



INCREASING CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT BY 50%

Resistance Labs' 2018 Texas
"Contest Every Race" Campaign

www.resistancelabs.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Resistance Labs' "Contest Every Race" program uses peer-to-peer texting on the Hustle platform, in partnership with state and county Democratic party officials and other organizations, to recruit candidates for local elected offices such as state legislature, city council, school board, and precinct committee member. We focus on Democratic activists, recruiting them for races in which no other Democrat is running.

During the summer of 2018, we conducted this work in Kansas, Florida, and Texas. This report covers our work in Texas during July and August, ahead of Texas' August 20th filing deadline for hundreds of school board, city council, and mayoral races.

Our campaign recruited 27 candidates in Texas and achieved results 50% better than a control group.

Specifically, we texted just under 60,000 individuals in Texas. 27 of them successfully filed to run for office, according to our search of official filing records.

We also reserved a control group, excluding nearly 30,000 individuals from the same source lists, randomly selected at the county level. We found 9 individuals from the control group in the official candidate filing records.

After accounting for the 2x difference in list size between intervention and control, that's a 50% difference in impact.

Moving forward, we recommend expanding this program, reaching out to County Party chairs shortly after the November 2018 election, and improving the data quality of lists.

RACES TARGETED

We targeted 478 elected offices (school board, city council, and mayoral seats) across [nearly 300 jurisdictions](#) (school boards and municipalities) in 125 counties.

We took these steps to target only races where no Democrat appeared to be running:

- State Democratic party leaders convened a conference call among county party chairs statewide, introducing our program and inviting county chairs to indicate in a spreadsheet which races had a candidate vs. which races needed one.
- State party leaders also emailed this info request to county chairs.
- In most cases, county chairs did not respond, so we targeted races with Republican incumbents (based on research compiled by the state Democratic party).
- We took several steps, described below, to put county Democratic party chairs in touch with prospective candidates, to steer them toward uncontested races.

LISTS

We bought lists from voter file vendors (TargetSmart, Catalist, and L2) that matched our targeted race geographies as closely as possible. We bought names with active cell phones and the highest available Democratic partisanship score (a metric provided by list vendors). However, high-scoring Democrats were often in short supply in our target geographies, which is not surprising since these were areas where local offices were held by Republicans, with no Democratic challenger. As a result, many of the names we bought had no clear party preference; this was often the only option.

In Texas, many of our down-ballot geographic territories (school board and city council district boundaries) were more granular and irregular than geographies more commonly sold by voter file vendors (such as counties, cities, and state legislative districts). Among our three vendors, only TargetSmart offered the fine

targeting we needed. So we bought most (60%) of our Texas lists from TargetSmart. But TargetSmart was unexpectedly and significantly delayed in fulfilling our complex order during the busy election season. Triaging under the resulting time pressure, we quickly bought 40% of our lists from other vendors that offered far less exact targeting, in order to have immediate geographic coverage for a key element of our campaign with fixed calendar dates: scheduled receptions with county Democratic party chairs (described below).

We bought and texted 57,923 names overall, including:

- 35,133 names from TargetSmart
- 14,185 names from Catalist
- 8,605 names from L2

Analysis of the [relative performance of those lists](#) shows that the TargetSmart list outperformed our control group and the L2 list by up to 90%.

CONTROLLED EXPERIMENT METHODOLOGY

We ran a controlled experiment in Texas to measure the attributable impact of our program.

With extensive input from a team of statistical experts led by Micah Gell-Redman at the University of Georgia (referred by the Analyst Institute), we designated a control group randomly separated from the intervention group at the individual level.

Specifically, for every 10 names we bought and texted (enumerated above) in our intervention group, we also bought 5 additional names to withhold from our program as a control group. We multiplied the overall amount of our buy in every geographic sub-territory by 1.5 to support this. We then applied a random number to each name we purchased, sorted the list by the random number, and separated the bottom 1/3 of randomly numbered names into our control group. We repeated this process in each county, in each list we bought.

With this method, we separated 28,961 names into our control group, and sent no texts to them.

CAMPAIGN CONTENT

After excluding our control group, we sent an initial text to the ~60,000 individuals in our intervention group. This initial text asked:

Hi {{Contact Name}}, I'm {{Agent Name}}, a volunteer w/ the Texas Democratic Party. You live in a town or a school district where we're looking for a candidate to run for local office. Would you like information on how to run?

