

RURAL ROADMAP TO 2024

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

RuralVote.org put together this resource to ensure progressive rural organizers can access data, research, and best practices for engaging voters in small towns and rural communities in 2024. Please note that this resource is a living document: if you run a rural campaign this cycle and adopt these tactics, we'd love to hear about their efficacy or lack of success. You can e-mail us at campaigns@ruralorganizing.org.

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WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM 2023

2023 validated two long-standing tenets of our philosophy, both of which defy conventional wisdom. First, traditional organizing — the hard work of neighbors speaking to neighbors and having conversations about local issues — is the most effective way to ensure long-standing progressive change. Direct voter contact is critical to winning elections, especially in rural communities often overlooked by campaigns. The two referendums in Ohio this year gave us invaluable insights into the work that needs to be done and this toolkit highlights our winning strategy for 2024.

TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS

While conducting our 2022 Exit Interview project in early 2023, we spoke with 50 nationwide organizers, candidates, and organizations. In addition to the lack of civic infrastructure, funding, and geographic challenges, a surprising theme emerged. HOPE.

Voting is an emotional and social act, and while the messaging dominating both political parties is fear, the conservatives are doing a great job of correlating that emotion to another powerful one: Anger. To gain ground in 2024, progressives must cultivate a message that brings hope and generates a desire to take action informed by progressive policy.

DATA INFORMS STRATEGY

The second most significant point from our interviews was the lack of power Democratic candidates have in predominantly red spaces. So, the next question we came up with was: How can we build true power in rural communities? In researching the best (and fastest) methods to build progressive power in rural counties for 2024, we encountered person after person who had preconceived notions about what counties should or should not be included in our strategy and what tactics would and wouldn't work in them. It was eye-opening when the data proved different.

Over the last six months, we have analyzed election data in rural communities from the previous three election cycles. At the same time, we ran an extensive yard sign campaign in Ohio regarding Issue 1, the constitutional right for women to access abortion. Tackling the subject of abortion access in a state predominantly believed to be “red” definitely challenged the thinking of people living and working on this campaign. There are more progressives in rural areas than people think and we can have massive wins that build power. Ohio demonstrated that this past fall. We just have to buckle down, believe, and do the work.

This resource is a culmination of our 2023 projects and how we can utilize the findings to effectively and efficiently move the progressive needle in rural communities for the 2024 election cycle.

RURAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

ASSESS THE OLD PARADIGMS AND MAKE FOR THE NEW

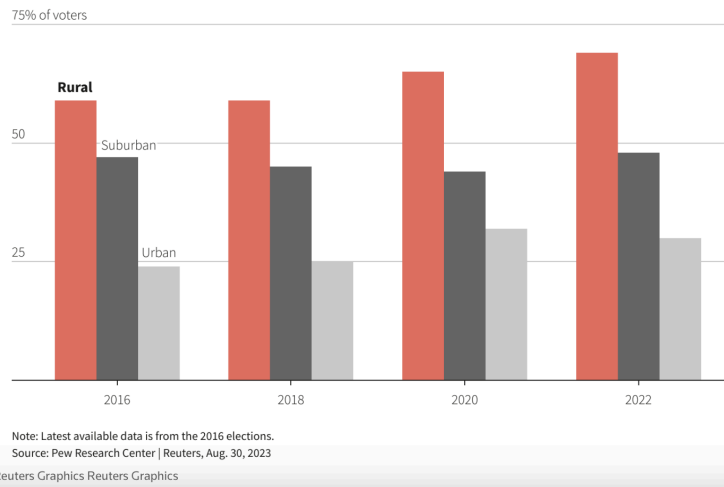
It's an uphill battle for any Democratic candidate in rural communities. The reality is that rural voters have continued to lean further right over the last decade.

According to Pew Research, Trump won 59% of the rural vote in 2016, 65% in 2020, and Republicans won 69% of the rural vote in the 2022 midterms.¹

Research also shows us that voters don't believe Democrats² aren't addressing economic inequality or inflation. While crime rates have plummeted over the last few years and inflation has stabilized, those statistics aren't going to move a rural voter who has felt the pain of higher prices for the past few years to vote for a Democrat.

