



LISTENING TO WIN

Q2 2026 Ground Truth Update

 **Ground Truth**



Swing Left's innovative Ground Truth program is proving that a fundamentally different approach to voter contact works—**one that starts earlier, listens deeply, and expands the universe of voters we engage.**

To build durable governing majorities, we have to reach and persuade more people to vote for Democrats—in the 2026 midterms, in the 2028 presidential, and beyond.

Executive Summary

Ground Truth is Swing Left's answer to a problem in Democratic politics: campaigns typically talk to too few voters, too late, and mostly at them. In contrast, Ground Truth volunteers knock every door in targeted areas—not a list of pre-selected addresses—and have long, open-ended conversations about what people are actually experiencing. Those conversations are captured in the volunteer's own words and analyzed using AI. The conversations and the insights derived from them are made available to campaigns and state parties so they can refine messaging based on the narratives present in their districts, adjust targeting to turn out friendly voters Ground Truth uncovered, and, when desired, follow up with individual voters.

Swing Left piloted the program in fall 2025 and scaled it across 29 House districts in Q1. In the second quarter of 2026, Ground Truth continued to expand—and became a genuinely national battleground program. When we announced our long-term strategy, **The Big Swing**, in May, we widened our federal map to include the 46 House and 9 Senate races most likely to determine the balance of power, and we set an ambitious goal of 500,000 substantive conversations this cycle.

By the end of Q2, Ground Truth volunteers had **conversations with voters in 38 of Swing Left's 55 federal targets, including roughly 85% of our highest-priority Must-Flip and Must-Hold races**. The program also grew from a House-only effort into one working in Senate races from Alaska to Georgia. This quarter, 1,146 volunteers participated in the program, up from 711 in Q1, bringing our total to 1,809.

What we found:

- 1. Talking to everyone means reaching people most Democratic campaigns have written off.** Of the people our canvassers spoke with in person, 34.5% had Democratic support scores below 40%—voters a typical Democratic campaign would not approach.
 - A meaningful portion of those with low-support scores say they will vote for Democrats.** Among those we could match to the voter file, one in five rated their own support for Democrats an 8, 9, or 10, and 14% rated themselves a perfect 10. This means that a single imprecise number has been deciding who was worth a conversation, while behind it was a population running the entire length of the scale.
 - Another subset of the low-support-score voters might be persuadable.** Only about one in five told a hard-partisan story and landed in the “Staunch Conservatives” category. The other approximately 80% were cross-pressured (aligned with Republicans on some issues and Democrats on others), economically squeezed, exhausted by politics, or checked out. These are the groups from which Democrats must net more votes—through deep listening, gradually building trust, and communicating with persuasive messages that resonate with people's internalized narratives.
- 2. We continue to capture what comes up organically at the doors.** Among the voters we spoke to,¹ the topic of system integrity and trust was the number one topic in Q1 and among the top two throughout Q2. Cost of living climbed from under a fifth of volunteer conversations in January to approximately a third by May, now on roughly equal footing with system integrity and trust. Immigration fell from four in ten January conversations to just over one in ten by June—and ICE, named by nearly half of voters who referenced an organization or person in January, was under 7% by June. Trump was the constant, raised in about a quarter of conversations every month.
- 3. The volunteer experience is the engine behind this effort, and it's holding.** Volunteers rate their likelihood of recommending a Ground Truth canvass at 9.04 out of 10 across 225 survey responses. The number of repeat volunteers grew this quarter, and 24 of the 29 races active through Q1 had volunteer-led events again in Q2. Deep listening doesn't burn volunteers out. Just the opposite, it makes them come back for more.

¹Ground Truth data is not representative of the population.

Ground Truth volunteers have now had 11,000 substantive conversations with voters, putting us on track to hit our ambitious goals. Most people don't feel the urgency to volunteer until after Labor Day, so the bulk of our conversations will come in the fall. This quarter has been about building the experienced volunteer core, in nearly all our must-win districts across the country, that will train and absorb that September surge. And at the same time, we have created and begun distributing a new strategic campaign asset: insights from voter conversation data.



FIELD REFLECTIONS

“We can’t fix a problem unless we understand it. Listening is the first step towards understanding.”

Dessa
Repeat Canvasser in OR-05

How to Read This Report

Program Scale covers how far the program has grown and what the foundation looks like. **The Value of Talking to Everyone** is our deepest look yet at the voters campaigns skip—who they are on paper, what they say when asked, and the stories they tell. **On the Issues** tracks what voters raised over the first half of the year. **Vote Forward, Partnerships, and Presentations** covers how Ground Truth is being adopted across the ecosystem, and **In the News** covers our strongest quarter of national coverage yet. We close with what’s ahead and what it will take.

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Program Scale

When we announced **The Big Swing** in the middle of Q2, we added new targets in the House and Senate² to reflect the full expanded list of competitive races that will determine the balance of power. We also set an ambitious goal of having 500,000 substantive conversations with voters in those races.

At the end of Q2, Ground Truth has active volunteer infrastructure in nearly all of our must-win races and is deepening the training and methodology, refining our technological infrastructure, developing our relationships and outreach with campaigns, and inventing new approaches to finding and recruiting volunteers and donors—all to route the maximum number of volunteers to having deep, effective conversations with the people who will decide most competitive elections this fall.

Ground Truth is now truly a nationwide battleground program

Volunteers are active in about 85% of our highest priority Must-Flip and Must-Hold races, from Alaska and California to Georgia and Pennsylvania. The table below shows the number of races we've been active in so far, along with our target number of races in each category.

Swing Left Target Race Coverage through Q2				
Tier	House	Senate	All	Coverage
Must-Flip	16/17	2/4	18/21	86%
Must-Hold	14/16	2/3	16/19	84%
Reach	3/13	1/2	4/15	27%
All targets	33/46	5/9	38/55	69%

Ground Truth continued to expand into new states and districts over Q2. The table below lists the races in which volunteers have had Ground Truth conversations. From just 4 initial pilot districts, the program scaled more than seven-fold to reach 29 target races in Q1. By the end of Q2, Ground Truth volunteers had conversations in 38 races.³

Swing Left Target Races with Ground Truth Activity ⁴								
AK SEN, At-Large	AZ 01, 06	CA 13, 22, 45, 48	CO 08	GA SEN	IA 01, 03, SEN	MI 04, 07, 08, 10, SEN	NE 02	NJ 07, 09
NM 02	NV 03	NY 03, 04, 17, 19	OH 01, 09, 13, SEN	OR 05	PA 07, 08, 10	WA 03	W1 01, 03	

