Leslie Leavoy
MC 4515—Goidel
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Election Strategy paper

For the 2012 presidential election, I will be representing a Democratic candidate working toward 270 electoral votes. Looking at websites such as RealClearPolitics.com and CookPolitical.com, tables and graphs neatly outline competitive states for the 2012 presidential election. To evaluate where I would like to put money and time, I listed all states and how each site, Real Clear Politics and Cook Political, categorized them as voting, how the state voted in the 2008 presidential election, the state's average income, average education level, and the unemployment rate for that state. Real Clear Politics and the Cook Political Report are two websites that are well-known and highly trusted for their analysis of political campaigns and polling. In addition, I feel it is vital to know each state's education and income levels, as well as unemployment rates as these statistics are used to make inferences about the citizens' attitudes toward the current political atmosphere and are part of the social identities that determine how a citizen chooses to vote.

Looking at the attached excel spreadsheet, I compiled all this information and decided where I wanted to spend time or money based on my criteria. In the column listed "Categorized by RCP," they categories listed on RealClearPolitics.com are titled based on the current 2012 candidates, Obama and Romney. For the purposes of this paper, we can assume that Obama's states are parallel to my candidate's states, and Romney's are parallel to a Republican opponent's states. I also color coded each category for quicker comprehension of the information. For information on how each state voted in 2008, I looked at an electoral map at NPR's website. For information on income, education, and unemployment rate I used the 2010

Average Median Household Income by State from the US Census, the 2009 Statistical Abstract of Educational Attainment by State from the US Census, and the Seasonally Adjusted Percentages for March 2012 from the Bureau for Labor Statistics, respectively.

Based on all this information, I also looked at the "2008 Presidential Vote by Social Group" table in the *Campaigns & Elections* textbook to put the numbers in context and decide for which candidate the state would most likely vote. (Sides, 348-349) As a result, I am considering the following states as a guaranteed vote for a Democratic candidate: California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

In these states, I want to spend about $5 million per state and one day per state because a candidate must reinforce and energize his base in order to motivate the swing voters to vote for him as well. In terms of media markets, I want to target smaller cities in those states and their media markets for reinforcement advertising on television and radio; it makes more sense to spend less money in smaller media markets in states that are planning to vote your way regardless. I don't think direct mail is a top priority for my campaign in these states, as we can allocate more funds for direct mail and targeting in key battleground states. These states have voted for a Democrat during numerous election cycles, and current polling and social identity data reveal that that tradition is likely to continue.

In terms of messaging for these states, my goal is to reinforce their voting and energize the core Democratic base. I plan to construct my messages around the candidate's election theme and focus on how his platforms and beliefs will mirror citizens' beliefs. I also plan to have some

contrasting messages, comparing my candidate to the opponent in a more positive light, making him the clear choice for president.

For states that I will be targeting as key battleground states, or states that are barely leaning Democratic, I chose the following for my focus: Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. These states I am considering as battleground states, but I believe the Democratic candidate will win them come Election Day. For these states, I want to spend about $15 million per state and appear about three times in Oregon, New Hampshire, Minnesota, Colorado, and Wisconsin, and five times in Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. The first five states will need some face time, but the second set of states is considered more competitive, and will need more appearances. These states will need stronger messaging and appearances in order to persuade them to indeed vote the direction they are leaning.

In terms of messaging, targeting based on social groups is crucial in states whose vote choices are teetering. I want to push job creation, importance of middle class, and sustainability in the Midwestern states and East Coast states. For places like New Mexico and Nevada, my messages will target Latino voters, as well as lower middle class families. Oregon is a tricky state socially, but I plan to push job creation as well as security for the middle class here as well. For all these states, my messages will contain statements about civil liberties as well as socially liberal issues; I believe these messages will further confirm their desire to vote for a Democrat. It will also be important to push attack ads closer to the end of the campaign in these states: the strategy of hitting heavy at the end will prevent the opposition from having enough time to respond.

