



Democratic National Committee

PLAYBOOK

**A GUIDE FOR COORDINATED
CAMPAIGNS & STATE PARTIES**



2

COMMUNITY POWER FINDINGS



COMMUNITY POWER FELLOWSHIP SUMMARY LEARNINGS

OVERVIEW

The DNC launched the **Community Power Fellowship** to invest in rebuilding trust with the voters and communities where we lost ground in 2024. In 2025, the DNC opened a call for experienced organizers from across the ecosystem — both the campaign “hard side” and movement “soft side” — who have successfully organized these communities at the local level. These organizers have a proven track record of developing effective strategies to build lasting connections with diverse groups of voters.

The inaugural Fellowship centers these voices: the organizers, community leaders, and coalition builders who have demonstrated success within their own communities. To start, we convened 39 community organizers across six specialized cohorts — **AANHPI, Black, Latino, Native, Workers, and Youth** — with experience across the following organizations:

COMMUNITY POWER PARTICIPANTS

Participants were affiliated with the following organizations:



OUR PROCESS

Across two intensive, six-hour sessions, these fellows worked to bridge the gap between national strategy and the work happening from organizers on the ground by:

- **SURFACING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES' EXPERIENCES** in the current political and campaign landscape.
- **IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS** to civic participation and partisan engagement.
- **DEVELOPING ORGANIZING APPROACHES** rooted in cultural competency and trust.

Each cohort has generated practical guidance designed to support organizers who may be engaging with these communities for the first time. **Think of these recommendations as a compass rather than a rigid map — they are meant to guide your approach, not serve as the final word on tactics. Likewise, no community is a monolith — not every insight, best practice or recommendation will be relevant to every community.**

Below, you will find:

1. **A SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS** that we heard directly from organizers in each community.
2. **A SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS** to strengthen your outreach.
3. **CASE STUDIES** documenting the on-the-ground work of organizers in state.

Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Communities Summary Memo

COHORT PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT - MARY PHAM (CALIFORNIA):

Mary was born and raised in Grand Rapids, MI. She became politically involved after attending UC Davis. She's the Organizing Director for Swifties for Hope (formerly Swifties for Kamala) and the Deputy Organizing Director for Every Vote Matters. She resides in the SF Bay Area with her husband and her dog, California.



RECENT ELECTORAL TRENDS

2024 vs 2020:

- 2024: Democrats won AANHPI voters 57% - 40%.¹
- 2020: Democrats won AANHPI voters roughly 70% - 30%.²

Electoral Shifts:

- Republican support among AANHPI voters increased from roughly 30% in 2020 to 40% in 2024.³
- That said, this shift was not uniform across the AANHPI community: the decrease in Democratic support was most salient among voters ages 30-44, as well as among Chinese American voters and Independent voters.⁴
- Vietnamese Americans are the only major AANHPI subgroup where a majority identify as Republican or lean Republican. (51%).⁵

Where Democrats Made Progress in 2025:

- Exit polls from the 2025 New Jersey governor's race showed AANHPI voters backed Democrat Mikie Sherrill 82% to 18%.⁶
 - 31% of AANHPI voters who identified as Republican voted for Sherrill for Governor.⁷
- In California, Proposition 50 passed with 63.8% statewide support; counties with high AANHPI populations delivered some of the highest margins in the state, such as Alameda with 80.6% support.⁸

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/26/trump-harris-non-white-voters-pew-survey/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/26/trump-harris-non-white-voters-pew-survey/>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/26/trump-harris-non-white-voters-pew-survey/>

⁴ <https://www.mysianvoice.com/the-asian-american-vote-in-the-2024-presidential-election>

⁵ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/25/asian-voters-in-the-u-s-tend-to-be-democratic-but-vietnamese-american-voters-are-an-exception/>

⁶ <https://aapinewjersey.org/2025-nj-election-exit-poll-results>

⁷ <https://aapinewjersey.org/2025-nj-election-exit-poll-results>

⁸ <https://apps.npr.org/2025-election-results/california.html?section=I>

AANHPI Community Cohort Learnings

What We Heard from Cohort Participants:

- **Diversity of Communities:** Organizing under a single umbrella ignores differences between ethnic groups, languages, and political experiences.
 - *"Trying to lump everybody together in one box is not working... there's so many different ways to get to the heart of people's decision making."*
- **Economy as Top Priority:** Like other communities, AANHPI voters are focused on getting food on the table, paying rent, and making ends meet.
 - *"It's about base needs right now. Like, getting food on the table, getting shelter... so when we walk in and we're like, will you sign this petition..they're gonna be like... I'm just trying to work so that I can live check-to-check right now."*
- **Political Taboos:** Some AANHPI communities, especially older immigrants, find it uncomfortable or impolite to discuss politics openly.
 - *"I realize a lot of my conversations tend to start apolitically.... they are not really open to having their minds changed, but what I have noticed is that they're open to prolonged and engaging discussion about what they actually believe in."*
- **Representation Matters:** AANHPI voters are significantly underrepresented in elected positions: AANHPI people represent 6.1% of the US population, but hold only ~.09% of federal elected offices.¹ Organizers noted that as they see Republicans run more AANHPI candidates than they have in the past, Democrats must work to communicate democratic values and policies that align with the priorities of the AANHPI community.
 - *"There are a lot of South Asians who are running as Republicans.... When I was canvassing... we often did get a lot of questions. It's like, 'oh, you guys are an Asian American organization, why aren't you supporting the Asian American?'"*