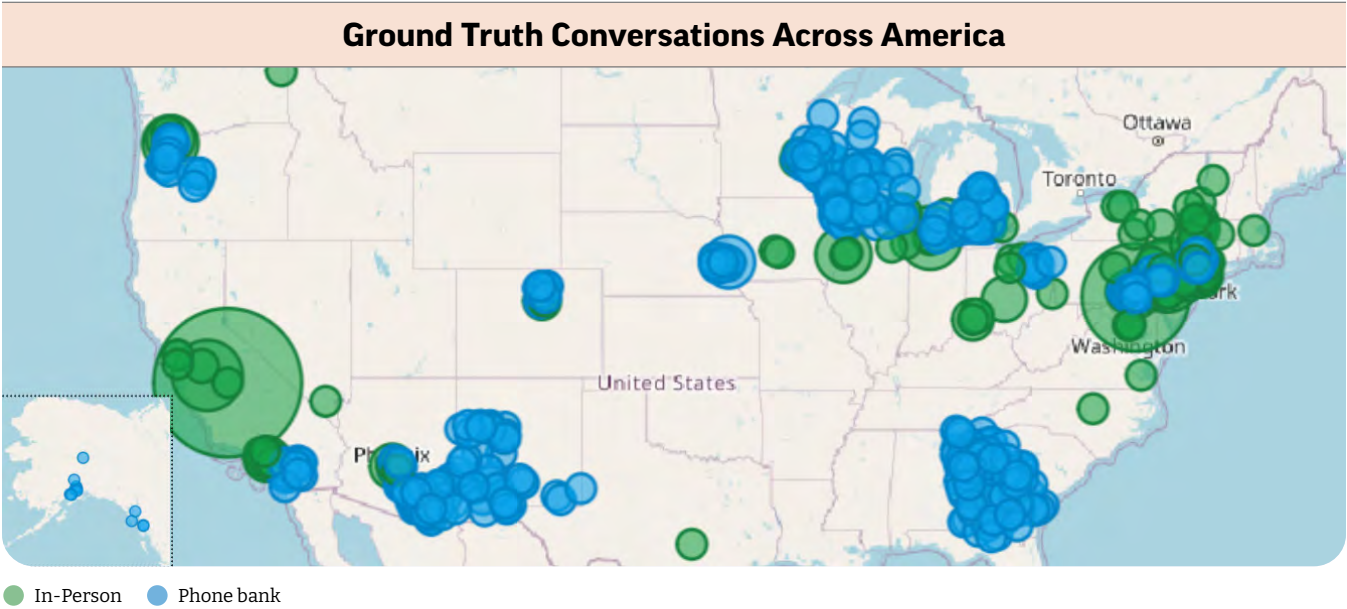
² And governor races, though the Ground Truth program itself only targets federal races.

³ Activity anywhere in a district within a state is counted toward that state's Senate race as well.

⁴ Excludes NY-18, which had Ground Truth activity but is not on Swing Left's current target map.

Five target states (and 14 races, mostly Reaches) do not yet appear above but are slated for expansion in Q3: **Texas** (five races, including the Senate seat), **North Carolina** (three, including Senate), **Virginia** (three House races), **Maine** (a House and Senate race), and **New Hampshire** (Senate).

The map below shows the geographic range of Ground Truth as of July 1, 2026. Each circle is a phone bank (blue) or canvass (green) in a target district. The larger the circle, the more conversations volunteers have had in that area.

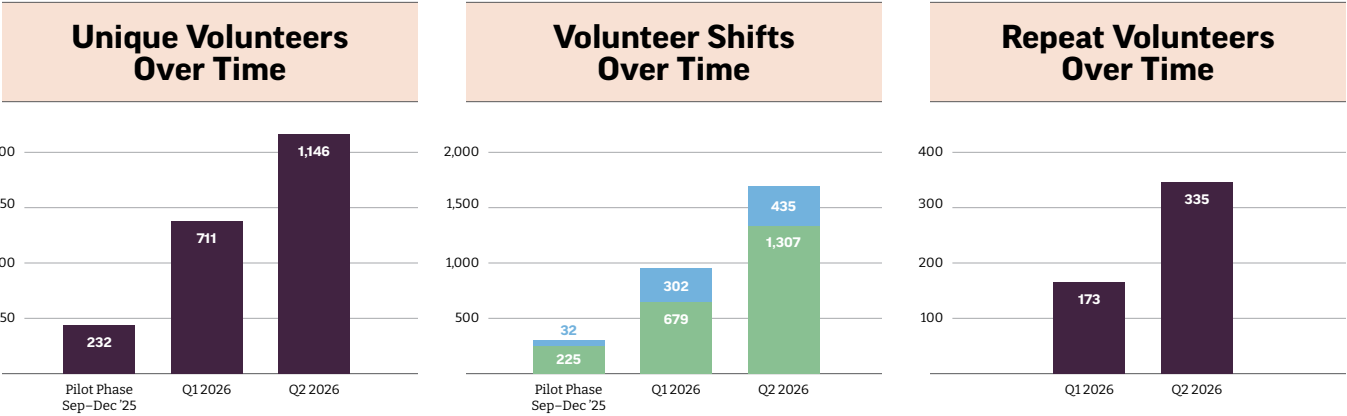


Our volunteer base is growing (and very excited)

Even as Ground Truth continued to expand geographically over Q2, it maintained steady volunteer activity in the areas it was already active. Of the 29 races in which Ground Truth was active in Q1, 24 of them (83%) also had events in Q2.

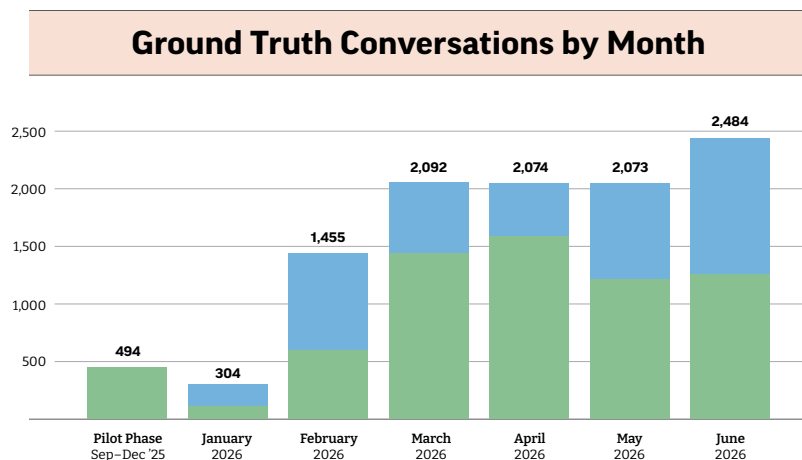
In Q2, 1,146 people volunteered with Ground Truth, up from 711 in Q1, bringing our total to 1,809. The charts below show our volunteer growth in terms of unique volunteers and total volunteer shifts.

