WORKERS DEFENSE

2020 Election Debrief

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Who We Are and Theory of Change

- Year round civic engagement
- Leadership Development
- Issues that are most important to our members
- Trusted messenger w/ Latinx families
- Building political power for mixed status and immigrant families, people of color
What are we fighting for?

- Workers rights
- Paid sick leave
- Immigrant rights
- Healthcare
- Equitable COVID-19 Response
- Governing power and a representative democracy for communities of color
The Context - what our communities faced in 2020

- Disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and essential workers
  - In Houston, Latinx individuals are 4.5 times as likely to be hospitalized
  - In Austin construction workers are 5x as likely to be hospitalized as workers in other sectors.
- Low-wage workers most vulnerable to job loss and reduction of hours but left out of state and federal safety nets
Texas Electoral Landscape

- Texas is trending more democratic
  - statewide margin between dems and republicans is shrinking
- Texas is becoming younger and diverse: there is no question about the inevitable demographic future of Texas. Every day it grows younger and more ethnically diverse - Black, Brown and Asian.
  - While white eligible voter population decrease by 12 points from 2000-2018, eligible voters of color population increased 11 points during the same period of time.
- Texas is historically a low turnout state - regularly performing 6-10 points behind the national average

Source: https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/presidential.shtml
Retrieved 1/24/21
Texas Ranks 46th for Ease of Voting

Where it's easiest and hardest to vote
State rankings on the 2016 Cost of Voting Index (1 = easiest to vote, 50 = hardest)

Christopher Ingraham. (Oct. 22, 2018). Low voter turnout is no accident, according to a ranking of the ease of voting in all 50 states. https://www.washingtonpost.com/

Source: 2016 Cost of Voting Index
Target: From Our Cities Out

- Focus on major urban areas
- Where we can win progressive governing power
- Some key surrounding suburbs
- Target unlikely voters, people of color
- Key Partners:
  - Texas Organizing Project
  - Texas Freedom Network
  - Planned Parenthood TX Votes
  - MOVE Texas
  - TX AFL-CIO and other Labor groups:
Overview of General Election Program

Workers Defense ran its most far reaching voter contact program ever, despite pandemic conditions:

- WD contacted 378,115 low-propensity voters and voters of color on the phones, at the doors, by text and mail.
- WD also launched a robust digital program that reached 3.2 million voters on Facebook, Instagram and Youtube, with a focus on reaching 18-35 year old Latinx voters.
Our whole family of organizations went to work

- Our C3 organization did nonpartisan voter registration and outreach in Houston.
- Our C4 organization launched a non-partisan voter mobilization campaign on social media reaching 3.2 million young Latinx voters
- Our GPAC reached out to voters in Harris County
- Our Independent Expenditure Committee reached voters in Travis, Tarrant, Bastrop and Dallas counties.
- Deployed over 134 organizers into the field in 5 counties
Contact Tactics

3.2 Million people reached digitally
761,136 calls made
335,866 text messages
119,117 mailers sent
24,322 pieces of lit dropped
Statewide Hot Takes

- Texas did not turn blue this cycle, but we did continue on a trajectory of becoming increasingly Democratic.
- In 2020, 11.2M voters cast their ballots in TX, that’s a 66% voter turnout*, the highest turnout in recent history.
- Workers Defense canvassed 75,000 voters in the general election.
- Healthcare, Jobs and, Criminal Justice were among the top issues voters talked about (Education too).
- Texas as a whole got bluer, especially along the “blue spine” of I-35 - which includes a number of the counties where WD has done deep organizing work.

*of registered voters
Highlight: First Time Voters

Analysis of early vote data suggests:

- Almost 70% were new voters of color
- More than half were young, between 18-34.
- Over half of new voters were Women
Initial Program Analysis

New Voters trend

Democratic

The vote difference between Dem and Rep. Voters:

- Across the 5 counties where WD did work, more new Dem voters turned out than new Rep. voters.
- Election outcomes in these geographies suggest the trend will hold including E-day data.
Texas House Races

- With our allies we had targeted more than 12 competitive house districts statewide, WD did work in 9 of them.
- Overall we broke even with state house races- we lost one incumbent D and picked up one seat, both in Harris County.
- We picked up 1 senate seat
- Bright spot: in Travis County, Workers Defense reached over 7000 households in HD 47 in the final weeks before the election, helping to carry incumbent Democrat Vikki Goodwin to re-election by a narrow margin and holding on to a critical seat.
Highlights: Tarrant County

- Workers Defense helped to flip Tarrant County to support the Democratic presidential candidate, by a .22 point margin.
- WD moved 4,485 new voters to the polls during EV
- Tarrant County Sheriff: narrowest margin in recent history. From 19.46% in 2012 to 5.34% in 2020.
Highlights: Travis County

- Austin City Council District 4: Greg Casar won re-election in a landslide
- District Attorney: José Garza (WD’s former co-Director)
- County Attorney: Delia Garza
- Travis County Dems swept the Commissioners court:
  - Precinct 3: Ann Howard (D 3) and
  - County Judge: Andy Brown Progressive Democrat
- Austin Independent School District: Noelita Lugo for AISD Board Place 8, and Lynn Boswell for AISD Place 5; Kevin Foster Place 3
Highlights: Central Texas Suburbs

- **Williamson**
  - Pushed out a corrupt anti-immigrant Sheriff
  - Supported a Democratic Presidential candidate for the first time in recent history

- **Hays**
  - Supported a Democratic Presidential candidate for the first time in recent history

- **Bastrop**
  - A deeply conservative county, Democrat came within 6% points of winning
  - According to early vote results there was an increase of voters of color participation up to ~4%
Highlights: Harris County

- Christian Menefee became the first Black man elected to the Harris County County Attorney seat. (WD Endorsed candidate)
- 10,850 first time voters early voted in HC CC3; narrowed the margin by 5 points
- Youth leaders from UH campaign bridging issue work to electoral
- Former TOP employee Tarsha Jackson elected to City Council!
Highlights: WDP Program

- Voter registration
  - 3,157 Calls
  - 31,499 Texts
- Drive Through Voter Registration event at our office with Nuestra Palabra October 3, 2020
Digital Program

Total Number of People Reached: 3,202,042
Total Number of Impressions: 7,504,677

Total Digital Voter Guides Distributed: 21,083 ad-clicks to our websites with voter information, candidate profiles, and commitments to vote.

Thanks to a robust and well funded digital electoral program:
- Total Impressions on social media increased by 298% in 2020 compared to 2019
- Total Engagements on social media increased by 443% in 2020 compared to 2019
- Total Post Link Clicks on social media increased by 487% in 2020 compared to 2019
- Total Followers on social media increased by 21.8% in 2020
Program Highlight: Partnership with Cultural Engagement Lab
about the power of using their voice
Lessons Learned
The Team

Chris Enriquez, Digital Strategist
Diana Ramirez, Director of Civic Engagement
Amparo Herrera-Hughes, Operations Director
Emily Timm, Co-ED
What’s Next?
2021 Priorities

- Build a diverse, powerful base of construction workers, immigrants, low-wage workers, and unemployed workers

- Fight for immigrant families by demanding comprehensive immigration reform and win criminal legal system reforms to disrupt deportations at the local level.

- Fight to center essential workers and their families in the response to the pandemic

- Build power in the construction industry by winning Better Builder® policies and other protections for construction workers

- Resist state efforts to undo our local victories or tie the hands of ally local elected officials, and uplift righteous policies that our communities deserve at the State Capitol.
Check out our New Websites!

www.workersdefense.org | www.wdactionfund.org

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