, it's more difficult for Democrats to break through.

By design, content platform algorithmic feeds leverage polarization over policy and rage over reason as a means of keeping users online and active in their sites or apps. Given the relevance these platforms have in culture, Democrats cannot abandon all of them, but must still rethink the way time, money, and other resources are allocated to ensure Americans are effectively engaged to win. It's past time to consider new ways to drive awareness and seek connections with voters at the reach and frequency required to win elections.

Rethinking the Media Mix

Modern marketing is different. The traditional approach of paying for media to dominate share of voice or attention is far less effective in the context of how information now moves and the ways people consume or seek information and content. Money can leverage reach, but not salience. In an environment designed for shareable media and where algorithmic lift drives traffic and engagement, "virality" can easily surpass the reach and impact of legacy media spending.

20 years ago, a candidate would launch with an op-ed, a press release, or a rally – followed by careful media management, some barnstorming, and a raft of early endorsements and fundraising events. Other than races for President, or when a celebrity or scion sought office, those moments generally stayed in-state, or in-district. Down ballot campaigns struggled to even get mentioned in statewide media, and it was usually only the insider class within those markets, or staff at national campaign committees who paid attention.

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Today, many campaigns launch online, some with announcement videos designed to capture the attention of a national audience of grassroots donors and activists – where small and repeat donations can power campaigns to record fundraising.

Yet, even in national campaigns these efforts can be ineffective. For many of the candidates seeking the 2020 nomination, for example, the launch was the best day of their campaign. But the tactic is an indicator of the changing ways information moves, the way opinions about viability are formed, and the way voters are engaged.

So why do campaigns – both Democrats and Republicans – still plow billions into legacy media? Is it “because it’s there”? Can Democrats change to engage in the new media ecosystem to win attention to win votes?

The fundamentals have changed. It’s no longer enough for campaigns to push information out – they have to pull people in – and digital and social platforms are tools designed for this engagement.

In the 2024 Presidential campaign, the media spend totaled \$3,187,474,265 by and on behalf of the two major party nominees. In removing the spending by primary candidates and their associated Super PACs, it was \$2,986,294,372.

The top 50 spenders in the Presidential election combined to spend \$2,904,105,253, or 97.2 percent of all ad spending for the general campaign, with \$1,338,400,815 coming from the candidates, joint fundraising committees, and national party committees. Trump and affiliated committees spent \$435 million, and Harris and affiliated committees spent \$903 million.

2024 Presidential Ad Spending and Share by Candidate and Committee⁵

	Broadcast+Cable	CTV+Digital	Radio+Satellite	Total	B+C	CTV+Dig	R+Sat
Trump for President	\$ 246,624,184.10	\$ 106,020,734.55	\$ 15,201,632.04	\$ 367,846,550.69	67.0%	28.8%	4.1%
Trump National Committee JFC	\$ -	\$ 54,970,013.56	\$ -	\$ 54,970,013.56	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Republican National Committee	\$ -	\$ 5,836,141.81	\$ 274,607.33	\$ 6,110,749.14	0.0%	95.5%	4.5%
Trump Save America JFC	\$ -	\$ 6,075,491.32	\$ -	\$ 6,075,491.32	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Campaign/JFC/Party Total	\$ 246,624,184.10	\$ 172,902,381.24	\$ 15,476,239.37	\$ 435,002,804.71	56.7%	39.7%	3.6%
	Broadcast+Cable	CTV+Digital	Radio+Satellite	Total	B+C	CTV+Dig	R+Sat
Harris for President	\$ 371,953,907.28	\$ 311,100,170.43	\$ 31,603,342.35	\$ 714,657,420.06	52.0%	43.5%	4.4%
Harris Victory Fund	\$ -	\$ 178,399,812.24	\$ -	\$ 178,399,812.24	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Democratic National Committee	\$ 7,071,536.92	\$ 3,046,279.23	\$ 222,962.01	\$ 10,340,778.16	68.4%	29.5%	2.2%
Campaign/JFC/Party Total	\$ 379,025,444.20	\$ 492,546,261.90	\$ 31,826,304.36	\$ 903,398,010.46	42.0%	54.5%	3.5%

⁵ Source – AdImpact 2023-2024 spending reports. The totals for Harris for President and Biden for President are combined, as are the Harris Victory Fund and Biden Victory Fund totals

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Both campaign committees spent a majority of funds on broadcast and cable, while their victory funds spent exclusively on digital ads.

*No
evidence
provided.*

By some estimates, corporate America invests 72% of its ad spend on digital advertising and connected television, and 28% on broadcast and cable television. Commercial marketing follows and seeks to shape the media behaviors of the largest market segments who tend to drive purchasing activity – mostly younger Americans.

For campaigns, there continues to be a decided bias in favor of broadcast and cable placement relative to connected television (CTV) and digital platforms.

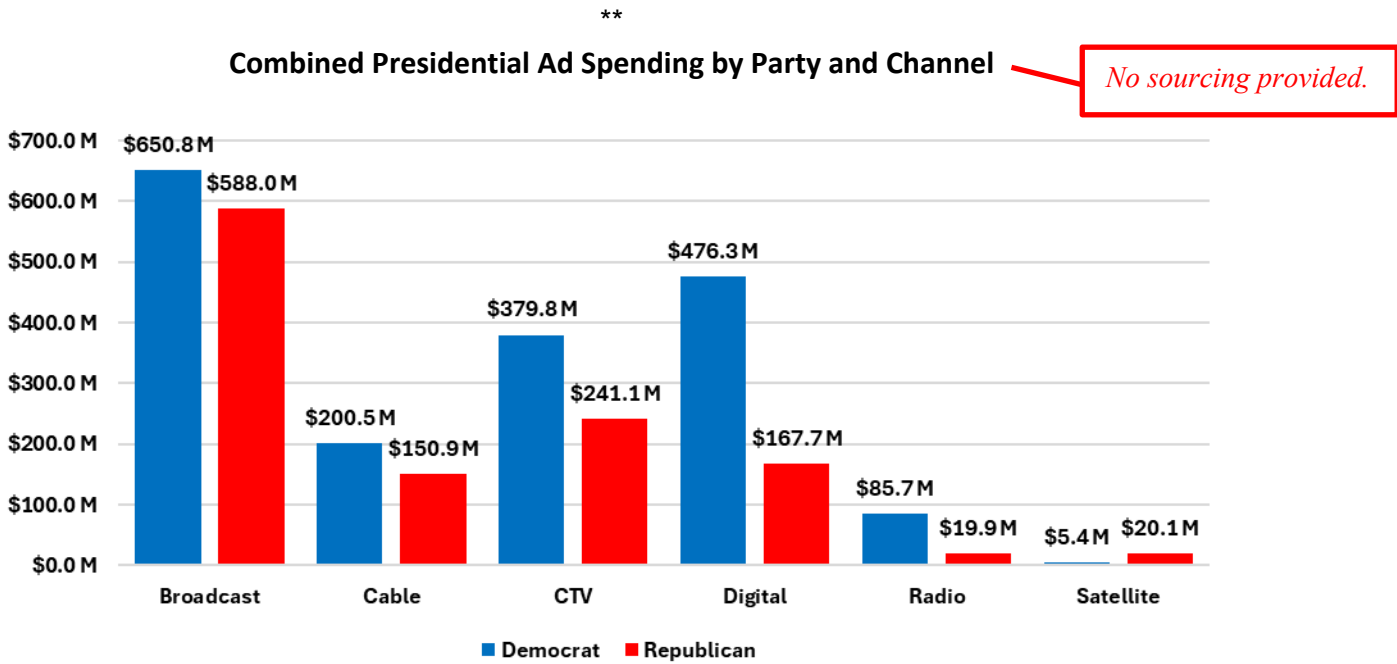
Trump ended up with an overall broadcast share of 56.7 percent, while Harris had an overall broadcast share of 42.0 percent.

Per campaign finance law, victory funds that are joint fundraising committees are only permitted to run advertising with a fundraising component.

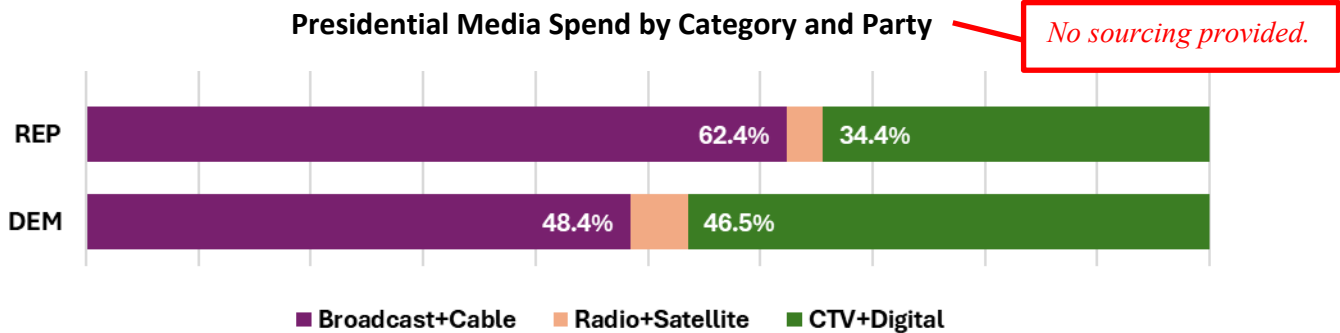
The supermajority of victory fund ad spending is dedicated to fundraising, so this still means for the purposes of persuasion, both parties are relying on broadcast and cable to carry the majority of their messaging.

Including the campaigns, affiliated committees, and independent expenditures, there was more than \$1.23 billion spent on broadcast in the Presidential election alone. The spending levels were relatively even on broadcast and cable, but Democrats had significant advantages in connected television and digital spending, and on radio as well.

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For the Harris campaign, affiliated committees, and aligned independent expenditures the overall mix of cable and broadcast compared to CTV and digital was nearly even (48.4 percent to 46.5 percent), while for the Trump campaign, affiliated committees and aligned independent expenditures, the spend heavily favored broadcast efforts (62.4 percent)



In Governor's races, Democrats invested 61.6 percent in broadcast and cable, and 36.6 percent in CTV and digital, compared to Republicans, who invested 64.8 percent in broadcast and cable and 33.6 percent in digital. This covers the elections in Indiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Washington, with a combined \$287.5 million in media spending.

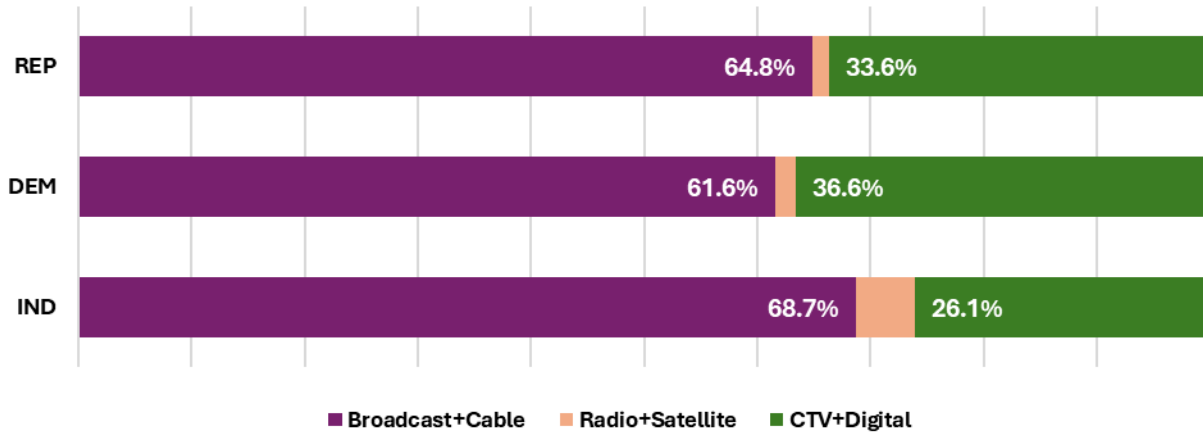
Methodology unclear for selection of these states for analysis.

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Gubernatorial Media Spend by Category and Party

No sourcing provided.



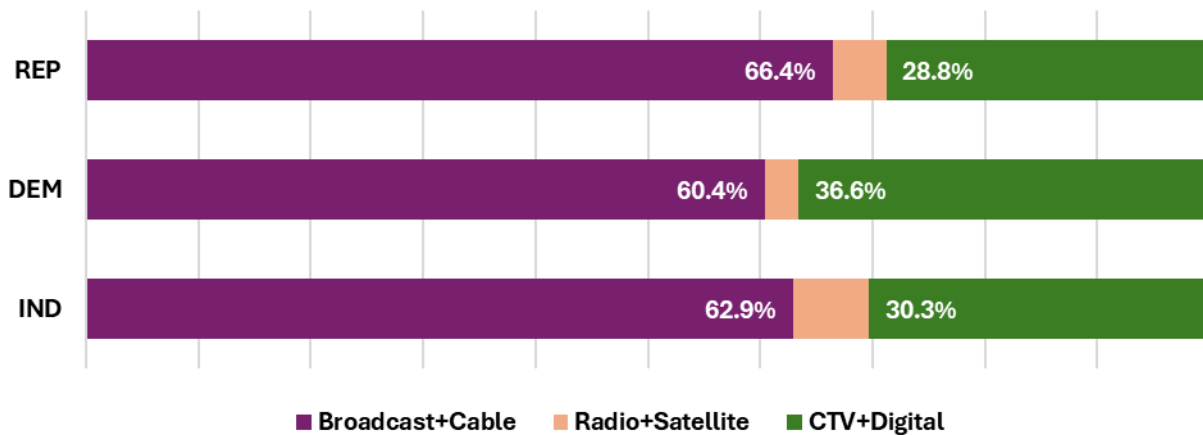
There were similar margins in the top-spending Senate races, where Democrats invested 7.8 percent more of the media and budget into CTV and digital than Republicans. Democrats invested 60.4 percent in broadcast and cable and 36.6 percent in CTV and digital. Republicans invested 66.4 percent in broadcast and cable, and 28.8 percent in CTV and digital.

This covers the elections in Arizona, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, with a combined \$1.93 billion in media spending.

Methodology unclear for selection of these states for analysis or exclusion of WI.

US Senate Media Spend by Category and Party

No sourcing provided.

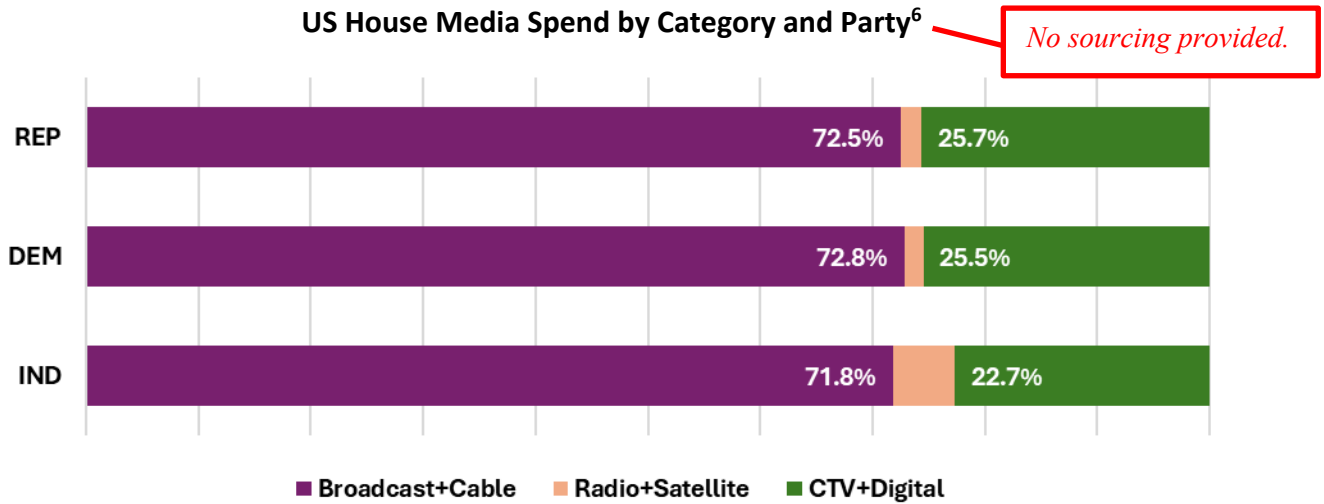


A review of the top 33 House races – each with a combined \$20 million or more in media spending – shows near identical spending between Democrats and Republicans. Democrats

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spent 72.8 percent on broadcast and cable, and 25.5 percent on CTV and digital. Republicans spent 72.5 percent on broadcast and cable, and 25.7 percent on CTV and digital. The combined media spending reached \$1.1 billion in these 33 districts.



Combining the Presidential, statewide races, and competitive US House districts shows Democrats held a spending advantage across channels, with the exception of satellite TV.

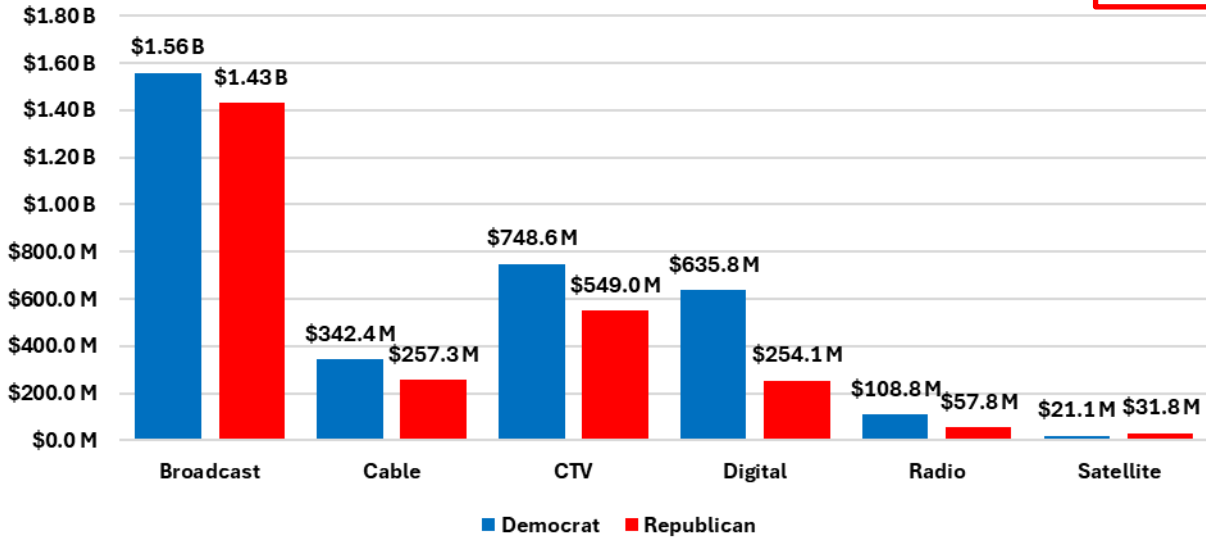
⁶ The covered House districts are AK-AL, AZ-01, AZ-06, CA-13, CA-22, CA-27, CA-41, CA-45, CA-47, CO-08, IA-01, IA-03, ME-02, MI-07, MI-08, MI-10, NC-01, NE-02, NJ-07, NM-02, NY-04, NY-16, NY-17, NY-19, NY-22, OH-09, OH-13, OR-05, PA-07, PA-08, VA-07, WA-03, and WI-03.

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2024 Federal and Gubernatorial Ad Spending by Party and Channel

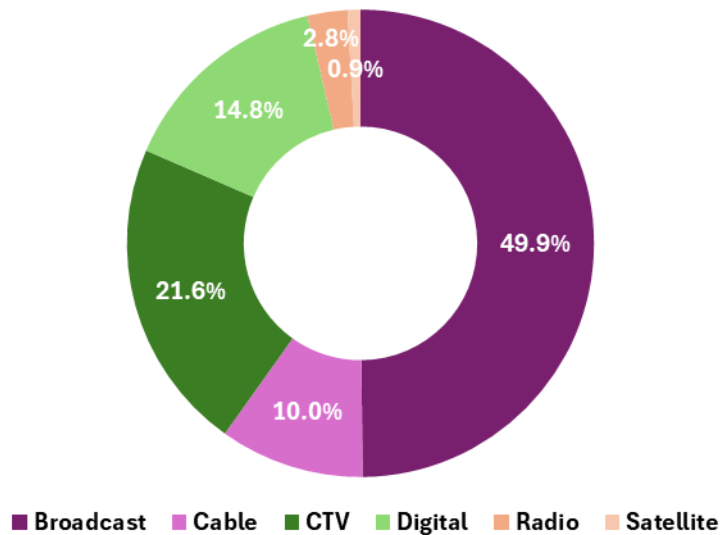
No sourcing provided.



The combined 2024 media mix skews towards broadcast and cable over CTV and digital.

Share of Combined Media Spending by Channel

No sourcing provided.



This spending mix disadvantages Democrats, who are more reliant on digital-native and cord-cutting younger Americans who rarely engage with broadcast or cable television. While Democrats do spend more on digital than Republicans, the share of spend is still not fully reflective of where the marketplace is.

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By party, Democrats spent less on broadcast and more on CTV and digital than Republicans.

2024 Combined Media Spending by Channel and Party

No sourcing provided.

	Broadcast	Cable	CTV	Digital	Radio	Satellite
Democrat	45.6%	10.0%	21.9%	18.6%	3.2%	0.6%
Republican	55.5%	10.0%	21.3%	9.8%	2.2%	1.2%
Total	49.9%	10.0%	21.6%	14.8%	2.8%	0.9%

So why the disconnect? Why do Democrats not invest more in the places and spaces younger Americans consume information and content?

No source or interview materials were provided to substantiate this claim.

In post-election interviews, some 2024 media strategists indicated they were forced to invest in broadcast because of limited digital inventory. The larger spenders and early movers had saturated the digital market, so the strategists explained they had to move to broadcast and cable as a matter of necessity and market availability.

Democrats have to rethink this approach, especially since many of the voters Democrats lost ground with are digital natives and younger Americans who voted in 2020, and did not vote in 2022 and/or 2024. Investments in legacy media will miss these voters, and the 2024 strategies did not effectively reach them.

Some Democratic campaigns have taken the hint.

In 2024, Democrats lost electoral support at the Presidential level around the country, including in New Jersey and Virginia. Vice President Harris won New Jersey by 5.88 percent, a loss of 10.01 percent from Biden's 15.89 percent margin in 2020. Vice President Harris won Virginia by 5.78 percent, a loss of 4.33 percent from Biden's 10.11 percent margin in 2020.

Consistent with exit polling from around the country, Democrats lost ground with younger voters in these two states, and also showed slippage with non-White communities where Democrats normally perform well.

As a result of the narrow Harris wins, both major parties saw opportunities in New Jersey and Virginia, and prioritized attention and investment. In the 2025 gubernatorial elections, Democrats and Republicans combined to spend \$196.3 million in media for the general elections - \$111.8 million in New Jersey, and \$84.5 million in Virginia.

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These races were in three of the most expensive media markets in the United States – New Jersey is split between the New York and Philadelphia markets, and Virginia is covered by Washington, DC in Northern Virginia, and nine other markets, including Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News, Richmond-Petersburg, and Roanoke-Lynchburg. By design, the campaigns moved towards more affordable channels to ensure coverage and reach.

In both states, the Democrats heavily outspent the Republicans. In New Jersey, Democrats and allied groups spent \$67.5 million and Republicans and their allied groups spent \$44.3 million. In Virginia, Democrats spent \$54.5 million and Republicans spent \$30.0 million.

2025 Media Spending by State and Party

No sourcing provided.

	New Jersey	Virginia	
Sherrill - D	\$ 67,496,178.99	\$ 54,510,262.49	Spanberger - D
Cittarelli - R	\$ 44,312,494.10	\$ 29,971,847.64	Earle-Sears - R
Total	\$ 111,808,673.09	\$ 84,482,110.13	Total

Democratic campaigns and allied organizations combined to spend 44.0 percent on broadcast and cable, and 53.6 percent on CTV and digital; while the Republicans invested 52.0 percent on broadcast and cable and 45.5 percent on CTV and digital.

2025 Media Spending by Channel and Party

No sourcing provided.

	Broadcast	Cable	CTV	Digital	Radio	Satellite
Democrat	36.4%	7.7%	37.5%	16.1%	2.0%	0.4%
Republican	44.3%	8.2%	33.3%	12.3%	1.6%	0.3%
Total	39.4%	7.9%	35.9%	14.7%	1.8%	0.3%

Virginia 2025

The Democratic media investments were probably most efficient and effective in Virginia. Virginia does not have candidate contribution limits, which meant strategists knew these races would become very expensive. There was not a Democratic primary for governor, so general election spending began in May, with a combination of CTV and digital in all markets, and broadcast and cable in the Norfolk and Richmond markets.

Overall, only 38.5 percent of the Virginia Democratic spend (the campaign/DGA, and allied groups) was invested in broadcast and cable, while Republicans and their allied groups invested 47.9 percent – likely because they were targeting an older demographic more likely to be on those channels.

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2025 Media Spending by Channel and Party (Virginia)

No sourcing provided.

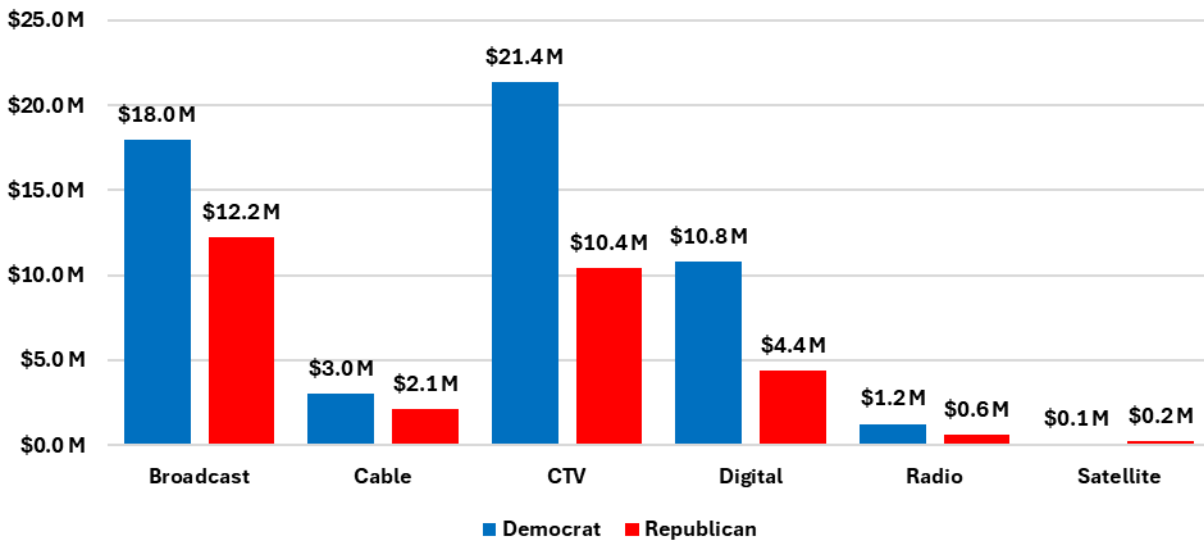
	Broadcast	Cable	CTV	Digital	Radio	Satellite
Democrat	33.0%	5.5%	39.2%	19.8%	2.3%	0.2%
Republican	40.8%	7.1%	34.7%	14.5%	2.0%	0.8%
Total	35.8%	6.1%	37.6%	17.9%	2.2%	0.4%

Democrats invested 53.6 percent into CTV and digital, while Republicans invested 45.5 percent. This advantage enabled Democrats to reach younger voters and other targets at greater scale. The Virginia Democratic campaign was able to sustain spending for the entire general election, and racked up significant advantages in placement across every channel other than satellite.

Data does not consistently support this claim.

2025 Ad Spending by Party and Channel (Virginia)

No sourcing provided.



The investment in connected television – \$3.4 million more than broadcast, and more than broadcast and cable combined – is notable and an important example for Democratic incumbents and candidates to use in asking their campaign teams to consider and potentially emulate.

Every campaign is different, and market rates, timing, and inventory drive media placement recommendations, but incumbents and candidates should be wary of media plans where resource allocations may not be connected to the communities and voters needed to win – and

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ask their teams to think better. Realigning Democratic spending to meet the market is long overdue, and necessary for a modern and effective campaign.

New Jersey 2025

The New Jersey campaign was different – different markets and rates, different demographic needs, and different candidate matchups. There was a vigorous primary in June for the Democratic nomination, and New Jersey also has a tight spending cap for gubernatorial campaigns.

Shortly after the Democratic primary, the DGA announced a robust media buy for the fall. This buy eventually grew to \$39.6 million, and was a critical investment to complement the capped candidate spend. Republicans also spent heavily, investing \$23.7 million.

Overall, 48.5 percent of the Democratic spend was invested in broadcast and cable, while Republicans and their allied groups invested 55.7 percent. Democrats invested 49.2 percent in CTV and digital, while Republicans invested 43.0 percent.

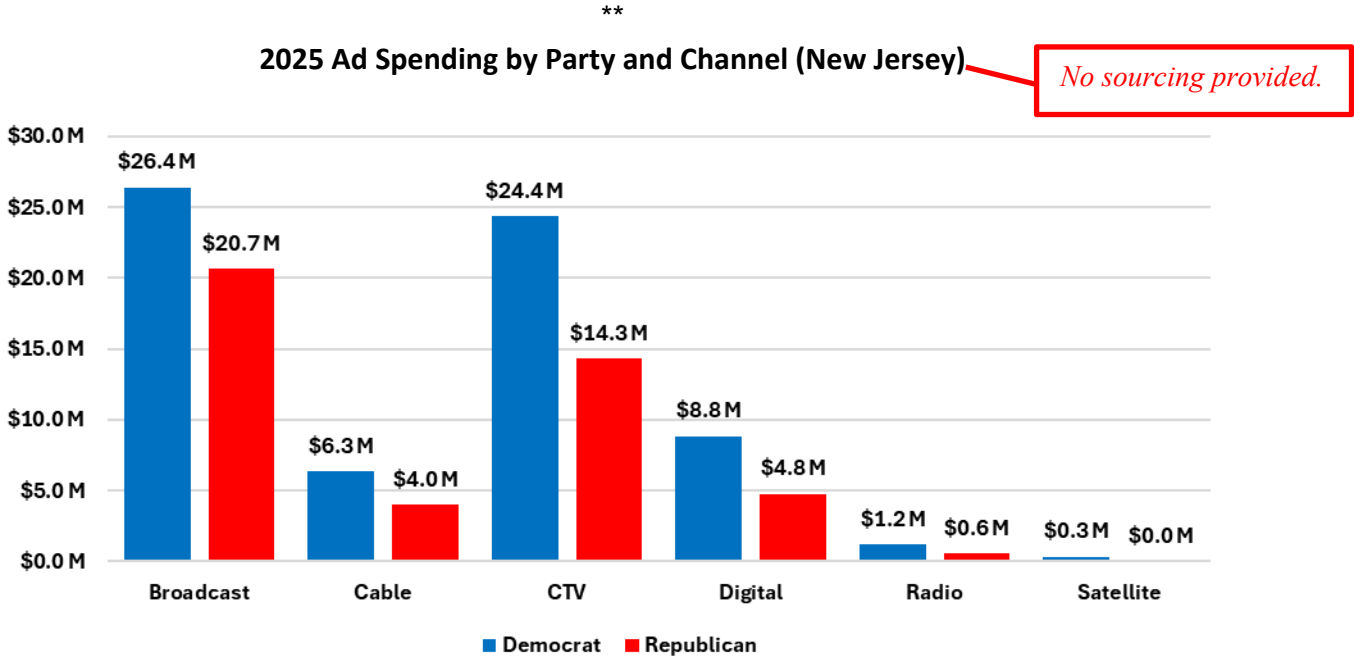
2025 Media Spending by Channel and Party (New Jersey)

No sourcing provided.

	Broadcast	Cable	CTV	Digital	Radio	Satellite
Democrat	39.1%	9.4%	36.1%	13.1%	1.8%	0.5%
Republican	46.7%	9.0%	32.3%	10.7%	1.3%	0.0%
Total	42.1%	9.2%	34.6%	12.2%	1.6%	0.3%

In a capped candidate spending environment, the media spend started later in New Jersey, with both parties starting to spend in late August. Combined Democratic spending exceeded Republican spending across every channel.

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The early investments by the DGA helped favorably define the contours of the media campaign landscape in both states. Both campaigns were able to build large advantages in gross ratings points and connected television ad impressions.

2025 Media Competitive Metrics by State and Party

No sourcing provided.

		New Jersey	Virginia		
Sherrill - D	GRPs	26,587	121,171	GRPs	Spanberger - D
	CTV Impressions	443,556,470	388,926,630	CTV Impressions	
Cittarelli - R	GRPs	22,855	96,609	GRPs	Earle-Sears - R
	CTV Impressions	259,897,342	189,194,822	CTV Impressions	
Dem Lead	GRPs	3,732	24,562	GRPs	Dem Lead
	CTV Impressions	183,659,127	199,731,808	CTV Impressions	

The variations between the states are a function of the campaign finance realities and the timing of the spending in each state. Within each state, the Democrats developed definitive advantages in dollars and delivery, helping each campaign make the case and contrast needed to win.

Data does not consistently support these claims.

The Presidential Ad Landscape

No sourcing provided for many claims in this section.

The national campaigns closely monitor ad spending, seeking to match and mirror their counterparts, and eke out advantages as the campaign progresses. Candidate placements receive preferential pricing and independent spenders have pay more for their placements.

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From July 1, 2024 forward, more than \$2.55 billion was spent on media – with \$1.5 billion spent on behalf of the Democratic nominee, and \$1.02 billion on behalf of the Republican nominee – a \$515.3 million Democratic spending advantage.

Within the battlegrounds, the margins were closer. There was \$980.3 million spent on behalf of the Democratic nominee, and \$788.2 million spent on behalf of the Republican nominee – a \$192.1 million spending advantage. This means 64.0 percent of all Democratic presidential ad spending was in the battlegrounds, while for Republicans it was 77.6 percent.

2024 Presidential Ad Spending by Party and State Competitiveness

No sourcing provided.

Party	ALL STATES	BATTLEGROUND	BG SHARE
Democrat	\$ 1,530,813,166.10	\$ 980,297,900.37	64.0%
Independent	\$ 7,371,686.92	\$ 4,435,455.71	60.2%
Republican	\$ 1,015,458,624.80	\$ 788,232,532.42	77.6%
Total	\$ 2,553,643,477.82	\$ 1,766,841,987.42	69.2%
Dem Margin	\$ 515,354,541.30	\$ 192,065,367.95	

This can break out further – into the campaigns (the campaign committee, joint fundraising committees, and national party committees) and outside spenders. The Democratic campaign efforts totaled \$735.9 million in ad spending, and the Republicans totaled \$401.5 million. Within the battlegrounds it was \$418.6 million for the Democrats and \$282.2 million for the Republicans – a \$136.4 million spending advantage.

Among the outside spenders, it was \$794.9 million for the Democrats and \$614.0 million for the Republicans. In the battlegrounds, Democratic outside groups spent \$561.7 million, while Republican outside groups spent \$560.1 million, a \$55.7 million spending advantage.

The Democratic campaign invested 56.9 percent of its ad spending in the battlegrounds, while the outside Democratic groups hit 70.7 percent. The Republican campaign invested 70.3 percent of its ad spending in the battlegrounds, while their outside groups hit 82.4 percent.

2024 Presidential Ad Spend by Spender Type, Party, and State Competitiveness

No sourcing provided.

	Party	ALL STATES	BATTLEGROUND	BG SHARE
THE CAMPAIGNS	Democrat	\$ 735,946,153.46	\$ 418,562,762.88	56.9%
	Republican	\$ 401,465,601.91	\$ 282,168,503.90	70.3%
OUTSIDE SPENDERS	Democrat	\$ 794,867,012.64	\$ 561,735,137.49	70.7%
	Republican	\$ 613,993,022.89	\$ 506,064,028.52	82.4%

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The comparatively efficient Republican battleground spending helped them narrow the gap in actual ad delivery. Despite being outspent by 50.7 percent overall, and by 24.4 percent in the battlegrounds, Republicans were able to narrow the gap in gross rating points and connected television ad impressions.

2024 Presidential – Gross Rating Points and Connected TV Impressions by Party and State Competitiveness

	ALL STATES		BATTLEGROUND	
Party	GRPs	Impressions	GRPs	Impressions
Democrat	1,269,025	5,877,066,634	1,268,077	5,532,840,316
Independent	35	82,902,753	28	76,631,032
Republican	1,265,139	3,853,715,712	1,264,897	3,642,827,167
Total	2,534,199	9,813,685,099	2,524,112	9,167,949,198
Dem Margin	3,887	2,023,350,922	3,180	1,890,013,148

No sourcing provided.

Democratic outside spenders were able to overcome what was actually a net advantage for the Trump campaign in Gross Rating Points, and added a net billion CTV impressions to the overall margin.

2024 Presidential – GRPs and CTV Impressions by Spender Type, Party, and State Competitiveness

		ALL STATES		BATTLEGROUND	
Party		GRPs	Impressions	GRPs	Impressions
THE CAMPAIGNS	Democrat	777,248	2,361,134,772	777,073	2,210,258,714
	Republican	785,350	1,411,095,599	785,350	1,322,325,655
	Dem Margin	-8,102	950,039,173	-8,277	887,933,059
OUTSIDE SPENDERS	Democrat	491,777	3,515,931,863	491,004	3,322,581,602
	Republican	479,788	2,442,620,113	479,546	2,320,501,513
	Dem Margin	11,989	1,073,311,749	11,457	1,002,080,089

No sourcing provided.

The largest drivers of non-battlegrounds spending are digital buys and national buys which are not allocated to a single state. Democrats spent \$303.8 million, and Republicans \$122.0 million on these types of investments.

The Democratic presidential campaign invested where it should, but the Republican campaign was more focused and efficient in matching Democratic ad levels. Ad strategies will continue to

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evolve by the time a future Democratic nominee needs to set a strategy, which will be guided by the exigencies and insights of the time, so there is not a definitive prescription for the future.

A future nominee will need to ensure their campaign’s ad placements are connected to the media consumption behaviors of the voters needed to win, and to the degree permissible, effectively and efficiently aligned with the decisions of outside entities to maximize the ability to present and make the case for the candidate and the ticket.

In the meantime, the DNC and partner committees will continue to research and support ad strategies connected to how the voters Democrats need seek information, receive information, and make voting decisions.

“Always Late” versus “Always On”

No additional sourcing or evidence provided for many claims in this section. Public reporting contradicts several underlying assumptions.

Since 2018, the progressive organization Tech for Campaigns has conducted an annual review of digital spending within each two-year election cycle. [In their report on the 2024 cycle](#), they highlight the way right-wing organizations are “always on,” and by comparison, how Democrats and progressive organizations use a seasonal and late messaging approach. Democrats and partner organizations make massive investments in media towards the end of an election cycle and then go dark – while right-wing organizations have as a more consistent spend.

By the time Democratic candidates show up, often in the last few months of a campaign, it can be too late to persuade voters when the other side has been framing and shaping partisan information flow for months, if not longer.

Those who argue voters only tune in towards the end of a campaign are wrong. In an age of misinformation and disinformation, the answer to the question of “when is the right time to engage actual and potential voters” must always be “now.” When Democrats “go dark” between cycles, it is ceding too much ground and share of voice – making it easier for Republicans and foreign actors to fill the messaging vacuum, push false narratives, and to define and brand Democrats on their terms.

Some Democratic organizations get it. In 2024, the DGA and DAGA each invested in early media in North Carolina. The DGA supported \$18.4 million in supportive advertising from May through August of 2024 focused on Josh Stein’s record as Attorney General – clearing the backlog of thousands of untested rape kits to help close decades old cases, and his crackdown on fentanyl in the state. DAGA spent \$4.5 million to define Republican Dan Bishop’s positions

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on abortion and his close alignment with the deeply polarizing Republican gubernatorial nominee who wanted to permanently ban all abortions and jail doctors.

By investing early and late, these efforts provided clarity for voters and enabled the campaigns to make their own plans and advance their own affirmative messages.

Democrats bear a responsibility to step up and advance stories and positions through a more longitudinal approach; and with partners, become more consistent content providers.

There are many organizations working to shape policy; and even more organizations dedicated to creating and delivering content and promoting candidates and choices. These organizations need resources to stay “on,” but many receive “seasonal” investment. Many also face funding restrictions in what they can say, and cannot associate themselves with the word “Democrat,” which can lessen the effectiveness of their investments.

Democrats can use the word Democrat. Party committees and candidates also need investment to stay “on,” especially in states and districts where Democrats have not been seen as viable and therefore have not been supported by the Party, organizations, or donors – in some instances for decades.

Consider Ohio, where Sherrod Brown was the only Democrat able to win a statewide election from 2012 through 2024 by winning re-election to the US Senate in 2018. There were many good Democrats who ran for statewide office each cycle, but each started from scratch – having to raise money, manage their resources, and spending on message delivery at the end. Candidates should spend to win with the resources they have on the calendar they have, but a supported state party can raise the floor for the whole ticket through an “always on” approach.

The Ohio Democratic Party made this case for years and did better than many of their counterparts in other states in terms of raising money and organizing. However, eventually the drag of the national party and campaign became too much for even Sherrod Brown to overcome. In a world (or state) where significant investment flows more frequently than once every six years, is Sherrod Brown still a Senator? Could Democrats have won one of the narrowly decided contests in 2018 if the party had received strategic support from 2012 through 2018?