Alongside our volunteer base expanding by 61%, the number of repeat volunteers (defined as volunteers who do more than one shift in a quarter) grew as well, shown in the chart below. These repeat volunteers are an essential piece of our ability to scale and accommodate a huge wave of volunteer interest in the fall. Most importantly, satisfaction remains sky high, with the average volunteer indicating they would be very likely to recommend Ground Truth to a friend. You'll see feedback from volunteers in their own words sprinkled throughout this report.



With nearly 11K foundational conversations achieved, Ground Truth is prepared to scale

Overall, total monthly conversations were higher in Q2 on average than in Q1 and show a clear upward trendline heading into the summer months. The chart below shows the total number of conversations we've had each month since the program began.



At nearly 11,000 conversations total we are at about 2% of our goal of 500,000. That's a long way from to go, but it's **right on track for where a program like this should be right now.**

Most people don't feel the urgency to volunteer until sometime after Labor Day. That's true in every election, and it means the bulk of our conversations will come in the final weeks, when a large wave of new volunteers will show up ready to knock on doors. The work between now and then is getting prepared to absorb that wave.

Ground Truth is a volunteer-led program, and whether our conversations actually net votes depends on good training. We won't be able to train thousands of October volunteers with staff alone. We'll need a smaller group of experienced volunteers who have been doing this for months and can train everyone else. Building that group now is what makes scaling later possible.

So the conversations we've had so far are doing two things. They give us the data behind the analysis in this report, which is valuable on its own. But they're also practice for the committed people who will be leading this program on the ground in October. Right now, success isn't about volume. It's about building a small, capable core.

These first 11,000 conversations are seeds we have planted across the country, in nearly 9 of 10 of our must-win target races, that we will cultivate over the rest of the summer. When most Americans start truly tuning in this September, October, and November, Ground Truth will be ready with the volunteer, technological, and tactical infrastructure to accommodate them.

"On a scale from 0 to 10, would you recommend a Ground Truth canvass to a friend looking to volunteer?"

9.04/10

The average of all 225 survey respondents.

FIELD REFLECTIONS

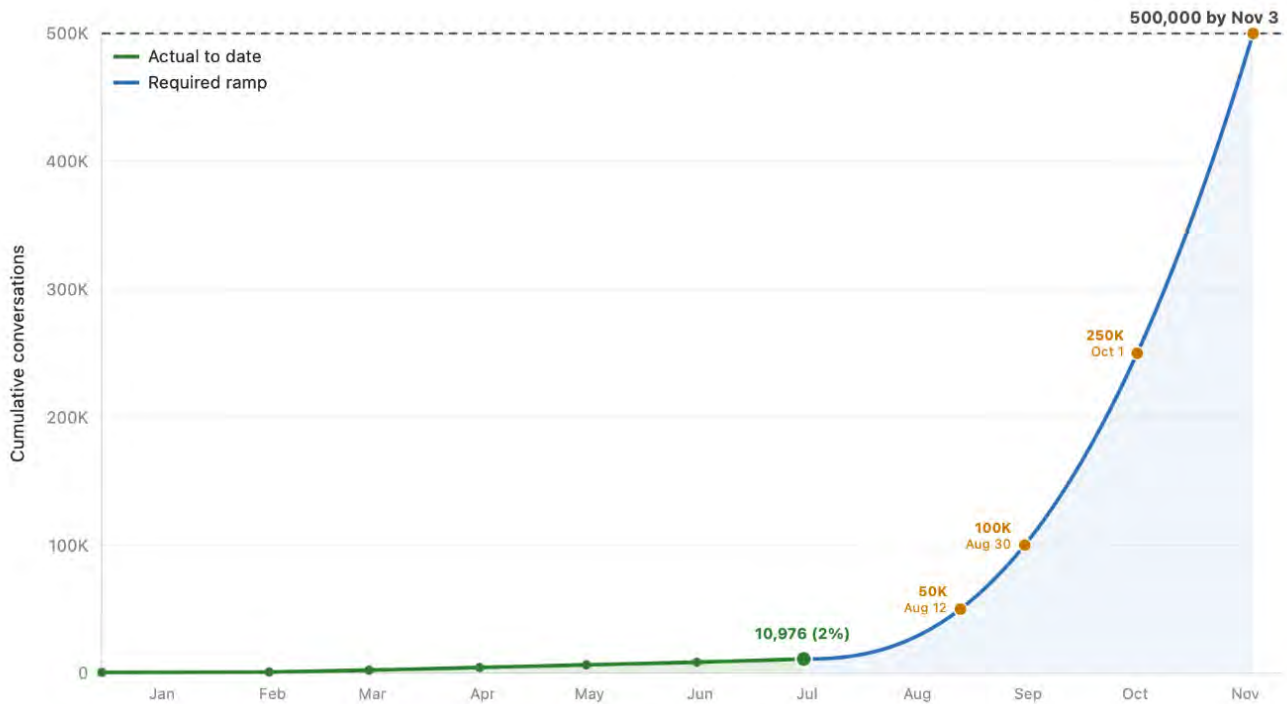
"I feel it's a privilege to be able to go into neighborhoods and engage strangers in deeply serious conversations about politics. All encounters are interesting; some are richly rewarding."

Christine

Experienced Canvasser in NY-03



The Path to 500,000 Conversations



Done

10,976 / 500K

Of Goal

2%

Peak Month

~9,206 / DAY

Final 8 Weeks

~74% OF GOAL

The Value of Talking to Everyone

Our analysis shows that Ground Truth's novel approach to voter contact is filling a gap in current campaign practices. Instead of heading out into a neighborhood with a specific list of addresses to visit in the final weeks of an election, Ground Truth volunteers are encouraged to knock on every door, and talk to everybody they come across, starting months before the election.

Our canvassing technology works no matter where canvassers encounter voters—even people parking their cars, walking their dogs, or otherwise existing outside. So far, that's included grocery stores, community events, and even gas stations. Organizing anywhere and everywhere means we end up having conversations with voters Democratic field campaigns typically don't reach.

In contrast, most candidate campaigns start their field operations only a couple months before Election Day, they only contact voters they expect will lean their way, using a targeting metric called a support score, and the scripts are designed to simply remind people to vote. This scoring metric, which runs from 0% (extremely unlikely to support a Democrat) to 100% (extremely likely to support a Democrat), incorporates party registration, past voting behavior, demographics, and other factors.

A voter with a support score of 50% has a 50% modeled likelihood of supporting the Democrat on Election Day—it's not a prediction that they, or a group of voters like them, are undecided, moderate, or otherwise in the middle. (When a campaign has a bit more time, they might cast a wider net using other metrics and include people with lower support scores.)

Of the people we've talked to in person, 34.5% were people field campaigns would skip, using the conservative assumption that field campaigns do not reach out to those with support scores under 40%.

