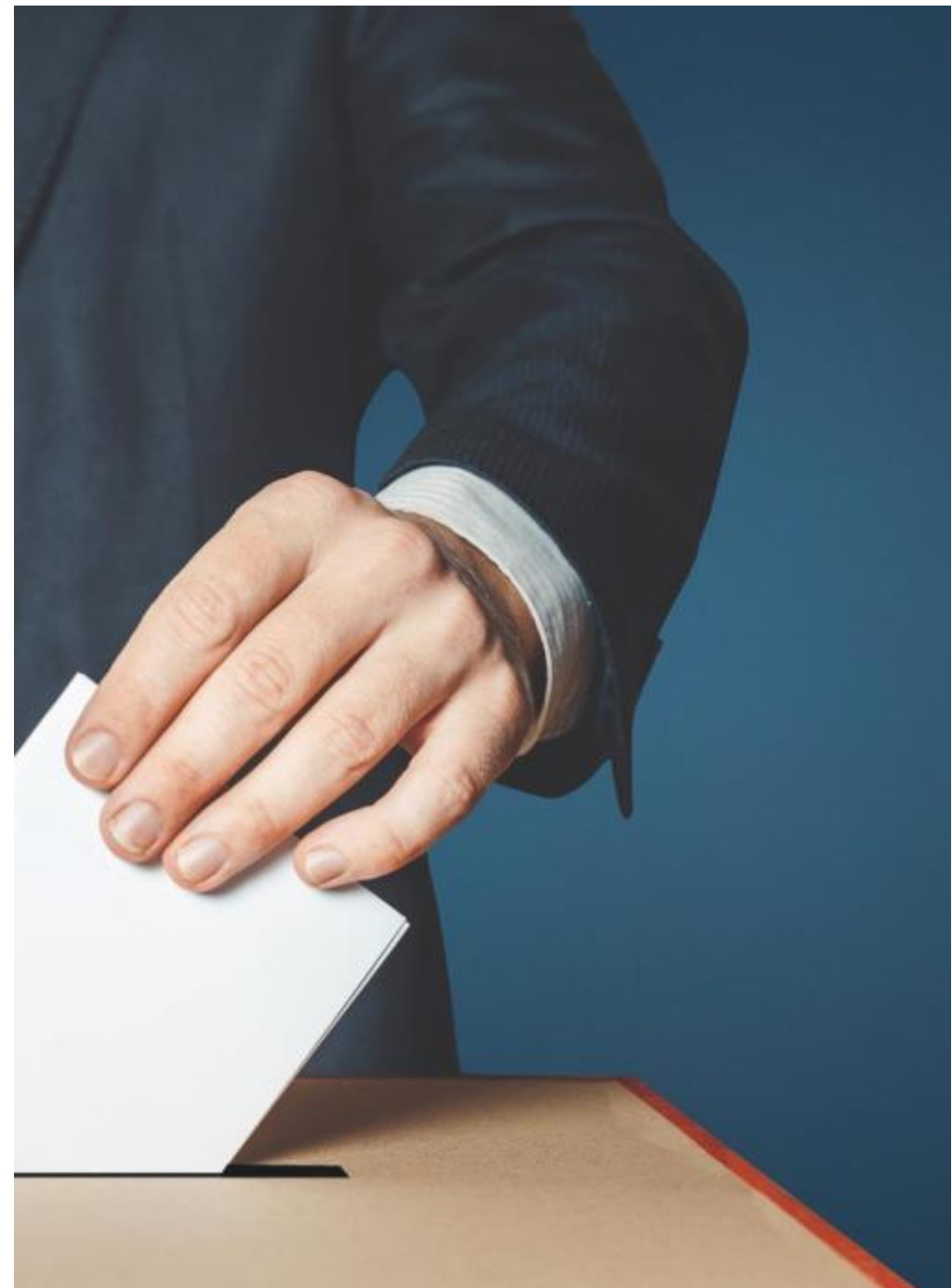# MASA Workshop

School Tax Elections:
Planning for Success in the New Normal

GOTV

Don E. Lifto, Ph.D.
School Election Strategies

Laws, Policies and Good Judgement

- Seek legal counsel to determine what the District is authorized to do and where GOTV efforts potentially "cross the line" in terms of advocacy (e.g., auto dialers or use Robo calls)

- Review key District policies such as data privacy, use of school buildings and grounds, use of staff mailboxes and email

- In most states the "litmus test" relates to whether or not expending public funds is paying for advocacy efforts as contrasted to information efforts (campaign work by school board and staff need to be *"on their time…on their dime"*)
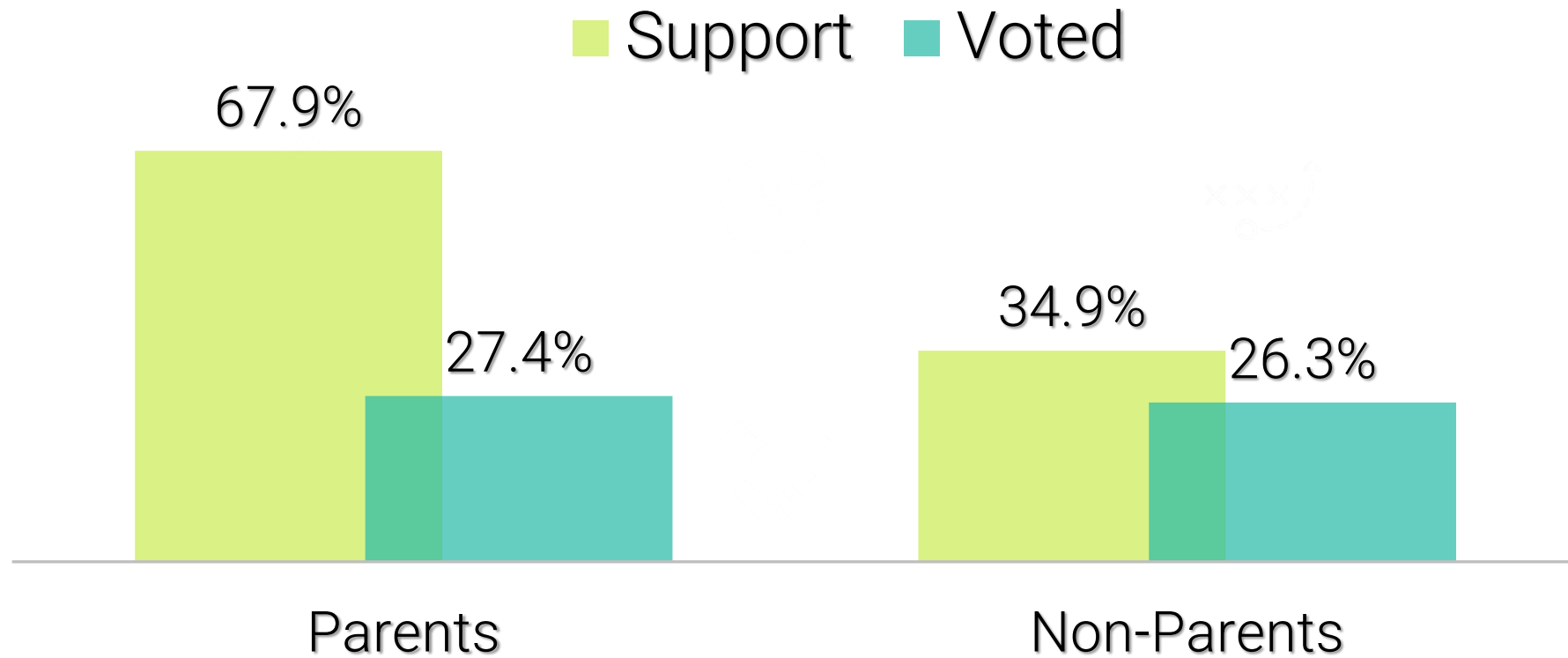
How Important is GOTV?

