

Taking Back the House

Our Mission: To take back the House of Representatives in 2018 for Democrats.

How We'll Do It: By directing the massive energy of the Left to the places and actions that have the most impact on the midterm elections.

In November 2018, we'll have the chance to win back the House of Representatives for Democrats. At Swing Left, we believe this is single most important thing we can do right now to put a check on Trump and the GOP.

Imagine if Democrats took control of the House. We'd have:

- A check on harmful Republican policies, from healthcare, to immigration, to the environment and civil rights
- Real investigations that hold the Trump administration accountable
- Democratic leaders who will fight for our civil rights, our economic rights and the heart and soul of our democracy

The challenge

The progressive movement has a geography problem. Although we have a wealth of resources—education, activism, cultural capital, and actual money—most of us are clustered in deep blue urban areas, from New York to Minneapolis to Denver to LA.

How bad is our clustering problem? In the last election, 48 percent of voters cast ballots for Democratic House candidates while 49 percent cast votes for Republican candidates. Despite these razor-thin margins, the GOP controls 241 seats in the House to the Democrats' 194. And, of course, gerrymandering has made the problem even worse, with Republican-controlled state legislatures redrawing state and federal district lines to disenfranchise voters of color and working people of all backgrounds.

None of this is new. What is new is Donald Trump, and the mass expansion of progressive activism that followed his ascension. But given that a great deal of this energy is concentrated in the same urban centers where so many progressives live, there is a real risk that the energy of the Resistance will not translate into votes where we need them.

In 2017, millions marched. But in 2018, will they be working to elect Democrats in the districts that matter the most?

This is the problem Swing Left is built to solve.

The strategy

How can millions of energized progressives make a difference in districts in which many of us do not live?

The answer is simple: by getting out the vote among people who share our values.

We know there are enough Democratic voters living in Swing Districts to win. Typical presidential election turnout is around 60%, while midterm turnout hovers around 35%. If all the Hillary Clinton voters turned out and voted for a Democrat, and Republicans voted at typical midterm levels, we wouldn't just win the 24 seats we need to take back the House. We'd win 120. (Not that we expect this to happen, but hey, we can dream!)

Right, then, you say. Getting Out The Vote (GOTV for political nerds) is the answer. That will happen in November of 2018. Is there anything I can do to make a difference now?

To that we say: hell yeah.

How we'll win: Three ways

Our strategy for taking back the House boils down to three big ways we can win: voter contact, grassroots fundraising, and cultural mobilization. Together, these three actions will help get out the left-leaning vote in Swing Districts across the country.

1. Voter Contact

What: Build the biggest grassroots Swing District voter contact machine the country has ever seen.

Why: Nothing has been found to be more effective at turning out voters than face-to-face conversations at the door¹. And the volunteers who show up to canvass now will become the leaders we need to scale operations next fall when it matters the most. That's why Swing Left's organizing team and thousands of grassroots volunteers has been focused on voter contact events (canvasses, phone banks, voter registration) since February 2017.

There's another critical component to Swing Left's voter contact strategy. It's exciting and frankly gets us a little tingly when we think about it. Are you ready? Here it is:

Swing Left speaks directly with the campaigns we're supporting.

1. Studies vary, but a conversation at the door generally increases the chance that someone will vote by more than 4 percent. Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout

What, that doesn't sound exciting? Because of the ways our laws work, it actually is. Campaign finance laws prohibit most grassroots organizations from coordinating directly with campaigns. That leads to a cluster#\$\$% in the two weeks before an election, with some voters getting their doors knocked by 10 different groups and other voters going uncontacted.

But we're different. After the primaries are over, Swing Left volunteers, district teams, and organizers will work directly with campaigns to support their needs and priorities. That means we will be the conduit for all out-of-district activists to get involved in the races that matter most for 2018.

How to Turn Out the Vote: Visit swingleft.org/take-action

2. Grassroots Fundraising

What: Raise as much money as possible for the Democratic candidate in each of our Swing Districts, as early as possible, through District Funds.

Why: Money matters in elections. Most of us know that intuitively, and when it comes to flipping House seats, it's backed up by science, too². Swing Left's District Funds are pots of money, raised in advance, for the eventual Democratic nominee in each Swing District. The money is delivered immediately to incumbents in Democratic-held districts, and held in escrow for the eventual winners of open primaries.

