

OHIO

2007-08 Political Plan

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After delivering a minimum wage increase to an estimated 718,000 Ohioans -14% of the state's workforce, ACORN members and organizers are building political power by bringing low and moderate income Ohioans together around a broader Working Families Agenda.

Executive Summary

Objective

The election of 2008 will be the most important national election in a generation and presents an unmatched opportunity for progressives to win the White House, build a progressive majority in the House and Senate, pave the way for the post 2010 redistricting struggle, and hold progressive candidates accountable for implementing progressive public policies. The following political plan is designed to mobilize key progressive constituencies in strategic locations in order to capitalize on this opportunity.

ACORN members and organizers throughout Ohio are moving plans to build on the successes of the Minimum Wage win in 2006 and the unprecedented voter registration drives in 2004 and 2006 which added 300,000 new voters in Ohio.

Strategy

Ohio ACORN's 2007-08 Political Plan is divided into three components and designed to maximize the participation of base voters generally as well as boosting the participation of "swing" voters in key Congressional Districts upon which the balance of power in Congress will rest. These components are:

- Base Voter Program
- Swing Voter Program
- Ballot Initiatives Program

Each component will combine several of ACORN's traditionally strong voter participation methodologies, voter registration, voter education, and voter mobilization, in varying degrees. Work will start on some programs in key 2007 elections, both to build capacity for a to-scale 2008 effort and to field-test specific aspects of the various programs to ensure effective and efficient implementation in 2008.

Component Narratives

Base Voter Program

An analysis of the 2006 elections by Donna Brazile and Cornell Belcher suggests that progressive gains in Missouri, Ohio, and Pennsylvania senatorial elections were largely the result of significant gains of support from African-American and Latino voters. In comparing 2004 Senate elections with 2006 Senate elections via exit polling, Belcher and Brazile note that the share of African-American voting for the more progressive candidate surged in a range from 7% to 18% from 2004 levels. At the same time, African-Americans increased their percentage in the electorate in Maryland, Ohio, Missouri, and Pennsylvania. This combination of more Blacks in the electorate, and more of them choosing to support progressives, likely propelled progressives to victories in each of those states.¹

In other words, base voters brought home the 2006 elections for progressives. These voters represent a major portion of ACORN's core constituencies and ACORN's programs have a demonstrated track record in both expanding the pool of these voters in the electorate and in mobilizing them to the polls.

ACORN organizes and engages thousands of Ohio's base voters in local politics year round, see an expanded look at ACORN's *Permanent Campaign* on page 10 of this document.

ACORN's Constituency

ACORN's targeted constituency is low- and moderate-income families generally. Within that context our largest sub-constituency in Ohio is made up of African-American and Latino communities. White working class families make up the next largest constituency grouping. All of our Plan components involving base voters are aimed at either first-time voters or low-propensity voters; components aimed at swing voters will contain both new and infrequent voters and more frequent voters. Much of our resources are aimed at mobilizing people who otherwise would not vote. Sustained, strategically targeted work of this kind both delivers in immediate elections and steadily increases the progressive electorate in key Congressional Districts.

Strategy

As Belcher and Brazile make clear, progressive electoral victories will come through increased participation from base constituencies and an increased share of that participation going to progressive candidates. To that analysis ACORN would add that in Ohio some U.S. House, state Senate and Ohio House Rep. elections are key to defending and/or expanding the progressive majority in Congress and in the State House, particularly those with low densities of base voters, swing voters (defined here as white working class families, single working

¹ Belcher, Cornell and Brazile, Donna, "The Black and Hispanic Vote in 2006", [The Democratic Strategist](http://www.thedemocraticstrategist.org/0703/brazilebelcher.php), March 2007, www.thedemocraticstrategist.org/0703/brazilebelcher.php

women, and others responsive to a progressive issues agenda such as ACORN's Working Families Agenda) will play a similar role.

Increased participation comes in two ways: voter registration and mobilization of low-propensity voters. Increased share of the vote comes through voter identification and education. ACORN's 2007-08 program is designed to achieve both aspects of this key to electoral victory in 2008.

