

# CLIMATE HAWKS VOTE

MEMO

From: RL Miller, political director

To: Interested Parties

Re: The electoral record of Climate Hawks Vote, 2018

Date: December 20, 2018

⇒ Our highlight of 2018 was eviscerating the power of the climate peacocks – Republican members of the “Climate Solutions Caucus.”

We made a total of 18 endorsements: two “merit badge” endorsements of safe incumbent Senators; eight primary endorsements, of which we won six; nine general election endorsements in addition to the six candidates who won their primaries; and one endorsement in a runoff. **We ended up winning 10 races**, losing seven, and (shruggie emoji) in one race marred by election fraud.



Overall, Climate Hawks Vote raised over \$47,500 in small-dollar direct donations given to our candidates, spent an additional \$61,000 on independent expenditures, achieved national prominence, and spent hundreds of hours of staff time on our diverse, fierce, progressive slate of candidates.

Meet the Climate Hawks Vote class of 2018.



## ⇒ **DEBBIE MUCARSEL-POWELL VS. THE CLIMATE PEACOCKS, FL-26**

Three aspects of our work came together to secure a big victory and win Florida's 26th Congressional District.

Our democracy is being drowned in a tidal wave of dark oily money. One remedy: persuade candidates not to take money from the fossil fuel industry. Climate Hawks Vote, along with active national partners Sunrise Movement and Oil Change International, has been very aggressive over the last two years, persuading candidates to sign the No Fossil Fuel Money pledge – over 1,200 politicians in this cycle at all levels. And once candidates sign the pledge, they campaign on it; they use it in fundraising, and they call out their fossil-fueled opponents.

When the Climate Solutions Caucus was first formed, we gave tepid praise. This caucus works on a Noah's Ark principle – each Democrat who joins must be paired with a Republican – so as to encourage bipartisanship. And the caucus succeeded, in July 2017, in blocking something called the Perry amendment to a defense appropriations bill that would have prevented the Defense Department from even studying climate. However, that proved to be the caucus' *only* accomplishment. The leader (on the Republican side) of the caucus, Carlos Curbelo, proved unable to bring Republican votes to oppose an anti-carbon tax resolution. Meanwhile, the caucus had no admissions criteria whatsoever – the caucus even let in one Republican whose first bill introduced into Congress was a proposal to terminate the Environmental Protection Agency.

So we got really interested in **Debbie Mucarsel-Powell**, running against Curbelo in FL-26 – home to south Miami, the Florida Keys, and rising seas. She was running mostly on healthcare and guns, but met our high bar for endorsement with her climate hawk background leading a coral foundation. And when we endorsed her, we pointed out Curbelo's Big Oil contributions, contrasted with Mucarsel-Powell signing of the No Fossil Fuel Money pledge.

And Mucarsel-Powell ran on the issue that we raised. She put out memes and ads echoing ours. Ultimately the National Republican Congressional Committee answered with an eyebrow-raising ad claiming that Mucarsel-Powell took thousands in dirty coal money (which turned out to be one donation from Tom Steyer).

Separately, we ran digital ads in the district in the last four days before the election. Although we spent a little money on ads promoting Mucarsel-Powell, we focused on Curbelo's Big Oil money. Our digital ads were seen by 57,000 in-district voters – and featured in a *Mother Jones* piece.



Mucarsel-Powell won, 119,761 to 115,663 (50.9 percent to 49.1 percent), at the intersection of No Fossil Fuel Money advocacy, Climate Solutions Caucus accountability, and electoral politics.

And now the Climate Solutions Caucus is the focus of much punditry wondering whether bipartisan climate solutions are even possible. To be clear, our approach is to build a fierce climate hawk majority, never mind bipartisanship. The current political environment is highly polarized, climate is an especially polarizing issue, and we don't see that changing soon.

### ⇒ **CLEANTECH ENTREPRENEURS SEAN CASTEN, IL-06, AND MIKE LEVIN, CA-49**

We're especially proud of **Sean Casten** in Illinois' 6th District. He ran in the primary on climate change. We were the only national green group to back him (and we backed up our endorsement with digital advertising) in what turned out to be an upset primary victory. After the primary, incumbent Peter Roskam joined the Climate Peacocks (Climate Solutions Caucus), despite his previous claims that "global warming is junk science." We blasted his record as nothing more than political cowardice. We continued to support Casten with social media and, finally, general election compare-and-contrast digital ads seen by over 43,500 voters. He won, 156,819 to 139,939 (52.8 percent to 47.2 percent).

