

# 2020 Sister District Summit Notes

## Table of Contents

State of Sister District, Rita Bosworth, Executive Director	1
2020 Strategy, Gaby Goldstein, Political Director	2
Behind the Scenes of a Campaign, James Conway	5
2020 Messaging, Rita Bosworth and Lyzz Schwegler	8

## State of Sister District, Rita Bosworth, Executive Director

- Where we are
  - 19 million fewer folks represented by republicans in senate
  - Will acquit a president that knows he's above the law
  - Judiciary being taken over by right wing ideologues
  - Racism, violence, nativism being endorsed by this administration
  - It's a presidential election year -- the most important election of our lives is going to happen
  - But there is always something to be done even if we're not a Supreme Court Justice or a senator, etc.
- Here's what I know
  - We don't know what we don't know -- nothing is certain until it happens -- we keep fighting with every bit of strength
  - This will eventually end -- time passes -- we get through it
  - We cannot give up -- activism is hard. But what is the alternative? We have to keep doing everything we can because if we give up, they win without trying
  - It is always darkest before the dawn. We have made progress but it takes time. It's possible that right now we're on the cusp of a monumental breakthrough. So scared of what a free and equal society looks like that republicans are doing everything they can do to hold on to power because they know they will eventually lose.
  - The place we can have the quickest, biggest, and most effective impact is in the states. You know this because you're seeing it happen -- when VA became a trifecta they became the 35th state to ratify the ERA -- making election day a holiday -- passing gun violence legislation in the face of masked cowards who stormed their capitol building. These laws are directly impacting the people in VA -- we won't see that from Washington. We are going to see it in the states because we already are -- this is a critical election year --- by GOTV for state candidates, we're GOTV for senate, house, electoral college. 2020 is a census year. 2021 is a redistricting year. Will draw up new voting lines that will be with us for the next decade. This is the year for the states.
- We can't fix everything overnight, but there's always something to be done. None of us can do everything, but all of us can do something. We know through our efforts in the states, we can impact and shape the future of our country.

- These are values worth fighting for -- this shared belief that we can do better and will fuel us for whatever is coming until we succeed.

## **2020 Strategy, Gaby Goldstein, Political Director**

- Key Documents: [2020 Strategy](#), [2020 States](#)
- GOAL: to build and maintain progressive power by electing democratic majorities to state legislatures
- WHY: policy pipeline, leadership pipeline, vital key to fair districts, high volunteer ROI
  - Extremely overlooked -- sleeping giant of policy -- progressive/regressive -- half of all sitting members of congress came from state leg.
  - ROI - smaller bases in terms of budgets and field plans and access to candidates and understand what's going on on the ground compared to federal or statewide races. We have seen documented cases of reverse coattails - 2017 governor's race in VA - small but clear documented effect of the turnout for ralph northam.
- The basics:
  - Electoral: field and fundraising, and in-kind general consulting - baldly partisan PAC
  - Non-electoral: SDAN - voter education and registration, civic engagement. C4. find out best practices to keep people engaged and voter.
  - 3 Types of Chambers:
    - Blue Flips - chambers where democrats are down a handful of seats to flip, where we can flip in one cycle
    - Blue Holds - chambers where democrats have a fragile majority that we have to defend and expand
    - Blue In-Roads - "no chamber left behind" - chambers where democrats likely do not have a one-cycle solution to flipping, but where we must make whatever inroads we can
    - Mix of chambers seats changes each year:
      - Schedule of races
      - Shifting composition of chambers
      - Urgency of redistricting - prioritizing "last chance" races: the last elections before redistricting in 2021, in states where the state leg draws the district lines
      - Urgency of other key races + broader electoral opportunities - 2020 prioritizing state leg races nested in competitive congressional and/or senate races, in important presidential battleground states
- Political strategy in 2017:
  - Blue flips: Manka Dhingra flipped the WA Senate blue
  - Blue holds: Stephanie Hansen held the DE Senate blue (our very first candidate)
  - Blue Inroads: 13 VA House of Delegates candidates made inroads
- Political strategy of 2018:
  - Blue flips: flipped the CO state senate and ME senate
  - Blue holds: held and expanded control of the WA senate and DE senate