- To be part of Paul Wellstone "grassroots" politics meant that volunteers were expected to make three commitments:
  - Volunteer one day a week
  - Write a check to the campaign
  - Take Election Day off from work to help with GOTV (5000 door knockers on Election Day in last Senate race)
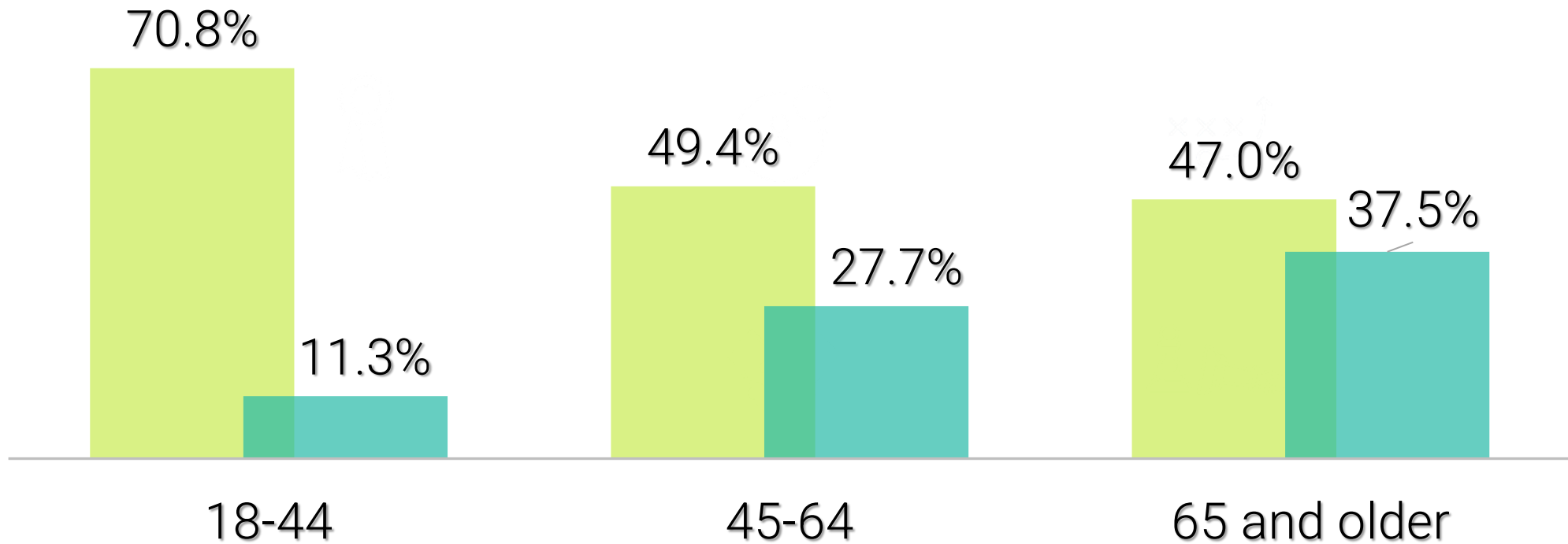
GOTV Failure
Juxtaposition of Support vs. Turnout

Support   Voted

67.9%
27.4%

34.9%
26.3%

Parents   Non-Parents

GOTV Failure
Juxtaposition of Support vs. Turnout *cont.*

Support Voted

Age group	Support	Voted
18-44	70.8%	11.3%
45-64	49.4%	27.7%
65 and older	47.0%	37.5%

