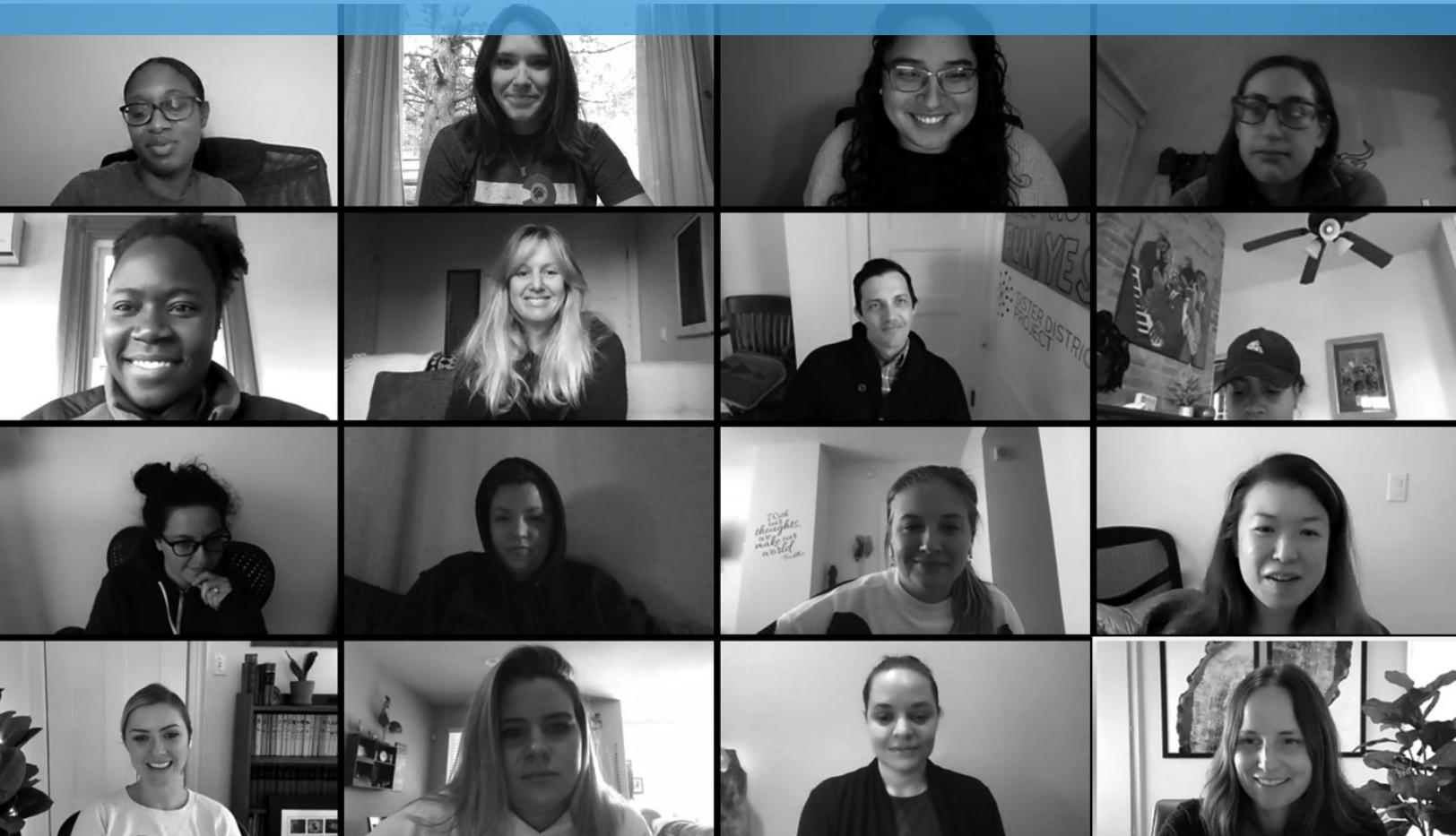




# 2020 IMPACT REPORT



# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

In 2016, we started Sister District because we wanted to activate our communities and engage in strategic civic action. We saw the critical but under appreciated role that state legislatures play in our government, and we knew this was a place we could make a difference.

Four years later, we are reflecting on the incredible progress of this organization. Despite obstacles—including gerrymandered maps, voter suppression, and a global pandemic—we made gains that will serve as the cornerstone of change for years to come.

Since our founding, we have engaged over 50,000 volunteers nationwide, raised \$3.6 million for candidates, and made 3.1 million field touches. This year alone, we raised an average of 9.7% of our candidates' total fundraising and made 34.5% of candidates' total phone calls, highlighting our capacity for outsized impact. We have flipped chambers blue, created Democratic trifectas, broken Republican supermajorities, and increased civic engagement to help implement independent redistricting commissions and elect progressive governors, supreme court justices, and of course, our next President and Vice President.

As we look ahead to 2021 and 2022, we will redouble our efforts to build progressive power in state legislatures by continuing to uncover every last electoral opportunity that will exist under newly drawn maps. We will also expand our professional support to candidates and alumni, and deepen our partnerships with BIPOC-led and community based organizations.