Nearly 1,000 recipients who replied “yes”, “maybe”, “tell me more”, etc., then received a series of texts featuring these resources:

- An informal reception with their county Democratic party chair: we set up [40 such meetings](#) in counties with targeted races. (Please see next section for more info.)
- The Texas Democratic party's [Project LIFT](#) supporting first-time candidates.
- Run For Something's Texas planning [checklist](#), and their [training program](#) for candidates under 40.
- The National Democratic Training Committee's free online candidate training [course](#).
- Specific info on the races that needed a Dem candidate, local to the recipient.
- Brief [overviews](#) of these offices' responsibilities and how to run for them.
- Exact details on [how to file](#) for these specific races, including links to forms, filing office address, filing requirements including ID, notarization, and fee if any, and deadline.
- Commitments that Resistance Labs will support candidates who file by texting their voters and by sending volunteers to support their campaign.
- A nudge to contact their county party chair in case they missed the reception, and contact info for a state party official as a fallback.
- A closing motivational video conference with an elected official, [Candice Quarles](#), including Q & A on how to run a successful campaign..
- Two deadline reminders, sent the Friday and Sunday before the Monday deadline.

The exact series of texts is appended below.

COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIRS

A key feature of our campaign is connecting prospective candidates with their county Democratic party chairperson. County chairs are uniquely positioned to complement our text outreach with local knowledge and presence.

Contact with county party chairs provides our prospective candidates with:

- A local, official contact with a human face.
- Local knowledge and guidance as to where a candidate might fare best.
- Encouragement and other informal support.

Contact with prospective candidates gives county chairs an opportunity to assess their strengths, to guide them toward uncontested races where they can be most impactful, and to let us know of any concerns the chairs may have about a prospective candidate's viability.

We put county chairs and prospective candidates in touch with each other by:

- Setting up 40 receptions -- informal, drop-in meeting opportunities -- with county chairs, at a time and place of the chair's choosing, and publicizing these receptions to all prospective candidates in the county, via text.
- Emailing complete lists of interested prospective candidates in each county to the county chair, and texting chairs to check their email for this info.
- Sending the county chair's contact info to the prospective candidate, via text.

After very few county party chairs responded to our initial outreach via the state party, we invested a full week of staff time calling them individually, securing the 40 receptions.

It appears that our receptions with county chairs made a difference. In our intervention group, 20 of the 27 officially filed candidates were in reception counties. However, we weighted our buy 2:1 to emphasize reception counties; correcting for that, the ratio of reception filers to non-reception filers is 20:14 or 10:7, **a respectable difference of +42%, echoing our +50% top-line results.**

For comparison, in our control group, 6 of the 9 officially filed candidates were in reception counties. After the same weighting correction described in the executive summary above, the result is an even 6:6 in the control group, as one would expect with no intervention.

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

The Texas Democratic party was our most important partner. Drew Turney with the state party was an invaluable ally: he had previously compiled an extensive list of school board and municipal races, including party info on ~90% of incumbents; this list was a key time-saver and the basis for our race targeting in the absence of up-front info from most county chairs. Drew runs Project LIFT, which provides extensive support resources for local candidates in Texas; we featured links to this program during our campaign. Drew was also instrumental in connecting us with Texas' county party chairs, he made himself available as a resource for any prospective candidates who were not responsive to our prospective candidates, and he recruited our closing speaker, Candice Quarles. Cliff Walker, the state party political director, also provided key support, as did state party chair Gilberto Hinojosa.

40 county Democratic party chairs partnered with us to host receptions with prospective candidates, described above. They represented a broad and diverse cross section of counties throughout the state and put in significant time reaching out to our prospective candidates, helping them assess potential candidacy, and encouraging them to file.

Run for Something. RfS provides training and support to first time candidates under 40 years old. We presented their program to 228 prospective candidates under 40, 7 of whom signed up. We shared their checklist with all our prospective candidates. We also ran a custom version of our recruitment campaign for 47 existing participants in RfS' program in Texas.

National Democratic Training Institute. We provided a link to NDTI's outstanding training program as a key feature of our campaign.

