

UPDATE - June 27, 2024, 12:35pm ET: WE'RE DONE! The piece is now [LIVE on our website](#). We'll be emailing it to our full list in the next few hours. **THANK YOU** everyone for all the incredible feedback and contributions!

JUNE 27, 2024

Bat Signal 3

Sliding Doors

This election will likely be won or lost by 10,000 votes – the “margin of effort”. Here’s our take on the political situation, the money situation, and how we rebuild our divided team. Our big play: An all-hands-on-deck effort to support hundreds of organizations to run *the biggest (emotionally intelligent!) voter turnout and persuasion effort in history*.



Dear friends in movements, politics, and philanthropy:

This is my 12th election cycle. I got into politics because of what happened in 2000. We lost to George Bush in Florida by 537 votes – a “sliding doors” moment in history.

For anyone who missed it, *Sliding Doors* was a ‘90s movie about a woman who misses a train by a fraction of a second. Her life was changed forever. In this case, we lost an election by a fraction of a percentage point.

That 537-vote margin basically messed up the future of the world: From Bush’s two Supreme Court appointments (which led to *Citizens United* and *Dobbs*) to soaring inequality, to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (which killed [half a million](#) people), to accelerating climate change.

To be clear, no one was excited about the Democratic candidate Al Gore. No one I knew liked him at the time. Friends of mine were staging protests at his campaign offices. Gore was *much* less progressive than Joe Biden is now.

But imagine for a moment how much better off our country would be if we had “caught the train” and made Al Gore president from 2001-2008. We would have had *no* Iraq war. An eight-year head start on addressing climate change. More racial and economic equality. And a liberal majority on the Supreme Court.

After 2000, I vowed to never let it happen again. Not on my watch. Even though I had no prior interest in electoral politics, it became my life’s work.

Fast-forward to 2024. This election is like nothing I’ve ever experienced before. The war in Gaza has divided our base. And now I’m a parent so the threat feels *very* personal. It is my parental responsibility to secure a decent future for my kids. With authoritarianism spreading and climate change spiraling, 2024 feels like my last shot.

What are we waiting for?

Early in the cycle, I started noticing a dangerous funding drought in Democratic and progressive organizing. This was a five-alarm fire. I wrote a memo [The Bat Signal](#) to sound the alarm – followed by [Bat Signal 2](#), urging donors to make their *biggest investments ever* in advance of 2024.

Many of you responded in the most incredible way. You listened! You made your *biggest donations ever* – from \$500 to multiple millions. As one donor put it: “10% of my net worth is nothing to save our democracy.” As a result of your investments, the voter

engagement field has gone from urgent care to stable condition. Yay! But many groups still have enormous budget gaps – with only 4 months to go.

We have a lot of big problems to solve as a field – and fast. We need our whole team on the field. We need to mend the breach. And we need money. Immediately. That's why I wrote *Bat Signal 3* – as an urgent strategy memo, a five act-play, written *mostly* for donors, but also for movement leaders.

Light summer reading at the beach!

And – yes! – I'm going to create a shorter version 😂😂😂 but that will take time and we can't afford to waste another day.

I have three requests:

1. **Share it around.** *Bat Signal 3* is designed to help spark generative conversations and agitate people to scheme and dream about what we can do!
2. **Share your intentions.** At the end, in Act V, there is a place to share your thoughts and intentions for 2024 – this will inspire others. *We don't have to do this alone!*
3. **Believe that we can make *the difference*.** If we believe we can make *the difference*, it will unleash our potential and increase our chances of winning.

I look forward to *celebrating* and ***dancing in the streets with you*** on the other side of November's sliding door.

Let's run as fast as we can to make that train!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Billy Wimsatt". The signature is stylized with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

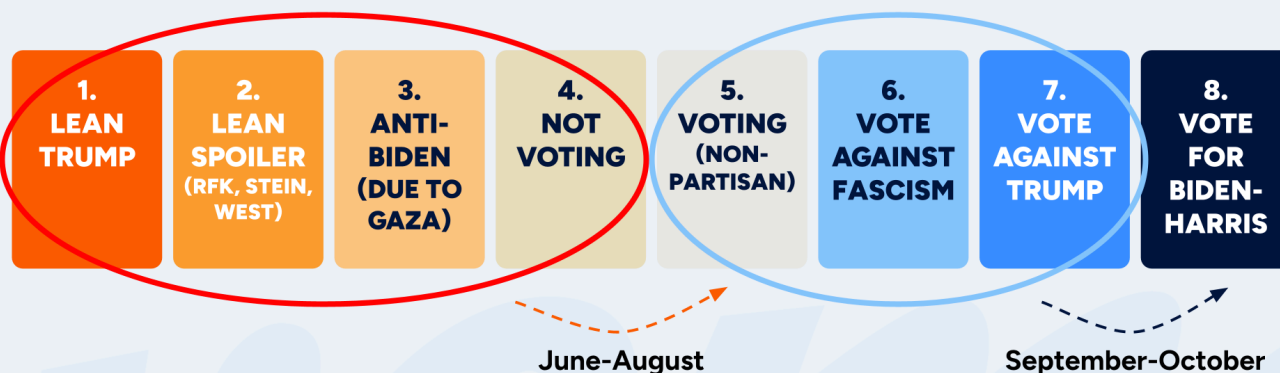
Billy Wimsatt

Executive Director, [Movement Voter PAC](#)

ps. This diagram below is a teaser – I promise I'll explain it more in Act II.

The Spectrum of Support

The Two-Stage Process for Engaging Alienated Potential Biden Voters



Our Goal: Create a **Permission Structure** for potential Democratic voters to 1) move into the blue zone in the summer, then 2) actually vote for Biden in the fall.



movement.vote

What to Expect (when you're electing)

ACT I: 10,000 Votes

The money and political landscape (*Brace yourself*).

ACT II: Rebuilding Our Team

How to get the gang back together in time to win (*Emotional intelligence is key*).

ACT III: The Good Part

What I find *genuinely* inspiring about this election (*Want hope? Skip here now*).

ACT IV: Now What?

Practical solutions! Ideas! Actions! (*Let's do this!*).

ACT V: Your Turn

What are *your* intentions? Time! Money! Outreach! (*Share – and inspire others!*)

“The future is not set. There is no fate, but what we make for ourselves.”

— Sarah Connor, Terminator 2

ACT I: 10,000 Votes

Why I’m Sending up the Bat Signal: Two Data Points

Right now, 2024 is looking more like 2016 – or 2000 – than 2020.

Here are two key data points:

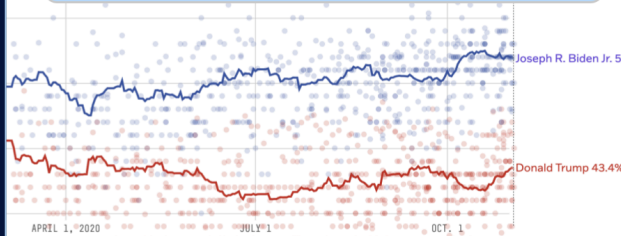
Data Point #1: The polling looks bad compared to 2020.

As of June 26th, Biden leads Trump in aggregated national [polling](#) by 0.1%. That might sound OK until you consider that on Election Day [four years ago](#), Biden led Trump by 8.4% in an election in which he ultimately won the popular vote by 4.5% (more than 7 million votes). And that *huge lead* allowed him to squeak out a measly 43,000-vote margin across just three states in the Electoral College.

BIDEN vs. TRUMP

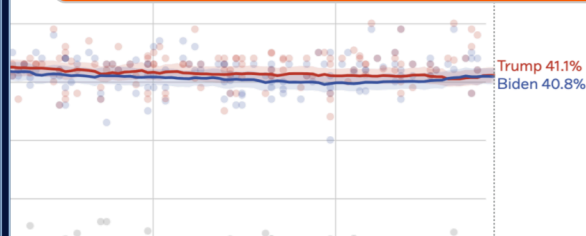
Polling Average, 2020 vs. 2024

BIDEN LEAD, 11/3/20: **8.4%**



2020

TRUMP LEAD, 6/28/24: **0.3%**



2024

Source: FiveThirtyEight

Side-by-side comparison of Biden and Trump's FiveThirtyEight polling averages, 2020 vs. 2024

For perspective: At his *lowest* point 2020, Biden led Trump by 3.4 points. In 2024, by contrast, Biden's *highest* point has been leading Trump by 0.4 points. And, FiveThirtyEight has Biden's win probability [down](#) from 62% in April to 50% today.

Swing state polls typically trail national polls by 2-3 points (because of the Republican bias in the Electoral College). If you suffer from insomnia, you might want to skip over this [Cook Political Report](#) graphic comparing FiveThirtyEight's [swing-state polling averages](#).

Is 2024 a rerun of 2020 or 2016?

Trump's showing in the FiveThirtyEight averages of 2024 polls finds him closer to his 2016 performance than his 2020 performance.

State	2016	2020	2024 538 Average*
Arizona	Trump +3	Biden +0.4	Trump +5
Georgia	Trump +5	Biden +0.3	Trump +5.4
Nevada	Clinton +2	Biden +2	Trump +5.4
Michigan	Trump +0.3	Biden +2.8	Trump +0.6
Pennsylvania	Trump +0.7	Biden +1.2	Trump +1.6
Wisconsin	Trump +0.7	Biden +0.6	Trump +1

* Includes RFK Vote

Source: FiveThirtyEight

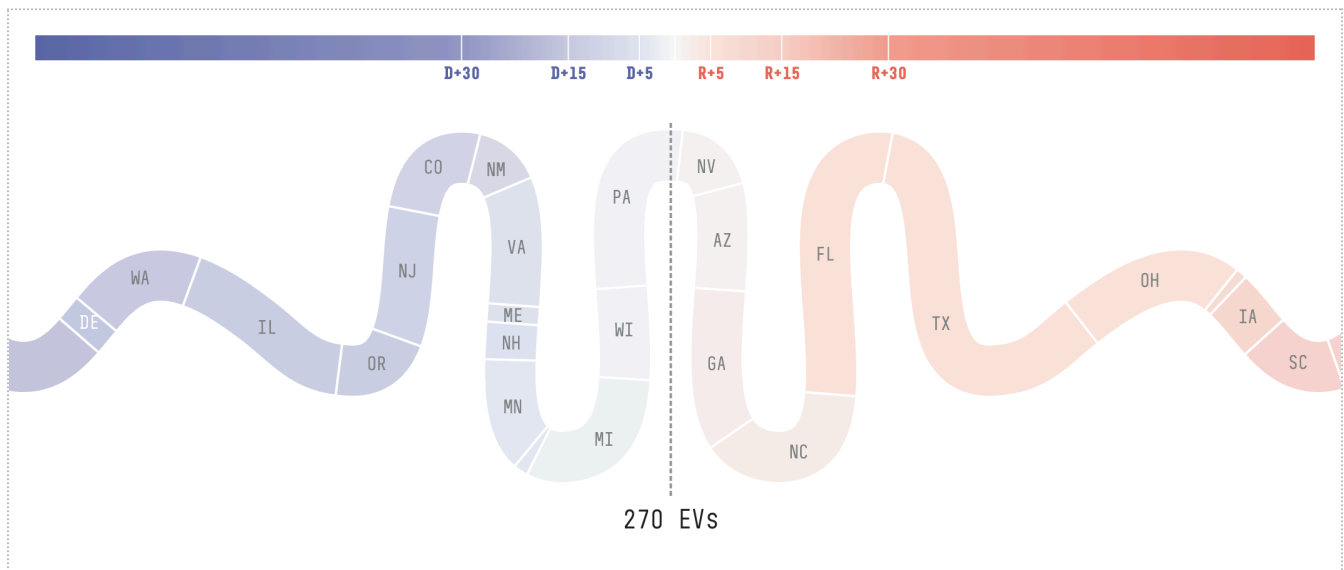
Cook Political Report. ["Biden's Slumping Poll Numbers Not Only Limited to Swing States."](#) June 12, 2024.

Before you curl up into a fetal position, here's important context: The chart above is based on polling averages for the whole year to date. Biden's current numbers today look 1-2 points better than what you see in this graphic, and FiveThirtyEight [projects](#) that Biden is likely to gain another 3 points between now and Election Day, as voters are forced to actually choose between him and Trump.

