

## Understanding Voters

### Introducing... the voters!

While these are certainly generalizations, it will be helpful to quickly size up voters so you can choose the best approach during the Persuasion phase of voter contact. (FYI, the other two phases of voter contact are Voter Identification where we simply call to see where voters are on the political spectrum and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) when we stop persuading and just get people to the polls.)

- **Non voters:** Just who is a non voter? Why don't they vote? Can you convince them to vote? Are you carrying voter registration cards? These voters may vote if emotionally involved in a candidate or if events have impinged on them in a personal way. In 2008 we saw millions of non-voters go to the polls because they had an emotional connection to Barack Obama. If you can create an emotional connection to your candidate or issue you may win these folks. Some non voters have never registered –simply being the one to register them may give you an advantage.
- **Low information voters:** Maybe they have three jobs and can barely stay afloat raising children. Then again, some folks just don't pay attention and/or politics turns them off. Things happening in the world, in Washington or at City Hall just don't interest them. The paycheck still arrives in Friday's mail, the kids go off to school -life goes on... I'll bet you, though, that there is one issue that they care about -you'll just need to find it (so ask!).
- **One issue voters:** -For these folks one issue is a deal breaker. If your candidate is on the wrong side for this voter, you will not likely overcome this objection. The GOP has done a great job of creating one issue voters and you may have noticed that they've done nothing to outlaw abortion and haven't built a wall in all the time they've controlled Congress because they know that keeping these issues alive keeps these voters.
- **Swing Voters:** Swing voters are not necessarily undecided; they often have strong views. Swing voters, by definition, do not hew to party lines. They may take pride in being independent. Some pick and choose positions from either party others may not have a well formed political worldview. It is crucially important to question and listen to these voters. Find a few issues where the voter agrees with our worldview. Swing voters may also be influenced by a person as much as an idea. And do not be surprised if you uncover a closet Democrat! There are many people who actually agree with us but either don't know it or won't say it.
- **Undecideds:** -A common myth is that undecideds are low information voters -after all, given the vast chasm between the Liberals and Conservative worldviews how can one not come down on one side or the other? Number one -because there are more than two sides. Number two, undecideds can, not irrationally, claim that both parties have problems

-and in fact may actually be the problem! This is where your skills at framing will be most valuable. Probing for their values and their biggest concerns will lead the way. Frame their issues in terms of our values and our worldview.

- **Leaning Democrats:** -Focus on our deep, shared values! Leaning Democrats sometimes have some beef with current Democratic leaders but also fear what the GOP has done. Rather than trotting out facts, affirm our values on the issues that matter to this voter. Ground them once again in why we believe what we believe. Assure them you are volunteering to get candidates elected who get it. If things are going really well, you might ask them to volunteer, contribute, take a lawn sign or tell a friend. Voters who take a positive action of any kind for your candidate are more likely to vote for them.
- **Leaning Republicans:** We may not turn them all into Democrats but after the Iraq war, the recession of 2007 and the rolling disaster that is Trump and the Republican Party, many have begun connecting the dots that establishment Republicans had a big hand in their diminishing well being. Some leaning Republicans -often older people who remember when the parties worked together and when Republicans believed that investing in our schools, roads, etc were good things- may be convinced that voting for a Democrat (or not voting for a Republican) means stopping right wing extremists. In short, some leaning Republicans can be convinced to vote for some or all Democratic candidates.
- **Green and other third party voters:** Often third parties have a focus around one or more narrow issues. You may find for example that you both agree on their issue. Now you have a basis for a conversation. Do not tell them their candidates have no chance to win, even if it's true. If they indicate they will not vote for a Republican then ask them to watch the polls and if it looks like the Republican is winning ask them if they'd vote Democratic.
- **Solid Democrats:** We have these folks, but we need them to vote! If they are really solid ask them to volunteer!
- **Solid Republicans:** We do not have the time to convince solid Republicans of anything -it's like putting lipstick on a pig -it won't work and it annoys the pig. DO NOT be tempted to waste time in spirited debate. Be polite, end the conversation immediately and say "Thank you for your time."

Keep in mind the power of personal contact. With the GOP's preference for robocalls and paid telemarketers, you may be the only authentic human they've spoken to. You may also be the only person who actually listens to them. Identify yourself as a volunteer and a neighbor. This means more than you think!

Don't be discouraged if it seems you have not gotten anywhere. What you have said needs time to sink in. It may well be that you have turned a voter but had no indication at the end of your contact. At the very least you may have planted a seed that brings people around to our worldview down the road.

Lastly, remember: you *are* doing good work!