The permanent campaign Chair Martin has proposed includes dedicated communications infrastructure. Working through the DNC, ASDC, and state parties, in coordination with party committees, candidates, and partners, these investments will provide the research, training, and resources needed to drive our message and support our candidates across the ticket.

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As funders evaluate where to invest, they should question whether recent approaches have worked. The places and spaces where Democrats lost ground are known. Moving forward, is there accountability for what did or did not work? Are new organizations needed to fill gaps? How can parties be resourced and supported to help reclaim the voters Democrats need to win now and in the future? Will resources move earlier to support a more consistent and responsive messaging infrastructure?

Democrats raised and spent more than \$8 billion in federal elections alone in 2024. The resources are there, so it's time for Democratic decisionmakers – incumbents, candidates, party leaders, and donors – to direct and invest more resources to ongoing messaging, especially in the places outside the competitive landscape.

The right is “always on,” if Democrats do not match this strategy, it will be too late to make the case, much less close the deal. Democrats need to ideate and innovate across the ever-changing attention ecosystem, throw a lot of things at the wall, find what works best, and share best practices until it works at the scale of a national party.

In 2025, the DGA, DAGA, and DLCC again proved the benefits of early investments in New Jersey, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The DGA supported and financed early investment in media placement in New Jersey and Virginia, providing an effective contrast for voters, and clarity for campaign planners. DAGA directly invested in media placement immediately after the New Jersey primary to support the nominee. The DLCC provided early investments to the House Caucus in Virginia, and coordinated support for the judicial retention elections in Pennsylvania, enabling Governor Shapiro to close the deal as the election drew closer. A broad coalition supported California's Prop 50.

These are proof points for the path Democrats need for 2026 – waiting for the end of the cycle is too great a risk. Republicans can read polls, too. They can see the world turning against them and will adjust by spending billions. Democrats should have confidence in the proven ability to raise funds, and should invest earlier in defining the election for voters in favorable terms. The campaign has already started.

Countering Misinformation and Disinformation

American elections are now influenced by more than American interests. There is an obvious and conscious effort by foreign and domestic actors to shape electoral choices through misinformation and disinformation directed at American voters.

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This is not limited to the United States, as voters around the globe have been subjected to a barrage of extremist misinformation in recent elections. Recent news coverage about changes to the platform formerly known as Twitter **has exposed how nearly half of right-wing, pro-MAGA accounts were actually create and are managed in Russia, Eastern Europe, and other non-American locations.**

No evidence provided; contradicts public reporting.

Throughout American history, extreme views have temporarily bubbled up to shape public discourse, but normalcy eventually returned as more reasonable voices reasserted reason as a source of truth. Misinformation and disinformation are effective when there is a lack of trust or confidence in leaders and platforms, leaving voters susceptible to whatever they see or hear.

There are many organizations dedicated to correcting the record and supporting an affirmative argument for Democrats. In recent years, it's become apparent how fact-checking can be perceived as counterproductive by bringing more attention to the underlying smear.

Countering false information comes down to both making an affirmative case, and pushing back on the motivations behind the smears, rather than responding to the lack of substantive truth. Research has shown "Fact-checking will not stop the spread of misinformation if the need to signal one's politics, derogate the opposition, or generate chaos is a more powerful motivator than truth."⁷

Democrats will continue to explore this combination, by bringing focus to a consistent and long-term affirmative agenda and finding ways to address and align with voter motivations.

The attacks on Democrats, including the elevation of incumbents and candidates within the Democratic Party whose politics or positions are used to paint candidates running in competitive states and districts as out of touch will not stop. Those Democrats must continue to make their case, define their opponents, and have effective rapid response operations in place to protect the party and the candidates.

The DNC and other committees have developed staff and operations to manage rapid response efforts, usually through earned media efforts and coordinated messaging. These tactics will remain in place, and need more support. The organizations doing this work over the past several cycles have been subject to legal attack by the right, and by partisan investigations. Their work is essential to the broader ecosystem, and needs to be protected and continued.

⁷ Why Americans Crave Fake News, Aaron Tiedman, New America (2023). <https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/why-americans-crave-fake-news/the-problem-of-misinformation-in-a-democracy/>

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All is fair in love, war, and politics, and yes, Democrats have made investments in Republican primaries – seeking to shape general election matchups. The difference is right-wing interests take a longer-term approach and amplify polarizing messaging and candidates within the Democratic family with the intention of “othering” all Democrats. Without aggressive pushback and tactics, it works.

No evidence or sourcing provided for this claim.

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All Screens Are Not the Same

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

Effective modern media campaigns start with understanding each platform where an ad is placed is different, and so is every device. A phone is different than a tablet or a computer, which is different from a television. A social media or digital platform is different than a connected TV experience, print outlet, radio, or a television station or network.

A common critique surfaced during interviews is how Democratic media consultants seem to craft content for traditional media and then try to shoehorn the content into digital spaces. They cut a 30 second TV spot, and try to use it on digital platforms, or fashion cutdowns to 15 seconds, 12 seconds or 6 seconds to fit the ad specs of different platforms.

Critics – most of them digital practitioners – see this approach as uninspiring and lacking imagination. While this critique paints Democratic media strategists with a broad brush, innovation is a choice.

Understanding how different channels, different tools, and different platforms work is crucial to reaching the generations of digital-native voters who will decide elections. For Democrats to make the case for which party has these voters' best interests at heart, they first have to be able to reach the voters – in both delivery, and channel fit. Understanding the way in which an overproduced video creates dissonance with a voter based on where they are experiencing it in their media journey is an important step for Democratic candidates and incumbents who wish to remain relevant.

It is difficult to be always “on,” and to tailor media to audience and platforms, but it is required in this modern media environment. Democrats need to be everywhere to win anywhere - across platforms, channels, and media formats. There must be a commitment and openness to experimentation about where people are living, scrolling, reacting, and amplifying content, and then to effectively inhabit those spaces.

The smartphone has set the stage for social media and digital platforms to take on lives of their owns, attracting viewers and voters who are in each space looking for different and unique experiences. Each of these platforms, and many others, have different types of audiences seeking different experiences, and serve content to people who are either political or non-political.

It's up to Democrats to engage them wherever they are – now and in the future. User behavior is not tied to partisan choices – interests change with the moment, and usage of a platform

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changes on how people feel they fit. Audiences change their minds and habits all the time, and will flow to anything with a positive value proposition or user experience.

Democrats need better tools to identify and map potential voters against their preferred platforms and their media consumption habits – and then LISTEN. Only then can Democrats inhabit the habits of voters in effective ways to build support.

The Democratic National Committee has convened leaders from the technology and data sectors to understand the combination of technical and human resources needed to identify the most effective forms of voter listening and engagement. This work will help Democratic incumbents and candidates better connect with voters, and run more responsive campaigns.

Negative Messaging

No sourcing or evidence provided for many claims in this section.

Voting is a choice. And negative messaging needs to be a part of the story as choices are framed for voters.

At times, it seems Democrats are trying to win arguments while Republicans are focused on winning elections. Democrats operate in an ecosystem defined by reason even in cycles when the electorate is defined by rage. This highlights a fundamental and necessary truth – a brutal and efficiently delivered message will frame the choice for voters and help actually win the election.

When voters are not enraptured by the policy agendas advanced by candidates, the campaign's motivations and intentions are irrelevant. Democrats need to meet the voters where they are, and make an aggressive, contrarian case against their opponents.

The retrospective evaluation of Donald Trump's presidency was too positive. Given the ability of right-wing entities to slash and smear the Vice President, it was essential to prosecute a more effective case as to why Trump should have been disqualified from ever again taking office. The grounds were there, but the messaging did not make the case.

In April 4, 2025, Trump's favorability was well underwater among respected public polls. His net favorability was in the net-negative double digits. Trump had been consistently attacked by Republican candidates during the nominating process, and struggled to break 50 percent in Iowa and New Hampshire. He secured the nomination, but was not well positioned for November.

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In May of 2024, he was convicted in New York on 34 felony counts for making fraudulent and false statements to hide payments to Stormy Daniels at the close of the 2016 presidential campaign.

Yes, as the election drew near, his favorability improved, with net approvals in the net-negative single digits.

Select National Public Polling – Net Change in Trump Favorability

	April Favorability				Pre-Election Favorability				Net Shift
	DATE	FAV	UNFAV	NET	DATE	FAV	UNFAV	NET	
Economist/YouGov	4/6 - 4/9	43	55	-12	11/6 - 11/7	49	50	-1	11
NBC News	4/14 - 4/18	34	53	-19	10/30 - 11/2	42	51	-9	10
Wall Street Journal	4/11 - 4/17	39	57	-18	10/19 - 10/22	48	50	-2	16
NPR/PBS/Marist	4/22 - 4/25	40	56	-16	10/31 - 11/2	45	53	-8	8
NY Times/Siena	4/7 - 4/11	44	55	-11	10/20 - 10/23	48	50	-2	9
Quinnipiac	4/18 - 4/22	41	54	-13	9/19 - 9/22	47	50	-3	10

No sourcing or evidence provided.

There were similar shifts in the campaign’s internal polling.

No sourcing or evidence provided.

There was a decision in the 2024 Democratic leadership not to engage in negative advertising at the scale required. The supporters of this approach argued Donald Trump’s negatives were known, obvious, and baked in, so it would not be a particularly effective approach to engage in negative messaging when the main priority was to introduce a relatively unknown nominee after the unprecedented candidate switch.

There are two primary observations to make here. The first is that there were millions of people voting for the first time in the 2024 election. These new voters, as indicated by exit data and other research, broke heavily for Trump.

No sourcing provided.

Was this because he met them where they were and reached out to them in effective ways? Or did Democrats fail to see these voters and thus fail to offer them a properly framed alternative? Or, was it because Democrats never helped these voters remember and reflect on Trump’s failures as president?

The second observation is how Trump’s favorability returned to net-double-digit negatives in 2025, and has stayed there – as voters have yet again experienced the expected chaos, lawlessness, and economic uncertainty of a corrupt and incompetent administration. Buyers (voters) would not have “remorse” if Democrats had effectively made the case.

No sourcing provided for these claims.

The Trump campaign and supportive Super PACs went full throttle against Vice President Harris, but there was not sufficient or similar negative firepower directed at Trump by Democrats.

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The Super PAC designated to supporting the Democratic presidential campaign had a different point of view and pursued a different strategy – based on economic messaging.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

In their post-election interviews with the party, Future Forward's principals were refreshingly transparent and forthcoming, and their argument about making the economy case holds salience, as it was a top issue for voters and drove voter choice.

The problem is Harris lost the economic argument. The national exit polling indicates Harris lost the 32 percent of voters who identified the economy as their most important issue by 18 to 81, a negative 63 percent margin; and lost voters earning between \$30,000 and \$100,000 (48 percent of the electorate) 46-52 a negative six-point margin.

2024 National Exit Poll

Most important issue					
22,966 total respondents					
	Foreign policy 4%	Abortion 14%	Economy 32%	Immigration 12%	Democracy 34%
● Harris	39%	76%	18%	9%	80%
● Trump	56%	24%	81%	89%	18%

Updated 5:07 p.m. ET, Dec. 13

This does not mean the ads did not work, or the strategy was wrong. The economy was bad, but voters wanted change, and did not see the Democrats as being enough. In this context, the inability to properly frame Trump to be as terrible as he has quickly proven to be was a massive missed opportunity given what was a necessity for the campaign.

If the Super PACs are not going to go negative, the campaign must, which is in part what happened. But it also goes against what has been somewhat of an established practice. Traditionally, where the campaign goes high, the Super PACs and the party committees go low.

There has been much ink spilled about the dynamic between the campaign and Future Forward. Notwithstanding these differences, future presidential campaigns need entities across the ecosystem to be aligned. While they cannot legally coordinate, there needs to be a more

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effective understanding about the role of Super PACs in presidential elections. There must be clarity between the Super PAC and the campaign about the lanes they will occupy.

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Campaign staff could see what the Super PAC was doing (or not) in terms of their ad placements, and made adjustments. The strategy should ideally be driven by and the signals sent by the presidential campaign. The campaign can access the candidate, and can drive outcomes and responses faster than external entities. The campaign also has more insight from voters on the ground and field level than the Super PACs do.

Super PACs can spend resources to monitor voter feedback and voter sentiment in close to real time as well. But when they are divergent on how to message, it means that there actually isn't a combined and coherent strategy. Efforts are duplicative at best, and confusing at worst.

Moving forward, Democrats need future presidential nominees to seriously consider their decisions about whether or not to have a Super PAC, and if so, whether the designated Super PAC is aligned with their strategic needs. Anything else simply cannot exist within the ecosystem, and donors and leadership should not accept it.

Pulling People In

In the context of the 21st century, media is now borderless. There was a time when an ad placed in a given market would stay within that market. Now, the way content is shared and the way algorithms can be manipulated means some voters can see something instantly, no matter where they are, while others may never see the content at all.

It is important for Democrats to acknowledge this moment an opportunity – to rethink and reformulate the way the party engages voters of all ages, backgrounds, and interests. The party must learn and align to how voters consume and receive information, what moves the needle, and what will keep them engaged and participating in subsequent elections.

Democrats need to move on from messaging strategies consisting of pushing information and content out, rather than pulling people in. A call to action focused on unity and empowering leaders to help and lead every level of politics.

Pulling people in is one of the hardest things to do in elections, especially in a modern information and cultural ecosystem where a lot of people are content to sit on their couch and be on the phone, as opposed to being out in their communities and engaging and learning about what's going on in the world around them.

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That is not a criticism of the American people, but an observation about what has changed in the culture. Democrats need to think about what it even means to pull people into a party, what does the process look like, and how best can it be achieved.

Because once Democrats get someone to show up and buy in, they might actually come back. They may not come back forever, but if they come back one more time, Democrats can shift the entire dialogue. It can then be about coming back with their friends and coworkers and loved ones.

Democrats can prove again to Americans there are people who think like them, with similar passions and priorities and politics. Showing and proving there is a party full of people like them will convince them to pull more people in and join the work to reclaim our country.

The truth is there are many communities throughout our country where Democrats have not been present for far too long. There are countless groups dedicated to a range of local, national, and global interests and causes. People access them through their phones, their chats, and their messaging apps. Unfortunately, Democrats are not even close to being in those conversations. It's time to re-engage – in-person and online.

This is organizing, yes – but an essential component of Democratic messaging. It will take a nation to get America back, and without vision and purpose, who will come?

The opportunity before Democrats is to think through how people and voters can be identified and invited into the party. And as Democrats bring people in, are they listening to what people are saying and what they want? How are conversations and insights being shared? Is there an approach to sharing these insights with incumbents and candidates so they understand where communities are?

The hard part is starting, the harder part is keeping it going, but the easiest part is having the humility to listen and learn, and to then incorporate what activists and allies say and want and need, and pulling them into the work Democrats have to do.

In the absence of effective engagement, everything becomes reductive to the tech stack and the dashboard – Democrats are limited to the questions the pollsters ask, and the inputs from those questions inform the decisions made about content, tactics, and strategies.

The broader the net, the broader the coalition, the stronger the Democratic Party will be. Because none of us is as smart as all of us.

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The truth is, right now, for all of the technology, and all of the data, Democrats may be able to tell what people think, but cannot answer why a voter feels a certain way about a candidate, or what voters bring to the table, or how voters make decisions.

These are the things necessary in a modern marketing ecosystem for Democrats to be able to first win voter attention, their support second, and their action – voting – third.

Pulling people in – through messaging, then organizing, is the path for Democratic candidates to be able to win anywhere.

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STATE OF RESEARCH & STRATEGY

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No additional sourcing or evidence provided for many claims in this section.

Research should drive design. It should tell us what to say, how to say it, and who to say it to.

Research approaches constantly change. In 2008, the Obama campaign applied innovative approaches to generate responses at scale - every day. Throughout the general election, the campaign could constantly model and revise how they would engage voters through effective messaging and effective organizing.

Seventeen years ago, it was possible to generate sufficient sample on a daily basis through phone banking – this is no longer the case. With technology like caller ID now ubiquitous and a range of experiential factors over the years, many Americans no longer answer their phone to people they do not know and response rates have collapsed.

Some of the people who do participate in market research are incentivized, or are – in general – atypical from the electorate. Skilled and experienced researchers bring their art to the table by knowing how to find the proper balance within the data they collect to reflect a representative voting population.

Response bias remains a challenge. Younger Americans and non-White communities have long been underrepresented in research approaches and technology has not exactly made it easier to engage. The challenge in reaching younger voters is further complicated by how many young Americans are still part of family plans, so their phone number may actually be associated with a parent or another relative.

Younger Americans are also more likely to change their phone number and younger Americans are far more likely to move than older Americans – where their addresses change, but their voter registration may not be updated. Campaigns and their research teams constantly evaluate whether they are reaching the right people in the right places with the right questions to develop the right messages.

Are elements of participation bias in our research ecosystem getting worse as it becomes more difficult to reach and engage voters? Perhaps. Are pending changes to the texting landscape going to force more innovation by researchers to achieve representative samples? Certainly.

Democratic candidates and incumbents therefore need to consider how we use market research to drive decision making, how to ensure research remains an effective tool, and whether newer research approaches are “better” or an effective complement to existing approaches.

A note on data quality

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Democrats have long believed certain voting cohorts are far more supportive than others, and in general, voter outcomes have validated this. However, if the demographic data within voter lists are not correct, then the underlying assumption about an individual voter's propensity to behave a certain way is also incorrect.

There are many examples over time about how voter data on both the hard side and the soft side misclassify voters based on gender or race. Further, some states do not report age in their voter rosters, and when age is modeled it is not always perfect.

Voter files require constant refreshing of phone number data and address data for voters, which drives cost because it is very expensive to constantly and consistently update voter files with fresh phone numbers.

The data modelers will say, while the data in most voter files is not deterministic at the individual level, in the aggregate, their models are correct. This is true. And yet it should not prevent Democrats from having the hard conversations about improving data quality, simply because it may seem cost prohibitive.

Democrats, as a family, need to have a conversation to resolve how to improve our source data to drive improved decision-making.

Once the data is improved, what are we using it for? How are we making decisions?

What analytical inputs and frameworks are being applied to identify support or vote propensity and other factors connected to voter choice and voter behavior.

Balancing Tactics and Approaches

If voter demographic data is generally correct with an acceptable level of fuzziness, it doesn't mean the tools and outputs from the data are fundamentally flawed. It means there should always be some level of hedge associated with what is learned from the data.

There are those within the party who drive decisions through the available science and tools we've developed. Analytics is truth, anecdote is flawed. Others argue sometimes we have to believe our eyes, no matter what the math says.

In general, more information is a good thing – and decision makers can and should base their decisions upon it. But models are generally lagging indicators of voter choice. They are developed on a foundation of proven and actual past behavior, measured and updated against current responses.

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But without sufficient or fully representative responses, how do we make sure we are seeing what we need to see? Either in real time, or in enough time to make adjustments to reconnect or recapture with the voters we need to win.

These debates have been raging for decades, and it's time for Democrats to convene and figure out how we need to move forward.

Analytics within the Democratic Party goes back to the 1990s. Experiments with clustering, voter profiles, and market segmentation have long been tools used by the national party in presidential and national coordinated campaigns.

As technology improved and it became easier to collect, analyze, and parse large-scale data sets, analytics became a ubiquitous tool for the design and implementation of national campaigns.

The 2016 Presidential campaign proved an analytics-dependent campaign can miss important context. In the aftermath of the loss, there was a lot of discussion about “fixing polling” or finding tools to parallel Cambridge Analytica.

There are many who argue polling is just fine in terms of what it is - measuring opinion and direction among who it is able to engage, yet surveys can miss things bubbling in culture because surveys can only give you the answers to the questions that you ask.

Most pollsters concur shrinking response rates and the inability to reach certain voters has changed their profession – and many excellent researchers have worked to resolve these issues.

Qualitative and social listening can indicate where voters are, and polling can measure the frequency and distribution of potential new information and trends, assuming it is quickly fielded, analyzed, and tested for the purposes of interventions or changes.

The ability to drive listening through technology-based solutions can be a value add, with the understanding human intervention and inquiry are still needed to understand where the public is and how and why they may be moving.

Democratic candidates and incumbents need to understand the ins and outs of the research business, because it drives so much of the decision-making within a campaign.

Everything about what a candidate says to how your resources are allocated, and how the campaign tries to reach your voters with your message.

The Democratic National Committee will be leading conversations around the information ecosystem, and the research approaches we need to take. And we will be seeking to educate our

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candidates and incumbents about what works, and the ways in which we need to engage voters, through a new research paradigm centered on listening to get the best outputs for Democratic candidates.

The 2024 National Campaign

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

The initial research structure of the Presidential campaign started on the analytics side, with departmental leaders starting on the DNC payroll as consultants in the late spring of 2023, and rolling over to the campaign shortly thereafter.

The analytics team created a series of products for different campaign departments and leadership needs. They supported grassroots fundraising and compliance, digital advertising, and state operations. They deployed large-scale panels for ongoing active listening, and could periodically explore reactions to ideas or breaking questions.

They also managed the ad testing for the campaign, generating reports and audience lists for the campaign paid media team and campaign leadership; and evaluations of campaign program effort and effectiveness.

Their work guided resource allocation for the campaign – how many voters were needed to win in a given state, and how many voters in a given set of states would lead to 270 electoral votes.

Claims are contradicted elsewhere in report.

From the outset, the campaign set three targeting priorities. There were “re-engagement targets” – voters who had supported Obama or Biden, but were infrequent voters who needed persuasion to vote and to vote for Biden and then Harris – mostly younger voters or voters of color. There were “traditional swing voters,” these are voters who have largely moved towards Democrats in the Trump era, mostly college educated suburban voters who were not field targets, but were tracked for support.

The third and smallest target group was “peel-away Trump voters,” who had perhaps voted for Trump in 2016 or 2020, but may have been with Democrats on abortion or who were alienated with the chaos and corruption of the Trump era. Trump’s favorability was tracking ahead of 2016 and 2020, especially in the Sun Belt, so they campaign felt they needed to take a run at these voters to drive his numbers down.

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No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

The analytics team reported there was little movement throughout the campaign – and the state teams struggled to meet contact and support goals. The analytics showed the race was characterized by stability – it remained tightly competitive throughout the general election.

No sourcing provided for this claim.

The “message polling” team was not fully onboarded until December of 2023. Comprised of three experienced polling firms and an expert qualitative firm, the pollsters described their work as underutilized during their initial engagement.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

They performed their work, and delivered their findings to campaign leadership, but there was limited feedback or discussion on their work product.

Before the candidate switch, the pollsters never reviewed ad copy or content – and commented how they did not see ads until after they were airing, in some instances reading about the ads in the media. They also reported they had little insight into the data provided to leadership from the analytics team.

As the June 2024 debate neared, there were discussions about polling around the debate and after the convention. The polling team was informed the plan was for them to poll three times during the general election, and the post-convention polling would count as one of those three polling waves. They attributed this minimalist approach to research to members of the media team not believing polling data was essential to decision making.

The debate obviously changed many things. The dial-testing during the debate demonstrated the weakness of the President’s performance, and a post-debate survey was scrapped.

The analytics team measured voter reaction, and reported seeing little change. The fundamental need to earn votes from the target audiences remained, and there was no positive movement towards the campaign.

Post-debate, and about a week before the candidate switch, there were internal discussions about how to prepare a campaign for the Vice President.

In 2020, when Kamala Harris was selected by President Biden to serve as the running mate, many voters were excited and curious.

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Democrats won the election and President Biden assigned the Vice President a brief including immigration, which was poorly framed by Republicans as the “border czar.” It was not the official title, but it was the one that the media propagated and the White House failed to contradict or correct.

Claim contradicts public reporting.

Prior to the midterm election, the White House directed the DNC to conduct polling to identify how Dr. Biden could support her husband as president. The research explored the settings, the issues, and the messages needed to create an effective framework.

No similar research was conducted to support the Vice President - to identify the issues she should talk about, the ways in which she should talk about them, the audiences with which she could perhaps resonate and support the President's agenda. There was also no independent research of the Cabinet.

The White House's approach towards elevating the Vice President with a controversial issue brief without leveraging research into understanding how taxpayers and voters would react to the messengers of the Democratic administration was a massive missed opportunity.

As a result, at the moment of the candidate switch the polling team discovered there was no self-research on the Vice President to guide the development of the research instruments.

No evidence provided; contradicts claims elsewhere in report.

An incumbent Vice President. With no research to share once she became the nominee.

The White House did not position or prepare the Vice President. Had the White House explored and evaluated ways to leverage Kamala Harris earlier in the administration, perhaps it would have improved the President's standing, and it certainly could have helped prepare her to lead the ticket.

Any fair critic of the Vice President has to acknowledge the strength and ability she demonstrated as the nominee. The idea that a prepared and supported Vice President could not have helped the President in the preceding three and a half years is a significant failure of imagination.

Once the candidate switch was announced, the polling team quickly scrambled to get into the field with three studies – one on the Vice President's biography and record, one on her vision and plan, and another on attacks and responses. Members of the Vice President's team were tapped to reconstruct and update their own self-research from 2019, but even they were unclear if the research made it to the polling team.

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The resulting research was rolled together into a report shared with campaign leadership. It guided ongoing conversations with campaign leaders, but the pollsters never provided a briefing to the ticket.

After the candidate switch, the post-convention research plan was revisited and the planned polling cadence increased. The pollsters attributed this to an addition to the campaign leadership team and a new desire for more data awareness to guide decisions.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

The pollsters had assigned states, and fielded surveys in roughly two-week intervals for the balance of the general election.

Throughout the general election, similar to what was shared by the analytics team, the polling data never really moved or expanded beyond the margin of error. There was a brief increase after the September, 2024 debate, but it receded and then remained stable for the duration of the general election.

Polling Reactions

The pollsters concurred on three key findings.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

First, they felt it was important for the Vice President to find separation from the status quo. They recognized voters were looking for change, and felt it was necessary to find ways to demonstrate how a Harris-Walz administration would be more effective in addressing American needs.

The pollsters acknowledged the loyalty demonstrated by the Vice President but also suggested it was contrary to strong signals in their data about how even measured breaks would help position the Vice President to win. They expressed their positions to campaign leadership, but there was little movement. One cited an attempted differentiation on immigration – with a single speech delivered on a Friday afternoon with little amplification as an example of too little, too late.

Claim contradicts public reporting.

Second, the pollsters were involved in discussions around the Trump attack ads – in particular the attack ad focused on the Vice President’s prior statements on transgendered Americans. They all recognized the attack as very effective, and felt the campaign was boxed – the ad was a video of her saying what she said, and it was framed as an attack on her economic priorities.

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If the Vice President would not change her position – and she did not – then there was nothing which would have worked as a response. The pollsters generally concurred with the opinions shared by campaign leadership - given the stakes and timing, the focus needed to be on attacking Trump.

Third, the inability to impact Trump’s favorability was a major failure of the campaign. His retrospective job approval was too high. The Republicans had a defined framework for attacking the Vice President, but the Democrats did not have a defined or consistent theory for attacking Trump or how to maneuver to disqualification.

Widening the Aperture

National campaigns also need to think about how they are faring in the ecosystem outside their battlegrounds. While most campaign resources should focus on battleground states, there should also be periodic inquiry into other states to measure potential opportunities or emergent risks.

This did not occur in 2024. In the fall of 2024, the campaign approached the New Hampshire gubernatorial campaign and the Democratic Governor Association for an update because **the campaign had not polled there since June**. Vice President Harris did win New Hampshire by 2.78 percent.

No evidence provided for this claim.

The pollsters were aware of shrinking margins in other states based on their awareness and analysis of public data – in the aftermath of the debate, there was serious concern about New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Minnesota – all of which ended up being decided by single digits.

This is not to say the campaign should have invested in states where we lost ground, but still won. From a campaign perspective, their job is to get to 270 electoral votes, and spending on states not initially in the battleground array would have been a distraction or a diversion of resources.

But now these states seem more competitive for Democrats. This played out in New Jersey and Virginia in 2025. The 2024 Presidential campaign won New Jersey by 5.88 percent and Virginia by 5.75 percent, leading some to argue Republicans had a chance to buck historic trends and win the statewide elections. Democrats therefore invested heavily in the 2025 states, securing double digit wins in the gubernatorial contests, and reclaiming ground lost in 2024.

This goes to the role of the party relative to the role of candidates. The party's job is to lay a foundation for candidates to win. This means the year-round organizing, the training, the capacity development within a state, the recruiting of candidates, the supporting of candidates

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in ways that help them out-punch their opposition and get themselves in a position to seek upsets and eventually turn voters to their cause.

It's the DNC's job. It's the job of the state parties and the county and local committees.

Our candidates and the campaign committees must keep their focus on winning their specific election – ideally in ways they can support the party's work.

By participating in coordinated campaigns, their dollars go further because they are pooled with other candidates – which both builds for the present cycle and lays the foundation for future work connected to year-round organizing.

Partisan “Polls”

In the run up to the 2022 election, a wave of partisan red wave “polls” flooded the media ecosystem and rocketed across social media. These “polls” resurfaced in 2024 and in 2025, presenting data inconsistent with reputable nonpartisan public polling, and internal Democratic data.

To the extent voters look to polling for information, these partisan efforts are an intentional disinformation effort targeted at Democrats, and less rigorous aggregators will include these polls in their polling averages. Democrats must align on how to respond to these attempts and media manipulation and voter disinformation – and in the interim, can respond in two ways.

First, every Democratic incumbent and candidate campaign must push back on partisan efforts to distort competitiveness and mislead voters. These efforts are disingenuous and relatively sophisticated. Some start by showing Democrats with an early lead so later polls then show Republican “momentum.” Others drop in a flurry nearer to the close of a campaign to shape polling averages and saturate media churn. By educating voters and the fair press about these efforts, Democrats can limit their coverage and enable the public to contextualize the “data.”

Second, Democratic fundraisers love to use competitiveness as a method for creating urgency and energy for fundraising. When it's legitimate, they should. When these disinformation tactics are in play, Democrats should avoid amplifying them at all costs. It is difficult for campaign comms teams to push back on “polls” the fundraising shop is promoting.

By their nature, these “polls” are intended to demobilize Democrats and deaden the focus our campaigns are trying to bring to the choices being presented to the electorate. Candidates and incumbents need to set guardrails and guidelines for their campaigns to limit the proactive spread of these and other sources of disinformation.

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Conclusion

This section was not provided by the author.

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STATE OF ORGANIZING & ADVOCACY

No evidence or sourcing provided for many claims in this section.

Democratic candidates and incumbents must demand a more effective organizing model for the Democratic Party.

There are many ongoing philosophical and practical conversations within the party and broader ecosystem about the best ways to engage Americans. There's been debate within progressive and Democratic circles for a long time about, first, who should lead organizing – the hard side or outside organizations (both), where should it live (everywhere), and how it should happen (all the time).

It's time for a serious conversation about roles and lanes and what the future can be, especially given how campaigns and parties can, apparently, now coordinate with outside entities who engage in these types of activities.

Democrats need to adjust to these shifting legal parameters and a loosening of constraints to reassess the essential roles everyone can play to cultivate effective engagement and two-way conversations with voters across the nation.

Democrats have proven the ability to raise sufficient funding to effectively fund quality organizing within the Democratic ecosystem. The media consultants may not like it, and organizing is one of the hardest things to do in politics, so there will be many within the party who will seek to preserve the current division of labor.

The existing understanding works – to a point. There is no doubt the Presidential election margins would have been much worse without independent efforts to organize in the battleground states. The split ticket results in the Senate, House, and nonfederal campaigns were not solely the result of **divergent messaging strategies**, there were also separate investments in direct voter contact.

No evidence or sourcing providing for this claim.

Democrats would have lost many more elections across the ballot without state tables and national partners directly engaging within communities on behalf of those candidates.

Given preferential media rates, and given the ways in which money can move through the ecosystem, this division of labor has made sense. However, this approach to offshoring organizing leaves Democratic committees and campaigns relying on independent or soft-side actors to meet what should be a core function for Democratic campaigns, which is to pull people in and not simply push information out.

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There were also unique challenges in the 2024 cycle – including misaligned independent approaches – which led to delayed implementation of programs across the ecosystem. A status quo approach may lead Democrats to the same place – locked out of power and incapable of offering leadership to the American people.

This also connects to the strategic intention of organizing investments. Many of the leading spenders across the ecosystem are focused on winning the elections right before them. This is the right approach for candidates, but not the Party.

It's the Party's job is to think through how to right-size and resource levels of effort in critical, targeted terrain necessary to win now, and it's also the Party's job to grow the map through strategies and programs focused on changing future conditions in states and jurisdictions not currently on the map.

States or jurisdictions outside of the so-called battlegrounds have not received meaningful partisan or nonpartisan organizing investments for years, if not decades. Democrats will not grow in the places they do not sow, and even in current battleground states and districts, Democrats may fail to rebuild a real relationship with voters if candidates and incumbents do not push their campaigns and parties to regain and reclaim organizing muscle.

Quality organizing is hard. At the significant scale of a statewide race, it's incredibly difficult for campaigns to effectively fund and organize from within the campaign. It's why state parties can and should be the vehicle to convene modern and effective coordinated campaigns to drive this activity at the required scale to support the entire ticket.

Democrats have proven the ability to raise the revenues required to properly fund quality organizing within the hard-side ecosystem – so long as leaders are willing to make the decision to do so. It's time to rethink the roles, responsibilities, and lanes to design, develop, and deliver a more effective approach to leadership and engagement.

What is Organizing, Anyway?

As Speaker Tip O'Neill shared decades ago, "people like to be asked." Organizing, at its core, is the process of developing the ability to reach as many people as possible to earn as many voters as possible through direct voter contact. The key to all of it is the ask.

It isn't putting money into paid phones for the sake of being able to reach more voters when no one answers their phone anymore. It isn't texting at the expense of a face-to-face conversation.

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No data provided for this claim.

Now, there are data showing response rates on doors are low, and it's less effective, or less efficient in terms of the allocation of a single dollar. These are the incorrect metrics for understanding how many people actually believe what Democrats are saying. Democrats will know they are winning in tough contests if voters are not engaged where they live their lives.

The current analytics approach partially considers efficiency through a fiscal evaluation - how far can a campaign stretch a campaign dollar? Can leaders calculate the cost of an incremental vote? How many decimal points are needed to measure campaign effect?

Data matters – a lot – but the efficiency approach ignores some pure fundamentals. As laid out by Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber in their classic study *Get Out the Vote*, “there no longer is any doubt that face-to-face contact with voters raises turnout,” both for the targeted voter and others within their household.

“Face-to-face interaction makes politics come to life and helps voters to establish a personal connection with the electoral process. The canvasser’s willingness to devote time and energy signals the importance of participation in the electoral process. Many nonvoters need just a nudge to motivate them to vote. A personal invitation sometimes makes all the difference.”⁸

The power in quality organizing flows from a highly trained volunteer who believes in their candidate, and is therefore capable of expressing what the candidates' positions are, what their values are, and who they are as both potential leaders and as neighbors or colleagues or friends of the person who's having the conversation.

This deep level of engagement is something the Democrats used to do at the scale of our politics. It is what catapulted Democrats to the White House and Governor’s Mansion, and the Senate, House, and offices across the ballot in states.

No sourcing provided for this claim.

Organizing wasn't done simply by Democratic campaigns showing up once every 2 years, 4 years, for the last 1-2 months of a cycle. It was done in close coordination with allies in the environmental space, with organized Labor, with pro-choice organizations. With local community organizations. With faith organizations.

Democrats now have a politics and an organizing philosophy driven, in part by what is the most efficient way to reach voters only in the geographies needed to win.

⁸ Green, Donald P. and Gerber, Alan S., “Get Out the Vote – How to Increase Voter Turnout,” Fifth Edition, 2024

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There used to be big debates and big fights within campaigns about how to allocate resources for media, for organizing, for all forms of voter contact, for the use of the candidate's time, for fundraising, for developing surrogates, for research and strategy development.

In healthy campaigns, the answer to all those questions should be “yes,” because healthy campaigns should have the resources to do everything.

Democrats have a proven ability to raise funds. The presidential campaign raised in excess of \$2 billion through the Democratic National Committee, their Joint Fundraising Committees, and the Principal Campaign Committee. The House, Senate, and nonfederal campaigns raised billions more. With the explosion of campaign money, will Democrats continue to operate through old ways of thinking, driven mostly by strategies of scarcity, of limited resources?

No sourcing provided for this claim.

When Democrats operated under spending cap, there were tight budgets, where 20-30% of a program budget would be allocated to organizing, and 60-70% to media and mass communications. In the 2024 context, this would mean somewhere around \$300 million being put into organizing.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

In speaking with campaign leadership, they estimated around \$150 million was invested in voter contact through the coordinated campaign structures, which is simply too small a piece of the pie in a context where Democrats need greater levels of engagement. By comparison, the national campaign invested \$1.04 billion in media expenditures through the DNC, campaign, and joint fundraising committees from 2023-2024.

With comparatively low spending, the campaign ended up running the same playbook of showing up at the end of a cycle and asking people to support a candidate they had never met, will never meet, and in some cases had never heard of.

Now it's fair to question whether a national campaign could effectively spend \$300 million on organizing – the answer should be again be “yes.” Grow capacity across the party, move money and program to more states and districts, register more voters, support more recruiting, training, and professional development for volunteers, staff, activists, surrogates, party leaders, and candidates. Leverage the funds (and time) to build to win.

Due to these ongoing shortfalls, the pressing challenge is to get back into communities and presence candidates and incumbents to show the American people not only are Democrats on

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their side, Democrats are actually delivering for them. This is what many 2025 candidates did – proving it is both possible and necessary.

Face-to-face organizing is why movement politics can be so powerful – leading through vision, and by pulling people in, rather than solely pushing information out. Instead, for too long Democrats have tried to negotiate with voters through the media **without any meaningful level of direct interaction.**

No sourcing provided for this claim.

It's time to again ask voters for their help, for their opinions, and to offer them the ability to be a part of something bigger than a single election. People are ready, it's up to Democratic leaders to meet them where they are.

Doing this requires two-way engagement – one-way communications can deliver the message, but two-way engagement can demonstrate if its working, help drive decisions, and provide insights to make adjustments. Organizing and organizers are the key to this approach – the human capital and human intelligence to leverage modern tools and approaches to put people and their concerns first.

How will Democrats define “quality” organizing? What is being measured, and what is being learned to adjust thinking and design across cycles to build to win and build to last.

What does an organizer do? Is there even a shared taxonomy for organizing – for what “field” means, and within field, what do canvassing, or phone banking, or any of the traditional and emerging tactics look like? How do things like visibility, voter registration, voter education and other factors come into play?

The party has to decide whether it will continue to rely on the tactic of dropping people into states as opposed to hiring locally. It's easier (cheaper for some) to develop and “deploy” seasonal talent even if it puts Democrats in a situation where cycle after cycle, campaigns and parties have to find new people to go work the same turf, instead of teaching people within the community and funding and empowering them to organize their neighbors year-round.

The Republicans do this differently. Turning Point USA is not a seasonal, churn and burn ecosystem. They run program around the calendar, and across the nation. The Koch-funded entities and other organizations started more than a decade ago, and remain in communities.

These efforts are targeted to specific elements of the electorate, and generally remain “always on.” Democrats and allies must consider how to match and exceed these investments.

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The irony is many of these efforts were emulating what Democrats used to do. The Republicans studied and learned from their losses in 1998 and the 2000 outcome to launch their “72-hour program.” They were intrigued by the effort and outputs of America Coming Together in 2004. They were blown away by the innovation of the 2008 Obama campaign. They observed, and then planned, and then organized a ground game to counter what had been Democratic and Labor advantages.

Paid Programming

No sourcing provided for this claim.

There are critics of paid programming and they miss the point. Yes, paid programming should be used as a supplement, not the foundation for direct voter contact. Quality canvassing or paid phones in turf - especially in hard-to-reach communities – will still have impact, especially if it is early enough in the calendar to engage and cultivate relationships and potentially build even more capacity for direct voter contact later in the calendar.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

Some donor advisors question the returns on paid voter contact – paid canvassing, phone banking, and texting – and have argued for limiting future investment in these tactics. Rather than debate those things through the lens of a controlled test, or the efficiency paradigm of an incremental vote, Democrats need to shift to a voter centered analysis. Quality programs work. If outside entities face challenges in funding, this previous cycle should demonstrate how limited or delayed resources impacted program quality, timing, and outcomes.

Learning from the Work

In the aftermath of the 2022 midterm election, key staff at the DNC conducted a review of organizing efforts in the cycle.

They explored a range of inputs from organizers and volunteers as well as leadership within the organizing ecosystem to understand the impacts of midterm programming, and to identify opportunities for improvement.

The report delivered seven findings and made five programmatic recommendations.

DNC 2022 Volunteer & Voter Contact Program Analysis (2023)

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Targeted 2023 investments based on these learnings will help net more Dem votes in 2024

Topic	Takeaway	2023 Recommendation
Training & Development	Staff and volunteers have significant programmatic and leadership skill gaps.	 Build a national coordinated and organizing team to support early innovative program, leadership development, management training, and core skills training with the initial state staff and volunteer base. Q1
Role of Organizers	Organizer time is most effectively spent engaging, training, and supporting volunteer activation and leadership escalation, rather than primarily volunteer recruitment or voter contact.	
Impact of Early Investment	Programs with early core leadership and organizing staff had higher outputs and growth, especially in larger programs.	 Hire CCDs, data directors, and organizing directors to customize relational and distributed programs to state and coalition needs. Q3
Relational Organizing	Volunteers want to organize relationally, but programs require integrated data, management, and programmatic support to scale.	 Choose a relational tool to build national and in-state relational program and data infrastructure , recruit volunteers, and escalate relational volunteer leaders. Q2
Volunteer Leadership	Developing volunteer leaders increases volunteer activity and voter contact: organizing leaders through a team model can further those gains.	 Hire lean, highly skilled organizing staff, and launch in-person Leadership Summits to integrate volunteers in Democratic county parties and clubs into state and national programs. Q3
In-Person Work	In-person working environments, whether offices or elsewhere, support staff and volunteer success.	
Hiring & Scaling	Staff recruitment requires more direct support. Campaigns need to build positive, inclusive and enjoyable working cultures by emphasizing training and support.	 Launch "Campaign Schools" across the country to start building cohorts for entry-level and mid-level roles. Q4

The takeaways included a need for training and development based on significant programmatic and leadership skill gaps; a strong recommendation for how Organizers can best use their time, how programs with early investment had higher outputs and growth over the cycle, the need to upgrade the tools required for relational organizing, how supporting volunteer leadership and in-person work improved outcomes, and how hiring and scaling was accelerated in positive working cultures.