Voter Registration

Voter registration is the first means by which we expand the base constituencies within the electorate. Notably, an increasing body of research shows that voter registration programs create new voters at a substantially less expensive cost than voter education and mobilization programs. Our voter registration programs in African-American communities cost \$12.50 per card and \$15 per card in New American turf, while Gerber and Green report that the cheapest voter mobilization program costs \$19 per voter contacted. Analyses conducted by Sandy Newman in 2005 put the *cost per voter acquired* through the least expensive door-based voter mobilization program at \$54.

Analyses of recent voter registration data indicate that a minimum of 72% of registrants make the voter rolls and at least 65% of those vote. Based on our \$12.50 per card cost, the *cost per acquired voter* strictly through voter registration is \$26.60. This cost should actually be considered less than this because a minimum of 67% of these voters persist on the rolls into the next cycle as well, allowing a portion of the \$26.60 cost to be amortized over more than one cycle. We can safely make this assumption because analysis of field research by University of Notre Dame Professor David Nickerson indicates that once a person votes in one election they are 29 percentage points more likely to vote in the next major election.

Analyses of voter registration drives and voter turnout data from 2003-2006, undertaken by Polimetrix and Sandy Newman, when aggregated and broken down by jurisdiction, show that, new and persisting registrants from these drives **likely provided more voters than the margin of victory in three US Senate elections and eleven elections for US House.**²

ACORN's voter registration program continues to incorporate the findings of field research and respond to the evolution of the political sensibilities of our targeted constituencies. **For the 2007-08 Plan, we consider our repeated contact with voters through the voter registration program as the equivalent of at least one door-to-door voter contact.** We are incorporating a short issues-based voter survey with our registrants on the streets and a follow-up contact from a call center within 3 days of registering them. All of our registrants will get monthly email issue updates as well as auto dial calls. This change more tightly integrates the VR program with the voter education and mobilization

² This analysis is proprietary. All inquiries regarding it should be directed to Mr. Newman and Polimetrix.

programs, starting the process of voter education from the moment the potential voter encounters the ACORN voter registration program. With repeated contacts concentrating on issues that resonate a key to turnout for new and infrequent voters, these changes enhance the overall effectiveness of our entire program.

ACORN led the largest voter registration drive in the country in 2004 and 2006 registering 1,480,213 low and moderate income people across the country and **300,000 in Ohio**. In 2007-08 Ohio ACORN will register **205,000 new voters** throughout the state.

Voter Education and Mobilization

Voter Education and Mobilization is the second means by which we expand progressive constituencies within the electorate. While the voter registration program adds new voters to the rolls and initiates voter contact, the voter education and mobilization work increases the share of the electorate that votes for progressive candidates. Our work uses a sophisticated personal contact methodology that includes mail, phone, and face-to-face conversations. It stresses issue-based conversations that can identify prospective progressive voters and persuade them to support progressive candidates. These programs will include traditional base GOTV programs and long-term membership-and-issues canvasses tailored for swing voters

ACORN's effectiveness at getting new and infrequent voters to cast ballots once on the rolls has been noted by experts like Yale University's Donald Green who said, in evaluating ACORN GOTV programs in 2003,

"ACORN's Maricopa County campaign ranks as the most successful voter mobilization experiment involving more than 1,000 voters. Among Latinos in the targeted precincts, voter turnout more than doubled when voters were mobilized by ACORN canvassers. This campaign illustrates the powerful effects of an intensive, personal approach to voter mobilization."

In Kansas City, also in 2003, Professor Green found that ACORN's work boosted turnout in our targeted precincts by 8.6 percentage points among those we contacted. Further, the analysis of our work with new registrants shows that we boosted turnout among those we contacted in this group by 25.9 percentage points.

A poll of low-income, low-propensity voters by Lake Research Partners on the night of November 7, 2006 in Ohio and Missouri also demonstrates the value of ACORN's brand of voter contact.

