



**TO: Interested Parties**  
**FROM: Jessica Post, President**  
**RE: State Legislative Campaign Update**  
**DATE: October 27, 2020**

Earlier this year, the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee laid out an ambitious \$50 million campaign to win legislative majorities across the country in GOP strongholds. With just days left until the election, we wanted to share an update on our progress and the dynamics we see playing out.

We chose an ambitious agenda because the moment called for it. A redistricting cycle last coincided with a presidential cycle in 2000 and won't again until 2040. We chose to do so knowing that we faced significant obstacles to success.

Republicans have long understood the importance of state legislative races. The GOP got a great return on its \$30 million investment in 2010, and they're not letting up. The national Republican Party is hemorrhaging support at the federal level. They're sending money down-ballot to stop the bleeding.

Our Republican counterparts, the Republican State Leadership Committee, raised \$10 million more than we did in Q3 and moved millions of dollars into their states at the end of October.

Republicans are also still running with the ultimate tactical advantage: they are defending districts that were hand-drawn, with precise data, for Republicans to win. They drew maps to their advantage, and now we are pushing up against the most challenging seats to win majorities. To add to their cash and geographic advantage, many red states have restrictive voting laws that purposely make it as difficult as possible for people to vote — particularly low-income voters and voters of color.

Despite these factors, Republicans know they're on defense. By all indications, the RSLC is anticipating that they will lose seats but is spending massive amounts to put sandbags around their majorities in gerrymandered states like Texas, North Carolina, and Michigan. Further, they're pouring defensive spending into states where they hold decisive majorities — which are not in danger — like the Georgia House and the Florida House, so that when they lose seats, they can call their cycle a success.

Let us be crystal clear: it's not. Every seat the GOP loses on gerrymandered maps is an embarrassment for them. This underdog committee is giving the GOP the fight of its life — despite the odds still being in Republicans' favor.

The reality is that Democrats are still paying for their strategic misstep of underfunding state legislative races in 2010. We're not running on fair maps. But this year, we have an opportunity to run up our seat count in every target state on our list and take back key chambers. We don't need to win every chamber to significantly diminish the GOP's dominance in the states. The sheer fact that the DLCC is no longer an understaffed and underfunded organization means that Republicans will never get a free pass in legislative elections again.

In the final days, here is what we anticipate will play out in our top target chambers.

## **Arizona House & Senate**

We need to flip just two House seats and three Senate seats to end Republican control for the first time since 1966. Arizona's GOP did not get their preferred candidates and instead are running right-wing, hard-line conservatives — including some QAnon followers. Democratic candidates have had unprecedented fundraising and Republican spending hasn't come close to the DLCC's investments. However, to flip this chamber, we need to win in historically Republican districts and we anticipate that our margins will be close.

## **Iowa House**

In 2018, Democrats lost the Iowa House by just over 500 votes. We only need to flip four seats to take back the majority, and Democrats are on offense. Our list of targets keeps growing thanks to impressive candidate fundraising and strong campaigns at the top of the ticket. Democratic legislative candidates are still outspending their opponents on TV and while that's encouraging, we still need to fight for every vote.

## **Michigan House**

We need to flip just four seats in the Michigan House to win a majority, and there are four Republican-held seats that Governor Whitmer carried in 2018. While Republicans are moving resources out of the state at the top of the ballot, they're still fighting hard to save their majority. Plus, maps in Michigan are still rigged in the GOP's favor. They were struck down by a federal court for being an unconstitutional gerrymander "of historic proportions" designed to "entrench Republicans in power." The United States Supreme Court allowed them to remain in place. That means our pickup districts and our incumbent protects are more challenging. Momentum will be on our side, but we cannot overstate the challenge these maps present.

## **Minnesota Senate**

Minnesota provides an opportunity for another Democratic trifecta and we need to flip just two seats to make it happen. This year is the first time the Senate has been on the ballot since Trump was elected. Our internal data shows we will hold the House and are likely to flip the Senate. However — Republicans are going to do everything they can to protect their only remaining lever of power in this state. They've expressed confidence that they can flip rural districts currently held by Democrats that we would need to hold to secure our majorities, and we know they will put their resources behind it. They are now doubling down on their race-baiting "law and order" message in rural districts and the suburbs.

## **North Carolina House & Senate**

We need to flip just five seats to win a majority in the Senate and just six to win the House. Our candidates have the fundraising advantage here and are putting it to good use with paid communications, but Republicans have already spent over \$12 million through a group called Good Government Coalition. North Carolina has long been one of the country's most notoriously gerrymandered states, which makes winning the majorities here an especially difficult task. In 2018, Democrats won the popular vote but only barely managed to break Republican supermajorities in both chambers. This will be an uphill battle for us. If we achieve a tie or run up the margins in either chamber, it would be a historic win for North Carolinians and stop Republicans from rigging the game for the next decade.

## **Pennsylvania House & Senate**

Democrats need to flip just nine seats to win control of the House. In the Senate, our goal is to tie the chamber by flipping four seats. Our path is much narrower in the Senate because only half the seats in the chamber are up at a time. By all indications, each chamber is a pure toss-up. Republican gerrymandering will be tough to overcome, and the Trump campaign already sued to make it more difficult to vote in Pennsylvania. The GOP's failure to lead on the coronavirus pandemic gives us an opening, but it will come down to every last seat.

## **Texas House**

We only need to flip nine seats to win a majority, and a diversifying electorate gives us a long list of targets. The fact that we're able to be competitive in this state shows how damaged the GOP brand is. The RSLC said that defending Texas was their top priority this cycle — which tells you a lot about how worried they are. But we're still running on Republican-drawn maps and the GOP has already invested \$8 million, and we'd bet there are millions more on the way. Republicans are ramping up targeted spending against Democratic incumbents in addition to boosting their representatives — especially those who haven't been able to raise much on their own. Voting in Texas is already off the charts and while these stats are encouraging, Democrats would need to have a perfect night for us to flip this chamber. We're still putting up a fight in the Lone Star State the likes of which the GOP has never seen before. Every seat they lose points to how weak their party is in Texas and across the country. If Republicans lose their majority in the House, it will note a landmark shift that will send shockwaves through the GOP — and it will be because Democrats overcame the considerable odds against us.

## **Kansas House & Senate**

We don't expect to flip either of these chambers, but we have a strong shot at breaking the GOP supermajority in the Sunflower State. By flipping just one House or three Senate seats, we can give Governor Laura Kelly the power to veto damaging legislation and rigged district maps. Republicans have already said the quiet part out loud and admitted they will gerrymander Representative Sharice Davids out of a seat if they maintain control, so Democrats must build power in the state.