If that happens, it might be enough for Biden to squeak by in (what currently appear to be) the three closest swing states – Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania – which would deliver us precisely the bare minimum 270 Electoral College votes we need.

We Can Still Win – But There's No Room for Error

Here's FiveThirtyEight's graph showing the winding and treacherous road to 270. As you can see, we have no room for error.



Screenshot: FiveThirtyEight. [What does the path to 270 look like?](#) June 25, 2024.

To reach 270, we need as many variables as possible to break in our favor. Given Biden's bad luck so far (two unexpected wars, inflation, COVID), we cannot take anything for granted.

Republican operatives are pulling out all the stops. They're even collecting signatures to get Cornel West [on the ballot](#) in swing states. Not to mention that everyone from Vladimir Putin to Bibi Netanyahu to Elon Musk to oil barons have an **intense motivation and self-interest** in seeing Biden lose. Those folks can afford to pay for a *lot* of anti-Biden AI bots (who could seem like real humans to impressionable people online).

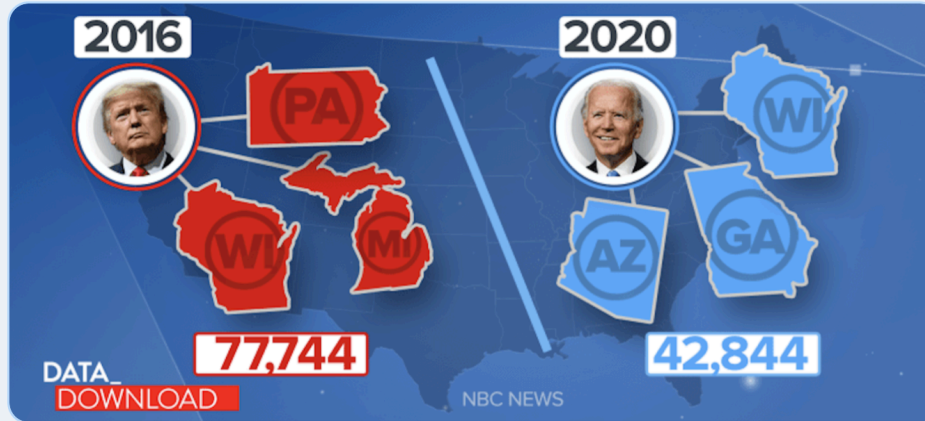
This election is going to be a knock-down drag-out gloves-off fight. The winner is unlikely to be called for days or weeks after November 5th. There will be recounts, lawsuits, battles over ballots, and the potential for political violence.

I'm finishing writing this on the eve of the first Presidential debate. It is unlikely that the debate moves the needle. Ditto for the Trump trials. Ditto for the RNC and DNC conventions – each should produce only temporary polling bumps. Sure, there will be plot twists, but the fundamentals of the race are mostly baked in.

10,000 votes is the margin of effort.

Keep in mind, even the most dismal polling is not predictive. It's prescriptive: It doesn't tell us what's going to happen, it tells us what we need to do.

2024 will be won or lost by a few thousand votes.



2016: Trump wins by 0.06% of all U.S. votes.

2020: Biden wins by 0.027% of all U.S. votes.

In the end, 2024 will come down to this: A handful of votes in a handful of states. If Trump wins, he's probably going to win by somewhere in the neighborhood of 10,000 votes. If Biden wins, he's probably going to win by 10,000 votes. Which means that, for better or worse... the entire election is going to come down to *us*. Little old us. We will be the *margin of effort* to decide whether an autocratic demagogue captures the presidency by 10,000 votes.

You would think that the strategic mega donors on our side would be investing even more money than they did in 2020 to secure Biden's victory. They are not.

Data Point #2: The money is not flowing like in 2020.

Remember in 2020 when we won? Wasn't that *amazing*? We were dancing in the streets. You would think we would want to invest at the same level we did in 2020 so we could win again. Or at a *higher* level because everything costs more than it did back then (staff, canvassers, rent, tech tools, printing, digital ads). And the polling and enthusiasm is much worse. So really, we should have *two or three times* as much money as we had in 2020 to try to achieve the same result under adverse circumstances. Wouldn't that make sense?

***We can't rely on billionaires to save us.
We're going to have to save ourselves.***

Instead we have less money. Even on the campaign side, Trump has leap-frogged Biden in fundraising, thanks to [\\$75 million](#) from one right-wing donor, Tim Mellon. Democratic-leaning mega donors do not appear to be similarly motivated. Basically – surprise, surprise – we can't rely on billionaires to save us. We're going to have to save ourselves.

I've been calling around to MVP's national partner organizations and I keep hearing the same thing: the money is not flowing. Here is a sampling from leading national progressive orgs of the approximate **budget gaps** (as of June 20th) to run their largest electoral programs and contact tens of millions of voters this year:

Organization	Approx. Budget Gap (as of June 20)
Black Voters Matter	\$24 Million
Working Families Party	\$20 Million
Showing up for Racial Justice (SURJ)	\$4 Million
The Collective	\$10 Million
Alliance for Youth Action	\$9 Million
Community Change Action	\$11 Million
MoveOn.org	\$7 Million
People's Action	\$4 Million
Working America	\$18 Million
Accelerate Action	\$11 Million

The list above is only national organizations. In terms of the local organizations MVP funds, we are still gathering their fundraising data. Suffice it to say, there are a lot of very big gaps at both the state and national level.

Taking the political and fundraising data points together, make no mistake: We're in a *very* challenging situation.

This problem is extremely time-sensitive. So please, everyone reading this, go figure out your finances and make your *biggest donations ever* in the next few weeks. Make a donation proportionate to the gravity of the situation. I don't care if it's via MVP or one of the *many* other excellent local or national organizations or donor intermediaries – we're all of the same team. We are happy to be honest brokers and help you figure out the best option for you.

With every passing week that this money doesn't come in, groups will be scaling back their voter engagement programs. We need groups to be scaling *up* their programs right now and swinging for the fences, not contracting.



Black Voters Matter, getting out the vote in the 2023 elections

The Funding Cliff for Black Organizing

If you also noticed that some of the major organizations with very large budget gaps are Black-led organizations, your eyes are not deceiving you. In 2020, there was a surge of funding for Black organizing in the wake of the horrific police murder of George Floyd. For a few months it seemed like everyone from corporations to celebrities to online donors suddenly cared about Black people. But let's be honest: A lot of it was guilt money and not all of it was given in the most strategic ways. Predictably, there was a political backlash and a funding cliff after 2021.

This has left a lot of excellent Black voter engagement organizations deeply underfunded. In 2020, for the first time, they *finally* got the funding they needed to scale their programs. Then it went away. Many had to do major layoffs. In the 2024 election cycle, we desperately need to fund Black organizing at scale. Not only are Black communities the most reliable Democratic voters, but they are also experiencing some of the most dampened enthusiasm for Biden – over cost-of-living, a perceived lack of policy progress, and, for many Black voters, over Gaza as well.

(A little group of us are [drafting a letter](#) for major donors to recommit to funding Black organizing and encourage our peers to as well).



Asian American Advocacy Fund getting out the vote in Georgia

The Sun Belt is the Future - and it's also the present

Progressive funders would be stupid as hell not to invest *heavily* in supporting Black organizing to save democracy this election cycle – and long term. The same goes for AAPI, Hispanic/[Latine](#), AMEMSA (Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, South Asian), and Native voter organizing. One of the most disturbing political trends this cycle has been the disinvestment from the Sun Belt by some major Democratic party-aligned institutions and funders, most acutely from Georgia, based on Biden's polling being a few points below his polling in the Midwestern battlegrounds. For the record, MVP is continuing to fund heavily in all of the top 2024 Sun Belt battleground states: [Georgia](#),

[North Carolina](#), [Arizona](#), [Nevada](#). And we are continuing to fund meaningfully in Florida and Texas as well.

The Sun Belt is the future – and it's also the present. In 2024, Arizona seems very winnable on every level – with an abortion ballot measure and MAGA extremist Kari Lake running for Senate. Both Arizona and Nevada have *must-win* Senate races this year. Nevada took a big economic hit, which is hurting voter morale, but it's still very winnable. North Carolina has a must-win Governor's race against an extreme MAGA candidate. Georgia is eminently winnable if we invest properly. It is shocking how quickly Georgia became the shining new beacon of hope for Democrats after 2020, then was just as quickly dropped.

Never mind that both Georgia and North Carolina will have incredibly important Senate races in the next two cycles. Both states (along with Arizona and Nevada) have the potential to become consistently blue by 2030 *if* we continue to heavily invest in them (think of the 10-20 year arc of transformation for states like Virginia and Colorado).

Divesting from the Sun Belt and from communities of color right now is lunacy, morally repugnant, and political malpractice. Yes, we need to max out our investments in every corner of [Wisconsin](#), [Michigan](#), and [Pennsylvania](#). Absolutely. *And* we need to invest heavily in the Sun Belt as well. A Midwest-only strategy to just barely eke out 270 is dangerous and unsustainable. We have to invest deeply in all communities of color in all the perennial battlegrounds every year – short term and long term. And in white communities too. That is what it's going to take to win, to heal the wounds of injustice and transform our country long-term.

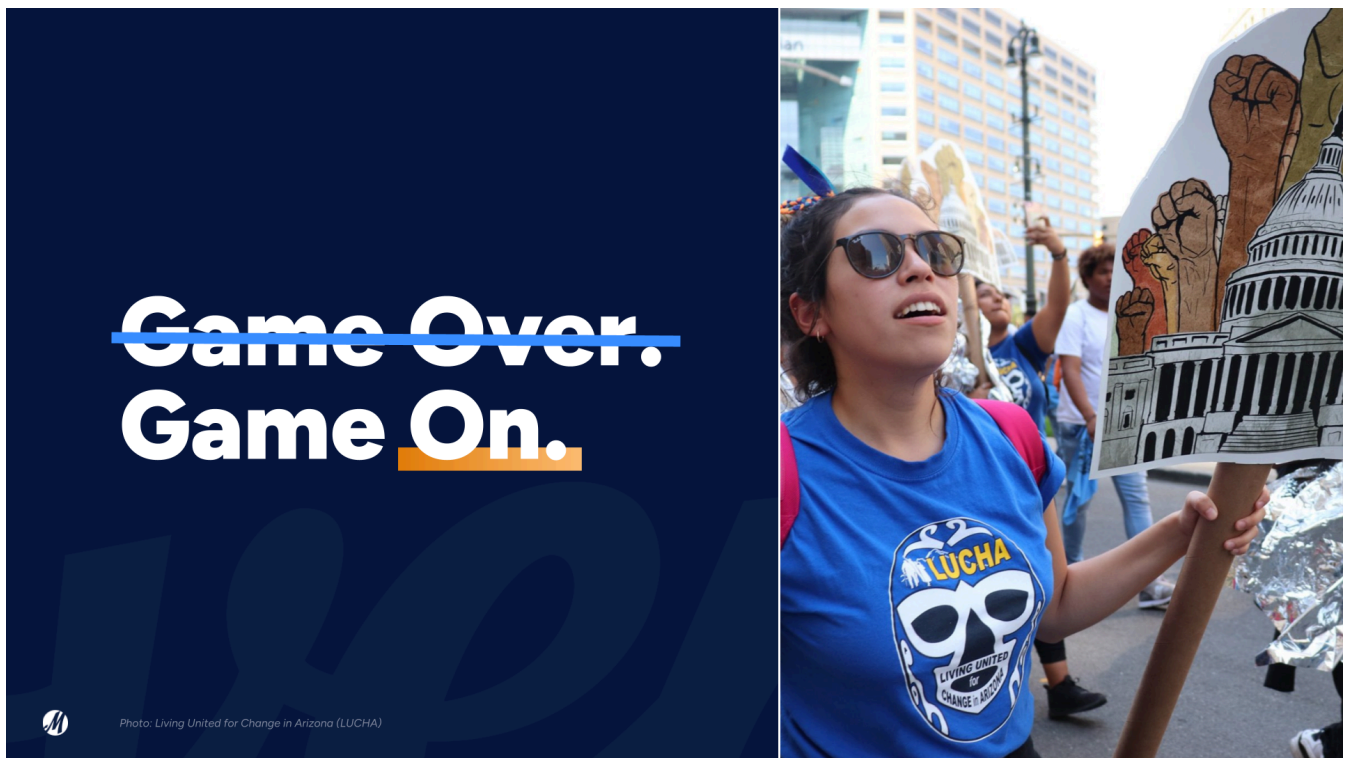


Photo: Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA)

This is Not Game Over – It’s Game On!