These insights cannot be taken for granted even if they may be obvious to some. Organizers need to trust and be valued by their own organization. Workflows accelerate and quality improves when everyone in the ecosystem knows their role and is supported. Tools have to work and support the work. Training and retraining optimizes quality and outcomes.

Based on these takeaways, the DNC staff made five recommendations for actions in 2023 to prepare for the 2024 national election, with potential start dates, including:

Q1 2023 - Build a national coordinated and organizing team to support early innovative program, leadership development, management training, and core skills training with the initial state staff and volunteer base.

Q2 2023 - Choose a relational tool to build national and in-state relational program and data infrastructure, recruit volunteers, and escalate relational volunteer leaders.

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Q3 2023 - Hire CCDs, data directors, and organizing directors to customize relational and distributed programs to state and coalition needs.

Q3 2023 - Hire lean, highly skilled organizing staff, and launch in-person Leadership Summits to integrate volunteers in Democratic county parties and clubs into state and national programs.

Q4 2023 - Launch “Campaign Schools” across the country to start building cohorts for entry-level and mid-level roles.

Each of these recommendations were designed to increase capacity and net more votes for 2024. The authors have argued they felt the recommendations were even more important given the relatively poor standing of President Biden, so it would require more time on task to generate capacity.

Unfortunately, none of these recommendations were implemented on the proposed timeline, if at all. The authors of the report acknowledged how hiring and decision-making for organizing was impacted by the reality there was little volunteer or activist interest in the campaign.

Hiring the senior staff in states began in the Spring of 2024, and lasted through August 2024.

No evidence provided; contradicts public reporting and data.

No evidence or sourcing provided for this claim.

The final state staffing hires were made in October, only weeks prior to the election.

No sourcing or evidence provided for this claim.

Many of these findings and recommendations in the 2022 report hold true, and mirror what has been shared by allied organizations in their assessments of 2024 – the need for comprehensive assessments of training and professional development, the need to hire and retain entry and mid-level staff earlier in the cycle, and more experimentation and learning around relational organizing.

The Democratic National Committee will convene urgent and actionable conversations with stakeholders in the organizing ecosystem to understand how reset around roles, lanes, and resources to maximize outputs and reclaim our primacy in organizing.

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2024 Program Feedback

No sourcing or evidence provided for many claims in this section.

The 2024 cycle shows the inefficiencies of the current ecosystem and contrasts with how Republicans raise and invest across the calendar while Democrats spend at the end (“always on” versus “always late”).

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

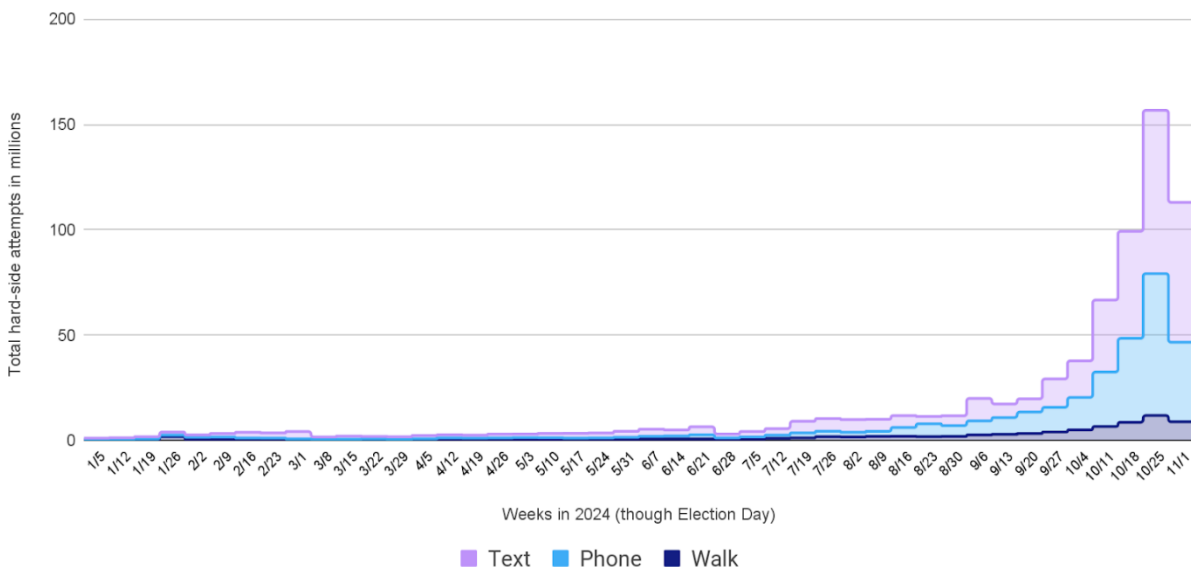
In interviews with leaders across the ecosystem, there were consistent observations about the limitations placed on their programming based on how money moved (mostly late), and the types of money raised (restricted, etc.). Delayed fundraising delayed decision making, and left organizations across the ecosystem scrambling to engage at the close of the campaign.

Democratic coordinated campaigns achieved significant volume of activity in 2024. The post-election assessment conducted shortly after the election demonstrates the ability to engage is there. The data also showed engagement needs to start far earlier in the cycle.

No evidence provided for this claim.

Sourcing not provided.

Democratic Voter Engagement Attempts by Week (2024)



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The chart above demonstrates the overwhelming surge of activity at the end of the 2024 cycle. This proves Democrats have the technical capacity and the tools to attempt to reach voters, and should serve as the foundation for understanding how to implement effort across the calendar moving forward.

There were similar patterns of effort on the independent side. Because Democrats and allied organizations actually follow the law, even well-funded groups had to stay within their primary purpose, and lacked early resources to engage in voter persuasion. As a consequence, several key leaders in the voter engagement ecosystem said they could not engage in persuasion until the first week of October – after some states had started voting. The organizations were ready, and had the people, but did not have the right “flavor” of funding to engage as they intended.

The entities funded by organized Labor fared better and ran very effective programs, but even these organizations could have used more funding. Historically, these organizations leverage contributions from other funders into their programs. In interviews, these groups shared how the delays in funding by other entities or donor tables prevented them from hiring staff in states as early as they would have preferred, delayed program ramps, and ultimately limited their ability to persuade early enough to shift to get out the vote efforts.

Democrats have long known early money is like yeast – it helps the dough rise. This lesson has certainly been used by candidates to win nominations and general elections, but it needs to apply to organizing and messaging efforts across the ecosystem. With adequate and early funding, state parties and state tables, national committees and national organizations can better design and deliver the organizing capacities needed to win.

Decision-makers need time. Time to evaluate program inputs, to make adjustments to scripts and content. To leverage candidate and surrogate time into engaging with the right voters in the right places.

A Tactical Assessment

No evidence provided for many claims in this section.

From a tactical perspective, there was a lot of discussion about diminishing contact rates. Response rates on phones have cratered for voter research and direct voter contact. There are also anecdotal critiques about response bias among the voters who do answer their phones - who tend to be older and homeowners rather than younger and renters.

Texting is a way to rapidly reach voters at enormous scale. One problem identified in interviews is how Democrats and organizations bombard voters and grassroots donors, with nonstop fundraising solicitations. By curating a suboptimal experience for the people being

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texted, it should surprise no one when many voters say “all the Democrats ever do is ask for money.”

People constantly text with their family, friends, and colleagues. People will engage with people they know, but will ignore and be frustrated by stranger, or bulk texting. What can and should be a two-way conversation becomes one-way delivery and a “STOP” message.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

Strategists within the presidential campaign indicated they did not see texting as a form of organizing or an effective tool for persuasion. They did see its value in fundraising, in organizing for events, and driving event attendance.

Prospectively, assuming these potentially effective actions are synced to organizing, texting retains a measure of value, but with emerging technical restrictions on texting, it will pale by comparison to more proven tactics as a way of persuasion or driving turnout among voters.

Practitioners are also seeing a reduction in response rates in door-to-door canvassing, and attribute it in part to the learning loss from the limited organizing during the 2020 pandemic cycle. This forced many 2018 activists out of a normal, second organizing ecosystem, and prevented new talent from emerging in the organizing ecosystem. They believe these gaps in the organizing ecosystem limited the quality and capacity of 2024 canvass programming.

Practitioners agree this can be countered through a commitment to training to help the ecosystem reclaim a greater measure of responsiveness in door-to-door canvassing and position Democrats to effectively engage communities.

Even though response rates on doors have dropped, they are still significantly higher than those on phones. And while phones are less expensive, and therefore potentially more cost-efficient, Democrats can reach more people in communities directly and indirectly by leaving literature, by finding supporters and offering them lawn signs and other opportunities to display support.

How Tech is Impacting Organizing

No sourcing provided for many claims in this section.

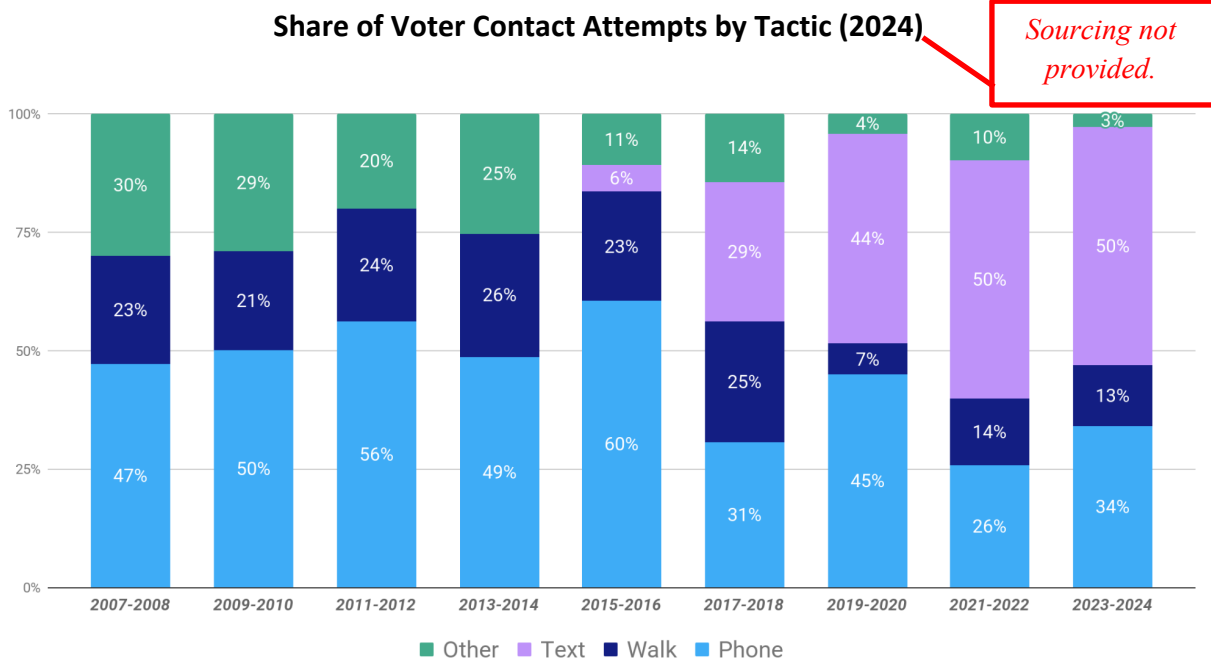
The composition of Democratic organizing tactics has changed. While phone banking has long been the principal channel of engagement, door-to-door canvassing had generally comprised 20 to 25 percent of all voter contact attempts each cycle.

The volume and share of door-to-door contact attempts cratered during the 2020 pandemic cycle, and it has not yet recovered to its pre-pandemic share. There is still a meaningful volume

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of door-to-door canvassing, but when low-response tactics like phones and texting dominate the share of attempts, Democrats should evaluate whether this is an effective tactical mix.



2024 Program Outputs

In 2024, Democrats made a total of 370.7 million voter contact attempts, generating a total of 11.7 million contacts from 7,968,547 voters. Of these voters, 6,602,150 eventually voted, for an 82.9 percent turnout rate.

309.8 million of these attempts occurred within the battlegrounds,⁹ generating a total of 9.1 million contacts with 6.97 million voters.

⁹ Here, battlegrounds refer to the states of Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and the Maine-02 and Nebraska-02 Congressional Districts.

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2024 Coordinated Program Recap¹⁰

Sourcing not provided. Table appears to contain inaccuracies.

State	Vote Total	Total Attempts	Total Contacts	Total People ID'd	ID'd People Who Voted	ID Rate	Turnout of ID'd Voters
AZ	3,400,726	36,997,424	1,052,799	799,853	578,106	23.5%	72.3%
GA	5,275,133	43,759,428	993,749	790,798	499,426	15.0%	63.2%
ME-02	402,873	1,248,197	80,336	71,157	61,562	17.7%	86.5%
MI	5,674,843	48,888,866	1,268,009	1,047,902	695,398	18.5%	66.4%
NC	5,699,141	44,186,340	1,045,315	844,331	599,328	14.8%	71.0%
NE-02	318,646	1,962,518	61,959	30,814	25,840	9.7%	83.9%
NV	1,484,840	27,177,395	684,762	513,842	312,923	34.6%	60.9%
PA	7,058,351	79,490,072	2,794,567	2,026,092	1,590,108	28.7%	78.5%
WI	3,422,918	26,049,379	1,133,563	845,562	672,643	24.7%	79.5%
Total	32,737,471	309,759,619	9,115,059	6,970,351	5,035,334	21.3%	72.2%

Inconsistent with data in chart.

32.5 million Americans voted in these battleground jurisdictions. By engaging 6.97 million people, this means Democrats contacted and identified support (ID'd) from 21.4 percent of the battleground electorate. Turnout among the voters ID'd by the party averaged 72.2 percent.

Voter contact rates varied across tactics and states. The contact rate on doors was 17.1 percent across the battlegrounds, the phone contact rate was 2.2 percent, and the text contact rate was 0.8 percent. A text contact is not the delivery of the text message; it is when an outgoing text message generates a trackable and responsive reply (an indication of how the voter intends to vote).

2024 Voter Contact Rates by Tactic and State

Sourcing not provided.

State	Door Contact Rate	Phone Contact Rate	Text Contact Rate	Total Contact Rate
AZ	16.8%	2.5%	0.8%	2.8%
GA	15.3%	2.5%	0.4%	2.3%
ME-02	26.2%	2.4%	2.4%	6.4%
MI	14.4%	1.8%	1.2%	2.6%
NC	15.6%	1.8%	1.1%	2.4%
NE-02	20.0%	3.9%	0.6%	3.2%
NV	13.5%	1.8%	0.7%	2.5%
PA	19.5%	2.3%	0.7%	3.5%
WI	19.3%	2.7%	0.4%	4.4%
Total	17.1%	2.2%	0.8%	2.9%

¹⁰ ID Rate divides the Total People ID'd by the Vote Total – with the quotient being the percent of all voters who were ID'd by the Democratic Party. The Turnout of ID'd voters divides the count of ID'd People Who Voted by the Total People ID'd to generate a turnout percentage.

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In most of the battleground turf, phone calls represented a majority of contact attempts, followed by text messages. Across the battlegrounds, 53.0 percent of voter contact attempts were made by phone, 38.4 percent by text message, and 8.6 percent by door-to-door canvassing.

Share of Voter Contact Attempts by Tactic and State

Sourcing not provided.

State	Door Contact Share	Phone Contact Share	Text Contact Share
AZ	6.4%	60.0%	33.6%
GA	5.8%	48.5%	45.7%
ME-02	16.9%	78.6%	4.5%
MI	8.2%	52.3%	39.5%
NC	6.5%	50.2%	43.2%
NE-02	1.0%	71.6%	27.4%
NV	8.8%	64.9%	26.3%
PA	10.7%	48.5%	40.8%
WI	14.1%	55.1%	30.9%
Total	8.6%	53.0%	38.4%

The differing tactics applied in a given state connects to the variable nature of the demographic and geographic realities of each state and market. Some communities and cohorts are more walkable; some are easier to reach by phone.

Overall, the battleground program heavily relied on tactics with low-contact rates to generate ID volume – the only option with limited time at the end of the campaign.

Despite constituting only 8.6 percent of contact attempts, door-to-door canvassing represented 50.0 percent of voter IDs. Phone IDs represented 39.6 percent of voter IDs, and text messaging represented 10.4 percent of voter IDs.

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Share of Voter IDs by Tactic and State

Sourcing not provided.

State	Door ID Share	Phone ID Share	Text ID Share
AZ	37.9%	52.2%	9.8%
GA	39.2%	53.0%	7.8%
ME-02	69.0%	29.3%	1.7%
MI	45.2%	36.2%	18.6%
NC	42.9%	37.8%	19.4%
NE-02	6.2%	88.2%	5.6%
NV	47.4%	45.5%	7.1%
PA	59.2%	32.1%	8.6%
WI	62.3%	34.5%	3.2%
Total	50.0%	39.6%	10.4%

These data reflect a significant volume of activity, but there were still program challenges.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

Leadership of the states program within the campaign indicated their programming was limited by staffing gaps. Throughout the spring, they found it difficult to find people willing to work on the campaign, and were not always able to hire staff on the planned schedule. They also reported challenges with onboarding – a process which got much smoother by the end of the campaign was at times a source of tension between the campaign and the party committees.

As a consequence, staffing took months longer than expected to reach its full complement, and the delays impacted programming. While phones and texting can be quickly deployed, reaching people door-to-door requires time to build. Organizers and canvassers need to be recruited, onboarded, and trained, and it takes weeks to develop an effective rhythm in the many tasks associated with an effective canvassing operation.

This impacted the ramp of door-to-door programs.

The battlegrounds combined to generate 4.7 million contacts on the doors. There were one million IDs shortly after Labor Day, it took a little more than a month to cross two million, with a rapid acceleration at the end.

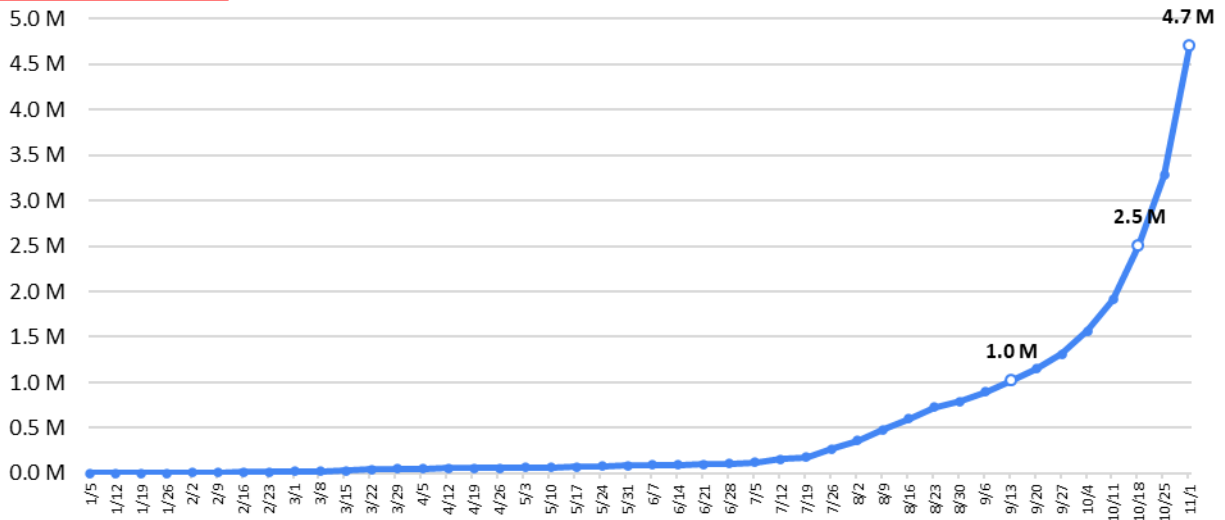
The ramp is solid, yet 72 percent of the IDs were collected during last month of the campaign, when in most battlegrounds, voting had already begun.

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Battleground Door Contacts by Week (Cumulative)

Sourcing not provided.



There are some who argue direct voter contact should take place later in the cycle, when it has more of a chance to “stick.” This may be true for some campaigns, but for voters, this becomes yet another example of a national campaign and party showing up in the last month of an election and asking voters for their support.

It was not late in every state. A few states banked IDs earlier in the cycle, providing the ability to adapt program and re-ID those voters over the course of the campaign.

Share of IDs Over Time by State

Sourcing not provided.

	AZ	GA	ME-02	MI	NC	NE-02	NH	NV	PA	WI	ALL
PRE-OCT	27.4%	35.7%	14.3%	32.9%	34.7%	1.1%	26.3%	33.2%	17.4%	39.9%	28.0%
OCT+NOV	72.6%	64.3%	85.7%	67.1%	65.3%	98.9%	73.7%	66.8%	82.6%	60.1%	72.0%

Data and science show face-to-face engagement works. Democrats therefore need greater effort in door-to-door canvassing and other forms of face-to-face engagement to earn support and tun out voters. If Democrats instead continue to rely on ineffective tactics instead of thinking through ways to effectively organize communities so neighbors are talking to neighbors it is acquiescing to an ecosystem defined by its tools, as opposed to designing an effective ecosystem centered on voters. This requires starting earlier and a dose of imagination.

Starting earlier will provide more effective geographic reach and volume of engagement where voter feedback can provide insight for adjustments or course corrections.

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Committing to direct, person-to-person engagement also requires investing in people.

State teams need time to build a high-performance culture capable of delivering with energy and urgency in the moments voters are making decisions. Backloading this work leaves little flexibility for Democrats to make the case, much less close the deal.

Not every state or district can necessarily start early. Some states have primaries later in the calendar, complicating efforts to build out capacity for the entire ticket. Even after primaries, there are some instances where relationships need to be healed, and it is difficult to flip the switch from the primary to the general election.

This played out in 2025. In Virginia, the gubernatorial nominee was uncontested, and was able to take control of the coordinated campaign after the filing deadline. In New Jersey, there was a contested (and heated primary) which required several weeks of careful politicking to bring the team together. The DGA and DNC provided critical leadership, technical support, and financing during the general elections, and while the Virginia coordinated program started earlier, by Election Day, both coordinated campaigns were firing on all cylinders.

Democrats will have a rigorous, efficient, and fair nominating process for 2028, but it is entirely possible there it will be a protracted contest – perhaps finally resolving in a July convention. If this is the case, Democrats may have a nominee who needs to bring the party together, a staff and team exhausted by the process, and urgency in standing up a national campaign.

This is exactly what occurred in 2016, when Secretary Clinton **cinched the nomination in Philadelphia 104 days before the election and then discovered** there was little infrastructure in place to help her win.

Timeline inaccurate; claims contradicted in public reporting.

This DNC will prepare for all eventualities, and this is why the Chair has called for a modernized coordinated campaign, where state parties can organize and convene partners to identify the right voters in the right places to win.

Thinking ahead, planning ahead, and staffing in the right sequence will help prepare the party to support the nominee, and allow the nominee to layer an existing structure instead of having to hire from scratch. If the party reaches consensus on a nominee sooner in the calendar, all the better. Democrats will be prepared for any scenario.

A National Commitment to Training

To better plan and organize for the future, Democrats must overcome a persistent failure to effectively train, retain, and sustain human capital within the party. There are many people

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who love this country and want to make elections and politics a career, yet struggle to find opportunities where they can earn a consistent living, or receive sufficient professional development or advancement opportunities to make it worth their while.

There's no denying the impact of COVID-19 on the 2020 cycle. Democrats engaged in very little in-person organizing, and it's had a significant impact on the organizing ecosystem in terms of learning loss and a missed opportunity to engage entry-level staff and cultivate them for subsequent cycles.

The Democratic Party and the broader family need a reset.

The DNC is leading through the creation of a National Training Institute, the establishment of boot camps and training modules to drive engagement in communities across the country.

The DNC will convene, and organize the organizers of training across the ecosystem to reach consensus on what effective modules should look like, who are the people who will be trained, and what needs to be designed and developed to support accountability measures and identify any gaps.

Funders who want and expect quality need to invest in the people who will deliver the work. The strategists and donor advisors guiding program investments over the next two years should ensure there is a skilled and reskilled workforce ready to lead.

If an operating premise is Democrats need to organize Everywhere to win Anywhere, people power is a critical prerequisite.

Voter Registration

No evidence or data provided for many claims in this section.

Voter registration is a foundational element of organizing and administering elections.

Voter registration affects who gets to vote, how candidates are chosen, and who ultimately governs. The constitutional approach to voter registration has evolved over time, with access to the franchise expanding over the centuries and decades. Constitutional amendments, court decisions, and legislation have expanded the franchise to women, non-White Americans, and younger voters.

The expansion of access was not easy – and those who favored oppression and suppression resorted to violence, terror, and murder to prevent individuals and groups from being able to vote.

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Through the diligence and courage of patriots, abolitionists, progressives, clergy, organized Labor, and the blood and sacrifice of too many martyrs to the cause, access to voting is something many Americans now take for granted. Yet the entire nation now faces mounting efforts to purge voter rolls and suppress participation.

Improving access to registration and to casting a ballot have long been priorities for Democrats. Democrats believe voting and freedom are directly linked to each other, and any restriction on voting is by design the first step in limiting other freedoms enjoyed by all Americans.

The reverse is also true. Republicans feel threatened when voting increases, which is why they opposed the passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, why radical federal courts are overturning voting protections, and why Republican state legislatures and governors passed significant restrictions on voter participation in the aftermath of the Trump defeat in 2020.

The MAGA-organized insurrection on January 6, 2021 was only the first act. Voter suppression, the partisan rigging of congressional lines, and the unconstitutional deployment of military forces on American soil are unprecedented but intentional steps to trample American freedoms.

If Democrats want to ensure elections exist – and then remain free and fair – Democrats need to make sure everyone can be registered to vote, can participate in the elections they want to, and then can vote for candidates of their choosing.

This is important in states with partisan voter registration or nonpartisan voter registration alike. While evidence of suppression can be easier to see in states with partisan registration, Republicans are enacting and enforcing barriers across the nation. Democrats must respond.

Historically, Democrats have benefitted from nonpartisan voter registration efforts. Democrats have long earned votes from younger Americans, women, and non-White voters. As more of these voters aged into the electorate, having entities support registration and provide voter education helped protect or expand partisan margins.

At the time of Barack Obama’s election, there were seven jurisdictions with majority Democratic enrollment. In 2024, there were two: Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

Democratic Enrollment Share (2008-2014)¹¹

¹¹ Official State Sources – Secretaries of State or other designated custodians of voter records. Data pulled in July, 2025.

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	2008	2024	Shift
Washington, DC	76.0%	77.2%	1.1%
Kentucky	57.2%	43.5%	-13.7%
Maryland	57.1%	53.3%	-3.9%
West Virginia	56.5%	31.1%	-25.4%
Louisiana	52.9%	38.4%	-14.6%
Pennsylvania	51.5%	44.8%	-6.6%
New York	51.1%	48.9%	-2.2%
New Mexico	50.4%	43.5%	-7.0%

The greatest shifts were in three southern states: Kentucky, West Virginia, and Louisiana; where Kentucky went from 57.2 percent Democratic in 2008 to 43.5 percent in 2024, West Virginia went from 56.5 percent to 31.1 percent, and Louisiana went from 52.9 percent to 38.4 percent.

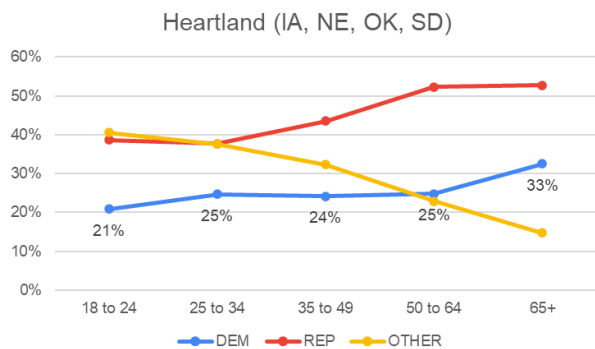
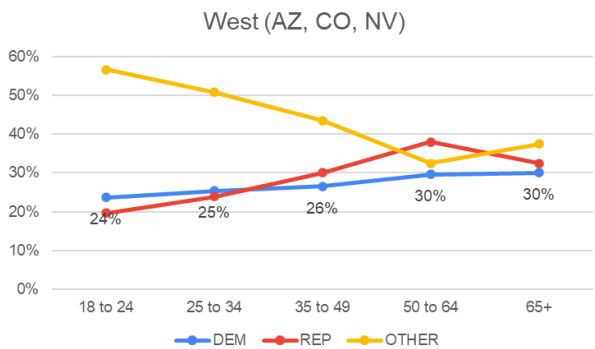
These states had traditionally been Democratic, and while some people switched their registration, the magnitude of the shift may be attributed to older legacy Democratic voters transitioning, and their younger “replacements” registering as Republicans, in third parties, or as unaffiliated voters.

This pattern of lower partisanship among younger cohorts is a common feature of American politics, persisting over time, and across parties. In every region of the nation, a plurality of younger voters register as unaffiliated or independent, and become more partisan as they age.

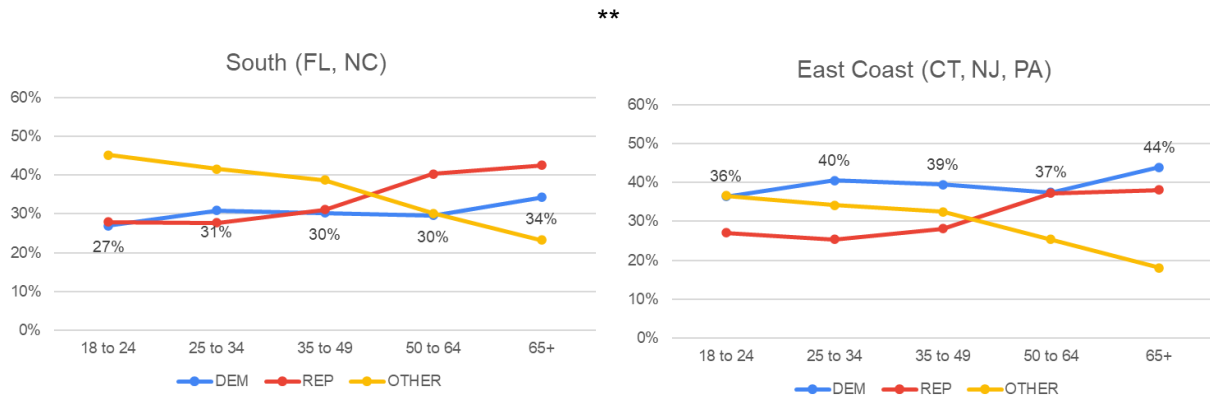
The charts below are select states with partisan registration, parsed by region, party, and age. In each instance, the youngest voters are the least partisan. The Democratic and Republican shares each of age cohort increase over time, with the most partisanship among seniors.

Regional Enrollment Shares by Party and Age (2025)

Sourcing not provided for the following charts.



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No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

There are some advisors and commentators who believe Democrats can no longer count on the so-called Rising American Electorate of young and non-White voters to lift Democrats to victory. They therefore argue against voter registration because they feel it could actually bring more non-Democrats into the franchise. Please reconsider.

First, the Rising American Electorate will one day be The Electorate. Failing to plan is planning to fail.

Second, while there were definitive shortfalls among most of these cohorts in support for the national campaign, the 2025 elections showed how quickly voters will change their support based on information and experience. The gains and improvements in support by Democrats across the nation in 2025 special and general elections are a positive sign – working to cement and expand those gains is the work Democratic candidates and incumbents must demand their campaigns and party committees lead.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

There are also critics of the organizations leading voter registration who point to the shrinking partisan margins and states as proof the organizations have not met the moment.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

Interviews with these organizations surfaced how voter registration efforts were not identified as a priority by the national campaign, so they found it difficult to raise funds to effectively field their programs and generate new registrations.

Registration is a priority for Republicans, and it must again be so for Democrats. The Democratic Party, through the DNC, Association of State Democratic Committee, and the State Parties will work to register voters on the hard side.

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Every state party has been participating in organizational reviews with the DNC and ASDC, and will identify voter registration goals as part of their strategic planning processes. Voter registration will be an essential goal for every coordinated campaign, and an early and ongoing measurement of progress and growth.

The broader ecosystem needs an “always on” approach to voter registration. Nevada first flipped after years of investment in registration. Georgia and Arizona flipped because of years of organizing and registration by funded in-state groups and the party. There are proven best practices and proven organizations ready to do the work – they need the resources to get started.

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STATE OF TECHNOLOGY & DATA

Technology by itself is not enough to win elections, but in this always-on, real-time environment it can be a critical building block to dictate the terms of engagement and drive the relationships needed to make or break critical messaging campaigns.

Having the proper political technology in place will allow the party to break through the noise and counter messages from an increasingly sophisticated conservative media ecosystem focused on sowing discord and apathy among priority voters, increasing its relational presence and taking the DNC to new heights for the next ten years and beyond.

Political decision-makers have to contend with a vast, fractured media ecosystem made up of streaming content, mobile devices, an ever-increasing number of social media applications and networking spaces, and find ways to center the human element in politics while leveraging the power of a cutting-edge technological infrastructure. It is no secret technology changes faster than politics, and Democrats must keep up.

In the past, there were only a few communication channels open to campaigns, and voters were easy to target. Voters picked up the phones when you called them, and it was easy to determine what they were thinking, what they wanted to see from their elected officials, and how likely they were to vote. In these digital times, however, analog methods fail to provide the micro-level analysis necessary to shape adaptive campaigns capable of winning anywhere.

Focusing on the digital and technological infrastructure needed to support the hard work done by the boots on the ground, and understanding where improvements need to be made to remain competitive for 2026 and beyond is essential. Democrats must simultaneously work to shore up our own capacity and counter rising authoritarian politics and right-wing extremism.

This section assesses the evolution of the technological capabilities and structures of the Democratic Party, identifies where innovation is needed, and lays out a path for how the party must again advance to meet the challenges inherent in targeting and engaging a shifting electorate constantly influenced and informed in a rapidly changing information environment.

2012 Election Cycle

No sourcing provided for many claims in this section.

The 2012 Democratic National Committee and the Obama/Biden campaign were celebrated for their sophisticated use of technology and data analytics, particularly when compared to what the RNC was able to do for Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan. It was during the 2012 election cycle that

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the DNC first acquired a license for Vertica, a high-performance analytics software that enabled the party to centralize its volunteer and donor data, but also to access and analyze a 180-million-person voter file. A state-of-the-art system at the time, Vertica served as the party's central data repository, the digital warehouse containing every state's voter file, every commercially available voter data point, and internally, the results of every door visited by canvassers on and every phone call made by volunteers.

This data was combined with information generated from social media, campaign interactions, and online user activity to reveal voter tendencies in a way never before envisioned. With these new capabilities, the Obama/Biden campaign was able to "micro-listen" to what voters were saying/doing, and test the effectiveness of messages aimed at narrow demographic groups. Algorithms integrated into Vertica could look for patterns embedded in the data and develop scores to place voters into particular groups to identify how much attention needed to be paid to them and which channels of communication were mostly likely to make significant inroads.

The effects of these microtargeting models was most evident in the way it directed volunteers to target particular voters over the phone or at their doors, and provided guidance on which script was likely to maximize the impact of the message. The results of voter interaction helped refine those models, increasingly identifying the next likely voter who could be persuaded to vote and vote Blue.

In contrast, Republican data repositories were so slow that they could not respond to changing news cycles, and were so fragmented and antiquated they could not handle the traffic from its own volunteers, crashing so completely on Election Day staffers thought they had been the victim of a cyberattack.

No sourcing or evidence provided for this claim; contradicts public reporting.

Before Vertica, the DNC had no central repository of data, and lagged when it came to identifying the chorus of voters and the song they sang in any election cycle. Knowledge about voters was stored separately from data about campaign interactions, because those databases were developed by different teams who had little interest in making their systems compatible.

Sourcing not provided.

Vertica represented a quantum leap forward in terms of targeted outreach and advertising on a granular level. While it convinced some in the party they had their system of the future, it was not a success built to last.

No evidence provided for this claim; contradicts public reporting.

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While Democrats were content enjoying the 2012 victory and celebrating what got them there, Republicans went back to the drawing board to learn from their losses.

No sourcing provided for this claim.

Instead of trying to revolutionize their own system, Republican analysts looked at where the Obama campaign spent its attention and resources, and worked to reverse-engineer the reasoning behind those decisions. Eventually, they were able to surpass Democratic efforts and reinvented the process by which Republicans approached digital media, to great effect for future campaigns.

2016 and 2020

In the wake of the unprecedented and largely unforeseen forces leading Trump's election in 2016, the party had to reckon with the roles played by decaying data assets and an increasingly outdated technological infrastructure in its failure to elect Hillary Clinton. Despite the significant, forward-thinking investments made to advance data-driven campaigning for the 2012 election, an unfortunate decision to rest on the laurels of success instead of institutionalizing their advantage led to significant under-investments in upgrading and maintaining the system.

No sourcing provided for this claim.

This decision compounded the inability of Democrats nationwide to identify the specific micro-groups of likely and potential voters who could be persuaded to vote for Democrats across the ticket.

Vertica played a central role in the strategic decisions made in the 2012 election, but an inability to commit to continuous improvement validated the old adage about technological progression: if you are not on the train, you will be left at the station.

Reflecting on the 2016 campaign, Hillary Clinton believed the system she inherited campaign produced "mediocre to poor, nonexistent, wrong" data.[i] In 2016, Vertica was already too old and too strained to handle the amount of data it held and the analyses it was being used to conduct.

Interviews with various campaign staffers detailed how the system was known for crashing upwards of 16 hours at a time[ii].” Vertica, the centerpiece of DNC data analysis, was an archaic tool being used beyond its designed capabilities. It was not a system built to last indefinitely or designed to be used by the number of individuals and entities who were accessing it.

Party leaders and state-level decision makers were therefore not tuned into changes in voting patterns by age, gender, race, and state. Shifts in reliably blue regions were undetectable until it

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was too late, leading to under-investment in areas needing financial and operative injections to maintain the Blue Wall. The abandonment of a microtargeting and micro-listening approach left wide swaths of potential voters under-motivated to vote for Democrats, and in many cases, to vote at all.

No sourcing or evidence provided for this claim.

Some observers consider this a significant reason why Clinton did not spend meaningful time engaging voters in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and other historically Democratic states because the shifts were invisible in a system too bulky and unwieldy to hear micro-dissents and objections.

In the aftermath of 2016, the DNC recognized Vertica's limitations. It was essential to catch up to the times and ensure Democrats were on the train and not left at the station once again. This time, the Warehouse was scaled up to ensure the people who needed access to voting data could get it when they needed it, and simple queries would not crash the system for hours at a time. Thus began the construction of a new Data Warehouse backed by Google's BigQuery, a tool capable of petabyte-scale analysis that could unlock insights previously unreachable with existing tools and hardware.

Using BigQuery was another massive leap forward. It allowed for the party and its affiliated groups to share data without running afoul of campaign finance laws, based on the advanced Republican model many believe provided Donald Trump with an advantage in the 2016 election by providing data beyond what the RNC could reasonably capture on its own. Redeveloping such a system had been previously impossible for Democrats relying on the outdated Vertica system, despite Democrats being the originators of the approach.

Source not provided.

2020 Innovation

Per public reporting, the firm was founded by Bloomberg prior to his campaign's launch.

As part of the 2019 nominating process, the Bloomberg campaign helped found Hawkfish in early 2019 in order to combat the digital advances made by Republicans and the MAGA strategists in charge of President Trump's campaign. Ostensibly founded to provide a technological edge to his own presidential campaign, Hawkfish also began working on races in Virginia and Kentucky, where Democrats picked up down ballot wins. In November 2019, Andy Beshear narrowly defeated Republican Matt Brevin to take control of Kentucky, a state where Trump's 2016 margin of victory was just under 30 percentage points. One key to this victory was leveraging technology

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to determine what was most important to Kentucky voters, and showing them how Beshear's platform most aligned with their needs and interests.

No sourcing or evidence provided for this claim.

Hawkfish was initially founded to be a premier digital agency and technology services provider, specializing in “digital ad services, including content creation, ad placement, and analytics” for Democratic contenders in various races¹². Bloomberg founded the company after realizing how President Trump and the GOP were better at creating content and using it as calls to action than any entity in the Democratic ecosystem.

What Bloomberg knew, and what the party needs to accept, is that the only way to position the party for future wins is to master the digital medium, targeting the right groups and sharing the kind of compelling content to keep them awake, energized and excited about the future.

Now Bloomberg was unsuccessful in winning the nomination, and while Hawkfish continued to work in the 2020 cycle, it was officially shut down in Spring 2021.

Hawkfish is a cautionary tale about innovation. Win and you're in, lose and you're out. And sometimes the ideas persist, sometimes innovation leaves, and other times there is no growth.