The rightward shift of rural America after Trump

Share of **rural**, **suburban** and **urban** voters who voted Republican in recent U.S. elections



According to researchers at Iowa State University, rural households had to pay an extra \$8,120 due to inflation in 2021 and 2022, more than the \$7,480 paid by urban households in the same two years.³ In addition, Cornell University researchers estimate that 94% of the country's job growth since 2010 has happened in urban areas. Acknowledging the struggle that rural communities face and the more significant impact inflation has had in their daily lives is a critical piece that every campaign hoping to win rural voters must do.

Mainstream media doesn't always get it right.

According to the Center on Rural Innovation, the national portrayal of rural communities is that they consist of white farmers and ranchers in the Midwest and Midwest, white coal miners in Appalachia, or the "white working class." National Media outlets reinforce the misconception that rural communities are homogeneously white and ignore that 86 of the 100 most marginalized counties in the country are rural. In addition, 60 of those counties are located in Tribal Lands or Southern regions with large Black populations.⁴

These misconceptions and misrepresentations have consequences. They make it extremely difficult to address the systemic racial and ethnic disparities and inequities of rural people of color.

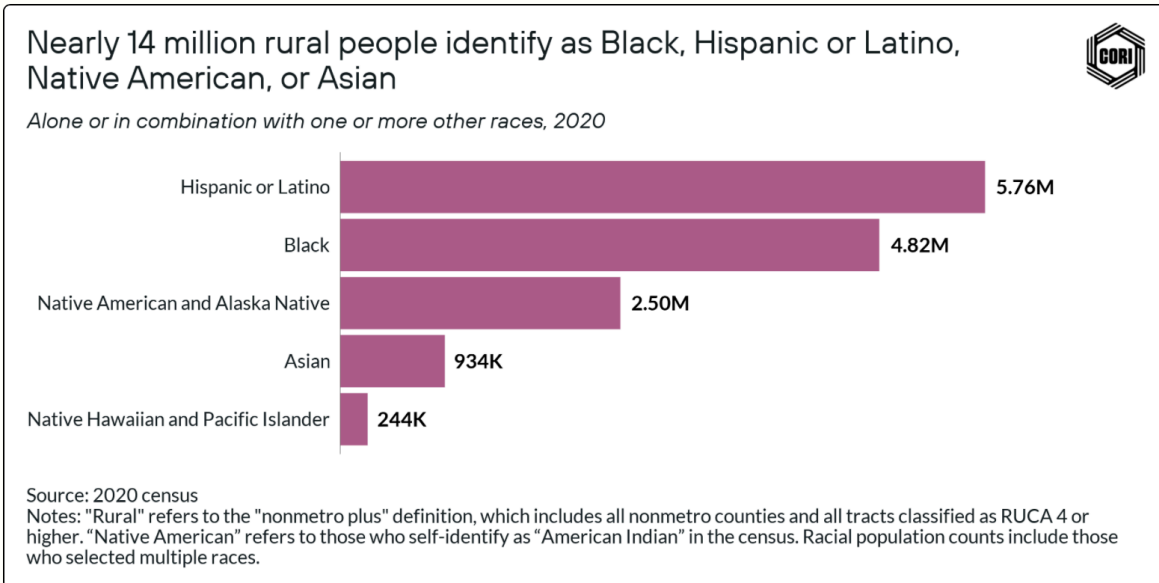
¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/can-joe-biden-fistful-cash-win-rural-america-democrats-2023-09-15/>

² https://democracycorps.com/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?iuwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd_category_id=315&wpfd_file_id=383848&token=&preview=1

³ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2024-election/rural-voters-continue-evade-democrats-rcna123252>

⁴ <https://ruralinnovation.us/blog/who-lives-in-rural-america-part-i/>

Additionally, depicting the racial and ethnic makeup using only single group percentages paints a whiter picture of rural communities than the actual population numbers. For example, 75% of rural communities identify as white compared to 57.8% nationally. But when you look at the number of people of color in rural communities, you get a different picture. In 2020, nearly 14 million people identified as either Black,



Hispanic/Latino, Native American, or Asian, which is a number greater than the populations of New York and Los Angeles combined, according to the 2020 Census.⁵ If we intend to serve better and reach rural people, we have to understand who makes up these communities, how they are portrayed in the media, and the impact of the misconceptions that come with it.

Rural voters care about abortion and democracy.

Additionally, we hear again and again that the most significant challenges that Democrats encounter when running campaigns in rural communities include:

- The Democratic message is a hard stop in rural communities
- Sensitive topics like abortion are non-starters in rural communities.

