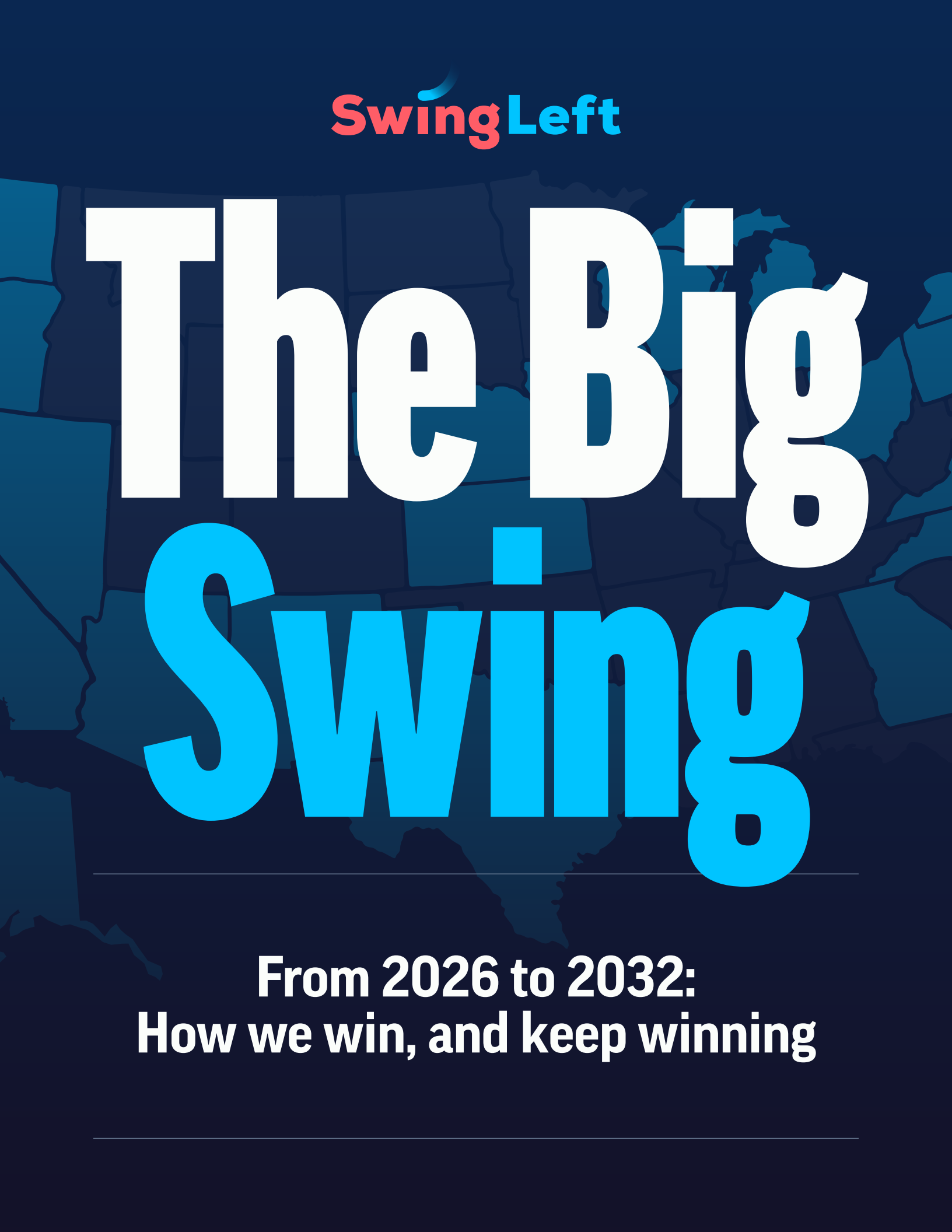




SwingLeft



The Big Swing

**From 2026 to 2032:
How we win, and keep winning**

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Introduction

Swing Left's community of one million grassroots volunteers and donors is not driven by any one ideology or worldview. Some of us are on the left, some are closer to the center. Many don't fit neatly anywhere. **What unites us is our shared goal to help Democrats win governing majorities capable of actually delivering results.**

We know winning isn't everything, nor does it eliminate or replace the need for hard work on accountability and issue advocacy, but it's the necessary start. That has been our north star since we launched on the eve of Donald Trump's first inauguration in 2017; because progress isn't possible without power.

That goal still drives Swing Left today. The stakes are even higher now, and we can't afford to simply rehash ineffective tactics from past cycles and bury hard-earned learnings. We need to be honest about what it will take to win back power and, more importantly, sustain it—not just in two-year chunks, but for the long term.

