



2016 ELECTION PRINCIPLES

# Lessons *from the* Last Three Elections

NEWT GINGRICH



## **2016 Election Principles**

### ***Lessons from the Last Three Elections***

#### **Foreword**

*by Chairman Reince Priebus of the Republican National Committee*

Ever since the disappointing loss in the 2012 presidential campaign, the Republican National Committee has had an intense interest in understanding how modern campaigning is evolving.

Our first major effort was the Growth and Opportunity Project. Its report led to serious strategic changes in how the RNC approaches campaigns. We created a unique field organization unlike anything the GOP had ever built. We developed new approaches to data management, social media, and big data. We helped other Republican organizations with new knowledge, new insight and, in many cases, new resources.

Working with our partners at the RGA, NRSC, NRCC, and RSLC, we developed a very aggressive, early, and targeted approach for 2014.

Today the GOP is the majority party at every level except the presidency.

While the news media has ignored or discounted the extraordinary gains that began in 2010 and accelerated in 2014 and 2015 (and in special elections since then), it is a fact that Republicans enter the 2016 campaign with more office holders than at any point in the party's history.

The challenge now is to apply the lessons of a constantly evolving political process to winning the 2016 election at every level including the presidency.

The Republican National Committee's goal is to accelerate the replacement of bad government with victories at every level, from the most local race to the presidential campaign.

If President Obama used new technologies brilliantly in 2008 and 2012, we are determined to build on those achievements and field a Republican campaign that is even more effective than the President's was.

In order to build on our post-2012 efforts at the RNC, I asked former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and his team to do a thorough review of the changing patterns of effective campaigns.

Since I first encountered Newt's work as a teenage Republican driving around Wisconsin and listening to GOPAC training tapes, I have watched his continuing efforts to build a permanent Republican governing majority. I knew that he and his longtime partner in political campaigns, Joe Gaylord, have more than a century of political experience between them. Their design of the 1994 Contract with America campaign remains a classic study in effective campaign design and implementation. With their associates, they interviewed an extraordinary range of people and examined the major emerging trends in campaigns and elections.

They have produced an outline of what they learned in the form of principles for modern campaigns. Every candidate, campaign manager and consultant should read this document.

A Republican Party that learns and applies these principles will turn purple states red and blue states purple.

We have the opportunity in 2016 to prove that the 84-year era of the Democratic majority (dating back to President Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1932) is finally over.

We have the potential to have a Republican president, a Republican Senate, a Republican House and Republicans in governorships, state legislatures and local governments work together to apply sound principles to getting America on a track to prosperity, safety, limited government, and freedom.

This report, *2016 Election Principles*, is based on an in depth analysis of the 2012, 2014, and 2015 elections at every level.

Our goal at the RNC will be to get as many Republican candidates, party leaders, campaign workers, consultants, pollsters and interested Republicans as possible to read and learn these lessons.

We believe this is a great beginning to what could be an incredible, historic year of Republican opportunity.

## **Introduction**

by Newt Gingrich

We are in the early stages of a revolution in campaigning, politics and elections.

That revolution first appeared with MoveOn.org, the Howard Dean campaign of 2004, and the Bush campaign's micro-targeting the same year.

It accelerated dramatically with the 2008 Obama campaign, which was brilliantly explained by the campaign manager, David Plouffe, in his book *The Audacity to Win*.

By 2012, Republicans had begun to understand that they were campaigning in a new world, but the difference in social media, data analytics, and overall strategies of the Obama and Romney campaigns led to a Republican defeat that surprised many Republicans (including me).

Twelve years after the first glimmerings of this emerging world in 2004, it is clear that many profound changes are still underway.

What is striking to Joe Gaylord and me was how widespread these changes are. Running a modern campaign is not simply a matter of adding social media or better data on top of the old methods. There are a host of changes underway that go to the very basics of how campaigns are run. The party that best understands and adapts to them is going to have a decisive advantage.

To put it in our personal context, Gaylord and I agree that if we attempted to run the Contract with America campaign today, we would simply be annihilated. We would resemble a mid-size college football team trying to compete in the Super Bowl. Campaigns are bigger, faster, and more expensive; they use new and different technologies that require new knowledge.

This is not a final report. It is a work in progress. The new political environment and new capabilities are going to continue to evolve.

As a result, Republicans should plan to review their campaign practices after every election to ensure that we are capturing the changes in technology, in strategy, and in what our opponents both in the Democratic Party and in the larger system of the Left are doing.

Each new set of lessons learned should be integrated into the training and briefing programs leading to the next election.

Our primary sponsor in this project has been Chairman Reince Priebus and the Republican National Committee. We have also received key support from Matt Walter and the Republican State Leadership Committee. We have received tremendous cooperation from the NRCC, NRSC, and from key leaders in campaigns, SuperPACs, and a variety of political firms.

In addition to Joe Gaylord's expertise, this report draws heavily on the work of Ross Worthington and Vince Haley at Gingrich Productions and of Anthony Duhon at the RNC.

At the end of the report is an appendix acknowledging a wide range of contributors.

While dozens of people advised on the contents of the report, the final product is my responsibility.

We look forward to your comments and suggestions.

## **Proposition**

The 2016 election will be a contest of historic opportunity and unusual importance for the Republican Party. The GOP has both the potential and the need to develop a national campaign in 2016—one that combines widespread inclusion of ethnic groups, the use of modern technology and information systems, and the development of an effective national campaign narrative. Such a campaign could lead to a stunning Republican victory from state legislatures to the presidency.

The lessons of the 2014 and 2015 elections in particular offer insights into how a national Republican campaign could create a new Republican majority with a decisive mandate to end the 84-year-old Roosevelt majority and replace it with a limited, Constitutional government that works.

This opportunity is much larger than just the presidential campaign, and offers an opportunity for every Republican candidate at every level.