While the poll found that the minimum wage initiatives provided strong motivation for voting,

"A significant number of targeted voters [said] that having someone come to their door to discuss the minimum wage

initiative made them more likely to vote (28% in Ohio, 13% in Missouri.)”³

ACORN regularly conducts scientifically-rigorous studies of our contact and turnout methodologies and uses the findings to refine our model as appropriate.

Swing Voter Program

While we have not seen similarly comprehensive analyses of voter behavior across the closely contested Congressional District races, it is not hard to note that in district after district, swing voters put progressive voters into office. While base voters’ importance to winning statewide races is indisputable, swing voters’ importance to victory in smaller geographies cannot be overlooked. This voting bloc has proven itself a progressive bloc, if it is given the opportunity to vote that way as the six minimum wage victories in 2006 show. ACORN’s work in four of these contests including Ohio demonstrates that our programs can effectively and efficiently ensure progressive votes from this bloc.

Swing Voters and the Associate Member Canvas (Voter Mobilization in Targeted Districts)

In 2006 ACORN recognized the need to engage progressive moderate to middle income communities in local and state politics beyond the traditional election year canvass and GOTV activities. The *Associate Member Canvass* expands our ability to talk politics with communities who fall outside of our current organizing structure and whom want to hear more about our Working Families Agenda but are not necessarily growing an active dues paying chapter in their neighborhood at this time. **A hybrid organizing/canvass model, this strategy allows us to develop relationships in neighborhoods where we have no formal organizational structure, but residents are receptive to a progressive political message.**

These independent-heavy neighborhoods are yielding thousands of provisional members with whom we can communicate on an ongoing basis about candidates and issues who support a progressive Working Families Agenda.

BALLOT INITIATIVE PROGRAM

Strategy

Progressive ballot measures are powerful elements of civic engagement. For many citizens, traditional candidate campaigns fail to engage them, they see their vote as not making a difference or worse, they see the candidate choices as not making a difference in their lives. As we have seen, progressive ballot measures have the ability to engage citizens where candidate campaigns have failed. With ballot measures, infrequent and never voters see the opportunity to cast a vote to deliver an immediate, real and concrete benefit to themselves, their family and their community. This is especially true when there is an

³ Lake Research Partners Memo, November 20, 2006. Available upon request.

economic justice measure on the ballot like minimum wage or health care reform.

In addition to being a successful civic engagement tool, progressive ballot measures provide the additional benefit of providing a vehicle for organizational capacity and power building for the progressive community.

Ballot measure strategies, when effectively executed can:

- Build a progressive electoral majority
- Shape the political dialogue
- Build a permanent progressive political infrastructure
- Connect candidates to progressive issues and values
- Win real concrete benefits

There are three key voter blocks that progressive ballot measures are capable of mobilizing. These three electoral elements are critical for both progressive public policy wins and electing progressive candidates.

Base Voters (infrequent and newly registered voters)

- Minority
- Youth.

Progressive Swing Voters (infrequent and newly registered)

- Non college educated women
- Working women
- Union households

Independent/No Party Voters (frequent voters)

Ballot Initiative History and Accomplishments

In 2005-2006 ACORN launched a coordinated multi-state ballot initiative strategy around an increase in the minimum wage. This campaign helped raise this economic justice issue to the forefront in campaigns for Governor and Congress across the country. In Arizona, Colorado, Ohio and Missouri, ACORN organizers convened coalitions and campaign committees to place the minimum wage on the ballot.

In the course of these campaigns we coordinated public opinion and policy research, collected over 1.2 million signatures by building a field operation of over 1,500 people on the street in four states.

In two of the largest states, Ohio and Missouri we managed these ballot measure campaigns providing campaign direction, messaging, staffing and directed two of the largest direct voter contact field programs in the nation. The result was victories in all four states and a significant increase in base turnout especially in Ohio and Missouri. In Ohio we ran an integrated direct voter contact and communications program that targeted **304,000** infrequent minority, youth and women voters in six metropolitan areas. We built an “on the

ground" field operation of over 600 campaigners and knocked on over 396,000 doors supported by direct mail and phone calls to those same doors.

