



SISTER DISTRICT SUMMIT 2023

# 2023 STRATEGY UPDATE

Gaby Goldstein, Co-Founder



SISTER DISTRICT  
PROJECT



Action  
Network



NEW MEDIA VENTURES

ActBlue

EMERGE



# OVERVIEW

01 Sister District Strategy

02 Electoral Deep Dive: Where We've Been

03 Looking Ahead: 2023 and Beyond



# SISTER DISTRICT STRATEGY



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## Mission

- To build sustained progressive power in state legislatures

## Why State Legislatures?

- Policy pipeline
- Leadership pipeline
- Vital key to fair elections, voting rights, democracy
- High ROI for volunteer & donor time and resources
- Trajectory: narrowing federal protections + devolution to states
  - Challenges and opportunities



# SISTER DISTRICT STRATEGY

How do we build progressive power in state legislatures?

**We fill critical gaps at every point in the political life cycle**

- Win Elections
- Support Organizers
- Develop Legislators
- Educate & Empower



# SISTER DISTRICT STRATEGY

## Win Elections:

- Data and analytics to identify the most strategic and competitive state legislative races
- Powerful grassroots, hardside field and fundraising programs
- Comprehensive candidate services program
- Candidate pipeline development: Future Winners
  - 2023: Sister District, EMILY's List, DLCC

# SISTER DISTRICT STRATEGY

## Support Organizers:

- Organizer training, development, and community-building for 95+ Sister District Teams & Affiliates
- Annual Sister District Summit
- State Bridges
  - Fundraising event series for state-based organizations engaged in year-round power-building
  - Often led by people of color and centering experiences of those most affected by state policies



# SISTER DISTRICT STRATEGY

## Develop Legislators:

- Purple District Network
  - National network of ~80 progressive frontliners
  - Best practices, governance and policy strategies
- State Power Table
  - Co-convenor with SiX and Pipeline Initiative





# SISTER DISTRICT STRATEGY

## Educate & Empower:

- Award-winning political research program
- Civic engagement programming
  - Narrative Change - Elevating the visibility and prominence of state legislative issues, policies and leaders
  - Partnerships with Crooked Media, Teen Vogue and more



# **WIN ELECTIONS: OUR POLITICAL STRATEGY**



# SISTER DISTRICT: POLITICAL STRATEGY

**Blue Flips:** Chambers where maps provide Democrats with the opportunity to compete for a legislative majority

**Blue Holds:** Chambers where Democrats have a fragile majority that is in jeopardy of flipping red

**Blue Inroads:** Chambers where Democrats unlikely to flip in short-term, but where we must hold the line and position ourselves for future successes



# SISTER DISTRICT: POLITICAL STRATEGY

## Mix of Chambers + Seats Changes Each Year:

- Schedule of state legislative elections
- Shifting composition of chambers
- Broader electoral opportunities



# SISTER DISTRICT: WHERE WE'VE BEEN

- **2017:** Flipped WA Senate blue; held DE Senate; brought VA House within 1 seat of flipping blue
- **2018:** Flipped CO and ME Senates; held WA and DE Senates; broke GOP supermajorities in MI and PA Senates
- **2019:** Flipped both VA Senate and House
- **2020:** Only flips in NC House, WI Assembly, TX House, PA House, AZ House
- **2021:** Lost VA House in tight red flip (633 votes in 3 districts)

# SISTER DISTRICT: WHERE WE'VE BEEN - 2022

- **New Democratic Trifectas:**
  - MA, MN, MD, MI
- **New Chamber Majorities:**
  - MI House, MI Senate, PA House, MN Senate
- **New Governing Coalition:**
  - AK Senate
- **Held (Fragile) Majorities:**
  - NV, OR, CO, NM, ME
- **New/Protected Supermajorities:**
  - VT, DE, NV
- **Gov Veto Protected:**
  - WI; NC