However, 2023's Ohio abortion and democracy ballot referendums showed us that rural voters care deeply about abortion access and democratic values. Democrats have to cut margins in rural America, and the Republican extremism on abortion rights presents the most significant opportunity to engage rural voters in 2024. (That's also something we knew from our polling of rural voters in 2020 and 2022.)

In 2022, RuralOrganizing.org [commissioned a national poll](#) showing a candidate's pro-choice position was the most important issue tested among rural voters polled in 10 battleground states, even outpacing party ID (i.e., being a Republican), which came in second. Another key finding of the survey was that for a Democratic candidate, an endorsement from a pro-choice organization boosted a candidate's appeal more than an endorsement from the Farm Bureau or a labor organization.

⁵ <https://ruralinnovation.us/blog/who-lives-in-rural-america-part-i/>

We recommend that your campaigns rethink their stereotypes about rural voters and design messaging that shifts the paradigm about them and surfaces opportunities for improvement through progressive issues, messengers, and messages.

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF RURAL VOTERS

According to a 2020 Gallup analysis of data from the US Department of Education, 54% or 130 million Americans lack proficiency in literacy, reading below the equivalent of a sixth-grade level⁶. This is an incredible statistic in and of itself, but it's critically important when canvassing, door-knocking, and communicating with potential voters.

In addition, 2018-2019 reporting demonstrates that states gave approximately 16.2% of their education funding to rural schools.⁷ Inequitable financing in rural communities and an already significant literacy proficiency issue across the country may mean that some areas have even more significant deficits. That's why it's crucial to have a simple, compelling message. It's like using the K.I.S.S. strategy - Keep it short and straightforward.

- Increasing wages
- Decreasing daily expenses
- Improving the rural quality of life

- How are you demanding good jobs and wages because on average, household incomes in small towns and rural communities are lower than in other areas of the country?
- How are you discussing decreasing daily expenses because rural Americans spend more of their budget on day-to-day expenses?
- How are you talking about programs that improve the quality of rural and small-town life because current federal and state programs underserve rural residents?

Having potential voters understand your position on the issue, your proposed solution, and the implementation method is a considerable piece of obtaining their support. Speaking the language of rural voters is about using language that you would at the kitchen table, at church, or a bar - simple. We lose voters when we talk either above or down to them, especially in rural communities where constituents are underestimated.

⁶https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BBFoundation_GainsFromEradicatingIlliteracy_9.8.pdf

⁷<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-state-of-rural-schools-in-charts-funding-graduation-rates-performance-and-more/2023/11#:~:text=Rural%20school%20funding%20is%20inequitable.local%20districts%20to%20rural%20schools>

COMMUNICATIONS TIP

Do you want to know how to overcome objections before you get them?

1. The first step is to identify the 2-3 most common objections people give for not voting and/or not voting for the progressive candidate.
2. Next, show how these objections benefit the potential voters or why they aren't a meaningful/valid reason not to vote.
3. Gain agreement from the voter before addressing the objection that if you can demonstrate the benefit or eliminate the validity of the objection they would commit to voting/voting for the progressive candidate.
 - a. Another key to overcoming objections and maintaining conversation control is incorporating "trust checkers" into the discussion. You're gaining agreement throughout each point. Ensuring you're getting an agreement that leads to commitment versus compliance is essential.
4. Ask them to sign a Commit to Vote Card, Pledge to Early Vote, or something similar. If you have done the third step correctly and they don't take the pledge or commitment to vote, you know you've only gotten compliance throughout the conversation instead of genuine commitment. The great thing about that is you have something to call them on. Either they lied to you when they agreed initially, or they're not fulfilling their end of the deal.

Hope is a winning strategy.

We recognize that including an emotion like hope in a candidate's toolkit may be unorthodox. Still, the reality is that it was a consistent theme throughout the 2022 Exit Interview Project and the RuralVote.org monthly NetWORKing calls. Plus, if we're taking our advice and assessing what has and hasn't been working, not discussing and cultivating hope appears to have impacted the success of progressive candidates.