District Funds are a potentially game-changing form of small-dollar fundraising:

- **Money only goes to the winning candidates.** Rather than fund a specific candidate who may or may not win the primary—but who will almost certainly spend all money raised before then—we can raise money for nominees in all of our districts starting now. This is critical since general election campaigns can be really short—some of our districts don't have their primaries until September 2018!
- **The earlier the candidates get the money, the better.** Hiring new staff, buying ads, and other campaign spending is often more effective when it's done six months as opposed to six weeks before the election. And nominees usually emerge from primaries cash poor, while their incumbent opponent has been amassing funds for years.
- **Small dollars are more powerful than large dollars.** Super PACs aren't all they're cracked up to be. There's a reason candidates spend a ton of time soliciting direct contributions: money donated directly to the candidate can fund campaign staff and purchase ads at significantly reduced rates—neither of which Super PAC/large dollar money can do. District Fund donations are sent directly to the nominees' campaigns, to be spent however they feel is best.

How To Donate or Fundraise for Candidates: Visit swingleft.org/fundraise

2. According to an analysis of the 2014 midterm elections "a well-financed challenger is more important than a well-financed incumbent...If the election is in a competitive district, the challenger candidate's spending has a larger effect." Fair Vote

3. Cultural Mobilization

What: Build a cultural moment around the 2018 midterm elections on a scale usually reserved for presidential elections.

Why: Potential volunteers aren't going to go talk to strangers about politics or open their wallets in a vacuum. We need to educate people who want to make a difference about why this election is so important and how they can get involved.

To drive the kind of grassroots activism and fundraising we need to win, the 2018 midterm elections need to feel like a really big deal—as important as a presidential election, if not more so. We need everyone, from public figures to grassroots storytellers, talking about #WhyTheHouse is so important and how people can get involved.

Important note: the goal of our cultural mobilization is not to convince people in our liberal echo chambers to go out and vote for Democrats (because they probably already will), but to convince them to go talk to voters in Swing Districts and donate to Swing District Democrats. It's a small but absolutely crucial distinction, as every person who gets involved with Swing Left has a multiplier effect on these races.

How To Spread the Word: [Share our video](#)

Our timeline

Pre-Primary: Now Until Spring/Summer 2018

In the warm summer months of 2017, we were focused on getting as many people as possible knocking doors and talking to voters in their closest Swing Districts. As the weather turns colder (making canvassing harder) and the primaries approach, we are making a big push on fundraising for candidates. Simply put, we think now is the most strategic time for people to be donating to and raising money for these nominees we will all start getting to know starting in March of 2018. Keep an eye out for a number of innovative ways to fundraise for these candidates we will be rolling out over the next few months.

Of course, we will continue pushing on all three fronts, with phone-banking parties to contact voters, continued canvasses in the warmer states, new creative content, and other yet-to-be-announced initiatives.

Post-Primary: Summer and Fall 2018

The pre-to-post primary shift will take place over several months, from March to September. As we start to know our nominees, all three of our actions will be important. On the fundraising side, we still have time to raise the early money that is most useful to candidates. For voter contact, our district teams will begin to integrate with the nominees' campaigns and get out in the field on their behalf. And on the cultural front, we have the opportunity to uplift and define our Swing District candidates in the public eye before the Republican ad blitzes roll in.

Get Out the Vote: The Last Few Weeks Before Election Day (November 6, 2018)

This is when our cultural mobilization efforts bear fruit. But the key distinction is that instead of everybody sharing on social media how and where to vote, we want people talking about how and where to volunteer for Swing District Democrats.

Because when it comes to the weeks leading up to Election Day, donating is good, but nothing is more important than voter contact. Our district teams have been working since February of 2017 building the volunteer infrastructure necessary to drive and ride this wave into the greatest grassroots voter contact effort Swing Districts have ever seen. These few weeks are when it all comes together.

This is how we win.

**Now You've Read the Plan.
Are You Ready to Help Take
Back the House?**

Let's Get Started!

swingleft.org/take-action

PRE-PRIMARY / Now until Spring/Summer 2018

VOTER CONTACT

Start Talking to Voters

- Register voters and collect vote pledges
- Build District Teams

FUNDRAISING

Go Big on District Funds

- Host fundraisers
- Donate online

MOBILIZATION

Focus on Midterms

- Share #WhyTheHouse stories
- Highlight bad behavior of GOP incumbents

POST-PRIMARY / Summer and Fall 2018

VOTER CONTACT

Connect to Campaigns

- Support campaigns' priorities
- Canvassers become canvass leaders

FUNDRAISING

Support Candidates

- Support early hiring and ads
- Fundraise directly for nominees

MOBILIZATION

Build Momentum

- Celebrate our Democratic nominees
- Connect voices to campaigns

GOTV TIME / The last few weeks before Election Day (11/6/18)

VOTER CONTACT

Harness the Wave

- Organize transportation to districts
- Unleash an army of leaders

FUNDRAISING

Strategic Support

- Close funding gaps
- Channel donations to the tightest races

MOBILIZATION

Momentum → Turnout

- Create presidential-level excitement
- Get Out The Volunteers