The *Bat Signal* does not mean hope is lost — it means help is needed.

Knowing that the polls are bad, the money isn’t flowing, and that our voters are angry and disillusioned is not game over. It’s *game on*.

Local organizers and trusted messengers made the difference in [2017](#), [2018](#), [2020](#), [2022](#), [2023](#). They can deliver again in 2024. But it’s going to require an unprecedented Apollo Project level of investment.

That’s why thousands of us are dedicating our time, money, and lives to this fight. As volunteers, donors, organizers, influencers, and donor organizers large and small we are going to contact *tens of millions* of angry and disillusioned Democratic and independent voters and produce *tens of thousands more new net votes* in each of the key states (see how you can get involved below, in **ACT IV**).

*We’re not doing this to help Joe Biden or Kamala Harris.
It’s not about them.*



New Pennsylvania Project (NPP)

We're not doing this to help Joe Biden or Kamala Harris. It's not about them. We're doing it because we care about our country – which happens to be the most powerful country in the world. It matters who is in charge of our multi-trillion dollar budget, our sprawling government, and our President's bully pulpit. We need to make sure we don't have a bully in the pulpit.

We – all of us reading this – have the potential to be deciders in who controls the world's most powerful country. We have a *really* big job this year: To make sure we defeat the forces of MAGA by 10,000 votes – instead of letting the bullies win by 10,000 votes. That's our #1 job. That's it. Our kids' future. The future of our country. The future of democracy. The future of our planet. Right there.

Four months.

Us.

What do we have to do?

Step 1 – We have to be crystal clear about the situation we are in. We have to be honest with ourselves about what will happen if we lose.

Step 2 – We need to get our team back together. This is the scene in the movie where we go around and get our band of reluctant misfit superheroes back together again.

Step 3 – We lay out our battle plan, put out the Bat Signal to recruit others, and go kick their butts.

So let's dive in. Let's talk strategy – starting with who we are, who our voters are, and the emotionally intelligent (and sometimes counter-intuitive) approaches we will need to bring our team back together to defy the odds this fall.

Note to Readers: **ACT II** is a long meditation on strategy. If you're looking for hope and practical solutions, skip ahead to [ACT III: The Good Part](#).

ACT II: Rebuilding Our Team



Divided We Fall – United We Win.

Here's an interesting "sliding doors" thought experiment: In the version of this story in which we lose by 10,000 votes: *Where did we go wrong?*

For me the answer is clear: We stayed divided.

In this terrible version of the proximate future, the "Party Faithful" stick to their "Biden great, Trump bad" message, dismiss marginalized voters' concerns over cost-of-living and Gaza, and *just enough* of these voters stay home. Boom. We lose.

This is what happened in 2016. People thought Hillary had it in the bag. They were overconfident and took disaffected voters for granted. In 2020, our side worked hard to make sure this did **NOT** happen. (Remember the [Biden-Sanders Unity Task Forces](#)?)

*In the version of this story in which we lose by 10,000 votes:
Where did we go wrong? The answer is clear: We stayed divided.*

To win in 2024, we need to deliberately stitch the Biden 2020 coalition back together in full force (as best as we can under the circumstances). This is going to require shifts in perspective, and a more emotionally intelligent approach to the work and to each other.

Let's start with *who* we are.

Our Coalition: Desperate, Disillusioned, and Angry

The Democratic coalition can largely be divided into three key psychographic categories: the Desperately Motivated, the Angry Left, and the Disillusioned Base – with many voters fitting into two or more categories. I, for example, fit into all three buckets. 😊

The Democratic Base in Three Categories



The Desperately Motivated

Most of the people reading this fit into the **Desperately Motivated** category. We are a diverse group but tend to be older, whiter, college-educated, and relatively affluent. We probably make up about 20% of the Democratic base.

We have followed Biden's many policy successes and understand that [he has done a lot of good](#) despite *tremendous* odds (the fact that we didn't have a recession or stagflation is amazing!). We are aware of [Project 2025](#). We are terrified of a second Trump term, *terrified*, and rightly so. We are well-informed pragmatists who understand the stakes on climate, abortion, LGBTQ rights, global authoritarianism, and geopolitical positioning.

This category of Democratic base voters is simultaneously sympathetic to and worried by the anger on the left and the disillusionment of the poor and working class. Most Democratic and progressive activists and donors are in this category. This group also includes a lot of women and LGBTQ+ folks who viscerally feel the brunt of the right-wing war on women and trans people. We may feel angry and disillusioned too. But we are *extremely* clear about what the MAGA threat represents and are highly motivated to take action and do everything we can. It is critical for this group to maximize our donations, volunteering, and outreach to bring the rest of the Democratic base along.

The Disillusioned Base

The second group is the **Disillusioned Base** – by far the largest category, probably 50-80% depending on how you slice it (these are impressionistic ballpark estimates).

This group is racially mixed, leans working class, and is grappling with high prices (including housing, healthcare, and debt), general economic insecurity, and an understandable feeling of political frustration, exhaustion, and ennui.

They don't like Republicans, but (accurately or not) they don't think Biden or Democrats are doing much to improve things either. Despite overall positive economic trends, they are getting squeezed by – and are [understandably furious](#) about – inflation in all its many forms. Many are cross-pressured on immigration and economic issues. They tend to be lower-information voters and receive a lot of disinformation. They think Biden is too old. Many will vote for him – but not at 2020 Democratic turnout levels. The enthusiasm isn't there. They are going to need huge investment in mobilization and persuasion to vote for Biden this time instead of spoiler candidates or the couch.

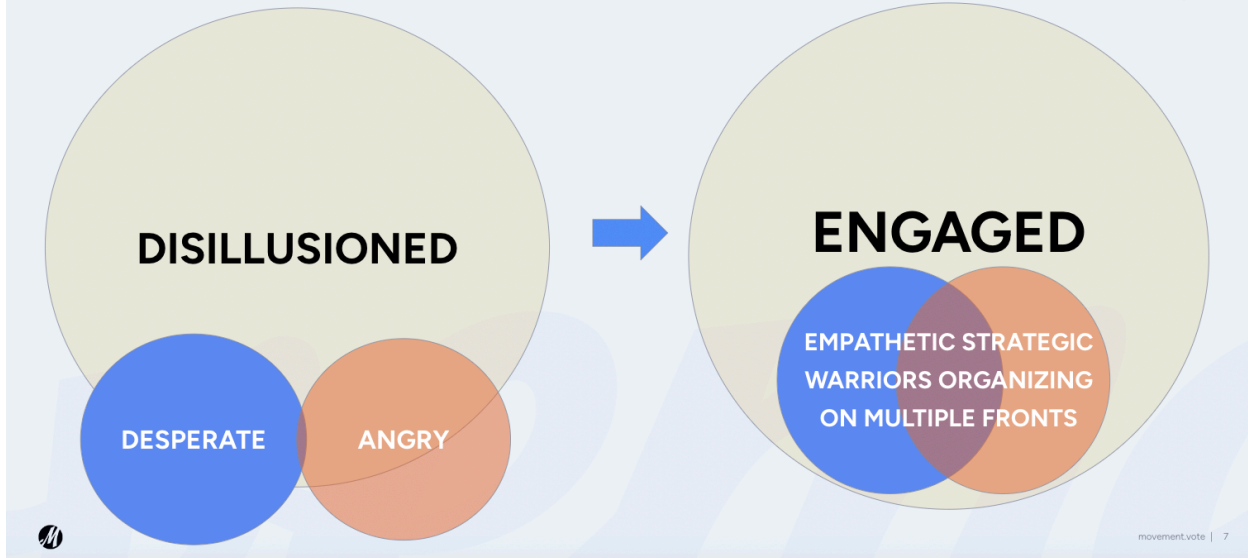
The Angry Left

The third category is the **Angry Left**. Though often dismissed as a small percentage of the electorate, this cohort is going to have an especially critical role to play this fall.

This Angry left is angriest with Biden, primarily over Gaza but also around immigrant rights and other issues. The Angry base includes many young people, as well as many Arab, Muslim, Jewish, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and politically radical voters – but also broader constituencies such as Black faith leaders, and anyone who follows Gaza-related content on social media. This is a group with influence beyond its numbers. They make up a huge percentage of the organizers, activists, influencers, and loudest voices online, on campuses, in cultural spaces, and in influential social circles.

Many of the Angry Left are actually the *children* of the Desperately Motivated – or at least in the same general age cohort. There is a huge generation gap in perception. So... feel free to send this along to your kids and/or your parents :). Maybe you'll have a more empathetic version of the usual family conversation this time around!

WE REALLY NEED EACH OTHER. LET'S TEAM UP TO WIN ON ALL FRONTS!



We Need to Work Together – on Gaza *AND* Trump

The Desperate and the Angry are the two most active segments of the Biden 2020 coalition. The challenge now is to bring them back together again to tag-team in engaging our Disillusioned base. To win in November, three things need to happen:

1. **We need the Desperate folks (us)** to become Empathetic Strategic Warriors and build partnerships with the Angry folks (also us) to work together to push Biden on Gaza, especially *before* the DNC in August, and help expand the coalition pushing for peace and freedom in the Middle East.
2. **We need the Angry folks (us)** to also be Empathetic Strategic Warriors, and *after* the Democratic National Convention in August, to pivot to organizing on two fronts: continuing to push for peace and freedom *AND* join the Desperate folks this fall to stop Trump. Essentially we need the Desperate us and the Angry us to make a commitment to support each other based on our shared interests, even if we don't see everything eye-to-eye.
3. **We need these two teams (us + us)** to work together for a ceasefire in Gaza *and* to engage the **Disillusioned us** to vote — not “for” Biden or Democrats, but against Trump, for their own power, and for a better future.

In short, y'all, we really and truly do *need* each other. Especially when it's hard, like now. This is the big-picture work we need to do together – short-term and long-term.

What does this look like in real life? It looks like a lot of one on one and small group conversations between Desperate and Angry folks (who are already in some type of relationship with one another). It looks like folks *choosing together* to take the risk of having compassionate, emotionally intelligent, generative, two-way conversations. Conversations about what each other wants and what it would look like to show up for each other in this doubly-challenging moment and over the long term.



Wisconsin Working Families Party

Why Working Families Party Is SO Important

This is part of why organizations on the left like the Working Families Party and its many close partners have an outsized role to play in winning this election.

WFP is arguably the most important and influential left political organization in the US. For those unfamiliar, WFP is a coalition of labor, community, and activist organizations at the state and national level who have joined together in a shared strategy to use elections to build multi-racial working class governing power.

WFP is doing its presidential endorsement vote in July. It has been organizing this process since 2023 with its members and allies. Their [national committee](#) has decided

to intentionally time their endorsement process to conclude right after the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee – good timing! Let me say that again. The Working Families Party is planning to make a presidential endorsement decision in July and throw their credibility, infrastructure, and muscle behind it.

This. Is. A. Really. Big. Deal.

As a leading political organization in the Ceasefire movement that lobbied dozens of Democrats in Congress to bravely come out for a ceasefire as early as last fall and has been pushing hard on Biden since then, they have the moral authority on the left that Biden lacks. WFP is deeply connected with and respected by hundreds of organizations and thousands of organizers on the left. I can't emphasize enough: WFP taking up the question of a presidential endorsement is a really big deal. If they endorse, they're opening up space for large parts of the left to join them.

The deliberate way they are going about their process – centering the need to block the authoritarian right, while also building long-term progressive power – is a principled act of leadership. It is the right thing to do. And anyone who cares about not having Trump needs to send them money (they have a \$20 million budget gap for their swing-state programs in PA, GA, AZ, WI, and more). This singular act of leadership is the most important thing any organization is doing this election cycle.