Conservatives have long relied on The Southern Strategy to win votes in the South, especially in rural communities. In 2012, when Mitt Romney was trailing President Obama, the strategy wasn't working. Dog whistle rhetoric and typical fear tactics simply underperformed against Obama's consistent positive messaging. When asked why Romney lost, Lindsey Graham stated, "The demographics race we're losing badly. We're not generating enough angry white guys to stay in business for the long term."⁸

Since then, we have seen a steady increase in violent, racial rhetoric from the GOP, and we witnessed its impact on January 6th. Anger, rooted in fear, is a powerful political motivator. A 2020 American Psychological Association article looks at fear as a motivator in politics and strategies for reaching across the divide in the current political climate. The article detailed three primary ways that fear is used in politics:⁹

1. Drive voters/votes towards a particular candidate or party.
2. Drive votes away from political opponents.
3. Diminish voter turnout.

⁸<https://www.cnbc.com/2012/11/07/secret-to-romneys-defeat-not-enough-angry-white-guys.html#:~:text=Back%20in%20August%2C%20Graham%20had.business%20for%20the%20long%20term.%E2%80%9D>

⁹<https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/fear-motivator-elections>

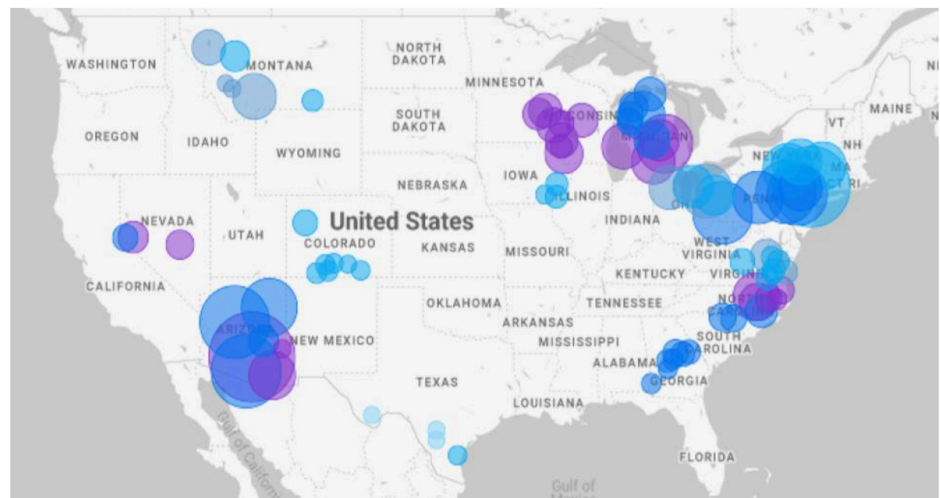
While more studies have been done on the impact of fear in politics, new studies on hope demonstrate that hope may be a more robust indicator for coping with significant adversities¹⁰ and a motivator for social change. In a 2016 study on hope published in *Political Psychology*, four collective studies were performed on the effect of hope in supporting change. Study 2 revealed that hope predicts support for social change over and above other emotions often investigated in collective action research.¹¹

What does this mean for progressive candidates and campaigns in rural communities in 2024? It means we have to remember that anger is a secondary emotional response to a first-level emotion: fear. In our conversations and canvassing, we need to be mindful that statistics and facts don't overcome either anger and fear in and of themselves. The key is to remain curious about the other person's point of view, find common ground, and demonstrate how, collectively, we can generate hope that together, we can bring about positive change for everyone.

LEVERAGING DATA FOR YOUR CAMPAIGNS

Effective messaging is great, but where can you be most effective with the fastest results when building power in rural communities? That was a central question that came out of the Exit Interview Project. Some might think the best way to determine the answer to this question is to ask the people doing the work in rural areas. While we recognize the importance and opinions of these folks, we didn't want guesswork or inevitably biased strategies. **So, we turned to the data.**

We looked at the battleground states for 2024 and their election results from 2020-2022, including the Presidential, House, Senate, and Gubernatorial races. The process began with identifying the battleground/swing states with a 10% or less margin in each election and then for the counties within those states. After cross-referencing each



of the elections, we identified the repetitive counties. Next, we used census data to determine the population and rural percentage of the counties. And lastly, we looked for the commonalities in districts/seats where a power play could be made. **We discovered that the data identified prime areas for progressive power building.**

¹⁰ Marciano H, Eshel Y, Kimhi S, Adini B. Hope and Fear of Threats as Predictors of Coping with Two Major Adversities, the COVID-19 Pandemic and an Armed Conflict. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022 Jan 20;19(3):1123. doi: 10.3390/ijerph19031123. PMID: 35162144; PMCID: PMC8834741.