The Obama administration's failures of both performance and policy--combined with the radicalism of its goals--have created this opportunity, because they have led so many Americans to want dramatic change.

The Republican opportunity has also been strengthened and expanded because of the Republican National Committee's Growth and Opportunity Project and the bold changes which grew out of it and which Chairman Priebus has implemented vigorously.

The proposed principles in this report should be read in this framework of unprecedented nationwide opportunity for a historic Republican victory.

## **New Opportunities for Republicans at the State Level**

President Obama has done more to grow the Republican Party than any Democratic president in our history.

According to the Gallup Poll, the country has gone from 35 clearly Democrat states and five clearly Republican states in 2008 (as measured by party affiliation), to 14 Democrat states and 20 Republican states in 2015. That is a dramatic swing in the Republican direction.

### *Political Composition of the 50 U.S. States*

Based on annual state averages of party affiliation from Gallup Daily tracking

District of Columbia not included

	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15
Solid Democratic	29	23	13	11	13	12	11	11
Lean Democratic	6	10	9	7	6	5	6	3
Competitive	10	12	18	15	19	19	18	16
Lean Republican	1	1	5	7	3	2	5	8
Solid Republican	4	4	5	10	9	12	10	12
Total Democratic	35	33	22	18	19	17	17	14
Total Republican	5	5	10	17	12	14	15	20
Net Democratic	+30	+28	+12	+1	+7	+3	+2	-6

Notes:

-- Solid states are defined as those in which one party has at least a 10-percentage-point advantage over the other in party affiliation (identification + leaning).

-- Leaning states are those in which one party has more than a 5-point but less than a 10-point advantage in party affiliation.

-- Competitive states are those in which the parties are within 5 points of each other in party affiliation.

**GALLUP**

Source: [Gallup](#)

This shift has been reflected in election results at every level. Since President Obama's election in 2008, we have gone from:

- 22 to 31 Republican governors, for a gain of 9.
- 22 to 32 Republican lieutenant governors, for a gain of 10.
- 18 to 27 Republican attorneys general, for a gain of 9.

The GOP has also seen historic growth in state legislatures. Under Obama, the GOP went from 3,223 Republican legislators and 4,082 Democrat legislators at the beginning of the Obama administration to a complete reversal, with 4,113 Republicans and 3,165 Democrats.

Republicans gained 890 legislative seats since the first Obama election. The Democrats had a net loss of 917 seats. (The difference between net gains for Republicans and net losses for Democrats is a result of vacancies and the election of independents. Nebraska is nonpartisan and doesn't count for either party.)

To get a sense of the depth of the Democratic Party's decay at the state legislative level in the Obama era, consider that since President Obama took office, 85 of 98 legislative bodies have become more Republican than they were when he was inaugurated.



Even at the micro level, the damage to the Democrat party is apparent. Many counties in the rural South have dramatically shifted away from the Democrats. For example, in Texas this drastic shift has occurred since 2010, wiping out many Democrat elected officials like justices of the peace, constables, sheriffs, county commissioners, and county judges. These local offices are the stepping stones to positions in state legislatures, and Republicans have made many gains in the past three election cycles that will have repercussions for years to come. The traditional Southern Democrat voter is going extinct.

The Obama legacy is the destruction of the Democratic Party's farm team in the states. This could become a historic problem for Democrats as aspiring candidates decide they must run as Republicans if they want to win. That would reverse the pattern of Democratic dominance which has held since the first Roosevelt election in 1932.

The Republican gains in the states have resulted in some promising demographic progress—both in terms of candidates and in election results. For instance, there are 140 new Republican women state legislators. Other examples include:

Beth Martinez Humenik won the deciding seat for the Republican majority in the Colorado Senate. She won a 23.04 percent Hispanic district by 1.7 percent. She had 25 percent of the non-white vote in September polling.

In the seat that decided control of the Nevada Senate, Becky Harris had 38 percent of the Hispanic vote in the last October tracking poll.

Young Kim won a California Assembly district by 12 points that Romney had lost by 6 points.

Janet Nguyen won a previously Democratic California state Senate seat by 19 points and is the first Vietnamese woman to serve in the California Senate.

Rene Plasencia won a Florida House seat Romney had lost by more than 21 points.

Niraj Antani won by more than 29 points to become the first Indian-American Republican in the Ohio House and its youngest member.

Jill Upson won by more than 12 points to become the first African American Republican woman in the West Virginia House and help the GOP take control for the first time since 1928.

And now the unprecedented Republican opportunity has come to Washington. The U.S. House of Representatives has more Republican members than any time since 1928. The Senate has been a lagging indicator because of bad candidates in 2010 and 2012. But in 2014, the more aggressive campaign paid off and the Senate is now also Republican. (And you could argue that with better candidates in those '12 and '14, the Senate would now have a 59 seat Republican majority and be virtually unchallengeable.)

## **Republican Growth Continues in 2015**

During the period in which this report was being written, Republicans have elected Janice Frey Van Ness to the Georgia state Senate in a special election, defeating a Democrat member of

the state House in a district that is 61 percent African American and that had voted for President Obama by 72 percent.

That most recent result followed the general pattern of Election Day 2015.