Zooming out, it is very hard for many people to support Biden right now. American-made bombs are killing children in Rafah under Biden's watch. A mass movement is pressuring Biden to pressure Netanyahu and Hamas for peace. We need to keep up the pressure.

And over the course of this summer, many voices on the left and within the ceasefire movement, will begin to speak up and say: We desperately want freedom, justice, and peace in Israel, Palestine, and Gaza. *AND*, we absolutely have to defeat Trump, which means we have to organize people to vote in record numbers for the Biden-Harris team, even with broken hearts.

This is a principled stance: The goals of stopping the war, supporting the Palestinian people, and stopping Trump are not in conflict. They are all aimed at stopping violence and right-wing ascendance around the world. Of necessity, they all go together.

But the *way* that we pursue these goals, and the *timing* of what we emphasize when, is of the utmost importance.



Black Leaders Organizing for Communities (BLOC) in Wisconsin, with Wisconsin Working Families Party, Leaders Igniting Transformation (LIT), and Power to the Polls

The First Rule Of Electing Biden: Don't Talk About Biden

Let's come back now to that "Sliding Doors" thought experiment. In the version of reality where Trump wins, *where else did we go wrong?*

Ah yes. We tried to push disaffected voters to vote for Biden by telling them to vote for Biden.

"Huh?" you might be saying. "How else do we get them to vote for Biden?!"

Allow me to explain. This next section is the crux of the (counterintuitive) strategy I believe is our best shot at beating Trump.

Why Explicitly Pro-Biden Outreach is Backfiring

Right now on social media, when people make pro-Biden influencer videos, they quickly get "stitched" with anti-Biden response videos, essentially saying, "How can you support Biden when people are dying in Gaza?"

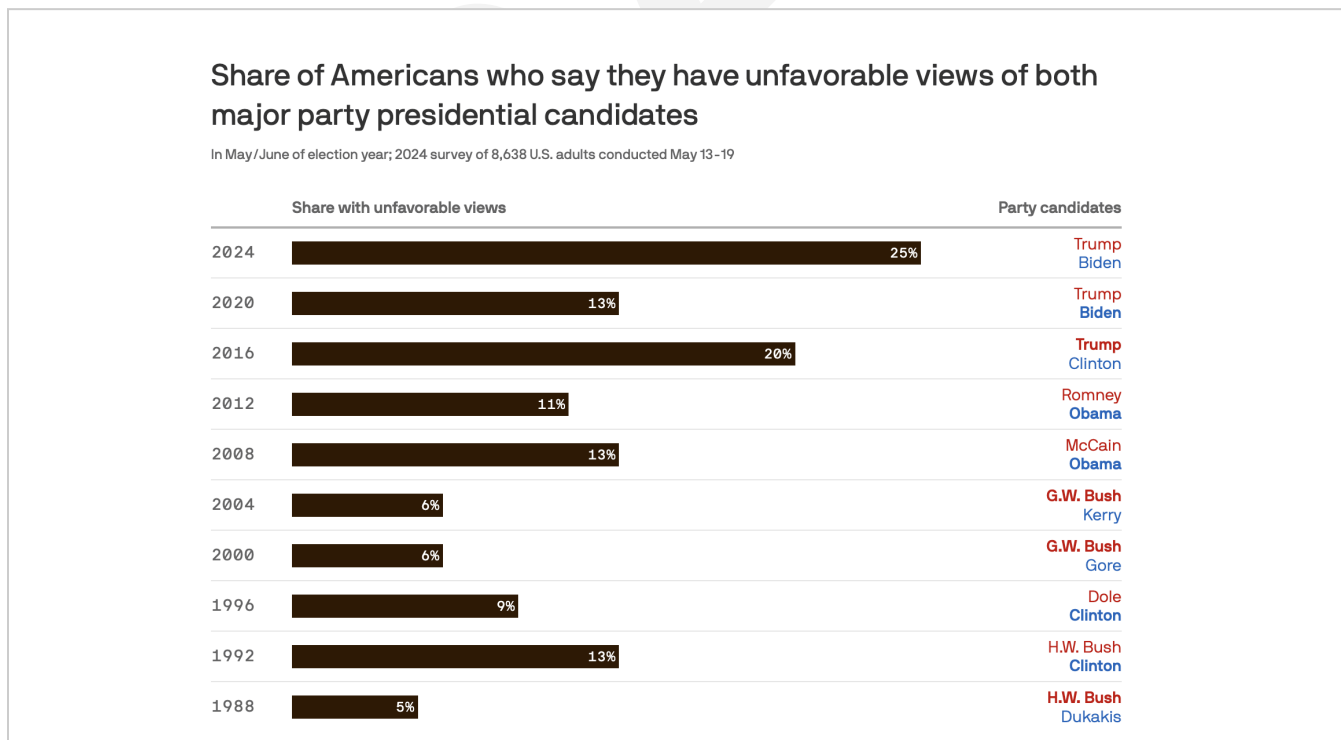
As you might guess, the anti-Biden videos are getting more traction and likes than the pro-Biden videos. Never mind that some of it is bots and probably foreign election interference campaigns. This phenomenon is so widespread that some pro-Biden digital strategists have advised their influencers *not* to create pro-Biden content online right now because it is hurting Biden more than helping.

The Positive Power of Negative Partisanship

A lot of people in the Democratic establishment oversimplify and misunderstand the nature of persuasion in this uniquely difficult election cycle. People talk about whether to endorse Biden or not as though it's a binary choice – a simple either/or question.

The key insight is that negative partisanship is *much* stronger and more effective than positive partisanship. This is true in general, but especially in this election – especially in the heat of the Gaza war. Negative partisanship in many circles is a *much* more effective mode of communication than positive partisanship.

The most coveted segment of the electorate right now are the so-called [“double haters”](#) who dislike both candidates. They are considering voting for spoilers or staying home on the couch... and they are polling at a [record high](#).



Axios. [“The dread election: Share of “double haters” hits historic high.”](#) June 15, 2024.

Doubling Down on the “Double Haters”

In addition to turning out our core base voters, winning this election is going to largely hinge on winning over the Democratic-leaning double haters, especially among youth, and voters of color. The technical term for this phenomenon is “base consolidation.” That is the central problem we have to solve this election: Democrats have not consolidated our base – yet.

When we are engaging these voters:

- **Message matters:** While explicitly pro-Biden messaging is mostly ineffective or even counter-productive, what *does* break through is making *voters* the heroes of the story: Asking about the issues that matter to them, and informing them of policy progress that *voters* have already made possible. The more a voter feels a sense of efficacy, the more likely they are to vote. (For example, see [this brilliant messaging guidance](#) on the Inflation Reduction Act, from [ASO Communications](#).)
- **Messenger matters:** The further away the messenger is from the Democratic Party and Biden, and the more proximate they are to the voter – geographically, socially, culturally, ideologically – the more credible the messenger will be.
- **Medium matters:** The more disillusioned the voter, the less likely they will be persuaded by TV ads and impersonal voter contact methods. This is why we need to invest in scaling up warm-touch, *relational* voter engagement. Translation: humans talking with and *listening to* humans.

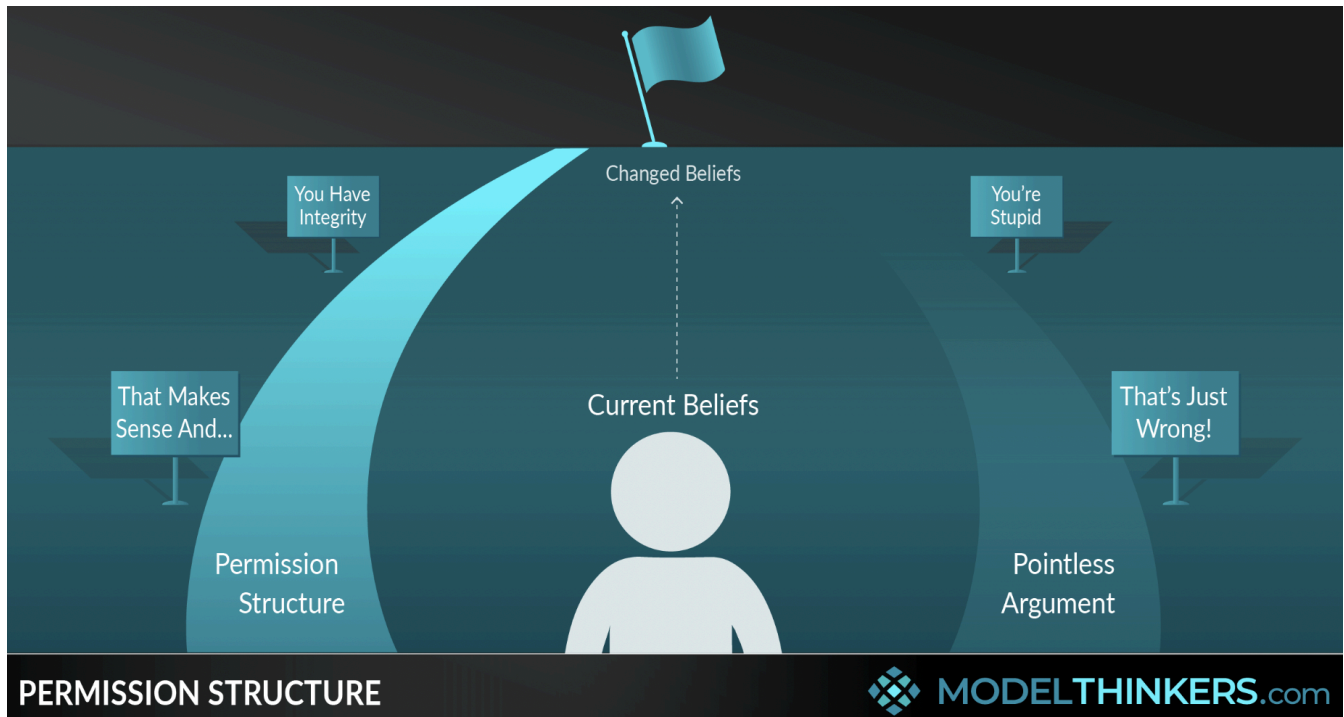
Negative voter sentiment is helpful feedback *if we listen to it*. Negative sentiment tells us who hasn’t yet felt heard, and which communities we most urgently need to invest in. It is *not* a signal of who in the electorate we should run away from; it’s a signal of who we should run *toward*.

A “Permission Structure” to Vote Against Trump

A fancy name for what we are doing is creating a [permission structure](#) for voters to gradually decide to vote against Trump this fall.

A permission structure “*provides an emotional and psychological justification that allows someone to change deeply held beliefs and/or behaviors while importantly retaining their pride and integrity.*”

This graphic shows how a permission structure sets the stage for persuasion so much more effectively than beating someone over the head with your point of view:



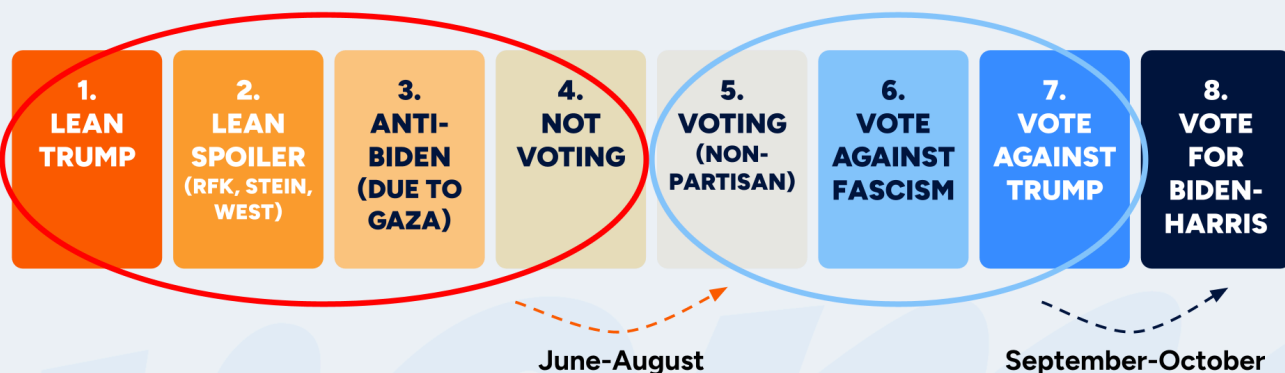
Credit: ModelThinkers

Voter Persuasion is a Two-Stage Process

Here's the bottomline: Some key voters we need in our coalition are *nowhere near ready* to vote for Biden. To win them (back) over, we need to walk them back from the brink — back from a spoiler vote, and mainly back from the couch — in a very deliberate, emotionally intelligent, incremental process between now and the fall.