More than ever, decision-making in politics is guided by data. The ability to identify and engage with micro-communities of voters, deriving insights about their preferences and priorities, is a key to modern campaigns. Data and politics are increasingly intertwined and inseparable from one another. Today's political campaigns and voter mobilization efforts are essentially data-driven efforts. Voters, candidates and elected officials rely on data analysis to shape their communities on the local, regional and national level.

No evidence provided; contradicts claims elsewhere in report.

The GOP's victory in 2024 largely came down to its ability to learn more from President Obama's victory than Democrats did. The GOP's campaign was powered by data, amplified by social media, and enabled by ardent supporters at every level.

2024 Election

Material in this section repurposed from previously published material from the DNC Tech department.

Despite the end result in 2024, the technological shift could be seen. Thanks to the donors who provided the seed money for system modernization and capital improvements, the DNC began to work with flexible and powerful technological toolkits. As a result of this latest investment, campaigns had access to a best-in-class data warehouse, codenamed Phoenix, powered by

Analysis not supported by source material.

¹²<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/23/mike-bloomberg-campaign-uses-tech-firm-he-founded-earlier-this-year.html>

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robust data about the American electorate and state-of-the-art tooling to turn that data into actionable insights.

Up through the 2024 election cycle, the specific work included:

- Modernizing our voter file processing infrastructure, which enabled the processing of more than 900 distinct voter file updates collected in partnership with state parties to ensure we have the clearest view of who is eligible to vote in every state;
- Doubling down on our investment in a unique internal algorithm for matching registration records as voters move between and within states, identifying more than 50 million records from moved or re-registered voters, allowing us to carry historical demographic, vote history, and support data with voters over time;
- Building custom tooling for ingesting absentee and early vote (AV/EV) data, giving campaigns a daily-updating view of every voter with a ballot in hand, successfully returned, or rejected around the country – powering critical ballot chase and cure programs in the final stretch. In 2024, the DNC AV/EV tool processed more than 10,000 data files – more than double our processing volume from 2020;
- Augmenting our understanding of voters with a powerful set of models leveraging decades of accumulated data to help campaigns understand who is likely to support their candidates, turn out to vote or to volunteer, be motivated about specific issues, and more;
- Strengthening our collaboration with the Democratic Data Exchange (DDx), which in the 2024 cycle provided hundreds of millions of data points to hard-side campaigns on the activities of outside groups, improving the targeting and efficiency of our programs up and down the ballot;
- Providing IWillVote.com as a premier resource for voter education information, including where and how to vote in every state. In addition to providing this information to millions of voters who visited IWillVote.com in the final weeks of the election, we launched a historic partnership program – “Powered by I Will Vote” – which facilitated the display of the I Will Vote data directly on partner websites and tools, and;
- Ensuring campaigns had the data they needed to reach voters where they were. This includes a revamped process for mapping addresses that led to the addition of six million new addresses to our file, and providing a 10% increase in Tribal canvassable voters and an 11% increase in rural canvassable voters. It also includes a multi-million dollar investment in cell phone tools that took the DNC from being able to target 30% of registered voters to 86% by the end of the 2024 election cycle.

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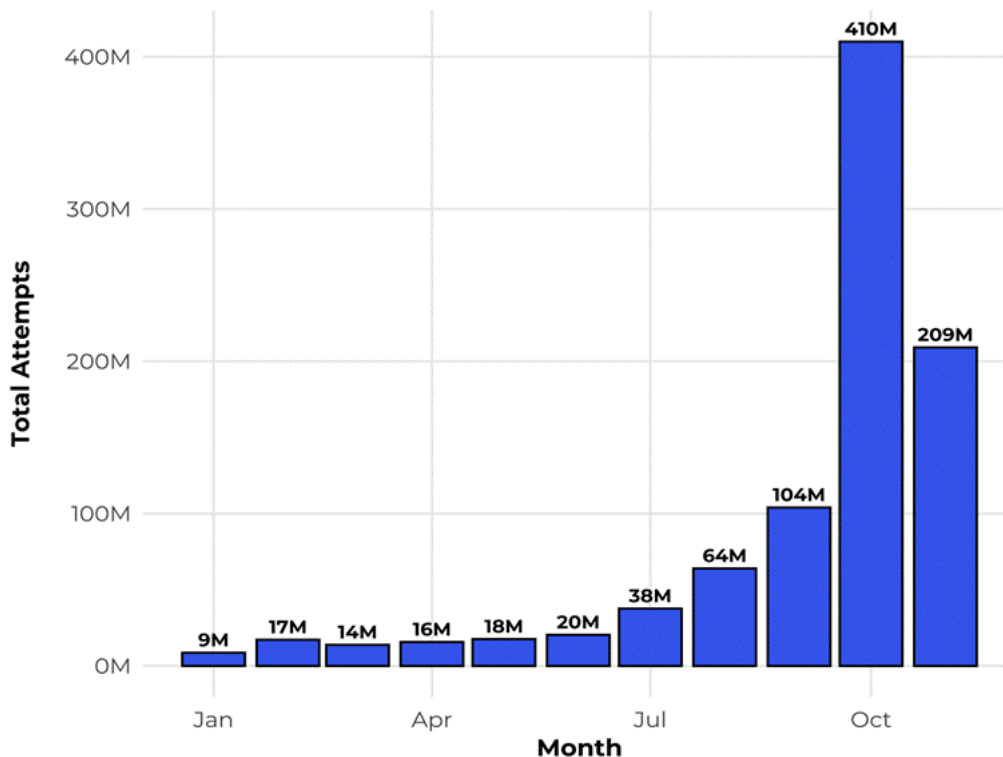
As a result of these investments, the Biden, and then Harris, campaigns were able to operate entirely on top of a DNC-built data infrastructure. This didn't replace critical functions of the campaign – far from it, it enabled the campaign to spend less time thinking about infrastructure and more time thinking about central strategic questions around resource allocation, targeting, and how to efficiently reach and engage with voters.

Contact Attempts

An analysis of contact attempts through the 2024 election cycle shows how necessary the upgrade to Phoenix was in advancing the mission, vision, and values of the Democratic Party. In terms of overall contact attempts, there were just under one billion individual data points to track, beginning with a high volume of text and phone calls, which were eventually overtaken by a shift to door-to-door canvassing.

Total Monthly Attempts

Includes Phone, Text, and Walk Attempts



(Chart from DDx 2024 After-Action Report, and includes both soft and hard side contact attempts.)

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These nearly 1 billion text, phone, walk, mail, and relational attempts resulted in almost 53 million successful contacts across the entire progressive ecosystem during the 2024 General Election Cycle, making the Phoenix system a vital component of the electoral analysis that shaped daily and weekly strategic decisions. The infrastructure in use at the time also allowed for an analysis of what was most effective from state-to-state, as seen below. By looking at the mix of types of attempts made versus polling data and the eventual outcomes in voting patterns in that state, analysts were able to develop increasingly sophisticated models of voter behavior, though much of this information arrived too late to change the 2024 outcome.

Total Attempts by State and Mode					
Millions of Attempts					
State	Total	% of Total	Text	Phone	Walk
Pennsylvania	169.96	18.5%	59.75	81.52	28.70
Michigan	94.57	10.3%	39.47	37.89	17.20
North Carolina	89.38	9.7%	37.43	40.18	11.77
Arizona	77.97	8.5%	29.50	34.71	13.75
Georgia	77.25	8.4%	29.50	35.60	12.15
Florida	76.42	8.3%	57.38	15.30	3.75
Texas	52.20	5.7%	30.33	14.12	7.75
Nevada	51.95	5.7%	13.51	30.22	8.22
Wisconsin	41.22	4.5%	13.14	19.37	8.70
Ohio	32.45	3.5%	12.69	11.91	7.85
All Other States	155.40	16.9%	95.78	34.77	24.85
Grand Total	918.76	100.0%	418.49	355.58	144.69

(Table from DDx 2024 After-Action Report, and includes both soft and hard side contact attempts.)

This same infrastructure was also available to every state party in the country, to Senate campaigns that pulled out narrow victories, and to campaigns up and down the ballot that leveraged data to run winning programs in the face of significant domestic and global anti-incumbent headwinds. Phoenix has now been directly used by thousands of campaign analysts, data scientists, and engineers representing hundreds of campaigns and committees. The data generated and maintained in our infrastructure was simultaneously available to every

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Democratic campaign staffer and volunteer around the country who knocked on doors or made phone calls around the country this cycle – with the results of their outreach coming back into Phoenix for the benefit of future campaigns. What Phoenix allowed analysts to understand is that while the mode of raw attempts was text messaging, with almost 420 million texts sent, the mode of successful contacts with voters was door-to-door canvassing, with just under 24 million total conversations had on doorsteps nationwide. The technical data supports the theory that future election cycles may just well be decided on American welcome mats, suggesting that continued use of donor dollars in this direction generates the highest return on investment.

This will continue being the case with demographics that failed to be reached in the last election. It has been pointed out by many that if the election were decided by voters under 30, that Kamala Harris would be President. Yet despite reaching voters online at a scale never before seen, the party still missed opportunities to connect with young voters and voters in key demographics because we failed to meet these voters in the ecosystems where they spend the majority of their time and where narratives are built.

No evidence or sourcing provided for this claim.

Election Integrity

Any assessment of the state of technology in the Democratic party would be incomplete without an acknowledgement that comprehensive data warehouses like Phoenix represent an irresistible target for hackers and other bad actors seeking to undermine the integrity of the modern political process. The mere existence of the kind of data collected and analyzed by the party requires sophisticated protective efforts to rebuff the kinds of cyber attacks experienced by the party in 2015 and 2016, when various groups of Russian-sponsored computer hackers and intelligence agencies infiltrated the DNC computer network to aid in Donald Trump's ascent to the presidency.

In the lead-up to the 2024 campaign cycle, a persistent concern was that more Russian operatives or nation-state actors would again attempt a cyberattack on Democratic resources. These concerns were warranted as data reveals that there were widespread cyberattacks in 2024. However, because of a commitment to deploying robust and advanced protection tools to safeguard the data, the DNC and its vendors repelled over 6.1 billion malicious requests between October 31st and November 6th, more than double the volume seen during the entire months of September and October.

2025 and Beyond

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Overall, what 2024 showed us is that our tech infrastructure finally began to work as it was intended. Campaigns were able to optimize their persuasive messaging and increase their voter mobilization efforts. Even more recently, Democratic wins in governor and mayoral races nationwide showed that when innovation is paired with investment and consistency, success is possible. Candidates were able to craft and deliver persuasive messaging, injecting them directly into the ecosystems where these voters spend the majority of their time and are open to being persuaded and engaged.

Yet, there is still work to be done. In March 2025, the New York Times reported on problems with NGP VAN, the database that most Democratic and progressive campaigns and organizations have relied on for years. Problems with the database were so severe during the 2024 election cycle that leaders in the party staged an “extraordinary intervention[iii]” to keep the system, and the election, up and running. In early 2024, NGP VAN warned Democratic groups that it could not continue to successfully handle the petabytes of data that were routinely being downloaded to and uploaded from its servers. If VAN had collapsed, the entire get-out-the-vote operation might have transitioned to one familiar with strategists in the 1970s and 80s, with canvassers working with pen and paper instead of smartphones and tablets, effectively unable to determine which doors would yield the highest likelihood of a successful conversion.

Thankfully, DNC engineers, with the assistance of devoted donors, were able to fund and operate an emergency workaround that maintained the accessibility of critical data and models. Top Democrats made addressing this issue a priority and agreed that this could not continue to be an item of discussion every four years. This is why Ken’s vision for the future includes one where cutting-edge technological tools lie at the very foundation of the modern political process, especially technology that “centers the user experience of organizers and volunteers,” who work at the ground floors of the campaigns and need to have up-to-date data on trends and changes in order to run flexible and adaptable campaigns capable of delivering on the promises set by the future faces and leaders of the party.

Sourcing for quote not provided.

No sourcing provided for these claims.

The reliability issues with NGP VAN raised concerns about an overreliance on a single CRM, and sparked an exploration of an alternative that could refine the party’s relational messaging and strategy while handling the increased technological demands of the tens of millions of data points contained within it.

This past spring, the DNC issued a Request For Proposal focused on identifying “the tools and technologies that will power the next generation of organizing at the DNC and at every level of the ballot around the country.” In a world where online and offline information continues to

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merge into a third, interconnected space, voting tools and technologies must be able to develop a cohesive strategy that unites influencer engagement, relational organizing, and digital media as equal parts of an executive strategy that reflects Ken's commitment to Organize Early, Organize Always, and Organize Everywhere.

As we work to build campaigns that honor our founding principles while branching out into new, uncertain realities, the DNC is committed to ensuring the tools leveraged and deployed in the future drive authentic, impactful voter engagement, while allowing teams to generate lessons learned from processes focused on continuous improvement. The vendors that the DNC partners with must not only understand this mission, but become equal partners in it, helping to organize winning strategies and campaigns not just for 2028, but for election cycles to come.

Rather than each community-, city-, and state-level effort generating data that sits around gathering dust between elections, it is essential to develop and deploy strong national standards around data sharing and reporting while preserving the flexibility that allows for adjustments based on local issues and trends. In this manner, technology and the data that it generates should focus on more relational organizing, more efficient person-to-person communication, and more resonant messages over technology for technology's sake.

It is essential that the DNC takes the lead in reducing duplicative efforts and stretched resources, and leverage technology in a way that models what cooperation can look like between and among groups with the same goals of a prosperous future that represents everyone's interests and not just that of a few billionaires and their friends. In order to do that, the technological infrastructure of the party must ensure that we are prepared to win elections now and for years to come, including the integration of redundancies and protections that ensure that the data is secure and accessible, and that its integrity can never be questioned.

If we have learned anything from the past few election cycles, it is that today's technological marvel can become tomorrow's antique faster than we can bat an eye. The breakthrough tools that powered "Yes We Can" in 2012 proved that they could not keep up just four years later. Ensuring that our advantages are institutionalized in our perspective and approach requires evaluating every relationship with every vendor to determine if they can continue to meet the moment, or whether it is time to find new partners as committed to the fight as everyone in the party itself.

Infrastructure can't be built once and then set aside – it requires continued, ongoing investment to keep up with both technological advances and the innovations of campaign programs that are

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built on top of it. And *especially* as we ask critical questions as a party about *how* we are engaging with voters, we should ensure our tools are helping to move us forward rather than limiting where we're able to go.

Additionally, innovations should be considered separated from end results. What has been made obvious through the demise of Hawkfish and other technological advances within the party is that while the role of technology in politics and political campaigns continues to expand at an exponential rate, the adoption and leveraging of political technology remains inconsistent at best. Not only is the money necessary for technology investment **often allocated at late points in the political cycle**, but campaigns frequently default to what they know best over what will work best.

No sourcing or evidence provided for this claim.

Allocating money for technology adoption late in the political cycle means that users of the platforms and the infrastructure are trained on it late in the cycles, discouraging their effective use and potential contributions to campaigns in need. Beginning with the end in mind means planning from the ground up, allocating money for technological investments early, consistently training members on their use, and ensuring that its use represents a cohesive strategic execution over fractured, duplicative, and frankly contradictory efforts.

We bear a critical responsibility to ensure our candidates – for the presidency and all candidates up and down the ballot – continue to have access to best in class infrastructure. And as the DNC Tech team, we're committed to staying in the fight.

[i] Inside the Democrats' plan to fix their crumbling data operation. Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/democrats-fix-crumbling-data-operation/>.

[ii] Inside the Democrats' plan to fix their crumbling data operation. Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/democrats-fix-crumbling-data-operation/>.

[iii] NYT. Inside the Democratic Disaster that Didn't Happen in November. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/01/us/politics/democrats-voter-data.html?searchResultPosition=1>

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Campaign Fundraising

No sourcing or evidence provided for many claims in this section.

One of the many great things about our American democracy (if we can keep it) is how in free and fair elections, a campaign can win on ideas and smart organizing, even if they are outspent by multiples of millions of dollars.

The ability to raise money – especially early money – does provide an enormous advantage. Candidates are able to hire staff, invest in organizing, print or produce collateral, pay for media, and build to win. Money, along with big ideas, sweat, shoe leather, and elbow grease, combine into energetic campaigns to persuade and turn out the voters needed to win.

No evidence provided for these claims.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, Democrats faced significant spending disadvantages. As the party of corporations and elites, Republicans consistently outraised and outspent Democrats at every level of federal and nonfederal campaigns. Democrats were still able to win by running lean and effective campaigns and by working in close partnership with Labor and other allies in service to working people and a better America.

This financial landscape changed in the 2000s for reasons discussed later, and Democrats now have a fundraising edge. By the 2024 cycle, Democrats significantly outraised and outspent Republicans in the race for President, in Senate and House elections, and in nonfederal elections.

Sourcing not provided, but assume data is from the FEC.

Federal Candidate Fundraising, 2024[1]

	House	Senate	President	All Races
REPUBLICAN	\$ 1,001,531,701.38	\$ 506,699,592.10	\$ 495,853,270.30	\$ 2,004,084,563.78
DEMOCRATIC	\$ 1,261,607,545.41	\$ 930,456,127.88	\$ 1,175,189,102.91	\$ 3,367,252,776.20
THIRD PARTY	\$ 18,825,467.96	\$ 39,985,388.00	\$ 67,278,247.27	\$ 126,089,103.23
Total	\$ 2,281,964,714.75	\$ 1,477,141,107.98	\$ 1,738,320,620.48	\$ 5,497,426,443.21

Sourcing not provided, but assume data is from the FEC.

Non-Federal Candidate Fundraising, 2024[2]

	Governor	Attorney General	Legislative	All Races
REPUBLICAN	\$ 95,329,844.00	\$ 33,901,190.00	\$ 96,002,679.00	\$ 225,233,713.00
DEMOCRAT	\$ 123,687,454.00	\$ 30,882,024.00	\$ 137,472,740.00	\$ 292,042,218.00
Total	\$ 219,017,298.00	\$ 64,783,214.00	\$ 234,076,911.55	\$ 517,877,423.55

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Of course, not every dollar raised is spent in cycle, and some spending can be from funds raised or rolled over prior to the two-year cycle. Fundraising totals are dependent on a combination of the electoral calendar, primary and general election competitiveness, and whether there are incumbents, challengers, or open seats for given contests.

For 2024, the summary tables above demonstrate how far Democrats have come in cultivating a significant fundraising advantage at nearly every level of politics.

However, **raising more campaign money than Republicans cannot be an end unto itself.** Democrats can and should take lessons from 2024 – when we had much more money than Republicans and still underperformed in critical elections – to revisit the principles, tactics, and outcomes of our fundraising.

A Note on Self-Funders

No sourcing or data provided for many claims in this section.

The wealthy and powerful have always sought to control our country, generally through proxies, but occasionally seek office themselves. And when they run, they usually self-finance their campaigns. **Self-financing candidates are often unsuccessful, frequently facing attacks for trying to “buy” public office.**

No evidence provided; contradicts claims elsewhere in report.

The 1980s and 1990s featured the rise of self-financed campaigns, with candidates like John Anderson, Ross Perot, Steve Forbes, and Michael Huffington spending tens of millions of dollars on losing campaigns for statewide and national office.

The flood of personal spending increased after 2000, with John Corzine spending \$60 million to win the New Jersey U.S. Senate race, Michael Bloomberg spending more than \$68 million to win his first mayoral election in New York City, and candidates like Tom Golisano (NY), Doug Forrester (NJ), Meg Whitman (CA), Linda McMahon (CT), and Bob Hugin (NJ) each spending tens of millions of dollars to lose statewide races.

In 2008, Mitt Romney poured nearly \$45 million of personal funds into his losing primary against John McCain.

In 2014, Bruce Rauner spent heavily to win the Illinois governor’s race, and spent heavily again to lose in 2018 when he was dramatically outspent by the also self-financing current Governor J.B. Pritzker.

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In 2019 into early 2020, Michael Bloomberg and Tom Steyer combined to spend more than \$1.4 billion in seeking the Democratic nomination for President. In fact, Bloomberg's \$1.07 billion spend exceeded the rest of the combined Democratic field seeking the nomination. **Bloomberg and Steyer combined to win a single delegate.**

Appears to be a conflation of contests won and delegates awarded.

While some self-funders can win, money only goes so far. Winning a nomination and general election requires a mix of funding, a message rooted in experience and relevant to the moment, and an organization geared to identifying and turning out supporters.

Regardless, the investments made by self-funders throughout recent history now pale in comparison to the amounts of money flowing into elections.

Presidential Campaign Fundraising

No evidence provided for many claims in this section.

As a general matter, campaign money is like water - it seeks its own level, probing for cracks and seeping into the body politic. From our Founding, special interests have sought influence, and as early as 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt advocated the establishment of public financing for Presidential campaigns.

In 1971, Congress passed the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). Additional post-Nixon reforms enacted in 1974 were designed to restore confidence in American politics, and led to the creation of the Federal Elections Commission in 1975.

First implemented in the 1976 Presidential campaign, public financing for Presidential primaries and the general election remains in place in the law, but these practices have been effectively abandoned by major party candidates as they can now raise more funds outside the public financing system.

To receive public funds, candidates need to "opt in" to the system. Opting in triggers more advanced disclosure requirements for fundraising, and tighter accounting, allocation, and disclosure rules for campaign spending. Candidates must hit fundraising thresholds to qualify for matching funds for the nominating contests, and the timing of receipts, expenditures, and federal fund transfers were once a tightly monitored and strategic process for candidates.

The nominees for any party receiving 25 percent of the popular vote in the previous Presidential general election are eligible to receive a grant for the subsequent general election. In exchange for accepting the general election grant, the nominee must agree to limit spending

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to the amount of the grant and may not accept private contributions for the general election campaign.

From 1976 until 2004, major party nominees opted to receive funding from the FEC for the general election, and were also eligible to participate in a matching funds program for the primaries and caucuses, subject to the aforementioned spending caps and tight regulation.

This had the effect of leveling the playing field for each party's nomination, and because the major party candidates received the identical amount of public funds for the general election, the candidates would have to carefully manage resources – forcing campaigns to limit their direct spending between the last nominating contest and their party convention when they would officially become the nominee and receive their general election grant.

The general election grant is \$20 million plus the difference in the price index. In 2024, the grant was set at \$123.5 million. Campaigns now routinely outspend this number in the general election – sometimes in a week! The unintended consequence of reform was to push more candidates out of the public finance system, leading to massive increases in campaign fundraising and expenditures.

The abandonment of the public financing system began in the 2000 cycle. Democrats Al Gore and Bill Bradley stayed in the matching fund system for the nominating process, and Gore accepted the grant for the general election; while then-Texas Governor George W. Bush “busted the cap” on the Republican side for the nomination, but accepted the FEC grant for the general election.

By staying out of the matching fund system, Bush enjoyed a significant advantage over the Republican field during the nominating process. Learning from this, and realizing an incumbent Bush would have an even greater spending advantage if he stayed outside the public finance system for his reelection campaign, most 2004 Democratic presidential candidates opted out of the matching fund program for the nomination process, but both major party candidates remained in the public system for the 2004 general election.

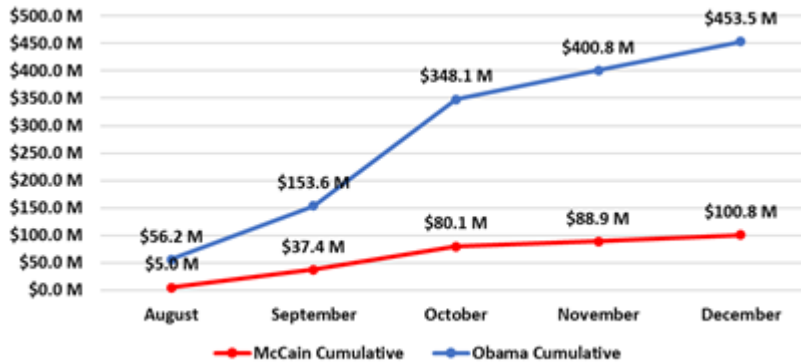
In 2008, candidates from both major parties opted out of the matching fund program for the primaries, and Barack Obama became the first major party candidate to opt out of the public financing system for the general election. President Obama therefore spent more than \$435 million in the general election, while Senator McCain spent a little more than \$100 million. This

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means President Obama enjoyed a more than four to one overall spending advantage over John McCain, who stayed within the public financing system he championed.

2008 Presidential General Election Spending (Cumulative)[3]



Inconsistencies found between chart and cited FEC data.

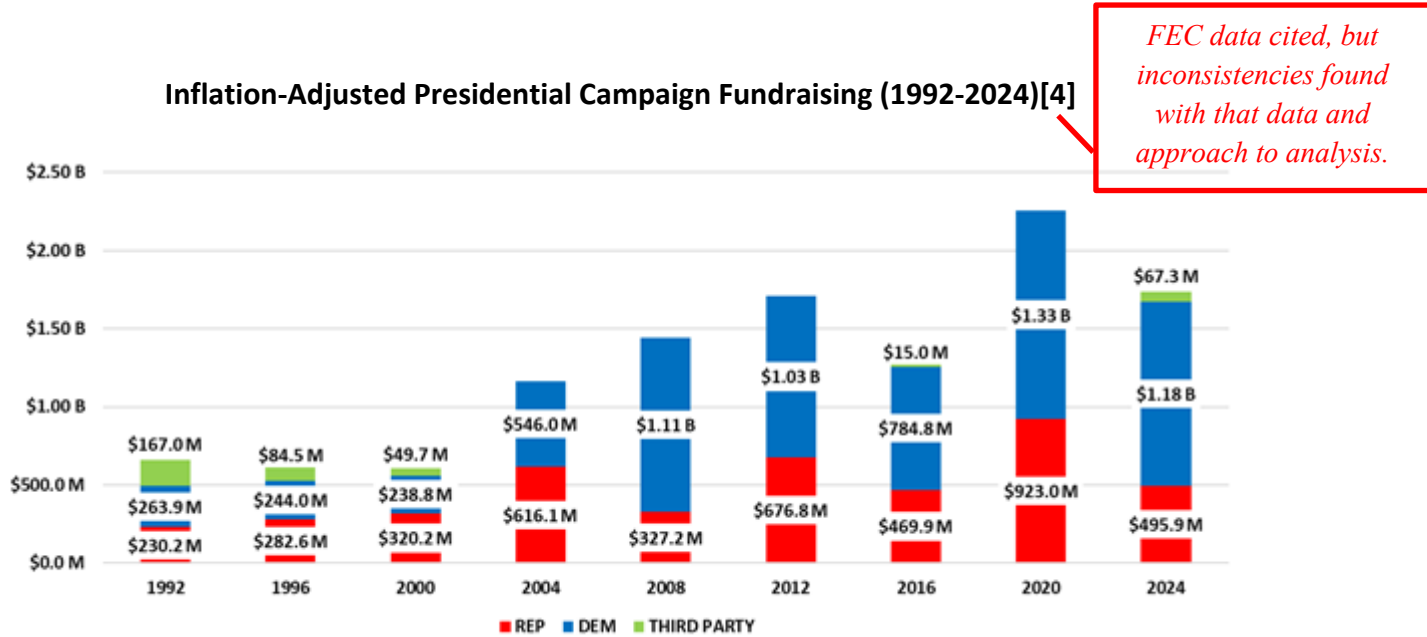
McCain was actually forced to borrow \$17 million in August and September 2008 to float his campaign until the federal funding transfer was made. This cash flow advantage and spending disparity helped fuel Obama's electoral landslide victory.

2012 was the first Presidential election where both major party candidates opted out the public finance system for the general election, resulting in combined presidential campaign spending exceeding one billion dollars when adjusted for inflation. This has persisted in every cycle since 2012, with combined spending exceeding \$2 billion in 2020.

Further, when adjusted for inflation, every Democratic nominee after 2004 other than Secretary Hillary Clinton in 2016 has exceeded \$1 billion in fundraising into their principal campaign committees – leading to significant and meaningful resource advantages for their campaigns.

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It is important to note these data are for the Presidential campaigns alone. The data does not include party or joint fundraising committee receipts or spending, or receipts to independent expenditure committees. These non-campaign committee entities combined for more than \$1 billion in additional receipts (and consequent expenditures) in the 2024 cycle.

The recent increases in total candidate fundraising for President have been matched by similar growth in fundraising in the Senate and House and in statewide and legislative campaigns. Collectively, campaigns are now more than a cottage industry, they are a double-digit billion-dollar ecosystem with weak regulation and where sharper practices can make a significant difference in driving winning outcomes.

Senate Campaign Fundraising

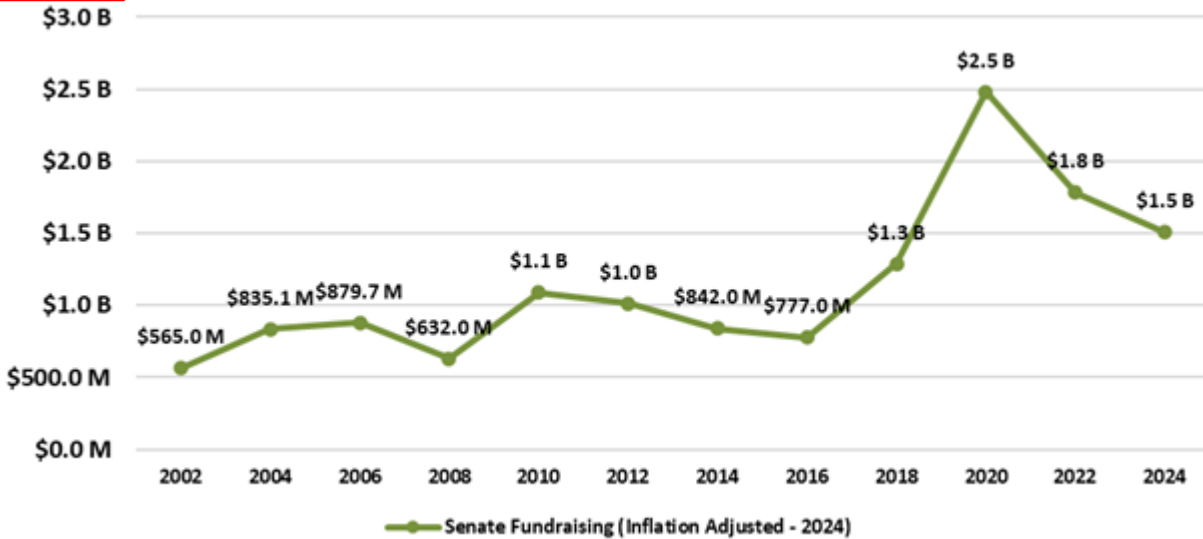
From 2018 forward, Senate candidates have aggregated at least \$1.3 billion each two-year cycle. After averaging \$829.3 million from 2002 through 2016, aggregate fundraising has more than doubled to an inflation-adjusted average of \$1.76 billion from 2018 through 2024.

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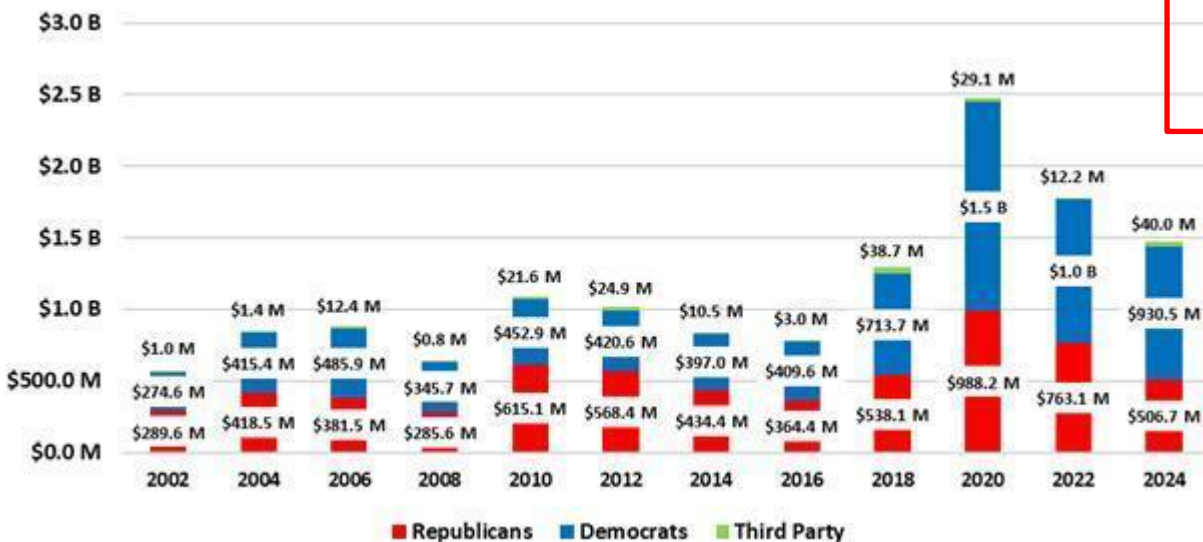
Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Senate Candidate Fundraising by Cycle – 2002-2024 (Inflation Adjusted)



As overall Senate fundraising has increased – Democrats have surpassed Republicans. In 2014, Republican Senate candidates outraised Democrats, but Democratic Senate candidates have outraised Republicans in every subsequent cycle.

Senate Candidate Fundraising by Party and Cycle – 2002-2024 (Inflation Adjusted)



Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

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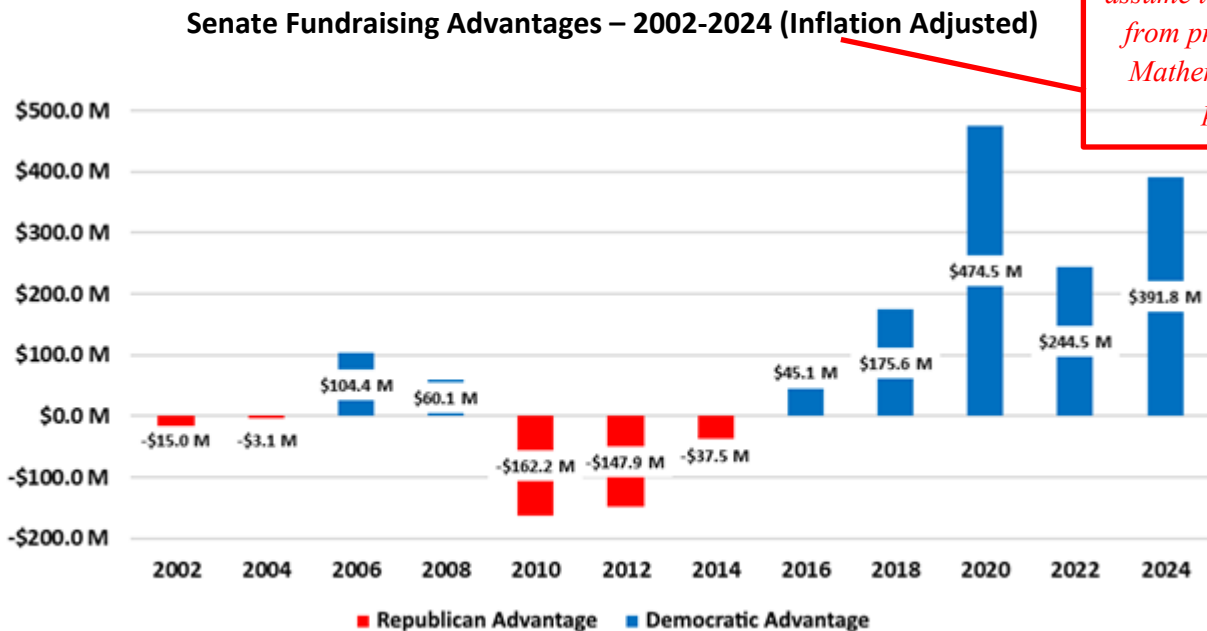
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Senate fundraising exploded in the 2018 cycle, driven by Democrats. Again, aggregate fundraising totals within a Senate cycle are connected to the map – which seats are up in a given election year – but the growth in 2018 was also connected to the midterm resistance in reaction to the Trump election and mismanaged administration.

Republican aggregate fundraising grew by 47.7 percent from 2016 to 2018 to an inflation adjusted \$538.1 million, while Democratic aggregate fundraising grew by 74.3 percent, to an inflation adjusted \$713.7 million.

In 2020, Democrats surpassed \$1.46 billion in total Senate fundraising, \$1.0 billion in 2022, and \$930.5 million in 2024; while Republicans raised \$988.2 million in 2020, \$763 million in 2022, and \$538.7 million in 2024.

As important as the growth is, the disparity in fundraising between the two parties is now enormous, and Democrats have averaged a \$370 million dollar fundraising advantage over the past three election cycles (a full six-year Senate term). These advantages helped Senate Democrats forge a tie in the Senate until a series of losses in the tougher 2024 map.



Sourcing not provided, assume to be calculation from previous charts. Mathematical errors present.

There were 34 Senate races on the 2024 ballot, with varying patterns of fundraising based on the nature of the contest – open seats versus re-elects, etc.

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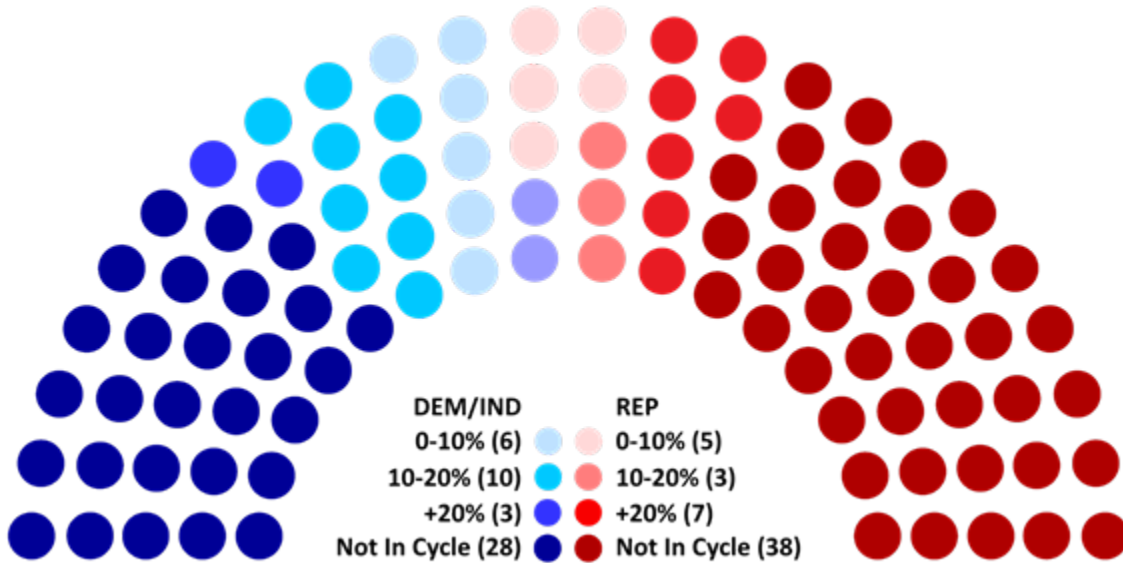
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Eleven seats were decided by single digits (6 Democrats and 5 Republicans), 13 decided by 10 to 20 percent (9 Democrats, 1 Independent, and 3 Republicans), and 10 seats were decided by more than 20 percent (2 Democrats, 1 Independent, and 9 Republicans). 28 Democrats and 38 Republicans were not in cycle in 2024.

Data inconsistencies with graphic

Sourcing not provided.

US Senate Election Outcomes (2024)[5]



Competitiveness drives fundraising, and in some instances, open safe seats saw significant primary spending which exceeded spending the general election.

When controlling only for the nominees in general elections, as expected, spending volume was higher in the more competitive contests. Fundraising for the 11 Senate contests decided by single digits totaled \$882,600,904.42, or 68.2 percent of all funds raised for all 34 Senate races. Two thirds of the funds were raised into the one-third of competitive seats.

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Sourcing not provided, but assume data is from the FEC and Secretaries of State.

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Senate Candidate Fundraising - 2024 (Single-Digit Contests)

State	Margin	Democratic Party	Republican Party	Third Party	Total Raise
Texas	-8.50%	\$ 94,674,182.67	\$ 74,050,030.94	\$ 13,994.00	\$ 168,738,207.61
Montana	-7.14%	\$ 93,570,122.72	\$ 30,004,859.72	\$ -	\$ 123,574,982.44
Nebraska	-6.67%	\$ -	\$ 6,555,361.20	\$ 15,129,327.27	\$ 21,684,688.47
Ohio	-3.62%	\$ 96,530,240.72	\$ 26,920,693.53	\$ -	\$ 123,450,934.25
Pennsylvania	-0.22%	\$ 58,147,601.15	\$ 35,970,836.83	\$ 21,112.57	\$ 94,139,550.55
Michigan	0.34%	\$ 51,937,060.20	\$ 13,247,396.66	\$ 2,307.50	\$ 65,186,764.36
Wisconsin	0.85%	\$ 50,228,545.14	\$ 31,958,333.20	\$ 76,594.95	\$ 82,263,473.29
Nevada	1.64%	\$ 43,915,245.20	\$ 24,063,366.48	\$ 15,573.29	\$ 67,994,184.97
Arizona	2.40%	\$ 64,657,199.96	\$ 26,252,199.20	\$ -	\$ 90,909,399.16
Virginia	8.93%	\$ 18,121,880.46	\$ 9,832,460.01	\$ -	\$ 27,954,340.47
New Jersey	9.61%	\$ 12,441,003.62	\$ 4,249,567.71	\$ 13,807.52	\$ 16,704,378.85

Unclear which 14 races are being referred to. Chart above and analysis only mention 11 races.