What follows is a look at Swing Left's strategy to win the 2026 midterms—in the House, the Senate, and the states—in a way that sets us up to build durable governing power in 2028 and beyond, despite structural headwinds. This work is too important to hinge on any one politician, viral moment, or election cycle. It only succeeds if it is deeply rooted in broad participation and grounded in a simple idea: grassroots action, if it is organized and practical and directed at winning, matters.

Organizing to win requires ruthless pragmatism. Not the absence of values, but a clear-eyed focus on what actually works in the world as it is. We take seriously an old organizing principle: no permanent allies, no

permanent adversaries, only permanent interests. We don't see elections as love letters to politicians but as vehicles that can take us where we need to go: toward a country that comes closer to its ideals of liberty, equality, and justice.

If we want durable governing majorities, Democrats have to rebuild trust with voters, expand whom we engage, and make decisions based on outcomes rather than comfort or habit. The electorate is not fixed, and coalitions shift. Rebuilding trust will take time and hard work. This requires a long-term strategy in a political landscape that is changing faster than many are willing to admit.

That work takes all of us. And it can't wait.



I: The Political Moment

Where This Election Cycle Started—and What Has Changed

A year ago, Swing Left launched our “3 to Win” campaign: flip three seats and we could take back the House. The context was grim. Trump had won the 2024 election decisively, making inroads with virtually every demographic group. Trust in the Democratic Party had fractured, and many of the tactics and assumptions that guided us previously were proving insufficient or stale. Meanwhile, the headwinds of Trump 2.0 were proving to be as strong as our darkest predictions anticipated.

We knew Democrats would need to take big swings to escape the political wilderness, and that we had a great deal of work ahead to determine what would be effective. We also knew that for Democrats to regain governing power that lasts, we’d need to think beyond eking out a tiny majority—and compete aggressively in more places to earn back the trust and votes of a broader group of people.. But as action takers, we also knew we needed to get to work early, and start from what the shape of the political landscape actually was, not what we wished it was. Our “3 to Win” strategy reflected that reality. We focused narrowly on protecting the most vulnerable Democratic incumbents and picking off the most beatable Republicans, because even the historical pattern of the party in power losing seats in the midterms seemed uncertain given the scale of the 2024 swing.

The stakes of winning the House were enormous then. They still are. But now three things have changed in Democrats’ favor:

First, Trump’s approval has cratered. Driven by the public’s response to the war with Iran, massive cuts to healthcare subsidies, and ICE’s aggressive tactics, his net approval rating has dropped by more than ten percentage points since early last year. And the

backlash cuts across demographics. The supposed “realignment” of 2024 has evaporated.

Second, Democrats are winning. Off-year elections in Virginia and New Jersey, and special elections in Texas, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi have shown a massive swing toward Democrats. Every candidate Swing Left supported in last November’s elections won. And Democrats are even winning in some of Trump’s strongholds. In January, Democrat Taylor Rehmet pulled off an upset victory in a Texas State Senate special election, flipping a seat by 14 points in a district that Trump won by 17 points in 2024.

Third, the generic ballot has swung hard toward Democrats. The generic congressional ballot, which is one way to assess current voter preferences in House elections, shows Democrats leading by between [5 and 6 percentage points](#).

Simply put, the Trump backlash is here. Despite recent court rulings and ongoing battles over redistricting, most nonpartisan election analysts still consider Democrats the favorites to win the House in November. The conditions for Democrats scoring that and other major wins are real. And that changes everything about how we should be thinking about this year’s elections.

When Swing Left launched “3 to Win,” we were playing defense. We were focused on a narrow path to the House majority because that’s what the environment demanded. But the environment has shifted dramatically and our strategy has to shift with it. If we only focus on the races that initially looked competitive, we could put ourselves in a situation where we win the low-hanging fruit, but leave many other opportunities on the table. **Our job at Swing Left is to direct people’s time and money to the most competitive races in the country, where grassroots efforts can actually move the needle. Which races those are has changed a lot.**

II: The Bigger Picture

Why Winning Isn't Enough— The Deeper Problem

While the electoral landscape is incredibly favorable to Democrats right now, it's not the full story. We actually need to step back and look at the bigger picture because the decisions Swing Left is making this election cycle only make sense in context. In many ways, the pattern of American politics is so broken that a single good election can't fix it. We want to look deeper at what's causing that fractured foundation and how we can change it going forward.