The Spectrum of Support

The Two-Stage Process for Engaging Alienated Potential Biden Voters



Our Goal: Create a **Permission Structure** for potential Democratic voters to 1) move into the blue zone in the summer, then 2) actually vote for Biden in the fall.



movement.vote

This graphic shows the gradations of opinion among many potential Biden voters in 2024, and the incremental two-stage process by which they can ultimately decide to vote for Biden this fall.

“Are You For Biden?” is the Wrong Question

This diagram above is the single most important strategic advice we can offer anyone attempting to communicate with alienated Democratic base voters.

By focusing first on negative partisanship, we can establish common ground and enable voters to think more deeply about how their values and beliefs might apply differently in this election than they might initially think.

Going from a 3 to a 7 is psychologically not that hard. It’s going from a negative (“I can’t vote for Biden”) to an even stronger negative (“I *really* can’t have Trump”). Once you’re solidly at a 7, going from a 7 to an 8 is much easier because if you know you don’t want Trump, you have to vote for *someone else* and that someone else can only be... someone whose first name starts with a “J” and whose last name starts with a “B.”

The rookie mistake that many pro-Biden forces have been making since October 7th is to try too quickly to convince, lecture, chastise, or terrify people who are in the 1-4 zone into moving all the way over to an 8 in one fell swoop. This is not an emotionally intelligent approach. It is a bridge too far. It’s like trying to get someone who doesn’t like you to commit to marrying you on the first date.

Or more accurately, it is like trying to convince someone to vote for Biden while they are in mourning at a funeral. For a major segment of our base whose social media feeds are filled every day with heartbreaking images from Gaza, that is very close to what they are experiencing. Understandably, demanding that people jump from a 3 to an 8 is not working and it is creating a huge backlash.

Chastising disaffected voters to get them to vote for Biden is like trying to get someone who doesn't like you to marry you on the first date.

So now, many of our core voters are loudly encouraging each other not to vote. *That* is the really big problem we have right now. The problem is *not* that people aren't verbally committing to vote for Biden. It's that they're *publicly committing to NOT vote for Biden*. A subtle distinction that makes a world of difference. By attacking the wrong problem, with the wrong timing, the Desperate pro-Biden folks are ham-handedly entrenching anti-Biden sentiment.



Leaders Igniting Transformation | Wisconsin

What do we need? Emotional intelligence.

When do we need it? Now.

Lack of emotional intelligence on both the ultra-left and the center-left is a huge problem. In the wake of October 7th, there wasn't enough empathy and emotional intelligence to support Jewish Americans who were viscerally grieving over a brutal mass murder. And ever since October 7th, there hasn't been enough empathy and emotional intelligence to support Palestinian, Arab, Muslim and other Americans who are grieving every day over mass murder, destruction, and starvation, financially supported by U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Most American Jews, Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims want the war to end and have empathy for the human beings who are suffering on both sides. But the most strident and insensitive voices on both sides are reinforcing one another and polarizing everyone into feeling like there is a much bigger divide within the Democratic and progressive coalition than there needs to be. The polarizing voices feed off of each other – similar to the Israeli far right and Hamas – by stoking fear of the “other” and driving all of us toward a divisive right-wing, fear-based worldview. In reality, the people on the “other” side are just like us.

Abandon Biden? Uncommitted? There's a Difference!

Let's look at this in terms of pro-Palestinian organizing around the election.

On one hand, [Abandon Biden](#) is a campaign to “punish Biden at the ballot box” and “actively campaign against him.” Clearly, they are in the 1-3 range on our scale.

On the other hand, the [Uncommitted National Movement](#) seeks “to push voters to engage in November in a meaningful way to fight fascism and strengthen our democracy.” They are in the 5-7 range, articulating an explicitly anti-Trump orientation even as they push Biden and the Democratic Party on Gaza. Here is our [deeper-dive analysis](#) of their strategy.

A lot of otherwise highly informed people tend to lump the two together and think they are all the same since they both effectively opposed Biden during the Democratic primary. That's a big mistake. Both Uncommitted and Abandon Biden are pushing hard for change in U.S. policy toward Gaza. But there is a world of difference in their theory of change. While Abandon Biden focuses on punishing Biden for his Gaza policy, Uncommitted is a strategic effort to build the power of Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian

communities and aligned anti-war voters to increase their influence within the only major political party where they have a meaningful chance of making an impact.

Uncommitted has staked out a highly principled, morally consistent, and strategic position that is both anti-war and anti-Trump. They have the credibility to move anti-war voters from the 3-4 range to the 5-7 range because they have a constructive theory of change. That is a big deal. Anyone who cares about the future of democracy should be writing them thank-you notes and sending them money. We need to support voices like the Uncommitted movement among both micro and macro influencers and organizing groups.



Arizona, 2020. Even back then, negative partisanship was the name of the game!

Shhhh!! We're speaking *in code*

For many progressive influencers and organizations who are not willing to explicitly associate themselves with Biden right now (most of them), this election campaign is going to have to be communicated *in code*.

Here's how it works: This fall, an angry and disillusioned voter on a campus in Michigan hears from four trusted messengers about the election.

- **Messenger A:** "It's really important to vote."
- **Messenger B:** "It's really important to vote. We have to stop fascism."

- **Messenger C:** “We have to vote to stop fascism... We have to stop Trump.”
- **Messenger D:** “We *really* have to stop Trump. He’s a scary autocrat so we’re gonna have to vote for...I know it sounds crazy but... Joe Biden.”

To the voter in Michigan, it all adds up to: “We have to vote for Biden” even though only one of the four messengers actually said Biden’s name.

Shhhh! Don’t tell anybody.

Timing is Everything

But if everyone is speaking in *code*, who is going to say nice things about the Biden-Harris team? Surely *someone* has to remind voters of the [good things](#) about Biden’s presidency.

A lot of us will say nice things about Biden when the time is right. I’ve already started working on *Bat Signal 4*, timed to come out after the DNC in August. Bat Signal 4 is going to be *hyperbolically* pro-Biden (with some nuance), as well as anti-Trump. Timing is everything. It’s important for the most trusted messengers not to peak too early, lest they squander their trust. After the RNC and DNC, and especially by September and October, it should become more socially permissible to move publicly from the 5-7 range to an 8. Here’s how it will all come together:

- **We need a critical mass of voices who are vocally supporting Biden after the RNC in July** (the Working Families Party and allied groups).
- **We need *another* critical mass that is communicating in the anti-Trump range after the DNC in August** (Uncommitted and allied groups).
- **We need a loud chorus of pro-voting groups** saying it’s important to vote, have our voices heard, and save democracy.

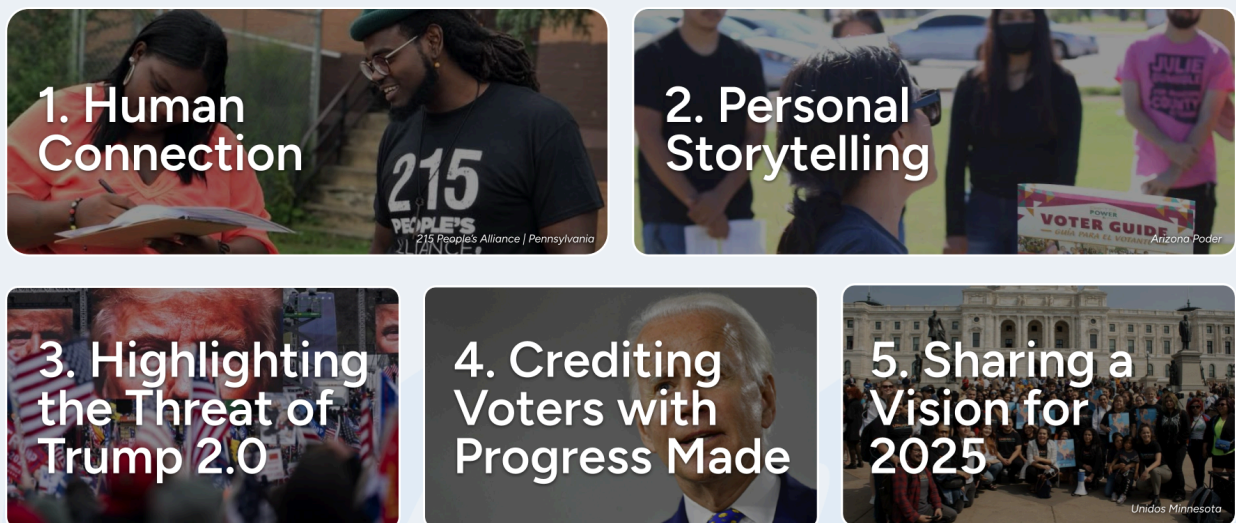
Together these movement leaders (the Working Families cluster and the Uncommitted cluster) create a *permission structure* for others. We need people with the credibility to go back to voters and influencers in the anti-Biden range and ask: “Would you be willing to reconsider?”

Five Strategies, Multiple Touches

The Spectrum of Support diagram should make it clear that we are not talking about a one-and-done conversation with a disillusioned voter.

We're talking about warm, relational, steady engagement, with multiple touches over time between now and Election Day. (This is one important rationale for [giving early](#), not just in a panic a few weeks before the election.)

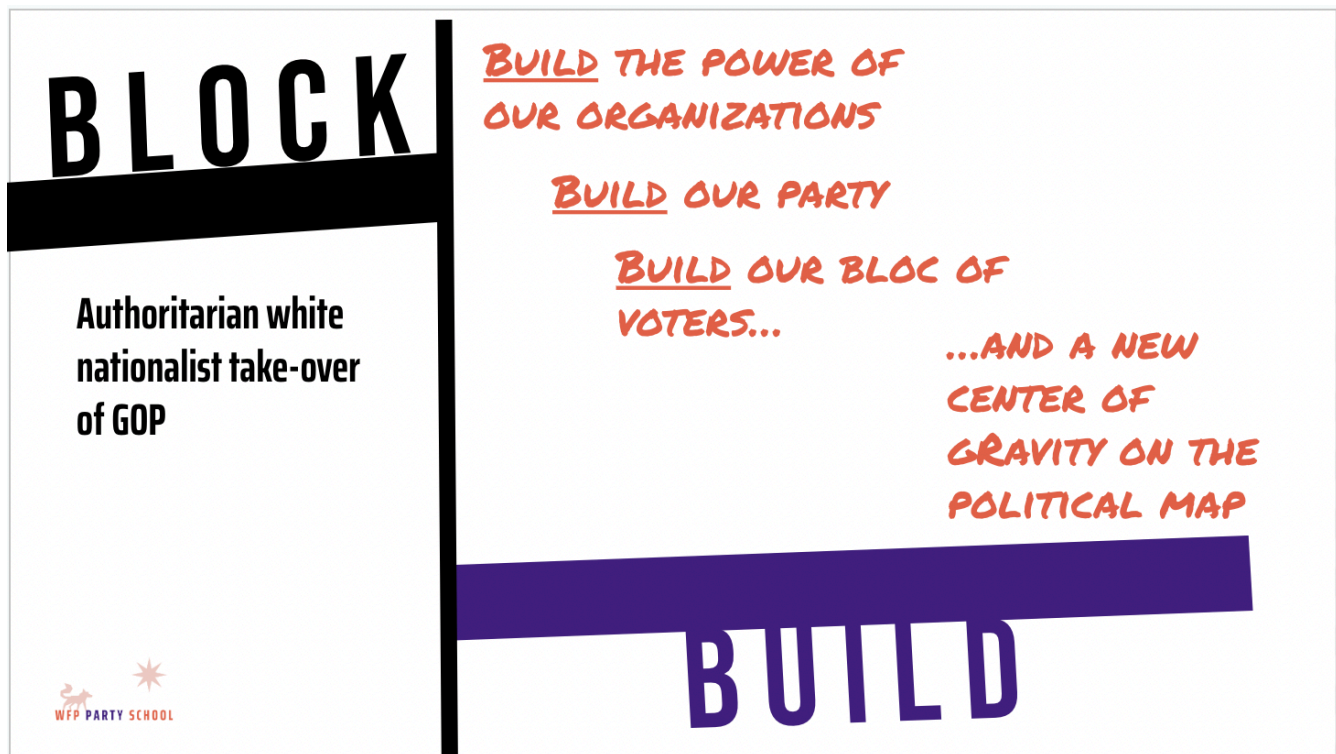
5 Strategies to Meet Voters Where They Are



At a micro-level, this looks like *tens of thousands* of organizers, canvassers, volunteers, and local influencers having genuine conversations with *tens of millions* of voters which incorporate five strategic lenses:

1. **Human connection** through [deep canvassing](#) and empathetic listening.
2. **Personal storytelling** in which the canvasser authentically shares what is motivating them personally in this election (rather than parroting the usual, superficial b.s. partisan messaging pabulum).
3. **Highlighting the threat of Trump II**, helping voters overcome the “[Trump Amnesia](#)” that has stricken far too many Americans.
4. **Crediting voters for [Biden's progress](#)**, making *them* the true heroes of the story – creating a renewed sense of efficacy that makes them far more likely to vote again.