We believe there is value in understanding these voters deeply, and that winning over many of them is essential to durable Democratic majorities. So we wanted to look more closely at what kinds of stories they shared and launch an ongoing exploration into how Democratic candidate campaigns and organizations might be able to reach and persuade them.

So who were the people we talked to that a standard campaign would have passed by?

Who they are, on paper

By party registration, this group does look exactly like the people a Democratic list would skip. Of the low-support in-person contacts⁵ we matched to the voter file, roughly **62% are registered Republicans** and another **31% are unaffiliated or independent (and 6% are registered for a third party)**. Just **1% are registered Democrats**. On the numbers alone, the support score is doing its job: these are, for the most part, not hidden registered Democrats waiting to be found.

But registration only tells you how someone filled out a form, and a support score only tells you what a model expects. Neither tells you what a voter will say when someone actually asks, or how they will actually vote.

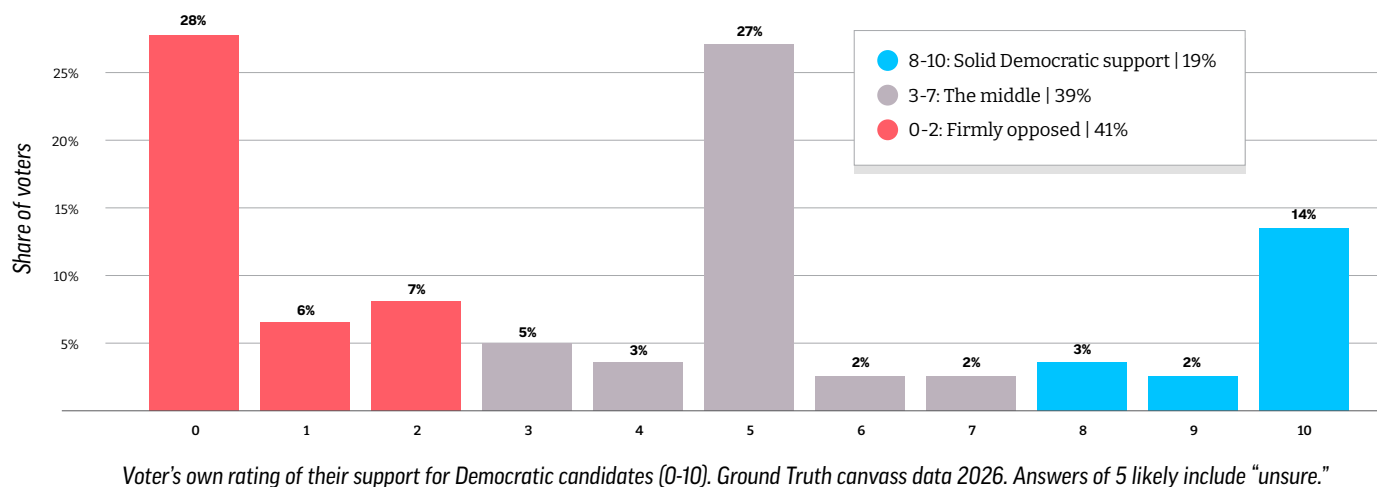
Who they are, according to them

At the end of many conversations, our volunteers record how the voter rates their own support for Democratic candidates, on a scale of 0 to 10. Among voters who had support scores below 40% and answered the question—969 people in all:

- **About half rated their support for Democratic candidates a 5 or higher.**
- **One in five rated themselves an 8, 9, or 10**—that is, as solid Democratic supporters.
- **Nearly 14% rated themselves a perfect 10.**

Discovered Support Levels Among Atypical Targets

Self-reported support for Democratic candidates among in-person voters with support scores below 0.5 (n=969)



⁵ We excluded phone bank data from this analysis because, at the moment, we do not do the equivalent of "knocking every door" on the phones.

Therefore, one in five of the people whom traditional Democratic field campaigns would not have contacted actually described themselves as solid supporters. And one in seven said they're as supportive as it gets. Because we have now identified these voters, their information will flow into the voter files that are available to state parties and individual campaigns, allowing for follow-up and continued engagement leading up to Election Day.

Some caveats: people are talking to a friendly volunteer at their own front door, and some will overstate their openness due to acquiescence bias. The large cluster of answers at exactly 5 likely reflects “unsure” as much as true ambivalence. A substantial 40% did rate themselves a 0, 1, or 2—for many of these voters, a low score reflects something real. And finally this is descriptive data, based on what we’ve found so far where and when we’ve gone. While we expect that the trend is likely to continue, it isn’t generalizable in a statistical sense.

However, it is true that a single metric often decides who is worth having a conversation with, and Ground Truth is uncovering evidence that reaching out to these people is worthwhile.



FIELD REFLECTIONS

“Going door to door with the intention of listening to all people, regardless of their point of view, feels like true democracy.”