¹¹ Greenaway, K. H., Cichocka, A., van Veelen, R., Likki, T., & Branscombe, N. R. (2016). Feeling Hopeful Inspires Support for Social Change. *Political Psychology*, 37(1), 89–107. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43783897>

Check out our 2024 Top 100 Rural Counties Report.

Our online report, [2024 Top 100 Rural Counties Project](#), is available for a quick, detailed overview of which counties in your state have been identified as ripe for power-building this year and what criteria (House, Senate, Presidential) it met.

Rural voters account for 30% of the North Carolina, Georgia, and Wisconsin electorate. They account for 22% of the voters in Pennsylvania and a staggering 61% in Maine.¹² All five of these states were included in our 2024 Top 100 Rural Counties for Power Building Project, and these numbers demonstrate just how vital organizing and running an effective campaign is in these states. It also drives home how crucial the rural counties we identified are to moving the progressive needle in the 2024 election cycle.

In addition to our Project report, we conducted several deep dives for these battleground states where we reviewed the data more in-depth, discussed how to use it, and provided the PDF presentations.

- Access the Deep Dive Recordings here: [Deep Dive Recordings](#)
- Access the Deep Dive Presentations here: [Deep Dive Presentations](#)

CASE STUDY: MONTANA

Big Horn, Deer Lodge, Gallatin, Lake, Lewis & Clark, and Silver Bow counties are home to 107,111 rural people making up almost half the population.

The 2020 Presidential election had a daunting margin of 16% that could be reduced by 39.01% if the 98,816 registered voters who did not vote in 2020 were mobilized to vote for a progressive candidate in 2024.

The impact of rural Montana voters doesn't stop at the Presidential election. House District 1 had a 3.1% margin in the 2022 election, and four of our six counties are in that district. 57,895 inactive voters could crush the 7,837 vote difference and flip that seat.

Use available data for your fundraising pitches.

Many Democrats and progressives feel alone in rural communities. We often see common phrases like “a blue dot in a red sea” on social media, right? Maybe that's a true statement, and perhaps it isn't.

If only 50-60% of the people in your county are turning out to vote, how can you know for sure that you're genuinely a tiny fraction of the population? What if that 30 - 40 % of the people NOT turning out to vote stay home because they also feel like a blue dot and their vote doesn't count?

¹² <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/can-joe-biden-fistful-cash-win-rural-america-democrats-2023-09-15/>

DATA TIP

How do you take data from the 2024 Top 100 Rural Counties Report and use it for fundraising?

Let's say your county had a 20% margin in the last presidential election, with 60% of the voters being for the Republican candidate and only 40% for the Democrat candidate. At first glance, these numbers sound astronomical and too significant to make actual progress, right?

Watch what happens when you shift your perspective.

Instead of saying 60/40, what if you said, "Did you know that almost half of the voters who cast a ballot in the last presidential election voted Democrat? Yup! Of every 10 voters, 4 voted for the progressive candidate! And that's the people who thought their vote might make a difference!"

Consider executing a community needs assessment.

[In 2022, RuralOrganizing.org Education Fund collaborated with three local small-town and rural Ohio groups to conduct Local Progress Reports also known as community needs assessments.](#) The innovative use of a drop-off/pick-up survey methodology and publicly available census tracts is an approach shown to reduce nonresponse bias and take canvassing for community perspectives to a whole new level.

Blending door-knocking and community-based research techniques, this approach empowers local leaders to develop the right questions for their neighborhoods, hear from a broader range of community members than can be reached by traditional canvassing techniques, and generate local solutions that respond to local needs.

- The Local Progress Reports help shift the paradigm about people in rural communities.
- Rural progressive power in Ohio is possible: working from a nonpartisan angle opens doors (literally).
- Local Progress Surveys can hopefully change policy – and so much more.
- The Drop-Off/Pick-Up survey methodology is high effort/high reward.

Data from the surveys yielded valuable insights into community priorities within neighborhoods that often go largely unreached; higher rates of nonvoters, geographically difficult-to-reach locations, and systemic barriers to civic engagement mean that these perspectives are likely unrepresented elsewhere. [You can download the toolkit by clicking here.](#)

LOCALIZED ORGANIZING STRATEGIES FOR 2024

IDENTIFY THE LOCAL ISSUES TO INNOCULATE AGAINST HYPERNATIONALIZATION

We lose rural voters when we focus solely on national issues and ignore the local struggles the people in the area face. Yes, abortion is an issue that has proven to move people to the ballot box, but in a noisy election year, caring loudly for local issues can help you stand out as a candidate or as a campaign.