# SISTER DISTRICT: WHERE WE'VE BEEN - 2022

- **Surge & Decline**
  - Since 2004: Pres party lost at least 8% state leg seats in battleground chambers in midterms
  - Heading into 2022 with historical headwinds
  - 2022: First election since 1934 Pres party hasn't lost a state legislative chamber in a midterm.
- **State Leg Shifts (net, not gross)**
  - In '10 - GOP gained ~700 seats
  - In '14 - GOP gained ~250 seats
  - In '18 - Dems gained 300+ seats
  - \*\*In '20 - GOP gained ~150 seats\*\*
  - In '22 - GOP gained ~25 seats

# SISTER DISTRICT: WHERE WE'VE BEEN - 2022

## Small Margins for Success

- WI Assembly - 2,993 votes in 4 seats kept GOP from supermajority (0.12% of total Assembly votes)
- MI Senate - 404 votes in 1 seat won the chamber (0.009% of total Senate votes)
- MI House - 765 votes in 1 seat won the chamber (0.02% of total House votes)
- PA House - 63 votes in 1 seat won the chamber (0.001% of total House votes)
- NC House - 629 votes in 1 seat kept GOP from supermajority (0.02% of total House votes)





# 2023: POLITICAL STRATEGY



# 2023: POLITICAL STRATEGY

## Big Picture - Good Political Environment

- Historic midterm performance
- Down-ballot roll-off and enthusiasm gaps
- Virginia as GOP enthusiasm barometer
- Redistricting: heterogeneous landscape
- Better political environment than 2021, fair maps in VA
- Different states, different contexts



# 2023: POLITICAL STRATEGY

- **Virginia:** Flip the House and expand the Democratic Senate majority
- **Mississippi:** Create inroads in competitive districts
- **Louisiana:** Create inroads in competitive districts
- **Special Elections:** Endorse in special state legislative elections when strategically appropriate

# 2023: POLITICAL STRATEGY: VIRGINIA

- Senate - blue hold (22D/18R = D can only lose 1)
- House - blue flip (48D/52R = 3 seats to flip)
  - Dems lost House in 2021 by 633 votes in 3 districts
- No gubernatorial or statewide elections
- Imperfect but fair legislative maps
  - Retirements and open seats
- 2022: Democrats lost one Congressional seat
- 2023: Democrats won key special elections - Jennifer McClellan (CD4), Aaron Rouse (SD7)



# 2023: POLITICAL STRATEGY: MISSISSIPPI

- Senate - blue inroads (15D/36R/1I)
- House - blue inroads (45D/72R/2I)
- Gubernatorial and statewide elections
- Legislative maps are further gerrymanders



# 2023: POLITICAL STRATEGY: LOUISIANA

- Senate - blue inroads (12D/27R)
- House - blue inroads (34D/69R/2I)
- Open Gubernatorial and other statewide elections
- Legislative maps are further gerrymanders



# 2024 PREVIEW

## **Blue Flips - Dems have opportunity to compete for a majority**

- AZ House & Senate; PA Senate

## **Blue Hold - Fragile Democratic majorities**

- PA House; MI Senate & House; NV Senate & House; MN House & Senate

## **Blue Inroads - Holding the line & preventing superminorities**

- Wisconsin; Georgia; North Carolina



# 2024 PREVIEW

- **States:**
  - **Presidential battlegrounds**
  - **Competitive Senate races**
  - **Gubernatorial elections**
- **Districts:**
  - **Nested in Competitive Congressionals**
  - **Open seats**
  - **Fragile incumbents**
- **Candidates:**
  - **Inspiring and reflective**
  - **Ready to run hard and win**





# THE YEAR AHEAD IN 2023

## Exact seats and chamber selection:

- Candidate recruitment and filing deadlines
- Internal resources & volunteer capacity

## We are already hard at work:

- Data analysis, trends and trajectories
- Local and national grassroots, electoral and advocacy organizations
- Electeds and other stakeholders

## Endorsement Timeline:

- Wave 1: Late April; Wave 2: June



**THANK YOU!**