In November, we saw a stunning upset in Kentucky, electing the state's second Republican Governor in Kentucky in more than 40 years. Lieutenant Governor Jenean Hampton's win on the same ticket made her the first African American from either party elected statewide in Kentucky history. In addition, consider the following results at the state level, according to the Republican State Leadership Committee:

- New York Senate candidate Fred Akshar won the special election in District 52 (Binghamton and surrounding areas) with more than 76 percent of the vote in a district Obama won in 2012.
- In candidate rematches from 2014, Maine Republicans picked up both state House special elections in Obama- carried districts. These victories will give Republicans 69 of 151 seats. Heading into the 2016 elections the margin is also important since a joint session of the Senate and House select the state's Attorney General and Secretary of State. With a 20-15 Republican majority in the Senate, Republicans are within four net seats of half of the total Maine state House.
- Republicans also flipped a Democratic Senate seat with Guy Reschenthaler's victory in Pennsylvania District 37 to expand an Obama- blue state Republican legislative majority. In a state that elected a new Democrat Governor in November 2014, Republicans gained net seats in both chambers that Election night and have flipped seats in both chambers in special elections in 2015 including winning a House seat in Philadelphia with first time 26-year-old candidate Martina White earlier in the year.
- The special election in Washington House District 30B (outside Tacoma) marked a GOP pickup by first-time candidate Teri Hickel, which will move that chamber one seat away from a split chamber. This is the sixth straight election year, including odd year specials like this one, with GOP net gains in the state House. The ten-point Republican margin of victory exceeded all expectations for how competitive this race was supposed to be.

These promising results indicate that the march away from the Obama-led Democratic Party continued even in recent months.

## **Developing Campaign Principles**

We are in the middle of a revolution in the process of developing and electing candidates. Almost every aspect of campaigning is being changed by new technologies, new demographics, new media, and new cultural patterns. In addition, the structures of organizing campaigns, from the national parties to SuperPACs, are also changing in unpredictable ways. And of course, there is a larger environment created by the confluence of these developments that we have never had before. They make all campaigns, in some sense, part of a truly national effort.



The campaigns that elected Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the first Republican House in 40 years in the 1994 Contract with America campaign would be too small, too underfunded, and too slow to compete in the election environment that is emerging.

It is vital that we understand this new world, while also recognizing that it is still just beginning to emerge. No one should believe that the campaign principles in this report are the final pattern that we can memorize and execute.

These principles are steps toward a future to which we must constantly adapt; in which technology will continue to evolve, campaign sophistication will continue to improve, candidates will continue to learn and voters' interactions with the election process will continue to change.

These principles, then, are more like trail markers than instructions for assembly. Many of the opportunities and challenges Republican candidates will encounter are still unknowable, and some of these principles will doubtless be reshaped by technologies and events which have not yet occurred.

The candidates, campaign managers, consultants, and party leaders of the next few elections must be among the most pioneering and creative in American history.

## **Principles for Planning the 2016 General Election Campaign**

The election environment is rapidly changing, but nonetheless the developments we see emerging suggest a wide range of new insights and principles. We believe these principles apply at every level of politics, from the most local to the presidential.

These principles are not ranked in a priority list. In different situations, some will be more important than others.

Consider this a preliminary report, and please let us know what we have missed, what you think is wrong or needs restating, and how you would organize the principles into a logical, effective and teachable pattern. You can send ideas, critiques, and suggestions to [newt@GingrichProductions.com](mailto:newt@GingrichProductions.com).

## **Words and Ideas Matter**

1. **The wrong words cripple or kill.** At least 5 Republican Senate candidates (Delaware, Missouri, Nevada, Indiana, Colorado) were defeated in 2010 and 2012 because they used language in a way that isolated them and alienated voters. If they had won—and all of those races were winnable—those five would make the current Republican Senate majority secure. Democrat candidates have had their own trouble with language. In Colorado and Iowa in 2014, Democrats used the wrong language and made their defeat more likely. Thinking through the concepts and words to avoid can be a key to avoiding defeat.
2. **The right big idea or ideas, expressed in clear and simple language with the right tone, can win campaigns.** Larry Hogan's intense focus on cutting taxes while refusing to comment on controversial issues propelled him to a shockingly large and unexpected victory as Governor of Maryland. Maine Governor Paul LePage's focus on welfare reform won the votes

of a decisive block of voters that may have been the margin of victory in his reelection. And Matt Bevin's focus on reform and smaller government led him to a stunning and surprisingly large victory in the Kentucky governor's race.

The right ideas can act as shields against attacks in addition to defining a positive vision. In Colorado, Cory Gardner seized the initiative and defined women's health on his terms before the left could push him into a "War on Women" defensive position. That focus on ideas, language, and tone was worth more than all of the defensive ads he could have bought after he was negatively defined. It may have clinched his election to the Senate.

### **3. Big Ideas can attract donations and the lack of ideas can make money irrelevant.**

The presidential nominating race has been a case study in the power of ideas to reshape the political landscape. Bernie Sanders used a pro big-government, anti-Wall Street mantra to inspire two million donors and raise more money than Hillary Clinton. It was the combination of big ideas, a winning personality and the internet that created the insurgency on the left. Among Republicans, Jeb Bush's initial massive financial advantage had no impact because it was not attached to ideas as big as the bank account. Donald Trump has been a front-runner since the day he announced because he focused on several big ideas and a general tone which attracted a substantial minority of the GOP in a field of 17 candidates. And Ted Cruz has combined a focus on conservative ideas with a very sophisticated campaign to remain in contention as a possible nominee.

## **Candidates**

- 1. The internet makes good candidates more important than ever.** Because Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other forms of social media allow people to see candidates over and over, to get a much more detailed and nuanced sense of who candidates are, and (unfortunately) to see even their most minor mistakes, it is difficult to overstate the importance of good and authentic candidates in the internet age. Candidate recruitment—including recruitment of women and minority candidates—is an important task in the years ahead.

Social media--reinforced by television, 24-hour cable news and talk radio--creates an intimacy that makes the candidate even more central to the campaign. If there is a big gap between the candidate and the advertising, it is the candidate and not the advertising that will be dominant in people's interpretation of the campaign (a complete reversal of the old patterns of TV advertising). This is why some candidates can spend a lot of money and have very little impact while others can use social media and 24/7 news and radio and have an enormous impact with relatively little money.