ResistBot is another major activist texting platform we collaborate with often. ResistBot operates on a centralized opt-in model, rather than with peer-to-peer texts to purchased lists as we do. We provided a streamlined version of our text campaign content to ResistBot, and they sent it out. Of the 9,803 ResistBot Texas text recipients who expressed interest in running, 7 appeared in our compiled search of officially filed candidates.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Our program is effective in boosting candidate recruitment by 50%, and merits repetition in other states.
2. Receptions with county party chairs are a key part of our success formula. Our campaign in reception areas outperformed non-reception areas by 42%. The time spent scheduling these receptions was worthwhile.
3. When targeting races with non-standard or fine geographies, such as Texas' school boards and city council districts, success ratios depend heavily on targeting the list buy at exactly those geographies. Among our vendors, only TargetSmart supports this fine targeting.
4. To make the most of TargetSmart, we should either use their new online list-purchasing tool or give their staff plenty of lead time -- at least a week during election season -- to fulfill a large and complex buy like this one.
5. It was surprisingly difficult to get the attention of county party chairs for this campaign, compared to our previous campaigns in Kansas and Florida. Anecdotally, several chairs told us when we called that (1) their attention was focused higher up the ballot, esp. on Beto O'Rourke's Senate race, during the final months of this high-stakes election season and (2) they viewed the school board and muni races as small potatoes, not worth their time.

NEXT STEPS

We're currently reviewing states with filing deadlines for local offices from December 2018 through September 2019, as potential next venues for this powerful program.

We invite your support for this program in the form of:

- Localized vetting and training support for potential candidates
- Funding of \$600,000 for a national push in 2019 and \$2,500,000 in 2020

- Lists of activists who may be interested in participating. In return for your sharing of a list, we will:
 - Clean it, removing bad numbers
 - Return it with names identified of officially filed candidates, volunteers, and those who were interested but did not file
 - Not retain your list beyond those who file for office or who volunteer
 - Never ask your list for money
- Volunteers to participate in our extensive peer-to-peer texting operation

APPENDIX 1: CANDIDATES RECRUITED

The 27 candidates we contacted filed to run for these offices:

Bandera ISD school board: Richard Redmond
Banquete ISD school board: Lillian Neely
Benbrook city council: Dustin Phillips
Benbrook city council: Jenevieve Williams
Center ISD school board: Joyce Edwards
Charlotte ISD school board: Tommy Garcia
Clint ISD school board: Jennifer Ivey
Conroe ISD school board: Kevin McZeal
Corpus Christi mayor: Aislynn Campbell
Copperas Cove ISD school board: Shameria Davis
Cross Roads ISD school board: William Stanfield
D'Hanis ISD school board: Wes Barlow
Dilley ISD school board: Aida Chapa
Fabens ISD school board: Benjamin Morales
Huffman ISD school board: Patricia Burnham
Lockhart ISD school board: Michael Wright
Manor ISD school board: Ana Cortez
McDade ISD school board: Joey Miller Jr.
Medina ISD school board: Marissa Gonzalez
Medina ISD school board: Jack McHaney
Odessa city council: Mari Willis
Riviera ISD school board: Tracy Beadle
Tarkington ISD school board: Jon Wright
Tornillo ISD school board: Hector Lopez
Tornillo ISD school board: Enrique Vega
Tuloso-Midway ISD school board: Victor Betancourt
Water Valley ISD school board: Angela Bloss

Full demographic, geographic, and partisanship data on these 27 candidates, and on the 9 who filed from our control group, is [available here](#).

APPENDIX 2: OUR FULL TEXT SERIES

Hi {{Contact Name}}, it's {{Agent Name}} w/ the Texas Democratic Party. Your {{County}} county Dem chair, {{CountyChairName}}, has set up a meeting to talk with you about the local races that need a candidate, and about how to run and win: {{ReceptionDate}} from {{StartTime}} to {{EndTime}}, at {{Location}}, {{Address}}, {{City}}, {{Details}}. Can you make it?