- Blue Inroads:
  - Staved off a republican supermajority in the FL House
  - Broke GOP supermajorities in MI senate and PA senate
  - Made critical inroads in the MI senate and PA house
  - Closed important gaps in AZ house, PA house, and NH house (put us in contention to flip these houses)
  - Longer term time horizon to come back the next cycle to get those flips
- Political strategy of 2019:
  - Blue flips: flipped the VA senate blue, flipped the VA house of delegates blue
  - Blue inroads:
    - Pam lovino brought the PA senate within flip range for 2020
    - MS house candidate Shanda Yates contributed to a more diverse general assembly in Mississippi than in decades (she's been very public with crediting SD for her win)
    - Candidates in MS and LA laid important groundwork for future Democratic success
- Political strategy of 2020:
  - Prioritize:
    - Urgency of redistricting - last chance races
    - Nested races - reverse coattails
  - Minnesota: Blue Flip - State Senate
    - The MN Senate is our pick for the best democratic chamber flip opportunity of 2020
    - Democrats are down just 2 seats in this chamber and it hasn't been up since 2016
      - Deliver a democratic trifecta
      - Last chance races - whoever is elected will draw district lines
      - Critical battleground for presidential state. Trump narrowly lost.
      - Important senate race (democrats must protect Tina Smith's seat), competitive congressional races (MN-07 and MN-02)
      - Working to support MN state senate candidates will drive turnout up and down the ticket in this historic election year
  - Texas: Blue Flip - State Senate
    - Democrats need 9 seats in the texas house to gain majority. There are 150 seats in the chamber
    - Dems gained 12 seats in the house in 2018. Momentum is now on our side
    - 9 house seats held by a republican where Beto won in 2018
    - Republican trifecta: winning the chamber will give Dems a seat at the table for redistricting
    - Last Chance races: will draw next maps.
      - Texas is blueing - romney carried texas by 16 points in 2012  
Trump's win was by 9 points
      - 2018 beto 3 point senate loss, dems 12 seat pickup in house

- North Carolina: Blue Flip
  - State legislative opportunities:
    - Dems need to win 5 senate seats and 6 house seats
    - Momentum is on our side: in 2018 dems broke GOP supermajorities in both chambers
    - Flipping a chamber would give dems a critical seat at the redistricting table
    - Some NC districts have recently been redrawn, new maps are not a slam-dunk for dems
    - Dem governor Roy Cooper up for reelection in 2020, competitive races, drive resources and GOTV efforts for down ballot candidates
    - These are last chance races
- PA: Blue Flip
  - State leg opportunities:
    - Dems need to win 4 senate seats and 9 house seats
    - Momentum on our side: in 2018 dems broke GOP senate supermajority, flipped 12 state house seats
    - Flipping a chamber would give dems seat at the redistricting table
    - Flipping a chamber especially important because PA governor does not have veto power over state leg maps.
    - Last chance races
  - One of the most important presidential battleground this year
  - One of the Big Four that will likely control 2020 outcome
  - Very competitive congressional races
- Michigan: Blue Flip:
  - State house opportunities:
    - Dems need 4 seats to win
    - Momentum on our side: dems broke gop supermajority in senate, gained 5 house seats, broke gop trifecta by electing dem governor
    - Flipping the chamber: give gov whitmer a partner in the leg, GOP refuses to work with her to govern effectively.
  - Critical battleground presidential state. Obama carried in 2018, trump won by a hair
  - One of the “big Four” states likely to control 2020 outcome
  - Very competitive senate race and congressional races
- Arizona: Blue Flip
  - Dems need to win 3 senate seats, 2 house seats
  - Not a redistricting target, just a flip target
  - Very competitive senate and congressional races
- Colorado: Blue Hold
  - 2018 flipped state senate - blue trifecta
  - GOP relentlessly trying to recall dem state senators to try to recapture power - have been unsuccessful so far

- Georgia: Blue Inroads
  - 2018: Dems flipped 11 seats in the house and 2 in the senate despite voter suppression
  - Stacey Abrams almost won that race
  - Last chance races
- Wisconsin: Blue Inroads
  - Dems received 200,000 more in 2018 and are on the brink of a supermajority (36% of the seats)
  - GOP has supermajority in the senate
  - GOP is 3 seats away from supermajority in the house - have to prevent that
  - Democratic governor with veto power - supermajority would override the veto
  - One of the Big Four to decide the election (single most important)
- Florida: Blue Inroads
  - 2018 Andrew Gillum lost by less than half a percent
  - GOP state legislatures drew the state's lines in their favor in 2010
  - Critical presidential battleground: one of the Big Four
- Exact number of seats depends on: candidate recruitment, internal resources, volunteer capacity
- Already on the ground: local and national grassroots, electoral and advocacy orgs
- Endorsements: early April (wave 1), Mid-June (wave 2), maybe a special election -- soon!
- Questions!
  - Always looking for places where there's energy on the ground -- cannot manufacture grassroots support but we can provide a boost -- amplify -- work in coalition to support races where there is already interest.
  - What's the best ROI: spending money on plane tickets or using it to fundraise for folks on the ground? -- going to do a download (SDAN) on various tactics for where your time is best spent -- canvassing is king, phonebanking is queen, money is great (there are many ways to contribute).