Democrats outraised Republicans in 13 of the 14 contests. The one exception is Nebraska, where Democrats did not field a candidate, and the independent candidate outraised their Republican counterpart.

Comparing fundraising totals may not paint an accurate picture of a given election’s competitiveness. Each state is different – with different populations, geographic and economic profiles, and campaign landscapes. There are also impacts on how candidates raise money based on their status as incumbents or challengers.

This next table shows the comparative “raise per voter” – the total amount of money raised for each competitive Senate race compared to the actual number of votes cast in each state.

Total Senate Raise Per Voter - 2024[6]

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

State	Margin	Total Raise	Votes Cast	Raise Per Voter
Texas	-8.50%	\$ 168,738,207.61	11,291,854	\$ 14.94
Montana	-7.14%	\$ 123,574,982.44	607,262	\$ 203.50
Nebraska	-6.67%	\$ 21,684,688.47	938,336	\$ 23.11
Ohio	-3.62%	\$ 123,450,934.25	5,704,620	\$ 21.64
Pennsylvania	-0.22%	\$ 94,139,550.55	6,963,137	\$ 13.52
Michigan	0.34%	\$ 65,186,764.36	5,577,187	\$ 11.69
Wisconsin	0.85%	\$ 82,263,473.29	3,390,787	\$ 24.26
Nevada	1.64%	\$ 67,994,184.97	1,464,728	\$ 46.42
Arizona	2.40%	\$ 90,909,399.16	3,354,552	\$ 27.10
Virginia	8.93%	\$ 27,954,340.47	4,445,535	\$ 6.29
New Jersey	9.94%	\$ 16,704,378.85	4,036,123	\$ 4.14

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As a general matter, there is no discernible pattern to the spend associated with a given vote total or outcome. The Montana spend is significant, but was necessary. Jon Tester spent the most per voter, outspent Tim Sheehy by more than three to one, and outperformed the top of the ticket by more than any other battleground Senate race.

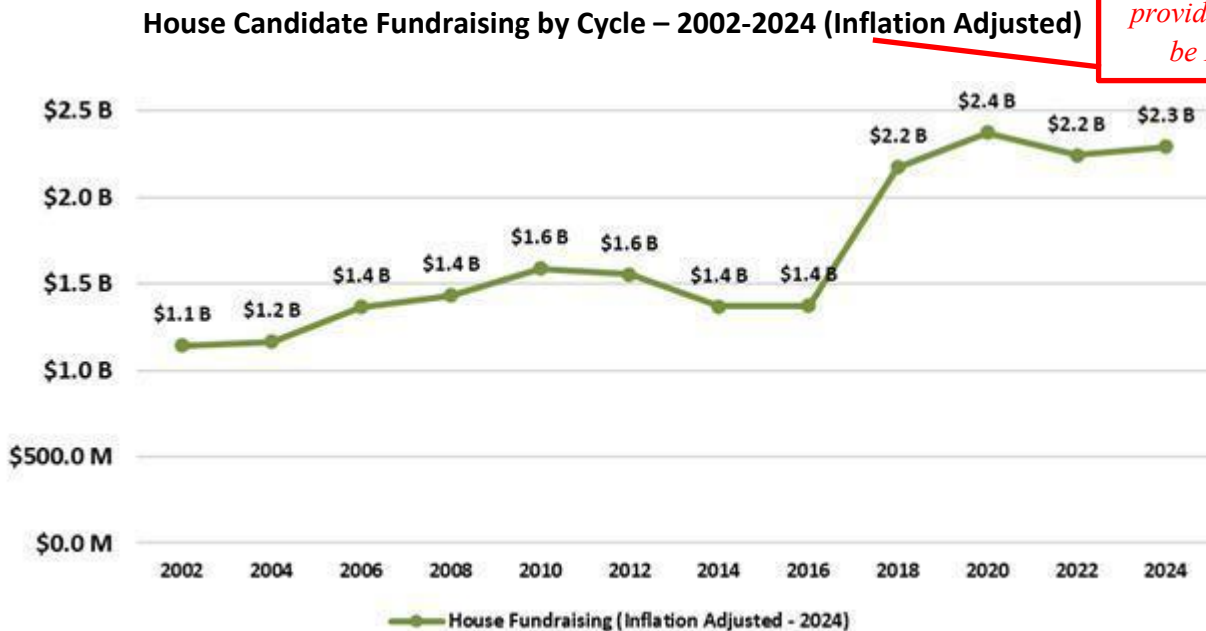
Raise and spend appear to be used interchangeably in this section.

It bears repeating – candidate fundraising is only one measure of financial support. The Senate campaign committees, coordinated expenditures, independent expenditure efforts, and state parties all add to the fundraising mix for both major parties – taking the combined spending in the battlegrounds to an average of more than \$100 million per state.

House Campaign Fundraising

Similar to the Senate, fundraising for US House candidates has more than doubled when adjusted for inflation since 2016 - exceeding \$2.2 billion in every election since 2018.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.



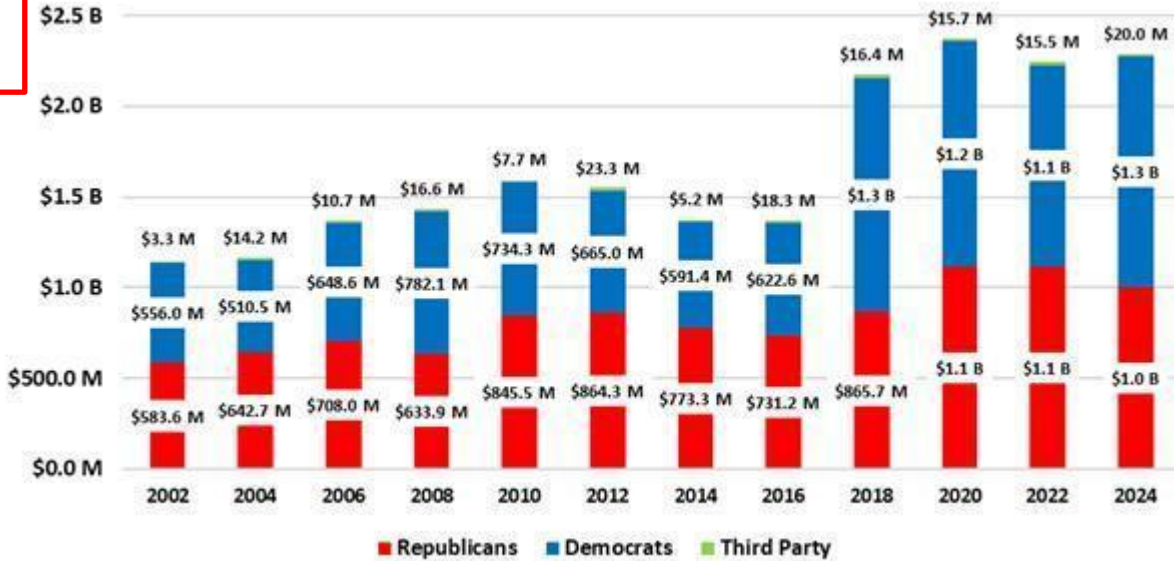
The House landscape is far more complex than the Senate, where every seat is up every two years. There are therefore many more House candidates – 1,869 FEC filers for the House in 2023-2024 in comparison to 265 filers for the US Senate - and Democrats now have the advantage in aggregate fundraising.

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House Candidate Fundraising by Party and Cycle – 2002-2024 (Inflation Adjusted)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.



Most House candidates raise less than Senate candidates – but their aggregate dollars exceed Senate fundraising. A significant portion of House funds are raised and spent during primary elections, and as with the Senate, a significant percentage of House fundraising is concentrated in battleground districts.

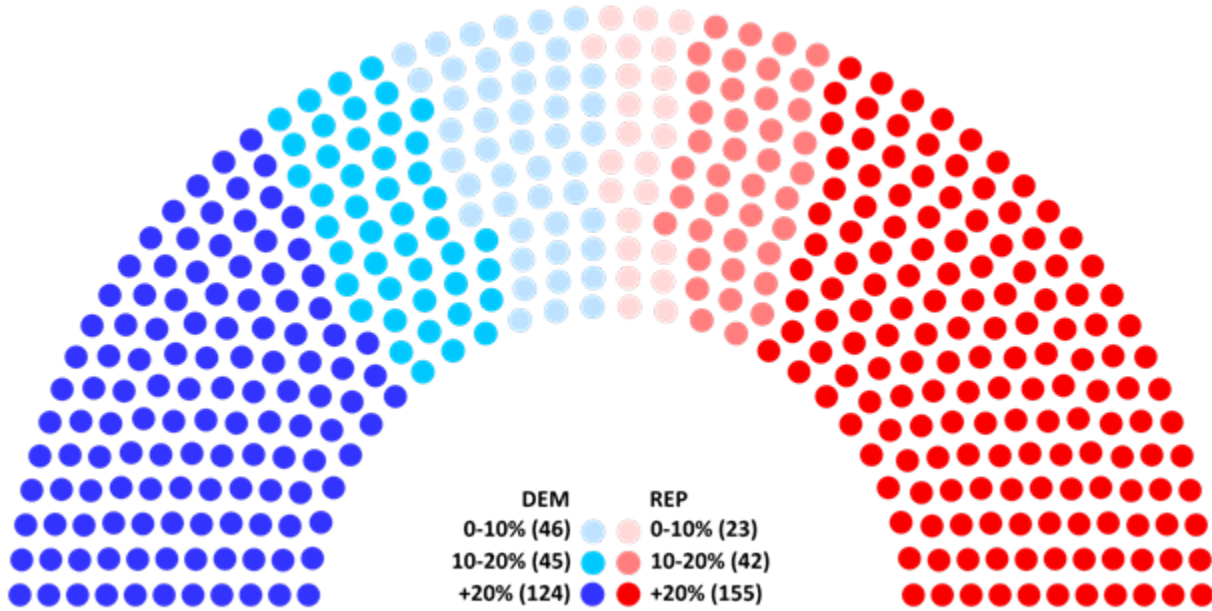
This assessment starts with measuring the electoral competitiveness of the 2024 elections. There are a few ways to consider House outcomes – the seats decided by single digits in 2024 (46 Dem, 23 Rep), seats decided by 10 to 20 percent (45 Dem, 42 Rep, and 279 seats decided by more than 20 percent (124 Dem, 155 Rep).

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US House 2024 Election Outcomes[7]

Sourcing not provided.



Focusing solely on nominee campaigns (excluding unsuccessful primary campaigns or retiring members) shows Democrats retained a financial advantage, especially in battleground districts.

Overall, general election Democrats averaged \$4,322,692.33 raised, while general election Republicans averaged \$3,683,447.76 raised.

Sourcing not provided, assume analysis is based on data provided above.

	> 20	10 - 20	0 - 10	0 - -10	-10 - -20	< -20
Districts	124	45	46	23	42	155
Dem Raise	\$ 300,768,101.97	\$ 148,077,593.36	\$ 237,504,604.72	\$ 168,368,871.00	\$ 48,422,585.54	\$ 28,237,094.89
Rep Raise	\$ 14,928,633.99	\$ 21,369,741.11	\$ 118,477,103.06	\$ 129,257,750.47	\$ 119,771,201.63	\$ 406,564,077.55
Average Dem Raise	\$ 2,425,549.21	\$ 3,246,168.74	\$ 5,163,143.58	\$ 7,320,385.70	\$ 1,152,918.70	\$ 182,174.81
Average Rep Raise	\$ 120,392.21	\$ 474,660.91	\$ 2,575,589.20	\$ 5,619,902.19	\$ 2,851,696.28	\$ 2,622,994.05
Share of Raise	18.1%	9.6%	20.5%	17.1%	9.7%	25.0%
	48.2%			51.8%		

As the table above demonstrates, 37.6 percent of all funds raised were within the 69 districts decided by single digits – with those 69 districts comprising 15.9 percent of all House seats. Democrats raised 43.7 percent of all of their funds, while Republicans raised 30.6 percent off all funds in the 68 districts decided by single digits.

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House Top Raisers

The top 25 winning raisers in each party are a collection of leadership and battleground Members.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Top 25 Raisers by Party (2023-24) – Successful Candidates

Democrats	Receipts	Republican	Receipts
NY-08 - Jeffries	\$ 22,977,197.34	LA-04 - Johnson	\$ 19,867,069.39
VA-07 - Vindman	\$ 18,096,189.51	NY-21 - Stefanik	\$ 15,467,577.50
NY-14 - Ocasio-Cortez	\$ 15,299,235.57	LA-01 - Scalise	\$ 14,732,239.34
WA-03 - Gluesenkamp Perez	\$ 11,856,001.72	OH-04 - Jordan	\$ 13,512,268.90
IL-08 - Krishnamoorthi	\$ 10,897,838.27	MT-01 - Zinke	\$ 10,117,220.53
CA-27 - Whitesides	\$ 10,614,137.63	MI-10 - James	\$ 9,546,139.34
CA-17 - Khanna	\$ 10,570,516.03	CA-40 - Kim	\$ 9,244,755.74
NJ-05 - Gottheimer	\$ 10,246,423.95	GA-14 - Taylor Greene	\$ 8,960,241.51
CA-11 - Pelosi	\$ 10,223,363.88	AZ-02 - Crane	\$ 8,559,239.47
NY-19 - Riley	\$ 9,846,326.11	NY-17 - Lawler	\$ 8,387,801.92
MI-13 - Thandekar	\$ 9,660,670.47	MN-06 - Emmer	\$ 8,158,685.41
NY-03 - Suozzi	\$ 9,646,883.39	CA-41 - Calvert	\$ 8,056,905.14
NY-15 - Torres	\$ 9,149,800.46	TX-15 - De La Cruz	\$ 7,936,781.16
MI-12 - Tlaib	\$ 8,473,097.48	WI-03 - Van Orden	\$ 7,658,526.55
MN-05 - Omar	\$ 8,335,875.08	KY-01 - Comer	\$ 7,650,141.57
MN-02 - Craig	\$ 8,288,031.44	AZ-06 - Ciscomani	\$ 7,035,782.04
NY-18 - Ryan	\$ 8,143,126.11	TX-06 - Ellzey	\$ 6,899,715.28
ME-02 - Golden	\$ 7,943,838.27	FL-01 - Patronis	\$ 6,772,979.08
OR-05 - Bynum	\$ 7,524,631.65	TX-13 - Jackson	\$ 6,668,890.94
NM-02 - Vasquez	\$ 7,040,626.00	FL-19 - Donalds	\$ 6,600,931.63
CA-47 - Min	\$ 6,835,943.16	MO-04 - Alford	\$ 6,549,798.75
NY-16 - Latimer	\$ 6,679,191.82	VA-02 - Kiggans	\$ 6,481,317.57
WA-08 - Schrier	\$ 6,530,378.69	PA-01 - Fitzpatrick	\$ 6,439,520.45
CA-45 - Tran	\$ 6,514,154.69	NE-02 - Bacon	\$ 6,358,739.35
CA-31 - Cisneros	\$ 6,477,170.49	IN-06 - Shreve	\$ 6,241,636.66
Top 25 Total	\$ 247,870,649.21	Top 25 Total	\$ 223,904,905.22

Democrats averaged nearly \$1 million more than the top 25 Republicans, with Democrats averaging \$9,914,825.97, and Republicans averaging \$8,956,196.21. The two leaders led their respective caucuses in fundraising, with Hakeem Jeffries at \$22,977,197.34 and Mike Johnson at \$19,867,069.39.

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Democrats also had an advantage among the candidates who were unsuccessful. The table below shows the top 25 fundraising Democratic and Republican incumbents and challengers who came up short, with the colors reflecting the margin of the contest in favor of the current incumbent.

Note how 20 of the 23 single digit Republican-held seats are on the Democratic list. Democrats did not lose because of a lack of funding – though more would have certainly helped. This is actually a good sign – competitive Democrats proved to be effective fundraisers.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Top 25 Raisers by Party (2023-24) – Unsuccessful Candidates

Democrats	Receipts
CO-03 - Frisch	\$ 17,188,573.07
AK-AL - Peltola	\$ 13,443,537.46
CA-41 - Rollins	\$ 12,603,461.80
NY-17 - Jones	\$ 9,960,888.75
PA-07 - Wild	\$ 8,960,927.65
PA-08 - Cartwright	\$ 8,650,657.78
AZ-06 - Engel	\$ 8,461,618.48
CO-08 - Caraveo	\$ 8,124,793.49
MI-07 - Hertel	\$ 7,656,059.90
NE-02 - Vargas	\$ 7,515,611.35
IA-01 - Bohannon	\$ 6,900,996.18
PA-10 - Stelson	\$ 6,516,973.46
CA-22 - Salas	\$ 6,515,959.58
WI-03 - Cooke	\$ 6,358,058.65
AZ-01 - Shah	\$ 6,343,150.10
NJ-07 - Altman	\$ 6,252,517.05
MT-01 - Tranel	\$ 6,225,655.30
IA-03 - Baccam	\$ 5,610,180.06
AZ-02 - Nez	\$ 5,522,850.09
NY-01 - Avlon	\$ 5,298,299.52
CO-04 - Calvarese	\$ 4,384,661.94
PA-01 - Ehasz	\$ 3,961,549.18
CA-16 - Low	\$ 3,717,868.88
GA-14 - Harris	\$ 3,529,948.79
VA-02 - Cotter Smasal	\$ 3,250,762.89
Top 25 Total	\$ 182,955,561.40

Republican	Receipts
CA-45 - Steel	\$ 10,730,106.83
TX-34 - Flores	\$ 6,926,111.49
CA-27 - Garcia	\$ 6,539,107.78
OR-05 - Chavez-Deremer	\$ 6,092,658.62
MI-08 - Junge	\$ 5,984,458.77
NY-19 - Molinaro	\$ 5,570,305.64
CA-49 - Gunderson	\$ 4,958,325.22
NC-01 - Buckhout	\$ 4,795,621.51
NY-04 - Desposito	\$ 4,644,841.34
CA-13 - Duarte	\$ 4,576,132.43
CA-47 - Baugh	\$ 4,507,491.38
NM-02 - Herrell	\$ 4,475,628.35
NY-22 - Williams	\$ 4,190,242.60
AL-02 - Dobson	\$ 3,857,871.22
ME-02 - Theriault	\$ 3,628,072.48
VA-07 - Anderson	\$ 3,408,433.58
MN-02 - Teirab	\$ 3,304,665.91
CT-05 - Logan	\$ 3,011,059.71
WA-03 - Kent	\$ 2,654,419.86
FL-09 - Chalifoux	\$ 2,647,413.28
NY-18 - Esposito	\$ 2,435,666.01
CA-09 - Lincoln	\$ 2,278,918.26
MN-05 - Al-Aqidi	\$ 2,270,918.50
NY-14 - Forte	\$ 1,922,536.14
KS-03 - Reddy	\$ 1,903,036.30
Top 25 Total	\$ 107,314,043.21

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Raise and spend appear to be used interchangeably in this section.

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For the Democrats, Adam Frisch raised \$17.2 million to finish 4.98 percent behind Republican Jeff Hurd, while Republican Incumbent Michelle Steel spent \$10.7 million to finish .21 percent behind Democrat Derek Tran. Unsuccessful Democrats outspent unsuccessful Republicans by \$3.0 million, averaging \$7,318,222.46 raised compared to \$4,292,561.73 for Republicans.

Federal Party Committees

Federal Party Committees include the national party committees, Senate and House campaign committees, state party federal state party accounts and local party federal accounts.[8]

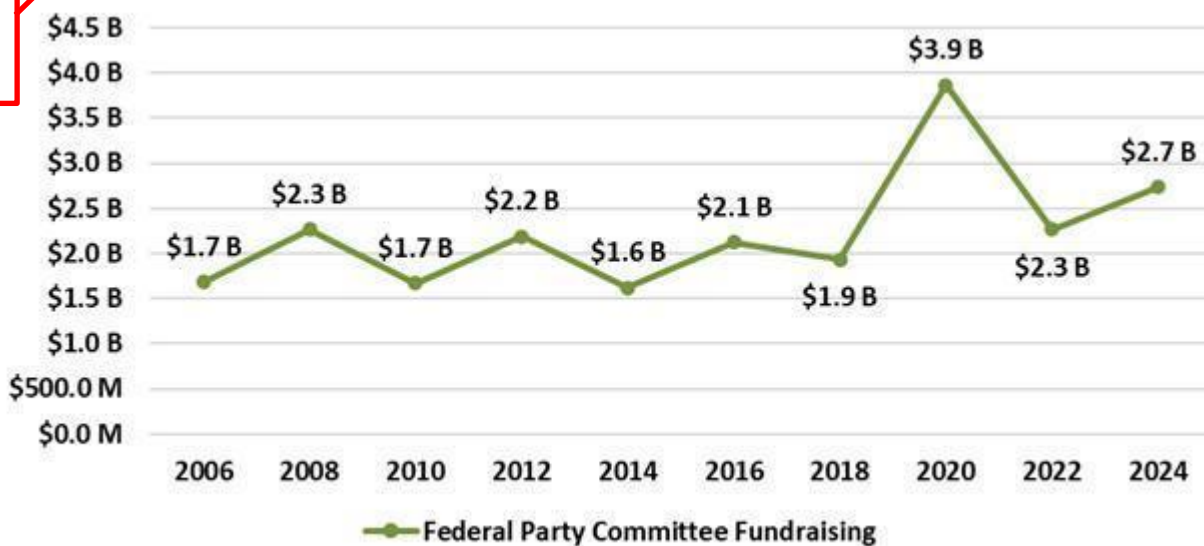
While contributions to candidates and national party committees are indexed to inflation, individual contributions to state party committees have been capped at \$10,000 per year since BCRA became effective in 2003.

Aggregate federal party committee fundraising is generally higher in Presidential years and lower in midterms – and had been relatively stable – averaging an inflation adjusted \$1.7 billion in each midterm from 2006 through 2018, and an inflation adjusted 2.2 billion in the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Presidential cycles.

Party committee fundraising exploded in 2020, driven by the \$890,538,963 record receipts by the RNC – with a massive portion from joint fundraising committee transfers into the RNC.

Sourcing and methodology not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Federal Party Committee Fundraising by Cycle – 2006-2024 (Inflation Adjusted)



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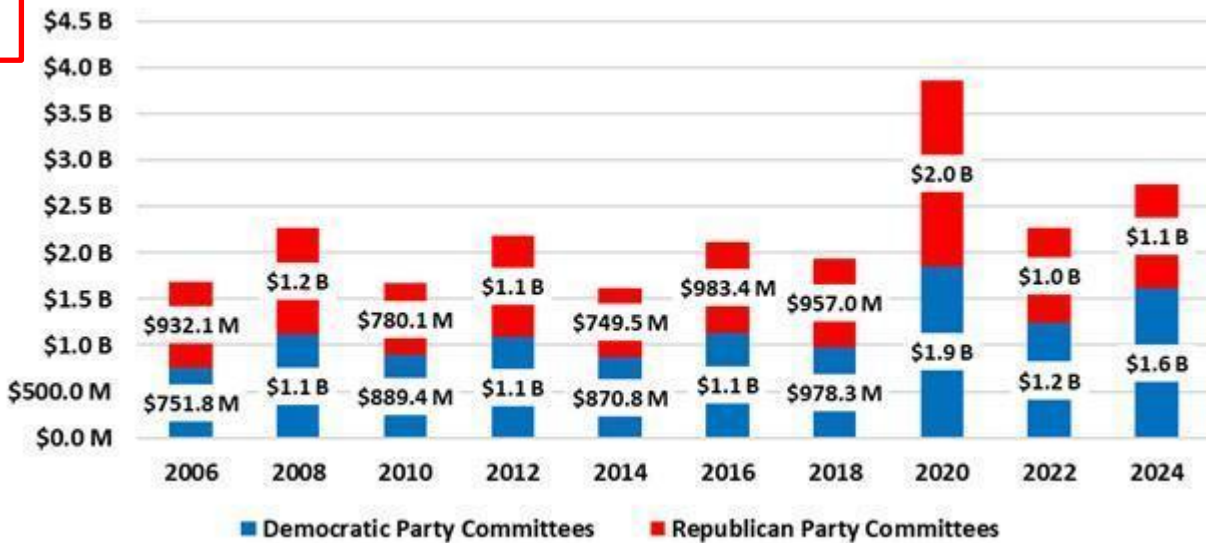
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The 2022 midterm election generated a combined \$2.3 billion in party committee fundraising - a meaningful bump from 2018. By 2024, the combined party committee fundraising reached \$2.7 billion.

Other than 2020, Democrats have led in aggregate fundraising in every cycle since 2012, when Democrats trailed Republicans by \$4.6 million for the cycle.

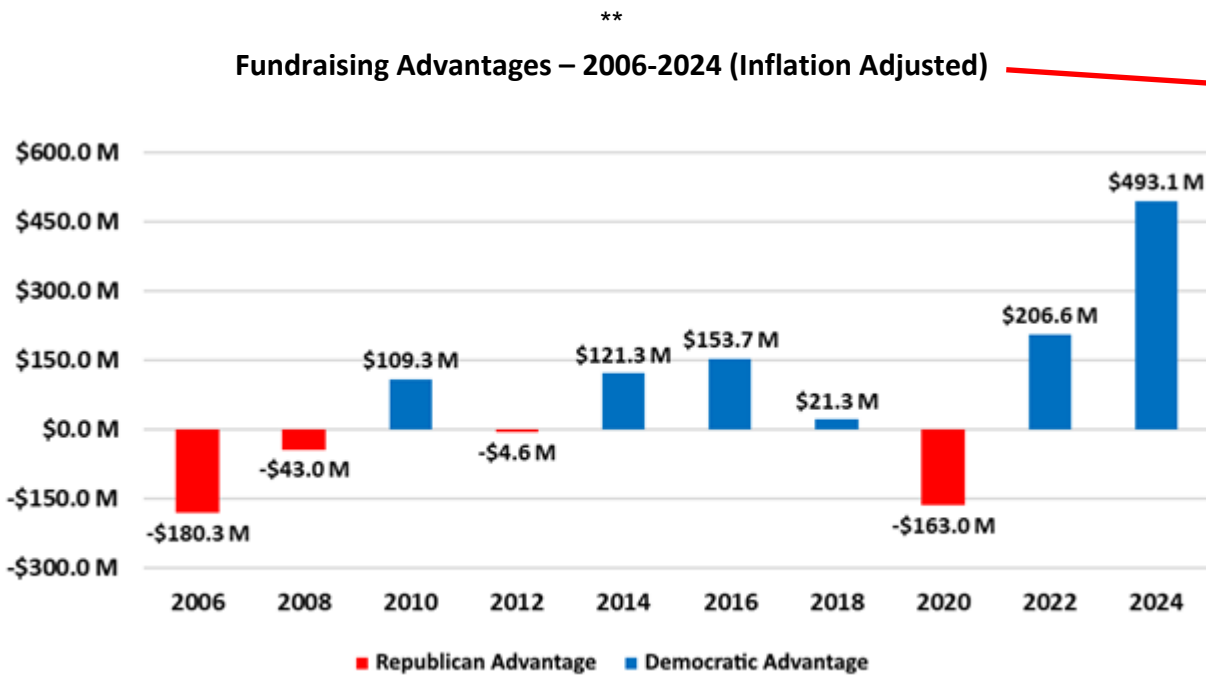
Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Party Committee Fundraising by Party and Cycle – 2006-2024 (Inflation Adjusted)



In 2024, the Democratic advantage was nearly half a billion dollars.

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Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

The 2024 cycle featured several advantages for Democrats. Democrats led in fundraising at the national committee, House committee, and state and local party committee levels, while trailing at the Senate committee level.

Chart appears to contain mathematical errors; sourcing not provided.

Party Committee Receipts Comparison (2023-2024)

	Democrats	Republicans	Difference
National	\$ 683,649,096.81	\$ 475,764,008.28	\$ 207,885,088.53
Senate	\$ 275,526,331.39	\$ 296,513,913.40	\$ (20,987,582.01)
House	\$ 339,935,852.88	\$ 236,307,296.49	\$ 103,628,556.39
State+Local	\$ 694,168,004.74	\$ 385,881,173.64	\$ 308,286,831.10
Total	\$ 1,614,170,584.43	\$ 1,121,104,532.16	\$ 493,066,052.27

The significant receipts reported by the national party committees and state and local party committees requires context.

National and state party committees can transfer unlimited amounts of money to and from each other, and national party committees can also transfer unlimited amounts to their Senate and Congressional campaign committees.

The ability to transfer funds is particularly important for joint fundraising committees, where funds can be raised in a coordinated fashion with Presidential candidates, the national party committee, and among state parties. Subject to careful documentation and compliance

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regulations, these funds can then be transferred among the committees to make certain types of expenditures.

State Committees can also receive unlimited transfers from federal candidates. One of the most common examples is for direct mail. Most state committees have a nonprofit mail permit which allows them to send mail at a much lower postage rate. Senate and House candidates can take advantage of this lower rate by transferring funds to their state party to cover the production and postage for direct mail, and save themselves money in the process.

In looking solely at transfers, the DNC and Democratic state and local parties received much more in transfers than the RNC and Republican state and local parties, while Republicans transferred more at the Senate and House levels.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Transfers to Party Committees (2023-2024)

	Democrats	Republicans	Difference
National	\$ 299,613,640.70	\$ 152,680,777.79	\$ 146,932,862.91
Senate	\$ 20,381,076.54	\$ 29,740,356.58	\$ (9,359,280.04)
House	\$ 28,229,645.27	\$ 34,596,750.44	\$ (6,367,105.17)
State+Local	\$ 486,486,957.78	\$ 254,324,160.69	\$ 232,162,797.09
Total	\$ 834,711,320.29	\$ 471,342,045.50	\$ 363,369,274.79

Transfers are still money however, and the more important evaluation is whether the transfers stay within the committee and how they are invested in infrastructure or election activity.

Restricted Account Receipts

Within the totals for the national party committees are accounts to support the presidential nominating conventions. National party committees, along with the Senate and House committees can also have accounts for recounts or other legal proceedings, and headquarters buildings. These are sometimes referred to as restricted funds, because they can only be spent for their intended purpose.

Restricted contributions totaled \$446 million across the six party committees for the 2024 cycle, and are included within the overall \$2.7 billion in party committee receipts listed above.

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Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data. Chart appears to contain mathematical errors.

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Contributions to Accounts of National Party Committees (2023-2024)

	Convention	Recount	Headquarters	Total
DNC	\$ 17,171,936.47	\$ 67,012,974.01	\$ 63,604,859.39	\$ 147,789,769.87
RNC	\$ 26,777,876.32	\$ 58,011,358.68	\$ 47,839,097.23	\$ 132,628,332.23
DSCC	\$ -	\$ 22,812,178.29	\$ 10,122,840.12	\$ 32,935,018.41
NRSC	\$ -	\$ 26,751,643.12	\$ 15,961,036.60	\$ 42,712,679.72
DCCC	\$ -	\$ 17,454,243.31	\$ 32,118,607.36	\$ 49,572,850.67
NRCC	\$ -	\$ 15,654,790.71	\$ 24,401,942.57	\$ 40,056,733.28
Democratic Total	\$ 17,171,936.47	\$ 107,279,395.61	\$ 105,846,306.87	\$ 230,297,638.95
Republican Total	\$ 26,777,876.32	\$ 100,417,792.51	\$ 88,202,076.40	\$ 215,397,745.23
Grand Total	\$ 44,260,252.03	\$ 207,697,707.12	\$ 194,049,671.17	\$ 446,007,630.32

Overall, party committee fundraising is a complex, tightly regulated ecosystem. As with candidate fundraising, Democrats have cultivated an advantage relative to Republicans.

Joint Fundraising Committee Receipts

Joint Fundraising Committees (JFC or JFCs) enable candidates to pool contributions based on the aggregate contribution limits for each candidate, PAC, or party committee participating in the joint committee. A donor could write a single check covering the combined “max” for the participating committees, as long as they have not separately contributed to any of the participating committees during the covered election cycle.

Candidates in both parties use Joint Fundraising Committees to raise funds and manage fundraising expenses. There are no limits to how much money can be transferred from a joint committee into a participating committee – so long as the accounting shows there were not separate contributions subject to limit made to the receiving committee.

For the 2023-2024 cycle, there were 1,298 registered joint fundraising committees, 715 benefiting Republican candidates, 556 benefiting Democrats, 26 benefiting third party candidates, and one as PAC contributing to candidates of both major parties, but reporting no revenue. JFCs totaled \$3.49 billion in receipts in the two-year cycle.

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Joint Fundraising Committees – Count and Total Receipts by Party (2023-2024)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Party	Count	Total Receipts
Democrat	556	\$ 1,673,891,185.70
Republican	715	\$ 1,811,660,783.43
Third Party	26	\$ 9,360,044.66
PAC	1	\$ -
Total	1,298	\$ 3,494,912,013.79

Candidates can participate in more than one joint fundraising committee, and several candidates took advantage of this to leverage significant fundraising capacity.

A supermajority of funds raised through JFCs benefited Presidential candidates. Kamala Harris raised \$1.37 billion in two joint fundraising committees, the Harris Victory Fund and the Harris Action Fund. Donald Trump raised \$1.09 billion into three committees – the Trump National Committee JFC, the Trump 47 Committee, and the Trump Save America JFC. Robert Kennedy raised \$6.1 million into the Kennedy Victory Fund for his withdrawn independent bid.

Presidential JFC Receipts (2023-2024)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data. Standard for including JFCs unclear; not all JFCs included for either nominee.

Presidential JFC Name	Total Receipts
HARRIS VICTORY FUND	\$ 1,313,956,729.16
HARRIS ACTION FUND	\$ 59,761,642.81
Total	\$ 1,373,718,371.97

Presidential JFC Name	Total Receipts
TRUMP NATIONAL COMMITTEE JFC, INC.	\$ 474,483,143.76
TRUMP 47 COMMITTEE, INC.	\$ 368,225,256.08
TRUMP SAVE AMERICA JFC	\$ 244,929,841.70
TEAM STAND FOR AMERICA (HALEY)	\$ 31,989,190.30
TEAM DESANTIS 2024	\$ 10,907,758.54
TIM SCOTT VICTORY FUND	\$ 2,799,827.92
TEAM ASA, INC.	\$ 558,173.89
Total	\$ 1,133,893,192.19

Presidential JFC Name	Total Receipts
KENNEDY VICTORY FUND 2024	\$ 6,118,863.07

There were also joint fundraising committees for Nikki Haley, Ron Desantis, Tim Scott and Asa Huchinson during the Republican nomination process.

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Among the non-Presidential joint fundraising committees, Republicans dominated, raising \$677.8 million in comparison to \$300.2 million for Democrats.

Non-Presidential JFC Receipts (2023-2024)

Party	Count	Total Receipts
Democrat	554	\$ 300,172,813.73
Republican	708	\$ 677,767,591.24
Third Party	25	\$ 3,241,181.59
PAC	1	\$ -
Total	1,298	\$ 981,181,586.56

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

The Republican fundraising advantage is notable, because it centers on a strategy to raise money from large contributors and to exploit loopholes to spend funds through a joint fundraising committee on advertisements in support of the participating candidates.

The 2014 holding in *McCutcheon v. FEC* struck down the aggregate limit on contributions an individual could make across all federal candidates and party committees – at the time, \$123,200. This opened the floodgates, where wealthier Americans can now plow millions into the federal ecosystem each cycle.

Historically, joint fundraising committees were used to raise funds and then transfer permissible amounts into campaign committees. The excess funds were generally used to subsidize the costs of fundraising – enabling candidates to “net” more direct contributions and turn those transfers into permissible candidate activity. This meant most of the funds raised into a joint fundraising committee were distributed out to the participating committees.

Republicans started pushing the envelope in 2024. They began using JFC funds to run “fundraising ads” which were more persuasion than fundraising. The ads were nearly identical to the standard campaign ads, but would briefly mention or make a fundraising request in a caption included in the ad.

The Trump campaign went further – using JFC funds to organize rallies and held “donor” events – photo lines or roundtables – to rationalize the spending.

Democrats sought clarity from the FEC, requesting an opinion on the limits of JFC advertising, but the commission deadlocked 3-3, so no formal opinion was issued and the parties moved forward without constraints.

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This context explains why some JFCs are retaining more money rather than transferring it to the candidates or committees – they are now able to engage in campaign activity, yet at a “discount” to the candidate. Rather than focus on transferring eligible funds to participating committees, they can directly advertise, and drive greater levels of placement at the lowest unit charge candidates receive from broadcast media. This phenomenon will be covered more in the spending section of this report.

It's also important to understand how transfers from JFCs to participating committees are considered receipts for the receiving committee. For example, the Presidential joint fundraising committees transferred out money to their principal campaign committees, the national parties, and to state parties. The cash retained was spent on fundraising and advocacy

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Presidential JFC Receipts, Transfers Out, and Cash Retained (2023-2024)

Presidential JFC Name	Total Receipts	Transfers Out	Cash Retained
HARRIS VICTORY FUND	\$ 1,313,956,729.16	\$ 899,402,049.70	\$ 414,554,679.46
HARRIS ACTION FUND	\$ 59,761,642.81	\$ 56,430,000.00	\$ 3,331,642.81
Total	\$ 1,373,718,371.97	\$ 955,832,049.70	\$ 417,886,322.27

Presidential JFC Name	Total Receipts	Transfers Out	Cash Retained
TRUMP NATIONAL COMMITTEE JFC, INC.	\$ 474,483,143.76	\$ 273,762,296.73	\$ 200,720,847.03
TRUMP 47 COMMITTEE, INC.	\$ 368,225,256.08	\$ 243,503,360.87	\$ 124,721,895.21
TRUMP SAVE AMERICA JFC	\$ 244,929,841.70	\$ 162,502,905.75	\$ 82,426,935.95
TEAM STAND FOR AMERICA (HALEY)	\$ 31,989,190.30	\$ 18,334,389.00	\$ 13,654,801.30
TEAM DESANTIS 2024	\$ 10,907,758.54	\$ 8,552,285.74	\$ 2,355,472.80
TIM SCOTT VICTORY FUND	\$ 2,799,827.92	\$ 1,121,961.47	\$ 1,677,866.45
TEAM ASA, INC.	\$ 558,173.89	\$ 191,018.87	\$ 367,155.02
Total	\$ 1,133,893,192.19	\$ 707,968,218.43	\$ 425,924,973.76

Presidential JFC Name	Total Receipts	Transfers Out	Cash Retained
KENNEDY VICTORY FUND 2024	\$ 6,118,863.07	\$ 5,301,080.00	\$ 817,783.07

The receiving committees reported the transfers as receipts, and when thinking about combined fundraising statistics, they should be counted once – at the final receiving end. Nikki Haley was criticized for reporting the gross receipts of her principal campaign and joint fundraising committees as a combined total during her campaign for President. Deducting the transfers will paint a more accurate picture of actual receipts to the campaign.

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In the non-Presidential joint fundraising committees, there is a different pattern. The JFCs for Democrats transferred \$247.9 million of total receipts to participating committees and retained \$52.3 million - or 17.4 percent. The JFCs for Republicans transferred \$437.1 million to participating committees and retained \$240.708 million – or 35.5 percent. The Republican non-Presidential JFCs had a more intentional strategy to push the envelope on spending regulations, and were positioned to leverage the deadlock and inaction of the FEC into more direct spending on behalf of their candidates.

Non-Presidential JFC Receipts, Transfers Out, and Cash Retained (2023-2024)

Party	Count	Total Receipts	Transfers Out	Cash Retained
Democrat	554	\$ 300,172,813.73	\$ 247,900,934.08	\$ 52,271,879.65
Republican	708	\$ 677,767,591.24	\$ 437,058,763.85	\$ 240,708,827.39
Third Party	25	\$ 3,241,181.59	\$ 2,750,874.87	\$ 490,306.72
PAC	1	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total	1,298	\$ 981,181,586.56	\$ 687,710,572.80	\$ 293,471,013.76

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Between the Presidential and non-Presidential joint fundraising Committees, \$1,138,100,092.86 was retained – and can be considered additive to campaign committee and party committee fundraising.

Moving forward, Democratic incumbents, candidates, and strategists need to consider how best to leverage JFC receipts into effective action.

Independent Expenditures

Independent expenditures are made by a range of organizations, including party committees. Since party committees have been covered above, the receipts to those organizations are excluded from this analysis.

Many independent expenditure committees invest in multiple campaigns or for particular offices. There are IEs specific to President, the Senate, the House, as well as IEs which make expenditures for all three committees, or a mixture of two – Senate/President, House/President, and Senate/House.

Es make expenditures to support or oppose a candidate, and most are exclusive to a single party. An IE will sometimes appear to support a candidate from the other party – for example

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to attempt to influence the opposing party’s primary. Some IE committees make expenditures to “support” a candidate by running counterproductive content in an effort to mislead voters.

This analysis aligns committees with their stated intent, and interprets the “hybrid” spenders based on their core allegiance or stated intention, and assigns partisanship based on those insights.

803 non-party committee organizations made independent expenditures in 2024. 575 primarily supported Democrats, 249 supported Republicans, and six supported third party candidates.

Independent Expenditure Committees by Party and Recipient Type (2023-2024)

IE RECIPIENTS	DEM	REP	OTHER	Total
PRESIDENT	227	45	4	276
SENATE	43	59	1	103
HOUSE	90	88		178
HOUSE/SENATE/PRESIDENT	108	15		123
SENATE/PRESIDENT	53	17	1	71
HOUSE/PRESIDENT	34	7		41
HOUSE/SENATE	20	18		38
Total	575	249	6	830

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

All IEs report revenues and disbursements. Most IEs mask contributors by raising funds into dark money entities, and then transfer the money into the IE committee. Many IEs also receive transfers from affiliated committees and other sources. These transfers in – from party committees, candidate committees, other IEs, and other affiliated committees – are excluded from this analysis to prevent double counting them as revenue.

