



[TYLER LE]

INSIDER PRESENTS

DUNGEONS & DEMOCRACY

THE SYSTEM IS STRUCTURALLY DESIGNED IN FAVOR OF OLDER MEMBERS WITH MORE SENIORITY. CAN YOU, A YOUNG MEMBER OF CONGRESS, SURVIVE?

DUNGEONS & DEMOCRACY



WELCOME, PLAYER, TO A FANTASTICAL WORLD.

A world of incredible powers, of treasures gained and lost, where youthful mortals vie with beings far more wizened who knew the world during a different epoch.

A place where a scrap of paper in the hands of a trusted ally or dangerous foe means life or death across the land.

A world where the taverns are full of whispers and the chambers full of merchants and clerics, the capital only occasionally beset by ravaging hordes.

Welcome to Congress.

WHAT IS THIS?

The game you are about to play is a tabletop roleplaying game in which you will become a member of the US House of Representatives, dealing with re-election, fundraising, redistricting, and other challenges.

Depending on the character you choose — a younger and energetic member, or an older, wizer member benefitting from structural advantages that favor incumbents and drive the American gerontocracy — your abilities will differ.

WHAT DO I NEED TO PLAY IT?

This game can be played alone, with you rolling the dice on behalf of your adversary. Or, you can recruit a friend to embody your political enemies. While nobody lasts forever in politics, the objective is simply to endure as long as you can.

Along the journey, you'll see how lots of things in American politics — from surviving the redistricting process unscathed, to shoring up financing, to preventing a primary challenger — are easier for members who have been in power a long time. Disadvantages abound for newcomers.

What you'll need: a 20-sided dice, as well as a couple other dice. Or, you can use a free online dice roller, like the one Google has: <https://g.co/kgs/6aKDbV>

WHAT'S MY OBJECTIVE?

Survive as long as possible

Politics is a bare-knuckle, zero-sum game. Nobody comes out alive. You'll eventually lose, the only question is when. Try to last as long as you can. Mark your **terms** at the top of the sheet and try to get a high score.

THE HISTORY OF THE REALM: THE US GOVERNMENT IS GETTING OLD.

This game is part of Insider's **Red, White, and Gray** investigative series into the oldest government in American history. At no point in the history of the republic has Congress been as old as it has been lately. We're going to explore some of the systemic incentives of how it got there. Just some of the topics that are going to come up are:

- Nearly one in four members of Congress are in their 70s or 80s — **a level never before seen in US history.**
- Almost 50% of Americans are under 40, **but only about 5% of members of Congress are.**
- Most Americans want term limits and age ceilings for Congress, per an Insider/Morning Consult poll.
- Retirees are becoming one of the most powerful political financial forces in the nation.
- Redistricting and gerrymandering have **significant ramifications** for youthful representation.

To read the stories excerpted throughout this game, check out the stories from the project here:

<https://bit.ly/3fz1UYT>

HOW TO CAMPAIGN

Read your character sheet, making notes of the fundraising abilities, campaign techniques, and basic attacks you can manage.

HEALTH AND REPUTATION

You're going to want to first look at two numbers in combat, your **financial health** and your **reputation**. Your **financial health** is going to be important. Once that hits zero, you're politically dead. When you suffer an attack, you're required to spend down your financial health to recover, and as a result, you sustain damage.

You have a number of campaign techniques and special abilities that can help you gain back lost financial health. But not all of it can be used in the middle of a campaign, so be sure to recover it wisely.

Your **reputation** is your armor. Lucky for you, you've got a pretty good name in your congressional district. As a result, the only way you're going to get damaged and lose financial health is when your opponent's roll beats your reputation.

Your **Seniority Bonus** will come up in situations where you're competing with other members.

ATTACKS.

You have **basic attacks**, which can be used as often as you like. You've also got a few tricks up your sleeve, **campaign techniques**, but you need to spend finite amounts of political capital to take advantage of them. Finally, you've got **fundraising**, but this also runs out, and can't always be used in the midst of combat.

COMBAT

The way political combat works is you roll a 20-sided dice (a D20) to attempt to hit your opponent with an attack. Then, you add the modifier. For example, let's say you or an opponent has an attack called **yard sign** that reads:

YARD SIGN: +3 TO HIT, 1D8 +1 DAMAGE.

