



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Dee Duncan
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DATE: May 15, 2023
RE: Defending Majorities and Expanding the Map

The Republican State Leadership Committee's (RSLC) top political priority heading into the 2023-2024 election cycle is crystal clear – we have to defend our majorities against an overwhelming amount of outside spending from Democrat affiliated groups. A mere **33 seats** are standing in the way of Democrats taking back **eight legislative chambers** across **five states**, to take control of a majority of state legislatures in the country. National Democrats are targeting all of them and have already asked for an additional \$10 million while they continue to rapidly outpace Republicans with financial resources and investment.

In 2022, state Republicans defied the odds by facing down an onslaught in national liberal spending and an incredibly challenging political environment to still preserve their hold on an overwhelming majority of state legislatures throughout the country. We **net-gained 35 seats** across the country and expanded our power in numerous states, gaining supermajorities in both chambers of the Florida Legislature, the Iowa Senate, the North Carolina Senate, the Wisconsin Senate, the South Carolina House, and the Montana Senate. We also broke out of the super-minority in both chambers in Oregon as well as making gains in the New York Assembly. Additionally, we picked up seats in liberal strongholds like Maine, New Mexico, and Hawaii.

In 2023, we have already seen state Democrats switch parties and join Republican-led legislatures in Louisiana and North Carolina, giving Republicans a veto-proof supermajority in the Louisiana House and North Carolina House, bringing our total number of Republican supermajorities up to 25 nationwide.

WHAT WE LEARNED IN 2022

While state Republicans defied the odds in 2022, our mission is becoming more challenging:

1. Simply put, it is going to take an abundance of resources to catch up to the spending levels by Democrats. National liberal groups like the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC), the States Project, and Forward Majority still combined to spend over **\$130 million** on state legislative races. This is why the RSLC, even after raising a record **\$82 million** in the 2021-2022 cycle, was stretched thin in comparison. And already in 2023, we saw spending levels skyrocket in the Wisconsin state Supreme Court race, the most expensive state Supreme Court race in history, nearing \$50 million.
2. We need to target low propensity voters early and often by implementing an effective absentee ballot/early voting (AB/EV) political program. Democrats hammered this block of voters in battleground states like Michigan in 2022 and were effective in turning out low propensity voters.
3. Retaining Republican-controlled legislatures is becoming increasingly harder. We can no longer wait until an election year to begin defending our own majorities.

While the U.S House, U.S. Senate, and the White House have changed hands a total of seven times since 2010, the one constant for the conservative movement has been state legislative power. We have gotten used to having a strong backstop in the states, but our complacency has us trending in the wrong direction and is putting Republicans at risk of no longer controlling a majority of state legislative chambers for the first time since 2010.

The Challenges We Face

Despite many successes, 2022 was also full of major challenges that we need to learn from going forward. While the RSLC spent a record of more than **\$30 million** in state legislative races, three national Democrat outside groups alone (The States Project, the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC) and Forward Majority) combined to spend over **\$130 million**. This spending disparity put us at a huge disadvantage, especially in battleground states where the Democrats flipped chambers, such as Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. In those three states alone, **the three Democrat groups combined to spend more than the RSLC spent in all 50 states.**

Democrats will surely use the chambers they flipped in 2022 as fuel to come back with even more resources in the next cycle, and the only way to stop them is to work together to grow the RSLC to new heights. It will no longer be enough to compete against our own fundraising records. We need to set the bar higher and start comparing ourselves against the constellation of national liberal outside groups that drastically outspent us this past year.

Looking Ahead

The 2023-2024 cycle is shaping up to be a huge undertaking, as 48 out of 50 states will have at least one state legislative election. The most immediate battles ahead will be in 2023 when we will be looking to gain complete control of the Virginia General Assembly. We will also be looking to build on our 2021 successes in New Jersey and deliver wins in state legislative races in Mississippi and Louisiana.

2023 TARGETS

We must maintain our majority in the Virginia House of Delegates while working to flip control of the Virginia Senate where Democrats hold a 4-seat advantage. Coming off of a historic election cycle in New Jersey in 2021, we must now defend the seats gained, while working to take away from the Democrats' 12 seat advantage in the House and 8 seat advantage in the Senate. Finally, we will have to once again defend our supermajorities in the legislative chambers in Louisiana and Mississippi.

2024 TARGETS

Defending Republican Majorities

Republicans currently hold **56 of the 93** state legislative chambers on the ballot this cycle, **and 58 of the 99 overall across the country.** Keeping these states in Republican hands this year is our top objective and will not be an easy task. In their four top target states that national Democrats released in March of 2023 (Arizona, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Virginia), Republicans have just a **10 seat** margin across all **6 chambers**, averaging a cushion of **two seats** per chamber.

With competitive gubernatorial or U.S. Senate races in each of the four states, along with three of those four states being highly contested presidential battleground states, their legislative races will be more expensive than ever before. We saw this in 2022, where national liberal groups spent \$8.1 million in [Arizona](#), \$1.4 million in [New Hampshire](#), and an astounding \$13.1 million in [Pennsylvania](#). Our preliminary list of states that must be defended are as follows:

- Arizona
- Florida
- Georgia
- New Hampshire
- Pennsylvania Senate
- Texas

Opportunities to Flip Chambers

With such narrow margins in multiple chambers across the country, it will be critical for down-ballot campaigns to fight for every single vote. A postmortem of the 2022 election conducted by the RSLC shows that one of the best ways to make an impact in races decided by such narrow margins is to invest in absentee, vote by mail, and early vote programs that are different from what other party committees are offering.

In 2022, Republicans lost the Michigan House by just two seats. Five districts were decided by less than 1500 votes. If Republicans had targeted low propensity Republican voters in five districts utilizing targeted voter universes and converted each universe by less than 6.5%, they would have won all five districts and maintained control of the chamber with two seats to spare. If we implement this strategy across Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania, we are confident that we can flip control of their respective legislative chambers.

- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Pennsylvania

Possibilities for Meaningful Gains in Liberal Strongholds

Republicans performed well in liberal strongholds in 2022, breaking out of the super minority in both chambers in Oregon while adding seats in places like Illinois, New York, and New Mexico. With Joe Biden's approval ratings [underwater](#) and reaching an [all-time low](#), we have an opportunity to make meaningful gains in these legislative chambers carried by Biden in 2020.

- Illinois
- Maine
- Nevada
- New Mexico
- New York
- Oregon
- Washington

CONCLUSION

Heading into a pivotal election cycle with Joe Biden on the top of the ticket, Democrats will be taking nothing for granted up-and-down the ballot. This list remains a preliminary target list and is subject to change throughout the course of the election cycle because we are not taking anything for granted as a 50-state organization. The Democrats have already proven that they're willing to implement an earlier strategy and invest larger sums of money at the state level than ever before, so we must be prepared to take action anywhere, anytime. While Republicans will be focused on retaking control of the White House, it is our duty to stop the Democrats from taking a majority of legislative chambers across the country. We are the cornerstone of the conservative movement, and with your continued partnership and support we will be able to defend our majorities and expand the map for state Republicans.