

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP FUND



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Dan Conston, President, Congressional Leadership Fund
DATE: March 2, 2021
RE: Early Keys To Winning The Majority in 2022

While Democrats took control of the Senate and the White House in 2020, Republicans defied the odds in the House and flipped 15 districts from California to Florida. Moreover, no Republican incumbent lost re-election for the first time since 1994. In 2020, CLF became the largest House super PAC in history, and the most successful: our spending generated an 82% ROI as we stepped into the breach with persuasive messaging, soup-to-nuts voter contact and voter turnout campaigns – investments focused on winning races, not just winning the air war.

We begin the 2022 election cycle just five seats away from the Majority, eyeing a wide battlefield and many avenues to win the House in support of Leader McCarthy, Whip Scalise and the entire GOP conference. We will win back the Majority if we're clear-eyed about the obstacles in front of us, apply the lessons learned from 2020 and follow our plan to victory. It starts with these early keys:

- **Continuing the recruitment success of 2020**
- **Fixing the GOP's massive candidate-side fundraising problem**
- **Aggressively spotlighting the left's socialist overreach & painting a contrast**
- **Heeding the opportunities and challenges in redistricting**
- **50 opportunities to win 5 districts – maximizing our battlefield to retake the majority.**

CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT MATTERS

In 2020, all 15 of the seats Republicans flipped were won by a woman, a minority, or a veteran. They were candidates of character, heroism, and achievement. That's not by accident. Leader McCarthy made it a priority from the outset to find strong candidates with compelling life stories that reflect their districts. No surprise: **these** are the candidates who won so many Democrat-held seats. Continuing to recruit similar candidates is a foundational building block to the Majority in 2022.

We already have a leg up here. A number of truly exceptionable candidates came a little short last cycle. With a different political environment and new district lines, a number of these candidates are primed to run again. New stars will emerge, too. The Democrats' overreach in 2021 and the serious challenges the country faces will inspire many meritorious Americans to heed the call for service and enter the arena. They can expect the support of CLF.

CANDIDATE FUNDRAISING

The single biggest threat to Republicans taking back the Majority is insufficient candidate fundraising. In competitive races, half of all GOP incumbents and all but three GOP challengers were outraised in 2020. In the final stretch, those Democrat candidates spent 2.5 times more than Republican candidates on television, an \$88 million gap. In reality, the problem is much larger considering how much cheaper advertising rates are for candidates than IE's.

Too many candidates didn't raise enough money to wage sufficient campaigns, in some races leaving independent expenditure efforts to fund nearly all advertising and field and voter contact programs. Not enough candidates seriously invested in building online donor or major donor programs, instead relying on cash transfers from Leader McCarthy, the NRCC, and a CLF conduit program that independently helped boost candidate's online fundraising.

More campaigns must do their part. **A key criterion for earning CLF's support will be whether a campaign seriously invests online and raises the money they need to stand on their own two feet.**

THE RIGHT CONTRAST

Americans are getting their first taste of life under total Democrat control in Washington in a decade. It's not what they ordered. From pushing working-class families out of jobs with fracking bans and pipeline cancellations, to keeping schools closed, and hijacking COVID relief for a trillion-dollar progressive wish list, the Biden Administration has proven will cave to the socialist left at every turn.

Politically, after an election trying to paint every suburban Republican as too supportive of Trump -- and losing everywhere -- Democrats new strategy is to say those same mainstream Members actually support QAnon. We support their strategy. Good luck.

In contrast, CLF stayed laser-focused on kitchen table issues that actually impact people's lives: threats to their jobs, impending tax hikes, and risks to public safety. Our 2020 message was a significant element of our success. As Democrats move further left and increasingly out-of-touch, we believe voters will unite behind shared conservative principles that foster opportunity for all Americans and support small businesses and American workers. The contrast is clear.

REDISTRICTING

Redistricting creates a lack of clarity for much of 2021 and some unique challenges, as many challengers will inevitably delay campaign launches. The Census Bureau postponing the release of all data until September 30th exacerbates the issue greatly. Redistricting will also bring painful Member vs. Member primaries. **But in the end, we expect redistricting to benefit Republicans for a simple reason: Voters are fleeing poorly-run high-tax Democrat-held states for the friendly environs of well-run low-tax Republican-led states.** That shift and GOP control of key states means Republicans will likely pick up multiple seats in Texas and Florida, as well as seats in Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, and Montana. Fairer redistricting commissions should lead to more favorable districts in Arizona and California. We expect some problems in Democrat-led states like New York and Illinois - but they will overreach and in doing so give us slivers of opportunity.

NEARLY 50 OPPORTUNITIES TO WIN 5 DISTRICTS

2020 is proof that Republicans can win in every type of competitive district. No matter how redistricting unfolds, we'll be on offense across a wide battlefield in 2022. In early February, the NRCC unveiled nearly 50 offensive targets held by Democrats. House Republicans need just 5 seats to retake the majority, and with 7 Trump seats held by Democrats and 24 Democrats who got 52% or less last election, the list of 47 speaks to the difficult task ahead for Democrats in 2022.

- **Rural and working class districts present opportunities.** Six of the seven Trump-won districts held by Democrats fit this group, as do an additional ten districts that Biden narrowly won in 2020. Early targets include: Ron Kind (WI-03), where we believe star Navy Seal Derrick Van Orden should seek a rematch, as well as Jared Golden (ME-02) and Matt Cartwright (PA-08), who will be far more endangered against stronger recruits.
- **Key suburban districts will flip to Republicans in 2022.** The many political obituaries written about Republicans in the suburbs entirely missed House Republican performance in 2020. Republicans won 18 of the 25 suburban districts CLF invested in. 19 of those 25 GOP candidates outran the top-of-the-ticket, 11 by over 5%. Standout recruits like Tom Kean Jr. and Wesley Hunt ran ahead by 9% and 5%, respectively, and should run again.
- **Latino and Asian voters abandoned Democrats.** A large positive swing occurred in districts with major Latino or Asian populations, with four Republican flips in districts with large Latino and Asian populations. Looking forward, Texas' Rio Grande Valley presents opportunity, where Vincente Gonzalez barely hung on by 3% after a 21% win in 2018.

- **Open seats are inevitable headaches for Democrats.** Already, a handful of Democrats are exploring higher office and we expect more to follow suit as the likelihood of a Republican House grows. For Cindy Axne (IA-03), Tim Ryan (OH-13), and Conor Lamb (PA-17), it's probably more appealing to run for higher office than face likely defeat in Pelosi's House.
- **History is on our side.** Since WWII, first-term presidents have lost 27 seats on average in their first midterm. Only twice in the last 100 years has the President's party picked up seats in a midterm. With a hard-left single-party agenda coming out of Washington, there is no reason to believe the backlash against President Biden would be any different.

BOTTOM LINE

We enter the 2022 on the cusp taking the House Majority for Republicans. If we stay vigilant to raise the money, recruit the candidates, and remind the voters of the clear contrast between our parties' vision for America, we believe voters will respond in kind and elect a new generation of Republican leadership in House of Representatives.