To start with, the United States seems to be caught in a "change" election doom loop. Political power has flipped back and forth between Democrats and Republicans in [six consecutive federal elections](#). This reflects a pattern where voters, instead of choosing a party, are rejecting whichever one is currently in charge. Democrats win, fail to deliver (or fail to communicate that they've delivered), lose. Republicans win, overreach, lose. Nobody governs for long enough to earn trust.

More than [85% of Americans](#) now say that elected officials don't care about people like them. Both parties are viewed unfavorably by roughly [60% of the public](#). This isn't a Democratic problem or a Republican problem—it's a systemic crisis of democratic legitimacy.

To win a durable governing majority, we can't just attack Republicans, we need to build trust in Democrats and in government itself. That's a harder and more important problem than winning any single election.

This challenge is compounded by how badly the Democratic brand has been damaged in recent years. Convincing people to vote for Democrats, not just against Republicans, will require rebuilding voters' understanding of what Democrats stand for, besides

being anti-Trump. Over the course of more than one election cycle, Democrats have to prove through decisive legislative action, effective administration, and proactive communication that they are truly listening to and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the American people.

The Reapportionment Problem

In the midst of all these challenges, the 2030 Census will dramatically shift both the House and the presidential maps. First, every congressional and state legislative district in the country will be redrawn based on Census data. When this happens, the party that controls state legislatures and governorships will shape American politics for the following decade. The time to do something about that is now, not in 2030.

Second, because each state's Electoral College votes are determined by its population, the 2030 Census will also significantly impact the 2032 presidential map. Demographic projections suggest that states won by Kamala Harris in 2024, including solid blue states like California and New York, could lose roughly 10 Electoral College votes by 2032, while majority-red states, like Texas and Florida, will see increases. This blocks the minimally viable path to the White House that Democrats have relied on for years. To win the presidency, Democrats will have to fight through a much harder map, with states like Texas, North Carolina, and Georgia becoming necessities, not stretch targets. Turning those states solidly blue will require years of work and investment. We have to start now.

The Need for a New Approach

All of this points to the fact that Democrats can't keep eking out wins on the margins, and we can't just keep attacking Republicans. To win a durable governing majority, we need to win back trust in government, and that's going to be really hard. We need to think big, do things differently, and take big risks, because the old ways aren't working.

If Democrats win the House in 2026 and then fail to win the White House and Congress in 2028, we'll be right back where we started—or worse, because the structural disadvantages will have gotten bigger. The goal can't just be to win the next election. **It has to be to break the cycle-to-cycle whiplash and build toward a durable governing majority.**

Our Strategy—2026 and 2028 as One Fight

A changing context demands a new strategy. Here's Swing Left's plan:

- **2026:** Win control of both chambers of Congress, prioritizing a strong House majority, and key state offices.
- **2027:** Focus on key state-level elections and early organizing in the presidential election swing states.
- **2028:** Elect a governing majority, both chambers of Congress and the White House, and further expand power in the states.
- **2030:** Win the midterms and secure key state legislative majorities and governorships ahead of redistricting.
- **2032:** Expand the presidential map after the Electoral College reapportionment and elect a durable governing majority.

We see 2026 and 2028 as a single election cycle that ends with the decisive defeat of MAGA, and lays the groundwork to prevent its return. Everything we build to win in 2026—the volunteer networks, voter relationships, technology, data, learnings, and communications channels—carries over. We're not just running a midterm campaign. We're building the infrastructure for a presidential-year operation and for the redistricting battles that will follow the 2030 census. And we need to start competing now in geographies where Democrats currently can't win so that by 2028 and 2032, we have the organizing capacity to fight for them.

That means three things for 2026:

First, win control of the House by as many seats as possible.

Democrats need to gain just three seats to take back the House. Right now, most political analysts believe we are favored to do it. The math is straightforward: hold the districts that already lean Democratic and win about half of the true toss-up seats.

That is happening in the middle of an aggressive redistricting fight. Republican legislatures in states like Texas, Missouri, North Carolina, Florida, and Ohio are trying to redraw congressional maps to make more seats safely Republican. Democrats, meanwhile, have responded with voter-approved redistricting changes in California that will create more favorable and competitive seats for Democrats.

At the same time, the battlefield itself is still changing. Court rulings and new maps could shift a handful of seats in either direction before November.

Some of those changes favor Republicans. The Virginia Supreme Court recently struck down the state's voter-approved redistricting referendum, which was a blow for Democrats (and a fight that's still ongoing). And the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Louisiana v. Callais*, which weakened key Voting Rights Act protections, has made it easier for Republican-controlled states to redraw districts in ways that could dismantle majority-Black districts, weaken Black voting power, and reduce Democratic representation in the years ahead.