We have learned first hand that the path to change is not a straight line. But with patience, perseverance, and hope, we continue striving to build the world we want to see. Thank you to all of our dedicated volunteers who have made this all possible. Onward to 2021.

With gratitude,



Rita Bosworth  
Co-Founder and Executive Director

# FIELD AND FUNDRAISING

## Official Sister District Races

In 2020, Sister District supported 45 races. This included 40 Sister Races with full field and fundraising support (1 special election and 39 races in general elections) and 5 Sister District alumni seeking reelection (fundraising only for 2 and endorsement only for 3).

**\$1,833,155.88** from 66,667 donations

(money raised directly to endorsed candidates in 2020)

**1,283,024** touches from 50,000+ volunteers

(total field touches from volunteers across the country)

## Looking Back at 2020...



**45**  
RACES



**708,573**  
PHONE CALLS



**254,890**  
TEXTS



**50,000+**  
VOLUNTEERS



**318,754**  
POSTCARDS



**807**  
DOORS



**177**  
TEAMS+ AFFILIATES

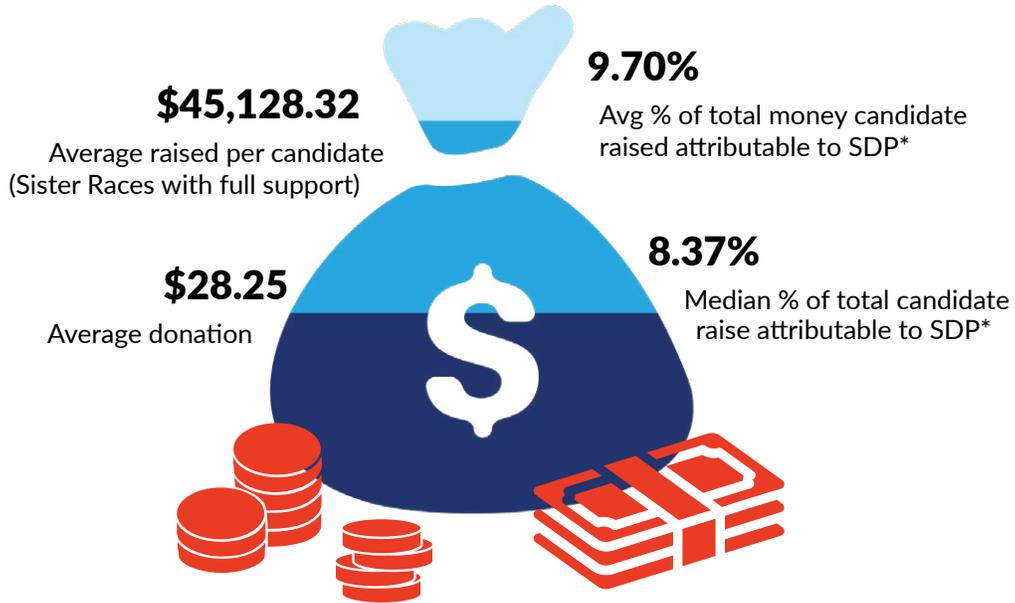


**1 GLOBAL**  
PANDEMIC

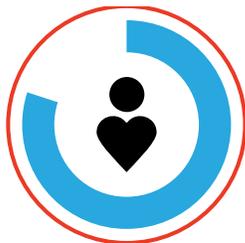


**1 GREAT**  
HOLIDAY PARTY

Our fundraising and field operations made significant contributions to our campaigns. Sister District raised an **average of 9.7%** of our candidates' total fundraising and **34.45%** of their total phone calls.

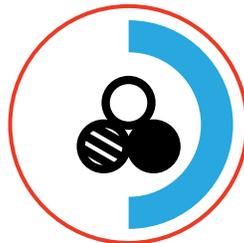


*\*Only some candidates reported their total fundraising, therefore these numbers only include candidates who self-reported their fundraising total to SDP. Alumni were not asked for their fundraising totals.*



**79.71%**

% of fundraising that went  
to women candidates  
(14.25% increase over 2019)



**50.15%**

% of fundraising that went  
to candidates of color  
(14.70% increase over 2019)



**9.33%**

% of fundraising that went  
to LGBTQ+ candidates  
(9.22% increase over 2019)

Field and fundraising efforts largely went to the areas where they could have the biggest impact. (Totals reflect full slate candidates + alums; full slate candidates are candidates who generally received both field and fundraising support.)



**58.98%**

% of fundraising that went to races **decided by less than 5%**

**88.20%**

% of fundraising that went to races **decided by less than 10%**

---



**57.06%**

% of phonebanking that went to races **decided by less than 5%**

**83.63%**

% of phonebanking that went to races **decided by less than 10%**

We also delivered an outsized impact to women and candidates of color in our highest tiers of fundraising.