Ohio ACORN's Ballot Initiative Plan for 2007-2008

ACORN is prepared to play the same role it did in 2006 in developing and implementing a coordinated multi-state progressive ballot measure strategy. However, unlike 2004 and 2006 where the campaigns to increase the minimum wage had all the necessary elements for a progressive ballot campaign and was clearly the vehicle to accomplish our civic engagement goals, there is currently no clear policy vehicle.

The first phase of this effort is to engage in a multi-tiered and comprehensive research program. This research program needs to begin this summer so that ballot measures may be identified, vetted and message tested so we can launch signature gathering efforts in 4-5 key states by the fall. The goal of this research is to identify issues that resonate with key voter groups and match issues with states and constituencies. It is our goal to find a single policy measure like minimum wage that will work in all the target states, but there is a scenario where there is no single issue and we might need to identify several issues that will work in different political environments.

Research Plan

We will begin in June with a national poll to identify issues that have the intensity with infrequent voters to motivate them to vote in the fall of 2006. This survey, by necessity will have a large sample with over sampling among key voter groups. We will immediately follow this survey with two waves of qualitative focus group research. The composition and location of the groups (8-10 groups) will be determined by the survey. This qualitative research will further explore the issues that "jump out" of the polling. We will test the details of these issues, messages, messengers and the intensity among target voters on each issue.

After this first phase is concluded and analyzed a second round of state specific polls will be conducted to test in detail the vetted issues with state campaigns in mind. The national survey will help identify the states that will be best suited for these initiative campaigns. While we are beginning with a list of battleground states that permit citizen initiatives, we are focused on states with multiple competitive election contests to have the greatest impact. Those states are; (Ohio, Missouri, Colorado, Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Florida.

Finally we will conduct a round of state specific qualitative research, once actual ballot language has been drafted to test and refine the ballot measure just prior to submitting the initiatives for signatures.

ACORN's Permanent Campaign (Core Constituency)

ACORN has been organizing low to moderate income communities across America for 37 years. Our model of community organizing develops homegrown leaders in a given neighborhood who bring neighbors together to solve problems using the political process. ACORN neighborhood groups are not organized as part of a larger election year strategy, they grow organically and work on a daily basis year round to solve local problems. Many of our neighborhood chapters have become institutions of themselves with multi-generational leaders making change in a given neighborhood for more than 20 years. Local leaders talk door-to-door, one-on-one with their neighbors about issues that affect them all, they challenge them to get involved, and celebrate their victories with pot lucks in each others homes. It is no surprise then that ACORN is a trusted brand in low-income urban neighborhoods throughout the country.

So when ACORN connects the dots—drawing parallels between issues it has worked on and candidates seeking office in upcoming elections—voters listen.

ACORN's Permanent Campaign is more effective than so-called "continuous campaigns" because voters can inherently tell the difference between a permanent organization—rooted in the community with long-term home grown leaders—and a canvass that simply extends voter contact into off-cycle years. Most of ACORN's local chapter members have visited their local ACORN office for free tax preparation, housing assistance, to pick up printed materials –or just to volunteer. Many have boarded buses or vans chartered by their local ACORN office and bound for the state capital to lobby their elected representatives on issues like predatory lending, EITC or minimum wage. Many have rallied in front of city hall for a stronger police presence or engaged in an action to draw attention to nuisance abandoned houses that are havens for drug trafficking.

Currently Ohio ACORN has 40,000 members organized into 16 neighborhood chapters across the state mostly in Ohio's six most populous counties (Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Montgomery, Summit and Lucas). This year our organizing efforts will increase membership in these counties to approximately 65,000 and by November of 2008 ACORN will establish chapters in X# additional counties , namely X, Y and Z. These organizing efforts will yield an additional X# members to our base voter program bringing the total to X# .