GOTV
Power of Contact

Voted Did not vote

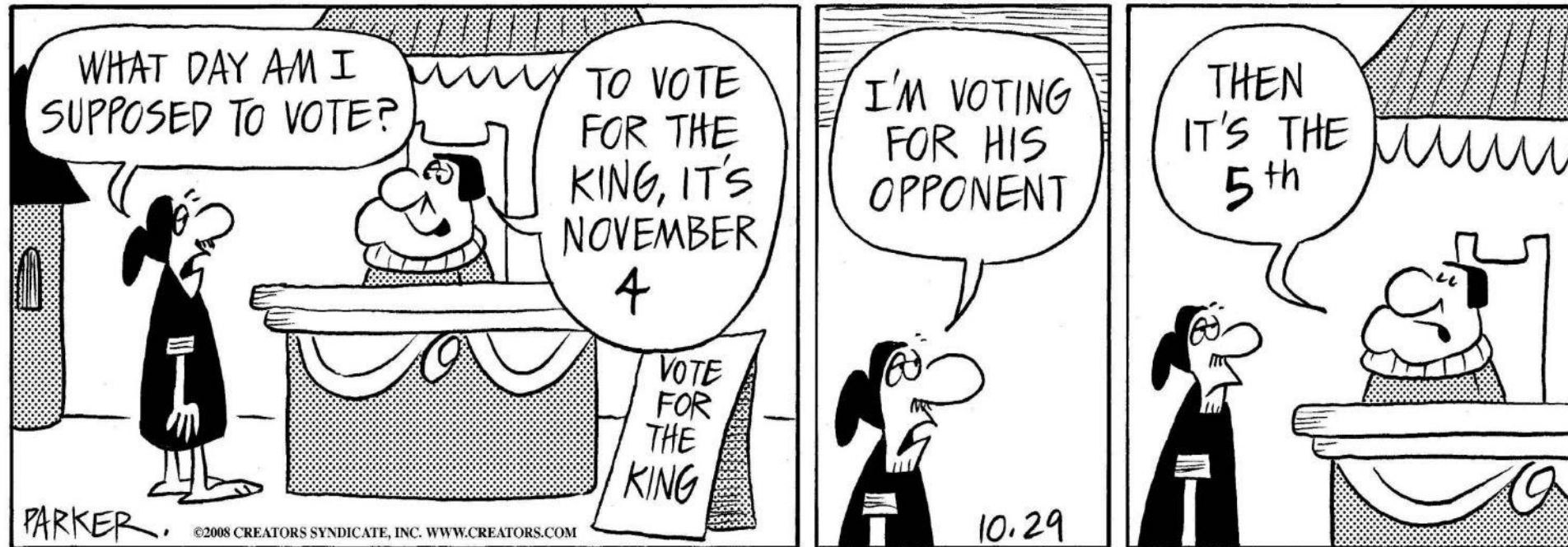|	No contact made	Yes	Undecided	No	Assumed Yes	Material left
Voted	34.2%	60.7%	52.1%	59.8%	39.6%	56.5%
Did not vote	65.8%	39.3%	47.9%	40.2%	60.4%	43.5%
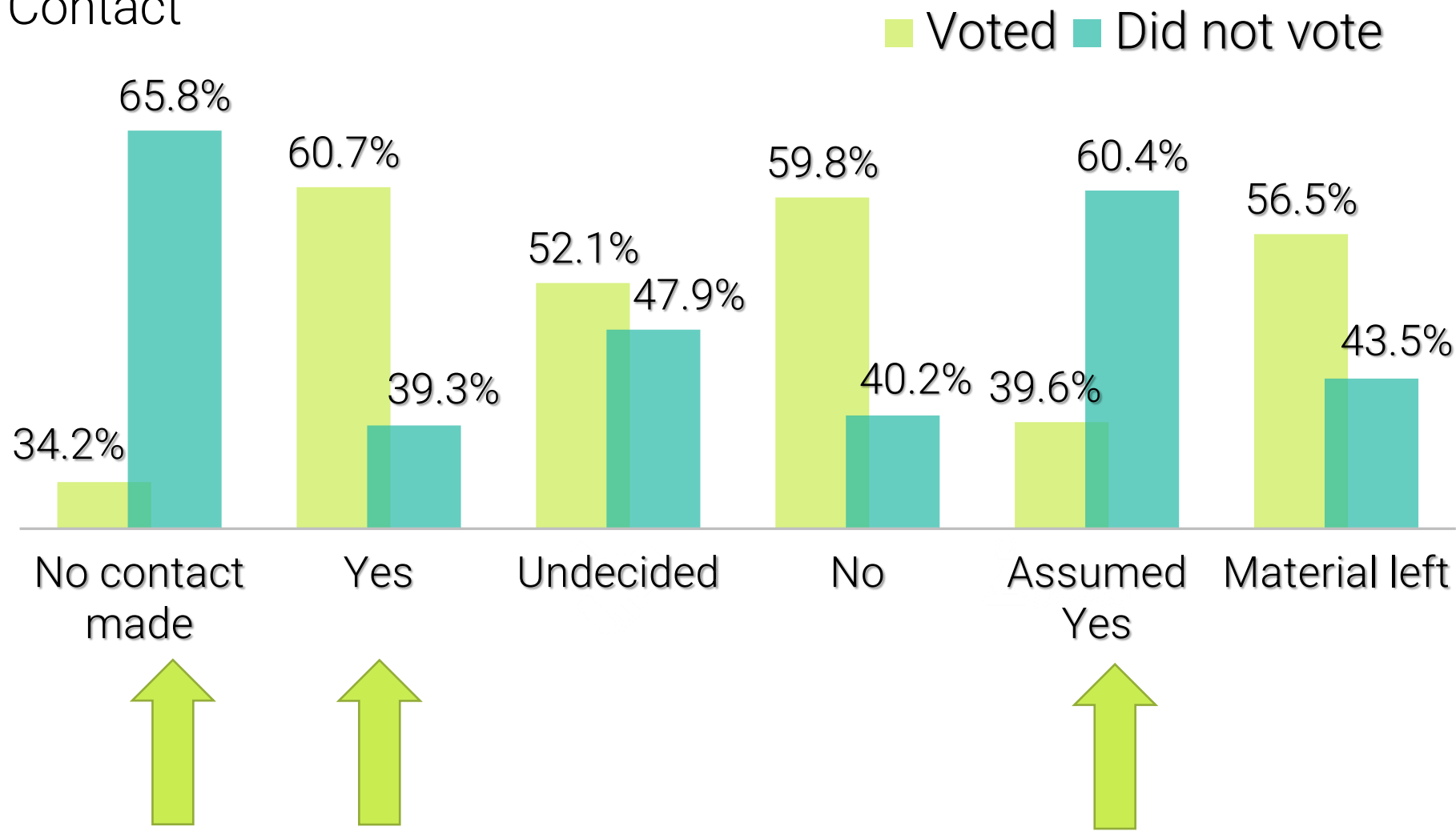
Executing Successful GOTV
Option 1... Cheat Like the Wizard of Id!

Executing Successful GOTV *cont.*
More than One Way to Cheat!

Executing Successful GOTV
Option 2... Research and Best Practice

Key Components of Successful GOTV

Figure out how many folks are going to vote	Figure out how many "yes" voters you need to win based on turnout estimate	Canvass (call, door knock, website, social media) registered voters until you find enough "yes" voters to win plus a safe margin (130%)
Plan and execute GOTV strategies that work, mobilizing "yes" voters identified by canvassing committee to maximize turnout	Demobilize likely "no" voters" into nonvoters (cognitive dissonance)	

How Many "Yes" Votes Needed to Win: Timing Matters!

Operating Referendum Results for New Prague Area Public Schools

Year Held	Net $/P.U.	Number of Years	Pass or Fail	# Yes Votes	# No Votes	Total Votes
1995	$367.41	5	Pass	1569	1167	2736
2000	$415.00	5	Pass	3774	2140	5914
2002	$550.00	10	Fail	2196	3627	5823
2003	$453.00	4	Pass	2190	1527	3717
2003	$145.00	4	Fail	1822	1888	3710
2007	$757.00	5	Pass	2413	1942	4355
2011	$857.00	5	Pass	1829	1334	3163

Source: Schoolfinances.com

GOTV and Estimating Voter Turnout: Art.