Lastly, I consider these states as states that will probably vote Republican, but we must have a strong attack presence, as we are the underdog: Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Missouri, and Virginia. Here, I plan to spend about $16 million in each state on television, radio, and direct mail blasts attacking the opposing candidate and targeted mail based on social identity I plan to target Latinos in Arizona and Florida, as well as middle class and job creation in Indiana, Missouri, and Virginia. Also, I plan to target the younger, more liberal population in these states, as they could sway the vote in our favor. In terms of appearing in these states, my candidate should appear about seven times in Arizona, Florida and Missouri, and six times in Indiana and Virginia. These appearance amounts are based on the competitiveness of the race in each state, as well as the need to push the state in the opposite party direction than predicted. Virginia is an odd one here. At first glance, one would see a low unemployment rate and a Democratic vote in 2008 as a sure sign of a guaranteed vote. However, polling in favor of the Republican Party is rising in the Southern state, causing a possible party shift. This competitiveness places a Democrat as the underdog in this state.

As an aside, it is always important to consider the real life realities of the current political environment. The incumbent president, a Democrat, is facing low approval ratings compared to past incumbent presidents at this point of the re-election cycle. Approval ratings below 50 percent when up for re-election is a vulnerable point to be in, not to mention a sporadic economy, high unemployment rates, an unpopular healthcare policy, and a climbing national deficit. All these things will contribute to the current president's vulnerability in the upcoming election, and as my candidate is a Democrat, the situations are parallel. However, targeting young and minority voters by motivating them to rise up and act for change (like in 2008), as well as promoting the death of Osama bin Laden and a decline in conflict overseas, a Democratic

candidate can promote high voter turnout among those that are usually less likely to vote, and promote issues usually "owned by Republicans," compensating for less-than-spectacular domestic issues.

If these states vote in the way I predicted, combined with the reality of the current political climate, the Democratic candidate will win the presidential election with 316 Electoral College votes to his Republican opponent's 222 Electoral College votes.

Switching angles, as a member of the Democratic Party looking to target competitive Congressional races, I compiled spreadsheets for the upcoming U.S. Senatorial and House elections. For the Senate, I compared and listed analysis from the Cook Political Report, and Real Clear Politics, as well as the possible opponents and current polling in terms of which candidate (or party) is ahead at this point in the election cycle that were listed on each site. Filing for most states is not until June, so many states are still in limbo as far as having legitimate, declared candidates. For the purposes of the spreadsheet, I listed the opponents who, as of now, are leading in primary polls and who I consider to be the most qualified. After compiling this information, I matched races that both sites considered key target races, which are color coded depending on if I want to fund a quality challenger or protect an incumbent Democrat. From here, I looked back at my information from my spreadsheet of the presidential race, looking at unemployment rate, income level and my predictions of how they state will vote in the presidential race in November.

Again, the current political realities must be considered. Candidates for the United States Senate must be aware of the national issues previously mentioned, as well as state issues. The Senate, as the most visible body of the Congress with longer terms must present themselves as

viable candidates that can adequately represent their state as well as fight for their party's platform on a national stage. In terms of messaging, it will be important to take national issues such as the economy, healthcare, and foreign policy and put them in context of a statewide election—showing their constituents they can represent their core values and beliefs on a national stage is key to a victory.

With this information in hand, I am considering the following states as competitive races for the United States Senate where I want to spend $55 million of my $100 million budget: Connecticut, Hawaii, Michigan, Ohio, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Beginning with Connecticut, this senate seat has been vacated by incumbent Joe Lieberman, an independent who has caucused with the Senate Democrats. According to Cook and Real Clear Politics, likely contenders for this race include Democrat Chris Murphy, U.S. Representative for Connecticut's 5th district against Republican Linda McMahon, who was the Republican nominee in 2010. Looking at available polling, Murphy seems to be up in the polls by 11 points; therefore, I see him as a viable challenger for this open seat and a candidate I would like to support. Connecticut is an inherently liberal state, with high approval ratings for Lieberman, so Murphy has a good shot here.

