

TO: Chairman Steve Israel  
FR: Kelly, Jesse and DCCC Senior Staff  
DATE: Friday, June 7, 2013  
RE: DCCC Theories of the Case for 2013-14

---

This memo outlines the “Theories of the Case”– our guideposts for the 2014 cycle and the foundation from which we will define our strategic imperatives at DCCC. We have 8 key guiding theories around which we will orient our work this cycle, and the DCCC senior staff has spent a great deal of work developing the strategies and tactics needed to be successful. By defining our theories of the case in this way, we can help orient our work away from ideas which are interesting – and often tempting targets for focus – but don’t address these overarching strategic imperatives that affect our ability to be successful this cycle.

These are the 8 guiding “Theories of the Case” for the 2014 cycle:

1. We do not have to raise less money just because it’s a non-Presidential election year
2. Coordinated-side activities are the Committee’s comparative advantage
3. Our most critical voters don’t have to drop off in a non-Presidential year
4. The Obama Campaign produced new knowledge that can benefit House races
5. This cycle is hand-to-hand combat: we have to win each race
6. But...we should be ready for a wave
7. 2012 was about Obama, 2014 is about House Republicans
8. We must stay one step ahead: Republicans will up their game; we must, too

**1. We do not have to raise less money just because it’s a non-Presidential election year.**

We believe we can and must continue the successful fundraising trajectory for the DCCC and raise as much as – if not more than – we raised in the 2012 Presidential cycle. Despite the lack of the Presidential-election to drive donor enthusiasm, we proved in Q1 that we can still set record fundraising numbers. We must:

- Take advantage of newly-available federally maxed donors who are no longer focused on the Presidential race.
- Hire DCCC fundraising staff earlier than ever before and keep more from the previous cycle.
- Leverage the 49 newly-elected Democratic Members to contribute and raise.
- Raise and expand the Chairman’s profile to increase his ability to raise.
- Limit debt--and pay remaining debt earlier--to make sure it doesn’t discourage donors.
- Invest in online infrastructure, list-building, and testing and optimization (for both online and direct marketing) to ensure success.
- Cut fundraising, direct mail and event costs to net more in fundraising.
- Successfully service Democratic Members and engage Ranking Members to increase dues participation.
- Leverage POTUS (and FLOTUS/VPOTUS) fundraising events for the DCCC now that he is available and willing.

## **2. Coordinated-side activities are the Committee's comparative advantage.**

Given the growth of outside groups (c4 and SuperPAC), the DCCC's comparative strength is in our coordinated-side activity, which is the non-IE activity on which we can coordinate with campaigns. While we need our IE budget to remain competitive, this is a comparative advantage for us because 1) the committees are the only groups that can engage in coordinated-side activity with campaigns, and 2) campaigns are the only ones who can receive lowest unit rate (LUR) for television. This means we need to:

- Recruit strong candidates who fit their districts. No one else will do that as effectively as us.
- Successfully and aggressively raise money directly for candidates so they can take advantage of lowest unit rates.
- Engage in list swaps, direct mail and candidate email programs to raise money directly for campaigns.
- Expand our online team's capacity to directly help campaigns with their online programs.
- Ensure candidates have the resources to deliver the message directly on television, typically the most effective type of spots.
- Take as many expenses off campaign budgets as possible to leave resources available for LUR television, including: splitting the costs of polls and trackers, providing targeting and modeling data, conducting hybrid advertising and doing research books.
- Explore with our legal team other innovations to leverage the DCCC coordinated activity.
- Support endangered incumbents with expansive political, communications, research and policy support.
- Partner with coordinated allies to define Republican targets in the earned media before paid media begins.
- Work with incumbent offices early to bank headlines on their positive work for future paid communication.

## **3. Our most critical voters don't have to drop off in a non-Presidential year.**

If turnout in 2014 falls back to 2010 levels, we know we can't be successful. While the youth vote was 18 percent of the electorate in 2008 and 19 percent in 2012, it was only 12 percent in 2010. Similar statistics hold true for African Americans, Hispanics and unmarried women, the key base voters we need to win. To prevent drop-off we will:

- Expand our targeting capacity to identify these critically important voters.
- Utilize new paid outreach methods like online/digital advertising and text messaging to engage these voters who are otherwise difficult to contact
- Build a voter registration program in early 2014, in partnership with allies.
- Encourage incumbents to leverage all resources available to reach out to these critical demographics.
- Conduct message research (off- and on-year polling) and experiments to find compelling narratives that are not only persuasive to swing voters, but also motivate the potential drop-off voters.
- Use the DCCC online lists to build a volunteer base for our field programs around the country.

- Identify the critical drop-off target districts early and build early capacity to engage these voters, in coordination with state parties.
- Test and experiment with tactics, messages and timelines to reach these voters.
- Explore new vendors offering outreach ideas and learn from the experience in the 2013 off-year races (especially Virginia) and special elections where they tackle this challenge post-2012.