Out of this organizing structure ACORN has developed the APAL (ACORN Precinct Action Leaders). PAL's are ACORN members who want to do more and are willing

It is THIS kind of LONG-TERM interaction and commitment to problems that plague peoples daily lives that allows ACORN to bring voters together around a progressive agenda—and it is this kind of organizing that ACORN brings to bear on elections where a distinction can be drawn between progressive candidates who care about working families and those who do not.

to volunteer their time and commitment at election time to making certain that citizens in their own neighborhoods are registered to vote, informed about the issues and candidates on the ballot, and work hard to make sure these folks get to the polls or vote early. These are the member activists who work with ACORN campaign professionals to move our base voter program.

Ohio ACORN Proposed Base and Swing Voter Targets

Voter Mobilization in Nested Districts

ACORN will target three competitive Ohio congressional districts as well as a half dozen state rep seats nested within the districts. Our electoral work will mobilize and educate voters about candidates who support issues important to working families. Our **paid professional canvass** will execute tightly managed Voter ID and GOTV canvasses moving our core constituency of base and swing voters to the polls to vote for the candidates who most closely align with a progressive Working Families Agenda.

Targets

Congressional District	State Leg. District	2004/06 Margin of Victory		Winning Party	2002 %	2004 %
		# Votes	Winning %			
CD-1		105,680	52.25%	R	64.8	59.8
CD-1	HD-28	21,104	51.96%	R	58.9	53.6
CD-1	HD-31	15,557	67.33%	D	65.2	69.36
CD-2		120,112	50.45%	R	74	71.7
CD-2	HD-34	23,191	53.88%	R	63.1	60.04
CD-2	HD-35	30,884	64.79%	R	100	72.64
<i>CD-10/11</i>	HD-16	<i>25,521</i>	<i>50.95</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>40.9</i>	<i>38.26</i>
CD-15		109,659	50.19%	R	66.6	60.02
CD-15	HD-22	26,156	53.9%	R	65.3	60.8
CD-15	HD-24	23,633	54.96%	D	39.9	43.65
CD-18		129,646	62.06%	D	100 (R)	66.16 (R)
CD-18	SD-22	116,588	100%	R	[64.4]	[53.71]
CD-18	SD-30	100,824	66.9%	D	[100]	[66.9]
CD-18	HD-69	26,302	55.47%	R	60.2	55.33

Hamilton County

CD1: Republican Steve Chabot won his seat in 2006 by only 52.25%; term limited Democrat Steven Driehaus (HD-31) will likely run for Chabot's Congressional seat. Another potential democratic contender is John Cranley and Todd Book (State Rep in 89th).

Strategy: A combination of our *Base Voter Program* and a *Swing Voter Program* will be employed in this district.

Nested in CD1:

HD-28: Currently held by Republican James Raussen. This seat has become increasingly more competitive since 2002 where Republicans enjoyed an almost 60% margin of victory—but in 2004 the margin declined to 53.6% and in 2006 was a mere 51.96%. Connie Pillich (AF Vet and lawyer) will run on Dem ticket.

Strategy: A combination of the *Base Voter Program* and a *Swing Voter Program* will be used in this district.

HD-31: Democrat Steven Driehaus is term limited; Denise Driehaus's (sister) is thought to be considering a run for this seat.

Strategy: The *Swing Voter Program* will supplement GOTV efforts in this district

CD2: Republican Jean Schmidt held her seat by a razor thin 50.45% in 2006; Potential democratic challengers: Victoria Wulsin (in 2006 was leading two weeks out from the election in 2006); Russ Arey (state central committeeman); and Paul Hackett. It may be that challengers in the Republican primary take Schmidt out of the picture making the mostly upper income conservative district less competitive. A top progressive strategist (Burgess) however thinks the seat is winnable with micro-targeting even under this scenario.

Strategy: The *Swing Voter Program* will be employed in this district which has pockets of progressive voters and a few low-income neighborhoods.

Nested in CD2:

HD-34: Republican Tom Brinkman won his seat in 2006 by only 53.88% and will likely face a serious challenge from Democrats.

The *Swing Voter Program* will be employed in this district which has pockets of progressive voters and the *Base Voter Program* will be employed where we have membership in a few low-income neighborhoods.