Myra

Experienced Canvasser in OR-05

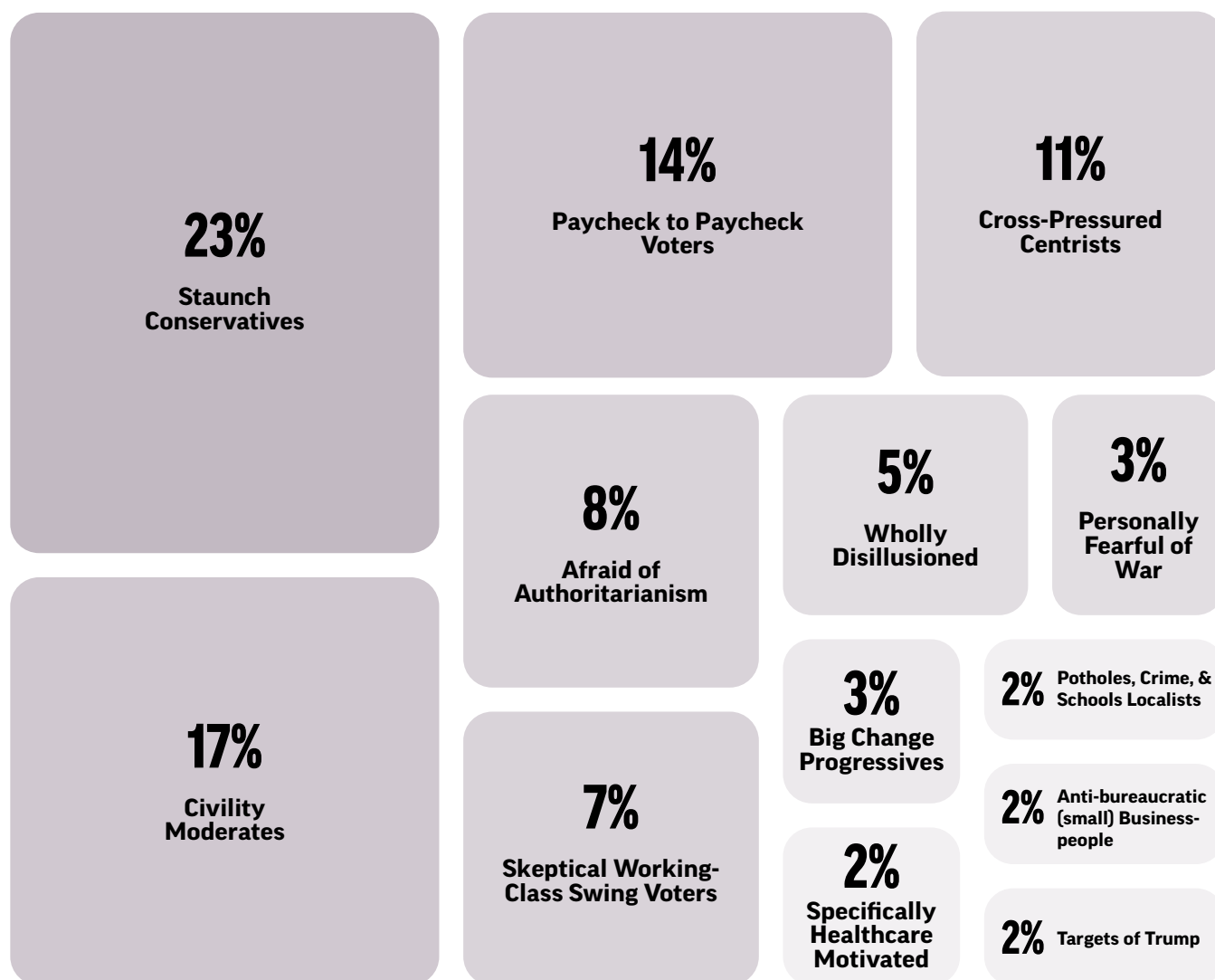
The shared stories people live in

To better understand what might motivate and persuade these voters, Ground Truth uses novel Swing Left-developed technology⁶ to group conversations into narrative clusters—recurring themes that come up again and again across thousands of notes.

How the clusters are built. We start with the conversation notes that carry enough substance to analyze. Then, we use a language model to mirror the work a human coder would do, but much faster: read the notes and sort them into groups, one at a time. The tricky part is the same one a human sorter would have—the groups you end up with depend on the order you read them in. So we don’t rely on any single pass. We shuffle the notes and repeat the process several times, each pass producing a different set of groupings, then look for the pattern across all of them: which notes keep landing together, run after run. Then we run the pattern through a community-detection clustering algorithm (which is statistics, not AI) to decide the final groupings. So the AI does the language work. It judges which notes resemble which, precisely what language models are good at, and the groupings come from ordinary statistics. Our staff then reviews each group to decide what it’s actually capturing. Notes that never settle into a group are left out rather than forced into one; about 21% stay uncategorized.

⁶ Swing Left built custom code to apply statistical clustering techniques on Ground Truth conversation note data and to create meaningful clusters useful for our stakeholders.

The People Democratic Campaigns Typically Ignore⁷



Among these low-support-score voters, the conversations rich enough to cluster tell a striking story: **only about one in five fell into a hardened “Staunch Conservatives” cluster.** The other roughly 80% were cross-pressured (aligned with Republicans on some issues and Democrats on others), economically squeezed, exhausted by politics, or checked out entirely—not locked-in opposition. Fully half landed in just four clusters of cross-pressure and economic strain: the Civility Moderates, the Paycheck to Paycheck Voters, the Cross-Pressured Centrists, and those Afraid of Authoritarianism.

The pattern holds even at the extreme. Among the voters with support scores below 10%—the ones a model is most certain won’t support a Democrat—only about a quarter of conversations fell into the Staunch Conservatives cluster. The rest were exhausted centrists, cross-pressured moderates, and people squeezed by the cost of living.

Below we explore the six largest clusters within the low-support-score group, in these voters’ own words. (Notes are real canvasser write-ups, lightly cleaned for length and transcription errors.)

⁷ Source: Ground Truth canvass data, 2026. Clusters generated out of thousands of conversations with substantive notes. Shares are of the 564 in-person conversations with a Democratic support score below 40%; tile areas are approximately proportional to each cluster’s share.

Staunch Conservatives: ~23%

The one genuinely hard-partisan group: voters aligned with the president on immigration, culture, and welfare who aren't looking to be persuaded. These aren't folks volunteers will spend more time with, but volunteers, as well as some of these voters, report feeling moved by the possibility of having civil conversations with the other side.

"[Redacted] is a regular voter who will never vote as a Democrat. She's against supporting people who don't work—unemployed people, people on welfare. Anyone who'd get her vote would have to go along those same lines."

- 40-year-old white woman
- Registered Republican PA-07
- Modeled support 0.01
- Self-reported 1/10

"[Redacted] is a strong Trump supporter. He likes what the administration is doing on immigration, and on trying to keep energy costs down. He thinks the economy is going in the right direction. Overall, he feels good about the direction of the country."

- 62-year-old white man
- Registered Republican, CA-22
- Modeled support 0.02
- Self-reported 1/10

"She's upset about divisiveness and a lack of respect for Trump. Angry about what she sees as people abusing welfare benefits. She works in a grocery store and believes people who don't deserve food benefits are using them."

- 68-year-old white woman
- Registered Republican, CA-22
- Modeled support 0.02
- Self-reported 0/10

Civility Moderates: ~17%

Overwhelmingly Republicans themselves (61 of 100), these voters are repelled less by policy than by conduct—the lying, the cruelty, the chaos. Their break with the party is about character, not ideology.

"This man is a lifelong Republican but feels Trump is 'a rich guy playing with the job. We need someone serious.' Says he votes for the person and has gone back and forth."

- 82-year-old white man
- Registered Republican, NY-19
- Modeled support 0.01
- Self-reported 5/10

"The whole family is depressed because of the way he talks—because he lies. She said she's a Republican but has voted Democrat three times: Obama, Biden, and Harris. Her son is a Marine who has to stay quiet, but does not like Trump."

- 68-year-old Asian woman
- Registered Republican, CA-45
- Modeled support 0.02
- Self-reported 10/10

"Registered Republicans. Started voting Democratic when George Bush lied about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Hates what's going on. Trump is the worst person possible for that position—would vote for Mickey Mouse over Trump."

- 68-year-old Asian man
- Registered Republican, CA-22
- Modeled support 0.02
- Self-reported 10/10

Paycheck to Paycheck Voters: ~14%

Voters whose politics run straight through the cost of housing, groceries, and healthcare. Many are Republicans who like the direction in theory, but can't make the math work at home.