That means that you'll roll a 20-sided dice, then add 3 to the result. If that final result is **equal to or higher than** your opponent's reputation, you've successfully landed a hit! Then, you can roll for damage, in this case two 4-sided dice, and then add 1 to the result. That final number is then subtracted from the health score. Bring the financial health of an opponent down to 0, and you've defeated them. Alternate turns in combat — start with yourself, then your opponent, then you, and so on — until someone's financial health is dropped to zero.

YOUR FIRST EASY GENERAL ELECTION

Let's start easy to get the hang for the rules. Your first encounter in this adventure is with a **Weak General Election Opponent**. He's not well-funded and everyone's saying you're going to waltz into the congressional seat. But what do you say we dispatch him with what we've got?

WEAK GENERAL ELECTION OPPONENT

Self-funded, but well-liked.

Reputation 15

Financial Health 11

Machine	Instincts	Donors	Statehouse	Policy	Charisma
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Languages English

A local fixture at city council meetings and school boards, this local political gadfly wants to make a doomed stab at your seat.

Dad's Money. If an attack hits, it will deal an extra 2d6 damage.

ACTIONS

Yard Sign Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit. Hit 1d8 + 1

HOW TO PLAY THE GENERAL ELECTION CONTENDER

Your opponent has a low budget and won't really be able to spam you with too much beyond **Yard Sign** each turn.

While he's got a pretty good reputation around these parts, he's pretty poorly funded. One or two hits successful hits and this one's not going to trouble you too much.

HINT

Best not to waste your special attacks too much. Save up your warchest for a tougher foe down the line.

DID YOU WIN?

Congratulations! Welcome to Congress. Mark **one additional term** at the top of your sheet.

HOW GAMEPLAY WORKS

Having dispatched your first general election rival, you're back on Capitol Hill.

Over the next two years, you'll focus on the truly important tasks ahead of a member of Congress, such as fundraising, consolidating power, and preparing for your next election cycle.

You'll use a few of your non-campaign skills, such as hosting fundraisers and building capital in the Capitol. Once you're ready, you'll face down your next electoral foe ...

A PRIMARY CHALLENGER.

Yes, a member of your own party wants your seat. The gall! Look on the bright side, this race is a chance for you to flex some of your more exciting campaign skills to make a statement. You'll have to use all the tools at your disposal to thwart them — and hold on to your place in Congress.

PRIMARY OPPONENT

You want my seat? Come and take it.

Reputation 16

Financial Health 27

Machine	Instincts	Donors	Statehouse	Policy	Charisma
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Senses changing national mood, 60 ft.

Languages English, Spanish

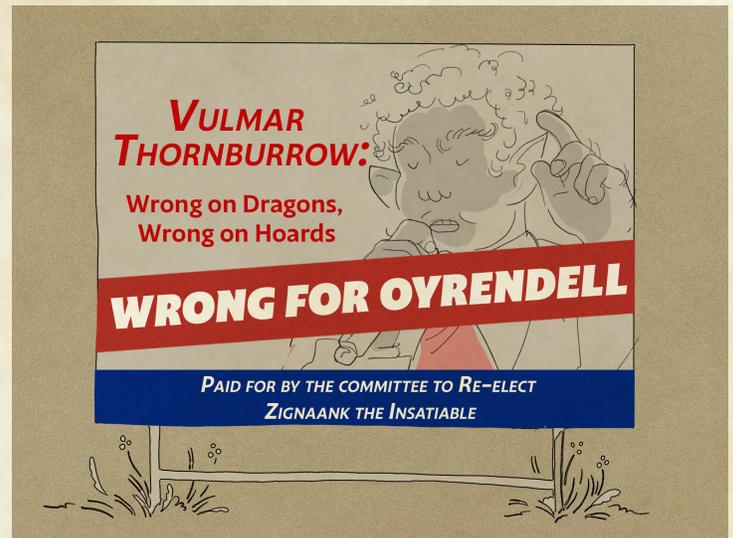
They think you might be vulnerable to an attack from a more partisan opponent, and that your district wants not one more day of your centrism. Want to show them who's boss?