5. **Sharing a vision for 2025** and what is possible if we elect a governing majority that is on-the-record as ready to secure voting rights, protect abortion rights, invest in climate solutions, support working families, and [so much more](#).



Credit: Working Families Party

The Block And Build Strategy: We Choose Us

At a meta-level, our task is to engage voters in a deeper, non-candidate-centric theory of change: Voting for Biden is not actually about Biden.

As Black Voters Matter says: “It’s About Us.” As an elaboration on that, a lot of groups this year are using the phrase “We Choose Us.” In the analytical language of the movement, it’s a “Block and Build” strategy. We have to *block* MAGA fascism. And we have to *build* our own political power to make things better over time.

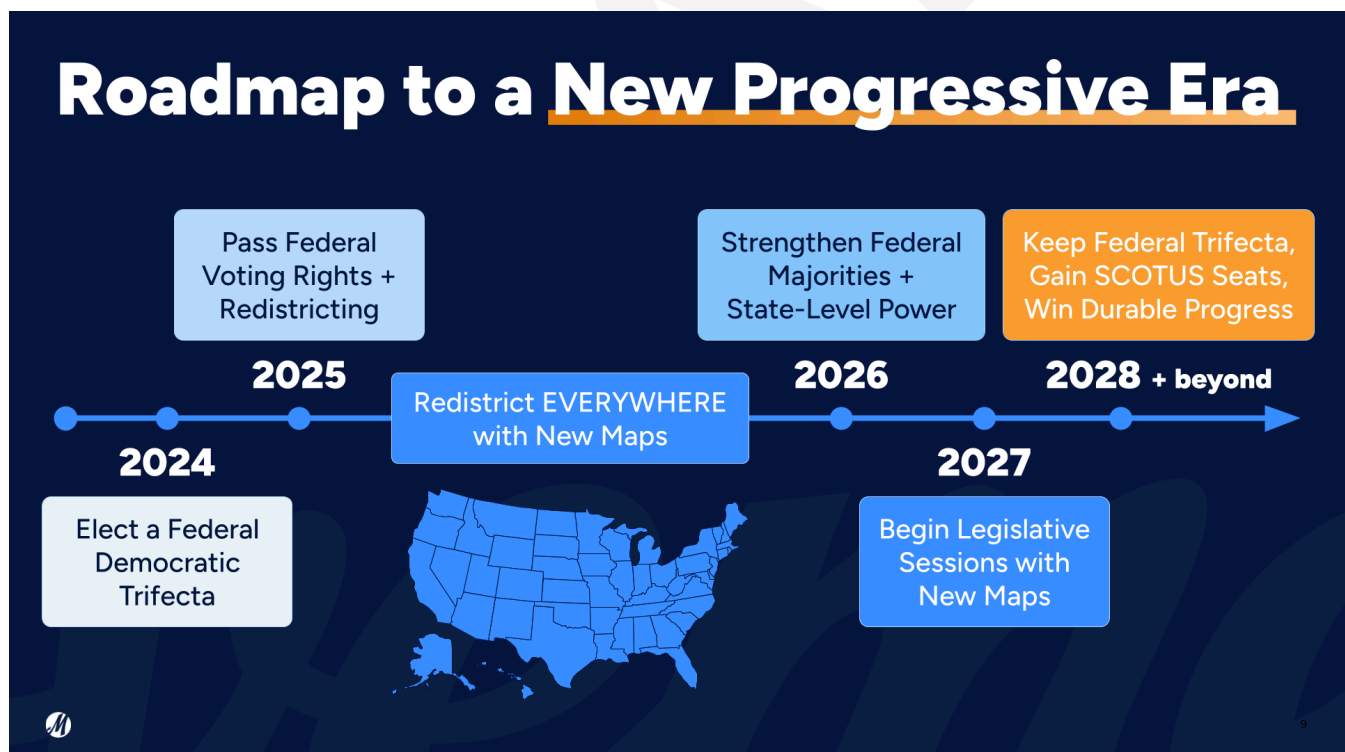
The ultimate goal is to reframe the election from voting for a candidate to voting to build the power of communities to have real clout in the political process.

ACT III: The Good Part

We Can Win and Have Nice Things

We can totally win this election, pass game-changing legislation, and build a Progressive Decade. We can still do that. I agree with most of what Democratic optimist [Simon Rosenberg](#) says: We do have a better candidate. We do have a better record to run on. We do have more potential voters. We have won the last three major election cycles (2018, 2020, 2022) and most of the odd-year ones as well. The Republican Party is in many ways a dumpster fire.

I would feel a lot better about our chances if our side had been able to raise another \$500 million six to twelve months ago to fully fund our efforts. But I'm hoping we can collectively shake loose a good chunk of that in the next few months and have enough to scrape by with a halfway decent field, digital, and culture operation. If we lean all the way in, we can do it. We still have a good chance to win the future.



If we elect a federal Democratic trifecta in 2024, it will give us the chance to pass major voting rights and redistricting legislation in 2025, opening the way for greater Democratic and progressive power for years.

2024 is an inflection point, not the end point.

Amidst all this talk of winning in November, it's important to remember something: This whole election is a means to a much greater end. We're running as fast as we can to catch this train, not because we love the train itself, but because we are inspired by where this train can take us. It will take time to get there, but if we catch this train in 2024, we will find ourselves back on track, en route to a 21st-century Progressive Era.

Why I Am *Genuinely Excited* About This Election

When I think about what it will take to get other people excited about this election, I ask myself the question: *What are the things that get me genuinely excited about this election?*

Why do I personally feel so, so, so strongly about it? Why am I feeling utterly compelled to spend my Saturday night right now, opting out of fun social activities, to write this long-ass note? :)

There are so many things about this that excite me...

These are a few of my favorite things!

On a personal level...

I get excited about feeling like swinging this election is the most important thing in the world that we could possibly be spending our time on. Nothing else I can possibly imagine comes remotely close to the impact this will have.

I get excited by the power of winning and knowing the difference that winning makes. Feeling proud for the rest of my life. Sharing that feeling with others. Knowing *we did that*. We saved the world in a major way. It's the most fulfilling feeling I can imagine.

I get excited about how close the election will be, and the fact that regular people like you and me can actually make the difference. Mind-boggling!

Swinging this election is the most important thing in the world that we could possibly be spending our time on.

I get excited about being part of an all-hands-on-deck effort. The feeling is addictive - a flow experience, better than drugs or endorphins.

I get excited by the puzzle and the challenge. I derive energy from the fear that we're going to lose. I derive creativity from the pressure of feeling like the underdog in a fight.

I get thrills from the strategy. I feel like I'm stretching my brain and giving it everything I've got – like “ultimate fighting” (mixed martial arts). Strategic organizing is, in the immortal words of Pelé, a *beautiful game*.



Georgia Youth Justice Coalition, Young People's Platform press conference

On a larger policy and dreamy aspirational level...

I get excited about winning *hundreds of billions* of desperately needed dollars for education, housing, health care, and all the good things people need to have dignified lives. All the things that we could pass with a Democratic trifecta in 2025.

I get excited about transitioning to renewable energy. I feel so hopeful seeing the graphs for solar and wind going up every year. When we had the narrowest of Democratic trifectas, we were able to pass the biggest climate and clean energy

funding we've ever seen. There is potential for [so much more](#) if we can win the House and hold the Senate in 2025 (sans Senators Manchin and Sinema).

I get excited about seeing more women, people of color, and LGBTQ people in elected and appointed leadership. The number of women and people of color in Congress has *doubled* in the past 20 years and Biden has appointed more Black women judges than all previous presidents *combined*. The difference this will make – on so many levels.

I get excited by seeing the Democratic party trending more progressive, and being less corrupted by corporate lobbyists. Led by Pramila Jayapal (who is a former community organizer with one of MVP's partner organizations), the Congressional Progressive Caucus is now the largest caucus in Congress and has a level of influence that would have been hard to imagine ten years ago. I sometimes hear people lament that the Democratic Party is becoming more conservative. Say what? To anyone who has watched closely, this couldn't be further from the truth.

I get excited by seeing policies we only dreamed of ten years ago gaining momentum and sometimes passing – from honoring gender identity to phasing out fossil fuels to canceling student debt. Obviously all of these policies are contested, imperfect, and facing backlash – as is the nature of policy in a divided and polarized country. But we've seen a sea change from just four years ago.

I get excited by seeing the most pro-labor president in modern history walking a picket line with striking workers in Michigan, passing laws and appointing staff who are pro-labor, and seeing new hope, energy, and success in the labor movement.

I get excited about the potential to pass major democracy-strengthening legislation that would make it *easy to vote anywhere*. Imagine that! It would also get rid of voting restrictions and gerrymandering everywhere in one fell swoop – holy smokes! And it would put a dent in the corruption of money in politics. Imagine for a moment how much better our politics would be with those three changes alone.

I get excited about family-supporting legislation that is on the table in 2025 for family medical leave and investing in care for our elderly, children, parents, and caregivers – making hundreds of millions of people's lives better.

Are you getting tired of hearing all this good stuff – or do you want more?

I get excited about replacing hundreds of Bush and Trump-appointed Federal judges. So excited. Within 10-15 years, if we can keep a Democratic trifecta at the federal level, we can win reasonable, moderate to liberal majorities on all of the circuit courts, appeals courts, and the Supreme Court. What a difference that would make.

I get excited about curtailing the power of mega-corporations and the ultra-wealthy with progressive taxation, and regulating international tax havens to make billionaires and giant corporations pay their fair share.

I get excited about rebalancing our relationship with the Middle East and being an honest broker for peace and security for all peoples in the region. Ditto for Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

I get excited – and this is kind of wonky – about modernizing our government and making it better, more user-friendly, and filled with talented public servants who care and want to earn back people's trust in our government.

I get excited about investing in planning ahead for climate resilience, pandemic preparedness, proactive public health, and emergency response.

I get excited about transforming our broken immigration system, carceral system, and mental health system in a way that is more rational and humane, and implementing common-sense gun laws to reduce the epidemic of gun violence.

I get excited about seriously addressing poverty and inequality and investing in the potential of every person – from universal pre-K to free college to job training, re-entry, drug treatment, and rehabilitation.

I get excited about transforming our culture and laws to respect people of color, immigrants, women, and LGBTQ people, and ensuring reproductive and bodily freedom – including trans rights and abortion access in every state.

I get excited about the U.S. becoming a more reliable global partner for progressive democracies everywhere, and a counterbalance to the rise of dictators and right-wing authoritarians.

I get excited about seeing the U.S. lead internationally towards a future of renewable energy and climate justice.

I get excited because the vast majority of Democrats now actually want these things. Elected Democrats will typically vote for them if they have the votes. This wasn't always true. But things are shifting. As the Republican party has gotten worse, the Democratic party has gotten better. For the most part, if we elect enough Democrats, we can actually have a lot of nice things. Not everything, but way more than we could have imagined under Clinton or Obama.