But the bigger picture has not changed. Even if Republicans manage to redraw a handful of seats in their favor, **the national political environment is still strong enough that Democrats are the clear favorite to win back the House in 2026.**

That's why we can't settle for just winning the majority. We need to build a margin that can survive redistricting, future map challenges, and the political headwinds of governing. Every additional seat we

win this year is a buffer against the structural forces working against us. And every Democrat who wins in 2026 will build up name recognition, constituent relationships, campaign infrastructure, and fundraising networks that will be vital going into 2028.

Second, compete hard for control of the Senate.

The Senate is a harder fight. Republicans currently hold a 53–47 majority. Of the 35 seats up in 2026, 22 are held by Republicans and 13 by Democrats. Taking the Senate would therefore require protecting all the Democrats up for reelection and flipping 4 seats.

It'll be tough, but we believe that the Senate is in play for three reasons. First, the same national environment that's putting the House within reach is also putting pressure on Republican senators in states that aren't usually competitive. Second, several of the Republican incumbents facing reelection have liabilities that make them vulnerable in this political climate. Third, our Ground Truth program (which we describe in detail later) is specifically designed to reach voters that campaign field programs usually ignore—and that kind of expanded electorate is exactly what Senate races in tougher states require.

We're going to fight hard for the Senate because if we do win, the implications are profound: a Democratic Senate could block dangerous judicial and executive branch nominees through the end of Trump's term. And even if Democrats fall short of a Senate majority, every seat we can win matters enormously. The Senate seats we win in 2026 won't be up again until 2032, which means they lock in gains for years and will form part of the foundation for a governing majority if Democrats win the White House in 2028. A Democratic president taking office in 2029 needs a Senate that can confirm their nominees and pass legislation on day one.

Third, compete in the states.

State governments draw congressional districts, set voting rules, and have a tremendous impact on the lives of the people they govern. There are eight competitive gubernatorial races this year. In each

of those states, Democrats have an opportunity to either create a Democratic trifecta, or break or block a Republican one by winning the governorship. Because state legislatures also play a vital role in redistricting and protecting election integrity, we will announce a slate of key state legislative races across the country later this summer.

We only need to look at this year's redistricting battles to understand that control of the House and the White House will be significantly affected by who wins control of state governments this cycle. Our ability to fight back against Republican gerrymandering and voter suppression depends on having a strategy to win the states. And if Democrats want to rebuild trust with voters, we have to deliver when we're in power—which is often easier in state government than in the gridlocked federal government. Every gubernatorial race we win this year better positions us to protect fair elections going into 2028.

What comes next:

If we succeed in winning power in 2028, the challenge will be to maintain it. As the incumbent party, we'll face strong headwinds in the 2030 midterms. Unfortunately, that's also an especially critical election: following the 2030 Census, in each state, the party that wins majorities will also control redistricting, setting the rules of the game for the next decade. If we don't do everything we need to do now to win in 2030, we could see a repeat of the 2010 election, where Democrats were crushed in state government and Republicans effectively gerrymandered many states. (To learn more about the lessons of 2010, we strongly recommend David Daley's *Ratf**ked: The True Story Behind the Secret Plan to Steal America's Democracy*.)

Our goal is to get to 2032 having built as much federal and state-level power as possible, which will enable us to continue competing—and winning—despite increasingly challenging maps.

III: Our Plan

The Races We're Targeting and Why

Because more races are now competitive, more people can have more impact, in more places, than at any point since Trump was reelected. Swing Left is therefore expanding our House targets from 33 to 46, as well as adding 9 key Senate races and state-level targets that will shape the balance of power—and the rules of the game—for the next decade.

[As you can see on our website](#), we're splitting our targets into three categories:

Must-Flip and **Must-Hold** races are the ones we must win to control the House or Senate. Our goal is to win as close to 100% of these races as possible. These elections are where the balance of power will be decided, where falling short by even a few votes will have an outsized impact.

Reach Races are more of a stretch, but investment now could result in additional seats. We shouldn't expect to win every single one of these, yet it still makes sense to compete aggressively for each one. Doing so will lock in some key wins and, where we fall short, build the groundwork to win next time around.

Swing Left takes the art and the science of picking our targets seriously. We don't chase longshots and we don't invest in candidates just because they are going viral. Our team evaluates each race across four criteria:

- **District-level data:** past win/loss margins, voter turnout trends, and how the race has moved since 2024.
- **Structural factors:** redistricting changes, top-of-ticket dynamics, media market costs, and candidate quality.