- Focus on a local agenda that reduces daily expenses for small towns and rural community residents. Rural Americans spend a larger share of their budget on day-to-day expenses. Over the last two years, Congress has allocated billions of dollars for rural-exclusive or rural-focused cost reduction programs. Local, state, and federal candidates for office should run on ensuring these programs reach small-town America.
- Build legislative platforms centered on concrete initiatives that improve the quality of life in small towns and rural communities by investing in affordable housing, transportation, and addressing the local impacts of the addiction epidemic
- Campaign on establishing programs that ensure local wages rise with the cost of living. Household incomes in small towns and rural communities are lower than in other areas of the country. While Congress has allocated billions of dollars for rural-exclusive or rural-focused job creation programs, many are implemented at the state and local levels.

Local leaders using local messages to engage local people through local means to solve local problems.

National issues like immigration, same-sex marriage, gender and racial inequality tend to be incredibly divisive. They are repeatedly used in the national media and by political candidates, and many rural voters have strong feelings about them. However, those beliefs and emotions are often rooted in misinformation or disinformation to sway voters away from political opponents.

By discovering and making local issues the focus of your campaign, you accomplish two things:

1. You avoid triggering conversations that immediately shut down the potential for understanding and progress.
2. You demonstrate to local voters that you are aware of the things impacting their daily lives and are interested in addressing them.

Once you've established yourself as interested and invested in the local community, you can use the data to create possibilities and bridge the gap between the issue and the candidate.

TIE FEDERAL PROGRESSIVE POLICIES TO LOCAL BENEFITS

Rural voters aren't convinced Democrats are fighting for their communities. And for the last few decades, they weren't exactly wrong. In recent decades, Democrats in Washington D.C. have outsourced their rural engagement to consultants and vendors who too often rely on stereotypes about rural people rather than strategy. As a result, Democrats' rural engagement efforts centered around farmers and USDA programs.

Ultimately and predictably, these attempts to engage rural voters have failed because those policies failed to deliver real results for most rural Americans.

Democrats in Congress allocated billions of dollars for small towns and rural communities with the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, the Infrastructure Investment and

Jobs Act of 2021, the Honoring Our PACT Act of 2022, and the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. Also, the Biden administration has used its executive power, for example, to rein in the monopolies in [the meat and poultry processing industries](#) that have used their power to harm farmers, consumers, and rural communities. **However, rural voters are often unaware of this funding and programming in their communities.**

Identify local messengers to tell success stories.

Democrats need to invest in a consistent local presence and trusted local messengers in rural America as part of a strategic, sustained, and authentic approach to rebuilding their rural brand. Republicans have failed to deliver real results for rural America and extreme GOP candidates have opened the door for Democrats to make real inroads among rural voters - but only through sustained engagement and authentic appeals that aren't just Republican-lite talking points.

Spend some time identifying trusted community figures and supporting them in crafting neighborhood-level stories highlighting the impact of federal investments. Then, pitch these stories to local media outlets and post on high-traffic community platforms for the most persuasive communications campaign possible.

ORGANIZING TIP

1. Select local, successful policy wins for each issue category below that have directly impacted rural communities.
 - Housing
 - Healthcare
 - Education
 - Economic Security
2. Check out these fact sheets to find a federal program you're interested in promoting locally.
 - o **FACT SHEET:** [The Biden Administration's Historic Investments To Create Opportunity and Build Wealth in Rural America](#)
 - o **FACT SHEET:** [President Biden to Visit Minnesota to Highlight Investments in Rural America. Lead Administration-Wide Rural Event Series](#)
3. [Use this website to identify where local governments are spending federal funds in your districts¹³](#);
4. Write a one-pager for your storyteller so they're prepared with talking points or bullet points for their op-ed.

¹³ <https://www.usaspending.gov/>

IDENTIFY LOCAL INFLUENCERS IN YOUR REGION AND SMALL TOWN

Public distrust of politicians, government, and mainstream media is high; however, local influencers elicit automatic authenticity and are accepted by their communities. They aren't outsiders and receive a certain amount of credibility to their opinions.