In addition, as a result of the same developments, we may also be dealing with much more sophisticated voters who are much better at analyzing and discussing campaigns than they were a generation ago. Perhaps "reality" shows have created a participatory audience accustomed to using campaign information differently than anything we have previously experienced. Think of "American President" as a variation on "American Idol" and the voters' conversations and processing of campaigns may become more understandable.

- 2. Opposition research and electronic trackers will become steadily more important.** The work of America Rising is an example of a system that helped defeat a number of Democrats

by taping and using their own words against them. Every serious campaign will have a significant tracking system for its opponents and the campaign committees will be forced to develop ever more extensive tracking capabilities themselves. Candidates will have to learn discipline and constant awareness if they are to survive that kind of scrutiny.

In 2014 a number of Democrats running important races suffered significant damage when their own statements were captured on video by a tracker or citizen using a smartphone to record them. Bruce Braley, running for a U.S. Senate seat in Iowa, [disparaged](#) Senator Chuck Grassley before an audience of trial lawyers in Texas, calling him an Iowa farmer without a law degree. Greg Orman, running for Senate in Kansas, [refused](#) to tell a voter whether he would vote to repeal Obamacare. Both videos had significant effects on the races in those states.

- 3. Training our own candidates to avoid major mistakes becomes a much more important requirement for an effective campaign.** The self-inflicted wounds of at least five GOP senate candidates in 2010 and 2012 likely postponed Republican control of the Senate by four years and narrowed dramatically the size of the Republican majority when it did occur.

The NRSC responded to these painful failures by setting up in-house trackers who ambushed GOP candidates to give them practice, and then forced the candidates to watch themselves fail to handle the attacks. Some candidates were irritated by being made to look foolish, but it clearly helped the candidates prepare for hostile tracking and interrogation.

In addition to opposition research trackers, there is a growing category of highly coordinated, partisan sources of information on both the right and the left who collaborate to drive news coverage on their own terms, and whose representatives often behave more like paid opposition than like objective reporters.

Every significant campaign down through the state legislative level should have some kind of "tracker and reporter" training program. Candidates have to learn that being embarrassed in-house is vastly better than being embarrassed in front of the news media and the voters.

Candidates need to learn to answer perfectly the two or three dozen most important questions they'll be asked. They need to practice it over and over and change as requires. And they need to do go about this in a systematic way.

- 4. Every campaign has to have a near real-time answer system to respond to changing circumstances.** News develops so rapidly and is disseminated so instantaneously that campaigns need to develop the capacity to understand changes, assess their impact on the campaign's strategy, and develop an effective response within minutes or at most hours. Answers that come too late are irrelevant because no one will cover them (the story is old even if your side has not been told). A rapid-response answer system is especially important because some even false claims can get out of control and become "facts" if they are not answered immediately. Furthermore, issues can come out of nowhere and catch the entire campaign (and the candidate) by surprise. The campaign that can better respond to the new big news story is likely to have an edge in news coverage and will convey the appearance of competence.

- 5. Because social media lets the voter get to know the candidate much better and much more intimately it is essential that each candidate develop a narrative of their own candidacy, of their worldview of the race, and of what they hope to accomplish.** Most

people remember stories much better and more vividly than they remember facts. Having a positive, sympathetic narrative is a big advantage in getting people to like you, vote for you, and stick with you through your opponent's and the news media's attacks. The internet makes this both more possible and more important than in the past. This is an essential feature of the most successful campaigns (and was arguably a primary reason for President Obama's election in 2008).

Ideally, the narrative should explain both the candidate and his or her opponents. Indeed, this is one of our greatest strategic challenges. The story should explain why electing the candidate would be good and why electing the opponents would be bad. Think of designing the campaign drama as a project Steven Spielberg would undertake before shooting a movie and you can begin to see what is needed. "The story of the candidate and the campaign" makes all the details much easier to communicate and for the voter to understand and remember. The heart of this principle is that message and messenger beat mechanism. If people see you, like you, and agree with your message, you have an enormous advantage in the age of social media over someone who can raise money and build a campaign but can't communicate themselves or their values.

In this strangely intimate world of communication, where candidates have the opportunity to visit with voters one-on-one, their answers to questions that are important to voters must fit within the narrative of their campaigns and within a coherent worldview that lets them understand what's important to voters. Candidates that do not have this ability will probably be rejected.

## Context

1. **National Tides Help.** The larger political environment in which the election is taking place is outside of the control of any one campaign or any one party. In 2014, the tide was in Republicans' favor, helping win races they might otherwise have lost. A party or a campaign that understands the national tide and develops issues and themes which fit the tide has a significant advantage over one that is historically out of context and is talking and advertising about things no one cares about. When a team of candidates on one side takes advantage of a tide, they can actually strengthen it and increase its power to help their side win.
2. **A national theme can help parties set context.** One of the greatest challenges for Republicans in 2016 will be to reinforce a national narrative and national definition of the choice which enables most Republicans to campaign at an advantage and forces most Democrats to campaign at a disadvantage. At the end of two terms of President Obama, this larger narrative may be as simple as whether this election is about change or continuity. A key job of the presidential nominee once chosen will be to coordinate with Congressional Republicans, governors, and the Republican National Committee to shape the larger narrative and the larger choice. That narrative should be reflected in the GOP platform and at the convention and should be reflected in the messaging that is communicated electronically to every candidate and campaign in the country so there can be a unified chorus driving home the winning narrative and the winning choice.
3. **Events can change an election.** The context of world events helps define the opportunity, and Republicans need candidates, narratives, strategies and campaigns that are suited to the

context in which they are set. If candidates are oblivious to what is going on in the world around them and what ordinary Americans are worried about, the internet age ensures they will look it.