After transfers in, independent expenditure committees reported a total of \$5.5 billion in receipts. Democratic-aligned IEs raised \$3.14 billion, Republican-aligned IEs raised \$2.28 billion, and IE’s supporting third and other party candidates raised \$76.0 million.

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Independent Expenditure Committee Receipts by Party and Recipient Type (2023-2024)

IE RECIPIENTS	DEM	REP	OTHER	Total
PRESIDENT	\$ 1,168,170,699.36	\$ 818,045,223.94	\$ 64,038,985.22	\$ 2,050,254,908.52
SENATE	\$ 80,594,275.18	\$ 575,679,893.17	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 656,329,168.35
HOUSE	\$ 717,095,016.17	\$ 97,275,240.25		\$ 814,370,256.42
HOUSE/SENATE/PRESIDENT	\$ 641,473,775.13	\$ 597,015,380.08		\$ 1,238,489,155.21
SENATE/PRESIDENT	\$ 154,742,185.89	\$ 75,348,541.88	\$ 11,874,651.33	\$ 241,965,379.10
HOUSE/PRESIDENT	\$ 297,993,043.24	\$ 7,600,580.24		\$ 305,593,623.48
HOUSE/SENATE	\$ 84,155,431.45	\$ 110,780,986.65		\$ 194,936,418.10
Total	\$ 3,144,224,426.42	\$ 2,281,745,846.21	\$ 75,968,636.55	\$ 5,501,938,909.18

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

This receipts for IEs far surpass the reported independent expenditures by these committees, as they also have operating expenses, and as with all committees, not every dollar raised is spent in cycle.

Total Federal Receipts

Combined receipts in the federal ecosystem reached nearly \$14.9 billion.

Combined Federal Receipts (2023-2024)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRATIC	THIRD PARTY	Total
Candidate Committees	\$ 2,004,084,563.78	\$ 3,367,252,776.20	\$ 126,089,103.23	\$ 5,497,426,443.21
Party Committees	\$ 1,121,104,532.16	\$ 1,614,170,584.43	\$ 10,850,851.71	\$ 2,746,125,968.30
Joint Fundraising	\$ 665,945,960.44	\$ 471,663,825.70	\$ 490,306.72	\$ 1,138,100,092.86
IE Committees	\$ 2,281,745,846.21	\$ 3,144,224,426.42	\$ 75,968,636.55	\$ 5,501,938,909.18
Total Federal Receipts	\$ 6,072,880,902.59	\$ 8,597,311,612.75	\$ 213,398,898.21	\$ 14,883,591,413.55

Democratic candidates, parties, and committees raised nearly \$8.6 billion or 57.8 percent of all funds raised, Republicans raised nearly \$6.1 billion or 40.8 percent, and third parties raised \$213.4 million or 1.4 percent of all funds raised.

If Democrats took every dollar raised in the two-year cycle and laid them end to end, it would circle the earth more than 33 times.

Non-Federal Receipts

No evidence provided for many claims in this section.

Democrats also hold advantages in nonfederal fundraising. In the aggregate, Democratic candidates generally outraise Republicans in battleground races.

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Each state has their own fundraising rules. Many, but not all states have contribution limits. Some have matching funds or spending caps. Some states have strict disclosure rules, others take a more unregulated approach.

Gubernatorial Receipts

There were 11 gubernatorial elections in 2024. Republicans outraised Democrats in eight of the elections, and Democrats outraised Republicans in three. In each contest, the leading spender won. \$219 million was raised by the major party candidates in the 11 elections.

Sourcing not provided, assume from state-level databases.

Gubernatorial Campaign Receipts (2024)

	DEM	REP	TOTAL	DIFFERENCE
DE	\$ 3,816,050.00	\$ 546,789.00	\$ 4,362,839.00	\$ 3,269,261.00
IN	\$ 5,429,816.00	\$ 20,468,722.00	\$ 25,898,538.00	\$ (15,038,906.00)
MO	\$ 2,444,529.00	\$ 6,206,941.00	\$ 8,651,470.00	\$ (3,762,412.00)
MT	\$ 2,863,696.00	\$ 3,209,919.00	\$ 6,073,615.00	\$ (346,223.00)
NC	\$ 83,120,655.00	\$ 19,728,559.00	\$ 102,849,214.00	\$ 63,392,096.00
ND	\$ 186,141.00	\$ 3,818,871.00	\$ 4,005,012.00	\$ (3,632,730.00)
NH	\$ 7,927,269.00	\$ 21,062,519.00	\$ 28,989,788.00	\$ (13,135,250.00)
UT	\$ 1,526,547.00	\$ 7,379,974.00	\$ 8,906,521.00	\$ (5,853,427.00)
VT	\$ 56,228.00	\$ 356,154.00	\$ 412,382.00	\$ (299,926.00)
WA	\$ 16,031,739.00	\$ 6,675,001.00	\$ 22,706,740.00	\$ 9,356,738.00
WV	\$ 284,784.00	\$ 5,876,395.00	\$ 6,161,179.00	\$ (5,591,611.00)
TOTAL	\$ 123,687,454.00	\$ 95,329,844.00	\$ 219,017,298.00	\$ 28,357,610.00

Many of the gubernatorial elections held in Presidential years are noncompetitive, and with most falling outside the Presidential battlegrounds, receive little investment from the opposing party in an acknowledgment of the difficulty in overcoming the gravity of the two national tickets. Two elections in Presidential battlegrounds bucked this trend, with the election of Democrat Josh Stein in North Carolina, and Republican Kelly Ayotte in New Hampshire.

In North Carolina, Stein outraised Republican Mark Robinson by more than four-to-one. In New Hampshire, Ayotte outraised Democrat Joyce Craig by more nearly three-to-one. Aggregate gubernatorial fundraising favored Democrats by \$28.3 million due to Stein's record fundraising in North Carolina.

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Attorney General Receipts

There were ten elections for attorney general. Eight aligned with gubernatorial campaigns (IN, MO, MT, NC, UT, VT, WA and WV), while two were standalone (OR and PA). Republicans outraised Democrats in six of the ten contests, and as with the gubernatorial campaigns, the larger raiser won in each contest. \$64.8 million was raised across the ten elections.

Attorney General Campaign Receipts (2024)

Sourcing not provided, assume from state-level databases.

	DEM	REP	TOTAL	DIFFERENCE
IN	\$ 1,129,971.00	\$ 3,798,067.00	\$ 4,928,038.00	\$ (2,668,096.00)
MO	\$ 401,255.00	\$ 1,715,239.00	\$ 2,116,494.00	\$ (1,313,984.00)
MT	\$ 340,247.00	\$ 815,909.00	\$ 1,156,156.00	\$ (475,662.00)
NC	\$ 17,151,769.00	\$ 9,120,213.00	\$ 26,271,982.00	\$ 8,031,556.00
OR	\$ 2,651,134.00	\$ 2,159,457.00	\$ 4,810,591.00	\$ 491,677.00
PA	\$ 6,726,837.00	\$ 14,082,223.00	\$ 20,809,060.00	\$ (7,355,386.00)
UT	\$ 320.00	\$ 1,554,585.00	\$ 1,554,905.00	\$ (1,554,265.00)
VT	\$ 121,444.00	\$ 25,875.00	\$ 147,319.00	\$ 95,569.00
WA	\$ 2,319,221.00	\$ 465,742.00	\$ 2,784,963.00	\$ 1,853,479.00
WV	\$ 39,826.00	\$ 163,880.00	\$ 203,706.00	\$ (124,054.00)
TOTAL	\$ 30,882,024.00	\$ 33,901,190.00	\$ 64,783,214.00	\$ (3,019,166.00)

Several factual errors found within analysis.

The two closest contests, North Carolina (decided by 1.3 percent) and Pennsylvania (decided by 4.6 percent) were the most expensive of the cycle. \$26.3 million was spent in North Carolina, where Democrat Jeff Jackson won over Republican Dan Bishop, and 20.8 million was spent in Pennsylvania, where Republican Dave Sunday won over Eugene DePasquale.

Jackson outraised Bishop nearly two-to-one, and Sunday outraised DePasquale by more than two-to one. Aggregate attorney general receipts favored Republicans by \$3.0 million, as five of the remaining three seats were Republican-held and noncompetitive.

State Legislative Districts

The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC) supports the election of state legislators and other offices to ensure Democratic representation in chambers across the country. They designate priority elections as Spotlight Races.

In 2024, the DLCC designated races in at least 24 states. Some of these races are Battlegrounds - essential to protecting or flipping control of a legislative chamber, others are races for Power

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Building – where majorities may not be in immediate play, but the contests are designed to get closer and position Democrats to flip a chamber in future cycles or to protect a Democratic gubernatorial veto. Watch List contests are where Democrats are focused on keeping a majority.

No sourcing or evidence provided for this claim.

A review of the campaign finance records in 24 states identified fundraising totals in 165 contests. Democrats led in aggregate funding in 15 of the 24 states, and in 115 of the 165 contests.

State	Districts	Democrat	Republican	Grand Total	Difference
AZ	12	\$ 5,655,033.55	\$ 3,369,969.00	\$ 9,025,002.55	\$ 2,285,064.55
CO	1	\$ 100,714.00	\$ 103,149.00	\$ 203,863.00	\$ (2,435.00)
FL	6	\$ 3,722,178.00	\$ 2,611,044.00	\$ 6,333,222.00	\$ 1,111,134.00
GA	7	\$ 3,254,982.00	\$ 2,143,000.00	\$ 5,397,982.00	\$ 1,111,982.00
IA	7	\$ 3,486,616.00	\$ 3,267,069.00	\$ 6,753,685.00	\$ 219,547.00
ID	1	\$ 60,489.00	\$ 79,851.00	\$ 140,340.00	\$ (19,362.00)
KS	10	\$ 1,340,671.00	\$ 1,185,331.00	\$ 2,526,002.00	\$ 155,340.00
ME	2	\$ 159,497.00	\$ 126,944.00	\$ 286,441.00	\$ 32,553.00
MI	13	\$ 14,467,500.00	\$ 8,700,916.00	\$ 23,168,416.00	\$ 5,766,584.00
MN	14	\$ 1,967,379.00	\$ 2,368,497.00	\$ 4,335,876.00	\$ (401,118.00)
NC	14	\$ 20,942,476.00	\$ 17,504,537.00	\$ 38,447,013.00	\$ 3,437,939.00
NE	2	\$ 537,004.00	\$ 666,503.00	\$ 1,203,507.00	\$ (129,499.00)
NH	17	\$ 1,015,423.00	\$ 1,198,653.00	\$ 2,214,076.00	\$ (183,230.00)
NV	7	\$ 3,608,233.00	\$ 2,829,444.00	\$ 6,437,677.00	\$ 778,789.00
NY	2	\$ 1,798,060.00	\$ 1,323,490.00	\$ 3,121,550.00	\$ 474,570.00
OH	2	\$ 565,442.00	\$ 3,340,446.00	\$ 3,905,888.00	\$ (2,775,004.00)
OK	2	\$ 487,749.00	\$ 382,562.00	\$ 870,311.00	\$ 105,187.00
OR	3	\$ 2,113,209.00	\$ 2,842,814.00	\$ 4,956,023.00	\$ (729,605.00)
PA	19	\$ 29,377,899.00	\$ 18,950,525.00	\$ 48,328,424.00	\$ 10,427,374.00
SC	2	\$ 320,082.00	\$ 426,928.00	\$ 747,010.00	\$ (106,846.00)
TN	3	\$ 1,159,825.00	\$ 547,210.00	\$ 1,707,035.00	\$ 612,615.00
TX	3	\$ 10,596,188.00	\$ 6,169,227.00	\$ 16,765,415.00	\$ 4,426,961.00
UT	2	\$ 259,540.00	\$ 447,677.00	\$ 707,217.00	\$ (188,137.00)
WI	14	\$ 31,078,043.00	\$ 15,416,893.00	\$ 46,494,936.00	\$ 15,661,150.00
Total	165	\$ 138,074,232.55	\$ 96,002,679.00	\$ 234,076,911.55	\$ 42,071,553.55

State contribution limits and reporting requirements vary, and not every leading funder wins at the legislative level.

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For all nonfederal races the national campaign committees, state party committees, and state legislative caucus accounts generate revenue they invest in races or in coordinated campaigns, and there are many allied organizations seeking to power build in the states. Given the volume of state legislative races, the combined legislative receipts can exceed gubernatorial or other constitutional officer receipts. Finding more efficiency through effective coordinated campaigns and state tables can expand the map and enable nonfederal campaigns and committees win more races and reshape the state political landscape.

Why Does Money Matter?

Most Democratic voters, activists, and donors are unaware of the massive amounts of money Democratic candidates and incumbents can access to run campaigns. Even many Democratic incumbents and candidates are not fully aware of the ways campaign fundraising has exploded within the political ecosystem – and are therefore not fully appreciating the opportunities they have to demand more innovation from their strategists and consultants to rethink strategies and systems.

For a long time, Democrats have planned campaign budgets and programs through scarcity. There was the belief there would be limited funds, so campaigns would have to carefully marshal resources across the calendar to ensure payrolls could be met, media buys could be placed, and organizing could be supported.

Campaigns can now meet their fundraising needs. Contested Congressional races are now routinely exceeding \$10 million, statewide races can reach \$100 million, and Presidential races easily exceed a billion – and most recently – two billion dollars.

With all of these resources, why are Democrats crafting budgets to “spend at the end”? When will Democratic incumbents and challengers demanding their campaigns invest in the communities and people they seek to represent and serve – and invest earlier in the campaign cycle, and between elections?

No evidence provided for this claim.

For now, Democrats remain a people-powered party. A supermajority of our campaign funding comes from our grassroots activists. We take their hard-earned cash, yet are spending enormous funds on legacy and social media platforms owned by oligarchs. We are essentially cementing inefficiencies in our ability to engage voters by continuing to rely on systems we “rent” and Republicans “own.”

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We have enough money to think and act differently. Democrats must break with stale and counterproductive practices to Build to Win and Build to Last.

[1] These are candidate totals only – and exclude party and joint fundraising committees. Presidential fundraising reflects the two-year fundraising by Donald J. Trump for the nominating process and general election, and excludes the fundraising by other Republican candidates who sought the nomination. The Biden-Harris and Harris-Walz fundraising are combined, with the committee’s name changing after the candidate switch.

Senate fundraising reflects two-year totals for the 34 seats in-cycle for 2024.

[2] Non-federal candidate fundraising reflects the totals for all gubernatorial and attorney general elections held in 2024. The Legislative totals reflect the aggregate fundraising in DLCC 2024 spotlight contests.

[3] Source: FEC Bulk Data – Operating Expenses (2007-2008).

[4] Third Party Fundraising reflects Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996, Ralph Nader in 2000, Jill Stein in 2016, and Robert Kennedy in 2024. Source: FEC Presidential Fundraising Summaries (multiple).

[5] Two Senate incumbents were elected as Independents and conference with Democrats – Senator King from Maine won by 17.42 percent, and Senator Sanders from Vermont won by 31.08 percent. Their results are shaded purple in the graphic, and are included in the Democratic totals in the chart legend.

[6] Vote Margins and Totals are sourced from official state election returns. Campaign fundraising totals are from the FEC Financial Summary for 2023 and 2024 Senate Campaigns Through December 31, 2024.

[7] In uncontested House races, the Presidential margin correlating with the partisanship of the elected Member was used to define their margin of victory.

[8] The party committee analysis is limited to the activities for the two major parties. The DNC and RNC, the DCCC and NRCC, the DSCC and NRSC and Democratic and Republican state and local committees.

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SPENDING ANALYSIS

Sourcing not provided for most claims in this section, assume to be FEC data.

Campaign Spending

There is no set formula for how campaigns should spend money. Campaign spending plans should be flexible in meeting campaign needs and the realities of the moment – and they reflect the campaign’s values and strategy.

Campaign success is the result of many factors, including the strengths of the opponent, the office being sought, the economic or national climate, the composition of the electorate, the partisanship of the state, district, or jurisdiction, and how much money is available.

Campaigns differ in how they raise money, which then impacts the spending strategy. Some choose to focus on low dollar fundraising; others focus on major donors; and most try to leverage both into robust fundraising. Some candidates position around whether to accept contributions from donors with certain backgrounds; seeking favor from interest groups or to shape a public narrative around being a “clean-money candidate.” In some non-federal elections, there are choices about opting into or out of public financing systems.

In the federal campaign ecosystem, any expenditure supporting or opposing a candidate must be reported and disclosed to the FEC. In competitive races, campaign strategists will pore over the campaign finance filings of their opponents, seeking to discern the strategies of the opposing campaigns, and will consider adjustments based on what they see.

In federal campaigns, spending falls into two major categories. The first is called “hard side” spending – the investments by candidates, committees, and party committees. These expenses require rigorous disclosure, and are focused on express advocacy, organizing, infrastructure, administration, staffing, and fundraising.

For what's called the soft side, independent expenditures expenses typically include fundraising, advocacy through advertising, and organizing. These organizations tend to have leaner staff counts, and focus on putting most of their investments into program.

These two “sides” combined to spend more than \$13.2 billion on campaigns in the 2024 federal election cycle. Democrats had nearly \$7.5 billion dollars spent by or for their campaigns, while Republicans had nearly \$5.6 billion dollars spent by or for their campaigns. This does not account for billions more spent through PACs, Separate Segregated Funds, or non-connected committees.

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Total Federal Campaign Spending (2023-2024)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

	REPUBLICAN	DEMOCRATIC	THIRD PARTY	Total
Candidate Committees	\$ 1,902,795,497.36	\$ 3,373,827,618.80	\$ 132,221,920.48	\$ 5,408,845,036.64
Party Committees	\$ 1,076,854,990.02	\$ 1,559,195,542.00	\$ 10,850,851.71	\$ 2,646,901,383.73
Joint Fundraising	\$ 386,112,868.24	\$ 412,845,861.98	\$ 695,202.63	\$ 799,653,932.85
IE Committees	\$ 2,206,593,954.77	\$ 2,105,656,193.83	\$ 40,713,164.19	\$ 4,352,963,312.79
Total Expenditures	\$ 5,572,357,310.39	\$ 7,451,525,216.61	\$ 184,481,139.01	\$ 13,208,363,666.01

Candidate Spending

In practice, the “best” spending is candidate spending. It is closest to the person the people are being asked to support, and in principle, closest to the electoral strategy. At the candidate level, Democrats led in spending for President, for Senate and House elections, and in non-federal campaigns.

\$5.4 billion was spent directly by campaigns, with nearly \$3.8 billion spent by Democratic federal candidates, and \$1.9 billion spent by Republicans.

Federal Candidate Expenditures, 2023-2024

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

	House	Senate	President	All Races
REPUBLICAN	\$ 926,767,710.00	\$ 504,526,135.53	\$ 471,501,651.83	\$ 1,902,795,497.36
DEMOCRATIC	\$ 1,211,803,259.00	\$ 986,740,075.48	\$ 1,175,284,284.32	\$ 3,373,827,618.80
THIRD PARTY	\$ 17,671,599.00	\$ 48,011,252.12	\$ 66,539,069.36	\$ 132,221,920.48
Total	\$ 2,156,242,568.00	\$ 1,539,277,463.13	\$ 1,713,325,005.51	\$ 5,408,845,036.64

In non-federal campaigns Democrats led Republicans in spending on gubernatorial elections by more than \$27 million, trailed in Attorneys General races by nearly \$2.4 million, and led in targeted state legislative races by more than \$30 million.

Non-Federal Candidate Expenditures, 2023-2024

Sourcing not provided, assume to be from state-level databases.

	Governor	Attorney General	Legislative	All Races
REPUBLICAN	\$ 90,032,049.00	\$ 32,756,761.14	\$ 72,117,316.00	\$ 194,906,126.14
DEMOCRAT	\$ 117,478,587.00	\$ 30,383,759.96	\$ 102,985,694.00	\$ 250,848,040.96
Total	\$ 207,510,636.00	\$ 63,140,521.10	\$ 175,103,010.00	\$ 445,754,167.10

The overall advantages in non-federal spending are based on strong Democratic campaigns for Governor and Attorney General in North Carolina. DGA, DAGA, the DLCC, and state legislative caucuses spent tens of millions more dollars to support their candidates’ success.

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In federal campaigns, spending by other entities – party committees, PACs, and independent expenditures – surpass candidate spending – creating a vast ecosystem of billions of dollars spent to shape the landscape and define voter choice.

Presidential Campaign Spending

Evaluating presidential campaign spending requires understanding how money moves into and through Presidential campaigns. For national campaigns, massive amounts of money are moved through transfers into and out of campaigns, and once those transfers “stop moving” they are spent on planned activities.

Historically, candidate committees have invested in media spending because candidates receive a preferential rate for media placement. The national and state party committees typically have nonprofit postal accounts which allow them to send direct mail at a much lower postal rate so they usually send mail on behalf of the ticket. There are also benefits to centering organizing in state parties as an efficient approach to creating and earning voters and votes for the whole ticket, and to leverage nuances in campaign finance law to maximize the “utility” of a given campaign dollar.

It is therefore normal and expected to see Presidential and other candidates to spend a significant portion of funds on media – to both raise money and to spread the campaign message – and for there to be large transfers to state parties or the national committees to fund permissible activity at the most efficient cost.

For the purposes of this analysis, in 2024, the Presidential “campaigns” consist of the principal campaign committees, designated joint fundraising committees, and the national party committees.

The Harris and Trump campaigns – including the primary elections – reached \$3.57 billion in combined spending. Harris spent \$2.28 billion, and Trump spent \$1.29 billion. Harris had an overall \$988.2 million “hard” spending advantage.

Combined Presidential Election Spending by Candidate and Committee Type

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

	Harris	Trump	Total	Spend Advantage
Principal Campaign Committees	\$ 1,175,284,284.32	\$ 471,501,651.83	\$ 1,646,785,936.15	\$ 703,782,632.49
Joint Fundraising Committees	\$ 412,845,861.98	\$ 368,470,348.80	\$ 781,316,210.78	\$ 44,375,513.18
National Party Committees	\$ 692,078,721.04	\$ 452,002,717.20	\$ 1,144,081,438.24	\$ 240,076,003.84
Total	\$ 2,280,208,867.34	\$1,291,974,717.83	\$ 3,572,183,585.17	\$ 988,234,149.51

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Senate Spending

Senate candidate spending is more straightforward. While the Senate Republican and Democratic Party committees (NSRC and DSCC) spend on behalf of candidates and the races in cycle, they are dividing investments across multiple candidates.

Across the 89 general election candidates in the 34 Senate elections held in 2024, spending reached \$1.31 billion, with \$853.1 million spent by Democrats, \$435.3 million spent by Republicans, and \$29.6 million spent on behalf of third party candidates (two incumbent independent candidates – Angus King in Maine, and Bernie Sanders in Vermont, as well as Dan Osborn in Nebraska). There was an additional \$221.1 million spent by primary candidates or candidates who withdrew during the cycle.

2023-2024 Senate Spending by Party and Candidate Status

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Party	All Candidates	Party Nominees	Single-Digit Races
REPUBLICAN	\$ 504,526,135.53	\$ 435,363,491.59	\$ 282,268,302.51
DEMOCRATIC	\$ 986,740,075.48	\$ 853,188,512.55	\$ 598,310,586.91
THIRD PARTY	\$ 48,011,252.12	\$ 29,622,926.13	\$ 15,206,432.13
TOTAL	\$ 1,539,277,463.13	\$ 1,318,174,930.27	\$ 895,785,321.55

DEM ADVANTAGE	\$ 482,213,939.95	\$ 417,825,020.96	\$ 316,042,284.40
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The elections decided by single digits accounted for a supermajority of campaign spending - \$895.7 million spent by campaigns in 11 states.

Senate Candidate Spending - 2024 (Single-Digit Contests)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data and state Secretaries of State election results.

State	Margin	Democratic Party	Republican Party	Third Party	Total Spend
Texas	-8.50%	\$ 94,530,048.03	\$ 75,643,604.41	\$ 13,926.12	\$ 170,187,578.56
Montana	-7.14%	\$ 95,689,258.19	\$ 28,624,278.38	\$ -	\$ 124,313,536.57
Nebraska	-6.67%	\$ -	\$ 7,930,346.81	\$ 15,066,161.35	\$ 22,996,508.16
Ohio	-3.62%	\$ 99,564,642.30	\$ 26,388,504.54	\$ -	\$ 125,953,146.84
Pennsylvania	-0.22%	\$ 60,234,443.54	\$ 35,373,179.48	\$ 18,285.98	\$ 95,625,909.00
Michigan	0.34%	\$ 51,654,344.82	\$ 12,952,601.52	\$ 2,307.50	\$ 64,609,253.84
Wisconsin	0.85%	\$ 53,242,337.24	\$ 31,822,973.40	\$ 76,336.37	\$ 85,141,647.01
Nevada	1.64%	\$ 46,560,379.83	\$ 23,799,770.21	\$ 15,598.29	\$ 70,375,748.33
Arizona	2.40%	\$ 65,722,622.25	\$ 26,033,985.72	\$ 84,401.01	\$ 91,841,008.98
Virginia	8.93%	\$ 19,130,674.58	\$ 9,517,135.17	\$ -	\$ 28,647,809.75
New Jersey	9.61%	\$ 11,981,836.13	\$ 4,181,922.87	\$ 13,817.52	\$ 16,177,576.52

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Democrats outspent Republicans in every contest apart from Nebraska where there was no Democratic nominee in the regular election – and where the Independent, (Dan Osborn) outspent Republican incumbent Deb Fischer.

In isolation, spending volume did not correlate to winning. The highest-spending Democratic campaigns were mostly unsuccessful, but it doesn't mean those investments were a mistake – because it takes massive spending to make difficult partisan terrain competitive. Dollars also spend differently in each market or state, so a \$95.6 million Democratic spend in Montana spends “further” than a \$94.5 million spend in Texas, or a \$99.5 million spend in Ohio.

In Texas, the \$94.5 million spend by Colin Allred was offset by the smaller, but still large \$75.6 million spend by Ted Cruz. The \$18.8 million Allred spending advantage over Cruz measured against the 11.29 million votes cast in the state works out to a \$1.67 per voter spending advantage for Allred – the lowest for any single-digit Senate election. By comparison, the \$67.0 million spending advantage for Jon Tester over Tim Sheehy works out to \$110.44 per voter spending advantage.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data and state Secretaries of State election results.

Senate Candidate Spend per Voter by Party and State

State	Margin	Votes Cast	DEM Spend Per Voter	REP Spend Per Voter	Dem Edge Per Voter
Texas	-8.50%	11,291,854	\$ 8.37	\$ 6.70	\$ 1.67
Montana	-7.14%	607,262	\$ 157.57	\$ 47.14	\$ 110.44
Nebraska	-6.67%	938,336	\$ -	\$ 8.45	n/a
Ohio	-3.62%	5,704,620	\$ 17.45	\$ 4.63	\$ 12.83
Pennsylvania	-0.22%	6,963,137	\$ 8.65	\$ 5.08	\$ 3.57
Michigan	0.34%	5,577,187	\$ 9.26	\$ 2.32	\$ 6.94
Wisconsin	0.85%	3,390,787	\$ 15.70	\$ 9.39	\$ 6.32
Nevada	1.64%	1,464,728	\$ 31.79	\$ 16.25	\$ 15.54
Arizona	2.40%	3,354,552	\$ 19.59	\$ 7.76	\$ 11.83
Virginia	8.93%	4,445,535	\$ 4.30	\$ 2.14	\$ 2.16
New Jersey	9.61%	4,036,123	\$ 2.97	\$ 1.04	\$ 1.93

Of course, candidate committee spending is only part of the story. There was additional joint fundraising committee spending, and both coordinated and independent expenditures which drove spending even higher in most Senate contests – addressed later in this section.

US House Spending

There were 1,851 filers with the Federal Elections Commission for the US House in 2024,

Claim contradicts public data.

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including retiring incumbents, and candidates who reported no revenue or expenses. There were also candidates who were on the ballot but did not file with the FEC, either because they never reached a reporting threshold, or otherwise decided not to file their candidacy.

These 1,851 filers spent a combined \$2,141,139,139.88 - \$1,201,964,587.47 spent by Democrats, \$922,081,629.86 spent by Republicans, and \$17,092,922.55 spent by third party candidates, a \$279.8 million spending advantage for Democrats.

2023-2024 House Spending by Party and Candidate Status

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Party	All Candidates	Party Nominees	Single-Digit Races
DEMOCRATIC	\$ 1,201,964,587.47	\$ 836,468,127.90	\$ 402,327,613.03
REPUBLICAN	\$ 922,081,629.86	\$ 719,474,638.61	\$ 244,767,620.44
THIRD PARTY	\$ 17,092,922.55	\$ 12,204,177.85	\$ 234,102.78
TOTAL	\$ 2,141,139,139.88	\$ 1,568,146,944.36	\$ 647,329,336.25
DEM ADVANTAGE	\$ 279,882,957.61	\$ 116,993,489.29	\$ 157,559,992.59

Among the 808 filers who made it to the general election (Party Nominees), a total of \$1.56 billion was spent, with \$836.4 million spent by Democrats, \$719.4 million spent by Republicans, and \$12.2 million spent by third party candidates – a \$116.9 million advantage for Democrats.

Among the 69 districts decided by single digits, 647.3 million was spent, with 402.3 million spent by Democrats, 244.7 million spent by Republicans, and 234,102 spent by third party candidates – for a \$157.5 million advantage for Democrats.

The 69 districts (15.9 percent of the 435 house districts) accounted for 31.4 percent of all House candidate spending for the cycle. It was strategic decision made by both parties to “over-invest” in these battleground districts. Note the higher average spend by both parties in the 23 Republican-held single districts – where the majority was decided.

House Candidate Campaign Spending by District Margins

Sourcing not provided, assume analysis is based on data provided above.

	> 20	10 - 20	0 - 10	0 - -10	-10 - -20	< -20
Districts	124	45	46	23	42	155
Dem Spend	\$ 256,894,914.31	\$ 118,335,952.95	\$ 234,605,563.71	\$ 168,397,217.83	\$ 48,054,404.49	\$ 26,877,188.93
Rep Spend	\$ 14,288,616.10	\$ 20,062,196.97	\$ 116,638,949.47	\$ 127,154,606.79	\$ 108,857,692.31	\$ 345,161,946.52
Average Dem Spend	\$ 2,071,733.18	\$ 2,629,687.84	\$ 5,100,120.95	\$ 7,321,618.17	\$ 1,144,152.49	\$ 173,401.22
Average Rep Spend	\$ 115,230.78	\$ 445,826.60	\$ 2,535,629.34	\$ 5,528,461.16	\$ 2,591,849.82	\$ 2,226,851.27
Share of Spend	17.1%	8.7%	22.2%	18.6%	9.9%	23.5%
	48.0%			52.0%		

House Top Raisers

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The top 25 spenders among winning candidates in each party are a collection of leadership and battleground Members. Typically, leadership will raise funds to support other candidates, and battleground Members will be among the top spenders.

Top 25 Spenders by Party (2023-24) – Successful Candidates

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Democrats	Spend	Republican	Spend
NY-08 - Jeffries	\$ 20,238,857.80	LA-04 - Johnson	\$ 19,499,271.29
VA-07 - Vindman	\$ 17,961,255.77	LA-01 - Scalise	\$ 15,253,286.22
NY-14 - Ocasio-Cortez	\$ 16,716,492.89	OH-04 - Jordan	\$ 13,631,832.23
WA-03 - Gluesenkamp Perez	\$ 11,895,854.48	GA-14 - Taylor Greene	\$ 10,062,930.19
CA-11 - Pelosi	\$ 11,739,026.18	MI-10 - James	\$ 9,606,963.87
CA-27 - Whitesides	\$ 10,287,404.27	MT-01 - Zinke	\$ 9,546,737.64
NY-19 - Riley	\$ 9,795,032.58	AZ-02 - Crane	\$ 8,308,125.11
MN-02 - Craig	\$ 8,295,355.52	NY-17 - Lawler	\$ 8,256,895.05
MN-05 - Omar	\$ 8,063,370.60	CA-40 - Kim	\$ 7,906,735.89
NY-18 - Ryan	\$ 8,011,645.30	CA-41 - Calvert	\$ 7,864,571.94
ME-02 - Golden	\$ 7,851,798.65	NY-21 - Stefanik	\$ 7,636,448.94
NY-03 - Suozzi	\$ 7,675,778.00	TX-15 - De La Cruz	\$ 7,375,027.97
OR-05 - Bynum	\$ 7,479,499.09	WI-03 - Van Orden	\$ 7,319,385.43
NM-02 - Vasquez	\$ 7,024,317.60	MN-06 - Emmer	\$ 7,115,860.66
NY-04 - Gillen	\$ 6,803,193.24	AZ-06 - Ciscomani	\$ 6,853,656.75
CA-47 - Min	\$ 6,662,877.38	FL-01 - Patronis	\$ 6,824,261.22
NY-16 - Latimer	\$ 6,486,537.83	VA-02 - Kiggans	\$ 6,461,350.75
CA-31 - Cisneros	\$ 6,437,094.66	TX-06 - Ellzey	\$ 6,401,941.63
CA-13 - Gray	\$ 6,293,278.56	NE-02 - Bacon	\$ 6,174,541.22
CA-45 - Tran	\$ 6,186,813.18	IN-06 - Shreve	\$ 6,109,921.87
CA-16 - Liccardo	\$ 6,136,051.31	NJ-07 - Kean	\$ 6,068,925.14
MI-08 - McDonald Rivet	\$ 6,050,001.17	IA-03 - Nunn	\$ 5,857,350.20
MD-06 - McClain Delaney	\$ 5,930,648.68	FL-19 - Donalds	\$ 5,598,912.45
NC-01 - Davis	\$ 5,808,396.52	IA-01 - Miller-Meeks	\$ 5,591,186.53
NV-03 - Lee	\$ 5,642,671.43	KY-01 - Comer	\$ 5,518,741.17
Top 25 Total	\$ 221,473,252.69	Top 25 Total	\$ 206,844,861.36
Democratic Average	\$ 8,858,930.11	Republican Average	\$ 8,273,794.45

The top 25 spenders for Democrats averaged an \$8.8 million spend, while the top 25 spenders among Republicans averaged an \$8.2 million spend.

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Democrats also had an advantage among the candidates who were unsuccessful. The table below shows the top 25 spending Democratic and Republican incumbents and challengers who came up short, with the colors reflecting the margin of the contest in favor of the current incumbent.

Note how 20 of the 23 single digit Republican-held seats are on the Democratic list.

Democrats	Spend	Republican	Spend
CO-03 - Frisch	\$ 17,314,502.33	CA-45 - Steel	\$ 10,283,182.55
AK-AL - Peltola	\$ 14,050,828.27	TX-34 - Flores	\$ 6,949,504.57
CA-41 - Rollins	\$ 12,610,995.05	CA-27 - Garcia	\$ 6,605,923.34
NY-17 - Jones	\$ 9,990,162.80	OR-05 - Chavez-Deremer	\$ 5,748,786.10
PA-07 - Wild	\$ 8,946,230.00	MI-08 - Junge	\$ 5,636,809.29
PA-08 - Cartwright	\$ 8,614,503.43	NY-19 - Molinaro	\$ 5,580,361.75
AZ-06 - Engel	\$ 8,430,005.34	CA-49 - Gunderson	\$ 4,921,691.96
CO-08 - Caraveo	\$ 8,137,990.05	NC-01 - Buckhout	\$ 4,769,317.96
MI-07 - Hertel	\$ 7,652,531.73	NM-02 - Herrell	\$ 4,563,150.29
NE-02 - Vargas	\$ 7,487,835.30	CA-47 - Baugh	\$ 4,491,942.93
IA-01 - Bohannon	\$ 6,823,503.73	NY-04 - Desposito	\$ 4,462,228.60
PA-10 - Stelson	\$ 6,506,817.96	CA-13 - Duarte	\$ 4,386,892.76
WI-03 - Cooke	\$ 6,347,919.13	NY-22 - Williams	\$ 4,208,335.51
CA-22 - Salas	\$ 6,323,925.21	AL-02 - Dobsen	\$ 3,854,940.03
AZ-01 - Shah	\$ 6,252,020.16	ME-02 - Theriault	\$ 3,611,594.86
NJ-07 - Altman	\$ 6,241,501.33	VA-07 - Anderson	\$ 3,355,704.96
MT-01 - Tranel	\$ 6,205,245.86	MN-02 - Teirab	\$ 3,284,981.02
IA-03 - Baccam	\$ 5,585,059.27	CT-05 - Logan	\$ 3,010,025.98
AZ-02 - Nez	\$ 5,457,626.09	WA-03 - Kent	\$ 2,708,358.04
NY-01 - Avlon	\$ 5,297,995.26	NY-18 - Esposito	\$ 2,421,806.90
CO-04 - Calvarese	\$ 4,277,733.76	CA-09 - Lincoln	\$ 2,254,794.13
PA-01 - Ehasz	\$ 3,962,973.73	MN-05 - Al-Aqidi	\$ 2,231,999.62
GA-14 - Harris	\$ 3,534,244.34	KS-03 - Reddy	\$ 1,855,803.44
CA-03 - Morse	\$ 3,262,405.92	NY-14 - Forte	\$ 1,845,354.18
VA-02 - Cotter Smasal	\$ 3,237,816.04	FL-22 - Franzese	\$ 1,775,046.36
Top 25 Total	\$ 182,552,372.09	Top 25 Total	\$ 104,818,537.13
Democratic Average	\$ 7,302,094.88	Republican Average	\$ 4,192,741.49

Unsuccessful Democrats outspent unsuccessful Republicans by \$77.7 million, an average of \$3.1 million, with Democrats averaging \$7.3 in spending compared to nearly \$4.2 million for Republicans.

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Non-Candidate Spending

Candidate committee spending is only part of the puzzle – an important and perhaps decisive part – but still only a portion of what is spent on behalf of candidates. The FEC requires the disclosure of spending information from any entity spending on behalf of a candidate – either for the candidate or against their opponent(s). Depending on the type of entity, the spending is disclosed in periodic reports and aggregated by the FEC.

Separate from the direct candidate spending, joint fundraising committees, party committees, and independent expenditures all add to the spending mix.

Presidential Non-Candidate Spending

For Democrats, an incumbent President exerts control over the DNC, and even before Joe Biden announced his candidacy for re-election, the integration of his campaign with the DNC was expected and immediate. As part of this integration, two joint fundraising committees were set up, and used to help raise money and support the overall campaign.

Joint fundraising committees enable candidates to raise and spend money in collaboration with party committees, and a party committee can support the transfer of unlimited funds for permissible activities. As indicated above, the combined candidate committee, joint fundraising committees, and national party committee spending totaled \$2.28 billion for Harris and \$1.29 billion for Trump.

When adding independent expenditures, the gap expands.

Combined “Hard” and “Soft” 2024 Presidential Expenditures

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

	"HARD" SPENDING	IND. EXPENDITURES	TOTAL
REPUBLICAN	\$ 1,291,974,717.83	\$ 859,590,202.24	\$ 2,151,564,920.07
DEMOCRATIC	\$ 2,280,208,867.34	\$ 905,423,459.35	\$ 3,185,632,326.69
TOTAL	\$ 3,572,183,585.17	\$ 1,765,013,661.59	\$ 5,337,197,246.76
DEMADVANTAGE	\$ 988,234,149.51	\$ 45,833,257.11	\$ 1,034,067,406.62

Republican independent expenditures spent \$859.5 million on behalf of Republicans or against the Democrats, and Democratic independent expenditures spent \$905.4 million on behalf of the Democrat or against the opposition – a net \$45.8 million advantage for Democratic spending, taking the overall margin for disclosed presidential spending to \$1.03 billion.

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Senate Non-Candidate Spending

The Senate landscape is a bit more complicated. First, Senate candidates will have joint fundraising committees make both transfers to the participating candidate committees and make direct expenditures to raise money and communicate with voters. Excluding the transfers to the participating candidate committees, the joint fundraising committees spent \$95.0 million on direct expenditures. Republicans spent \$72.1 million, while Democrats spent \$22.8 million, a \$49.3 million Republican advantage.

The Senate national campaign committees also invest in campaigns – through planning, infrastructure development, coordinated and independent expenditures, and transfers to state parties. When excluding refunded contributions, the remaining committee spending reached \$563.3.0 million, with \$293.2 million spent by the NRSC, and \$270.0 million by the DSCC – a \$23.6 million Republican advantage.

Reported Senate independent expenditures reached \$1.22 billion, with \$671.9 million spent for Republicans and \$548.2 million spent on behalf of support Democrats – a \$123.6 million Republican advantage.

Non-Candidate Committee Senate Spending

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

	JOINT/VICTORY	CAMP. COMMITTEES	IND. EXPENDITURES	TOTAL
REPUBLICAN	\$ 72,174,105.71	\$ 293,294,243.09	\$ 671,953,330.00	\$ 1,037,421,678.80
DEMOCRATIC	\$ 22,837,919.44	\$ 270,033,796.82	\$ 548,260,656.00	\$ 841,132,372.26
TOTAL	\$ 95,012,025.15	\$ 563,328,039.91	\$ 1,220,213,986.00	\$ 1,878,554,051.06
REP ADVANTAGE	\$ 49,336,186.27	\$ 23,260,446.27	\$ 123,692,674.00	\$ 196,289,306.54

Across these categories, spending topped \$1.87 billion, which when coupled with the \$1.53 billion in Senate candidate spending brings total spending for the Senate to \$3,417,831,514.19, or an average of \$100.5 million per campaign.