- **Long-term potential:** places where support now can build momentum for future candidates, influence outcomes in the 2030 reapportionment, and create durable local infrastructure.
- **Grassroots capacity:** places where Swing Left has volunteer infrastructure, or where there is strategic rationale to grow it.

The Winning Combination

So how are we going to execute this strategy? Swing Left's work this year has two necessary pillars:

1: Channel volunteer energy into the highest impact voter contact opportunities. We'll do this primarily through Ground Truth, Swing Left's most ambitious organizing program yet. This massive volunteer-led listening program is a fundamentally new approach to how Democrats talk to voters. In the next section, we'll explain what it is, why we think it will work, and what we've learned so far. In addition to Ground Truth, when efficiencies or compliance rules require it, we'll continue to send volunteers directly to campaigns running traditional field operations.

2: Raise money to elect Democrats. We're building a fundraising machine to direct small-dollar donations to the races where grassroots resources will make the biggest difference.

Our goals for this cycle:

- Have **500,000 substantive conversations** with voters. (We're done setting goals around doors knocked and calls made. What matters is how many people we're actually reaching.)
- Raise **\$25,000,000 to help elect Democrats** in competitive elections.

IV: Ground Truth

What It Is

If you've canvassed for a political campaign before, you've probably had an experience something like this: You got a list of specific doors to knock on. If the person on your list answered the door, you asked them who they were voting for or you reminded them to vote and maybe handed them a piece of campaign literature. If a different person answered the door, you thanked them for their time and moved on, even if they were excited to talk to you. If you saw someone walking their dog or sitting in their front yard mid-canvass, you probably didn't engage them in conversation and might have even avoided eye contact because they weren't on your list. You were trained to stick to a fairly robotic script and discouraged from having deep, substantive conversations. Even if you had that kind of conversation, there was no way to make note of it in the canvassing app you were using—all you could do was check boxes for a couple of generic survey questions.

That's the standard approach: find Democratic voters in the last couple months of an election and remind them to vote. Stick to the script, emphasize efficiency, only talk to people on your list. Done well, it can be effective at increasing turnout and is an essential part of modern campaign strategy. But it can't solve all of Democrats' voter contact problems, and it suffers from some of its own:

First, we need to do more than mobilize Democrats to vote. We need to persuade disengaged nonvoters that participating in politics is worth it and that Democrats will deliver on their promises. And we need to persuade some disillusioned or disappointed Republicans and independents to vote for Democrats.

Second, the technology and data used for this kind of canvassing is broken. You can only collect data on people who are on your list, and the voter file data

you're working from is often wrong. As a result, you often don't even have a real conversation with half the people you try to talk to.

Third, this kind of canvassing doesn't meaningfully capture how voters are feeling or what they're experiencing. Its primary purpose is turnout, not deepened understanding. As a result, campaigns miss out on the kind of textured, grounded insight that should shape their strategy, broader messaging, and persuasion efforts.

Ground Truth is built around three innovations that will transform all of this:

First, we start early and talk to everyone—not just likely supporters. Traditional Democratic voter contact programs are powered by sophisticated statistical models that predict whether each voter is likely to vote for Democrats. Campaign field programs typically ramp up in the final stretch of the election and focus on those likely Democratic voters, reminding them to vote. That's the right thing to do in October when time is scarce, but no statistical model is perfectly accurate, so this approach misses lots of people whose votes we might win. Rather than waiting until late in the election cycle and relying on specific target lists, Ground Truth canvassers start months (and even a year) before the election, knock on every door in a targeted area, talk to every voter they can, find Democratic-leaning and swingable voters that other campaigns miss, and take the time to try to persuade people who aren't already with us.

Second, we ask questions, listen, and do the hard work to persuade. Ground Truth takes a research-informed approach to persuasion. Our conversations are typically 10 to 15 minutes long, structured around listening rather than lecturing. We do this not just because we're curious about the people we're talking to—though we are!—but also because listening is the foundation of effective political persuasion. The simple

act of showing up to listen is also fundamental to restoring trust in the damaged Democratic brand.

Third, we use new technology to turn conversations into strategic intelligence. Ground Truth isn't just about face-to-face persuasion. It's also a massive, volunteer-led public opinion research operation. Using the brand-new canvassing app that Swing Left helped develop, after each conversation, volunteers record a voice memo summarizing what the voter said. These memos are transcribed, analyzed using AI-powered technology, and converted into actionable information about voter sentiment. That data is then made available to Democratic campaigns and state parties so that it can inform campaign messaging and paid media.