## Campaigns

1. **Quality Campaigns Still Matter.** No one could have predicted Larry Hogan's 5-point victory in the Maryland governor's race. No one thought Matt Bevin would win the Kentucky governorship by 9 points. And who would have thought an African-American Republican, Congressman Will Hurd, could win a congressional seat with a 69 percent Hispanic voting age population?

Everyone expected Congressman Mike Coffman to have the closest margin in the country. But with a campaign that spent more than \$5,000,000 (it was the second-most expensive House race in the country), and that was well designed and intensely executed, he won by 9 points. (An additional \$10,000,000 was spent in the Coffman district by outside groups.)

In the age of big money Super PACs and outside groups, quality candidates with smart, organized campaigns are essential. They can create opportunities that may not otherwise exist, can undermine the opposition's attacks (i.e. See Cory Gardner combat the "War on Women"), motivate the base, recruit volunteers, engage donors and shape the debate and environment better than any outside group. A great candidate with a smart campaign leads the army, including the party and outside groups, to victory.

Candidates need to run campaigns as though no outside groups exist and the day a campaign says, "don't worry, the Super PACs will handle it" is the day it starts losing. Outside groups supplement and compliment a good campaign, they cannot substitute for a well-trained, focused candidate and campaign.

2. **Election Day is now election season.** Campaigns must master and maximize opportunities to win votes through whatever voting means is provided. The first voting day of 2016 is September 23, in Minnesota, where you will be able to cast an in-person absentee ballot up to 46 days before the election. The mechanisms of voting have changed and vary drastically from state to state. We have early polling sites, early voting, absentee voting, online registration, same day registration, voting by mail (now the only way to cast your ballot in Oregon, Washington, and Colorado). Long voting cycles change all of the old strategies for the old campaign cycles. Campaigns have to face the fact that in many places, roughly half of the electorate will have voted before Election Day. This changes the last eight weeks of the campaign, at every point, and requires an ongoing effort to bank early votes.
3. **Digital is not an add-on; it needs to permeate every aspect of the campaign.** The average American spends three hours per day on his or her digital device. We check our smartphones 155 times a day. These devices are where voters live, and campaigns need to shift to meet them there. This means digital must be involved in every aspect of the campaign, from organization and volunteers, to messaging and fundraising—ending the more traditional silo approach where each division of a campaign maintained its own data and lists and guarded them like the gold in Fort Knox. All data is useful for each part of a campaign. Consolidating and coordinating data inputs from across the campaign can help make the

most of voters, donors and volunteers. Using even the off-the-shelf free analytical tools to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of one's digital efforts would be a simple basic step. Integrating modeling, matrices and accountability would empower larger campaigns to ensure robust engagement with voters, volunteers and donors and allow them to monitor their returns on investment in every aspect of a campaign.

4. **A balanced approach to paid media: Technology is making campaigns more efficient and effective with their dollars.** Most congressional campaigns buy television in an enormously wasteful manner. In many areas, the TV station covers three, four or more districts. Most of the advertising money is simply wasted on people who can't vote in that race. However, new technology and a more balanced approach by campaigns are creating more efficiencies and allowing candidates to spend money more effectively. Companies like Optimus and Deep Root Analytics are helping campaigns structure and target their TV buys more efficiently. Digital companies can build micro-campaigns to key constituencies and echo other mediums to drive up voter recall of messages. Mobile companies can help get candidates' ads on smart phones, apps and iPads. Mail firms are even making new advances that can combine nicely with digital or other mediums. Furthermore, campaigns need to understand which tactics work best for which objectives. For example, digital campaigns are an excellent tool for organizing and mobilizing voters, for which television is not effective.

As voters diversify how they consume information, campaigns need to diversify how they deliver information. Television may still be king, but every year technology is developing better ways to allow candidates to sharpen their message, run longer and more targeted campaigns, and use dollars more efficiently.

As these capabilities develop, campaigns must demand transparency, clear metrics, and accountability from all of their vendors—in television, digital, and mail—so they understand what they are really buying.

5. **Building a digital grassroots movement is work and requires investment.** Campaigns have the opportunity to build huge databases with remarkable amounts of personal information to target potential voters. Those systems can then create a sense of belonging or community on a grand scale. (Dr. Ben Carson's estimated 545,000 donors in less than a year, for instance, would have been unachievable in a pre-digital world.) But the development, nurturing, and maintenance of a really big, effective online community requires an early and continuing investment.

Tim Cameron, Digital Director at the NRSC, has a [good checklist](#) for thinking about this kind of capability. Large scale digital fundraising takes a bigger investment over a longer period of time but can yield remarkable returns. We have only scratched the surface of this kind of operation and the power it may eventually give a campaign. This should be thought of as an entire campaign in its own right and not as a subsidiary of the "real" campaign.

Data analytics, data-mining and modeling for potential supporters, volunteers and donors should be standard practice in future campaigns at the Congressional district or state level and above. Campaigns and consultants must create a culture that values and invests in quality data. In Texas, Governor Greg Abbott identified [70 percent](#) of his voters by Election Day using field staff guided by effective models and metrics.

6. **Campaigns need to be agile and fast.** Social media combined with 24/7 news channels provide such intense, virtually real time coverage that a campaign has to be able to respond

very quickly or else find itself in deep trouble. An early indication of the speed with which things can change was the 2008 Democratic New Hampshire primary. Obama came out of Iowa with a surprisingly big win. With only five days between Iowa and the New Hampshire primary he seemed almost inevitable. He was up by more than 8 percent in polls. On primary day, he lost by almost three points. The climax of that 11 point swing an emotional coffee shop encounter between Senator Clinton and a group of women the day before the vote. That change indicates how rapidly and intensely news can spread and change minds. And that was 8 years ago with fewer mobile devices, less social media use, etc.