"Her primary issue is the economy—gas and food are so expensive. She has to go to a food bank. Her Social Security check doesn't stretch. She's a Republican, but she looks at who the candidate is and doesn't necessarily vote down ballot."

- 79-year-old white woman
- Registered Republican, PA-10
- Modeled support 0.01

"Not very happy about things, locally and nationally. He will vote for a Democrat if it's the right one—which is why he's a six. He always votes. His number one issue is the cost of gas, of housing, of vehicles, everything, and the policies that make things more expensive."

- 70-year-old white man
- Registered Republican, PA-08
- Modeled support 0.01
- Self-reported 6/10

"Said flatly that the country is going in the wrong direction. He's very worried about the cost of living, as he and his wife are on a fixed income. He is asking for honesty from the government. He feels that we're in a dark age, and may never come out of it. He wants to feel that as a voter, he gets the truth."

- 83-year-old Hispanic man
- Registered Republican, CA-22
- Modeled support 0.06
- Self-reported 6/10

Cross-Pressured Centrists: ~11%

Voters holding a mix of positions from each side—often to the right on immigration or spending, to the left on healthcare—actively shopping for a moderate who fits none of the existing boxes.

"Long-time registered Republican, but has never voted for Trump. Did not vote in the last presidential election because he didn't think Kamala was a good candidate. He wants the Democrats to nominate somebody who is solid on economic issues but doesn't go in for 'all those crazy social issues.' Concerned about costs—food prices, gas, insurance. Says he has always voted across party lines."

- 69-year-old white man
- Registered Republican, NY-19
- Modeled support 0.01

"He's primarily a Republican, although he and his wife are both pro-choice, so they don't agree with Republicans on everything. They think Democrats need to be more inclusive and not rule people out of the party if they don't believe everything. He takes some issues the other way—he's concerned about immigration and borders."

- 59-year-old white man
- Registered Republican, CO-08
- Modeled support 0.02

"She is a moderate Republican, a special ed teacher, worried about the deportation of the mother of one of her students. But she also sees people she knows living off of aid and taking vacations, and she feels like it's her tax dollars. Not fair."

- 47-year-old white woman
- Registered Republican, CA-13
- Modeled support 0.08
- Self-reported 5/10

Afraid of Authoritarianism: ~8%

Voters alarmed by the erosion of democratic norms and the President's conduct in power. Despite scoring as non-Democratic, they are among the most intensely motivated people we spoke to—and many are Republicans.

"[Redacted] is a registered Republican who says he leans left and votes independently. He's unhappy with the way things are going — specifically the erosion of civil rights, everything from free speech to search and seizure. He's probably persuadable."

- 67-year-old white man
- Registered Republican, CA-22
- Modeled support 0.02
- Self-reported 8/10

"Definitely the wrong direction—she can't watch the news. Republicans need to do their job and stand up to Trump. She feels like we're headed to World War II Germany. If she were in charge, she would fire him and put him in jail. Trump is a bully and a thug. We need reps voting their conscience."

- 54-year-old white woman
- Registered Republican, OR-05
- Modeled support 0.07

"[Redacted] is a Republican and is upset at the state of the party. She's concerned about how everything is going, and that there are no checks and balances. She mentioned Democrats should stand up more and be vocal to Trump. She repeats: Democrats should stand up."

- Woman
- Registered Republican, PA-07
- Modeled support 0.06
- Self-reported 10/10

Skeptical Working-Class Swing Voters: ~7%

Working-class voters who feel burned by both parties and treat their vote as conditional. They aren't sold on anyone—but they aren't closed either.

"Three-time Trump voter. Very disappointed in Trump. Does not like the war. Should fire them all and start over. May be persuadable for the right person. Especially hates politicians who promise things and don't deliver."

- 75-year-old white man
- Registered Republican, NY-19
- Modeled support 0.01
- Self-reported 5/10

"'Everything is a mess.' His two adult children live with him because of housing prices. He works in roofing, but work has slowed. 'It doesn't seem to matter who's in charge—Democrats are in charge at the state level and things are a mess; Republicans are in charge at the federal level and things are a mess.'"

- 51-year-old white man
- Unaffiliated, MI-04
- Modeled support 0.17

"[Redacted] is a registered Republican. He voted for Trump because it seemed like the right alternative at the time. He is very angry about the tariffs, which have caused an increase in prices—and which caused him to lose his job as a fiber optics installer."

- 43-year-old man
- Registered Republican, NY-17
- Modeled support 0.03
- Self-reported 10/10

The rest

The remaining clusters are smaller but round out the picture of who sits behind a low support score: the **Wholly Disillusioned** (~5%), who've largely opted out; **Big Change Progressives** (~3%), who want structural change; those **Personally Fearful of War** (~3%); the **Potholes, Crime, and Schools Localists** (~2%), focused entirely on their neighborhoods; the **Specifically Healthcare Motivated** (~2%); **Anti-Bureaucratic (Small) Businesspeople** (~2%); and **Targets of Trump** (~2%), whose central concern is the treatment of immigrant families.

The Takeaway

The point is not that every one of these voters is a hidden Democrat—many are not, and never will be. It's that a support score flattens all of them into a single “unlikely” bucket and tells a campaign to keep walking. Behind that one number is a Republican who said she'd put the president in jail, a grandmother on Social Security going to a food bank, a three-time Trump voter who says he was lied to, and a registered Republican who has voted Democratic in three straight presidential elections and rates herself a 10 out of 10.

None of them would have been on the list. All of them opened the door to a Ground Truth volunteer and had a real conversation.

As more data is collected, campaigns could come to understand the types of narratives that are coursing through their districts and make strategic decisions about message framing to better reach and connect with certain populations. Further, the conversations themselves give a field organizer the actual words a persuadable Republican used, the specific worry to follow up on, the reason to knock again.

FIELD REFLECTIONS

“This kind of canvassing is perfect for people who, like me, aren't automatically excited to help elect Democrats, but want to help Democrats actually become what voters are looking for.”

Cynthia

Repeat Canvasser in PA-07



On the Issues

In the Q1 report we cataloged what topics people raised with our volunteers, and found the issues in the national conversation showing up in our data. The chart below extends that through June: using a fixed set of topics that an AI model checks each conversation against, it shows how often each topic came up, month by month, as a share of all conversations.

While this data is not representative or generalizable like a poll and isn't designed to be, it demonstrates that these conversations raise real, current concerns at the door, and our analysis picks them up in ways that make intuitive sense—international conflicts, for instance, jumped up from almost nothing in March, right when the Iran War news broke. The value of this type of data, unlike a tracking poll, is that campaigns can go in and see the full conversational context in which a topic was brought up, as well as what other topics were raised, to understand a richer, more textured picture of particular voters in their district.