For the 5 Sister District candidates for whom we raised the most money,

**81.7% of those dollars went to women** (3.06% increase over 2019)



For the 10 Sister District candidates for whom we raised the most money,

**89.87% of those dollars went to women** (26.57% increase over 2019)



For the 5 Sister District candidates for whom we raised the most money,

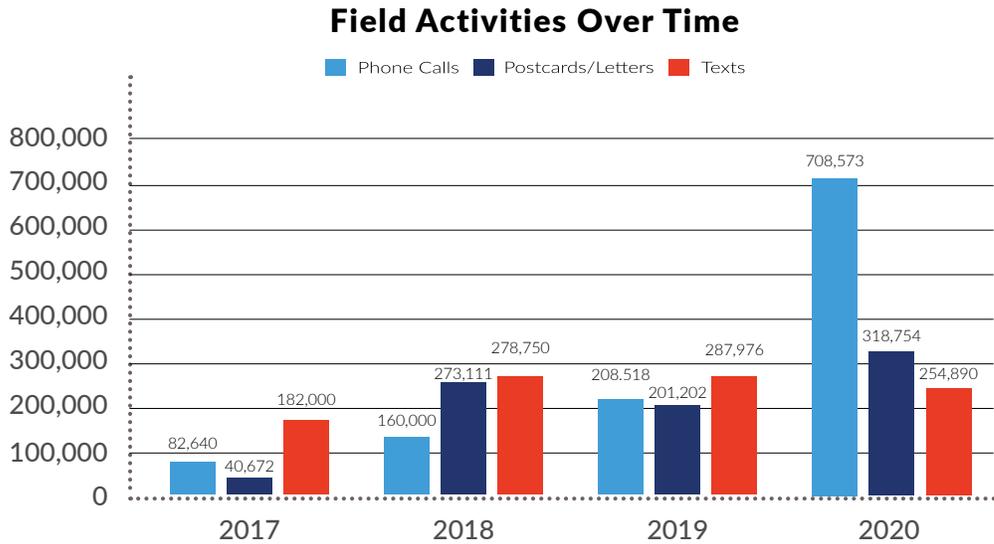
**81.7% of those dollars went to candidates of color** (60.34% increase over 2019)



For the 10 Sister District candidates for whom we raised the most money,

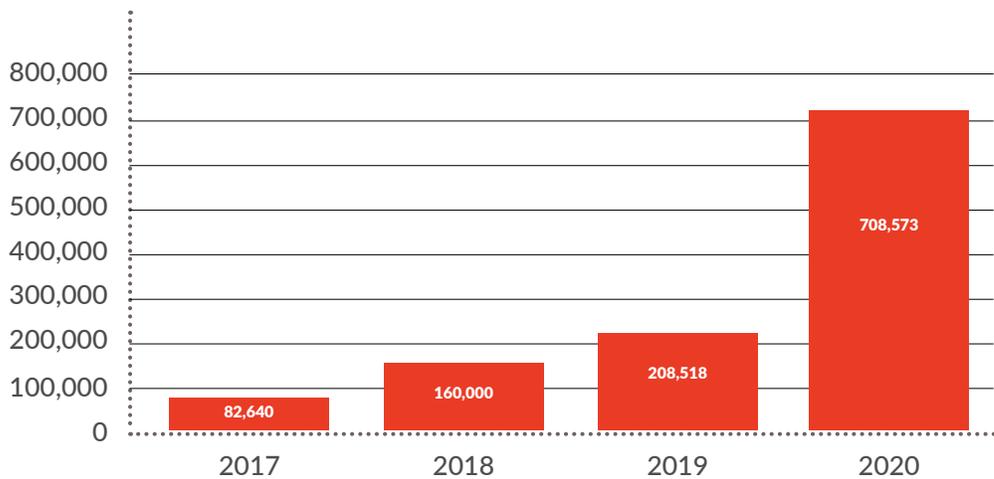
**54.56% of those dollars went to candidates of color** (24.01% increase over 2019)

## Field Programs Growth



Canvassing is not included in the graph above because the pandemic prevented us from canvassing for all but 1 candidate (special election candidate Howie Hayes).

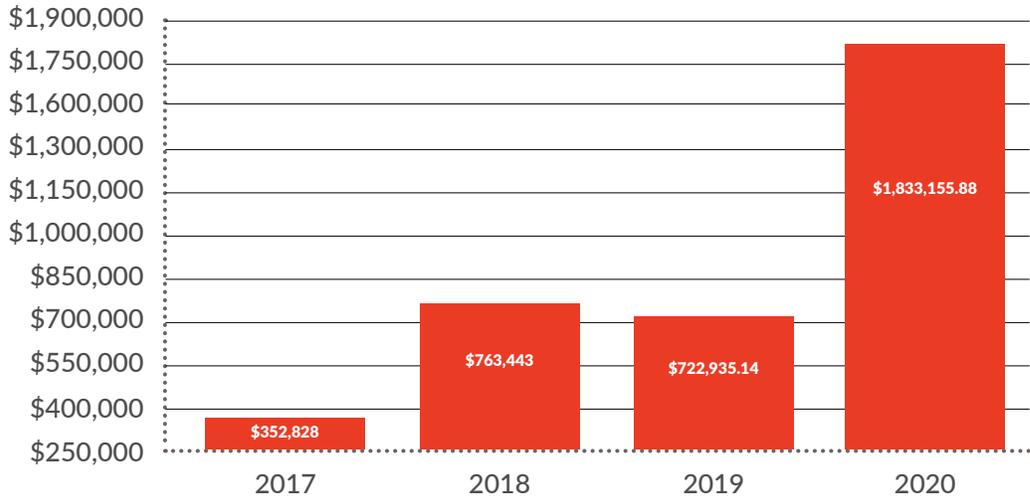
### Phone Support For Candidates Over Time