Art relates to considering
the unique na...
particular elect...
context within ...   and electorate
be execu...   ...osition

Groups Typically in your GOTV Audience
(But, Remember Not One Size Fits All)
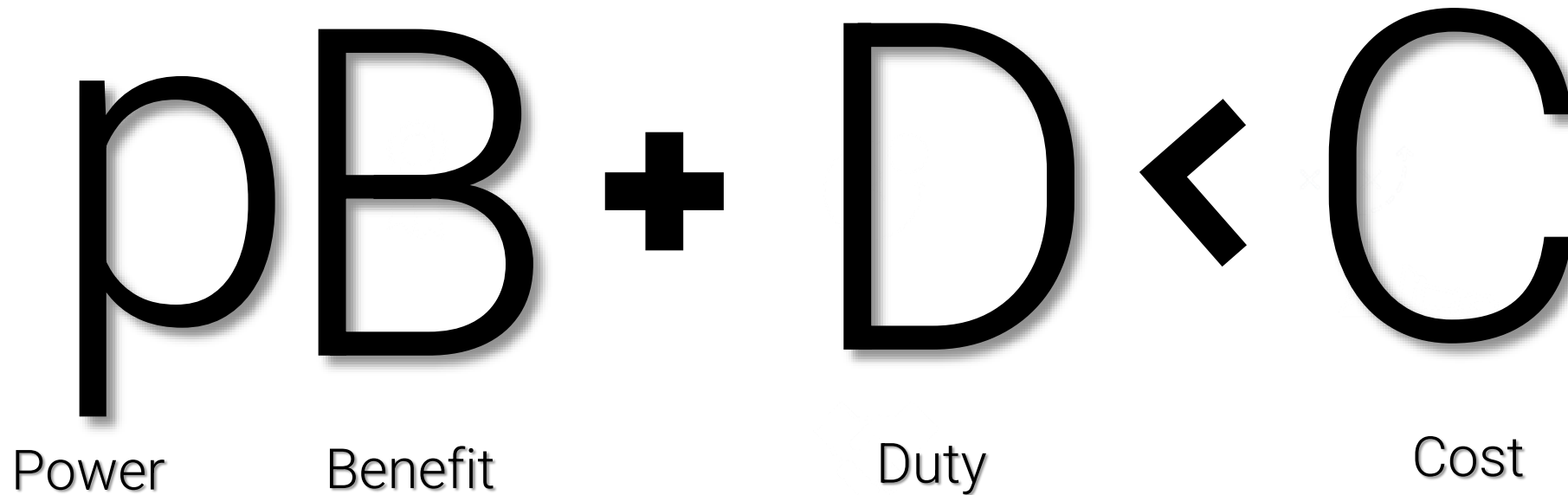
- Identified supporters based on target structure
  - Survey results
  - Canvassing
  - Past voting records
  - Predictive databases (VAN)
  - Past supporter lists

So once you have the data
and voter targets, then what?

Step 1: Develop Core GOTV Message and Sub-Messages

$$pB + D < C$$

Power   Benefit   Duty   Cost

GOTV Core Message: **Power**
perceived <u>Power</u> of each vote

$$pB + D < C$$

"We are expecting a very close election and your vote is critical."

Every Vote is Vital to Our Success!

Belle Plaine Herald
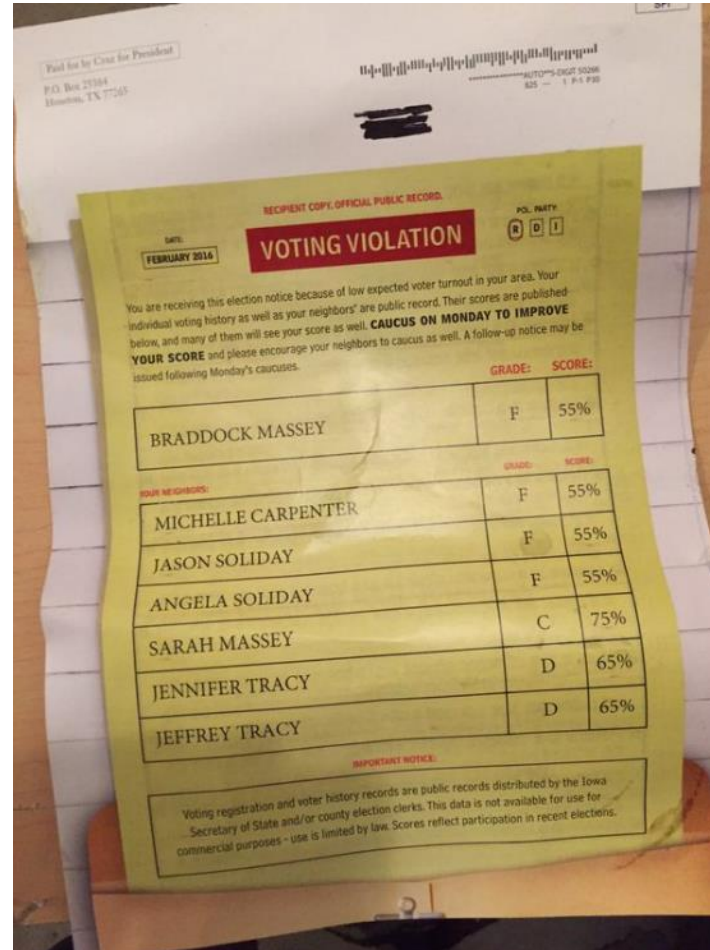
BELLE PLAINE, MINNESOTA, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2004

Recount Set for Thursday
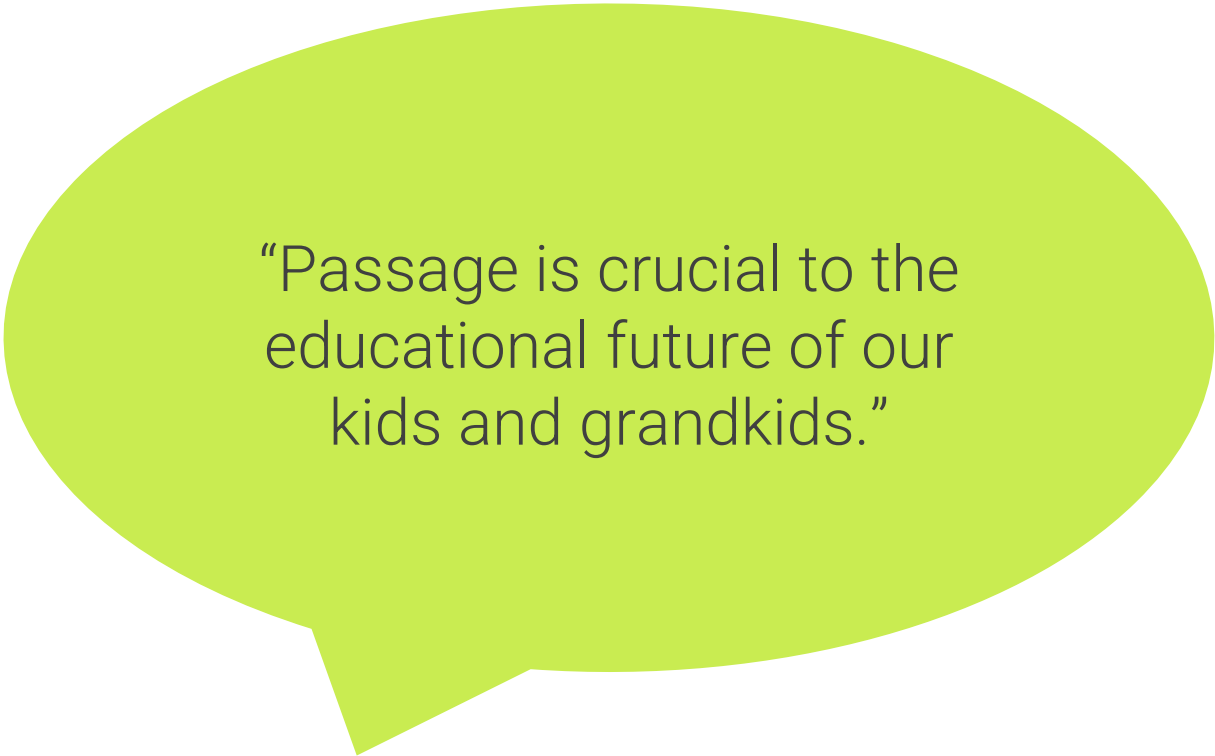
868 "Yes" – 868 "No"