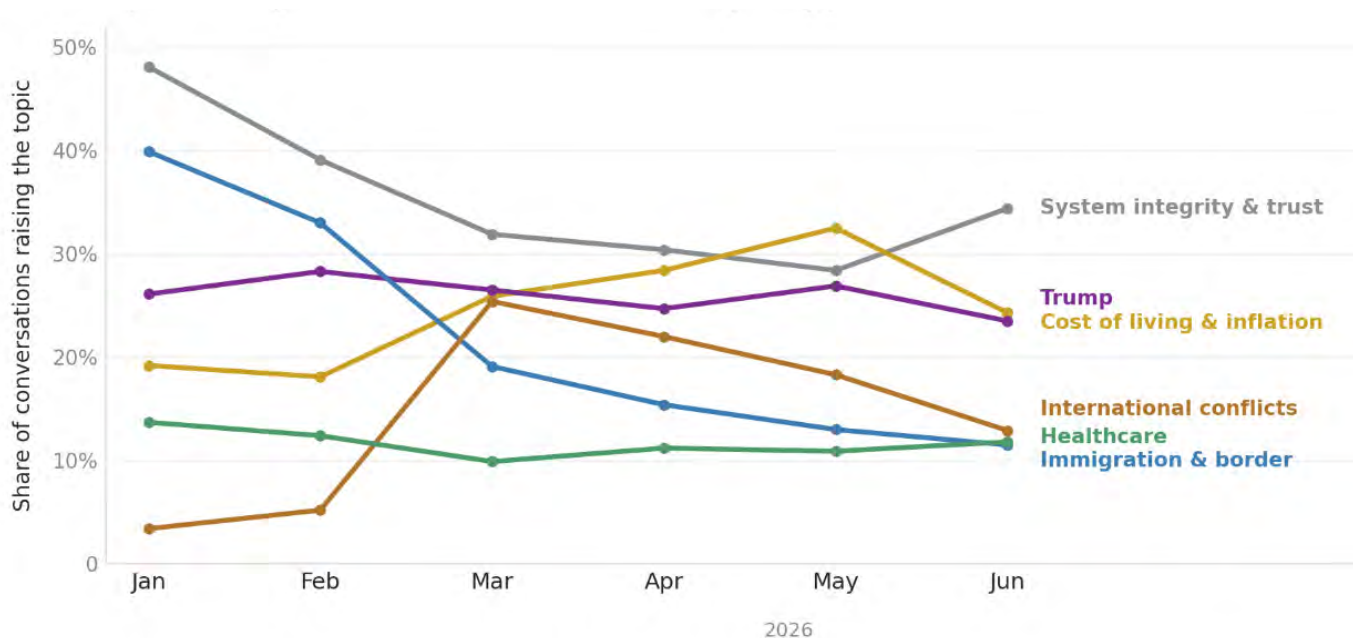
What We Heard

Across all conversations to date, the topics voters raised most often were trust in the system and its institutions (33%), President Trump (26%), and the cost of living (26%). Immigration (17%), international conflicts (16%), and healthcare (11%) followed.

Over the first half of 2026 topics have moved up and down.

What Came Up, Unprompted

Topics raised by voters in Ground Truth conversations, January-June 2026



Not a poll. Reflects what voters chose to raise with our volunteers in the districts we canvassed, not a representative sample of the electorate. January reflects 291 conversations; February-June range from 1,456 to 2,484.

1. **Cost of living rose and stayed high.** It climbed from under a fifth of conversations in January to roughly a third by May, and was consistently competing with system integrity and trust for the most-raised issue for most of Q2. This is consistent with what we see in the narrative clusters: economic strain cuts across party, and it is where low-support-score voters and Democratic messaging most often meet.
2. **System integrity and trust remains at the top.** It has been the defining concern since September, reflecting deep disillusionment with the two parties, our country's institutions, and politics in general.
3. **Immigration fell sharply.** It was raised in four of ten January conversations and just over one in ten by June. The sharpest version of this is ICE: in January, nearly half of the voters who named any political figure or institution named ICE. By June it was under 7%.
4. **International conflicts arrived abruptly and faded.** Essentially absent in January and February, they jumped to a quarter of conversations in March when the war in Iran began, and have been fading since.
5. **Trump was the constant.** He was raised in roughly a quarter of conversations every single month, moving less than any other topic.

Together, these insights confirm what you might expect: that dominant news narratives are reflected in what is front of mind for many voters. But beyond that, our data enables campaigns, through our cluster analysis and access to the notes themselves, to look not just at what topics were raised, but how voters are thinking and feeling about them.

FIELD REFLECTIONS

"The interviewees seemed stunned that someone would actually take the time to listen to their concerns. This was true across party lines."

Jeff

Experienced Canvasser in OH-01

Vote Forward, Partnerships, and Presentations

Winning back power in 2026 and 2028 will require some material shifts within the Democratic ecosystem. We believe that the tactics we're creating with Ground Truth can be a significant part of that. By partnering with various leaders and organizations across the ecosystem, we're using our influence and expertise to encourage change and improvement, maximize the scale of our program, and spread the word about our work and learnings.



Vote Forward: Swing left will collaborate with Vote Forward on its Ground Truth Civic Action Follow-Up Letters program. Roughly 100 trained Vote Forward volunteers will write tailored letters to voters who have already had a substantive conversation with a Ground Truth canvasser or phone banker—picking up where that conversation left off rather than starting cold.

- These letters will be sent to those unconvinced that voting matters at all—the people who told us they don't trust either party—and those genuinely torn between Democrats and Republicans.
- Vote Forward uses strategic messaging drawn from the evidence-based Insights Bot developed by Blue Rose Research to help volunteers craft personalized persuasive messages based on the actual conversations voters had with Ground Truth volunteers.
- Vote Forward will be testing whether a letter that builds on a real conversation moves people in a way that neither tactic could alone. As with everything Vote Forward does, the tactic is built with a research component and the findings will be published.



Alaska Democratic Party & Mary Peltola: This is our deepest state collaboration to date, and Ground Truth's first expansion into a Senate race, covered in [*The Washington Post*](#). On June 26, we launched in Alaska with a Ground Truth canvass in Anchorage with the Alaska Democratic Party and Mary Peltola's campaign to unseat Sen. Dan Sullivan. Ground Truth is now integrated with the Alaska Coordinated Campaign, which has already mobilized more than 10,000 volunteers across 160+ communities statewide. As our Executive Director Yasmin Radjy put it: "We can't win in Alaska by mimicking tired tactics from the lower 48." This collaboration extends our model into rural and hard-to-reach communities—fish camps and festivals, not just doorsteps—where conventional canvassing has never been standard practice.



