

# CLIMATE HAWKS VOTE

MEMO

To: Interested Parties

Fr: RL Miller

Re: The 2016 electoral record of Climate Hawks Vote

## 1. INTRODUCTION

First, it's hard to talk about our winning record when the American people lost something far worse - the right to a stable climate. The election of Donald Trump is a climate catastrophe. Nevertheless, it is a call to action - there is no more important time to organize for climate justice than right now. We're heartened by the number of new volunteers signing up since November 8 and by the sense that we can elect fierce uncompromising climate hawks to Congress in 2018 and the Presidency in 2020 with the active participation of a committed bloc of climate voters.

**Our candidates won 8 out of the 10 general election races in which we endorsed.**

And we're proud of our diverse, uncompromising, fierce candidates.



Overall, Climate Hawks Vote raised over \$40,000 in small dollar direct contributions to over 50 candidates, made \$40,000 in independent expenditures, and dedicated hundreds of hours of time of our two full-time staff in support of our candidate slate.



We began our endorsement process in June 2015. As the Republican primary wore on and Trump shouted hateful words louder, we sought out anti-Trumps. We made a point of selecting sons and daughters of immigrants, persons of color, and women - the kind of people who will now stand up against Trump and the Republican majority in Congress. And we did so without compromising our values. We're independent of the Democratic Party and not afraid of primaries (and, in California, Democrat-vs-Democrat races). In the presidential primary, based on an overwhelming membership vote, we endorsed Bernie Sanders. And we endorse very selectively, because we want our endorsements to be meaningful.

## 2. THE CLIMATE HAWKS VOTE CLASS OF 2016

**Nanette Barragán, CA-44** - full court press in a Dem vs Dem race

This was our first endorsement, in June 2015, and Climate Hawks Vote was the first green group to endorse her. We did extensive work on this race because we saw it as a proxy for the California moderate-Democrats-vs-progressive-Democrats battle within the state legislature in which the moderate Democrats have gutted significant climate legislation (her opponent came out of the oil-friendly side). Barragán finished second in the primary with 21% of the vote, and was generally seen to have very little chance against an opponent with 40% of the primary vote backed by the California Democratic Party and most of its luminaries.

We urged larger groups such as Democracy for America, PCCC, and Our Revolution to endorse her (they all did). RL Miller blogged about the race on DailyKos, and Barragán used the Daily Kos quotes in her campaign mailers. We pitched the race and obtained coverage in Energy & Environment News, Grist, and Bloomberg. And we ran social media ads before both the primary and the general election in Spanish and English, focusing separately on clicks and ad recall, reaching over 59,000 Democratic and unaffiliated voters in Spanish and English. We also fundraised for her extensively through ActBlue, raising thousands for her - people responded very favorably to the message of an insurgent running against a Big Oil-funded Democrat. RL Miller also served on the host committee for two fundraiser events.

Most important, we funded an independent expenditure to phone bank for Barragán, targeting voters who requested ballots in Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean languages and new Latino voters. Most English speakers in this very multi-ethnic district are African American, and Barragán's opponent was appealing to African Americans - so we targeted everyone else. We contacted, identified, and persuaded 6,348 voters, a mix of vote by mail and poll voters, and then made GOTV calls to those poll voters.

Barragán has declared victory with 52 percent of the votes. Currently she leads with 6,826 votes (California votes are still being counted but her lead grows with every update posted). We are confident that our efforts were instrumental in her success.



Barragán, the daughter of Mexican immigrants, is the first Latina to represent the district. We have high expectations for her. In addition, we expect the influence of oil in the California legislature to shift dramatically because of both this win and a similarly situated California Assembly race in which environment-backed Eloise Reyes defeated incumbent Cheryl Brown, also an oil-friendly moderate Democrat.

- We will make deeper investments in donor management, analytics and communications.
- With investment at the million-dollar level, we will expand our reach to identify, endorse, and support local and state climate-hawk candidates.

