

To: NOW National Board

From: Linda Berg and Sara Mitchell

Date: Nov. 6, 2019

POLITICAL REPORT

Virginia

While Virginia NOW was coordinating with and working for candidates across the state, National NOW and the Feminist Majority ran an Independent Expenditure campaign focused on two things. The first was bringing out the college vote through ERA and young feminist messaging. The second was electing pro-women and ERA candidates in targeted districts in which there were no colleges. The purpose of running an IE instead of pooling our resources with Virginia NOW was that it allowed our campaign (Voters for Equality) to serve as an extra layer of validation to voters that these candidates were strong feminists who would help pass our agenda, including ratifying the ERA. National NOW and the Feminist Majority partnered in the effort with the Feminist Majority taking on more of the administrative and organizing tasks and NOW taking on a larger proportion of the funding.

The ground organizing component included hiring 36 students on college campuses near target seats (University of Mary Washington in Northern Virginia; Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond; University of Virginia in Charlottesville; and Christopher Newport University, Old Dominion University and Virginia Wesleyan University in the Virginia Beach region). These students registered voters on campus through October 15 and then executed a Get Out The Vote campaign to increase college-student turnout. CNU, for instance, rented a bus to drive students from the campus to the polling place.

The IE also included a social media advertising component that used geofencing to target users of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram within the boundaries of the college campuses (this works when users allow the social media platforms to track their location). The ads urged them to register to vote and pledge to vote to help ratify the ERA. This specific form of geotargeting is a fairly new tactic and it was a good learning experience for us on how to use it to bring social media ads to very specific locations (more college campuses, or perhaps the DNC Convention, the next Women's March, etc).

National NOW's staff specifically focused on Hala Ayala's district in Prince William County, as she is a NOW leader and NOW PAC board member whose district does not have a college campus to organize out of. Hala's district had also been redistricted to be 12% more Republican. Returning her to office was a crucial component of our strategy for ratifying the ERA next session. Sara went to the district multiple times a week to canvass voters at the DMV and various commuter lots where thousands of people take carpools and buses into D.C. The National Action Center was closed on Election Day so all staff could hand out the IE's flier for Hala at four of her precincts. Hala actually ran into and talked to our staff at two of the precincts so she was able to see our work in action.

2020 Political Outlook

In just three months, New Hampshire will hold its presidential primary. The Democratic presidential field will begin narrowing and soon thereafter a presumptive candidate will arise. Of course, there are those who imagine a contested primary season culminating in a brokered convention which could be interesting to political junkies but which could be disastrous to the candidate who emerges from that mayhem. The intensity of feeling on both sides of the political spectrum is so high that anything could happen in the presidential race.

The PAC will continue to monitor the presidential playing field closely but at this point it has decided not to endorse. However, we are looking very carefully at the Senate contests because those fields are fairly fixed by now, and the Senate holds the key to any action on progressive legislation including the ERA. It also is the place to stop the onslaught of radical right-wing judicial nominations.

The U.S. Senate has 53 Republicans and 47 Democrats (including two independents both of whom caucus with the Democrats.). There are 35 seats up in 2020 - including special elections in Arizona and Georgia - of which 23 are held by the GOP. Democrats will need to gain of three (if they win the presidency) or four seats (if they lose the presidency) to take control. Of those 35 seats up, only 6 appear to be competitive. That field might narrow down, but right now we are looking at protecting Senators Gary Peters (MI) and Doug Jones (AL) - both of whom were NOW PAC endorsed and are both endangered. The Republicans have 4 seats that are vulnerable, Senators Tom Tillis (NC), Martha McSally (AZ), Cory Gardner (CO) and Susan Collins (ME). We must plan to keep our two endangered and take the four vulnerable Republican seats. Hopefully we will find other opportunities since there is little room for error in this task.

PAC Meeting

The PAC met August 17-18, 2019 to start formulating strategy and targeting for 2020 and to fine tune our plans for the 2019 Virginia election. The focus was on developing goals, both electoral and financial. There are 8 voting members of NOW PAC, 3 at large members: Kimberly Adams, Hala Ayala and Gay Bruhn, 3 board members: Cindy Drabek, Jacqueline Kozin and Nancy Campbell Mead and the two officers: Toni Van Pelt, and Christian F. Nunes. The PAC advisors are Eleanor Smeal, Alice Cohan, Jan Erickson and Pat Reuss. Because of the importance of the 2020 elections, we expect to call another PAC meeting early in the year.

The transition – A note from Linda

This summer, I announced that I planned to retire at the end of 2019. My hope was that we could bring on a Deputy Political Director to train and be mentored by me during the 2019 elections and to begin planning for 2020 – which clearly will be the most important election in our lifetime. After an extensive nationwide search, we were so pleased to hire Sara Mitchell. Sara has substantial experience in political organizing, independent expenditures, financial compliance, social media and political communication. Sara and I have worked side by side to accomplish a smooth transition. As part of this work, we are having joint phone calls with all the state coordinators. We listen to their challenges, talk to them about

effective endorsement and PAC procedures and remind them of the federal incumbents from their state that we would like to re-endorse. The calls have been marvelously received and it has been a good way for Sara to meet NOW leadership. We are also working with Kim to revise the unwieldy PAC website so that it is more user friendly to our leadership, members and candidates. Upon my departure, Sara will become NOW's Political Director. Her contact information will be the same as mine is now elections@now.org and 202-628-8669 x 146.