### **Behind the Scenes of a Campaign, James Conway**

- Intro: Joshua Cole's 2019 campaign manager (HD-28)
  - 2017 he was a first time candidate and only lost by 73 votes
  - Got back in touch when he was running again and asked to manage his campaign
  - Worked on Hill for almost 4 years for Sen. Tim Kaine and on his reelection campaign (lead contact in NoVA for community events)
  - In 2016 organized in Alexandria and got campaign bug
- The start of a political race
  - Started in Dec 2018, staff usually not brought on until March because of \$
  - Start grinding - Doing call time, doing appearances, needed to understand the district and the voters (Kaine had won the district so knew could do it)

- Understand the candidate - Josh is a pastor, had to have a job because campaign didn't pay
- Look at past data, VPAP very valuable. Looked at each area in the district in the breakdown and see where we could gain ground by driving up the vote in certain areas.
- Researching your opponent - thought he was going to run again the incumbent so they voted in an extremist, so far right but exactly what the party wanted there. Less competitive than the more centrist R incumbent.
- Setting a campaign plan and timeline - Lays out goals and activities in a week by week plan that you can go off of to ensure you are running the campaign soundly and meeting your goals
- Hiring staff and building partnerships/alliances with places like Planned Parenthood and Citizens United and ask them not just for money but to be invested in the race.
- Campaign must dos
  - Fundraising - time must be between doors and fundraising
  - Build relationships with the press and the state party - helps to amplify the stories that underlie policy (e.g., testimonial of teacher about raising teacher pay)
  - Endorsements - important, like building a coalition of partners you can roll out regularly. Shows campaign has momentum and there is general support.
  - Shifting capacity - need to ensure folks are talking to voters we haven't hit yet
  - Building organizational strength - consultants can help. Need folks who aren't just trying to make money, but are real partners. Staff and volunteers are also crucial, have a human touch and talk to folks like real people. Don't treat people just like resources.
- Fundraising
  - Understanding how to fundraise - Found that telling people what the money is being used for and why it's so important. An email program can also be a way to design a fundraising strategy. Segmented so people don't get the same emails. Ask for different amounts for people who can give at different levels.
  - Importance of early money - Shows viability. Important because you get more party investment (by raising a certain amount by the first quarter fundraising deadline). Doing call time all the time. Getting that first chunk helps to show people it will be competitive campaign. Important to keep relationship going, You don't always want to ask for money. Sometimes soliciting feedback from donors can be a useful way to not as.
  - Call time - Candidates hate it but if you aren't doing it someone else is. Once people realize your campaign is viable more money starts coming in on it's own.
- Endorsements
  - Important and shows you have a coalition of establishment and non-establishment support. So many groups around that can be helpful. You trot them out on a rolling basis like weekly, maybe with a theme. Make sure that we are staying on track, hitting different issue areas and covering all bases.