For Hawaii, this is also an open seat, vacated by Democratic Senator Daniel Akaka. Likely contenders include Democratic U.S. Representative Mazie Hirono, who is leading in the primary polls, against former Republican Governor Linda Lingle. As of now, Democrats as a party are leading in polls against Gov. Lingle, and Hawaii is likely to vote Democrat in the

presidential election. I would like to fund Hirono's candidacy as a quality challenger who has a good chance of beating Lingle in the general election.

Michigan is considered a battleground state in the upcoming presidential election and as a result, the Senate seat up for election is as well. Democratic incumbent Debbie Stabenow is up for re-election for a possible third term against likely Republican candidate Pete Hoekstra. This race is interesting because Hoekstra aired the infamous ad in Michigan during the 2012 Super Bowl which showed an Asian woman mocking the incumbent's position on government spending. This highly controversial ad gave Hoekstra an immense amount of negative backlash, and as the Democratic Party, I want to build on that. Protecting Stabenow as a viable incumbent is important and will ensure an easy victory.

The Senate race in Ohio is also a close race that requires money to protect Democratic incumbent Sherrod Brown, who is running against Ohio State Treasurer Josh Mandel. In all polling so far, Brown has a slight lead, and will need protection from the party to ensure a win for a second term. The previous four states are "Leaning Democratic," which I view as states worth paying attention to in order to protect seats in Congress, but as a party can be generally optimistic about winning.

The next races are considered true "Toss Up" races with about three races needing protection for incumbents and seven races needing funding for quality challengers in hopes of overtaking the seat or winning an open seat for the Democratic Party. In Florida, incumbent Bill Nelson is leading in the polls against possible Republican opponent Connie Mack IV. This race is going to be a close one as Florida is leaning toward a Republican vote in the presidential race and the other senator, Marco Rubio, is a favorite for the vice presidential nominee of presidential

candidate Mitt Romney. The southern state is growing more and more Republican, but Nelson is up in polls by eight points, so protecting Senator Nelson is vital. Likewise, in Missouri, Democratic incumbent Claire McCaskill is in need of protection from the party as her likely Republican opponent, Sarah Steelman is currently ahead three points in the polls. Both are qualified candidates, but McCaskill is vulnerable with Missouri being a battleground state for the presidential election and having established a conservative image by giving their delegates to presidential hopeful Rick Santorum before he ducked out of the race. Surprisingly, a competitive race is also occurring in Montana, with Democratic incumbent Jon Tester pitted against likely Republican candidate Denny Rehberg, who has been elected to many public offices in the past. Currently, Rehberg is up three points, so Tester is in need of funding from the party to help his chances.

Two toss up states have open Senate seats: Virginia and Wisconsin. Both are being vacated by Democratic incumbents, so protection from the party to keep these seats Democratic is vital. In Virginia, the open Senate seat is vulnerable as it is currently favoring likely Republican candidate and former U.S. Senator and Governor George Allen. Former Governor of Virginia Tim Kaine is the declared Democratic candidate and in current polling, is barely keeping his head above water. As this is a key battleground state for the presidential race, special attention must be given to Virginia. For Wisconsin, this open seat is favoring likely Republican candidate Tommy Thompson, former governor and former Secretary of Health and Human Services. The Democratic contender is Tammy Baldwin, current U.S. Representative. Wisconsin is also a key battleground state for the presidential race and should also be pushed as an important race for Senatorial funding.

Lastly, Arizona, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska and Nevada are states that are either considered toss ups or "Likely Republican," but should still get some attention from the Democratic Party to find quality challengers to foster a close race or upset. Arizona has an open seat with Republican incumbent Jon Kyl retiring. Currently, Republican U.S. Representative Jeff Flake is popular to run against Democratic candidate and former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona. Rep. Flake is currently ahead in the battleground state, which is leaning toward the Republican vote for the presidential race in November. In Maine, Senator Olympia Snowe is retiring, with likely Republican candidate Charles E. Summers, Jr., Secretary of State vying for the seat against likely Democratic candidate Matthew Dunlap, former Secretary of State and Angus King, Independent and former Governor of Maine. King is up by a whopping 34 points in the polls and it could be a good idea to back him if he plans to caucus with the Democrats. If not, Dunlap will need support to come back in the polls as he is the biggest underdog. Massachusetts is seeing a close race with Republican Scott Brown looking to be re-elected against likely Democratic candidate Elizabeth Warren who is highly qualified. Brown took the seat after Sen. .Ted Kennedy died and is leading by a mere one point in the polls. Warren has the chance to regain this seat for the Democrats with sufficient party funding. In Nevada, incumbent Republican Senator Dean Heller, who was appointed to the Senate seat after Sen. Ensign resigned, is running for his first full term against Representative Shelley Berkley, a Democrat. Currently, Heller is up three points in polls, but Berkley could have the chance at an upset as a current public official and with sufficient party funding. Finally, Nebraska is facing a close Senate race with an open Democratic seat vacated by Ben Nelson. Currently, likely contenders include Republican Jon Bruning, Attorney General and leader of current polls and Democrat Bob