We saw a significant increase in phonebanking this year. In general, volunteers are more willing to send text messages and postcards than make phone calls, but we know that calls are -- behind canvassing -- the best way to reach voters. We have invested considerable resources in terms of our coaching, training, and content to drive phonebanking participation. It has worked -- our average per candidate phonebanking support increased by **65.05%** this year.

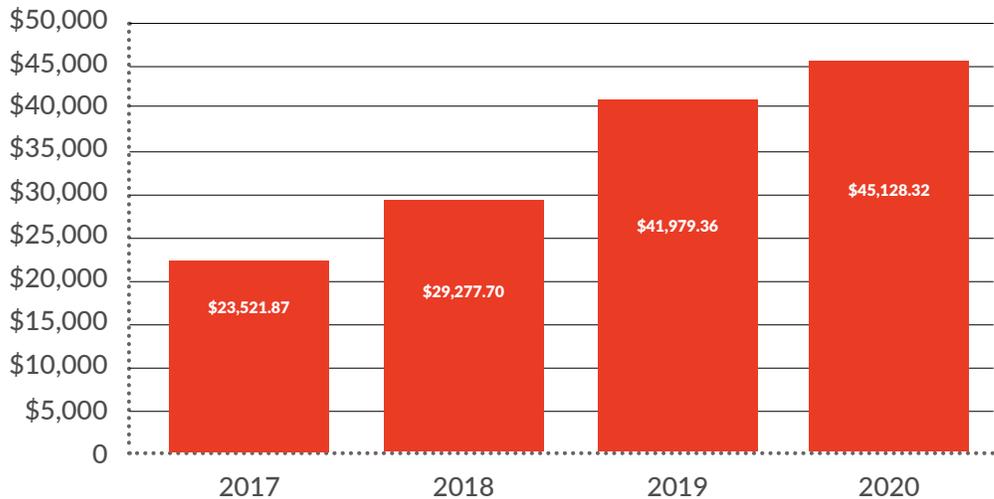
Candidate Fundraising Growth:

**Total Candidate Fundraising Per Year**



*\*Graph above reflects full slate candidates and alumni*

**Average Money Raised Per Candidate**



*\*Graph above just includes full slate candidates*

Our programs have expanded on every metric since 2018, the last high profile election year in Sister District’s tenure, with a **143.10%** increase in full slate candidate fundraising over 2018 and a **104.92%** increase in the number of donations received over 2018. We also saw a **54.14%** increase in the average fundraising per candidate over 2018. Including our alumni, we saw a **140.12%** increase in candidate fundraising and a **95.35%** increase in the number of donations received over 2018.

Compared to 2019, Sister District saw a **152.94%** increase in fundraising for full slate candidates, **191.89%** increase in the number of donations, and a **7.5%** increase in average per candidate fundraising.

In terms of field performance:

| Year         | # of Candidates | Dollars               | Average Raised per candidate | Number of Donations | Average Donation | Doors         | Dials            | Postcards      | Texts            | Total Field Touches |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 2017         | 15              | \$352,828             | \$23,521.87                  | 8,333               | \$42.34          | 30,488        | 82,640           | 40,672         | 182,000          | 335,800             |
| 2018         | 25              | \$742,539             | \$29,277.70                  | 32,095              | \$24.27          | 47,888        | 160,000          | 273,111        | 278,750          | 759,891             |
| 2019         | 17              | \$713,649             | \$41,979.36                  | 22,651              | \$29.49          | 17,310        | 208,518          | 201,202        | 287,976          | 715,006             |
| 2020         | 40              | \$1,805,132.86        | \$45,128.32                  | 65,768              | \$28.45          | 807           | 708,573          | 318,754        | 254,890          | 1,283,024           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>97</b>       | <b>\$3,614,148.86</b> | <b>\$34,976.81</b>           | <b>128,847</b>      | <b>\$31.22</b>   | <b>96,493</b> | <b>1,159,873</b> | <b>833,739</b> | <b>1,003,616</b> | <b>3,093,721</b>    |

## 61,963 volunteer hours supporting candidates in the field

(increase of 97.69% over 2019)



**28,343**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

(25 calls/hour)



**1,699.3**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

(150 texts/hour)



**31,875.4**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

(10 postcards/hour)



**44.8**  
VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

(18 doors/hour)

**1,073+**

Number of  
phonebank  
events

**48**

Number of  
recurring  
phonebanks

**7**

Weekly Spanish  
language  
phonebanks

(4,000 dials)

**165**

Number of candidate  
appearances at Sister  
District events

## Adapting to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Less than two weeks after the first shelter-in-place order, Sister District launched our **Virtual Organizing Hub** with guidelines, how-tos, tips, and other resources to help volunteers transform their in-person events into virtual parties.