#### **Salud Carbajal, CA-24** - targeted endorsement and social media

We endorsed Carbajal several weeks before the June primary when he and another Democrat were battling for one of two spots. Our message - that he was the only Democrat with political courage to call for a fracking moratorium - was very well received within the Santa Barbara environmentally minded community, and he made it into the top two. In addition, the weekend before the general election, we ran social media ads that reached 28,800 English and Spanish-speaking Democratic voters in key geographic areas. Carbajal won with 53.5% of the vote so far.

Carbajal is the son of a farmworker and the first Latino to represent the district. We expect him to be a strong voice in opposition to those who would frack and drill the California coast.

#### **Kamala Harris, US Senator (California)** - strategic early organizing before and during party convention

We endorsed strategically shortly before the California Democratic Party convention. At that point, the Harris campaign had a wave of bad press, and environmentally minded California Democratic Party delegates didn't have much information on either candidate. Our endorsement got picked up by climate-oriented outlets, and an Energy & Environment News story featuring our endorsement was printed out and distributed by the Harris campaign at the convention booth. We printed hundreds of "Climate Hawks for Kamala Harris" stickers and passed them out at the convention. RL Miller, who chairs the state's environmental caucus, proclaimed the Climate Hawks Vote endorsement to environmentally minded convention delegates. We also ran one social media ad targeting California Democratic activists. Harris won the vote of the Democratic Party delegates over her rival Loretta Sanchez, 78%-19%, and never looked back, ultimately winning the general election with 62.7% of the vote over Sanchez so far.

Although no one can replace Barbara Boxer's extraordinary record of climate leadership, Harris' future is very bright and we look forward to her voice in the Senate.



### **Raja Krishnamoorthi, IL-08**

We endorsed Krishnamoorthi and did modest fundraising for him through ActBlue. He won with 59.2% of the vote.

Krishnamoorthi is the son of immigrants, and we look forward to his leadership on solar issues.

### **Don McEachin, VA-04**

We endorsed Don McEachin late, and did modest fundraising for him through ActBlue. He won with 83.6% of the vote. Note that this is technically a Democratic pickup seat, because it had been represented by a Republican who elected not to run in a radically redrawn district.

We are looking forward to McEachin's perspective on climate justice as an issue affecting African American residents in larger cities.

### **Jamie Raskin, MD-08**

We endorsed during a hard-fought primary among progressives and business-friendly Democrats in which Raskin won with 33.6% of the vote. We fundraised for Raskin through ActBlue. Once he won the primary we directed resources elsewhere given the highly favorable makeup of the district, and he won the general election with 59.2% of the vote.

Raskin believes that every decision should be viewed through the lens of climate change, and we look forward to him speaking out against climate deniers in Congress.

### **Brian Schatz and Ted Lieu - rare incumbent endorsements**

We endorsed two incumbents, Brian Schatz (HI-Sen) and Ted Lieu (CA-33), two of the fiercest climate hawks already in Congress. We wanted to recognize their work and raise their profiles among climate voters nationally. We raised small amounts of money for them through ActBlue and did minor social media promotion, but generally directed resources elsewhere given that they were generally considered safe. They both cruised to reelection - Schatz received 70.1% of the vote and Lieu has 66.4% of the vote so far, and we look forward to their principled and courageous leadership.



### 3. OUR TWO LOSSES

#### **Morgan Carroll, CO-06**

We endorsed Morgan Carroll, challenging Mike Coffman. The race received national attention thanks to Coffman's efforts to thread the needle on Donald Trump. As we are independent, we diverged from Carroll a little on strategy - she campaigned on the Coffman-Trump connection, while we emphasized Coffman's ties to the Koch brothers (which was a message resonating with our membership). We fundraised for her extensively, raising over \$4,000 through ActBlue from nearly 400 donors, posted on DailyKos, and ran social media ads targeting both English and Spanish speakers that reached Democratic and unaffiliated voters. Both the DCCC and NRCC were heavily engaged along with many independent groups, and we found that segmented targeting in this race was expensive. Unfortunately, Carroll lost, 51.2% to 43%.

We want to extend our sincere thanks to Carroll, a truly gutsy leader. We hope she runs for office again.