What Participants Recommend:

- **Prioritize In-Language Engagement:** Prioritize outreach that is led by community members, utilizing relational tools like postcards to make participation accessible.
 - Language access means having community members create materials in their own voice, not just translating pre-written English content.

¹ <https://www.axios.com/2021/05/04/aapi-representation-elected-officials-leaders>

- **From the Field** 📋: In a 2025 congressional special election cycle, organizers saw a 12% increase in AANHPI voter turnout by having community members write postcards in their own languages at postcard parties in churches, mosques, and community spaces.
- **Be Precise and Local**: Identify the different communities within the AANHPI umbrella that exist in your state, district, or turf, and make a plan on how to engage each independently.
 - Tag specific ethnic communities in VAN beyond the generic 'AANHPI' label
 - Work through community-specific cultural centers in population-dense areas
 - Don't lump Middle Eastern/North African communities under 'AANHPI' by default
- **Manage Community Media**: Control the narrative by building year-round relationships with AANHPI media and placing messaging in high-traffic community spaces.
 - Correct misinformation in other languages, not just English media.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Place ads in Asian grocery stores where you can on screens or in weekly coupon books.
- **Community Center/Leader Partnerships**: In population dense areas, partner with leaders and organizations of community-specific cultural centers.
 - Organizations could include Vietnamese community centers, Chinese cultural centers, Korean churches, Filipino organizations, and many more.
 - **From the Field** 📋: When building out your budget and coalitions staff footprint, consider funding community leaders part-time to host round-tables and help your candidate/campaign build trust with specific ethnic groups. One organizer's campaign paid 6 local community leaders 5/hours per week instead of hiring just one coalition staffer dedicated to AANHPI organizing.
- **Participate in Culture**: Show up year round for specific cultural moments and traditions. AANHPI communities notice when campaigns make the effort to participate.
 - Hire local vendors and AANHPI owned business to cater local organizing and volunteer events.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Get the details right: say 'Happy Lunar New Year' not 'Happy Chinese New Year.' AANHPI communities notice when you care about specificity.

Black Communities Summary Memo

COHORT PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT - BRENTEN SIMS (VIRGINIA):

Brenten Sims is a community advocate, storyteller, and creative who uses his work to bring people together and highlight real stories from the community. Through programs like Black Men Heal Yoga, he creates spaces focused on healing, connection, and support. Brenten's work centers on showing up for people, uplifting community voices, and building programs that help communities feel seen, valued, and connected.



RECENT ELECTORAL TRENDS

2024 vs 2020:

- 2024: Black voters backed Democrats 86% – 13%.⁹
- 2020: Black voters backed Democrats 87% – 12%.¹⁰

Electoral Shifts:

- While Black voters still overwhelmingly vote for Democrats, Democratic support declined modestly between 2020 and 2024.¹¹
- The most notable shift occurred among Black men, where Trump increased his support from roughly 19% in 2020 to around 21% in 2024.¹³
- Black women remain one of the Democratic Party's strongest constituencies; in 2024, 9 in 10 Black women continued to support Democrats.¹⁴

Where Democrats Made Progress in 2025:

- Exit polling from the 2025 New Jersey governor's race showed Black voters backed Democrat Mikie Sherrill by roughly 9 in 10 votes, maintaining the party's dominant support within the community.¹⁵
- Similarly, in the 2025 Virginia governor's race, Black voters overwhelmingly supported Democrat Abigail Spanberger, continuing a long-standing trend of strong Democratic alignment in statewide elections.¹⁶

¹¹ <https://www.cnn.com/election/2024/exit-polls/national-results/general/president/0>

¹² <https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/exit-polls/president/national-results>

¹³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/09/24/trump-black-voters-election-republicans/>

¹⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/09/24/trump-black-voters-election-republicans/>

¹⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/09/24/trump-black-voters-election-republicans/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/11/04/democrats-election-wins-trump>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/11/04/democrats-election-wins-trump>

Black Community Cohort Learnings

What We Heard from Cohort Participants:

