In what was the most expensive Attorney General’s race in Virginia history, topping out at around $19 million, the re-election victory last week for Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring was further evidence that when we work smartly, we win. While overall spending in both camps was almost the same, the Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA) spent $6.8M in the loss, and we, the Democratic Attorneys General Association (DAGA), spent $3M in the win.

Our mission is to support and elect Democratic Attorneys General, and when we win, we create opportunities to address the needs of working families, the middle class, and those in need; that’s what the People’s Lawyers do. Recognition nationally of the vital role Democratic Attorneys General play continues to grow, and as demonstrated in the past year, the value and necessity of working with Democratic Attorneys General has never been more important to making a difference in the lives of everyday Americans.

That is why this year, DAGA contributed nearly $3 million to AG Herring’s re-election campaign including more than $500,000 in-kind for dynamic, in-house digital and data tools focused on engaging voters in new ways tailored to the unique aspects of the office of Attorney General. These new tools attest to the fact that winning is about more than just dollars given; winning with the DAGA model is about the value-add that distinguishes DAGA from other committees.

The memo below details key ways DAGA supported Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring’s re-election victory that highlight why thinking differently about digital and efficiency at the margins in increasingly contentious and expensive state-wide campaigns matters.

Building off the success of a pilot done in Oregon during the 2016 Attorneys General race, DAGA’s team sat down with AG Herring’s campaign in January 2017 to assess goals, key demographics, and how DAGA could effectively support the re-election effort, particularly through digital engagement.

Ultimately, by engaging voters digitally prior to anyone else and focusing on both the content and the creative delivery, DAGA built organic engagement among real Virginians. This secondary phase of the Oregon experiment deployed in Virginia resulted in AG Herring’s campaign reaching unprecedented levels of interactions with key demographics, engaging voters in otherwise left untapped regions, and a victory on Election night.
• Through benchmark polling, A/B testing of messaging, and strategically buying pre-roll and banner ads in less competitive markets that still reached key demographics, **Mark Herring for Virginia’s Facebook grew from 8,000 likes to more than 50,000** — more than any other state Attorney General in the country — in just 6 months. At the end of the campaign, Herring still holds the record among AGs, with more than 60,000 engaged followers.

• DAGA expanded digital marketing into rural counties that lie outside of principal Virginia media markets.

• This growth quickly made AG Herring’s weekly engagement level on Facebook the **highest among any official running on the Virginia ballot** during the 2017 election.

In addition to amplifying AG Herring’s digital presence, DAGA employed texting tools to engage voters in all corners of the state to find out what issues mattered to voters, and what voters understood, or perhaps more importantly, what they misunderstood about the role and responsibilities of their state AG.

• Before either AG campaign was on the airwaves in D.C./Northern Virginia markets, DAGA partnered with Open Progress to engage voters in a pilot peer-to-peer texting program about what issues mattered most to them, and what they hoped to see from their state Attorney General.
  
  o These texts were among the first that identified a statewide candidate by name.
  
  o Internal polling done immediately following the texting pilot, and before television ads began, showed a **9% increase in Herring favorability** among democrats and a **2% uptick in voter choice in NoVA**.

• Given the pilot program’s success, DAGA expanded the texting program state-wide, working with more than 200 recruited volunteers to reach more than 330,000 Virginia voters by text message.
  
  o This included voters in counties where neither Herring nor Adams were up on T.V.
  
  o In some instances, these cord-cutting voters’ only interaction with a campaign was via text messages.
  
  o Initial election results indicate that some of those counties **went blue more-so for Herring than the other statewide candidates**.

Separate from the texting and digital successes noted above, DAGA also engaged in testing of new polling methodologies, all geared toward finding more efficient ways to understand the electorate and reach voters.

In 2018, we will be active in 32 races — there are 35 state AGs in play total. We are committed to protecting our Democratic incumbents and fighting to win seats for Democratic candidates — and we are hoping to take the digital communication lessons learned from phase 1 in Oregon, phase 2 in Northern Virginia, and the expansion to statewide efforts in Virginia, forward into the 2018 cycle.

If you have any questions about the 2018 map, the DAGA digital and data programs, and/or other questions about the Virginia race, please don’t hesitate to reach out!

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