This new reality will require campaigns to build "brand management newsrooms" such as those maintained by many large brands from Microsoft to GE in order to essentially create their own media outlets. These will need to produce original content and to have clear lines of authority to react to both dangers and opportunities very rapidly. Opportunistic tactical responses have to fit with a larger long term branding strategy, so paradoxically the requirement for speed leads to an even greater requirement for having a strategy that enables you to define which opportunities to take and how to use them.

7. **SuperPACs can be more efficient.** SuperPACs with the ability to get involved early can have a big effect. Many of our SuperPACs are run by smart and successful operatives, who spend more time learning and embracing new technology, data analytics, advanced strategies and tactics than their counterparts on campaigns because their time is not overwhelmed by the day-to-day grind of the campaign or the cyclical needs of a party committee (candidate recruitment, development, research, etc.).

Donors must realize, however, that the effectiveness and efficiency of a SuperPAC is best utilized when they can plan, organize and engage earlier. SuperPACs pay higher rates for television than candidates. Therefore, they need to reserve television earlier or pay two or three times what a candidate will pay. SuperPACs can help organize grassroots independent of a campaign, but only if they have the ability to put boots-on-the-ground months in advance. SuperPACs can and will use new technology, target voters more efficiently and try new tactics, but only if they are in a financial position to assess, test, decide and execute earlier in the election. As one SuperPAC operative noted, "when nine out of 10 dollars don't arrive until after Labor Day, there isn't much we can do to execute complex, advanced plans that needed to be funded and organized months earlier."

8. **Demography is not destiny. Demography is opportunity.** In Ohio, Governor John Kasich got 27 percent of the African American vote for re-election. In Texas, Senator John Cornyn became the first Republican in his state to beat his opponent 48-47 among Latino voters in Texas. He received 54 percent of the vote from Latino men.

Cory Gardner went from between 6 and 8 percent support among Colorado's Latino voters in January to tying incumbent Senator Udall at 48-48 on Election Day. Colorado Republicans worked Pueblo, a largely Hispanic area they had traditionally ignored and which now has a Republican Latina state legislator and boosted Gardner's vote above the historic pattern.

Also in Colorado Coffman's surprisingly easy re-election was built in part on his learning Spanish and debating in it (his opponent was more fluent but Coffman got great credit for trying). Coffman also focused on the Ethiopian Christian community which invited him to four churches the last Sunday before the election while freezing out his opponent.



In Virginia, Congresswoman Barbara Comstock's decisive win was helped by focused attention to Pakistani, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean and Latino voters.

In Texas Senator John Cornyn won Asian-American voters, had a plurality of Hispanic voters and also had websites in Vietnamese and Hindi.

The Republican State Leadership Committee points to a surprising number of Republican minority state legislative victories. For example, margin of control in the West Virginia House is a Republican African American woman. Republicans received an estimated 50 percent of the Asian American vote in 2014. There are more than 110 Republican minority state legislators and with each election the number grows. Leadership can translate demography into an opportunity, not a problem.

- 9. If demography is not destiny, paying attention to minority voters may be.** In every campaign we studied, there was a direct correlation between paying attention to minority communities, events, activities and key dates and the increase in votes. Jack Kemp observed "people have to know that you care before they care that you know." Again and again, successful Republicans built minority events into their schedules, created advisory groups from leaders of the communities, developed internships for young people from the community, etc.

Showing up is the essential first step to building bridges to minority communities. The goal has to be inclusion, not outreach. Outreach is when the old order makes a decision and then calls the community leaders to inform them. Inclusion is when the community is in on the discussion before the decision. Inclusion means that the content of what is being said is of interest. The difference between outreach and inclusion is enormous. The entire team has to be brought into an inclusion system or it will fail to be implemented.

- 10. One of the keys to a number of Republican victories has been a conscious effort to increase the acceptability of the Republican candidate to elements of the Democrat coalition.** Polarization has led a number of groups to conclude they simply can't vote Republican. No matter how bad the Democrat is, by definition the Republican is worse. Thus, Chicago votes Democrat in prosperity and recession. African Americans may be frustrated with the Democrat, but the Republican alternative is unthinkable.

Strategies to make the Republican candidate acceptable without alienating the Republican base can prove very effective in creating the margin of victory. In Colorado, Gardner's deliberate strategy to adopt issues that blocked the Democrats' "war on women" tactics is a good case study of strategically broadening acceptability without losing our own base. Similarly, Congressman Coffman's intense practice in Spanish and willingness to debate on Spanish television lowered resistance to him drastically. Suddenly he became acceptable both to many Hispanics and to moderate whites. Congresswoman Barbara Comstock's steady scheduling of Asian festivals and events made her more than a normal Republican and brought her votes that would have seemed unattainable to consultants at the beginning of the race. Kasich's hard work in the Black community brought him 26 percent of the African American vote, a share which if attained nationally would virtually guarantee a Republican majority. The College Republicans worked in a number of races with targeted social media advertising to make the Republican candidate more acceptable to millennials. (Look at the increase in Florida Governor Scott's youth vote as an example).

**11. Republicans can take advantage of a decimated Democrat bench—or squander it.**

One of the underappreciated effects of the Obama era has been the historic collapse of the Democratic party at the local and state level—a phenomenon which has left the Democrats with a very difficult time recruiting candidates for higher offices. The impact of this will be felt for years to come. Republican candidates at the national level in particular would do well to study how Republicans have won in marginal districts, and keep in mind the need to preserve and build on those victories.

**12. Focus on targeted growth demographics.** Republicans have the opportunity to perform better among single women, younger voters, Asians, Hispanics, and African Americans. Because the Republican stereotype among many of these groups is so bad, if candidates hope to win votes, they need to show up, make an effort, and have some “magnet” issues to attract them. This requires developing these issues that break the negative stereotype in a positive way. Here, national themes can be a big help.