They'll open up with **Surprise campaign launch**, and then each turn thereafter will resort to **Allegation of centrism**.

ACTIONS

Allegation of centrism Verbal Weapon Attack: +4 to hit. Hit 2d8 + 2 damage.

Surprise campaign launch Ranged Attack: +4 to hit. Hit 4d6 + 2 damage



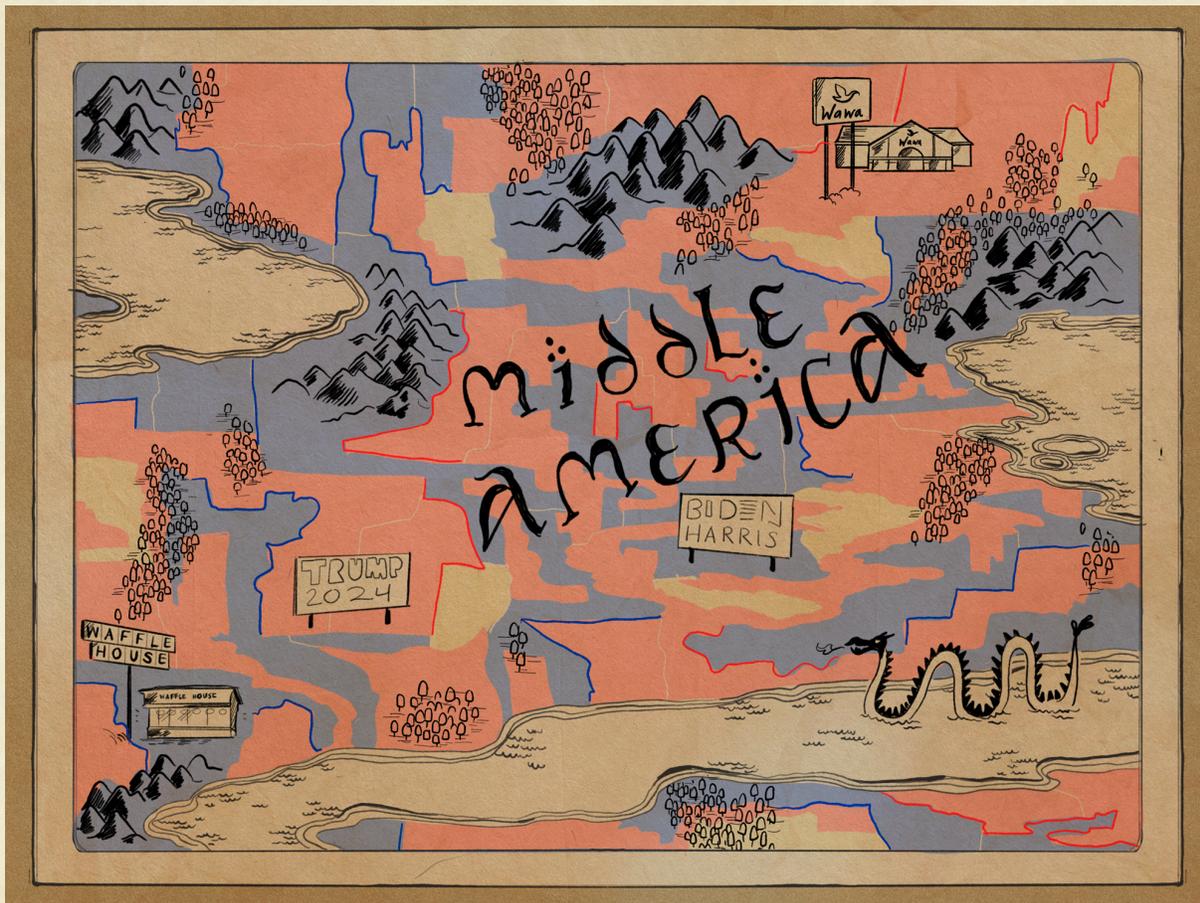
VICKY LETA

DID YOU WIN?

Congratulations! Welcome back. Mark **one additional term** at the top of your sheet. You're out of campaign season, feel free to use your non-combat actions.