Kerrey, former U.S. Senator. As a former Senator, Kerrey has a chance in the competitive race and can turn the tables with the help of the party as the election draws near.

To summarize, with my explanations of the likely competitive Senate races, along with successful Democratic victories in toss up states and seats not up for term limits, my prediction of the partisan change in the Senate adds up to 51 seats for the Democrats, and 49 for the Republicans, meaning the Democrats would control the Senate.

Looking at the 2012 House races, I again looked at listings on Real Clear Politics and Cook Political Report, I compiled competitive races and highlighted the corresponding race in each list. These mutual listings started my own list for possible competitive races that I would like to target to put $45 million of my remaining party budget to help Democrats in the general elections. I researched each district and the likely candidates for each, deciding the likelihood of the seat going to a particular party. Finally, I predicted the direction each of the following sixteen competitive district races along with if I would be protecting an incumbent, or pushing for a partisan shift. Either way, with current "safe seats," and my calculations, Democrats would have to win 46 seats in the upcoming election to gain control of the House; I am only predicting the party wins 41 seats, putting the party just five seats below the majority number of 218. Nonetheless, these are district races I am considering funding as the party, along with analysis of grouping them according to "protecting incumbents" and "pushing for a "party shift."

In terms of messaging the United States House candidates must pay attention to national issues, but they are seen as more local, as they represent smaller districts. The candidates for House are more accessible in this way and thus, grassroots organization is vital in these races. Face-to-face contact will make all the difference in these close races, as well as smart campaign fundraising and messaging in TV and radio spots. Making sure the candidates personalize their

message to their constituents will also help them in the primaries and general elections. My remaining $45 million will aide in these efforts, as well as allocating funds for possible attack ads, appearances, and campaign literature, such as push cards, which are very popular in local elections.

I grouped the following district races into races I think are likely to go Democrat, specifically, incumbents I would like to put money toward to protect: IL-11, CA-41, NC-8, GA-12, and UT-4. I believe these incumbents have steady polling numbers, all are currently ahead in numerous polls, and are in strong Democratic states, districts that have a democratic-voting background, or battleground states that are leaning Democrat in the upcoming presidential election. In addition, likely Republican opponents are battling it out in the primaries, which will give us some time to form financial backing and strategic messaging for the incumbents for the general elections.

The other group, "pushing for partisan switch," includes the following districts that our party will be putting money into in hopes of overturning the currently-favored Republican seat in favor of Democrats: CA-31, IN-2, IL-7, OK-2, IL-10, FL-22, IL-12, NC-7, CA-7, NV-3, and MN-8. These districts are currently favoring likely Republican candidates for open seats, or Republican incumbents. With the current political environment, one would think Republican incumbents would not be vulnerable, but the polling gaps are small and with sufficient funding from the party to find a quality challenger that can uproot Republicans, Democrats can come out on top in these districts. On my spreadsheet, I listed the possible Democratic opponents in these races, which I would happily fund during the general elections once they successfully one their respective primaries. These possible candidates were found on uselections.com, along with basic

background information that further helped my decision in picking a viable candidate to possibly beat the Republicans.

Like I said, the Democrats are narrowly missing the majority line with my predictions, but the Democrats will still have a heavy presence in the United States House with 213 seats.