(No Scrabble in School Referenda!)

Speaking of the Power of Each Vote...

GOTV Core Message: Duty
person's sense of civic Duty or gratification

pB + D < C

"We all have a responsibility as community members to do our part to support our kids."

Source: *Riker and Ordeshook*

GOTV Core Message: **Cost**
perceived <u>Cost</u> of voting "yes"

$$pB + D < C$$

"The investment in our kids and community will cost only pennies a day."

Source: *Riker and Ordeshook*

pB + D < C

Find "yes" votes by making a strong case that the importance of each vote, the benefit to students and civic duty to support kids and schools is greater than the cost

Final Core Message

"As parents and members of this community, we need to strengthen teaching and learning and make this happen for our kids. Now is the time to invest in our schools and children. The cost is modest, and our kids don't get a second chance. Every vote is vital to our success and we thank you for your support."

Source: *Riker and Ordeshook*

Success with GOTV: What Does the Research Say?

- Yale Civic Engagement Project
    - Researchers Donald Green and Alan Gerber
    - GOTV research in federal, state, and municipal elections from 1998 to present
    - Partisan, civic-engagement and issues-based elections
    - Randomized, control group experiments
    - Focus is on how different interventions mobilize voters and the cost-effectiveness of these interventions

One Additional Vote in Ballot Box for each...

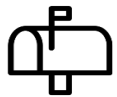**16** door-to-door contacts

36 volunteer phone contacts

0.1-3.8% increase with festivals, rallies and seminars

189 reached with leaflets

282

no detectable effect

312 text contacts

256 social prime

Door-to-Door Canvassing

- Considered the "gold standard" in GOTV mobilization (1/16)
- Personal and **authentic** contacts work best
- Influences other voters in household indirectly
- Logistics and training important
- Time and labor intensive (Gerber and Green estimate 6 – 8 households per hour of door-to-door canvassing)
- Targeted knocks more effective than blanket
- GIS mapping supports door-to-door work

Voter Targets Mapped in 5Maps
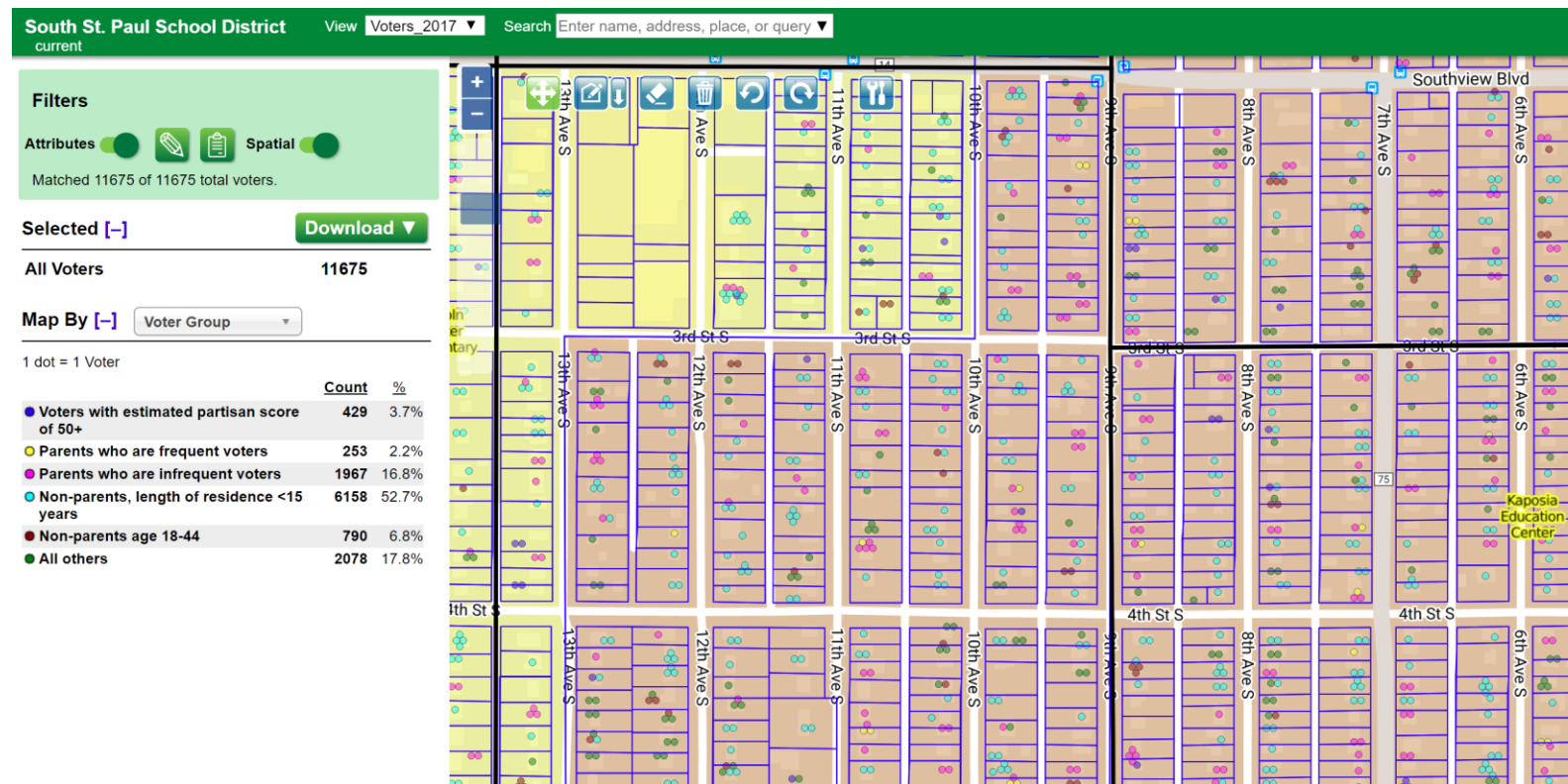
Phoning

- More effective if **authentic** connection established with voter (1/36)
- Live by professional phone bank are usually less effective (1/106)
- Calls are more effective the closer they are to Election Day
- Trained, enthusiastic volunteers produce better results
- Collecting cell phone numbers allows for instant text messaging
- Robo/auto dialer calls (talk to your lawyer!)