We know that local messengers using local media platforms are vital to penetrating the web of misinformation created by the Republican Party and candidates. These creators have built audiences talking about the issues that resonate with voters, have trusted brands, and are primed for political engagement. Your campaign should work closely with them, supporting them with resources and traditional and non-traditional media opportunities to reach even more voters in your area.

- When identifying the influencers best suited for your candidate or campaign, finding someone with an established record on the issue campaign is essential. If the influencer already has a history of disseminating information or advocating on this topic, all the better. The groundwork has been laid and is ready for you to build upon.
- When using micro-influencers via social media, finding the right balance is essential. The larger the audience, the more likely your intended audience is to distrust them. It's not likely that a rural conservative is going to hear Trey Crowder one day on Twitter or TikTok and suddenly change their opinions on liberal issues, even if he does sound like his brother's cousin.

CASE STUDY

People's First demonstrated this in their efforts around the Wisconsin Supreme Court vote earlier this year. They focused on finding 55 of these types of influencers with three qualities:

5. Less than 20,000 followers.
6. Appeared authentic and not "into politics."
7. Had shared something emotional or personal in their posts.

The response rate to these posts was 30%, while a "good" campaign typically has a 10-12% rate. In addition, overall engagement from these hyper-local micro influencers performed above 5x the industry average of 1.2%.¹⁴

RUN A YARD SIGN CAMPAIGN

For years, the Democratic Party has largely abandoned yard signs as an effective campaigning tool. At the same time, the Republican Party has seemingly increased its sign presence, especially in rural areas. Our working theory is that the absence of Democratic visibility in rural communities hurts voter turnout and progressive power building. The only way to change this is for rural progressives to step out of the shadows and lead on critical issues impacting their communities.

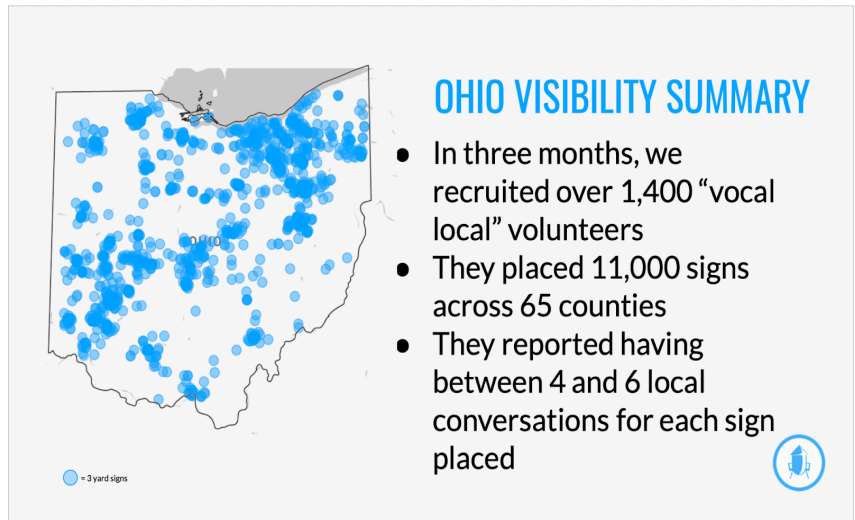
¹⁴<https://www.marketingbrew.com/stories/2023/04/20/the-hyperlocal-microinfluencer-campaign-that-may-have-impacted-the-wisconsin-supreme-court-race>

We placed 11,000 yard signs in rural and small-town Ohio. You can do the same.

In 2023, our sister organization RuralOrganizing.org placed over 11,000-yard signs in rural and small-town Ohio for their abortion access referendum in November.

We found that putting signs up encouraged local Democrats to talk/defend their beliefs about abortion access and encouraged other Democrats and some independents to be more emboldened to vote.

Additionally, the act of placing the yard signs brought together a diverse group of rural Ohioans who eventually became our “Sign Squad” and made this campaign a success.



While yard signs are not a silver bullet for turning out voters, they are undoubtedly the first step to identifying your “Vocal supporters,” who can be hard to find in small conservative towns and rural communities. So, if you’re an organizer and want to place yard signs, you shouldn’t consider putting up yard signs as a stand-alone effort. Instead, incorporate them into your door-knocking campaign and digital efforts.