This last point about giving campaigns access to our canvassing data is worth pausing on because it's a big deal. In the past, Swing Left couldn't run our own program and be in close coordination with our target campaigns because canvassing was considered a campaign contribution and would trigger contribution limits. That's why our previous model had always been to funnel volunteers into existing campaign infrastructure.

A 2024 Federal Election Commission advisory opinion changed all that, clarifying that canvassing does not constitute a "coordinated communication" under campaign finance law. This means Ground Truth can operate in direct coordination with candidate campaigns and party committees—sharing scripts, strategy, and data—without triggering contribution limits.

Swing Left is one of the first Democratic-aligned organizations in the country to take advantage of this new rule. Most other independent organizations that run canvassing programs are legally structured such that they are still not allowed to talk to or coordinate strategy with the candidates they're trying to help. We can. That means the voter intelligence that Ground Truth generates can flow directly to the campaigns, which can in turn act on it. The advisory opinion also means that we can design our canvassing program

hand-in-hand with campaigns rather than operating in a silo. And it means that when someone volunteers with Ground Truth, their work becomes part of a coordinated effort to win.

Deep Canvassing Can Persuade Voters

Swing Left developed Ground Truth based on two primary hypotheses about how to help win votes for Democrats in 2026, 2028, and beyond:

- 1. Empathetic face-to-face conversations with voters can win over people who don't typically vote for Democrats.**
- 2. Deep listening conversations can serve as a new kind of public opinion research,** collecting textured insights from hundreds of thousands of voter conversations and turning them into actionable information that helps Democratic candidates and leaders strengthen constituent relationships and improve their messaging.

This first hypothesis starts with a hard truth: we can no longer win just by turning out the Democratic base. We could win some elections some of the time, but we won't achieve ongoing public support and build large enough majorities to be able to govern. We also probably wouldn't survive redistricting after 2030. The math doesn't work if the only people voting for Democrats are people who already identify as Democrats. We need to reach people who've voted for Republicans and third party candidates, as well as people who've stopped voting entirely. And we need to persuade them to vote for Democrats repeatedly, in election after election. We need to shift the American electorate.

That may seem like a terrifying prospect. How do you persuade someone who voted for Trump? Why would someone who's given up on politics suddenly start participating again?

We believe the answer starts with something simple that politics has almost entirely abandoned: listening.

It's understandable to be angry and frustrated with people who—despite everything we're seeing—still vote for Republicans, or don't vote at all. But coalitions aren't fixed. As big believers in the organizing adage “no permanent allies, no permanent adversaries, just permanent interests,” and as devoted members of Team Win, we believe we need to figure out how to win some of them over. And we can't do that if we don't try to learn about them and attempt to empathize with their point of view, no matter how deeply we disagree with how they do or don't vote.

Some people who vote for Republicans or sit out elections have complex reasons for doing so. We know that because we've talked to thousands of them. While some MAGA diehards are essentially unpersuadable, there is a segment of people who voted for Trump because they thought the country was headed in the wrong direction and wanted a change. A lot of Democrats felt like the country was headed in the wrong direction too, but instead decided that Trump would make it worse.

And many nonvoters aren't apathetic. They've concluded, often with good reason, that nobody in power cares about them. And they aren't totally wrong. The system really is broken. Lots of people vote for Democrats or Republicans, or one and then the other, and don't see much change in their daily lives.

If we want to change people's minds, we have to start with curiosity and non-judgmental listening.

Ground Truth is based on a technique called “deep canvassing.” Deep canvassing emphasizes listening to voters and sharing our own perspectives and experiences in order to surface voters' conflicted feelings on an issue.

Rigorous scientific field experiments conducted by academics and progressive political organizations

have repeatedly shown that deep canvassing is a highly effective approach to political persuasion.

It's not always easy to suspend judgment and react with empathy. But if we don't, we won't win the new voters we need on our side given the structural obstacles we face through 2030.

Conversation Data Can Make Campaigns Smarter

Swing Left's second hypothesis for how Ground Truth will win Democratic votes is that the program can serve as a new kind of public opinion research tool that collects detailed, textured data from hundreds of thousands of voter conversations. This data can then be turned into actionable information that Democratic candidates and leaders can use to strengthen connections with their constituents and improve their messaging.