Leafleting

- 4 C's (1/189) – 4 C's (clear, concise, compelling, and consistent)
- Links to more detail
- Faster than door-to-door conversations
- Door hangers produce small but statistically significant benefit
- Include polling place for larger districts
- Include information about ballot

Make Local Schools Your First Vote...

You Will Find Measure H Near The End Of Your Ballot.
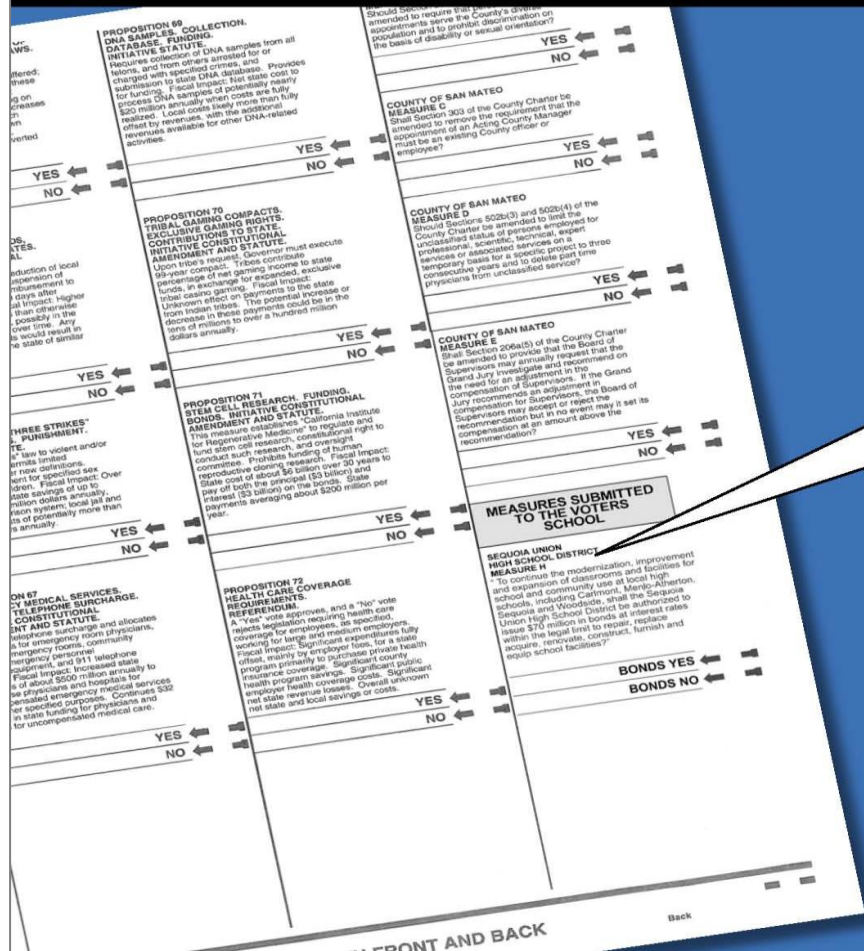
SEQUOIA UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT MEASURE H
" To continue the modernization, improvement and expansion of classrooms and facilities for school and community use at local high schools, including Carlmont, Menlo-Atherton, Sequoia and Woodside, shall the Sequoia Union High School District be authorized to issue $70 million in bonds at interest rates within the legal limit to repair, replace acquire, renovate, construct, furnish and equip school facilities?"

BONDS YES ◄
BONDS NO ◄

The Mercury News
Monday, October 11, 2004

"Sequoia has spent money from 1996 and 2001 bond issues responsibly, but aging campuses still need work. This measure won't increase the tax rate, but merely extend the current tax."

San Mateo County Times
Thursday, October 7, 2004

"Taxpayers in the Sequoia Union High School District will have the opportunity to get a significant bang for their buck in the Nov. 2 election."

Door Hanger Example

Direct Mail

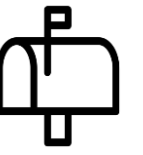- Refine lists so that only one piece goes to a household (1/282)
- Opportunity to differentiate message to target audience
- Mailings have a secondary benefit of influencing other registered voters in household
- Good alternative for campaigns that do not have the human resources to do door-to-door canvassing or leafleting
- Again... the 4 C's (clear, concise, compelling and consistent)

Every __Yes__ Vote for Measure H Is an Investment in The Future of Our Local High Schools.

Measure H will raise the funds needed to:

✔ *Build new classrooms to avoid overcrowding*

✔ *Complete the upgrading of water, gas, sewer, electrical, communications and safety systems*

✔ *Install energy-saving solar power*

✔ *Update the computer and network systems serving all our students and more…*

FOR MORE DETAILS, CHECK OUT
www.AboutMeasureH.com

Measure H __Will Not__ Increase Your Tax Rate.

YOUR POLLING PLACE IS:

Vote for Schools First on November 2nd! Vote __Yes__ on Measure H.