- **Historical and Personal:** Black communities carry generations of organizing knowledge passed down from abolitionist movements through Civil Rights to contemporary mutual aid networks. This history shapes how people understand their role in collective action today.
 - *"Our community's been at this for a long time, fighting really hard in a lot of different ways.... This has been generations of work."*
- **Backsliding Progress:** Watching progress that took generations to achieve be reversed creates big questions about whether engagement in electoral campaigns is worth it.
 - *"If one election can change everything that my granny and them were fighting for, then... what are we doing?"*
- **Guardedness and Distrust:** Black voters feel taken for granted and wary of having their stories co-opted for campaigns' self-interest.
 - *"[I] converse with a lot of white people who are [running] other organizations that are... inviting Black folks in to hear their story, hear their struggles, and then being like, 'thank you for your story, we'll take it from here.' As if they know what to do, as if they're more prepared to handle the efforts, and that's not okay."*
- **Community Power:** Black communities want to know their participation builds power for their own communities and trust themselves to do that best.
 - *"Sometimes people feel like they don't know if they're actually going to something that'll help them build power, or if they're just kind of helping build someone else's story that won't help them out, or their community out."*
 - *"Who do Black people trust? ... We do trust each other, right? There's a lot of points of distrust, but we trust each other.... We trust people that have historically been in the community and who have a traditional way of doing things. They do the same thing over and over again, it's consistent."*

What Participants Recommend:

- **Earn Black Votes:** Don't assume Black voters will automatically support Democratic candidates. Organizers noted that the Black community increasingly feels taken for granted, reinforcing the need for campaigns to engage Black voters intentionally and early.

- **Pro Tip** 💡: Ensure a meaningful percentage of Black voters are integrated into your persuasion and early engagement strategies, not just your turn out universe.
- **Develop Leadership Pipelines:** Prioritize hiring Black organizers and value lived experience as a meaningful credential. Too often, campaigns prioritize hiring people of color in junior positions, but don't prioritize diversity in leadership hiring.
 - Offer career development that allows talented organizers to advance.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Recruit organizing staff through trusted community networks — local advocacy groups, HBCU alumni organizations, faith communities, and historically Black civic institutions — rather than relying solely on traditional campaign hiring pipelines.
- **Cultivate Shared Success:** Build genuine relationships with people and leaders, to develop shared investment. When a volunteer sees that an organizer is genuinely there to help the community in concrete ways, they show up not only for the cause, but because they want to see their organizer succeed.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: *“Be honest when things are hard. Black communities have seen enough fake optimism from campaigns. When organizers share genuine challenges, people often step up to problem-solve together.”*
- **Honor Expertise, Elders, and Traditions:** Give Black communities the deference expert organizers are due and respect community norms.
 - Instead of saying, “The campaign needs you to knock doors,” try, “I’m trying to reach this goal and I need your wisdom on how to get there.”
 - When someone offers you a plate, receive it with gratitude. Let people encourage you, pray for you, or just listen.
 - Respect for elders (especially faith leaders) is nonnegotiable, and they are key messengers in their communities.
- **Invest in Collective Care:** Move beyond transactional politics by supporting the Black Church’s existing role as a social safety net and create spaces for emotional connection in addition to politics.
 - **From the Field** 📋: *Win with Black Women’s* calls included crying, praying, and shared emotional moments that felt powerful because Black women all over the country were experiencing it together.
 - Show up to support existing community service efforts (transportation, emergency assistance, food distribution, and social services).

Latino Communities Summary Memo

COHORT PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT - SIERRA HERNANDEZ (NEVADA):

Raised in a working-class, immigrant household, Sierra turned early struggles into strengths, leading with empathy and a deep commitment to ensuring people from all backgrounds feel supported. Having managed campaigns and led statewide digital engagement strategies across Nevada, they're well aware of the challenges Democrats face and the work that needs to be done. They might not be battle-born, but they sure are battle-tested.



RECENT ELECTORAL TRENDS

2024 vs 2020:

- 2024: Latino voters backed Harris 51% - 48% over Trump. ¹
- 2020: Latino voters backed Biden 61% - 36% over Trump. ²

Electoral Shifts:

- Democrats' advantage with Latino voters dropped sharply, from Biden +25 in 2020 to Harris +3 in 2024. ³
- Among Latino men, Trump rose from 39% in 2020 to 50% in 2024. Among Latina women, support for Trump rose from 33% in 2020 to 46% in 2024. ⁴

Where Democrats Made Progress in 2025:

- Exit polling in the 2025 New Jersey governor's race showed Latino voters backed Democrat Mikie Sherrill 68% - 31%. ⁵
- In Virginia's 2025 governor's race, Latino voters backed Democrat Abigail Spanberger 67% - 32%, and 77% of Latino voters said Trump administration immigration actions had "gone too far." ⁶

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/06/26/voting-patterns-in-the-2024-election/>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/06/26/voting-patterns-in-the-2024-election/>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/06/26/voting-patterns-in-the-2024-election/>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/06/26/voting-patterns-in-the-2024-election/>

https://americasvoice.org/press_releases/key-immigration-latino-findings-from-2025-exit-polls/

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/08/latino-vote-midterms-democrats-trump>

Latino Community Cohort Learnings

What We Heard from Cohort Participants:

- **Expansive Diversity:** Latino voters have tremendous geographic and linguistic diversity — spanning dozens of countries, and have varying levels of fluency in Spanish. One-size-fits-all strategies fail to respect this diversity and engage voters effectively.
 - *"We're not a monolith. You can't just say 'the Latino community' and think one message works for everyone. What matters to someone whose family has been here for generations is different from someone who just got here."*
- **Multi-Issue Voters:** Politicians cannot assume that Latino voters are one-issue voters, and that immigration is the *only* issue they care about. Latino voters care just as much about affordability and health care as anyone else.
 - *"People are working two, three jobs and still can't afford rent. That's what they care about. That's what we need to talk about."*
- **Family-Oriented Identity:** Many Latino voters are children of immigrants or immigrants themselves; these familial histories of migration and sacrifice shape their political perspectives.
 - *"When I turned eighteen and went to vote for the first time, I remember having this feeling on my shoulder. Because my vote became about something a lot bigger than my thoughts and my opinions. It became about my mom. And our family and her sacrifices and our story in this country."*
- **Fragmented Information:** Latino voters overwhelmingly consume content in a mix of English and Spanish on Youtube, TikTok, and WhatsApp — all spaces where misinformation can spread quickly and right-wing voices currently dominate.
 - *"My tía sends me stuff on WhatsApp all the time. Half of it is completely made up, but she believes it because it came from someone she trusts."*
 - *"Turn on Spanish radio — it's all right-wing. All of it. And people believe it because there's no alternative."*
- **Messengers Matter:** Effective organizing in the Latino community requires engaging local, trusted, multilingual validators.
 - *"I don't care what some politician in Washington says. I care what [local organizer] says, because they're here, they know what's happening, and they've helped my family."*

What Participants Recommend:

- **Prioritize Language Access:** Over 40 million people in America speak Spanish at home. Though not all Latinos are fully fluent in Spanish, culturally competent multilingual outreach demonstrates effort and is appreciated. Spanish-language organizing should be an integral organizing strategy from the beginning, with dedicated staff and resources, rather than an afterthought.
 - Ensure you have bilingual materials from the get-go, and invest in hiring or contracting with translators for any bilingual literature or training materials you need to create. Translation is a skill, and should not be an expectation of Latino staff.
 - *"Acknowledge that basic Spanish efforts are appreciated. Many voters recognize and respect when canvassers make genuine attempts... even imperfectly."*
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Provide basic Spanish-language terminology and cultural context training for all volunteers to ensure they're prepared and reduce avoidance of neighborhoods with higher densities of Spanish-speaking voters.
- **Track Spanish-Speaking Volunteer Capacity:** From the get-go, ask all event attendees and volunteer prospects if they are willing to volunteer in Spanish. This is essential to being able to scale a bilingual volunteer base, and:
 - Incorporate a question asking if volunteers can volunteer in Spanish into every check-in form and volunteer questionnaire.
 - Track Spanish-speaking volunteers with an activist code and/or survey question. This will make it easier to recruit for Spanish-speaking phonebanks and canvasses in Latino-dense precincts.
 - *"There were so many volunteers who had never been asked to volunteer in Spanish, and were so excited to do so. We saw the highest volunteer retention rate among our Spanish-language phonebankers, who felt so purposeful connecting with other Spanish speakers across the state. By the end, we had over 1,000 active Spanish-speaking volunteers."*
- **Run Community-Centered Organizing Programs:** Effective Latino organizing programs should incorporate service-based organizing to help build long-term trust and relationships with Latino voters, especially at a time when there is a heightened fear about ICE in Latino communities.
 - Host multilingual know-your-rights trainings with direct access to attorneys, in partnership with legal aid organizations.
 - Provide tenant rights and consumer advocacy workshops to help voters understand renter protections, access legal support, and connect with partner organizations.

- **From the Field** 📋: Several organizers described hosting mutual aid events, such as food distribution and neighborhood cleanups, as a way to be visible and show up to earn trust from the Latino community.
- **Partner with Trusted Community Institutions:** Faith leaders, labor unions, local community organizations, and immigrant advocacy groups already play central roles in Latino communities. Partnerships can build credibility for campaigns and candidates.
 - Meet people where they're at — this means not only reaching voters on the doors, but engaging Latino voters in the spaces where they'll already be present: at church, cultural festivals, concerts, and more.
 - On campuses, partner with Latino Greek organizations, cultural clubs, and student groups. Give them voter outreach materials, training, and resources, then let them lead engagement with their members and peers.
 - Work with faith institutions strategically and recognize their growing influence, especially among young Latinos.
- **Build Digital Networks:** Support Latino content creators, amplify community voices on digital channels, and build multilingual WhatsApp groups that can be used to manage large volunteer networks and combat misinformation voters may be hearing.
 - When working with creators and community validators, give them the autonomy to speak in their own voices with their own cultural references.
 - *"Short-form video (TikTok, Instagram Reels...) are where many Latinos... get information. Create content that breaks down issues in accessible, authentic ways".*

Native Communities Summary Memo

COHORT PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT - DAVINA SMITH (UTAH):

Davina Smith is a Diné (Navajo) woman from Monument Valley, Utah, and a leader in Indigenous land stewardship, Tribal sovereignty, and community-driven conservation. A citizen of the Navajo Nation, she was appointed by Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren to represent Navajo perspectives on the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, where she serves as Co-Chair. Davina is the Founder and CEO of Haseya Native Initiatives, providing culturally grounded consulting that centers Indigenous leadership and landscape-scale protection. She also serves as Chair of the Utah Native Caucus, a Delegate with the San Juan County Utah Democratic Party, and a board member of Bears Ears Partnership and Grand Staircase-Escalante Partners, advancing collaborative conservation across the Colorado Plateau.