Since 2024, the Democratic Party has been consumed by a furious debate about what went wrong and what to do differently going forward. Some people argue that Democrats need to move left—embrace populist economics, fight harder against oligarchy, stop trying to be everything to everyone. Others argue that Democrats need to move to the center—moderate on cultural issues, rebuild appeal with working-class voters, stop alienating the middle of the electorate. Every faction has its theory. Every theory has its polls and its anecdotes.

Instead, Swing Left is issuing a broad invitation: get outside your media bubble and talk to people who do not spend all day thinking about politics. The answers to the big questions before our country and world won't magically appear on a cable news panel or social media feed. They'll run through regular people, whose views are complicated, nuanced, and constantly changing.

We're not ideological. We know that Swing Left's volunteers and donors often disagree about which policy positions make Democrats most competitive. We believe you can't figure it out by debating it on the internet

or testing your theory at the ballot box every two years. All of us have to go listen to voters, not just occasionally, but all the time and at scale. And polling isn't sufficient; we need to have meaningful back-and-forth interactions with people, asking open-ended questions and letting them say what they think in their own words.

By using AI to synthesize and analyze the data from thousands of voter conversations, Ground Truth will be an important supplement to traditional polling and focus groups. Polling is effective at answering specific questions, but it doesn't excel at surfacing what is already on people's minds, or the deep contradictions in values that lead people to the decisions they make in elections and on issues. Focus groups do this well, but are expensive, timebound, and limited to a small sample.

This on-the-ground information about what real people in their jurisdictions are thinking and saying can help candidates craft better messages and make better paid media decisions—and help candidates stay deeply rooted in what their voters are feeling and experiencing, however fluid, idiosyncratic, and complex those might be. And all of that will lead to rebuilding trust and securing the votes needed to win durably.

What We've Learned So Far

Ground Truth began with a pilot program in the fall of 2025, and has since expanded across our target races as we move toward full scale ahead of the midterms. Here's what we've learned from the thousands of conversations we've had so far (if you'd like to go deeper, [read our detailed Q1 2026 report.](#))

People across party affiliation, geography, and demographics are eager to talk.

- Ground Truth canvassers have maintained an extremely high conversation rate—more than 7 in 10 people who answered the door engaged in substantive conversations.
- Conversations are much longer than those in traditional voter contact campaigns;

for example, in recent phonebanks calling Alaskans, conversations averaged 9 minutes long.

Ground Truth is successfully mapping a persuasion audience typically skipped over by Democratic campaigns.

- Roughly 40% of our conversations happened at doors Democrats would never normally knock on.
- AI analysis of those interactions identifies a significant population of “Disillusioned but Reachable” voters, “Dissatisfied Republicans,” and “Waning Democrats” who are ripe for follow-up persuasion touches across campaign tactics.

Ground Truth is generating a new kind of political intelligence: scaled qualitative data that tracks voter sentiment in real time and longitudinally, complementing polling and focus group data.

- “System Integrity & Trust” has been the defining concern across nearly every district and demographic group since September, reflecting deep disillusionment with the two parties and our country's institutions.
- “Immigration & Border” surged following the escalation of ICE operations in January, then pulled back as “International Conflicts” emerged from zero and climbed sharply after the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February.
- “Cost of Living & Inflation” is a consistent top theme and showed a steady upward trend throughout the program—suggesting deepening economic anxiety even as more acute crises compete for attention.

Volunteers keep coming back for more.

- With the average volunteer ranking their likelihood of recommending the program at 9.1 out of 10, Ground Truth is proving that deep listening doesn't just generate better data—it generates a more motivated, higher-retention volunteer base than traditional canvassing.
- When volunteers feel the impact of their conversations, they don't just finish a shift—they sign up for the next one, enabling the program to grow in volume and quality.

What it all means: These findings support what we said above—Democrats can't win by talking only to people who already agree with them, voters are hungry to be heard, and the frustration with the political system runs deep across party lines. If Democrats want to break the doom loop of anti-incumbent backlash, they have to rebuild trust. That starts with listening.



How Ground Truth Changes the Game

Winning long-term requires significant changes in how the Democratic Party interacts with voters. We can't win if we don't admit that a lot is broken. That's not disloyalty, it's honesty. And while it may upset some of our friends and allies, we owe our community the truth.

We see this election as a proof-of-concept for Ground Truth. We're building a program designed to win this year, but it's also a model for how campaigns should work that we hope the rest of the party will adopt.

The 2028 presidential primary will be a vehicle for change. The Democratic presidential primary, which will begin in earnest next year, is the single biggest opportunity to transform how the party operates. A large field of Democrats will be competing to win voters in early primary states. Some of the biggest organizing, technology, and data innovations of the last twenty years have emerged from competitive Democratic primaries. We expect 2028 to be no different.