**13. Field organizations must cultivate robust volunteer capacity, and empower volunteers to directly affect the electorate.** Unlike previous election cycles, Republicans must now make a long-term, organizational investment in developing the leadership potential of volunteers. Recruiting and organizing volunteers effectively can be challenging. For decades, campaigns have relied more heavily on paid staff because of the assumption that they are the only ones who would be able to put in the long tedious hours needed to make quality voter contact.

In recent election cycles, Republican campaigns have relied heavily on paid canvassers. Paid canvassers can certainly assist in voter contact and data collection, but we have learned that a dual approach of utilizing paid canvassers and volunteers will produce the most meaningful results. Obama for America revolutionized the ground game in 2008 by taking ordinary Americans and empowering them to organize their own communities.

As a result of the 2012 Presidential Election, Chairman Priebus committed to long-term field program that exists beyond Election Day. This investment has produced programs all around the country such as the Republican Leadership Initiative and the Neighborhood Team Leader project. The Republican Leadership Initiative has trained thousands of fellows who are responsible for organizing their own neighborhoods and communities. The diversity of these fellows has aided in expanding the engagement effort of the Republican Party.

Neighborhood organizations are providing new opportunities for Republicans to offer voter registration to new voters and personal contact with non-traditional Republican voters. By refocusing the ground game to the community based approach, Republican campaigns will be able to emphasize the importance of building towards voter contact capacity and empowering volunteers through the process.

**14. Internet and data centered campaigns are going to be expensive. They are also going to be necessary.** Staying on top of real-time information flow will take dedicated, competent professionals. Integrating online media with broadcast media will add complexity and require unique creative talents. Campaigns should build out their internet and data teams and strategies before they start thinking about television. A deep, successful internet campaign capable of growing a community of a majority of the voters in your state or district requires an early and continuing investment in technical manpower and sustained effort.

The results can be extraordinary but only if the investment is made. The results take the form of voter contact, email addresses, better models, better messaging, better listening, better fundraising, and smarter media buying. Most campaigns are dramatically underinvested in their information systems.

- 15. Data and modeling will increasingly supplement and redefine polling.** The emerging potential of data from daily paid canvassers using mobile devices with virtually real-time reporting, combined with the rapidly evolving world of traditional polling, will yield far more information with much greater detail than used to be available through traditional polling by itself. The changes from land lines to cellphones and the increasing challenge of determining who will and will not vote create an opportunity for canvassing to reinforce and substantially improve the results of polling.

Polling and data don't compete with each other; they complement each other. Your data analysts and your pollsters should talk from day one to Election Day. The sharing of information will make both stronger and help navigate the changes and challenges in traditional polling. Information is the lifeblood of strategic decision making and the more information your campaign consumes and uses, the better strategic and tactical decisions you can and will make.

In addition, recognize that traditional polling is a better strategic tool than a predictive tool. Strategic polling looks at trends; predictive polling looks at snapshot in time and tries to predict the future, but in our modern electorate with substantial shifts in voter turnout between election cycles, changes in cellphone usage, the ability to get an accurate sample and other challenges, it is becoming more and more difficult for traditional pollsters to accurately predict turnout. That doesn't mean the trends you see aren't accurate. Merged with a good data operation, polling can and will be more accurate and the amount of data collected and analyzed, along with your traditional polling, will allow you to see trends building or breaking.

- 16. The rise of the Voter Score as a model for tracking voter support is a revolution that changes the way we think about voters.** Instead of a for, against and undecided trio, there is now a way to use big data to grade each voter on a wide range of issues and begin to develop scores which open up the potential for micro-campaigns that bring together coalitions based on unique interests. As Bill Skelly, one of the architects of the RNC's data systems, describes:

Last cycle, Republicans ushered in a revolution coupling predictive modeling with voter contact and campaign targeting. Building upon a decade's worth of national micro-targeting projects, the RNC made a significant investment to take a giant leap and bring these targeting models to the next level. With the new Voter Scores in place, the RNC - and thereby all Republican campaigns and committees across the country - set a baseline score on every single voter in the U.S., allowing the national committee to monitor and track the electorate throughout early voting right through Election Day.

Starting in April of 2014, the RNC began the process of assigning a series of scores to every voter. These scores - ranging from 0 to 100 - assigned a percent likelihood for voters to lean in one direction or another across a partisan identification, partisan support and issue-based spectrum. On their own, the scores provided campaigns and the RNC Political Department with very granular building blocks upon which universes could be developed - and measured -

ensuring that campaign dollars and resources were being spent wisely and on the targets most needing attention.

Further, by providing a baseline data set for all campaigns and committees to utilize, the RNC reduced the barrier to entry and costs associated with campaigns accessing robust predictive analyses for their own use. Sophisticated campaigns could utilize the baseline voter scores provided by the RNC as another variable - one that had already been normalized - in their own predictive analysis strengthening their own models. Less sophisticated campaigns - or those that simply couldn't afford a modeling project of their own - had access to remarkably accurate predictions on where voters resided on the partisan and turnout spectrum. Everyone across the ecosystem benefitted from the investment being made by the national party.

The reality is that we, as a party, have just scratched the surface of what can be accomplished with the voter scoring program. With another cycle under our belts and the RNC committed to continued funding of the program, we can be sure that the models coming out of the national party will be more and more accurate headed into 2016. For the first time in the party's history, campaigns and committees alike have access to models refreshed during the "off year" of the cycle - with a second national survey being fielded to close out this year. Time series trends and a strong understanding of the Republican paths to maintain the Senate and take back the White House can now be measured and counted voter-by-voter as campaigns and the national parties lay out their strategies and budgets for the upcoming election year.

This program needs to be better understood by campaign professionals headed into 2016. The data - having been compiled and cleansed for decades within the RNC - is being made available to all campaigns and the building blocks are in place. The voter scores have proven to be an invaluable resource in 2014 and only stand to play a larger role in 2016 as the party continues to invest in this critical piece of data.