RECENT ELECTORAL TRENDS

2024 vs 2020:

- 2024: Native voters backed Harris 57% - 39% over Trump.¹
- 2020: Surveys found that 60% of Native voters supported Joe Biden.²

Electoral Shifts:

- In the 2024 Native-specific survey, Native women backed Harris 63% - 33%, while Native men were much more divided at 50% - 47%.³
- Native voters also remained more Democratic down-ballot in 2024: 57% said they voted for the Democratic congressional candidate versus 38% for the Republican.⁴

Where Democrats Made Progress in 2025:

- Native candidates made gains in representation at local levels; 16 indigenous candidates won their seats in 2025 for school board and city council.⁵

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-native-american-vote-in-the-2024-presidential-election/>

<https://latinodecisions.com/blog/native-americans-overcome-major-obstacles-part-of-voting-coalition-that-led-biden-to-victory>

<https://2024electionpoll.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024-AEVP-Fina-NA-Deck.pdf>

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-native-american-vote-in-the-2024-presidential-election>

<https://www.underscore.news/justice/contested-elections-local-races-natives-participated-across-the-country-in-2025-elections>

Native Community Cohort Learnings

What We Heard from Cohort Participants

- **Tribal Sovereignty:** Reservations are sovereign nations and campaigns must understand tribal governance in order to design their outreach strategies on tribal lands.
 - *"First, start with understanding sovereignty rather than strategy first, because every tribal government system is going to be different..."*
 - *"You gotta get permission from our tribal chairman to even have the press come to our reservation... it's not considered public space."*
- **Diversity of Experience:** The history and culture of each Native tribe is distinct. In states with multiple tribes and reservations, each tribe or reservation should not be treated as a monolith.
 - *"The thing is, that tribes are not all the same across this nation. We are not. That's the perception that we all do things alike, we have our ceremonies the same, we have our connections the same... it's all completely different."*
- **Generational Trauma:** Historical persecution, such as boarding schools and relocation programs, have created a legacy of distrust among Native voters toward federal agencies and elected officials. Skepticism of the federal government is exacerbated by disputes over water rights.
 - *"I'm a boarding school survivor... my parents thought... if I didn't go to boarding school, they would get thrown into jail. That was a generational mindset."*
 - *"25% of that water's river flow belongs to tribes in the form of paper water rights, and we can't pull that water out of the river."*
- **Voter Access Barriers:** On many reservations, there are significant voting barriers, including multi-hour drives to polls, lack of standardized mailing addresses, and mail-in voting restrictions in some states.
 - *"You need gas money. Or, you know, they're telling you, that polling place now is being redirected to another location, you can't vote there... they provide the IDs that you were instructed from the beginning, and then you're turned away."*

What Participants Recommend:

- **Expand Voter Access on Reservations:** Native communities face steep barriers to civic participation.
 - Implement geocoding systems like Google Plus codes on reservations.
 - Coordinate birth certificate and ID assistance programs. Elders born at home, people whose mail goes to another state, families whose validating witnesses have died — these are solvable problems that prevent people from voting.
 - Prepare contingency plans for how to alert Native communities about mail-by-vote restrictions as they happen.
 - **From the Field** 📋: Work to get mobile voting units deployed on reservation land. The Tohono O’odham mobile voting unit, launched by the Pima County Recorder, brings the polling place to voters instead of requiring multi-hour drives. This model is scalable.
 - **From the Field** 📋: some rural and tribal areas lack traditional street addresses. Solve these barriers by using tools like Google Plus Codes to assign coordinates to residences to facilitate targeted voter registration and voter outreach.
- **Understand Tribal Context:** Effective organizing of Native voters begins with a deep understanding of tribal culture and historical relationship with the federal government.
 - Build a one-pager briefing for staff on each tribe in the district: governance structure, key issues, preferred terminology, recent political conflicts, and tribal media outlets.
 - Map tribal lands, service areas, and urban Native populations — many Native voters do not live on reservations.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Begin engagement by consulting tribal leaders or designated community representatives about the appropriate way to organize within the community.
- **Prioritize In-Person Engagement on Reservations:** Many Native voters may be geographically spread out and have experienced long histories of political neglect. Showing up in person demonstrates meaningful commitment and effort.
 - Hire organizers from within the reservation, if possible; having someone who is already embedded in a reservation’s community is immensely valuable given how challenging it can be for a new person to break through.
 - Conduct roundtables. This is relatively new in Native communities and effective. It gives individual constituents — not just tribal council — direct access to candidates.
 - **From the Field** 📋: Organizers noted that candidates who traveled long distances to visit reservations earned significant goodwill.