We implemented virtual phonebanking parties early, experimenting with the method in advance of our mid-March special election, and perfecting it as campaign field programs ramped up earlier than usual in the summer. This has been so successful that it will continue to be a cornerstone of our field program, even after the pandemic subsides. Our volunteers brought incredible creativity to virtual fundraisers, organizing events such as silent auctions, comedy shows, cooking and cocktail classes, bingo nights, book talks by authors, trivia nights, and more.

Note-worthy events featured a wide variety of politicians and celebrities, including Senator Cory Booker, Former Representative Beto O'Rourke, and Governor Roy Cooper, as well as actress Alyssa Milano, Broadway performer Ryan Vasquez, writer Ann Friedman, musicians Katie Crutchfield (Waxahatchee) and Taylor Goldsmith (Dawes), and comedians David Cross, Paul Scheer, June Diane Raphael, Jason Mantzoukas, Tim Heidecker, and many more.

## Partnerships

Collaboration is core to what we do. We were thrilled to force multiply our field and fundraising impact this year in partnership with a wide variety of organizations to support our jointly endorsed candidates, including Collective PAC, DailyKos, DLCC, EMILY's List, Flip The West, Human Rights Campaign, Men4Choice, National Institute for Reproductive Health, NC League of Conservation Voters, The Next 50, Run For Something, Supermajority, Swing Left, Turn PA Blue, and Vote Save America.



# ELECTORAL SUCCESS & IMPACT

## 2020 Slate - Demographics

Our 2020 slate was demographically and geographically diverse, reflecting our commitment to helping build a democracy that looks like the people it represents.

|                  | Total | Women | POC | First-time Candidates* | 40 and Under | LGBTQ IA+ | # of States                            |
|------------------|-------|-------|-----|------------------------|--------------|-----------|--|
| Sister Races     | 40    | 31    | 19  | 19                     | 14           | 4         | 9 (PA, NC, TX, MI, WI, GA, FL, MN, AZ) |
| Alums            | 2     | 2     | 1   | 0                      | 1            | 0         | 3 (AZ, PA, MI)                         |
| Endorsement Only | 3     | 2     | 0   | 0                      | 0            | 0         | 2 (AZ, PA)                             |
| Total            | 45    | 35    | 20  | 19                     | 15           | 4         | 9 (PA, NC, TX, MI, WI, GA, FL, MN, AZ) |

\* First time running for state legislative office; may have held lower elected position.

## Sister Races



**77.5%**  
WOMEN  
CANDIDATES

12.79% increase from 2019



**47.5%**  
CANDIDATES  
OF COLOR

6.32% increase from 2019



**10%**  
LGBTQIA+  
CANDIDATES

4x increase from 2019



**47.5%**  
FIRST TIME  
LEG. CANDIDATES

12.21% increase from 2019



**35%**  
40 AND UNDER  
CANDIDATES

0.29% decrease from 2019

## Historic Firsts



**Padma Kuppaa**  
(MI HD-41)

First Indian immigrant and Hindu ever elected AND reelected to MI legislature.



**Ricky Hurtado**  
(NC HD-63)

First Latino Democrat elected to NC State House, and the only Latinx member of NC legislature.



**Ann Johnson**  
(TX HD-134)

First openly LGBTQ+ representative for district.

## Wins and Losses

We supported some incredibly competitive races in a historically high turnout election cycle. Our candidates won **37.50%** of their races and our alums won **80%** of their races.

|              | Total | Wins | Losses | Percent Won | Percent Lost |
|--------------|-------|------|--------|-------------|--------------|
| Sister Races | 40    | 15   | 25     | 37.50%      | 62.50%       |
| Alums        | 5     | 4    | 1      | 80%         | 20%          |
| Total        | 45    | 19   | 26     | 42.22%      | 57.78%       |

## Closing the Gap

Wins/losses are not our only metric of success. Closing the gap between Democratic and Republican performance, and competing in places where Democrats have not historically run, are also critical indices of programmatic success. Importantly, most of our 2020 races were decided by **less than 5%**, and in **57.5%** of our races, our candidate outperformed the last Democrat to run for the seat.

|              | # of Races Decided by <5% (% of total) | % of Races Decided by <5% (% of total) | # of our Races D Outperformed Last D | % of Races our D Outperformed Last D |
|--------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sister Races | 23 (57.5%)                             | 34 (85%)                               | 23                                   | 57.5%                                |

## Slim Vote Margins

Many of our 2020 races were incredibly close, underscoring that **every vote counts**.

Here is a small selection:



**Laurie Pohutsky**  
237 votes  
(<1%)



**Shea Roberts**  
377 votes  
(<2%)



**Frances Jackson**  
703 votes  
(<2%)



**Ricky Hurtado**  
477 votes  
(<2%)



**Anton Andrew**  
612 votes  
(<2%)

## Outsized Impact

Our volunteers made a **huge impact** on our winning races.