I get excited by reading all the little-known hopeful news in Jessica Craven's weekly Sunday [Extra Extra!](#) Newsletter which I read religiously to improve my mental health. Knowing all the good things will make your life better.



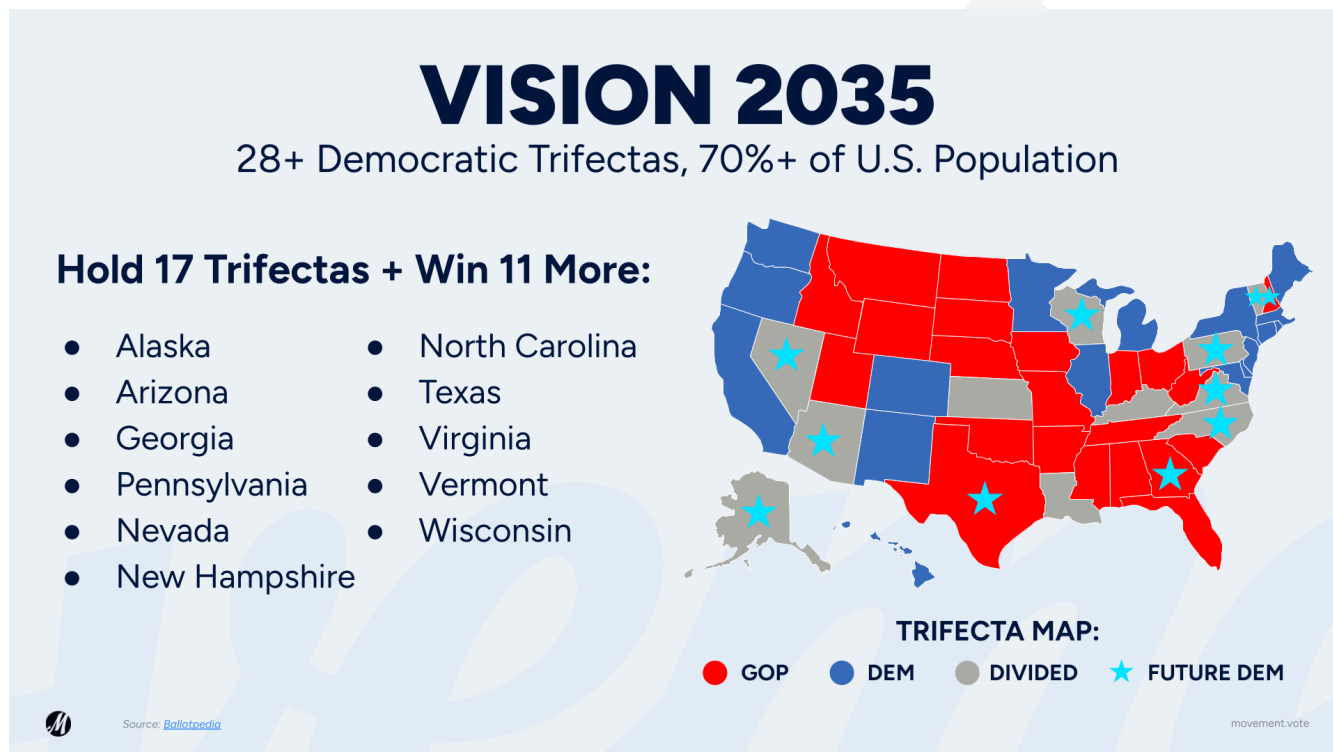
MVP partners flanking Wisconsin Gov. Evers (D) as he signs fair maps into law, ending 13 years of extreme GOP gerrymandering

Over the longer term...

I get excited about seeing the U.S. lead from a foundation of peace and diplomacy, steering humanity away from great powers conflict, and spending less money on weapons and more on human needs.

I get excited about building a permanent progressive governing majority over the next 10 years as the super-progressive Millennial and Gen-Z generations grow in the electorate.

I get excited about progressive governance at the local and state levels in more and more states - aiming to win Democratic trifectas in as many as 28 states over the next 10 years, including Texas, Georgia, Arizona, and North Carolina.



With sustained investment in local organizing and power building, we can secure 28+ Democratic state trifectas by 2035, covering over 70% of the U.S. population.

The right-wing has Project 2025. I get excited about what a progressive *Vision 2035* could look like. What if we could sustain a long-term Democratic trifecta at the federal level, win 28 state trifectas, and appoint a majority on the Supreme Court?

Imagine what we could do!

Does this vision excite you?

On a movement level...

I get excited because I actually think we can accomplish all of these things. We are on the road to success. Yes, we are facing a backlash. And obstacles. And bad luck (two

big wars in two years!). But I'm excited because I believe we're mostly on the right path. If we can make it over the next set of hurdles... If we can scale the winning strategies and solutions fast enough, we could get things to a much better place.

I deeply believe that re-electing the Biden-Harris team, winning a Democratic trifecta, and making progress at the state level will be a huge step toward winning that future. It isn't about the candidates at the top of the ticket. It's about the movement that all of us are building together and the progress we are making.

Our country is far from perfect. But we have a real chance to keep making it better. We're going to have to work hard for it over time: election by election, sacred interaction by sacred interaction, day by day.

And that is what is *really* exciting to me. This better world we want is worth fighting for with everything we've got. Elections are just one (really big) part of how we get there. 2024 is a giant inflection point. If we can survive Donald Trump in 2024, we have a truly amazing chance to turn a corner.

How can we do that?

On an organizing and human level...

I get excited about organizing millions of donors to fund movements and solutions at all levels to scale up the magic. I want to see us out-competing the right-wing MAGA cult and haters with love and compassion. The left is too often operating from a place of scarcity, fear, reaction, and anger instead of positive vision, true inclusion, and respect for all people.

"To sustain long-term movements, we must shift from cataloging what we're resisting to painting a desirable portrait of the world we seek."

– Anat Shenker-Osorio, ASO Communications

I get excited about changing the culture of the left to be more love-based, less judgemental, wiser, and more emotionally intelligent.

I get excited dreaming about all that we can do when we raise the resources. MVP currently helps move tens of millions of dollars a year. We could easily deploy ten or twenty times that and build a much stronger, deeper, healthier, more robust movement

to holistically transform our country and world. There is so much potential we haven't realized yet.

I get excited about dreaming toward that vision and seeing us make strides in that direction. I get excited because I believe we can figure out how to organize ten or twenty times as much money. [The money is out there](#). Americans donate \$500 billion a year. Raising an extra 2-3 billion dollars a year is less than 1% of it. We just need to get better at telling this story and educating people to donate. Let's help donors realize their dreams in more effective ways. This is doable.

I get really excited about welcoming new people into the movement - new donors and volunteers - and I get excited seeing people grow and become more skillful, more confident, more creative, more collaborative, and feeling part of a larger community.

I get excited imagining how we can *realistically* get to a better place. And I get excited when other people see it too. I feel like that is our job: visioning the realistic better world we want to see and organizing toward it – step by step, phone call by phone call, Zoom by Zoom, house party by house party, door knock by door knock, coffee meeting by coffee meeting, follow-up email by follow-up email.

I get excited meeting so many people who tell me that this “work” has transformed their life, brought them happiness, hope, beauty, friendship, and purpose. I get excited thinking that many more people will find their joy in this movement alongside us.

What we need more than anything now are *more people* who find see themselves in this great effort *which is the most effective way* to make a difference and create the world we want to see.

Please consider this an invitation to join with us and find your calling in this beautiful work – and specifically right now in this history-deciding 2024 campaign.

ACT IV. Now What?

Putting It All Together

OK, so coming back to 2024... A quick recap:

1. We're in danger of losing by 10,000 votes.
2. To win by 10,000 votes we have to repair our big-tent Biden 2020 coalition.
3. To win back disaffected Biden voters, we need to engage them through an emotionally intelligent, two-stage process.
4. If we win, we can have a 21st Century Progressive Era.

How do we do it?

Three words:

Support Local Organizing

We've written at length about how, given the razor-thin margins, local voter organizing is the [single most effective way](#) to win this year.

In a sentence: Undecided voters listen to people they know, relate to, and trust.

Here's a 2-minute video explainer on the power of local trusted messengers:



This is why the core solution to *all* of our thorniest problems in this election, and the key to winning by 10,000 votes instead of losing by 10,000 votes – surprise, surprise – will be investing in the *largest [relational, human-to-human voter contact effort](#) in history*.

We need to invest in a hybrid of micro-targeting, tailored messaging, deep canvassing, and relational organizing, at a level of scale and sophistication that has never happened before. This is cutting-edge stuff. It is going to require that we invest like never before.

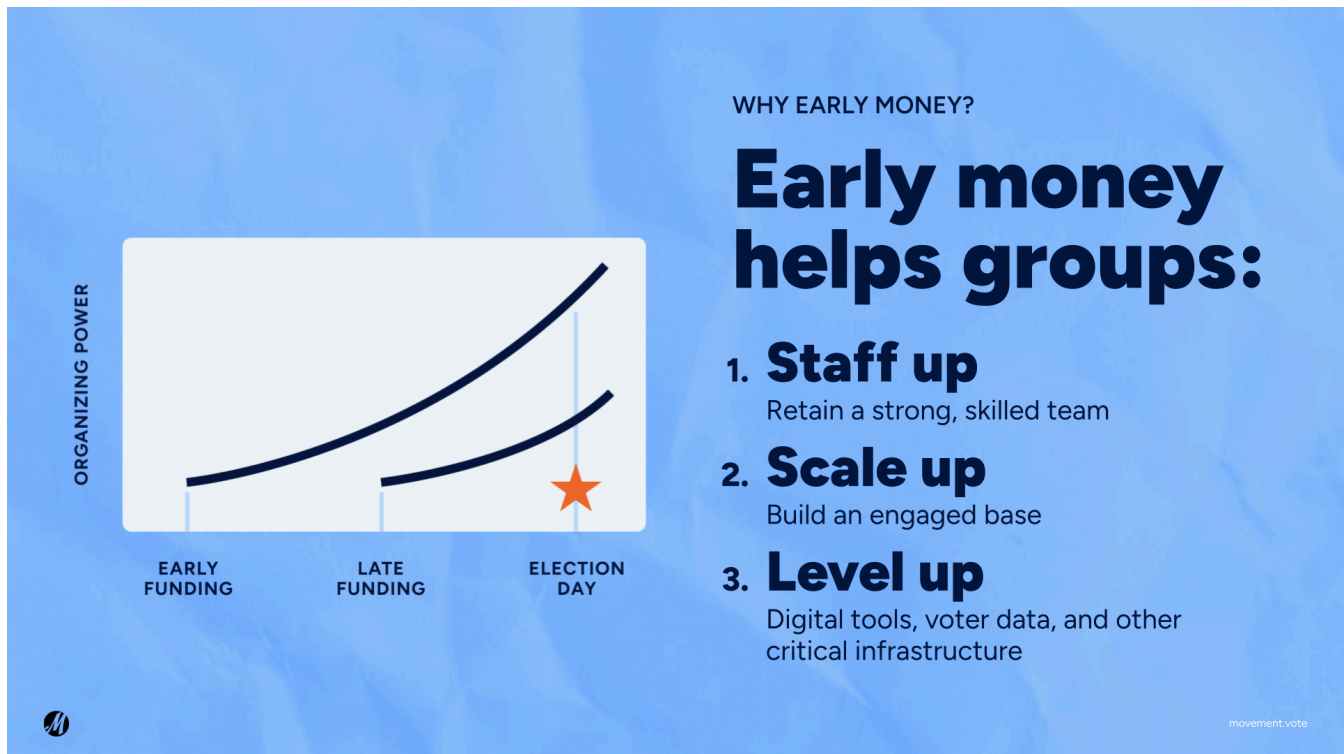
Ok, Let's Talk About Money!

What's The Money Situation?

As you read in Act I, the basic report we're getting from national groups, local groups, and funding intermediaries is: "it's not raining like in 2020." especially in terms of c4 and PAC funding (the dollars with the [most political impact](#)).