Hi {{Contact Name}}, it's {{Agent Name}}, a volunteer w/ the Texas Democratic Party. So glad you might be interested in running for local office. The party has a great program to support first-time candidates. Check it out:
<https://act.txdemocrats.org/page/s/project-lift>

Hi {{Contact Name}}, it's {{Agent Name}}. Here's another good intro to the TX Dem party's LIFT program for new candidates: <http://LIFTTexas.com> Also, a group called Run for Something has great resources to help you plan a run for office. Check out their TX guide at: <https://rr.team/RfS-TX>

Also, if you're under 40, Run for Something has a whole program to support you. Sign up: <https://runforsomething.net/resistance-labs/> The program starts with an intro phone call tomorrow evening, Tues., Aug. 7th at 8pm CT. More info when you sign up. :)

Hi {{Contact Name}}, it's {{Agent Name}} w/ the TX Dem. Party. These races where you live have no Dem running yet: {{Specific Races}}. Would you consider running for one of these seats? We'll send more info shortly on how.

Hi {{Contact Name}}, it's {{Agent Name}} w/ the TX Dem. Party. As you consider running for office, we encourage you to get in touch with your {{County}} Dem. Party chair, {{CountyChairName}}, {{CountyChairPhone}}, {{CountyChairEmail}}.

Hi {{Contact Name}}. This is {{Agent Name}} w/ the TX Dem. party. Here's another great resource to help you prepare for a possible run for office. The Nat'l. Dem. Training Committee has a great course to help you plan and win your campaign: <https://goo.gl/b9wZZD> It's free and very helpful!

Hi {{Contact Name}}, it's {{Agent Name}} w/ the TX Dem. Party. Here's how to file officially as a candidate for {{Specific Office}}. Go to {{Filing Location}}, {{Filing Address}}, {{Filing Phone}}. Ask for the {{Filing Official}}. Bring this form naming your campaign treasurer (can be you): <https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/forms/cta.pdf> and

this form declaring your candidacy:

<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/forms/pol-sub/2-21f.pdf>, and your ID. The candidacy form must be notarized; there should be a notary at the office but to play it safe, call ahead or go a day or two early. Be sure to file before the deadline: Mon. Aug. 20th, 3pm.

Hi {{Contact Name}}. There's less than a week left to file as a candidate for {{Specific Office}}. Have you been able to reach your {{County}} county Dem. Party chair yet to discuss it?: {{CountyChairName}}, {{CountyChairPhone}}, {{CountyChairEmail}}. In case not, Drew Turney w/ the TX Dem. Party can help you too: drew@txdemocrats.org

{{Contact Name}}, as you consider running for office, you might find it helpful to talk with an elected official. Candice Quarles, De Soto city councilor is holding a special videoconference to share her perspective with you this Thurs. 8/16 at 6pm. Join by video: <https://zoom.us/j/108870965> or by phone: 1-669-900-6833,,108870965# Can you make it?

Hi {{Contact Name}}. So glad you're considering running for office! If you go for it, a partner organization we work with has offered to help you win by texting voters in your district and asking them to vote for you.

Hi {{Contact Name}}, we're really hoping you'll choose to run for office. If you do, we'll help you win by texting other activists in your area & asking them to volunteer for your campaign!

Quick reminder: This Monday is the deadline to file as a candidate for {{Specific Office}}. Here's how: Go to {{Filing Location}}, {{Filing Address}}, {{Filing Phone}}. Ask for the {{Filing Official}}. Bring this form naming your campaign treasurer (can be you): <https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/forms/cta.pdf> and this form declaring your candidacy: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/forms/pol-sub/2-21f.pdf>, and your ID. The candidacy form must be notarized; there should be a notary at the office but to play it safe, call ahead or go today if you can. Do you have any questions?

Hi {{Contact Name}}, here are some final resources - a short guide to running for school board: rr.team/TX-SchoolBoardGuide and one for city council: rr.team/TX-CityCouncilGuide Is there anything else we can do to help with your decision? Remember: the filing deadline is Monday.

Final reminder: tomorrow, Mon. Aug. 20th, is the deadline to file as a candidate for {{Specific Office}}. Here's how: Go to {{Filing Location}}, {{Filing Address}}, {{Filing Phone}}. Ask for the {{Filing Official}}. Bring this form naming your campaign

treasurer (can be you): <https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/forms/cta.pdf> and this form declaring your candidacy: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/forms/pol-sub/2-21f.pdf>, and your ID. The candidacy form must be notarized; there should be a notary at the office but to play it safe, call ahead. Plan to get there early as some offices close at 3pm.

Hi {{Contact Name:leadName}}. So, the official filing deadline to run for office was yesterday. Did you file your papers on time?

Hi {{Contact Name:leadName}}. The official filing deadline to run for office was Monday. Were you able to file your papers on time?