Just a few examples:

| Candidate       | SDP Call Attempts | % of total campaign attempts made by SDP | SDP Post-cards | SDP postcards as % of campaign total | SDP funds raised | SDP funds raised as % of total raise | Vote margin |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Laurie Pohutsky | 40,291            | 34.31%                                   | 8,579          | 71.49%                               | \$59,201.91      | 18.03%                               | 237         |
| Brian Farkas    | 38,005            | 56.87%                                   | 4,983          | 100%                                 | \$49,973.93      | 7.14%                                | 869         |
| Deb Andraca     | 14,653            | 26.46%                                   | 8,533          | 100%                                 | \$46,956.36      | 14.10%                               | 1,324       |
| Shea Roberts    | 10,110            | 46.50%                                   | 11,500         | 65.22%                               | \$25,929.32      | 8.43%                                | 377         |

## Campaign Satisfaction with SDP 😊

We requested feedback from our endorsed campaigns and found that candidates and their staff were highly satisfied by the support SDP staff and volunteers provided. **Importantly, campaign satisfaction and estimates of value increased on almost every metric.**

| Question  | Average Rating 2020 | Average Rating 2019 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Value of SDP fundraising compared with other national groups' fundraising     | 9.6                 | 9.4                 |
| Value of SDP field support compared with other national groups' field support | 9.6                 | 9.0                 |
| Satisfaction with SDP volunteers  | 9.9                 | 9.9                 |
| Satisfaction with SDP fundraising   | 10.0                | 9.7                 |
| Satisfaction with SDP field support   | 9.6                 | 9.3                 |

*Note: 41 people representing 31 campaigns responded. All responses for the same campaign were averaged into a single composite score for that campaign for a total of 31 scores. Answers were translated to a 10-point scale. Only full Sister Race campaigns were surveyed.*

**100% of campaigns** rated SDP's fundraising support superior to other national organizations offering support this cycle.

**100% of campaigns** rated SDP's field support superior to other national organizations offering support this cycle.

**70.97% of campaigns** gave SDP a perfect rating of 10 for SDP's fundraising support compared to other national organizations they worked with this cycle, indicating that they felt that SDP was the best of all national groups that offered fundraising support to their campaign.

**80.65% of campaigns** gave SDP a perfect rating of 10 for SDP's field support compared to other national organizations they worked with this cycle, indicating that they felt that SDP was the best of all the national groups that offered field support to their campaign.

### **Selected quotes from 2020 candidates and campaign staff:**

“Knowing that others around the country were counting on me, supporting me, and helping me was invaluable. It gave me so much energy and restored my faith in America (I’m serious about that). You’ve created a powerful tool.” *Ann Johnson Stewart, Senator-elect for Minnesota Senate District 44*

“The strategy for support. SDP...has proven invaluable in terms of both fundraising and volunteer support. The true bandwidth of SDP support is incredible. Amongst all other endorsers, this is by large and far a more superior program to support candidates.” *Brooke Condrey, Campaign Manager for Shea Roberts, Representative-elect for Georgia House District 52*

“Among the many national groups that expressed interest in my campaign, only Sister District provided the critical volunteer support with regular phone calls and fundraising... SDP helped build momentum early in a district with underdeveloped campaign infrastructure and this led to further statewide and even national recognition for my race.” *Aleta Borrud, Candidate for Minnesota Senate District 26*

“Camaraderie. I know that our election cycle was a bit different because of the pandemic. However, I was able to hold large, innovative fundraisers through SD... I got to pop into Zooms while volunteers from all over made calls. It was great. I met people who I consider friends- and it was unexpected and wonderful.” *Amanda White Eagle, Candidate for Wisconsin Assembly District 92*

“The streamlined approach is truly a testament to what great organizing looks like. Being able to channel volunteers eager to do the work to campaigns is so valuable for a people-powered campaign.” *Luke Borwegen, Campaign Manager for Jonathan Kassa, Candidate for Pennsylvania House District 151*