#### **4. The Obama Campaign produced new knowledge that can benefit House races.**

Without a doubt, the 2012 Obama campaign was the most innovative in modern times on field organizing, online outreach, media outreach, data collection and the like. The key question for us is which of these innovations are applicable at the House level – with fewer resources and a smaller universe to which we can appeal. We must:

- Explore, and likely implement, a solution modeled after the Optimizer from the Obama campaign to optimize cable buying and reach critical targeted voters.
- Develop and understand the best outputs on our field program, mail program, and media buying. We may need to evaluate our impact on other metrics besides doors knocked and GRPs purchased.
- Heavily emphasize trainings of campaign and party staff and develop systems to share best practices across the country.
- Create different and specific targeted outreach in communities of color, incorporating feedback from the CHC, CBC and CAPAC about ways to best engage their communities
- Invest in field data and expand targeting capacity.
- Optimize our online program with testing, list building and other Obama campaign tactics.
- Replicate Obama campaign communications efforts – making the race about the Republican opponent locally and the Republican Congress nationally just like they did with Romney.
- Use Obama’s data infrastructure, to the extent we can gain access.
- Integrate all DCCC data – field, donors, online, direct mail – to make all our data smarter.
- Be the first Committee pushing/expecting/requiring consultants to follow Obama campaign best practices.
- Leverage POTUS/FLOTUS/VPOTUS and POTUS 2012 team for campaign support and expertise.

#### **5. This is hand-to-hand combat: we have to win each race.**

With 18 months until the election, we cannot expect a wave election – instead we need to expect local races fought out in 50/50 districts. This puts a premium on understanding the districts and implementing a customized, winning strategy for each one. We must:

- Hold staff and consultant post-mortem evaluations of the 2012 elections and weekly drill-downs in the off-year to develop district-specific strategies to win.
- Focus on the local press – op-eds, weekly newspapers, regional radio, and even campus and community newsletters – to land hits on Republican incumbents.
- Prioritize personalized hits rather than generic ones.

- Implement extensive tracking programs on targeted Republicans.
- Ensure campaigns have the coordinated-side resources needed to win.
- Land early research hits that take time to develop (i.e. unpaid taxes.)
- Define Republican incumbents and candidates locally.
- Recruit strong candidates who can win in one-on-one contests.
- Force tough votes for Republicans that are politically perilous at the local level.

#### **6. But... We should be ready for a wave.**

While we can't expect a wave, we have to build a strategy that can take advantage of one if it builds in 2014. We must:

- Employ early survey research (polling and IVRs) across the country to find districts that expand the map.
- Dig into the data and targeting to identify characteristics of potentially competitive districts (eg socioeconomic status, education levels).
- Define the brand of the Republican Congress and keep driving their approval ever lower.
- Recruit deep into the map to ensure races can be competitive if the environment allows.
- Develop a path to victory in races that seem to be initially uncompetitive.
- Recruit and train top talent staff for all campaigns—not just our top-tier races.
- Run rapid response operation about the Republican Congress.
- Partner with leadership to push the larger narrative about the Republican Congress.
- Prepare Democratic incumbents – beyond the Frontline list – in case it's a wave against us.

#### **7. 2012 was about Obama, 2014 is about House Republicans.**

While the national political debate in 2012 was about the Presidential race, this time it's about Congressional races. This presents opportunities for innovations and the oxygen to shape a message, as well as a responsibility to coordinate with our allies. We must:

- Keep the public focused on the obstruction of House Republicans.
- Conduct off-year research to develop a message for DCCC, Members and allies.
- Partner with outside groups who are interested in 2014 (but were focused on Obama in 2012).
- Be the first mover on innovations and leverage our role in the marketplace. For example, encourage consultants to use best practices on budgeting, ad testing, online ad buys, and digital advertising.
- Use legislation and votes to define the Republican Congress.
- Manage chattering class and create echo chamber about our success.
- Maintain public focus on the House—do not let the Senate dominate. Simultaneously, wrap the Republican brand around all of the Republicans in Congress, including the Senate.
- Partner with outside groups to hold House Republicans accountable.
- Recruit the best staff since they're available in a non-presidential year.

**8. We must stay one step ahead: Republicans will up their game; we must, too.**

Republicans have already telegraphed that they plan to run a smarter campaign in 2014 than they did in 2012, including increasing their online activity, expanding oversight of polling, developing smarter messaging to critical groups (e.g. women), and more aggressively recruiting good candidates. We must continue to stay one step ahead, and:

- Invest in data infrastructure, online list building and opposition research.
- Improve ad buying and targeting.
- Develop data-driven metrics for all aspects of campaigns.
- Improve accuracy of polling and IVRs.
- Share best practices and innovations with campaigns.
- Strengthen DCCC internal operations with new database, more robust systems and budgeting.
- Improve information sharing with outside groups.
- Find efficiencies and cut spending to maximize campaign budgets.
- Recruit and hire the best possible staff.
- Work with legal team to explore new innovations that improve DCCC opportunities, functions and/or efficiencies.

In addition to these Theories of the Case, it is important to note that there are several important factors outside of our control that will have major impacts on our prospects this cycle. We have identified the key ones because they must be monitored:

- The outcome of redistricting in Texas and Florida
- The outcome of the Supreme Court's case on the Voting Rights Act
- The involvement of POTUS and OFA in the 2014 elections
- WH implementation of Obamacare
- The role of 2016 Presidential candidates campaigning in 2014
- The outcome of the 2013 Virginia off-year campaigns
- The result of major legislative battles like gun violence, immigration, the budget, etc.

The theories and tactics outlined above will provide a guiding framework for the next 18 months until Election Day.