HD-35: A strongly Republican district where Michelle Schneider (R) is term-limited. The Democratic leadership however thinks taking this seat is an outside chance—especially if Steve Black chooses to run—Black is a moderate Democrat who has good name recognition because most of his Republican family is well known and respected—R's may vote for him; other potential are: Steve Black (Harvard Law Grad and former Mayor of Indian Hill), Jen Pihlaja (DCCC Midwest Rep).

Strategy: The *Swing Voter Program* will be employed in this district.

The Hamilton county Commissioner seat held by Republican Pat Dewine will be in play as well.

Franklin County

CD-15: Republican Deborah Pryce (CD15) eked out a win of 50.19% over Franklin County Commissioner Mary Jo Kilroy in 2006. Kilroy will run again in 08 as well as fellow County Commissioner Paula Brooks.

Strategy: A combination of the *Base Voter Program* and a *Swing Voter Program* will be used in this district.

HD-22: An open seat currently held by Republican Jim Hughes who held that seat by a margin of 53.9%

Strategy: A combination of the *Base Voter Program* and a *Swing Voter Program* will be used in this district.

HD-24: Democrat Ted Celeste won his seat in a traditionally Republican district by 54.96% and will likely be challenged in 2008.

Strategy: The *Swing Voter program* will be employed in this district.

16 Counties: Athens (part), Belmont (part), Carroll, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Knox, Licking (part), Morgan, Muskingum, Ross (part), Tuscarawas, Vinton

CD-18: Democrat Zach Space won the seat vacated by Bob Ney by 62.6% but will likely be a Republican target to gain back this mostly rural seat—for sure the Democrats have identified this seat as one to protect in 2008. The district is large and encompasses 12 entire counties and parts of Athens, Belmont, Licking and Ross counties; the most populous county is Tuscarawas with almost 91,000 residents. We don't have much of a base voter presence in CD-18 but Coluymbus ACORN has begun to organize in Licking county around foreclosures—this may be a strategy to build capacity in other areas of the county if we want to play a role in this race.

Strategy: In 2007, a combination of the *ACORN's Permanent Campaign* where we are already on the ground and the *Swing Voter Program* can be employed to root out and build capacity around foreclosure or perhaps paid sick days. In 2008 then a *Base Voter and Swing Voter Program* could be used in this district.

SD-22 and 30: We may want to focus in 22 (an open seat currently held by Ron Armstutz-R) and 30 held by Democrat Jason Wilson (and a solid dem seat).

HD-69: An SD-22 overlap currently held by Republican Wm Batchelder (55.47% in 2006).

About ACORN's Paid Professional Canvass

ACORN has learned that the key to a successful door canvass is management. Our model for door canvass management is to employ one field manager for every 10 (hourly) canvassers. Field managers are full-time salaried organizers

who recruit and train their team and are in the field on a daily basis conducting ongoing training and crew development by rotating from canvasser to canvasser through out the shift.

Field Managers undergo a 4 day training module covering turf prep, recruitment, staff training, crew development, accountability, reporting, conflict resolution and more.

Using this management model ACORN enjoys a higher rate of canvasser retention and a higher rate of quality door knocks.

Ramping Up- *Supplementing the paid canvass work*

Beginning in the summer of 2007 the **Associate Member Canvass** will talk to swing voters in the identified targeted districts around a progressive Working Families Agenda and will register an estimated 20,000 new voters in these districts.

Our summer intern program will conduct voter registration in three Ohio cities (Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati) and will register an estimated 30,000 new voters.

In January of 2007 our local office organizers (**Permanent Campaign**) began working with member chapters to educate members around the progressive Working Families Agenda. Organizers and members will continue expanding membership in their local chapters and developing leadership throughout 2007. (**APAL- member activists**) will conduct voter registration and voter education while continuing to build membership through the fall of 2008. Voter education activities around the progressive Working Family Agenda will also include house parties and door to door Voter ID contact during the months of September and October. Beginning November 1-4, PAL's will conduct traditional Phone Bank and Door to Door GOTV- contacting X# of voters and moving an estimated # of voters to the polls to vote for the candidates who most closely align with a progressive Working Families Agenda.