- Partner groups like Sister District helpful in raising early money and helping to outsource fundraising.
- Political/rally events - events where can get candidate out and talk to a group of folks, can help to leverage that for things you care about and show that you are engaged.
- Field program
  - Building a strong field plan - Need to understand what the party is going to do and what you need to do.
  - Voter targeting - The candidate doesn't necessarily need to speak to every voter but can help to talk to folks who aren't engaged because the candidate is more persuasive.
  - GOTV - got folks to come in and ubered them to where they needed to go.
  - Shifting capacity - maybe don't need to knock doors certain places like places where definitely turning out the vote. Should have a strong field director, help to ensure that everything is ready to go for volunteers like drinks and snacks.
  - Doing enough to get by is never going to be a winning formula, have to go above and beyond.
- Behind the scenes
  - Workplace environment - Want to make sure the environment is positive and supportive. Want to make sure folks don't burn out.
  - Keeping the candidate sane - Key because at all times someone is complaining to the candidate and everyone expects them to be invincible. Need to ensure getting enough sleep, and feeling well.
  - Spending money - Figure out what to do with the money raised, and specifically what should early money go towards.
  - Understanding the daily grind -Being clear one both campaign schedule and personal schedule. Campaign managers every day are doing things like making calls, scheduling events, responding to campaign requests, etc.
- Conclusion
  - It's a lot of work to run a campaign but built meaningful relationships and made it even better to win.
  - What does the election mean to staff/vols/partner groups? All stakeholders are invested and want to celebrate with everyone
  - Candidate reflection - Meaningful when the candidate is enjoying legislating. Fruits of the labor.
  - Most important takeaway - You are going to get burnt out on things. Take a break and walk away for a second. Go look at all the stupid things the opponent is trying to do
- Q&A
  - What is early money? If no primary, early summer is fine, but if primary need significantly before primary.
  - Going negative - Instead of going negative can contrast differences between candidate and opponent.

- Donors: how do you know who to call? - On VPAP James was able to see who donated to whose campaigns and can see who the person is but can't get the information (find it in VAN).
- Relationship with SDP - First contacted about campaign around February. Great way to get early money, great to have folks to bounce ideas off of.

## **2020 Messaging, Rita Bosworth and Lyzz Schwegler**

- Why state legislatures?
  - State legislators become national leaders, many presidents have served in the state leg
  - State policy becomes national policy
  - States control redistricting - many state legislatures
  - It's a good bang for the buck - often leads to more Dem votes for other candidates on the ballot
- Why Sister District?
  - We're well-organized: we're efficient, effective and strategic. Your volunteer hours and money go further.
  - No matter what you have to give, we have a place for you - people can do as much as they want. You can volunteer for any amount of hours (can rightsize for your team). Donations are still incredibly helpful if folks can't necessarily volunteer.
  - Lots of hands-on support from the staff - no experience necessary! Our organizing staff (Lala, Neal, Leif, soon to be more folks) will help you.
- Personal connections with candidates, IRL or on Facetime
  - State leg candidates are so accessible to us as volunteers
  - Allows volunteers to really engage with candidates and personally invest
- Burnout is real
  - Volunteers need a "home" that is manageable, nourishing, and effective
  - Part of what brings folks back is the human connection SDP provides. We are a team of real people in community with one another.
  - SDP is fun (e.g., Vermont's stroll with the heifers event, trivia nights, everyone dress like Elizabeth Warren night, etc)
- But what about the President?
  - Voter turnout is voter turnout - it's an and not an or
  - If you get vote out down ballot you will get vote out up ballot
  - When people go vote for president, if they don't recognize the names at the bottom of the ballot they just don't vote for those seats
  - Millions of dollars and millions of people will be working on the Pres level, not the case for state leg but it's just as important
  - Working on a state race doesn't mean you are NOT working on a presidential, especially if you are working in states that are swing states
  - Even if preferred candidate doesn't win the nomination, we know that we have candidates that we are passionate about, that we do care about getting elected and who will ultimately help get the vote out up ballot.



- Q & A
  - Money in state leg? Some people like Cheryl Turpin raised millions. Depends on the state, some states people are raising far less. Even if it's a lot it's far less than a presidential and money goes further
  - Suggestion: If HQ could start some google docs to put a bunch of ideas for fundraising and messaging that we could all add to. [sisterdistrict.com/library](https://sisterdistrict.com/library) is a resource library. Lots of ideas. Use what works for you and what resonates with you personally so that your passion shows through.
  - Suggestion: If people are discouraged about the pres nominee. If we don't feel passionate, then they don't have to knock doors for Pres. Can knock for state leg.
  - In terms of social media, how can leverage that? There will be press/social media kits this year. Make sure you read the HQL emails.
  - If you are excited about nominee, how up ballot will we go with the scripts (like vote for candidate and vote for Gov) or will that be based on each campaign? The pres campaign will be run in parallel with the states. What GOTV looks like will depend in part on the nominee and how those folks are investing in those states. Going to be a lot of decisions made on the ground, lots TBD. Also, when we start volunteering for state leg candidates, the pres nominee won't be known for a few months.

**Large Metro Team Caucus, facilitated by Lala Wu**

- [Notes and collaborative document for leader ideas](#)