And we're equally proud of **Mike Levin** in California's 49th District, formerly Darrell Issa's seat. Levin is, like Sean Casten, a fierce climate hawk, and he faced a candidate with serious baggage. Levin actively campaigned on climate change, opposing offshore drilling and promoting solutions. We were confident in Levin's ability to win, and kept our ad buy to a minimal amount. Our ads were seen by nearly 40,000 voters, and Levin won decisively, 139,450 to 111,778 (55.5 percent to 44.5 percent).

We're really looking forward to these entrepreneurs explaining reality to the "environment vs the economy" crowd.

### ⇒ **DISTINCT VOICES, COMPETITIVE RACES: ELAINE LURIA, VA-02, AND STEVEN HORSFORD, NV-04**

We backed **Steven Horsford** in Nevada's Fourth District. This race was targeted by both DCCC and NRCC, with Donald Trump making multiple visits to the area for the sake of Senator Dean Heller. We ran digital ads seen by 128,000 voters, and Horsford won, 121,834 to 102,834 (52 percent to 43.7 percent). Steven has a track record speaking out for solar energy in the Nevada desert.



We backed naval commander **Elaine Luria** in Virginia's Second District, also a closely-watched, national-priority district. Our ads focused on incumbent Scott Taylor's untrustworthiness – especially his contradictory positions regarding offshore oil drilling (and fossil fuel money contributions to his campaign). Yes, Taylor was yet another one of the Climate Peacocks. We ran digital ads seen by over 70,000 target voters, and Luria won, 139,350 to 133,335 (51.1 percent to 48.9 percent). Luria's district, home to the U.S. Navy, is sinking, and we expect she'll bring both a local perspective and a national security voice to climate discussions.

### ⇒ **FIERCE WOMEN, DECISIVE VICTORIES: DEB HAALAND, NM-02, AND RASHIDA TLAIB, MI-13**

**Rashida Tlaib** stood out as the purest voice of environmental justice this past cycle. She campaigned on her track record of going after – and winning against – corporate polluters. We ran digital ads just before her August primary in which she beat five other candidates.

**Deb Haaland** was one of the early strong voices calling for 100 percent renewable energy. And she ran on a slogan close to our hearts – #BeFierce. We endorsed and fundraised for her.

### ⇒ **DAN MCCREADY: RUNNING IN THE COUNTRY'S CROOKEDEST DISTRICT, NC-09**

We moved **Dan McCready** to the loss column, but his race is now back in limbo. McCready, a solar entrepreneur running in North Carolina's red 9th District, initially appeared to lose by 905 votes. However, the state board of elections has refused to certify the results due to what appears to be Republican election fraud. As of this writing, an election do-over looks highly likely. Our efforts thus far were focused solely on digital ads, which were seen by nearly 45,000 people. We'll be all in for him in whatever special election happens.



### ⇒ **ENDORSEMENTS ON MERIT: SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, D-RI, AND BERNIE SANDERS, I-VT**

We don't often endorse incumbents, but we wanted to recognize these two extraordinary Senators for their leadership on climate change. And we'll be utterly frank – we're not going to take credit for their reelections.



## ⇒ TOUGH LOSSES

We had some defeats as well. We focused our Texas advertising linking **Beto O'Rourke (TX-Sen)** with **Jana Sanchez (TX-06)**; both fell short, but far outperformed pre-2018 expectations. And we assisted other candidates with items other than digital ads. For example, **Jess King (PA-11)** ran a campaign solely focused on field, so we funded an organizer on the ground; sadly, she lost. We helped **Kara Eastman (NE-02)** beat a DCCC-backed incumbent in the primary, then watched as the DCCC did nothing to help her during the general election. (She nonetheless lost 51%-49% – only 2%). Our work for **Kevin de Leon (CA-Sen)** centered on music videos and earned media. We fundraised for **Jessica Morse (CA-04)** and her spirited challenge to Tom McClintock, and also fundraised for **Lindy Miller** in the Georgia Public Service Commission runoff. And we endorsed Washington's **I-1631** carbon tax.

## ⇒ CONCLUSION – FOR NOW

We're highly selective in our endorsements. We began with a spreadsheet listing potential candidates, which at one point had up to 100 races and over 400 names. Every candidate endorsed in a primary election got there after an in-district survey of Climate Hawks Vote members, not to mention vetting and direct candidate contact. Climate Hawks Vote does not use questionnaires in making its endorsements.

We're beginning to plan our 2019-20 work. Overall, Democrats succeeded in the big blue wave goal of recapturing one lever of government that could be used to stop Trump. And we're proud of the role we played in helping climate hawks win, bolstering their national profiles, and elevating climate as a national priority. We only have a few years to rapidly and justly transition away from fossil fuels. And that means emerging in 2021 with both a new climate hawk President and climate hawks holding leadership positions in Congress and in the states. With that in mind, our aim in 2019 will be to think boldly. We're looking forward to soaring onward.