YES ON H
SUPPORT OUR LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS
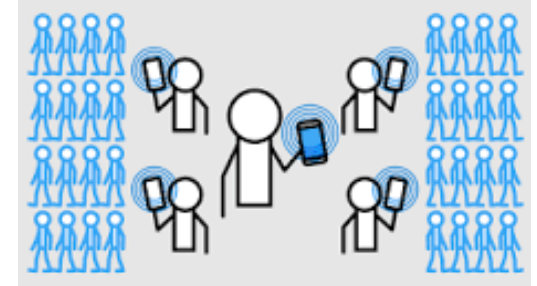816 Bradford Street
Redwood City, CA 94063

Measure H will help:
• Carlmont High School
• Menlo-Atherton High School
• Sequoia High School
• Woodside High School
All serving the
Sequoia Union High School District

Email

- Email – no detectable effect
    - Create sense of urgency (e.g., Happening Now)
    - Create interest by asking question (e.g., Cut Schools or Invest?)
    - Click through rates in GOTV experiments – 26% to 62% - use subject line effectively to improve click through rates (Stand with Our Schools Today)
    - Short, bulleted points with links to more detail (best if under 50 characters)
    - Impact of E-mail on GOTV more effective if authentic (person's name)
    - Graphics and HTML compatible e-mail provides more compelling message
    - Viral email can supplement other GOTV interventions
    - Avoid "spammy" words (e.g., breaking, friend, free, reminder, hot & click) and special characters (e.g., ! + &)
    - Subject lines matter – personal references and urgency improve open rates

Email *cont'd*

Example of effective subject line: **FLIGHT CONFIRMED**
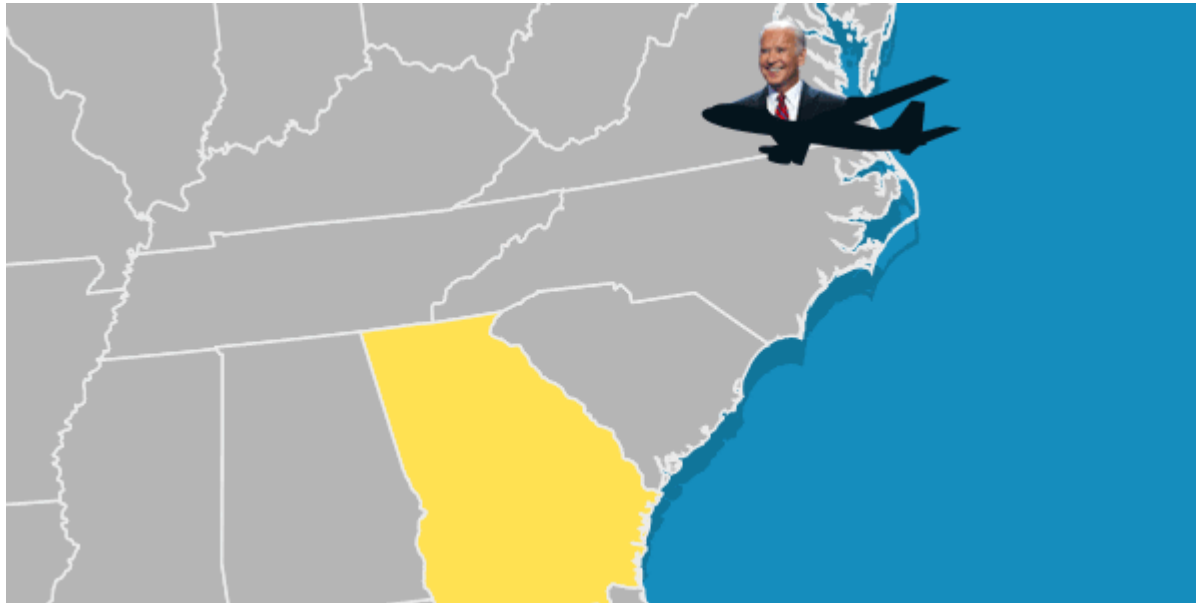
Texting

- Texting – (1/312)
    - Nearly 100% open rate for text messaging (people check their phones when they buzz)
    - By definition texts are shorter and more focused
    - "Texting is like cutting to the front on the line" (Campaigns and Elections magazine)
    - Hustle Peer to Peer and MiniVAN texting apps – volunteers can work from home

Sources: "The Secret to High Email Open Rates," by Jarrett Ray,, *Campaigns and Elections* magazine, March/April 2012 and
Get Out the Vote! How to Increase Voter Turnout, 4[nth]Edition, by Green and Gerber

Social Media

- **Authentic** "friend to friend" contact is most effective (1/256)
- Social media campaigns more effective when users can see what "friends" have already voted
    - Facebook is used by 70% of American adult population for an average of 71 minutes per day
    - When users see pictures or names of friends who have voted turnout increased .39%
    - When users logged into Facebook on election day and exposed to voting messages, turnout increased .35%
    - Facebook and similar patterns encourage ongoing personal connections with friends as most effective in increasing turnout potentially increasing turnout

GOTV and Social Media
Vote, Advertise and Celebrate!

Festivals, Rallies and Seminars

- Fire up supporters less likely to vote (can increase turnout .1 – 3.8%)
- Media coverage of festivals and rallies can help increase turnout
- Seminars that include information on how and where to vote help young voters
- Check statutes and be cautious with quid pro quo (buying a vote)
- YouTube and virtual email can substitute for live rally
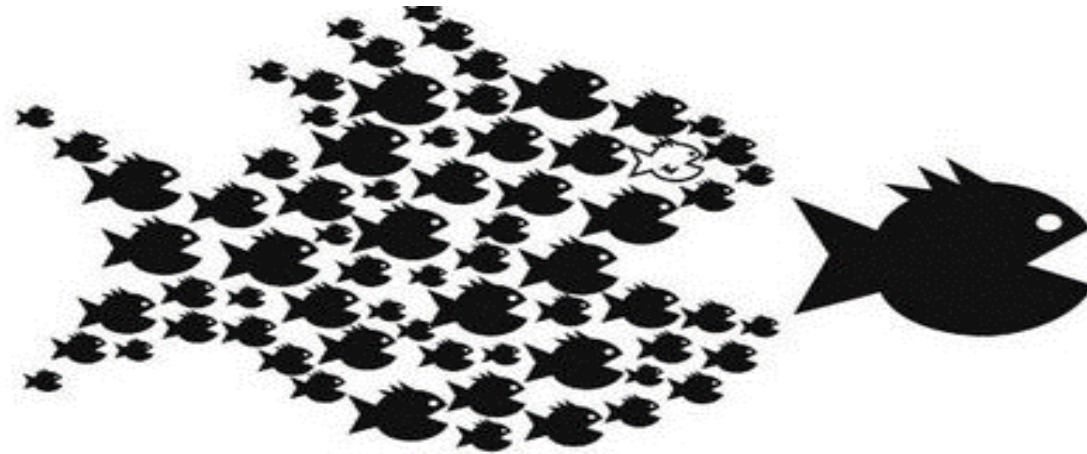- Collect cell phone numbers by having participants text campaign

Rallies and Your Campaign

Will you vote?

GOTV Planning and Execution

ORGANIZE!

(If it isn't written down it doesn't exist!)