Our theory of change is this: if we prove there is a new and better model for campaigning—one that reaches more voters, produces more useful data, and wins more elections—presidential campaigns will adopt it.

Presidential nominees remake the party from the top down. They spend more money than any other campaign. They hire more staff. They have tremendous influence on what downballot candidates do. A nominee who runs on the Ground Truth model doesn't just change one campaign; they change the ecosystem. That's how Ground Truth becomes more than a program for 2026. It's an attempt to change how Democrats do politics. Here are the changes we envision:

- **Change tactics.** Democratic campaigns start talking to voters way too late. They rely on brief, scripted interactions. They only talk to people already in their voter file as likely supporters. Ground Truth changes all of this.
- **Improve data and tech.** The voter file is a valuable tool, but the way campaigns currently use it actually prevents them from talking to people. It forces a narrow set of interactions—mark down a few survey responses, move to the next door. Ground Truth's technology stack is designed to be flexible: it can ingest qualitative data from real conversations, match it to voter records where possible, and surface insights that traditional tools miss.
- **Shift culture.** For too long, campaigns have treated volunteers as interchangeable inputs, handing them a walk list and pushing them out the door. Ground Truth institutionalizes things that good volunteers have always done against the wishes of campaigns: talking to people who aren't on the list but want to interact, knocking on a door because there's a yard sign outside, having a real conversation instead of reading a script. We're finally saying: the things canvassers do that are intuitive and human? Those are the things we want them to do.

- **Increase transparency.** Many Democratic Party-aligned organizations don't share what was and wasn't effective with their programs. In part, that's because not everything works, and it's not easy to tell donors, staff, and volunteers that their efforts didn't translate into netting votes for Democrats. However, political campaigns are powered by millions of regular people, and we have a duty to be honest and transparent with them, like when our nonpartisan affiliate, Vote Forward, publicly shared that its letter-writing program didn't have a statistically measurable effect on turnout in 2024. This cycle, Swing Left is committed to measuring the efficacy of our new and experimental tactics, sharing the results, and applying the lessons we learn in 2028.

Why scale matters:

If we run a small, innovative program and it works, that's nice, but it won't change anything. What we're building is a nationwide machine, unprecedented in scale in the Democratic Party, that kicks open the door in a stuffy room and lets in fresh air: the actual views, concerns, and lived experiences of the voters whose support we need to win.

Imagine thousands of volunteers in competitive districts across the country, having hundreds of thousands of deep conversations with voters, feeding that data in real time to campaigns and party committees. Imagine candidates and strategists making decisions not based on last cycle's voter file or a poll of 800 people, but on thousands of qualitative conversations with the actual voters they need to persuade. Imagine the Democratic Party not guessing what voters care about, but knowing—because we went and asked them.

That's what Ground Truth at scale looks like. And the data our volunteers collect doesn't stay locked up; it flows to state parties and candidate campaigns, improving the voter file for the entire Democratic ecosystem. We can push on the whole infrastructure by having an exemplary model that people look to for inspiration, by generating a massive amount of canvassing data and sharing it broadly, and by demonstrating that there's a different and better way to do this work.



V: Getting to Work

How to Be Meaningfully Involved

Everything we've described in this document depends on regular people who care about the country getting involved and working together to make it happen. And we don't mean in the vague, aspirational sense that organizations usually mean when they say that. In the concrete, operational sense, **none of what we described above will happen without tens of thousands of people knocking on doors, making phone calls, and donating.**

There are four strategic ways to contribute:

1. **[Knock on doors or make phone calls with Ground Truth.](#)** This is the single most impactful thing you can do.
2. **[Contribute to Democratic candidates in competitive races.](#)** Early money is a force multiplier.
3. **[Donate to Swing Left.](#)** Your support makes Ground Truth possible as we work to expand across the country and build a year-round organizing machine.
4. **[Start or join a Swing Left group.](#)** Our local groups are the backbone of how we organize at scale.



The political environment for the 2026 midterms is favorable, but winning one election isn't enough. Swing Left wants to be a leader in breaking the cycle. This requires a new strategy—one that treats 2026 and 2028 as a single fight, invests in a fundamentally new approach to voter contact, and builds the infrastructure for lasting power.

We're asking our members to do hard things. We're asking because it matters, and because one of our deepest values as an organization is that we will always be honest about what it will take to win, and we will always be strategic about directing people's time and money where it will have the greatest impact. That's how real, long-lasting change will happen.





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