Under these circumstances, MVP feels a huge responsibility to the larger field. We are trying to redistribute funds as fast as we get them, not only to support MVP's hundreds of local partners but also our national peer organizations, and trying to help build new donor organizing efforts to expand the pie together.

Overall, as far as money goes, it's safe to say the field is still *several hundreds of millions* of dollars short, especially on the c4 and PAC side.



Early money helps voter engagement groups staff up, scale up, and level up, so they can maximize voter turnout.

When Should We Give?

This will not surprise you: The earlier we give, the greater our impact.

Having said that...

Let's Not Overcorrect: Late Money Is Helpful Too!

I'm increasingly worried that we may have overcorrected and made some donors think that early money is the *only* good money. I heard a volunteer recently tell a donor that "after July, donations really aren't that useful." I had to correct him. Yes, early money is definitely much better. But organizations have come to depend on and budget around getting a lot of late money because it has been such a consistent trend for so long. So if there isn't tons of late money this year, in addition to the early money, a lot of organizations' will have to suddenly scale back their GOTV! Voter engagement work is year round – all year every year. Late money is still *very* useful, even though it's not nearly as optimal as early.



Unidos MN, speaking at their “Fund Our Futures” climate rally in 2023.

We’re Also Extremely Worried About 2025

In addition to being worried about 2024, our partners are also extremely worried about 2025. Whether we win or lose, most groups’ funding in 2025 is going to fall off a cliff.

This is likely to cause some groups to be more cautious about hiring and going all out in 2024. Which is obviously bad. The number one thing donors can do to address this is to *make your 2025 pledges now*. Put them in writing! Even better: If possible, give your 2025 gifts in 2024 so that groups have them in the bank and don’t have to wonder whether the gift is really coming. This will make them feel more confident to spend aggressively to win in 2024.

OK, I Want to Get Involved!

My #1 reason for writing this memo is to persuade you to get involved. This obviously starts with donating and making your *biggest investment ever* if you haven’t already. MVP is happy to serve as an honest broker and refer you to other excellent national organizations, and/or to distribute your donation directly to local organizations – there are so many good options! We just want to help you invest in a way that you feel good about.



MVP Western Mass Volunteer Hub hosting their “Dance for Democracy” fundraiser

Co-host a House Party or Zoom Party!

No prior experience needed – and it’s OK to be nervous! MVP provides support and makes it easy to co-host an educational and hope-inspiring house party in your area or via Zoom (Zoom parties are actually easier and tend to raise more money). Just fill out MVP’s volunteer [intake form](#), and we’ll help you take it from there.

The #1 feedback we get from house parties is “This gave me hope!” which is why so many MVP house parties lead to other house parties. We’re also happy to help informal groups who want to raise funds for specific groups in specific states. Or people who want to do benefit concerts, art sales, dance-a-thons... we can even do a special “Zoom Salon” with your extended family.

What do you want to do? Let’s do it!

Major Donor Giving Options – Beyond MVP

MVP is taking seriously our responsibility as honest brokers for the field as a whole. Here are two helpful new resources for major donors that go beyond MVP’s core competency of supporting local and state organizations:

Optimizing State-Based Funding

MVP is collaborating on a big partnership with Democracy Alliance, Way to Win, and Committee on States to create a new utility for the field as a whole: **BFD (Building for Democracy)**. As Joe Biden [would say](#), it's a "BFD" - hahaha! BFD is working in alignment with all of the state donor alliances to do real-time budget gaps tracking and assessment of the greatest needs in each state. With our combined resources, BFD has streamlined the near-impossible process for donors of figuring out where funds are most needed at the state level.

Essentially, BFD is an effort to curate and reconcile the top recommendations from all of our networks to give donors the most up-to-date advice on where funding most needs to go. (Yes, MVP also does this for the local organizing groups we fund, but BFD has a broader lens that includes state-based research, comms, mail, digital and coordination efforts that all of us benefit from – and will be critical to winning in November!).

As funders, we always love it when the groups we fund collaborate. So we figured it was high time we should join forces and collaborate too! BFD is a huge innovation that we are offering as a service to the field. We highly recommend that major donors and donor advisors consult with BFD on state-level giving in the final stretch. Just email the BFD team at: development@buildingfordemocracy.com.

National Groups We Recommend

MVP focuses primarily on investing in locally-based groups, but we are also developing a National Recommendations resource with multiple categories of national organizations to refer donors to – from youth to Black-led groups, to digital and culture-based strategies, to emerging experimental strategies, to mainstream organizations that are closer to the Democratic party.

MVP has vetted and funded more than 60 national organizations that we would be happy to recommend and make introductions to. And we have also identified other honest brokers in areas that we don't normally fund (such as disinformation, wonky insidery election administration, civic tech, and related areas). Here is an early working version of MVP's [national recommendations](#). We'd be happy to share what we know, groups' plans, make connections, compare notes, etc.

At the end of the day, for folks working in the broader democracy and political field, MVP sees it as our collective responsibility to help make sure the whole field gets funded at the proper levels necessary to win. MVP isn't for everyone so we pride

ourselves on also being good match-makers for donors with other interests. As donor advisors, we should meet donors where they're at and refer them to fund the best organizations that most deeply speak to them. Ultimately, we need more donors to fall in love with organizations where they want to make long-term commitments.

Have a Brave Conversation (or two)

Do you know someone who seems disillusioned, disengaged from the political process and/or so angry at Biden that they fall into the 1-4 range on the Spectrum of Support diagram? Are there young people in your life who are distraught about the war in Gaza? Talk with them! Share this piece with them if helpful! And then be open-minded, listen carefully to their concerns, ask questions to flesh out their experience and worldview, stay away from the "for or against Biden" binary.

Once you truly understand where they are coming from, dig deeper to understand their theory of change. What do they believe is needed to make things better? What do they think can realistically be done and what are they doing or thinking of doing?

Then, if they are willing to hear you out, share your worldview and theory of change with them and how it might connect with theirs. See if you can find common ground. Explore whether there is a way you could support each other to advance *both* of your theories of change in a way that is mutually beneficial. If that conversation goes well, ask what it would look like to have a similar conversation with their circle of friends.

Do you have creative ideas?

Winning is going to take a lot of people doing a lot of things that all add up. What would it take for you to throw down on this election over the next 4 months?

At MVP we like to encourage people's creative ideas. Often, people have ideas that someone else is already doing. Or that don't make sense. But some ideas are amazing. Please *do* [let us know](#) if you have creative ideas. Sometimes we can help.

We recently helped a new project, [MoveIndigo](#), which is trying to get Democrats to move to battleground states and districts. We're partnering with Movement Labs to curate an [ideas contest](#) to engage voters digitally. And we're starting to work with cultural organizers to curate a [sandbox](#) of creative messaging for influencers and others to test. We need all the creativity and entrepreneurial energy we can get this election cycle.

But more than anything, we need to double down on what we know will work: humans talking with humans in battleground states. And the #1 thing we need people to do is funnel money into the most effective voter engagement and persuasion programs.



Poder Latinx in Arizona, phone banking new voters

Want to help Get Out The Vote directly?

Beyond money, if you want to get involved as a volunteer, here are a few of our partner organizations that have particularly good volunteer programs that we recommend:

Our top recommendation, [Seed the Vote](#), is an MVP partner (and grantee) that is the best at deploying volunteers to phone bank and canvas in-person with locally-based grassroots organizations — most of which are MVP grantees!

A few of the other partners we most recommend for volunteer phone banking:

- [People's Action](#) is extremely adept at onboarding and absorbing new volunteers from around the country. They run an excellent deep-canvassing phone banking program, as well as text banking and door-knocking.

- [Showing Up for Racial Justice \(SURJ\)](#) runs an excellent phone bank program geared toward white people talking to other white people about why we need to vote for Democrats, as a key step toward advancing racial and economic justice.
- [Swing Left](#) plugs volunteers into battleground candidate campaigns across the country. Their team maintains a one-stop shop of strategic voter contact opportunities — in-person and virtual — where your time will go furthest to protect and expand Democratic majorities.
- [Working Families Party](#) is building a progressive political apparatus that can truly shift the center of political gravity in this country. They offer high-impact opportunities to phone bank, text bank, canvass in-person, and more, for key elections nationally.

Let's Do this!

So clear your calendar – or at least set aside some time!

Step One: Share this Bat Signal with your networks, spark a conversation, and let's save the world together. Sharing this will help you find a friend or two to do this with you... we don't have to save the world alone!

Thank you for reading, for everything you do, and thank you in advance for doing your part to save our country with us. In the section below, **ACT V**, you can add your thoughts, intentions and commitments. If you've read this far, you are clearly *extremely* committed (hahaha!) so we expect to hear great things from you!

Seriously, thank you.

Let's win!

Billy

ACT V: Your Turn!

What are some intentions or commitments you want to share in terms of time, money, activities, or outreach to help save our country over the next four months? Feel free to

[share your thoughts](#) (and name or initials if you're willing) in this crowdsourced document!

I plan to keep following up with friends I've told about MVP, to tune in and find out how/if I can inspire them to think more ethically/strategically about their own efforts and contributions. I'm inviting people to great online MVP house parties, and am going to an in-person one today! I've mostly emptied my donor-advised fund, and am sending PAC contributions to so many of the great events I have invites to. Being a big donor helps me know I'm doing what I can, instead of hanging on to more \$\$ than I need—and that I can turn off the angst. I'm not a political whiz, so I'm glad MVP is! I want to do my FULL part!

—Kara Tennis

I commit to inviting friends, family, and contacts who are “on the fence” about politics and giving money to make the leap this year, asking for their participation through donations and even hosting events. I commit to canvassing in swing states from now until the election. I commit to continuing to give to organizations dedicated to strengthening our democracy. I commit to taking bold steps forward, even when I'm scared or feel out of my depth. I commit to being inspired by the everyday Americans who've fought to make our country stronger and our people more free.

— Vaughan M.

Together with my friends and comrades-in-arms, we aim to raise more than \$100,000 for MVP, write letters and postcards to voters in battleground states, and knock doors somewhere between every other weekend and every weekend, in Pennsylvania and in the New York congressional districts flipped by Republicans in 2022. The threat from Trump and MAGA Republicans is very real, and it is time for all of us to get to work to protect democracy. The work is long, and the day is short. I hope you join us.

— Saul Austerlitz

I'm going to host a high school/college student house party with MVP's help! My friend has two sons, one age 24 and the other 18. I'm going to ask them what it would take to get their friends to show up to the party, then I'm going to do what they tell me. I'll step back as host to let them discuss the issues salient to their generation and motivate each other to vote.

– Anne Kiehl Friedman

Billy asked me to share some of the places I am giving outside of MVP. I love MVP but I have my own particular thoughts about what is effective and a fit for me right now. I will be giving in the six figures across: J Street Pac, (I am on the National Finance Board and happy to discuss with anyone why J Street); Environmental Voter Project; Down Ballot Climate Fund (Major donors only); Climate Cabinet (very similar to above, but designed for donors of all sizes); Guides.vote (Thanks to Billy for this intro); Party (Wisconsin State D Party) and Candidates (Red to Blue List) Giving. (Yes, I know, it is heterodox vis a vis MVP to give to candidates instead of groups. :).

– David Mendels

[Add yours here!](#)

Bat Signal 3 was a collaborative effort, written primarily by Billy Wimsatt and co-written by Zo Tobi with editing and contributions by Susan Adelman, Abbas Alawieh, Reema Ahmad, John Anner, Haley Bash, Ludovic Blain, Dana Brooks, Regina Clemente, Wendy Chavkin, Rebecca Ennen, Bernie Fischlowitz-Roberts, AK Friedman, Rachel Gordon, Betty Herschman, Rachel Hill, Helena Huang, Steve Hughes, Ulysses Lateiner, Brandon Klugman, Braeden Lentz, Paul Lipke, Margery Loeb, David Mendels, Janet Nahirny, Vaughn M, Micky McKinley, Tom Mendelsohn, Hallie Montoya Tansey, Ken Olum, Larry Ottinger, Talya Stagg, Molly Stranahan, Trish Welte, Sarah Williams, Irene Yen, and many other MVP staff, volunteers, allies, and supporters – though Billy takes full responsibility for its final content :)