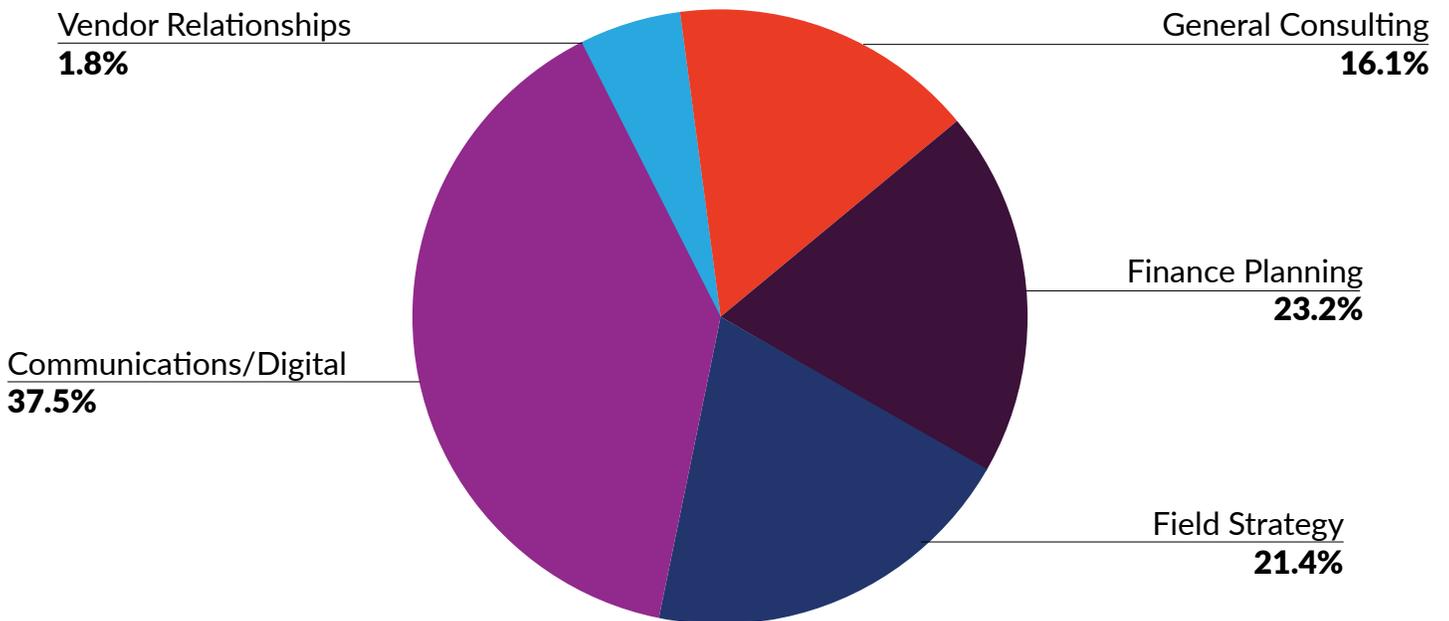
“I have been absolutely blown away by the commitment and generosity of the Sister District network. As a newcomer to running for office, I’ve learned so much over the past year, and your partnership in helping us through every step of the way - and commitment to the real boots-on-the-ground work that it takes to run a successful campaign - has meant the world.” *Judy Schwiebert, Representative-elect for Arizona Legislative District 20*

## HQ Campaign Services Program

This year, our Political Department greatly expanded our candidate services program. In order to engage candidates and their staffs, we launched a weekly candidate newsletter, completed specialized projects upon campaigns' request, and held open office hours to meet with campaigns on an advisory level in a one-on-one setting.

We completed over 60 special projects for endorsed campaigns. These included projects assisting with vendor relationships, communications and digital strategy, finance planning, field strategy and general consulting.

**Candidate Services Project By Category**



**Weekly Newsletter** All campaigns received the weekly candidate services newsletter which highlighted new campaign resources and further promoted the candidate services program.

**Office Hours** 68% of campaigns participated in weekly Office Hours with our Head of Campaigns for strategic advice and support.

**Candidate Call Time Power Hour** 47% of candidates participated in Call Time Power Hours with our Head of Campaigns. This was a great community-building opportunity for candidates to connect across states and fundraise together.

**Special Projects** Our staff completed at least one special project for 53% of our campaigns.

**Campaign Toolbox** Each campaign team had access to our campaign toolbox with free resources and original training materials.

**Average Participation: 67%**

# VOLUNTEER TEAM DEMOGRAPHICS

## Teams

Local groups are at the heart of our distributed organizing model. We cultivate volunteer teams and affiliates that stay civically engaged year-round, and are ready to deploy to support the most strategic campaigns cycle after cycle.

**177 total teams/affiliates across 31 states**

(as of November 1st, 2020)

**76 new teams/affiliates in 2020**

(as of November 1st, 2020)

| Year          | Number of Teams | Number of Affiliates | Total Teams & Affiliates | Volunteer Leaders |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| January 2018  | 32              | 7                    | 39                       | 94                |
| January 2019  | 57              | 19                   | 76                       | 217               |
| January 2020  | 62              | 39                   | 101                      | 301               |
| November 2020 | 62              | 115                  | 177                      | 482               |

## Team Satisfaction

We conducted a post-election feedback survey with our volunteer leaders to gauge enthusiasm and morale. Despite the pandemic and some tough losses, our volunteers are still highly satisfied with their candidates and contributions to our mission. Our teams feel deservedly proud of their work, and they see their work as part of a long-term strategy to build progressive power in state legislatures.

| Question  | Avg Rating 2020 |
|---|-----------------|
| How satisfied are you with the official Sister District candidates you were assigned to work with this cycle? | 9.3             |
| My team felt good about their work, even for Sister District candidates that did not win their races.         | 9.3             |
| My team feels that they helped move the needle in critical state elections.                                   | 8.4             |
| My team feels like a valued part of the Sister District organization.   | 9.3             |
| My team feels energized to continue working with Sister District in 2021-2022.                                | 8.7             |
| My team feels that Sister District helped to deepen their commitment to civic engagement                      | 9.2             |

Note: Items were translated to a 10-point scale. 34 Volunteer Leaders representing 33 teams and affiliates responded to the survey.