The Republican advantages in non-candidate committee and independent expenditures narrowed the margin in Democratic and Republican spending to a \$285.9 million Democratic advantage, and kept Republicans competitive as the campaigns came to a close.

House Non-Candidate Spending

In the House, joint fundraising committee spending reached \$100.8 million after transfers to participating committees, with Republicans dominating spending with \$94.8 million on behalf of their candidates and \$6.02 million on behalf of Democrats. Democrats offset this with strong

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spending by the DCCC of \$300.8 million in comparison to \$217.8 million by the NRCC, a \$112.9 million advantage for Democrats on a total national campaign committee spend of \$548,7 million.

The two parties virtually tied with independent expenditures - \$375.6 million spent on behalf of Republicans and nearly \$375.7 million spent on behalf of Democrats – a \$95,275 advantage with House independent expenditure spending reaching \$751.3 million.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Non-Candidate Committee House Spending

	JOINT/VICTORY	CAMP. COMMITTEES	IND. EXPENDITURES	TOTAL
REPUBLICAN	\$ 94,802,129.94	\$ 217,877,600.40	\$ 375,604,409.00	\$ 688,284,139.34
DEMOCRATIC	\$ 6,072,897.32	\$ 330,876,303.34	\$ 375,699,684.00	\$ 712,648,884.66
TOTAL	\$ 100,875,027.26	\$ 548,753,903.74	\$ 751,304,093.00	\$ 1,400,933,024.00
REP ADVANTAGE	\$ 88,729,232.62	\$ (112,998,702.94)	\$ (95,275.00)	\$ (24,364,745.32)

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Non-Federal Spending

Democrats also hold advantages in nonfederal spending. In the aggregate, Democratic candidates generally outraise Republicans in battleground races, with significant imbalances in non-battleground contests.

Each state has their own fundraising and spending disclosure rules. Many, but not all states have contribution limits. Some have matching funds or spending caps which impact spending strategies.

Gubernatorial Spending

There were 11 gubernatorial elections in 2024. Republicans outspent Democrats in eight of the elections, and Democrats outspent Republicans in three. In each contest, the leading spender won. \$207.5 million was raised by the major party candidates in the 11 elections, with Democrats spending \$117.4 million, and Republicans spending 90.0 million – a Democratic advantage of \$27.4 million.

Gubernatorial Campaign Spending (2024)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be from state-level databases.

State	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS	TOTAL	DIFFERENCE	RATIO
DE	\$ 2,731,464.00	\$ 559,235.00	\$ 3,290,699.00	\$ 2,172,229.00	4.9
IN	\$ 5,891,343.00	\$ 20,484,949.00	\$ 26,376,292.00	\$ (14,593,606.00)	3.5
MO	\$ 2,488,278.00	\$ 6,293,194.00	\$ 8,781,472.00	\$ (3,804,916.00)	2.5
MT	\$ 2,863,696.00	\$ 3,209,919.00	\$ 6,073,615.00	\$ (346,223.00)	1.1
NC	\$ 78,169,936.00	\$ 17,386,292.00	\$ 95,556,228.00	\$ 60,783,644.00	4.5
ND	\$ 186,141.00	\$ 1,170,382.00	\$ 1,356,523.00	\$ (984,241.00)	6.3
NH	\$ 7,729,498.00	\$ 20,489,545.00	\$ 28,219,043.00	\$ (12,760,047.00)	2.7
UT	\$ 1,537,985.00	\$ 7,408,617.00	\$ 8,946,602.00	\$ (5,870,632.00)	4.8
VT	\$ 48,768.00	\$ 494,166.00	\$ 542,934.00	\$ (445,398.00)	10.1
WA	\$ 15,537,317.00	\$ 6,666,812.00	\$ 22,204,129.00	\$ 8,870,505.00	2.3
WV	\$ 294,161.00	\$ 5,868,938.00	\$ 6,163,099.00	\$ (5,574,777.00)	20.0
TOTAL	\$ 117,478,587.00	\$ 90,032,049.00	\$ 207,510,636.00	\$ 27,446,538.00	1.3

The Democratic advantage in aggregate spending is the direct result of the record spending by Governor Josh Stein in North Carolina – whose \$78.1 million is in shouting distance of the entire Republican field of \$90.0 million. Democrats will not always have the advantage of a 4.5:1 spending advantage, but depending on the terrain, in some states, it is what it takes to win.

In New Hampshire, now-Governor Kelly Ayotte outspent Democrat Joyce Craig by 2.7 to 1. While New Hampshire voters have historically tended to split their ballots, and did so in 2024 by rejecting Donald Trump while voting for Ayotte, New Hampshire will remain a gubernatorial battleground.

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Governor Bob Ferguson also outspent Republican Dave Reichert by 2.3 to 1 in Washington. Ferguson proved to be a strong fundraiser, following the successful model of a State Attorney General moving up as a gubernatorial candidate.

Attorney General Spending

There were ten elections for attorney general, and Republicans outspent Democrats in six of the ten contests, and won all of the races where they outspent Democrats. Candidate spending totaled \$63.1 million across the ten elections, with Democrats raising \$30.3 million, and Republicans raising \$32.7 million – a \$2.3 million Republican advantage.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be from state-level databases.

Attorney General Campaign Spending (2024)

State	DEM	REP	TOTAL	DIFFERENCE	RATIO
IN	\$ 1,234,487.00	\$ 2,087,109.00	\$ 3,321,596.00	\$ (852,622.00)	1.7
MO	\$ 443,987.00	\$ 1,610,484.00	\$ 2,054,471.00	\$ (1,166,497.00)	3.6
MT	\$ 340,247.00	\$ 815,909.00	\$ 1,156,156.00	\$ (475,662.00)	2.4
NC	\$ 16,792,153.00	\$ 9,030,479.00	\$ 25,822,632.00	\$ 7,761,674.00	1.9
OR	\$ 2,679,398.00	\$ 2,142,869.00	\$ 4,822,267.00	\$ 536,529.00	1.3
PA	\$ 6,559,914.96	\$ 13,690,767.14	\$ 20,250,682.10	\$ (7,130,852.18)	2.1
UT	\$ 320.00	\$ 1,320,591.00	\$ 1,320,911.00	\$ (1,320,271.00)	4126.8
VT	\$ 59,196.00	\$ 25,927.00	\$ 85,123.00	\$ 33,269.00	2.3
WA	\$ 2,234,135.00	\$ 470,766.00	\$ 2,704,901.00	\$ 1,763,369.00	4.7
WV	\$ 39,922.00	\$ 1,561,860.00	\$ 1,601,782.00	\$ (1,521,938.00)	39.1
TOTAL	\$ 30,383,759.96	\$ 32,756,761.14	\$ 63,140,521.10	\$ (2,373,001.18)	0.9

Several factual errors found within analysis.

The two closest contests, North Carolina (decided by 1.3 percent) and Pennsylvania (decided by 4.6 percent) were the most expensive of the cycle. \$25.8 million was spent in North Carolina, where Democrat Jeff Jackson won over Republican Dan Bishop, and \$20.2 million was spent in Pennsylvania, where Republican Dave Sunday won over Eugene DePasquale.

Jackson outraised Bishop nearly two-to-one, and Sunday outraised DePasquale by more than two-to one. DePasquale actually outraised Sunday in contributions, but Sunday was aided by a massive \$10.0 million in-kind expenditure from a conservative donor which enabled Sunday to outspend DePasquale.

State Legislative Spending

The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC) Spotlight Races also generated significant spending. A review of the campaign finance records in 24 states identified spending totals in 165 contests. Democrats led in aggregate spending in 13 of the 24 states, and in 112 of the 165 contests.

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Sourcing not provided.

DLCC Spotlight Race Candidate Spending by State and Party (2024)

State	Districts	Democrat	Republican	Grand Total	Difference
AZ	12	\$ 5,838,329.00	\$ 3,233,874.00	\$ 9,072,203.00	\$ 2,604,455.00
CO	1	\$ 102,692.00	\$ 137,666.00	\$ 240,358.00	\$ (34,974.00)
FL	6	\$ 1,961,986.00	\$ 1,992,759.00	\$ 3,954,745.00	\$ (30,773.00)
GA	7	\$ 3,027,498.00	\$ 1,913,960.00	\$ 4,941,458.00	\$ 1,113,538.00
IA	7	\$ 1,601,358.00	\$ 655,682.00	\$ 2,257,040.00	\$ 945,676.00
ID	1	\$ 48,988.00	\$ 60,808.00	\$ 109,796.00	\$ (11,820.00)
KS	10	\$ 1,280,737.00	\$ 1,212,524.00	\$ 2,493,261.00	\$ 68,213.00
ME	2	\$ 159,437.00	\$ 111,956.00	\$ 271,393.00	\$ 47,481.00
MI	13	\$ 6,866,413.00	\$ 1,780,610.00	\$ 8,647,023.00	\$ 5,085,803.00
MN	14	\$ 1,574,970.00	\$ 1,365,608.00	\$ 2,940,578.00	\$ 209,362.00
NC	14	\$ 19,575,414.00	\$ 17,388,733.00	\$ 36,964,147.00	\$ 2,186,681.00
NE	2	\$ 408,025.00	\$ 764,553.00	\$ 1,172,578.00	\$ (356,528.00)
NH	17	\$ 17,510.00	\$ 31,768.00	\$ 49,278.00	\$ (14,258.00)
NV	7	\$ 4,076,287.00	\$ 2,754,059.00	\$ 6,830,346.00	\$ 1,322,228.00
NY	2	\$ 2,074,040.00	\$ 1,082,343.00	\$ 3,156,383.00	\$ 991,697.00
OH	2	\$ 451,088.00	\$ 1,324,060.00	\$ 1,775,148.00	\$ (872,972.00)
OK	2	\$ 450,035.00	\$ 276,653.00	\$ 726,688.00	\$ 173,382.00
OR	3	\$ 1,224,489.00	\$ 2,985,069.00	\$ 4,209,558.00	\$ (1,760,580.00)
PA	19	\$ 13,013,516.00	\$ 13,794,668.00	\$ 26,808,184.00	\$ (781,152.00)
SC	2	\$ 225,186.00	\$ 311,456.00	\$ 536,642.00	\$ (86,270.00)
TN	3	\$ 249,067.00	\$ 444,580.00	\$ 693,647.00	\$ (195,513.00)
TX	3	\$ 4,209,791.00	\$ 2,572,376.00	\$ 6,782,167.00	\$ 1,637,415.00
UT	2	\$ 255,096.00	\$ 416,377.00	\$ 671,473.00	\$ (161,281.00)
WI	14	\$ 34,293,742.00	\$ 15,505,174.00	\$ 49,798,916.00	\$ 18,788,568.00
Total	165	\$ 102,985,694.00	\$ 72,117,316.00	\$ 175,103,010.00	\$ 30,868,378.00

These 165 candidates spent \$175.1 million, with Democratic legislative candidates spending a combined \$102.9 million, and Republicans spending a combined \$72.1 million, for a Democratic advantage of \$30.8 million.

For each of these non-federal races, there are national campaign committees, state-level legislative caucus committees, and state party committees who invest in races or in coordinated campaigns, and there are hundreds of millions of dollars invested every cycle by many allied organizations seeking to power build in the states.

Given the volume of state legislative races, the combined legislative candidate spending sometimes exceed gubernatorial or other constitutional officer spending. Finding more efficiency through effective coordinated campaigns and state tables will help Democrats expand the map. As Democrats plan and map future redistricting and state policy fights,

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winning these non-federal campaigns is essential to reshape the state political landscape and build a national majority party strategy.

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Understanding Outside Spending

No evidence provided for many claims in this section.

Well before FECA was even enacted, or the first officers of the FEC took their oaths, some wealthy individuals and powerful interests worked to find ways around the constraints on campaign finance. While reformers have made continuous efforts to amend and revise FECA – either to close loopholes or strengthen enforcement – there have been simultaneous efforts to overturn Congressional intent through federal court decisions which have undermined the context and concept of clean campaign finance and fair elections.

As the federal courts loosened campaign finance regulations, Congress eventually passed the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA) or McCain-Feingold. BCRA included significant and substantial changes to campaign finance, such as eliminating the raising or spending of nonfederal campaign funds, adjusting campaign contribution limits, and limiting the roles of federal candidates and officeholders in nonfederal campaign activity.

The goal was to provide clarity and transparency to the public – by limiting the influence of large contributors, and forcing federal party and campaign committees to operate with fewer resources. While well-intentioned, there were immediate reactions to these changes in federal law.

527 organizations (named as such due to how they were organized under the Internal Revenue Code) had existed since the 1970s as a tax designation for candidate committees, PACs, and party committees. While FECA imposed contribution limits and spending restrictions and mandated disclosure for campaign and political committees, Section 527 of the IRS did not. Campaign finance lawyers took notice, and advised so long as 527 organizations did not coordinate with parties or candidates, they could raise and spend unlimited amounts of money.

In the 2000 cycle, there were significant investments in 527 organization “issue campaigns.” In one instance, the cynically named Republicans for Clean Air spent millions on ads praising George W. Bush’s environmental “record” while attacking Senator John McCain during the nominating process.

Democrats also experimented with 527 issue advocacy, with investments in Joint Victory 2000, the Media Fund, the League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, EMILY’s List, and trial lawyer groups all making and placing issue ads throughout the general election.

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Year appears to be incorrect.

In all, IRS filings indicated an estimated \$100 million was spent by 527 groups in the 2020 cycle, a figure which now seems quaint, and in response, Congress required 527s to file disclosure reports, but allowed the organizations to continue to accept unlimited contributions.

So, when BCRA passed and banned so-called soft money contributions to political parties, there was already a tested vehicle ready to receive large contributions. Previously, national and state parties could leverage non-federal contributions into permissible activity. With the ban on soft money, there was now tens of millions of dollars in available financing, and strategists in both parties saw the potential for large-scale paid media campaigns and voter engagement efforts.

Notably, in 2003, in anticipation of the 2004 Presidential election, key Democratic strategists advocated investment and founded or expanded what were to become the first large scale external expenditures – America Coming Together, America Votes, and The Media Fund. Separately, some major donors and grassroots donors formed MoveOn Voter Fund (a separate organization from MoveOn.org, which started in 1998).

While independent of the campaigns, the 527 organizations could coordinate with each other. The Media Fund became the lead advertising arm of a broader 527 network, working in tandem with America Coming Together (ACT), which focused on field organizing and voter mobilization.

Both organizations were founded before there was a Democratic nominee, and played no favorites in the Democratic nominating process. ACT was on the ground in many states before John Kerry had secured the nomination, and The Media Fund and MoveOn filled the airwaves in the spring as the Bush campaign started to advertise after the Democratic nomination was secured. These 527 organizations combined to spend more than \$100 million in targeted states.

In response, Republicans created the Progress for America Voter Fund and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth – the infamous smear committee. These organizations ran a combination of attack and supportive ads.

In reaction to these expenditures, there were complaints filed by both parties with the FEC. The FEC concluded most of the 527 expenditures were impermissible engagement in federal campaign activity, and many were issued what were significant fines back then for violating contribution limits, improperly seeking to influence the election, and potential coordination.

Most of the 2004 527 organizations disbanded before the 2008 cycle, but their creation, activity, and impact were an early example of the massive spending still to come.

The Rise in “Outside” Entities

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Democrats were deeply frustrated with the 2004 campaign loss. Democrats were not outspent, but were under-organized on the hard side and were unable to counter Republican messaging and platform advantages – which may sound familiar 20 years later.

In response, major donors and organizations outside the party sought new forms of organization and investment to better engage voters to counter conservative advantages. The Democracy Alliance, labor unions, and other donor collaboratives sought to develop and support a network of think tanks, media outlets, and activist groups to provide a progressive counterweight to decades of conservative investment.

Over time, these efforts have matured – even if some organizations and donor collaboratives have disbanded or experienced changes in leadership or composition. There have been near endless debates about whether to focus on current elections or think more broadly about developing capacity for the long term.

During the 2008 cycle, the Obama campaign loudly and consistently discouraged outside spending – a strategy given the nominee’s preferences and perhaps due to his matchup against a campaign finance reformer in John McCain. With the ability to significantly outspend Senator McCain head-to-head on the hard side, and the massive energy fueling the Obama campaign it was an easier call, but not without risk. Some organizations continued to spend to provide a backstop to any potential reversals – but the Obama landslide was a welcome relief.

Federal court decisions between the 2008 and 2012 cycles radically changed campaign finance. The 2010 *Citizens United* and *SpeechNow.org* cases enabled corporations, unions, and groups of individuals to make unlimited contributions to groups making independent expenditures.

This led to the near-immediate creation of American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS (its 501(c)(4) parallel group) which spent more than \$70 million in support of Republicans and helped them retake the House of Representatives.

The entire political ecosystem took notice of these 2010 actions. In 2011, Priorities USA Action was created to support President Obama’s re-election and Democrats created House Majority PAC and Senate Majority PAC to support their incumbents and candidates.

On the Republican side, many of the potential challengers to President Obama had their own Super PACs – with organizations supporting Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum combining to raise and spend nearly \$200 million in the primary and general elections.

American Crossroads remained active in the 2012 cycle, and existing organizations, including several long-financed by the Koch network expanded their roles to take advantage of the new

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ability to spend. The Kochs catalyzed Americans for Prosperity and created Freedom Partners to pool contributions for independent expenditures.

The 2012 cycle was the first to feature Super PACs on both sides of the aisle, with more than \$600 million spent influencing federal elections.

By 2014, the lanes were clear – the Freedom Partners Action Fund, American Crossroads, Senate Conservatives Fund, and Club for Growth Action were driving spending on House and Senate races for Republicans, and House Majority PAC and Senate Majority PAC for the Democrats. Priorities USA Action remained active in the cycle, but positioned itself more to prepare for the 2016 presidential cycle. There were several other Super PACs on the right and left, but Republican-aligned Super PACs outspent Democratic-aligned Super PACS by nearly 2:1.

In 2015 and 2016, nearly every Republican presidential candidate had a Super PAC supporting their campaigns, with more than \$150 million spent in support of Jeb Bush, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Donald Trump during the nominating process. Americans for Prosperity and Freedom Partners spent more than \$200 million in the cycle, and Crossroads, while active, receded in influence as others began to spend more.

Priorities USA Action became the main Super PAC for the 2016 Democratic Presidential cycle, with House Majority PAC and Senate Majority PAC becoming institutionalized as the main Super PACs for the Democratic House and Senate; as spending reached a combined \$1.57 billion.

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Top 25 Independent Expenditure Committees (2015-2016)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Independent Expenditure (IE) Totals by Committee	Amount
PRIORITIES USA ACTION	\$ 133,408,056.41
RIGHT TO RISE USA	\$ 86,817,478.31
SENATE LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 85,994,327.66
DCCC	\$ 80,378,630.35
SENATE MAJORITY PAC	\$ 75,413,534.87
NRCC	\$ 73,601,651.08
DSCC	\$ 60,421,908.00
CONSERVATIVE SOLUTIONS PAC	\$ 55,443,629.89
HOUSE MAJORITY PAC	\$ 47,470,427.48
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 40,125,756.02
NRSC	\$ 39,172,190.00
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION	\$ 33,341,464.65
WOMEN VOTE!	\$ 33,167,398.37
FREEDOM PARTNERS ACTION FUND, INC.	\$ 29,728,850.26
US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	\$ 29,106,033.97
GRANITE STATE SOLUTIONS	\$ 24,267,139.70
FUTURE45	\$ 24,264,041.87
GREAT AMERICA PAC	\$ 23,608,329.91
45COMMITTEE INC.	\$ 21,339,015.32
REBUILDING AMERICA NOW	\$ 19,763,237.85
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA POLITICAL VICTORY FUND	\$ 19,241,228.01
CLUB FOR GROWTH ACTION	\$ 19,182,422.19
AMERICA LEADS	\$ 18,579,148.57
OUR PRINCIPLES PAC	\$ 18,327,118.77
LCV VICTORY FUND	\$ 15,703,967.09

The losses in the 2016 cycle were a shock to Democrats. The DNC was deeply in debt, and many existing institutions struggled to explain the research and program failures which allowed Trump to win.

In this vacuum, a surge of resistance energy led to the formation of many new organizations across the partisan and progressive ecosystem – dedicated to issues, story-telling, organizing, training, candidate recruitment, and candidate fundraising. The combined efforts of existing and new organizations helped elect new Democrats across the country in 2018, including several who won in Democratic primaries.

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There was \$1.26 billion in independent expenditures in 2018, with \$662.0 million spent on behalf of Democrats and \$603.5 million spent on behalf of Republicans. The leading spenders on the Democratic side were SMP, Majority Forward and the DSCC for the Senate, the DCCC and House Majority PAC to support House Democrats, and groups like Independence USA, Women Vote!, Priorities USA Action, the LCV Victory Fund, End Citizen’s United, VoteVets, and the With Honor Fund provided additional investment on behalf of federal Democrats.

Top 25 Independent Expenditure Committees (2017-2018)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Independent Expenditure (IE) Totals by Committee	Amount
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 138,305,792.18
SMP	\$ 111,587,832.07
SENATE LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 95,054,969.19
DCCC	\$ 84,632,372.87
NRCC	\$ 74,348,844.32
HOUSE MAJORITY PAC	\$ 72,108,156.15
MAJORITY FORWARD	\$ 40,273,268.24
INDEPENDENCE USA PAC	\$ 38,123,523.39
NRSC	\$ 35,649,898.69
NEW REPUBLICAN PAC	\$ 30,508,261.17
DSCC	\$ 29,621,184.36
AMERICA FIRST ACTION, INC.	\$ 29,251,778.40
WOMEN VOTE!	\$ 28,022,623.69
PRIORITIES USA ACTION	\$ 27,554,000.25
DEFENDARIZONA	\$ 21,966,590.39
LCV VICTORY FUND	\$ 16,236,042.14
CLUB FOR GROWTH ACTION	\$ 12,837,639.06
END CITIZENS UNITED	\$ 12,588,433.77
VOTEVETS	\$ 10,958,017.72
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS CONGRESSIONAL FUND	\$ 10,633,310.36
WITH HONOR FUND, INC.	\$ 10,331,814.77
AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY	\$ 8,936,471.68
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA POLITICAL VICTORY FUND	\$ 8,204,774.40
PATIENTS FOR AFFORDABLE DRUGS ACTION	\$ 7,965,280.44
CHANGE NOW	\$ 7,912,494.68

The Republican side was led by the Congressional Leadership fund and the NRCC for the House, the Senate Leadership Fund and NRSC for the Senate, and groups like New Republican PAC,

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America First Action, DefendArizona, Club for Growth Action, Americans for Prosperity, and the NRA.

There was \$3.14 billion in independent expenditures in 2020, with \$1.76 billion spent on behalf of Democrats and \$1.44 billion spent on behalf of Republicans, a \$318.3 million advantage for Democrats.

Top 25 Independent Expenditure Committees (2019-2020)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Independent Expenditure (IE) Totals by Committee	Amount
SENATE LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 293,723,598.31
SMP	\$ 229,911,900.82
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 142,784,335.19
FF PAC	\$ 141,585,981.72
HOUSE MAJORITY PAC	\$ 138,867,774.42
AMERICA FIRST ACTION, INC.	\$ 133,820,069.12
PRIORITIES USA ACTION	\$ 121,146,347.00
NRSC	\$ 120,644,239.82
PRESERVE AMERICA PAC	\$ 102,983,483.91
DSCC	\$ 91,241,902.31
DCCC	\$ 90,830,223.42
NRCC	\$ 80,680,071.67
AMERICAN CROSSROADS	\$ 79,476,088.91
CLUB FOR GROWTH ACTION	\$ 65,439,435.36
AB PAC	\$ 59,719,707.24
INDEPENDENCE USA PAC	\$ 56,530,453.55
THE LINCOLN PROJECT	\$ 49,186,930.07
AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY ACTION, INC.	\$ 47,633,480.57
LCV VICTORY FUND	\$ 42,267,572.82
UNITE THE COUNTRY	\$ 38,923,630.10
WOMEN VOTE!	\$ 36,769,794.12
BLACK PAC	\$ 31,783,483.55
VOTEVETS	\$ 25,888,818.69
EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY VICTORY FUND	\$ 21,202,307.92
RESTORATION PAC	\$ 19,777,019.84

SMP and the DSCC, and HMP and the DCCC again played major roles in driving Democratic independent spending for the Senate and House. Future Forward, Priorities USA, American Bridge, Independence USA and The Lincoln Project were all major spenders in the race for

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President, along with the LCV Victory Fund, Unite the Country, Women Vote!, Black PAC, VoteVets, and Everytown for Gun Safety.

For the Republicans, Senate Leadership Fund and the Congressional Leadership Fund again led Republican spending. America First Action and Preserve America PAC led spending for Republicans in the race for President.

During the 2020 Democratic nominating process, Super PACs were created to support some of the primary candidates. Unite the Country spent approximately \$20 million in the early states to support President Biden. Persist PAC spent \$14.7 million to support Elizabeth Warren in the Super Tuesday contests. VoteVets spent approximately \$8.0 million on ads in Iowa and New Hampshire supporting Pete Buttigieg, and Kitchen Table Conversations spent \$2.7 million on behalf of Amy Klobuchar.

There was \$2.25 billion in independent expenditures in 2022, with \$1.04 billion spent on behalf of Democrats and \$1.13 billion spent on behalf of Republicans, a Republican advantage of \$87.7 million.

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Top 25 Independent Expenditure Committees (2021-2022)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Independent Expenditure (IE) Totals by Committee	Amount
SENATE LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 246,008,451.30
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 227,323,123.62
SMP	\$ 159,574,382.59
HOUSE MAJORITY PAC	\$ 145,159,013.43
DCCC	\$ 96,432,377.95
NRCC	\$ 87,126,725.25
CLUB FOR GROWTH ACTION	\$ 69,864,511.83
AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY ACTION, INC.	\$ 69,495,634.52
GEORGIA HONOR	\$ 60,567,065.10
DSCC	\$ 49,445,273.02
NRSC	\$ 34,045,445.07
LCV VICTORY FUND	\$ 33,300,799.57
WOMEN VOTE!	\$ 29,851,977.65
WISCONSIN TRUTH PAC	\$ 28,874,330.56
UNITED DEMOCRACY PROJECT (UDP)	\$ 26,118,700.49
SAVING ARIZONA PAC	\$ 25,405,637.21
PROTECT OUR FUTURE PAC	\$ 24,246,046.40
VOTEVETS	\$ 22,985,353.06
AMERICAN LEADERSHIP ACTION	\$ 19,588,099.88
HONOR PENNSYLVANIA, INC.	\$ 19,262,384.24
FF PAC	\$ 16,089,825.95
PRIORITIES USA ACTION	\$ 16,002,432.11
PROTECT OHIO VALUES PAC (POV PAC)	\$ 15,985,860.20
MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN INC.	\$ 15,030,850.16
OUR AMERICAN CENTURY	\$ 13,615,268.83

The Senate Leadership Fund and the NRSC combined to lead spending in the Senate for the Republicans, and Congressional Leadership Fund and the NRCC combined to lead Republican spending in the House. SMP, Georgia Honor, and the DSCC combined to lead spending for Senate Democrats and House Majority PAC and the DCCC led spending for House Democrats.

In 2024, independent expenditures reached \$4.42 billion, with \$2.09 billion spent on behalf of Democrats, and \$2.20 billion spent on behalf of Republicans, a \$108.2 million Republican advantage.

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Top 25 Independent Expenditure Committees (2023-2024)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Independent Expenditure (IE) Totals by Committee	Amount
FF PAC	\$ 503,317,964.13
MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN INC.	\$ 376,948,786.70
WINSENATE	\$ 311,285,589.20
CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 216,785,222.48
SENATE LEADERSHIP FUND	\$ 211,093,032.88
HMP	\$ 195,994,624.44
AMERICA PAC	\$ 173,734,996.50
AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY ACTION, INC.	\$ 151,773,456.24
PRESERVE AMERICA PAC	\$ 112,321,879.52
SFA FUND, INC	\$ 81,820,666.44
DCCC	\$ 74,258,192.57
RIGHT FOR AMERICA	\$ 69,583,233.16
AMERICAN CROSSROADS	\$ 60,267,523.21
AB PAC	\$ 58,551,575.41
DEFEND AMERICAN JOBS	\$ 57,809,173.64
KEYSTONE RENEWAL PAC	\$ 54,394,982.49
WIN IT BACK PAC	\$ 54,062,372.99
LCV VICTORY FUND	\$ 46,685,018.06
DSCC	\$ 43,757,729.31
RESTORATION PAC	\$ 43,004,942.32
FAIRSHAKE	\$ 40,661,820.61
UNITED DEMOCRACY PROJECT ("UDP")	\$ 37,859,810.12
NEVER BACK DOWN INC.	\$ 37,764,477.49
REPUBLICAN ACCOUNTABILITY PAC	\$ 36,750,840.41
NRCC	\$ 36,483,146.06

As the primary super PACs for the presidential candidates, Future Forward led all independent expenditures spending with \$503.3 million on behalf of Biden and then Harris, and Make America Great Again Inc with \$376.9 million on behalf of Trump. WINSENATE inherited the SMP role as the lead spender for Senate Democrats, and HMP remained the leading spender for House Democrats. Congressional Leadership Fund led in House spending for Republicans and Senate Leadership Fund for Senate Republicans.

America PAC – the Elon Musk vehicle – spent \$173.7 million, and Americans for Prosperity Action – the Koch fueled entity – spent \$151.7 million.

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The largest difference between 2020 and 2024 is the near-tripling of Republican independent expenditures in the presidential election. The spending at the Congressional (House and Senate) levels were essentially the same from 2020 to 2024, but presidential independent expenditures for Democrats grew from \$720.5 million in 2020 to \$978.7 million in 2024 (an increase of 35.8 percent), while Republican spending grew from \$359.5 million in 2020 to **\$1.02 billion** in 2024 (an increase of 188.9 percent).

Data appears inconsistent with table below.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Independent Expenditure Totals by Party and Office (2016-2024)

	2015-2016	2017-2018	2019-2020	2021-2022	2023-2024
DEMPRESIDENT	\$ 334,295,072.80	\$ 500,721.75	\$ 720,521,463.87	\$ 1,615,462.81	\$ 978,721,313.68
REP PRESIDENT	\$ 342,791,431.77	\$ 10,511,736.95	\$ 359,510,692.13	\$ 52,341.61	\$1,038,823,719.77
DEMHOUSE+SENATE	\$ 449,730,452.80	\$ 661,583,893.92	\$1,043,050,697.36	\$1,044,065,216.59	\$1,119,588,770.57
REP HOUSE+SENATE	\$ 446,372,242.22	\$ 592,992,155.07	\$1,085,677,978.27	\$1,133,395,504.78	\$1,167,770,234.31
TOTAL DEM	\$ 784,025,525.60	\$ 662,084,615.67	\$1,763,572,161.23	\$1,045,680,679.40	\$2,098,310,084.25
TOTAL REP	\$ 789,163,673.99	\$ 603,503,892.02	\$1,445,188,670.40	\$1,133,447,846.39	\$2,206,593,954.08
TOTAL DEM+REPIEs	\$1,573,189,199.59	\$ 1,265,588,507.69	\$3,208,760,831.63	\$2,179,128,525.79	\$4,304,904,038.33

The combined \$108.2 independent expenditure advantage for Republicans in 2024 helped partially offset their hard-side fundraising and spending deficits. The Republicans were able to activate their oligarchs, and leverage multiple independent expenditures from Musk and others to make up for their lack of fundraising support from everyday Americans.

How Independent Expenditures Spend in Campaigns

Independent expenditures are made by committees, candidates and individuals in support or opposition to a candidate. Some organizations have much larger budgets and operations, and then transfer funds to another vehicle through which they make independent expenditures, so there is not a full picture of the resources being brought to bear.

Only the actual investments in support or opposition are disclosed – in organizing, media, and other expenses in direct support of the effort.

The FEC has categorical descriptions for expenses, including Administrative/Salary/Overhead, Advertising, Campaign Events, Campaign Materials (buttons, bumper stickers, brochures and other collaterals), Donations (to organizations and groups), Political Contributions (to candidates and committees), Polling, Solicitation and Fundraising Expenses, and Travel. In addition, costs specific to Voter Contact can be coded to identify organizing investments.

This analysis requires a caveat – expenses may not have been properly coded or described by the compliance teams for the various entities making the independent expenditures, and there

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are definitional questions about what constitutes a specific category of expense. For example, is a text message an advertisement or voter contact? Is a mailer intended to persuade an ad or voter contact?

For the purposes of this analysis – the more traditional definition of an ad – in print, television, radio, or digital – and all of the attendant production, placement and delivery costs are considered an advertising expense. Canvassing, phone banking, direct mail, and yard signs are considered voter contact. Each expense was reviewed and coded to these categories.

The spending numbers also slightly differ from the aggregate totals reported above – due to the way some expenses are estimated and later reconciled during the campaign season.

In 2024, massive investments in media and voter contact dominated the share of independent expenditure spend – accounting for more than 99 percent of disclosed independent expenditures on behalf of both parties.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

2024 Independent Expenditures by Category and Party

Expense Description	DEM	Share	REP	Share	Total
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 9,154,913.74	0.4%	\$ 3,688,990.81	0.2%	\$ 12,843,904.55
Advertising Expenses	\$ 1,868,062,491.73	87.5%	\$ 1,873,640,269.11	82.9%	\$ 3,741,702,760.84
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 782,931.46	0.0%	\$ 561,495.48	0.0%	\$ 1,344,426.94
Campaign Materials	\$ 3,818,846.23	0.2%	\$ 731,787.76	0.0%	\$ 4,550,633.99
Donations	\$ 3,700.00	0.0%	\$ 9,593.50	0.0%	\$ 13,293.50
Political Contributions	\$ 9,013.94	0.0%	\$ 30,284.72	0.0%	\$ 39,298.66
Polling Expenses	\$ 614,313.50	0.0%	\$ 224,480.00	0.0%	\$ 838,793.50
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 4,051,332.39	0.2%	\$ 4,767,988.08	0.2%	\$ 8,819,320.47
Travel Expenses	\$ 271,962.11	0.0%	\$ 11,893.37	0.0%	\$ 283,855.48
Voter Contact	\$ 247,546,708.71	11.6%	\$ 376,141,925.64	16.6%	\$ 623,688,634.35
Total	\$ 2,134,316,213.81	100.0%	\$ 2,259,808,708.47	100.0%	\$ 4,394,124,922.28

This is one of the key ways independent expenditures differ from campaigns and parties – with an overwhelming set of investments going to “program” rather than to overhead.

Again – many independent expenditures are made by committees with large staffs and much larger budgets, but most of those costs are borne by the organization, which makes the independent expenditures look more efficient when viewed solely through the lens of the reported expenditures.

Independent expenditures vary in size and scope – with 840 organizations reporting expenditures ranging from as low as one dollar to more than half a billion dollars. Breaking these down by the office sought and party provides a more informed insights into how decision makers sought to influence campaign outcomes.

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Presidential IE Spending

Filtering the expenses made on behalf of the two major party nominees reflects a Democratic spending advantage on media and a Republican spending advantage on voter contact.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

2024 Presidential Independent Expenditures by Category and Party

Expense Description	DEM	Share	REP	Share	Total
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 4,489,003.49	0.5%	\$ 2,893,669.34	0.3%	\$ 7,382,672.83
Advertising Expenses	\$ 781,327,929.18	86.1%	\$ 676,315,417.43	78.0%	\$ 1,457,643,346.61
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 432,752.53	0.0%	\$ 64,918.72	0.0%	\$ 497,671.25
Campaign Materials	\$ 3,329,023.47	0.4%	\$ 393,706.85	0.0%	\$ 3,722,730.32
Donations	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 6,956.00	0.0%	\$ 6,956.00
Political Contributions	\$ 10,173.81	0.0%	\$ 71.18	0.0%	\$ 10,244.99
Polling Expenses	\$ 74,803.00	0.0%	\$ 1,800.00	0.0%	\$ 76,603.00
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 3,541,733.64	0.4%	\$ 287,777.79	0.0%	\$ 3,829,511.43
Travel Expenses	\$ 241,974.06	0.0%	\$ 9,547.15	0.0%	\$ 251,521.21
Voter Contact	\$ 114,087,417.05	12.6%	\$ 186,855,007.57	21.6%	\$ 300,942,424.62
Total	\$ 907,534,810.23	100.0%	\$ 866,828,872.03	100.0%	\$ 1,774,363,682.26

Democratic IEs spent \$781.3 million on Advertising either supporting Biden/Harris or opposing Trump, while Republican IEs spent \$676.3 million either supporting Trump or opposing Biden/Harris – a Democratic advantage of \$105.0 million.

In Voter Contact – Republican IEs spent \$186.8 million in support of Trump or in opposition to his opponents, while Democratic IEs spent \$114.0 million in support of Biden/Harris or in opposition to Trump – a Republican advantage of \$72.7 million.

No source material or data provided. Unsourced claims cannot be independently verified.

The relatively low Democratic voter contact spend is not necessarily intentional. **There are many who critique** the relatively late arrival of funds in the 2024 cycle, and organizations generally agreed they needed more funds and sooner to make up for what Republicans were investing in the ground game.

The broader progressive ecosystem does invest heavily in nonpartisan organizing well before the election draws near, and those investments are not reflected in independent expenditure reporting. Yet, to a one, these organizations agreed fundraising was a challenge in 2024, with less money than 2018 or 2020, and later in the cycle. The late fundraising delayed hiring and

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deployment, limited scope of the overall program, and shortened the windows for voter persuasion – in some instances after voting was underway in some states.

Funders and their advisors need to consider how to assess and define organizing and voter contact in 2026 and beyond. Quality programs work, and need investment. Tools and tactics evolve with the times, so what do independent organizing programs look like – is it vended effort which spins up and down each fall? Or is directed investments in local capacity to build to win and build to last?

There also needs to be consideration of approaches to research, advertising, messaging, and branding. It's a lot easier for Republicans to close the deal when they have been engaging voters through culture around the calendar and Democrats show up at the end of each cycle, seeking to inform and persuade at the last moment.

Stakeholders need to recognize how messaging and advertising are evolving in real time. Research needs to be scrutinized for effectiveness and innovation. Delivery needs evaluation, as does messenger. Leaders need to think through how to diversify investments across multiple organizations to ensure there are agile investments to meet the electoral needs of the moment.

Despite the 2024 electoral outcomes, there are also many positive lessons from 2024 (and 2025). How those insights are shared, and how they are absorbed will be an important test for leaders and stakeholders. What does reform, growth, and optimization look like? How can lanes and responsibilities be defined – and how will organizations then be held accountable for actions and outcomes?

The ecosystem needs to have these conversations – and quickly – to overcome what will likely be massive right-wing investments in 2026, 2027, and 2028.

Senate IE Spending

Senate independent expenditures show a similar focus on Advertising and Voter Contact. When evaluating independent expenditures made on behalf of the 89 campaigns across the 34 Senate campaigns on the ballot in 2024, Democratic IEs spent \$524.7 million on Advertising to support Democrats (or Independents) against Republicans, while Republican IEs spent \$647.9 million to support Republicans or oppose Democrats – a Republican advantage of \$123.5 million.

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2024 Senate Independent Expenditures by Category and Party

Expense Description	DEM	Share	REP	Share	Total
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 1,958,496.88	0.3%	\$ 375,488.50	0.1%	\$ 2,333,985.38
Advertising Expenses	\$ 524,407,779.04	88.7%	\$ 647,959,975.87	88.8%	\$ 1,172,367,754.91
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 276,159.63	0.0%	\$ 292,787.57	0.0%	\$ 568,947.20
Campaign Materials	\$ 198,559.09	0.0%	\$ 7,232.11	0.0%	\$ 205,791.20
Donations	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 2,637.50	0.0%	\$ 2,637.50
Political Contributions	\$ 60.00	0.0%	\$ 71.18	0.0%	\$ 131.18
Polling Expenses	\$ 12,300.00	0.0%	\$ 48,530.00	0.0%	\$ 60,830.00
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 56,334.97	0.0%	\$ 247,604.57	0.0%	\$ 303,939.54
Travel Expenses	\$ 26,027.64	0.0%	\$ 2,241.87	0.0%	\$ 28,269.51
Voter Contact	\$ 64,054,665.90	10.8%	\$ 80,606,438.00	11.0%	\$ 144,661,103.90
Total	\$ 590,990,383.15	100.0%	\$ 729,543,007.17	100.0%	\$ 1,320,533,390.32

In Voter Contact – Republican IEs spent \$80.6 million in support of Republicans or in opposition to Democrats/Independents, while Democratic IEs spent \$64.0 million in support of Democrats or Independents or in opposition to Republicans - a Republican advantage of \$16.5 million.

In narrowing the focus to the eleven Senate races decided by single digits, Republican independent expenditures exceeded Democrats and Independents in seven of the eleven contests.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above. Table appears to contain mathematical errors.

Senate Independent Expenditures by Category and Party (Single-Digit Contests)

Expense Description	DEM	Share	REP	Share	Total
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 1,940,278.53	0.3%	\$ 245,502.57	0.0%	\$ 2,185,781.10
Advertising Expenses	\$ 492,397,590.75	88.5%	\$ 590,390,804.20	88.7%	\$ 1,082,583,242.17
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 261,057.13	0.0%	\$ 2,218.37	0.0%	\$ 263,275.50
Campaign Materials	\$ 165,023.03	0.0%	\$ 7,232.11	0.0%	\$ 172,255.14
Donations	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 137.50	0.0%	\$ 137.50
Political Contributions	\$ 40.00	0.0%	\$ 71.18	0.0%	\$ 111.18
Polling Expenses	\$ 12,300.00	0.0%	\$ 46,530.00	0.0%	\$ 58,830.00
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 35,987.24	0.0%	\$ 192,278.95	0.0%	\$ 228,266.19
Travel Expenses	\$ 26,027.64	0.0%	\$ 2,241.87	0.0%	\$ 28,269.51
Voter Contact	\$ 61,616,590.66	11.1%	\$ 74,538,525.05	11.2%	\$ 136,155,115.71
Total	\$ 556,454,894.98	100.0%	\$ 665,425,541.80	100.0%	\$ 1,221,675,284.00

Democrats and Independents combined for \$556.4 million in independent expenditures, while Republicans totaled \$665.4 million – a \$108.9 million Republican advantage.