- **Partner with Local Institutions and Validators:** Leverage organizations and leaders already working to engage Native communities, both on and off reservations.
 - Develop a list of Native-led organizations that you would like to make relationships with before you need them, and work to build those relationships as a priority.
 - Design and execute a Tribal media strategy that includes outreach to tribal radio stations and newspapers.
 - Hire locally for media production: Campaign ads and content made by people who have never visited the communities they're targeting do not land. This can be solved by hiring Native filmmakers, writers, and designers from the communities themselves.

- **Connect Priority Policy Issues to Daily Life:** There are several policy issues that are particularly salient for Native voters, such as the impact of climate change and tariffs. Campaigns need to put forth specific, tangible plans to address these issues.
 - *"Water rights is a huge thing for us, and is going to become a major issue in this election, even beyond the Southwest"*
 - Illustrate how tariffs impact Native communities — such as the rising costs of car parts that will have a high impact on Native communities on reservations who often drive long distances and work on their own cars.
 - Compare policy impacts to familiar local benchmarks, such as distance to the nearest hospital, cost of propane, and the time it takes to get to the closest grocery store.
 - **From the Field** : In the Southwest, make water rights and extreme heat campaign issues by tying together rising utility bills, access to A/C, and IRA funding cuts.

Working Communities Summary Memo

COHORT HIGHLIGHT - BRIONA PARKINSON (ARIZONA):

Briona Parkinson is the Political & Legislative Director for AFSCME Arizona and Chair of the Maricopa Area Labor Federation, specializing in strategic advocacy and executive governance. A veteran of high-stakes political strategy, Briona cemented her reputation for driving large-scale results by leading Arizona's largest labor electoral program as the 2024 AFL-CIO Campaign Manager. Her leadership extends to critical policy initiatives, including her recent tenure on the Governor's Heat Safety Taskforce, where she helped finalize statewide recommendations. A graduate of the Harvard State and Local Executive Leaders program, as well as the Leading for Change and Monzón Fellowships, Briona combines sophisticated oversight with a commitment to inclusive governance. She operates on the fundamental belief that the most enduring solutions are found through collective action: YOU + ME = WE.



RECENT ELECTORAL TRENDS

2024 vs 2020:

- 2024: Voters without a college degree backed Trump 56% - 43% over Harris. 1
- 2020: Voters with some college or less backed Trump 50% - 48% over Biden. 2

Electoral Shifts:

- White voters without a college degree remained one of Trump's strongest groups in 2024, with about two-thirds backing him at roughly the same level as 2020. 9, 10
- The broader non-college electorate moved noticeably right between 2020 and 2024, from Trump +2 to Trump +14. 1

Where Democrats Made Progress in 2025:

- In the 2025 Virginia and New Jersey gubernatorial races, working class voters shifted back toward Democrats after leaning Republican in both 2021 and 2024. That movement was driven especially by nonwhite working class voters without college degrees and voters making less than \$100,000 a year.
- Voters who said the economy was their top issue backed the Democratic gubernatorial candidates by 63% in Virginia and 66% in New Jersey, suggesting Democrats regained some traction with working voters on an economic message.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/interactive/2024/exit-polls-2024-election/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/interactive/2020/exit-polls/presidential-election-exit-polls/>

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/working-class-voters-shifted-slightly-toward-democrats-in-the-2025-gubernatorial-elections/>

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/working-class-voters-shifted-slightly-toward-democrats-in-the-2025-gubernatorial-elections/>

Working Communities Cohort Learnings

What We Heard from Cohort Participants:

- **The Survival Gap:** Many working class families are making decisions day by day, sometimes hour by hour: whether to pay for rent or their medication, whether they need to pick up another job if their hours are cut.
 - *“We are in survival mode, and that has to be understood and accepted as what it is right now, that’s not changing. And so when campaigns either feel like they’re shouting at us to get involved... or when they’re only talking about things that are multiple years in the making, it’s hard to want to participate.”*
- **Communication Deficit:** Even when policy wins occur, they are rarely communicated in spaces that actually reach working people. And if voters don’t see the benefit of policy actions in their everyday lives, the party won’t get credit.
 - *“It (The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) never got broken down into, ‘hey, that project down the road, that’s what you’re working on, that’s where this came from, we need more of this.’ We never bring it back to what actually hits home with our members, or what hits home with our communities.”*
- **Time Scarcity:** Hourly workers view free time as highly valuable. Time away from the job site means a direct loss of income, making traditional campaign events a potential burden.
 - *“If I’m off of work, I don’t get paid, that’s it. And so, if I’m not on the job site, I’m not getting a paycheck. And so, it’s very hard for working class families to go to multiple different things.”*
- **Pride and Identity:** Union workers take deep pride in their work; for many, their union affiliation and job are integral to their identity.
 - *“I am an ironworker, that becomes my persona, right?... I’m proud that our party is led by somebody who came from labor. Like, that’s, we don’t talk about that enough, I don’t think.”*
- **Transactional Politics:** For working families living paycheck to paycheck, politics is increasingly viewed through the lens of immediate benefit (“What are you doing for my family right now?”) rather than static party identification.
 - *“I constantly hear at every single one of our membership meetings, ‘well, you guys are just all vote blue no matter who.’ And it’s, no... these are the issues. Find us somebody who comes from a different background, and if they will stand next to us on the platform representing labor, we’ll have a conversation with them.”*