YARD SIGN CAMPAIGN TIPS

Things to consider when organizing your issue yard sign campaign:

- Leverage your existing network
 - Ask current members to sign up if they can distribute 10 yard signs in their neighborhood
- Create a data collection and reporting process which includes the names, addresses, email addresses, and cell numbers of the yard sign recipients
 - Some constituents may have concerns about their information being shared so be ready with information on how their information may/may not be used. Explaining the importance of accurate data for future campaigns and progressive advancement in your community will help alleviate some of these concerns.
- When designing the signs..
 - Giving your network of volunteers a voice in the design and the process gives them ownership of the project. In turn, they will be dedicated to ensuring the campaign's success.
 - Are there colors that will resonate with the community more than others?
 - Simple and effective. Your messaging has to be legible from a distance and while moving.
 - Don't limit yourself to yard signs. Would barn signs make sense in your area?

- Once signs are placed, ask supporters to record videos of themselves discussing why they want a sign in their yard and why they support the candidate when placing the signs. Then, upload the video to Facebook, Tik Tok, or IG and promote it through paid ads targeting the communities where you put the signs. While data shows that Facebook is where most rural people are online, cross-posting across various platforms can help extend your reach without taking too much of your time.
- Create an engagement ladder for your “Vocal Locals” who place signs: can you plug them into your current programming or other direct voter contact events?

ABOUT US

RuralVote.org is the sister SuperPAC to RuralOrganizing.org, which is a national network of civic leaders, organizers, and activists fighting for our hometowns and rural communities. We are legally designated as 527 SuperPAC and based in Columbus, Ohio. RuralVote.org is a national network of civic leaders working to elect candidates fighting for small towns and rural communities.

For more information about please visit RuralVote.org and RuralOrganizing.org. There, you'll be able to find [frequently asked questions](#) by other rural organizers, [materials for rural progressives](#), [press clips tailored](#) to rural organizers, and tools for connecting to other rural Americans planning for progressive change in communities like yours. RuralOrganizing.org seeks to be a resource for all rural organizers, groups, and rural candidates.

If you run a rural campaign using the tactics and guidance in this document, we'd love to hear from you! Please contact our team at campaigns@ruralorganizing.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR RURAL ENGAGEMENT

You might also be interested in the following resources from our sister organization RuralOrganizing.org.

Morning Press Clips

Sign up to receive morning rural news clips straight to your inbox. This email is a great way to stay on top of the news in rural America.

Community Resource: Running Rural Campaigns

RuralOrganizing.org compiled this resource to ensure progressive civic leaders have access to the latest public opinion research and field best practices for engaging voters in small towns and rural communities. This resource is not intended to replace our colleagues' amazing library of campaign resources but rather to focus on the rural elements of campaigns that often get overlooked.

2022 'Exit Interview Report'

Electoral campaigns can't do it all. We need permanent rural civic infrastructure, which we discovered when we conducted 70 "2020 Exit Interviews" with progressive rural organizers, candidates, and civic leaders. Between December 01, 2020, and March 01, 2021, RuralOrganizing.org conducted a campaign to capture, analyze, and share the lessons learned by rural engagement leaders from 2020 campaign trails. Then, we compiled our qualitative data into the set of conclusions and recommendations contained in this report.

Community Resource: Fighting Social Media Misinformation In Your Town

Starting on May 30, 2020, the RuralOrganizing.org network began hearing the same rumor mentioning out-of-town "Antifa" rioters bussing into various regions nationwide. We wrote this guide with the help of dozens of leaders from across the country in response to those rumors. Our goal was to create a resource to help community leaders fight misinformation online.

Toolkit: Conducting a Local Progress Report

This resource is intended to help rural organizers and civic leaders understand how to use Drop-off/Pick-up community surveys for building progressive civic infrastructure in small towns and rural communities. Blending door-knocking and community-based research techniques, this approach empowers local leaders to develop the right questions for their neighborhoods, hear from a wider range of community members than can be reached by traditional canvassing techniques, and generate local solutions that respond to local needs.

COMING SOON

Organizer Toolkit: Leveraging Yard Signs In Rural Communities

This updated toolkit is a blueprint for a campaign that uses yard signs to engage rural progressive base voters and help grassroots organizers identify the most vocal supporters in rural communities for issue-based or electoral campaigns. Originally created in 2019 and focused on our field experiment organizing in 45 rural Kentucky precincts during the 2019 governor's race, our updated toolkit will provide lessons learned from our 2023 Ohio yard sign campaign.