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Independent expenditures invested \$590.3 million in Advertising on behalf of Republicans, and \$492.3 million on behalf of Democrats – a \$97.9 million Republican advantage; and \$74.5 million in Voter Contact on behalf of Republicans compared to \$61.6 million for Democrats, a \$12.9 million Republican advantage.

Sourcing not provided. Table also does not align with title and appears to contain mathematical errors.

2024 Senate Independent Expenditures by Category and Party (Single Digit Contests)

State	Margin	DEM	REP	IND	TOTAL	Spending Edge
Texas	-8.50%	\$ 14,211,542.81	\$ 41,207,431.15	\$ -	\$ 55,213,821.18	\$ (26,995,888.34)
Montana	-7.14%	\$ 81,614,102.04	\$ 81,912,248.37	\$ -	\$ 163,526,350.41	\$ (298,146.33)
Nebraska	-6.67%	\$ -	\$ 8,909,032.20	\$ 20,132,321.21	\$ 29,041,353.41	\$ 11,223,289.01
Ohio	-3.62%	\$ 110,539,727.01	\$ 184,396,490.56	\$ -	\$ 294,936,217.57	\$ (73,856,763.55)
Pennsylvania	-0.22%	\$ 97,741,214.66	\$ 139,947,453.52	\$ -	\$ 237,688,668.18	\$ (42,206,238.86)
Michigan	0.34%	\$ 63,092,497.63	\$ 78,265,594.11	\$ -	\$ 141,358,091.74	\$ (15,173,096.48)
Wisconsin	0.85%	\$ 59,058,041.44	\$ 61,167,219.65	\$ -	\$ 120,225,261.09	\$ (2,109,178.21)
Nevada	1.64%	\$ 53,872,868.58	\$ 45,978,011.72	\$ -	\$ 99,850,880.30	\$ 7,894,856.86
Arizona	2.40%	\$ 54,792,547.63	\$ 22,886,227.35	\$ -	\$ 77,678,774.98	\$ 31,906,320.28
Virginia	8.93%	\$ 47,456.59	\$ 106,255.48	\$ -	\$ 153,712.07	\$ (58,798.89)
New Jersey	9.61%	\$ 1,352,575.38	\$ 649,577.69	\$ -	\$ 2,002,153.07	\$ 702,997.69
Total		\$ 536,322,573.77	\$ 665,425,541.80	\$ 20,132,321.21	\$ 1,221,675,284.00	\$ (129,102,968.03)

The independent expenditures for Democrats were more concentrated in these tighter contests – 94.1 percent of total Senate Democratic IEs were in these 11 states, compared to 91.1 percent for the Republican IEs. The highest aggregate spending was in the most competitive contests – is it should have been.

House IE Spending

Unlike the Senate, House Democrats were on the positive side of the ledger for independent expenditures. \$543.7 million was spent on behalf of House Democrats, and \$457.3 million was spent on behalf of House Republicans, an \$86.3 million Democratic advantage.

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House Independent Expenditures by Category and Party

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

Expense Description	DEM	Share	REP	Share	Total
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 1,822,669.45	0.3%	\$ 363,377.33	0.1%	\$ 2,186,046.78
Advertising Expenses	\$ 478,048,616.06	87.9%	\$ 381,601,322.76	83.4%	\$ 859,649,938.82
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 51,124.72	0.0%	\$ 88,674.19	0.0%	\$ 139,798.91
Campaign Materials	\$ 273,739.64	0.1%	\$ 61,336.69	0.0%	\$ 335,076.33
Donations	\$ 3,700.00	0.0%	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 3,700.00
Political Contributions	\$ 1,280.13	0.0%	\$ 30,142.36	0.0%	\$ 31,422.49
Polling Expenses	\$ 478,410.50	0.1%	\$ 171,650.00	0.0%	\$ 650,060.50
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 412,475.76	0.1%	\$ 470,031.96	0.1%	\$ 882,507.72
Travel Expenses	\$ 2,268.84	0.0%	\$ 104.35	0.0%	\$ 2,373.19
Voter Contact	\$ 62,665,660.91	11.5%	\$ 74,608,604.66	16.3%	\$ 137,274,265.57
Total	\$ 543,759,946.01	100.0%	\$ 457,395,244.30	100.0%	\$ 1,001,155,190.31

House independent expenditures show a similar focus in spending on Advertising and Voter Contact. Democratic IEs spent \$478.0 million on Advertising to support Democrats or oppose Republicans, while Republican IEs spent \$381.6 million to support Republicans or oppose Democrats – a Democratic margin of \$96.4 million. Republican IEs outspent Democratic IEs in Voter Contact - \$74.6 million to \$62.5 million, an \$11.9 million Republican advantage.

As with the Senate, the contests decided by single digits attracted most of the independent spending. In the 69 districts decided by single districts (46 Democratic and 23 Republican), spending reached \$796.2 million, with \$428.4 spent on behalf of Democrats, and \$367.7 million spent on behalf of Republicans.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

House Independent Expenditures by Category and Party (Single-Digit Contests)

Expense Description	DEM	Share	REP	Share	Total
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 828,913.97	0.2%	\$ 91,006.24	0.0%	\$ 919,920.21
Advertising Expenses	\$ 383,804,089.02	89.6%	\$ 310,718,994.12	84.5%	\$ 694,523,083.14
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 31,495.79	0.0%	\$ 88,674.19	0.0%	\$ 120,169.98
Campaign Materials	\$ 249,038.79	0.1%	\$ 6,600.18	0.0%	\$ 255,638.97
Donations		0.0%		0.0%	
Political Contributions	\$ 535.45	0.0%	\$ 71.18	0.0%	\$ 606.63
Polling Expenses	\$ 238,457.50	0.1%	\$ 61,450.00	0.0%	\$ 299,907.50
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 77,631.70	0.0%	\$ 145,208.34	0.0%	\$ 222,840.04
Travel Expenses	\$ 1,940.37	0.0%		0.0%	\$ 1,940.37
Voter Contact	\$ 43,188,053.62	10.1%	\$ 56,670,574.78	15.4%	\$ 99,858,628.40
Total	\$ 428,420,156.21	100.0%	\$ 367,782,579.03	100.0%	\$ 796,202,735.24

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78.7 percent of the total independent spend on behalf of Democrats was invested in these single-digit contests, and 80.4 percent of the total spend for Republicans. There is a growing trend of independent expenditures made in primaries – either within the party, or across party lines to shape ballot choice for general elections.

Within the 69 districts, independent expenditures on Advertising reached \$383.3 million on behalf of Democrats and \$310.7 million, on behalf of Republicans – a \$73.0 million advantage for Democrats. Independent expenditures on Voter Contact reached \$56.6 million for Republican and \$43.1 million for Democrats, a \$13.4 million advantage for Republicans.

While the parties spent more on “defense” than “offense,” the allocations make sense. Independent expenditures averaged \$11.5 million per district, with the average IE on behalf of Democrats reaching \$6.2 million, and the average on behalf of Republicans reaching \$5.3 million.

Sourcing not provided, appears calculation is based on tables above.

House Average Independent Expenditures by Party (Single-Digit Contests)

	DEM	Average	REP	Average	Total
Single-Digit Republican (23)	\$ 191,944,294.40	\$ 8,345,404.10	\$ 189,063,285.04	\$ 8,220,142.83	\$ 381,007,579.44
Single-Digit Democrat (46)	\$ 236,475,861.81	\$ 5,140,779.60	\$ 178,719,293.99	\$ 3,885,202.04	\$ 415,195,155.80
Total	\$ 428,420,156.21	\$ 6,208,987.77	\$ 367,782,579.03	\$ 5,330,182.30	\$ 796,202,735.24

Democrats invested more on defense than Republicans, and Democrats have a larger field to defend, so the takeaway should be these investments worked as intended. Had the headwinds at the top of the ticket been less, House Democrats are likely in the majority. This is why Republicans are rigging congressional lines across the country. They see the math and maps, and since they cannot change the math of the existing lines, they are trying to change the maps.

As leaders and stakeholders consider next steps, and as court cases and advisory opinions reshape the way money moves across the electoral ecosystem, there are a few key recommendations.

- Define lanes for communications ecosystem. Who will carry contrast and negative messaging so candidates go high as other entities go low. This was a major failing in 2024, and it cannot be repeated. Set the lanes and hold organizations accountable.
- Define what effective organizing will be in 2026 and 2027 as a prelude to 2028 and the 2030 Census and the next round of redistricting. The waves of right-wing spending are coming – and organizing will make the difference.
- Invest in partisan voter registration – where permissible and possible.

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- Upskill organizing staff to meet the moment. Support testing and innovation of tools and tactics through the combination of old and new.
- Invest earlier to scale earlier to identify and turn out supporters earlier.

Where Did the Money Go?

No sourcing provided; analysis appears to be based on public FEC data.

Billions of dollars in independent expenditures. Billions more on the hard side to shape electoral choice. A relatively narrow cohort of professionals making decisions impacting the planet.

The organizations making independent expenditures are known to few, but those few matter. The people running the organizations leading the charge for the Senate and House are known to stakeholders and are “blessed” by Leadership to manage majority-making or majority-preserving strategies. These people are deeply experienced – having worked at the campaign committees and in states, with multiple winning elections on their baseball cards.

This is why the same eight organizations – Senate Leadership Fund, Congressional Leadership Fund, NSRC and NRCC for the Republicans, and Senate Majority PAC (SMP), House Majority PAC (HMP) and the DSCC and DCCC for Democrats – have driven the majority of spending on behalf of their candidates for multiple cycles.

For presidential IEs, the process is subject to the nominee. Priorities USA was created for the Obama re-elect in 2012, and became the “blessed” Super PAC for Hillary Clinton in 2016. Priorities pivoted to support the Senate in 2018, and was the second-largest spender in 2020 after Future Forward, and ahead of American Bridge and Unite the Country as shown above.

Had another candidate emerged, there might have been different choices made, or there might have been no designated Super PAC, similar to 2008. Regardless, Future Forward took the lead for 2020 and 2024, even as many other organizations continued to invest in the Biden and Harris campaigns.

There is also more money than ever pouring into the ecosystem. Leaders and stakeholders need to inquire whether these resources are being properly invested as marketing and voters change. Loyalty is not necessarily the question – but is the ecosystem moving more money into tested vehicles or legacy tactics? Is there sufficient innovation and accountability to ensure the 2026 cycle is successful and a building block for an effective majority party strategy?

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For 2026, 2028 and beyond, there may or not be change – but part of the assessment is understanding the patterns and practices of the existing ecosystem to discern whether improvements can be made.

To this end, a quick recap of the movers and shakers within the vendor ecosystem can shed some light for leadership, stakeholders, and activists to prime the conversation for how both the independent side and hard side can rethink investment in our current context, and design new forms of voter communication and engagement to meet the needs of today and the future.

House IE Vendors

In the House, the top ten vendors on each side of the partisan divide accounted for a supermajority of independent expenditures. The largest on the Democratic side, Waterfront Strategies, accounted for 43 percent of all House Democratic independent expenditures, while the largest on the Republican side, Flexpoint Media LLC accounted for 44.4 percent of all House Republican independent expenditures.

Most of the top ten spenders are media firms, and these payments likely represent the gross media expenditures these firms made on behalf of clients.

Top Ten House Democratic IE Payees (75.0 Percent of Total IE Spend)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Payee	Total	Share
WATERFRONT STRATEGIES INC	\$ 175,782,934.00	43.1%
AMPLIFY MEDIA LLC	\$ 45,849,160.00	11.2%
SKDKNICKERBOCKER LLC	\$ 16,050,736.00	3.9%
TARGETED PLATFORM MEDIA LLC	\$ 15,577,199.00	3.8%
PESCADOR PUBLIC STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 11,555,729.00	2.8%
K SQUARED MEDIA LLC	\$ 10,036,500.00	2.5%
TRILOGY INTERACTIVE LLC	\$ 9,694,996.00	2.4%
WAVELENGTH STRATEGY LLC	\$ 9,588,690.00	2.3%
OTG STRATEGIES	\$ 7,364,654.00	1.8%
SYMMETRY MEDIA LLC	\$ 4,700,331.00	1.2%

OTG Strategies is a paid voter contact firm, which organizes voter engagement.

Top Ten House Republican IE Payees (76.6 percent of Total IE Spend)

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Payee	Total	Share
FLEXPOINT MEDIA INC	\$ 151,517,223.00	44.4%
NATIONAL MEDIA RESEARCH PLANNING & PLACEMENT	\$ 32,990,184.00	9.7%
NEBO MEDIA INC	\$ 17,799,476.00	5.2%
STARBOARD ADVERTISING	\$ 11,463,020.00	3.4%
MAIN STREET MEDIA GROUP	\$ 10,453,067.00	3.1%
CAVALRY LLC	\$ 9,833,474.00	2.9%
BLITZ CANVASSING LLC	\$ 8,144,827.00	2.4%
MEDIUM BUYING LLC	\$ 7,737,956.00	2.3%
IN PURSUIT OF LLC	\$ 6,403,010.00	1.9%
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	\$ 5,267,436.00	1.5%

On the Republican side, Blitz Canvassing was the main voter contact spender. The payments to the US Postal Service are postage for direct mail – more voter contact.

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Senate IE Payees

In the Senate, there are a few repeat vendors in both parties, and spending was even more concentrated on the Democratic side. Waterfront Strategies is again the top payee for Democrats at \$259.6 million, 47.4 percent of all Democratic independent expenditures. OTG Strategies and Targeted Platform Media also make repeat appearances for Democrats. The top ten vendors accounted for 84.5 percent of Senate Democratic independent expenditures.

Top Ten Senate Democratic IE Payees (84.5 Percent of Total IE Spend)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Payee	Total	Share
WATERFRONT STRATEGIES INC	\$ 259,664,515.00	47.4%
C PLUS K LLC	\$ 41,433,822.00	7.6%
OTG STRATEGIES	\$ 29,954,460.00	5.5%
GREAT AMERICAN MEDIA	\$ 26,815,243.00	4.9%
GAMBIT STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 26,412,170.00	4.8%
MVAR MEDIA LLC	\$ 21,183,202.00	3.9%
TARGETED PLATFORM MEDIA LLC	\$ 20,687,982.00	3.8%
SAGE MEDIA PLANNING & PLACEMENT	\$ 17,829,379.00	3.3%
AL MEDIA LLC	\$ 11,306,469.00	2.1%
LEFT HOOK COMMUNICATIONS LLC	\$ 8,015,328.00	1.5%

On the Republican side, Main Street Media Group is the top payee, at \$250.4 million and 37.3 percent of the overall Republican independent expenditures. Repeat payees are In Pursuit Of LLC, the Koch-owned firm, Medium Buying LLC, Nebo Media Inc, and the US Postal Service, again highlighting the Republican usage of direct mail.

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Top Ten Senate Republican IE Payees (76.9 Percent of Total IE Spend)

Payee	TOTAL	Share
MAIN STREET MEDIA GROUP	\$ 250,469,920.00	37.3%
GEN2 SOLUTIONS LLC	\$ 47,884,859.00	7.1%
DEL CIELO MEDIA LLC	\$ 41,490,053.00	6.2%
IN PURSUIT OF LLC	\$ 31,579,040.00	4.7%
ARMADA STRATEGIES	\$ 30,402,194.00	4.5%
MENTZER MEDIA SERVICES INC	\$ 26,330,670.00	3.9%
MEDIUM BUYING LLC	\$ 24,311,795.00	3.6%
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	\$ 23,491,492.00	3.5%
STARBOARD ADVERTISING	\$ 20,436,028.00	3.0%
NEBO MEDIA INC	\$ 20,244,220.00	3.0%

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

These top ten vendors accounted for 76.9 percent of Senate Republican independent expenditures.

Presidential IE Payees

Presidential elections draw the most independent spenders and a much larger pool of money. There were again some repeat vendors for both parties. Waterfront Strategies again led all payees, with \$425.4 million, or 46.9 percent of all Democratic Presidential independent expenditures. OTG strategies appeared for the third time, with Amplify Media and Wavelength Strategy making second appearances. The top ten payees accounted for 71.7 percent of Democratic Presidential independent expenditures.

Top Ten Presidential Democratic IE Payees (71.7 percent of IE Spend)

Payee	Total	Share
WATERFRONT STRATEGIES INC	\$ 425,419,994.00	46.9%
BULLY PULPIT INTERACTIVE	\$ 84,481,206.00	9.3%
OTG STRATEGIES	\$ 33,992,561.00	3.7%
AMPLIFY MEDIA LLC	\$ 32,481,253.00	3.6%
BERNI CONSULTING	\$ 22,996,838.00	2.5%
THE NEW MEDIA FIRM INC	\$ 13,188,346.00	1.5%
MEDIA PAYMENTS	\$ 11,105,370.00	1.2%
WAVELENGTH STRATEGY LLC	\$ 9,666,246.00	1.1%
META	\$ 8,695,021.00	1.0%
THE PIVOT GROUP	\$ 8,351,803.00	0.9%

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

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On the Republican side, Del Rey Media was the top payee at \$319.4 million, or 36.8 percent of the overall Republican independent expenditures. Nebo Media makes its third appearance, and Blitz Canvassing makes a second appearance, with In Field Strategies also listed – indicating the comparatively large investments in direct voter contact by Republicans.

Top Ten Presidential Republican Payees (75.8 Percent of Total IE Spend)

Payee	Total	Share
DEL RAY MEDIA LLC	\$ 319,425,746.00	36.8%
FULL REACH MEDIA GROUP LLC	\$ 118,938,102.00	13.7%
RED EAGLE MEDIA	\$ 49,725,205.00	5.7%
BLITZ CANVASSING LLC	\$ 41,471,402.00	4.8%
NEBO MEDIA INC	\$ 32,308,505.00	3.7%
IMGE LLC	\$ 31,355,082.00	3.6%
WESTERN CREATIVE GROUP LLC	\$ 20,476,000.00	2.4%
CONNECTION STRATEGY LLC	\$ 16,732,576.00	1.9%
IN FIELD STRATEGIES INC	\$ 16,593,021.00	1.9%
ECHO CANYON CONSULTING LLC	\$ 9,796,292.00	1.1%

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Combined IE Spending

Combining the spending from the Presidential, Senate, and House independent expenditures highlights the concentration of spending among a relatively small group of vendors and organizations. The top 30 payees from both parties account for 74.0 percent of the total IE spend – or \$2.77 billion of the overall \$3.74 billion IE spend

Top 30 Payees by Party – 74.0 Percent of Total IE Spend

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Payee	Party	Total	Share
WATERFRONT STRATEGIES INC	DEM	\$ 861,112,430.00	23.0%
DEL RAY MEDIA LLC	REP	\$ 319,425,746.00	8.5%
MAIN STREET MEDIA GROUP	REP	\$ 262,578,929.00	7.0%
FLEXPOINT MEDIA INC	REP	\$ 164,902,245.00	4.4%
FULL REACH MEDIA GROUP LLC	REP	\$ 120,217,206.00	3.2%
BULLY PULPIT INTERACTIVE	DEM	\$ 85,428,437.00	2.3%
AMPLIFY MEDIA LLC	DEM	\$ 78,330,413.00	2.1%
OTG STRATEGIES	DEM	\$ 71,311,675.00	1.9%
NEBO MEDIA INC	REP	\$ 70,352,201.00	1.9%
RED EAGLE MEDIA GROUP	REP	\$ 52,728,375.00	1.4%
IN PURSUIT OF LLC	REP	\$ 51,819,552.00	1.4%
GEN2 SOLUTIONS LLC	REP	\$ 50,658,846.00	1.4%
BLITZ CANVASSING LLC	REP	\$ 49,616,229.00	1.3%
TARGETED PLATFORM MEDIA LLC	DEM	\$ 44,359,486.00	1.2%
DEL CIELO MEDIA LLC	REP	\$ 42,724,955.00	1.1%
C PLUS K LLC	DEM	\$ 42,132,556.00	1.1%
IMGE LLC	REP	\$ 37,042,480.00	1.0%
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	REP	\$ 35,326,029.00	0.9%
NATIONAL MEDIA RESEARCH PLANNING & PLACEMENT	REP	\$ 32,990,184.00	0.9%
ARMADA STRATEGIES	REP	\$ 32,591,788.00	0.9%
STARBOARD ADVERTISING	REP	\$ 32,397,520.00	0.9%
MEDIUM BUYING LLC	REP	\$ 32,064,751.00	0.9%
GAMBIT STRATEGIES LLC	DEM	\$ 29,942,047.00	0.8%
MENTZER MEDIA SERVICES INC	REP	\$ 27,430,894.00	0.7%
GREAT AMERICAN MEDIA	DEM	\$ 26,815,243.00	0.7%
WAVELENGTH STRATEGY LLC	DEM	\$ 25,371,751.00	0.7%
SAGE MEDIA PLANNING & PLACEMENT	DEM	\$ 24,124,758.00	0.6%
MVAR MEDIA LLC	DEM	\$ 23,880,924.00	0.6%
BERNI CONSULTING	DEM	\$ 23,076,838.00	0.6%
SKDKNICKERBOCKER LLC	DEM	\$ 20,856,160.00	0.6%

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How the candidate committees spend money is the next question – with approaches based on strategic needs specific to each candidate matchup.

House Democratic Spending

No sourcing provided for many claims in this section.

All federal candidate committees are required to disclose spending, even if candidates are not on the ballot. This includes so-called zombie committees of former elected officials, who continue to spend money through their campaign accounts even if they have no immediate intention to run again for office.

In the House, there were 1,114 active Democratic candidate committees in 2024, even though there were far fewer active campaigns. All active committees combined to spend \$891.7 million. For House Republicans, 1,307 candidate committees combined to spend \$809.4 million.

Among the Democrats, effort and spending was concentrated in the most competitive seats. Democrats were on the ballot in 68 of the 69 seats (Washington has an open primary system, and the top two finishers in WA-04 were Republican). The 68 nominees spent a combined \$387.3 million, an average of \$5.69 million per contest.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

House Candidate Spending by Competitive Status

Expense Description	Non-Competitive	Share	Competitive	Share
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 189,566,859.75	37.6%	\$ 62,053,886.95	16.0%
Advertising Expenses	\$ 149,500,824.96	29.6%	\$ 261,836,290.91	67.6%
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 15,310,480.82	3.0%	\$ 3,330,534.58	0.9%
Campaign Materials	\$ 6,175,092.26	1.2%	\$ 481,829.60	0.1%
Donations	\$ 1,022,525.93	0.2%	\$ 228,991.68	0.1%
Political Contributions	\$ 3,029,446.42	0.6%	\$ 403,245.43	0.1%
Polling Expenses	\$ 9,194,437.86	1.8%	\$ 9,438,083.85	2.4%
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 87,437,237.48	17.3%	\$ 32,508,132.19	8.4%
Travel Expenses	\$ 11,329,098.87	2.2%	\$ 2,940,899.91	0.8%
Voter Contact	\$ 31,879,144.67	6.3%	\$ 14,120,000.61	3.6%
Total	\$ 504,445,149.02	100.0%	\$ 387,341,895.71	100.0%

What is important is how the competitive Democrats spent less on Administrative Overhead and more on Advertising. There is less spent on Voter Contact, which can be borne by an

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effective coordinated campaign in service to the whole ticket, and those expenditures are usually made with the state party.

There were more than 25,000 payees across the House Democratic candidate committees. GMMB – a leading media and placement firm was the top payee at 37.2 million, or 4.2 percent of the total House Democratic spend. The top 25 payees combined to spend \$408.3 million, or 45.8 percent of the total spend. As expected, a majority of the top payees are media production or placement firms.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

Top 25 House Candidate Committee Payees (45.8 percent of Total Spend)

Payee	Non-Competitive	Competitive	Total	Share
GMMB INC	\$ 9,183,956.83	\$ 28,029,230.42	\$ 37,213,187.25	4.2%
SCREEN STRATEGIES MEDIA LLC	\$ 8,382,962.11	\$ 27,075,164.54	\$ 35,458,126.65	4.0%
LEFT HOOK COMMUNICATIONS	\$ 6,269,198.15	\$ 26,458,386.35	\$ 32,727,584.50	3.7%
GUSTO INC	\$ 18,021,577.61	\$ 12,247,117.13	\$ 30,268,694.74	3.4%
BUYING TIME LLC	\$ 11,419,136.73	\$ 17,203,359.24	\$ 28,622,495.97	3.2%
AMERICAN EXPRESS	\$ 22,304,678.11	\$ 2,880,579.91	\$ 25,185,258.02	2.8%
TECHNICOLOR POLITICAL LLC	\$ 1,724,496.00	\$ 20,865,118.50	\$ 22,589,614.50	2.5%
ACTBLUE TECHNICAL SERVICES	\$ 12,794,073.90	\$ 9,273,187.63	\$ 22,067,261.53	2.5%
CANAL PARTNERS MEDIA LLC	\$ 4,549,914.00	\$ 17,271,631.00	\$ 21,821,545.00	2.4%
AL MEDIA LLC	\$ 3,932,151.00	\$ 16,662,922.00	\$ 20,595,073.00	2.3%
SKDKNICKERBOCKER LLC	\$ 1,540,483.34	\$ 15,769,410.85	\$ 17,309,894.19	1.9%
NGP VAN	\$ 9,870,183.84	\$ 2,495,319.03	\$ 12,365,502.87	1.4%
PAYROLL DATA PROCESSING INC.	\$ 7,190,366.85	\$ 4,049,281.11	\$ 11,239,647.96	1.3%
GPS IMPACT	\$ 3,768,138.99	\$ 7,003,369.51	\$ 10,771,508.50	1.2%
AISLE 518 STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 3,500,432.10	\$ 5,774,496.33	\$ 9,274,928.43	1.0%
OLD TOWN MEDIA LLC	\$ 848,060.80	\$ 8,197,207.43	\$ 9,045,268.23	1.0%
SAGE MEDIA PLANNING & PLACEMENT	\$ 572,515.31	\$ 8,298,480.15	\$ 8,870,995.46	1.0%
SNYDER PICKERILL MEDIA GROUP LLC	\$ 2,166,103.03	\$ 6,001,107.23	\$ 8,167,210.26	0.9%
THEMATIC CAMPAIGNS LLC	\$ 3,033,937.05	\$ 4,283,757.24	\$ 7,317,694.29	0.8%
SAPPHIRE STRATEGIES	\$ 6,532,761.03	\$ 469,111.07	\$ 7,001,872.10	0.8%
THE FROST GROUP LLC	\$ 3,701,923.52	\$ 2,681,730.86	\$ 6,383,654.38	0.7%
PAYCHEX	\$ 5,047,047.96	\$ 1,284,779.34	\$ 6,331,827.30	0.7%
BLUEWEST MEDIA	\$ 1,295,943.00	\$ 5,018,137.00	\$ 6,314,080.00	0.7%
BLUE WAVE POLITICAL PARTNERS LLC	\$ 3,653,299.52	\$ 2,342,354.57	\$ 5,995,654.09	0.7%
BEACON MEDIA LLC	\$ 112,637.40	\$ 5,262,679.76	\$ 5,375,317.16	0.6%

Senate Democratic Spending

There were 185 active Democratic Senate candidate committees in 2024, which combined to spend \$999.4 million. For Senate Republicans there were 241 committees which combined to spend 754.6 million.

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The 31 Democratic nominees in the cycle (excluding the third-party candidates Angus King, Bernie Sanders, and Dan Osborn) combined to spend \$823.0 million. \$240.7 million was spent on the Non-Competitive campaigns, and \$582.2 million was spent in the ten states (excluding Nebraska, decided by single digits).

In the competitive states, \$406.3 million, or 69.8 percent of the spend was allocated to Advertising, and \$30.1 million, or 5.2 percent of the spend was allocated to Voter Contact. In most of these competitive races, the coordinated campaigns could carry the bulk of organizing and keep those costs off-budget for the Senate campaigns.

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

Senate Candidate Spending by Competitive Status

Expense Description	Non-Competitive	Share	Competitive	Share
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 42,382,754.81	17.6%	\$ 57,955,741.99	10.0%
Advertising Expenses	\$ 131,355,136.77	54.6%	\$ 406,359,555.56	69.8%
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 1,941,289.57	0.8%	\$ 2,422,813.83	0.4%
Campaign Materials	\$ 201,456.93	0.1%	\$ 201,169.30	0.0%
Donations	\$ 4,052.10	0.0%	\$ 1,765.57	0.0%
Political Contributions	\$ 404,804.80	0.2%	\$ 1,625.55	0.0%
Polling Expenses	\$ 3,205,650.27	1.3%	\$ 4,778,010.49	0.8%
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 38,277,120.92	15.9%	\$ 78,467,507.18	13.5%
Travel Expenses	\$ 1,858,080.12	0.8%	\$ 1,864,626.06	0.3%
Voter Contact	\$ 21,164,305.87	8.8%	\$ 30,157,318.74	5.2%
Total	\$ 240,794,652.16	100.0%	\$ 582,210,134.27	100.0%

The top 25 Senate payees were a mix of traditional media, digital media, and fundraising firms, and combined to spend \$661.4 million, or 80.4 percent of all Democratic Senate spending.

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Top 25 Senate Candidate Committee Payees (80.4 percent of Total Spend)

Payee	Non-Competitive	Competitive	Total	Share
GRASSROOTS MEDIA	\$ 16,429,616.69	\$ 102,507,151.01	\$ 118,936,767.70	14.5%
SCREEN STRATEGIES MEDIA LLC	\$ 14,308,899.12	\$ 68,221,918.14	\$ 82,530,817.26	10.0%
AL MEDIA LLC	\$ 1,777,873.00	\$ 53,323,731.40	\$ 55,101,604.40	6.7%
MISSIONWIRED	\$ 8,334,165.72	\$ 35,020,057.81	\$ 43,354,223.53	5.3%
SKDKNICKERBOCKER LLC		\$ 33,485,618.09	\$ 33,485,618.09	4.1%
THEMATIC CAMPAIGNS LLC	\$ 24,507,865.17	\$ 5,358,519.80	\$ 29,866,384.97	3.6%
AUTHENTIC CAMPAIGNS INC	\$ 15,811,005.34	\$ 10,150,767.11	\$ 25,961,772.45	3.2%
BUYING TIME LLC	\$ 778,528.00	\$ 25,025,308.49	\$ 25,803,836.49	3.1%
WAVELENGTH STRATEGY LLC	\$ 3,492,000.00	\$ 22,003,907.32	\$ 25,495,907.32	3.1%
GAMBIT STRATEGIES LLC		\$ 24,017,267.96	\$ 24,017,267.96	2.9%
ACTBLUE TECHNICAL SERVICES	\$ 5,753,290.48	\$ 16,758,234.51	\$ 22,511,524.99	2.7%
AISLE 518 STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 2,950,790.53	\$ 19,396,622.50	\$ 22,347,413.03	2.7%
GMMB INC	\$ 19,605,727.04		\$ 19,605,727.04	2.4%
PAYROLL DATA PROCESSING INC.	\$ 6,361,818.69	\$ 12,980,617.54	\$ 19,342,436.23	2.4%
GPS IMPACT		\$ 15,725,037.25	\$ 15,725,037.25	1.9%
GUSTO INC	\$ 9,796,652.31	\$ 4,592,773.51	\$ 14,389,425.82	1.7%
MIDDLE SEAT CONSULTING	\$ 6,238,609.58	\$ 7,630,292.24	\$ 13,868,901.82	1.7%
RWT PRODUCTION LLC	\$ 1,239,743.12	\$ 10,108,019.72	\$ 11,347,762.84	1.4%
CANAL PARTNERS MEDIA LLC	\$ 10,520,052.00		\$ 10,520,052.00	1.3%
AMERICAN EXPRESS	\$ 3,718,799.69	\$ 6,569,812.18	\$ 10,288,611.87	1.3%
RISING TIDE INTERACTIVE	\$ 1,519,891.65	\$ 8,538,676.43	\$ 10,058,568.08	1.2%
WILKE COMMUNICATIONS		\$ 7,941,581.00	\$ 7,941,581.00	1.0%
LEFT HOOK COMMUNICATIONS	\$ 6,526,791.50		\$ 6,526,791.50	0.8%
FDM CONNECTS LLC	\$ 6,487,873.08		\$ 6,487,873.08	0.8%
CONEXION INC	\$ 531,470.96	\$ 5,388,981.14	\$ 5,920,452.10	0.7%

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

There were more than 3,600 payees in the Democratic Senate ecosystem. The top payee for Senate Democrats was Grassroots Media at \$118.9 million, or 14.5 percent of the total Senate spend.

23 of the top 25 Senate payees also worked for House candidates, and 14 of the top 25 are in common with the House top 25. Again, a relatively narrow cohort of firms managing most of the Democratic institutional spend.

Presidential Democratic Spending

The Biden-Harris/Harris-Walz campaign committee (the same entity renamed as part of the candidate switch to preserve the ability to spend the existing cash) spent more than \$1.15 billion.

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Presidential Campaign Spending by Category

Sourcing not provided, assume to be based on FEC data coded per methodology outlined above.

Expense Description	Non-Competitive	Share
Administrative/Salary/Overhead	\$ 88,613,907.50	7.7%
Advertising Expenses	\$ 818,234,233.29	71.0%
Campaign Event Expenses	\$ 101,377,744.63	8.8%
Campaign Materials	\$ 23,699.43	0.0%
Donations	\$ 75.00	0.0%
Political Contributions	\$ -	0.0%
Polling Expenses	\$ 13,375,895.34	1.2%
Solicitation and Fundraising	\$ 20,721,270.94	1.8%
Travel Expenses	\$ 44,743,510.56	3.9%
Voter Contact	\$ 65,603,979.03	5.7%
Total	\$ 1,152,694,315.72	100.0%

\$818.2 million, or 71.0 percent was spent on Advertising, followed by \$101.3 million on campaign events, \$88.6 million on Administration, Salary, and Overhead, and \$65.6 million on voter contact.

Presidential campaigns (especially when there is an incumbent) can rely on the DNC, state parties, and coordinated campaigns to place staff and to offload the associated costs from the main campaign committee. The fundraising costs are also low because most fundraising expenses were managed through the Joint Fundraising Committees instead of the campaign.

The top 25 payees were a mix of media companies, event production companies, payroll, and travel support entities. These 25 payees and combined to spend \$1.00 billion, or 86.9 percent of the total campaign committee spend.

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Top 25 Presidential Campaign Payees (86.9 percent of Total Spend)

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Payee	Total	Share
MEDIA BUYING & ANALYTICS LLC	\$ 333,537,616.12	28.9%
GAMBIT STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 137,486,610.46	11.9%
DUPONT CIRCLE STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 122,057,895.33	10.6%
BULLY PULPIT INTERACTIVE LLC	\$ 114,233,174.63	9.9%
GUSTO INC	\$ 45,389,173.74	3.9%
CONEXION INC	\$ 38,135,347.68	3.3%
TRUXTON CREATIVE LLC	\$ 29,876,524.84	2.6%
DNC TRAVEL ESCROW	\$ 22,952,819.22	2.0%
ACTION NETWORK	\$ 21,666,512.20	1.9%
ACTBLUE TECHNICAL SERVICES	\$ 20,279,505.37	1.8%
RAMP BUSINESS CORPORATION	\$ 12,590,940.32	1.1%
WIZARD STUDIOS NORTH, INC	\$ 11,125,502.73	1.0%
ASSEMBLY HOUSE LLC	\$ 9,695,578.33	0.8%
AMERICAN EXPRESS	\$ 9,258,338.43	0.8%
SCALE TO WIN LLC	\$ 8,876,538.32	0.8%
PRIVATE JET SERVICES GROUP, LLC	\$ 7,982,137.13	0.7%
ADVANCED AVIATION TEAM	\$ 7,744,568.14	0.7%
DNC SERVICES CORP	\$ 7,642,666.07	0.7%
PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT ONE, INC.	\$ 7,439,472.74	0.6%
CREATIVE SOUND AND LIGHTING	\$ 6,578,400.67	0.6%
MARYLAND EVENT SERVICES	\$ 5,783,591.07	0.5%
MAJIC PRODUCTIONS	\$ 5,364,422.13	0.5%
BNY PRODUCTION, LLC	\$ 5,363,186.27	0.5%
VOX PRODUCTIONS, LLC	\$ 5,340,651.66	0.5%
RISEUP MEDIA & MKTNG SOLUTIONS	\$ 4,896,649.47	0.4%

Overall, there were more than 2,000 payees for the campaign committee. Media Buying Analytics LLC – a dba for Canal Partners Media LLC – was the largest payee, at \$333.5 million. The investment in production companies to support more than \$100 million in spending on campaign events is unique to this presidential campaign. Their presence in the top 25 has pushed a few firms down who also worked on House and Senate campaigns.

Combined Federal Candidate Spending

Overall, there were more than 29,000 payees who received more than \$2.86 billion. It’s a lot of people and a lot of money. However, there is still a significant reliance on paid media in campaigns, and a concentration of those investments in a relatively small number of firms.

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The top 30 Democratic payees across the federal candidate ecosystem received more than \$1.90 billion, or 66.3 percent of all Democratic campaign expenses. \$1.56 billion goes to media and most of the rest to digital/fundraising firms, or contribution processing.

Top 30 Democratic Federal Candidate Committee Payees (66.3 percent of Total Spend)

Payee	Total	Share
MEDIA BUYING & ANALYTICS LLC	\$ 333,537,616.12	11.6%
GAMBIT STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 162,485,685.83	5.7%
DUPONT CIRCLE STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 122,057,895.33	4.3%
GRASSROOTS MEDIA	\$ 118,936,767.70	4.1%
SCREEN STRATEGIES MEDIA LLC	\$ 117,988,943.91	4.1%
BULLY PULPIT INTERACTIVE LLC	\$ 114,419,954.63	4.0%
GUSTO INC	\$ 90,047,294.30	3.1%
AL MEDIA LLC	\$ 77,392,978.53	2.7%
ACTBLUE TECHNICAL SERVICES	\$ 64,858,291.89	2.3%
GMMB INC	\$ 56,818,914.29	2.0%
BUYING TIME LLC	\$ 54,426,332.46	1.9%
SKDKNICKERBOCKER LLC	\$ 50,901,949.78	1.8%
CONEXION INC	\$ 45,745,763.20	1.6%
AMERICAN EXPRESS	\$ 44,732,208.32	1.6%
MISSIONWIRED	\$ 43,933,950.29	1.5%
LEFT HOOK COMMUNICATIONS	\$ 39,254,376.00	1.4%
THEMATIC CAMPAIGNS LLC	\$ 37,184,079.26	1.3%
CANAL PARTNERS MEDIA LLC	\$ 32,341,597.00	1.1%
AISLE 518 STRATEGIES LLC	\$ 31,781,857.46	1.1%
AUTHENTIC CAMPAIGNS INC	\$ 30,594,006.56	1.1%
PAYROLL DATA PROCESSING INC.	\$ 30,582,084.19	1.1%
TRUXTON CREATIVE LLC	\$ 29,876,524.84	1.0%
GPS IMPACT	\$ 26,496,545.75	0.9%
WAVELENGTH STRATEGY LLC	\$ 26,481,907.32	0.9%
DNC TRAVEL ESCROW	\$ 22,965,229.35	0.8%
TECHNICOLOR POLITICAL LLC	\$ 22,687,039.25	0.8%
ACTION NETWORK	\$ 21,998,930.58	0.8%
MIDDLE SEAT CONSULTING	\$ 18,844,178.28	0.7%
NGP VAN	\$ 18,539,667.65	0.6%
RAMP BUSINESS CORPORATION	\$ 13,272,535.58	0.5%

Sourcing not provided, assume to be FEC data.

Campaigns have to make choices with the time, options, and resources they have; so these may have been the proper decision in the moment, but are they best decisions for building a party?

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When an ecosystem invests so heavily in paid media, in fundraising, and events; or in paid voter “contact” through phones and texting, what gets left behind for the next campaign other than lists to rent or sell?

Building to win requires new thinking, and building to last requires thinking about more than the next election. It requires finding the best way to connect with the right voters in the right places, and if 2024 has proven anything, there is enough money to do it all the right way.

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CONCLUSION

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APPENDICES



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NOTES FOR THE READER

This section was not completed.

While we extensively fact-check DNC After Action Report in order to ensure accuracy, it is always possible that mistakes remain. We encourage any readers who notice factual errors to reach out to use at XXXX@dnc.org. Mistakes will be corrected as quickly as possible, and any changes will be noted in the text. All numbers and figures are accurate as of xx/xx/2025.

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SOURCES

Sources, interview materials, and other evidence not provided.

Empirical claims in the DNC After Action Report are based on publicly available evidence and are accompanied by a hyperlink to evidence supporting the claim. In addition, a traditional bibliography can be found here, and more data is provided in the Appendix below. We supplemented the publicly available data by interviewing more than 12,000 Democrats across all 57 state parties and territories. We conducted surveys with over 5,000 DNC members, voters, and supporters. We conducted these surveys and interviews from May 2025 - October 2025. All surveys and interviews and surveys were conducted by the DNC Office of Strategy and Innovation.