**17. Bigger, better campaigns will need a defined, clear management structure that decentralizes key tasks to achieve the agility the internet age requires.** Campaigns need a clearly defined chain of command and system of responsibility and authority. As campaigns get bigger and more expensive they also get more complicated and involve more and more specialists. Traditionally this might have led to slower decision making but the sheer pace of social news media and 24/7 news media requires campaigns to move faster than ever while being bigger and more complicated than ever. This will only work if there are very clear lines and delegations of authority.

**18. The bigger the campaign, the more it has to decentralize.** In a really big campaign, each component has to have its own leadership, and that leadership has to be given a very large grant of authority to act. Modern campaigns are so complex that no one person can understand all of the different patterns, techniques and technologies required to execute the campaign's strategy. Furthermore, modern campaigns exist in such a rapidly changing world that each component has to be able to make decisions and modify its activities in response to new developments. An overly centralized campaign will create bottlenecks and simply will not move fast enough to keep up with the modern world. This balance between central strategic direction and decentralized implementation is one of the most important characteristics of

successful modern, information-age organizations, and that principle applies to campaigns as well.

**19. The complexity and scale of these changes in the organization and methods of campaigns require a continuous learning and training program throughout the party.**

The Republican Party—whether through the RNC, the various committees, or through an institution that has yet to be created, should ensure that candidates, operatives, staff, pollsters, and consultants at every level have the resources they need to run cutting edge campaigns based on best practices in this rapidly changing environment.

**20. Because this pace of change is likely to continue well into the future, the GOP should ensure every two years that it reviews lessons learned and modifies its training and programs accordingly.**

There is often as much to be learned from victories as from defeats. The Party has an obligation to do a serious, clear-eyed analysis of what happens and why.

### **Origin of the 2016 Election Principles Report**

This report began the day after the 2012 reelection of President Obama. The difference between Republican expectations and reality was so great that it required real research into what was happening. Chairman Reince Priebus and the Republican National Committee launched a serious review through the Growth and Opportunity Project chaired by Henry Barbour. Its [report](#) was useful and the big structural changes made by the RNC were important and helped with the victories of 2014 and 2015.

At Gingrich Productions we felt that some very profound changes were underway and we knew we did not understand them. We had been as wrong as anyone else about the probable outcome of the 2012 election. Joe DeSantis undertook a four-month-long project to read everything that was available about the Obama system and how it had been developed from 2007 to 2012. David Axelrod generously spent several hours describing the differences between the 2008 and 2012 campaigns as seen by the Obama team. David Plouffe's [The Audacity to Win](#) is remarkably useful in its candid outline of key components of the 2008 Obama campaign.

Dr. Kiron Skinner, director of Carnegie Mellon University's Center for International Relations and Politics, was very helpful in outlining the scale of the Obama campaign's intellectual investments in first class scientists and the advantages this gave them.

As the Growth and Opportunity Project completed its work and the RNC began implementing the changes, Chairman Priebus and the entire RNC team were extraordinarily helpful in sharing what they were learning and what they were doing to try to meet the challenges of the new election environment.

The Republican successes of 2014 and 2015 raised important questions about planning for the 2016 election.

The Democrats and much of the media complacently believe that the difference in turnout between presidential and midterm elections explains everything. They believe demography is destiny.

Yet the 2014 and 2015 elections provided example after example in which that was simply not true. Republicans with the right campaigns and the right messages were breaking through.

As this became clear, Chairman Priebus endorsed an effort to look at key races and develop a set of principles based on lessons learned. He assigned Anthony Duhon to coordinate with the Gingrich Productions team. With the Chairman's support we were able to get Joe Gaylord to serve as a senior analyst. Since Joe had been active since 1970 and had been the key designer of the 1994 Contract with America campaign, he brought a wealth of knowledge and experience.

In fact, the very depth of Gaylord's experience was a factor in convincing us that the changes in the election process are deep and continuing. Matt Walter and the Republican State Leadership Committee also provided support, in particular getting John Morgan, Jr. to help with data analysis.

An amazing number of people have helped us with this project. In particular, we want to thank:

Reince Priebus  
Katie Walsh  
Sean Spicer  
Mike Shields  
Jennifer Korn  
Rob Simms  
Ward Baker  
Tim Cameron & the NRSC Digital Team  
Matt Walter  
Dave Winston  
Myra Miller  
Brian Walsh  
Bill Skelly  
Jason Chung  
Azarias Reda  
Johnny DeStefano  
Zach Moffatt  
Alex Smith  
Marc Short  
John Morgan  
Congressman Bruce Paloquin  
Christopher Cox  
Kristen Anderson  
David Wasserman  
Nathan Gonzales  
Kyle Kondik  
Michael Barone  
Chris Hansen  
Scott Reed  
Congresswoman Barbara Comstock  
Derrick Wilburn  
Aurora Ogg  
Paulo Sibaja

Jerry Natividad  
Maria Weese  
Jordan Gascon  
Josh Penry

### **Recommended Reading**

[\*The Argument\*](#), by Matt Bai  
[\*Audacity to Win\*](#), by David Plouffe  
[\*Groundbreakers: How Obama's 2.2 Million Volunteers Transformed Campaigning in America\*](#),  
by Elizabeth McKenna  
[\*Get Out the Vote\*](#), by Donald P. Green  
[\*Breakout\*](#), by Newt Gingrich  
["How We Won Texas"](#), Dave Carney, *Politico*  
["Abbott Campaign Credits Sophisticated Turnout Machine"](#), Jay Root, *Texas Tribune*  
["How Ted Cruz Engineered His Iowa Triumph"](#), Sasha Issenberg, *Bloomberg*