GOTV Planning

Budget for the cost of GOTV interventions	Recruit and train volunteers	Know the law
Use target structure based on canvassing and feasibility survey	Plan for multiple GOTV strategies	Differentiate strategies based on past voting history

Implement early voting strategies to maximize turnout

Early Voting 2022
Friday. September 23

September 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

© BlankCalendarPages.com

Assessing GOTV Resources

- What's your budget? Do you need more money?
- How many volunteers do you need and how many do you have?
- What other organizations can help?
- What other campaigns are on the ballot and what are they doing?
- How many phones are available? Where are they located and where can you find more?
- Number of cars available for Election Day
- Staging site for GOTV coordination

Differentiating GOTV Strategies Demographically

Voting History of Identified "Yes" Voters	GOTV Interventions
6/9 "Yes Voter	Phone Call
4/9 "Yes Voter	2 Phone Calls and Email
3/9 "Yes Voter	2 Authentic Phone Calls, 2 Emails & Leaflet
2/9 "Yes Voter	3 Authentic Phone Calls, 2 Emails, Leaflet, Text Message and Door-to-Door Contact
0/9 or 1/9 "Yes Voter Only if Needed to Achieve "Yes Target!	Authentic Phone Calls, 2 Emails, Text Message, Facebook Video, Leaflet, Postcard, Door-to-Door Contact and Ride to the Polls (9 to 11 Contacts)

Example of Successful GOTV Effort
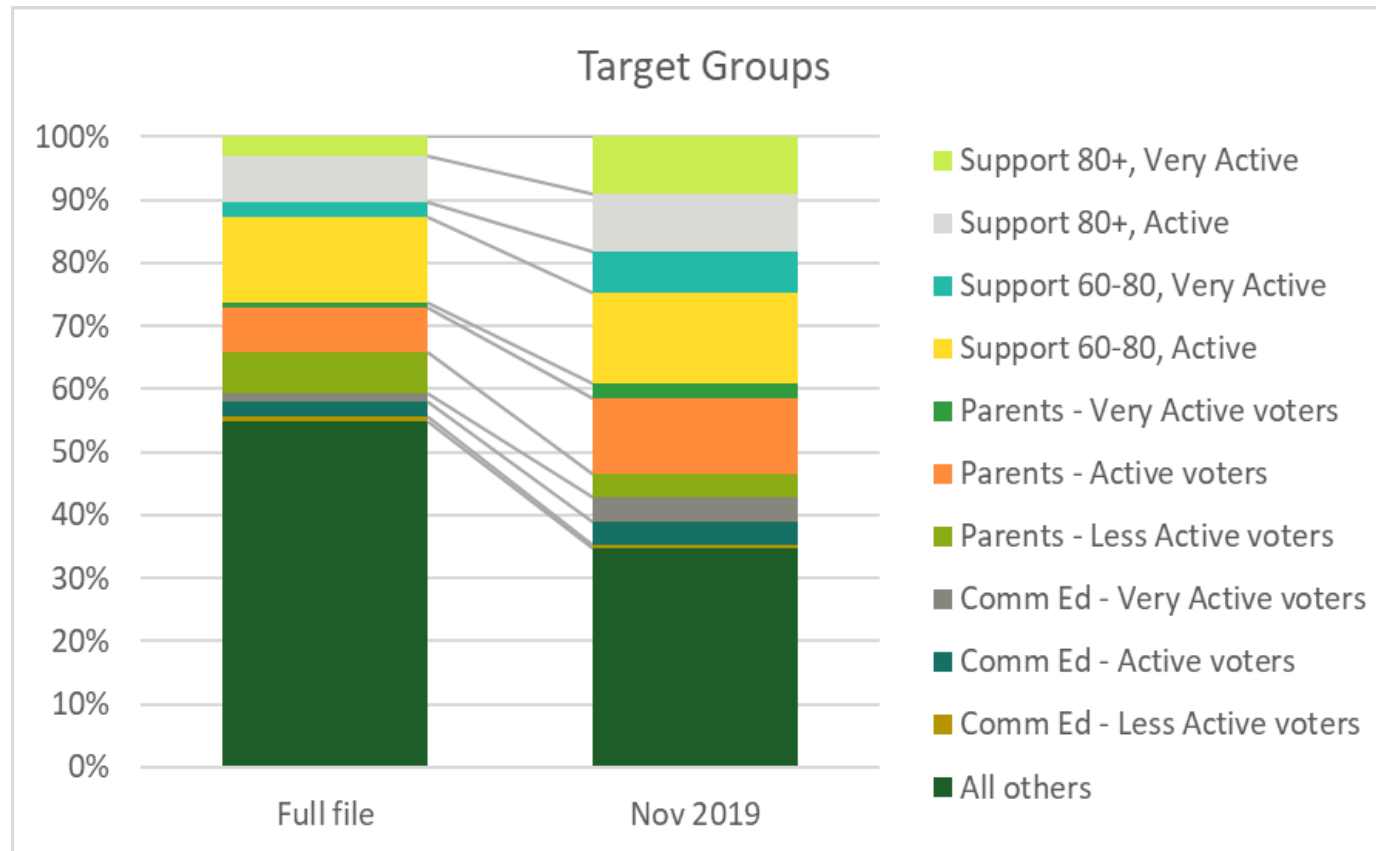
Summary and Recommendations

- Develop detailed GOTV plan including strategies, calendar and resources

- Calculate estimated turnout and target number to win (130% of 50% + 1)

- Develop target structure for GOTV based on likelihood to vote (based on past voting patterns and likelihood to vote "yes" based on scientific survey, predictive databases and canvassing

- Reinforce and seek to expand your natural base

- "Shoe leather politics" still works best – GOTV door-to-door has the most positive effect on voter turnout

- Analyze voter data and differentiate number and type of GOTV interventions (5 – 9 interventions for "slackers")

Summary and Recommendations *cont.*

- Authentic contacts (friend, neighbor, coworker) work best for door-to-door and phone engagement
- Communicate that voters are wanted and needed to participate
- Engage young voters in campaign by use of age-mates and technology (cell phones, text messaging and social networks)
- Festivals and rallies can be used to "fire up" the base
- Like a sprinter **run through the finish line**...not to the finish line

Summary and Recommendations *cont.*

GOTV Resources

School Finance Elections:
Planning for Success in the New Normal, 3ⁿᵈ Ed.
Lifto and Nicol
https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781475845952/School-Tax-Elections-Planning-for-Success-in-the-New-Normal-3rd-Edition

Get Out the Vote, 4ᵗʰ Ed.
Green and Gerber
Brookings Institution Press

Politics the Wellstone Way
Wellstone Action
University of Minnesota Press

Education Minnesota (MiniVan)
JimMeyer@edmn.org

Sample GOTV Phone Scripts
https://callhub.io/best-phone-scripts-for-political-gotv-campaigns-strategy

5Maps (GIS Mapping)
Carey Charboneau
ccharboneau@frontlineed.com

THANK YOU

Contact Information

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