What Participants Recommend:

- **Go Where Organizing is Already Happening:** Strengthening union support and labor relationships can help rebuild trust with working communities. These organizations remain a key bridge to working-class voters.
 - Embed organizing into the events and spaces where union workers are spending the majority of their day. Union halls, break rooms, apprenticeship classes, and job sites are where political conversations naturally happen.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Organizers and candidates should attend apprenticeship classes — these rooms are full of potential voters in a structured setting.
- **Activate Validators:** Working class voters are most likely to listen to people who share their experience. Hire organizers from the actual neighborhoods or industries you're targeting so they already know local gathering spots and social norms.
 - Send messengers into places they're already familiar with and let them have normal conversations rather than scripted pitches from surrogates.
- **Treat Distrust as Rational:** Build trust by accepting skepticism. Open with lived-experience questions, not political ones. ("What's been hardest this year?" "What costs are hitting you most?").
 - Validate feelings before offering any policy or candidate framing.
 - Repeat back what you heard ("So overtime cuts have been the biggest hit?").
 - Log personal context notes so future follow-ups feel more personal.
- **Translate to Tangible Impacts:** Connect legislation and policy proposals to local context.
 - Make policy tangible. Don't say "infrastructure investment" — say "that highway project your neighbor is working on exists because of this law."
- **Make Campaigns & Offices Accessible:** Build belonging by meeting workers in familiar spaces, using plain language, offering food when possible, and elevating working-class leaders as visible captains and messengers. Design volunteer shifts around short windows of time or tasks that can be completed flexibly.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Maybe someone has windows of time to knock 75 doors over the course of the week. Consider giving them a turf to knock and having them knock at times that work for them. After, evaluate on a per-person basis if it was effective and adapt.
 - **From the Field** 📋: One Michigan Senate candidate held a statewide microbrewery tour, hosting informal conversations at local gathering places where people were already congregating. By meeting voters in familiar spaces where they already spend time, the campaign created accessible touchpoints

for working people to engage with them without having to ask voters to travel to a new location to attend a traditional town hall.

- **Be a Straight Shooter:** Avoid spin, hedging, or overly polished language. Acknowledge tradeoffs, admit uncertainty, and speak in concrete terms to show respect.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Test your messaging with a working-class volunteer advisory board before deploying it. What sounds powerful in a campaign office may sound cloudy and abstract in a break room.

Young Voters Summary Memo

COHORT HIGHLIGHT - JONNIKA KWON (WASHINGTON DC):

Jonnika Kwon began her organizing work through the High School Democrats of America, where she served as Chair of the Washington State High School Democrats. In this role, her focus was on connecting young people with campaigns, increasing youth voter turnout, and bridging the gap between Democratic party leadership and youth communities. She is currently a freshman at Georgetown University and an intern for the Democratic Municipal Officials, where she is working on developing a national Youth Engagement Toolkit to help candidates increase their outreach and engagement with high school and college students.



RECENT ELECTORAL TRENDS

2024 vs 2020:

- 2024: Voters ages 18-29 backed Harris 54% - 43% over Trump.⁹
- 2020: Voters ages 18-29 backed Biden 60% - 36% over Trump.¹⁰

Electoral Shifts:

- Democrats' margin with young voters fell from Biden +24 in 2020 to Harris +11 in 2024.^{9, 10}
- Trump's gains among young men were especially striking: CNN's exit-poll discussion noted men under 30 moved from backing Biden by 15 points in 2020 to backing Trump by 13 points in 2024.

Where Democrats Made Progress in 2025:

- In New York City's 2025 mayoral race, about three-quarters of voters under 30 backed Democrat Zohran Mamdani.
- In Virginia, young voter turnout increased by 7% from 2021. In New Jersey, young voter turnout increased by 9% compared to the 2021 gubernatorial elections. According to exit polls, 70% of youth backed Democrat Abigail Spanberger and 69% supported Democrat Mikie Sherrill in New Jersey.

