

NPC Meeting on Electoral Strategy

This call was held on July 5, 2018 from 9:30pm EDT to 11:00pm EDT.

Agenda

Chair: Chris Riddiough

Notes:

Attendees: Zac Echola, Theresa Alt, Natalie Midirie, Maria Svart, Christian Bow, Cathy Hoffman, Allie Cohn, Ajmal Alami, RL Stephens, Chris Maisano, Ella Mahony, Jeremy Gong, Ravi Ahmed

1. Review of agenda - 5 min

2. Update from Maria
 - Has been focused on almost 5,000 new members, supporting the chapters in absorbing the new members. Sent out a letter to members + organizing memo to chapter leaders Focused on getting new member lists to chapters. Responding to media requests / additional calls to the national office.
 - Have been in contact with NYC DSA leaders.
 - Limited amount of things we can ask of AOC.
 - More than 10% of new members are concentrated in NYC.

3. Update from NEC - Christian
 - Since last Tuesday, got a lot of endorsement requests from chapters. 8-9 new endorsements to process. July 25th deadline to finish everything. Releasing candidate endorsements in a wide range of races in other areas of the country in many seats.
 - Surge in donations for Julia's race.
 - Zac: Can you speak to the strategy of releasing all these candidate endorsements at once?
 - A lot of media and organizations will be watching. This shows that we are running candidates up and down the ticket all over the country and that the face of socialism is working class people who represent where they are from.
 - Ravi: Can you speak to some of the trainings coming up?
 - We want to go back to the foundation of how to train and to put together materials about how to integrate non-electoral work into electoral work.

4. Strategic questions

a. About AOC and her victory:

i. How is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's win playing around the country?

1. Theresa: In Ithaca, one of the guys who hangs around but isn't a member "mouthing off" that she isn't a real working class background. She was an "invention of publicity" from Brand New Congress.

a. The leadership in socialism has seen both sides.

2. Christian: Her win is not just playing across the country, but across the world. People in Labour were excited.

3. Ravi: Justice Dems is testing out hypotheses in different races. Data suggests that gentrifying neighborhoods propelled AOC to victory. JD is trying to develop a base that isn't necessarily our base. The ask for a staffer is punching way above our weight. Team Jabari largely worked on AOC's campaign. Their approach to canvassing and turning canvassers into more active members is interesting but still something in formation.

4. Natalie: I think we should have people driving home that the success of her campaign is the working-class politics that she pushed forward. Our ability to frame out political program was a big reason she won.

5. Zac: everyone has started looking into gentrifying districts now; progressive Dems are pivoting to look at deep blue district primaries.

ii. Who are her coalition and what is our institutional relationship with them?

1. Christian: Lots of organizations endorsed. Some followed our lead.

2. Chris R: We used to work with the CPC on issues many years ago. We were involved with progressive groups in D.C. on that.

iii. Which of her demands/platform planks do we support nationally?

iv. In an ideal world, how should AOC speak about a national movement? How can DSA speak to it?

1. Natalie: DSA should focus on the talking point that AOC won because she built a working class movement and that was something we helped her with. We should try to influence her to have a left wing analysis such as talking about Crowley being a problem because of his real estate funding not just because he didn't show up to a debate.

2. Chris R: My cynical view is that people once they get into office think they can do what they want. I don't think she'll do that, but she will get pulled in many directions.
 3. R.L.: It is pretty well understood that we can't control AOC. The main power broker at the moment is Justice Dems and Ro Khanna because they're executing them to get Democrats elected. Having a humble perspective is important. This is a crisis of the administration of state power. These are the binds that she's going to be facing. The demands of being elected to bourgeois government are a reality. Is this a basis for establishing a socialist governance for society? I would argue it is not. What does this strategy of people of color running on votes of white voters mean in terms of patronage, how does that affect the work that we are trying to do when addressing things like racism? Thinking that through could put into perspective the questions of accountability. We should not overplay our hand on this.
 4. Allie: We have a lot of other people running on our endorsement. AOC will be taken up in the "swoosh of Washington." She barely joined DSA after the endorsement. These other candidates are a good base long term. There is a lot of focus on her because of how big it is, but we can use that to propel these other candidates and get more out of them.
- v. Assuming we can get a meeting between DSA and her or her senior staff, what are our talking points? What do we have to offer on a continued basis?
1. Christian: We have to be careful in our asks. Some things to ask are about policy. Abolish ICE, Free college. A lot of people are frazzled right now. We are a bigger asset to her within her district. Fundraising could be something we could ask about. Her digital media presence has grown considerably.
- b. Impact on elections this year:
- i. What impact does this have on the 2018 elections/our endorsements so far?
 1. Christian: It's really late. Julia is in a really good position right now.
 2. Catherine: This has lit a fire locally.
 - ii. Which of her demands can we replicate elsewhere, and how do we communicate that with chapters? How are we communicating that with the media?

- iii. Will AOC help raise money for similar candidates around the country, including our current and future endorsed candidates?
 - 1. Christian: Intentionally or not, she was a tremendous boost to Julia.
 - 2. Zac: This should be our main ask. We can raise a lot of money for state legislature and school boards with a tweet.
 - iv. Which areas of the country are the new members joining because of AOC's win concentrated? What are we doing to move them to action?
 - c. Long-term impact:
 - i. How does this impact our long-term electoral strategy for 2019, 2020, and beyond?
 - 1. Chris R: The Single Payer Strategy Conference could be a place to connect more concretely. "Medicare for All is now a mainstream issue" may not be entirely true but maybe. We have an opportunity to put forward the rest of our agenda. We want to connect all the pieces.
 - ii. How does this connect to our other priorities of M4A and Labor?
 - iii. How can/should we build partnerships with other organizations such as OR, Justice Democrats, Inside/Outside, Congressional Progressive Caucus?
 - 1. Chris R: I/O has had a couple of interesting calls. One with Lumumba and another about strategies going forward. We need a strategy on issues as well as electoral politics.
 - iv. What lessons can we learn about working within the Democratic Party?
 - 1. Christian: At the local level this can really help build relationships. There are many paper tigers within the party like Joe Crowley.

5. Next Steps/Discussion at July 21-22 NPC meeting

- a. Theresa: The NPC has to emphasize skills and flexibility and ability to deal with the unexpected.
- b. Christian: Will not be at the NPC meeting after this one.