#### **Tom Wakely, TX-21**

Our message race of the cycle was Tom Wakely, running on climate science against Lamar Smith, chair of the House (Anti) Science Committee. Smith has been using his office to attack climate scientists and state attorneys general investigating Exxon. The district was rated R+12 in 2012. We went into the race hoping to simply hold Smith's vote total below 60% this year. And we succeeded - Smith won with 56.9% of the vote, the first time ever that this nine-term incumbent won with less than 60 percent. Nevertheless, we are counting this as a loss because the candidate lost.

We commissioned a poll testing two messages - one asking people if they'd be more/less inclined to vote for Smith because of his early endorsement of Donald Trump, and the other one asking if they'd be more/less likely to vote for Smith because of his pro-Exxon work. Somewhat to our surprise, the Exxon message tested much more strongly than the Trump message. We used the poll to generate favorable coverage in the Texas Observer, Texas Climate News, Grist, and the Washington Post. In addition to the poll, we ran Facebook ads during the final weekend before the election, targeting 90,000 Democratic and independent registered voters, focusing on ad recall.

We were the only climate-focused group working this race at all (League of Conservation Voters and the Sierra Club stayed out), and probably the only progressive group.. Wakely raised a total of \$64,497 on his own through October 19 and we raised \$4,903 through ActBlue for him. Equally important, we succeeded in our goal of using the race to call national attention to Smith's scurrilous attacks on climate, dragging down his win percentage and thus demonstrating that attacking climate science has a political price.

We want to extend our sincere congratulations to Tom Wakely and the scrappy group of staffers and volunteers, most of whom came out of San Antonio for Bernie. Given Texas' changing demographics, we think a Latino voter registration drive might produce interesting results in 2018 or 2020.



## 4. ADDITIONAL CAMPAIGNING

### **Morgan Carroll, CO-06**

We engaged in additional campaigning for selected Democratic candidates for the U.S. House and Senate.

In August 2016, we analyzed the climate records of every House candidate considered to be viable challengers by any analyst - about 70 overall. From that, we identified 35 Red-To-Blue challengers with climate hawk potential, and did a one-day MoneyStorm. The MoneyStorm raised over \$10,000 for the candidates (including Carroll and Wakely) through ActBlue, with between 66 and 100 small dollar donations to each candidate. Equally important for those planning future races, we put their names and brief biographies in front of a national list of climate voters.

We similarly fundraised for Red-to-Blue Senate candidates (and including our endorsed candidates Harris and Schatz), raising over \$10,000 via one email through ActBlue.

Our members contributed last-minute dollars to expand our social media ads to targeted voters. We ran Facebook GOTV ads to reach likely voters on behalf of Ruben Kihuen (NV-04) and Stephanie Murphy (FL-07), both of whom won. We picked those candidates from our list of 35 candidates in part because Kihuen is Latino and Murphy is the daughter of Vietnamese immigrants, and in part because they were running in key battleground states. We reached 25,500 voters in NV-04 and 42,400 voters in FL-07, although we don't claim that our minor ads had a big impact on either race. We extend our congratulations to both, who both succeeded in defeating Republican incumbents.

We also put together an online ballot guide using PollVault, an interactive digital tool. We made recommendations for the 35 Red to Blue challengers noted above along with selected incumbent members of the House and Senate based on our scorecard.

Finally, we began to work up a #VoteClimate pledge and obtained nearly 30,000 signatures. Our challenge in the next electoral cycle is to identify and model the 17% of Americans who identify as Alarmed on climate change, and transform them into a cohesive voting bloc.

## 5. CONCLUSION

We're not going to lie - it's going to get worse under a Trump administration before it gets better. But we're going to keep doing what we do: finding uncompromising climate hawks, amplifying their voices, and working to elect them. The 2016 election has solidified our independent role, working outside of (and sometimes in opposition to) the DCCC/Beltway insider green-group partnership that has produced stagnation on climate policy. We will give voice to voters alarmed about climate change. We will remain focused on climate justice.