## HQ Volunteer Support Improvements

**Our expanded Organizing Department delivered the full package of coaching and collaborative support to 100% of our teams this year, doubling our coverage over 2019.**

We dig deep, working closely with leaders to set goals, build systems, and track success. This year, we developed extensive new templates and best practices to help teams jumpstart their support for candidates. We were also able to pivot quickly to virtual organizing in the face of the pandemic.

### **Our training is dynamic.**

We provide support and guidance while also facilitating opportunities for volunteers to learn from each other.

For example, we continued our popular monthly volunteer leader call and incorporated small group breakouts to help build community. We also incorporated beginner and advanced tracks to our annual Sister District Summit. Additionally, we expanded our programs for youth and new organizers, providing meaningful capacity to support teams' candidate support activities, while also offering fellows valuable hands-on experience.

Finally, we launched a monthly BIPOC volunteer happy hour as part of our commitment to building an inclusive culture at our organization.

# SDAN

Sister District Action Network (SDAN) is the 501(c)(4) affiliate of Sister District Project.

## Flagship Research Program

SDAN’s flagship program is its voter and volunteer research program. We conduct academic-quality experiments and analyses to develop and disseminate best practices in the areas of voter and volunteer engagement.

In 2020, SDAN’s research program continued to grow. We conducted and reported approximately the same amount of studies in 2020 as in 2019; however, SDAN’s experimental designs have become more complex and several included multiple waves of contact that deployed over time.

SDAN won an Expy Award from the Analyst Institute for the [Voter Registration Chase](#) experiment. This is the second year running that SDAN has been awarded an Expy from the Analyst Institute.

| Research Area             | Number of studies conducted |        |        | Number of studies reported |         |      |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|----------------------------|---------|------|
|                           | 2018                        | 2019   | 2020   | 2018                       | 2019    | 2020 |
| Voter Registration        | 2                           | 1      | 1      | 1                          | 2       | 1    |
| Voter Engagement          | 3                           | 5      | 6      | 0                          | 3       | 7    |
| Volunteer Engagement      | 2                           | 2      | 2      | 0                          | 3       | 2    |
| Broader Electoral Studies | 0                           | 1      | 1      | 0                          | 0       | 0    |
| Total                     | 7                           | 9      | 10     | 1                          | 8       | 10   |
| Growth Over Previous Year | -                           | 28.57% | 11.11% | -                          | 700.00% | 25%  |

## COVID-related Research

SDAN launched two projects in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

A volunteer survey that included a variety of questions about capacity and interest in volunteerism considering the stress of the pandemic. We found that volunteers were more motivated than ever to volunteer for political causes.

A randomized controlled trial conducted in partnership with researchers at the University of Michigan that sought to determine how the pandemic affected feelings about voting and various socially distanced methods for voting across the political spectrum.

## Civic Engagement Program

Education is a key piece of our work and lays the foundation for our tremendous volunteer capacity. We provide thought leadership and analyses that help spread the word about the importance of state legislatures, as well as generate a deeper understanding of key issues, including gerrymandering and voter suppression.

**Book Club and Fireside Chat Series:** In our popular book club and fireside chat series, we read books and hold conversations with authors and experts to deepen our engagement with issues around voting rights, the importance of states, fair maps and districting, social and racial justice and civic participation.

**Sister District Summit:** The annual Sister District Summit is an opportunity for volunteers from across the country to debrief, plan, and exchange ideas. Because the 2021 Summit will be virtual, we take the opportunity to expand our programming to reach even more leaders.

**State Bridges:** Launching in 2021, this program will connect volunteers across the country with organizations doing year-round power-building work in key states. By building bridges between our volunteers and local organizations, we strengthen progressive infrastructure and build long-term power.

## Sister District Alumni Program

We are proud to continue to support our alumni in their journeys as leaders through our Legislator Services and Future Winners programs.

**Legislator Services:** Sister District's alumni community now includes 49 state legislators in 14 states. We work to build community among these leaders and provide them with the tools they need to best serve their communities. Upcoming programming includes rollout of an alumni database, quarterly alumni convenings and newsletter, fostering connection between SDP teams and alumni, creating opportunities for mentorship and peer support among our alumni, and policy-specific discussions.

**Future Winners:** Progressive donors and organizations like Sister District invest significant time, energy and resources into candidates. Many who are initially unsuccessful have tremendous potential. Losses are often downpayments on future successes, but many candidates need encouragement and additional resources to stay in the pipeline. We must move away from treating candidates as static objects, and instead treat them as people on a trajectory of power. To do this, a second track to our alumni program serves our future winners: candidates who did not win their race, but have the potential to win in the future. Our Future Winners program uses a cohort model to build community, administer training and coaching on advanced topics of fundraising and communications, provide holistic analysis of past results, and help folks find the right next race.



# SISTER DISTRICT PROJECT

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