Sen. Jon Ossoff: Georgia's Senate race joined our target slate this quarter, and Sen. Ossoff publicly welcomed the partnership, saying he was "[*grateful for Swing Left's support.*](#)"



America Votes State Summit: In April, we presented Ground Truth at the America Votes State Summit conference, with Yasmin speaking to how Ground Truth can help win back the House and our Head of Technology Gautham Arumilli participating on a panel about the responsible use of AI in campaigns.



Democracy Alliance: Also in April, Yasmin presented at the Democracy Alliance (DA) conference in New Mexico, making the case for Ground Truth's model to funders and leaders across the Democratic ecosystem. Ground Truth is one of the DA's recommended investments for the 2026 midterms.



New Conversation Collaborative: Our partners at NCC (an affiliate of the New Conversation Initiative), are the nation's leading experts on deep canvassing, responsible for bringing deep-canvassing techniques into electoral politics based on the learnings from the LGBTQ+ rights movement's work on California's Prop 8. NCC is coaching our Script Iteration Team, a dedicated group of Ground Truth volunteers responsible for developing and refining our deep-listening based conversation guides, ensuring that our approach is informed by years of deep-canvassing research and practice.

In the News

Press coverage is a key part of our strategy to recruit enough volunteers to achieve the scale envisioned for Ground Truth and help drive big midterms wins. The more the word is out, the more volunteer sign-ups we see. Q2 was our biggest quarter of coverage yet—Ground Truth was featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, NBC News, and NOTUS, and Swing Left has become a go-to voice on how Democrats are rebuilding their ground game. Some highlights:

The New York Times

***The New York Times* (June 29)** — “How A.I. Is Changing the Way Politicians Run for Office”: *The Times* opened its national story on AI in campaigns with a Ground Truth canvass in PA-10, following our volunteers at the door in Janelle Stelson’s district. As our East Coast organizing program manager Violet Kopp told the paper: “Everything a person is saying is a data point.”

The Washington Post

***The Washington Post* (June 30)** — “Democrats turn to unconventional organizing in an atypical ‘must-win’ Senate race”: *The Post* covered the organizing challenge in Alaska—a state that, as they put it, “presents myriad challenges to political organizers”—days after our Ground Truth expansion there.



***NBC News* (May 16)** — “Grassroots group to target 60+ races with ambitious canvassing effort”: This exclusive covered our expansion from 33 House battlegrounds to 63 House, Senate, and governor’s races, with Ground Truth at the center—and reported our Q1 results directly, including that roughly 40% of our conversations happened at doors Democrats would never normally knock on.



***NOTUS* (April 22)** — “A Liberal Grassroots Group’s Plan to Win Over Republican Voters”: “A liberal grassroots group is trying a novel approach to win over Republican voters . . . talking to them.” This piece detailed our model at length, and included DCCC officials describing our program as a serious effort—notable, they said, for the real-time data it gathers at the door.

POLITICO

***NOTUS* (June 29)** — “Inside Republicans’ Plan to Win the Midterms”: NOTUS turned to Yasmin for the Democratic response to the GOP’s much-hyped turnout operation. Her assessment: it’s “a consulting revenue stream dressed up as a turnout program.”

The Atlantic

***The Atlantic* (June 18)** — “The Democratic Base Is Angry”: The Atlantic described Ground Truth as a year-round canvassing program that uses AI to summarize voter concerns and carry them back to the party—and gave Yasmin the floor to press the party on whether this year’s energy is being converted into anything lasting: “Are we building something durable, or is it all a house of sand?”



***Lincoln Square* (July 9)** — “The Numbers Behind the Midterm Shake-Up”: Yasmin was interviewed on this podcast, breaking down what the shifting midterm landscape means for where Democrats should be putting their time and money.



Swing Left was also cited in ***Politico’s Weekly Score*** (June 29) about our Alaska expansion and ***Politico*** on the Maine Senate ad blitz (July 10), and Yasmin joined ***MS NOW’s*** Chris Jansing (April 21) to discuss the Virginia special election.

Looking Ahead

Q2 was about building the machine. Q3 and Q4 are about running it at scale.

Everything in this report describes a foundation: volunteers recruited and trained, technology built and tested at the doors, partnerships seeded in nearly nine of ten of our must-win races.

We have had nearly 11,000 conversations. Our goal is 500,000. This means the fall operation has to be dramatically larger than the spring one, with the overwhelming majority of our conversations happening in the final two months. That is how field campaigns typically work, and it is what the infrastructure we spent this quarter building is for. It will require more volunteers, more shifts per volunteer, and more funding.

Four things will define the next two quarters:

- **Depth in the races that decide control.** We have activity in 86% of our Must-Flip and 84% of Must-Hold races. Expansion is largely done; now we go deeper—building standing volunteer teams inside each target, integrating with campaigns as nominees are set, and moving from episodic canvasses to sustained presence.
- **Closing the loop from doorstep to campaign.** Ground Truth's promise is that what a voter says at their door reaches the people asking for their vote. Volunteers are already seeing it work. As nominees emerge and our data-sharing infrastructure matures, this becomes the program's central proof point—and the clearest answer to voters who feel like no one is listening to them.
- **Introducing persuasion conversations.** We have been piloting conversations that bridge from listening to persuasion with a small group of seasoned volunteers known as our Script Iteration Team and experts on deep canvassing from the New Conversation Collaborative. In the next quarter, as Democratic nominees are set in most races and are starting to run directly against Republicans, we'll be rolling these persuasion scripts out to our whole program to blend deep listening with the need to net votes for Democrats.
- **Turning listening into follow-up.** This will happen in a few ways. The conversation data we collect will enable Democratic campaigns to add voters we have identified into their get-out-the-vote universes so they can engage with them and turn them out. Additionally, Vote Forward's Ground Truth Civic Action program will write follow-up letters to voters whose conversations indicated they might benefit from further communication.

The harder question underneath all of it. As reflected in this report, the voters we've talked to have been remarkably consistent about one thing: they do not believe the system, or either party, is working for them. Roughly a third raised trust in institutions unprompted, more than any other topic, and it has been the defining theme since the program began. We cannot fix that in one cycle. But we can stop making it worse—by showing up before we need something, by listening without an agenda, and by proving that what people say actually changes what the party does.

And then we can keep things going after November and into the next elections. This is a long-term project. Join us in building it.

FIELD REFLECTIONS

"I had two conversations which began with 'I am not going to vote' and concluded with both deciding that they would vote. At first, I thought...'OK, this isn't going anywhere...I need to give up...' but I didn't settle upon a proper place to end the conversation as the person at the door kept opening up and I kept asking questions. It's as if we had a soft landing together. I tell you, I feel personally transformed."

Elizabeth

Volunteer Canvass Host



THANK YOU!