⁹<https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-approval-rating-young-men-changed-11285979>

¹⁰<https://apnews.com/article/poll-election-2025-demographics-voters-latino-black-b59518a2c8d2f37f857fe1ac32995b9a>

¹¹<https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/young-voters-power-mamdani-victory-shape-key-2025-elections>

Youth Community Cohort Learnings

What We Heard from Cohort Participants:

- **Echo Chambers Online:** Social media algorithms have replaced many real world experiences, with curated feeds designed to reinforce existing beliefs. This makes in-person interaction, where people encounter different perspectives, exceptionally valuable for organizing.
 - *"...you see something on the internet and you think that's... the whole picture. But when you're, like, actually in that... in [in-person institutions], like, you're talking to people who have a completely different 'For You' page... and showing people perspectives that they never would have been exposed to, because their phone is just going to show them more of the same."*
- **Economic Hopelessness:** Young voters' political engagement is driven by an evaporating entry-level job market, the exorbitant cost of rent, and crushing student debt. Young voters don't expect to do better financially than their parents.
 - *"The entry-level career market is so bad right now. I know a lot of seniors [in college] who are struggling to find jobs."*
- **Radar for Authenticity:** As social media natives, young people have a hyper-sensitive radar for "cringe", untrustworthy content. Even when executed well, being online isn't enough to breakthrough or inspire action.
 - *"I really feel like social media is that, like, first step, it's that recognition, but it doesn't necessarily mean that's... that's who you're gonna believe in."*
- **Gender Divergence:** Algorithms are sorting young men and women into increasingly separate and often opposing political realities, with young men specifically targeted by a sophisticated right-wing media ecosystem that offers them explanations for their economic anxiety, social isolation, and perceived loss of status.
 - *"I went to an all-girls school.... I think we had one Trump supporter in our entire school, like, super, super liberal school.... We had a brother school, and they were, same location, under the same sphere. They were really conservative, and I feel like that just really sums up what's going on with Gen Z right now."*
- **COVID Hangover:** Missing out on key high school or college experiences was devastating for many young people and fundamentally shifted how they communicate.
 - *"For me, I'm 21, so COVID happened for me in 9th grade, so the beginning of high school. And so, I kind of saw the effects of COVID all the way through high school into college. Essentially, at my high school in Alabama.... every*

year of COVID, there was, like, a suicide that happened in high school to, like, a detriment to isolation during that time, 2020."

What Participants Recommend:

- **Value Youth Partners:** Successful organizing treats young people as equal partners with valuable expertise rather than as a source of free labor. Listen to their feedback and source prospects for a youth advisory group/board/team early in the campaign.
 - Pro Tip 💡: Compensate young volunteers giving large amounts of time when possible. If payment is not possible, offer other concrete benefits like service hours, food, stipends, and merch.
- **Be Authentic, Don't Imitate:** A campaign shouldn't adopt slang or mimic online culture just to relate to young people. Engagement works best when it is respectful, direct, and simplifies complex issues — especially for people who aren't steeped in politics. Keep this principle in mind when drafting scripts.
 - Prioritize warmer, more human touchpoints: peer-to-peer introductions, in-person conversations in shared spaces, and opt-in follow-up ("Can I text you the details?").
 - Capitalize on viral moments as locally as possible. When something from the campaign is going viral online, think about how to associate it with on the ground activity.
 - Pro Tip 💡: Be responsive to feedback. What constitutes 'cringe' can change quickly. Language from even two months prior may need to evolve.
- **Prioritize Outcomes over Inputs:** Focus on key outcomes — like candidate IDs and voter registrations — over rigid, mandatory input metrics such as call-time goals that frustrate young volunteers. Consider providing organizing staff with a menu of tactics they can use to reach their goals, and allow them the autonomy to choose what works for them, so long as they are meeting their output goals.
 - Pro Tip 💡: Design classic campaign activities with young volunteers experience in mind:
 - Redefine one-on-ones to be more flexible. Define some hard-and-fast rules for what should be accomplished in a one-on-one, but don't define the locale or length.
 - Canvassing alone should always be an option, but young people, especially first time volunteers, should be encouraged to feel comfortable going in pairs.
- **Broaden the Scope:** Build issue-based infrastructure that outlasts any single candidate or cycle. "Buckeyes for [Candidate]" is narrow, and disappears after the election. "Buckeyes for Progress" is broadly appealing, and stays across cycles. Offer

the “[X] for Progress” model particularly in areas that lack trust in the Democratic brand.

- Remember mutual aid is organizing. Organize rapid-response actions around politically salient moments and host community service events to connect with voters we may otherwise not reach.
- **From the Field** 📋: Organizers hosted “Know Your Ballot” events in commonly used third spaces where young people could learn about propositions and candidates on the ballot, with focus on how they specifically will be affected.
- **Build Youth Exclusive Spaces:** Young voter-oriented organizing should be approachable, comfortable, non-intimidating, and introduce very little new vocabulary to the average participant. Recognize that “going out and having a good time” while talking politics with friends can count as organizing.
 - **Pro Tip** 💡: Instead of holding an event called a ‘friendbank,’ invite people to come hang out and text their friends. Host low-pressure social events alongside higher-effort organizing activities.