DID YOU LOSE?

Enjoy your new career, podcaster. If you'd like, try the game again with a different starter character.



[VICKY LETA]

WIN THE GAVEL

Back at your day job, it turns out that the member who chairs the congressional subcommittee you're on went down to defeat in the previous cycle. Owlbear attack. *Very sudden.*

You'd like to make a play to chair a subcommittee of the Elf & Human Services Committee, but you're not the only one. You know for a fact that if you score the chair, you'll get a **+1 to your reputation score for the next two cycles.**

THE GAVEL OF ELF AND HUMAN SERVICES

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

When held, adds +1 to Reputation for two election cycles. After that time, the magic wears off.

Here's the challenge: Your party's leader considers **Seniority** when assigning positions on the committee.

WILL YOU WIN THE CHAIR?

There are two other members vying for the job, so roll a 20-sided die twice to figure out their rolls.

The first one of them has **+1 to Seniority**, and the other has a **-2 to Seniority.**

Now, roll a 20-sided dice plus your **Seniority** modifier.

If you're the top score, congratulations, **the gavel is yours**, and with it, a temporary two-cycle +1 boost to your **Reputation.** If not, better luck next time — a committee chairpersonship should open up any decade now

SENIORITY IN CONGRESS

How long a person has been serving in Congress affords them additional privileges when it comes to securing power within the chamber.

- More senior senators get preferential treatment when choosing committee assignments on their own committee, and also leads to leadership posts.
- The more senior you are, the more desirable your office.
- In the Senate, committee chairs and ranking members are traditionally given to the most-senior senators of their respective party.
- Committees wield a great deal of power, actually executing the work of Congress behind the scenes. The chairs are powerful people steering legislation and appropriations through the body.

This ensures that there's a pretty powerful incentive to stick around in Congress as long as possible. The very design of the body all but ensures members today are more powerful than they were yesterday.

CAN YOU SCARE OFF A CHALLENGER?

The other party thinks you could be vulnerable. This happens every now and again — depending on your fundraising and your popularity in the district, they're always hunting for a seat to pick off. Right now, they're trying to recruit someone in your district.

“For many millennial and Generation Z office seekers, simply trying to get local leaders on board with a candidacy can be a frustrating experience with minimal financial or party support,” wrote Insider’s John Dorman.

“For every candidate like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez or Maxwell Alejandro Frost — the 25-year-old Democratic nominee to represent the Central Florida-anchored 10th congressional district and who is poised to be the House’s first Gen Z lawmaker — there are dozens of enthusiastic young candidates who are willing to serve but are instead mired in institutional hurdles.”

THE BIG THREAT

The contender they'd really like to run against you, the **Solid Election Challenger**, is still on the fence. You have a sense they're waiting for the perfect time to make their move, and maybe they're going to sit this cycle out if they think you're not easy pickings.

THE SMALLER THREAT

Also thinking about running against you is your opponent from two cycles ago, **Weak General Election Opponent**. You'd obviously prefer to run against him, but he'll still probably cost you.

YOUR BEST BET

The best case scenario is for you to scare them off. There are some municipal elections up this year, and you've made a couple of endorsements. They're going to be looking at how well your political machinery works in bringing those votes home to gauge your efforts.

THE ELECTION

Roll a D20, and then add your Machinery plus your Seniority bonus.

- If your score is over 15, your machine got everyone you wanted into the municipal offices they sought. Congratulations, you've scared the other party off. You are unchallenged this election, mark **one additional term** at the top of your sheet.
- If your score is between 10 and 15, you managed to scare off the big threat. However, you're facing **Weak General Election Opponent** this November.
- If you score 9 or lower, your machine looked weak. The other party thinks you're vulnerable. They put a target on your district and if you want to hold your seat you've got to beat **Solid Election Challenger**. Good luck!

SOLID ELECTION CHALLENGER

This kid's got spunk. I hate spunk.

Reputation 14

Financial Health 27

Machine	Instincts	Donors	Statehouse	Policy	Charisma
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Damage resistances Excellent direct mail operation, campaign mailer attacks do half damage.

Languages English

A political natural. Has advantage on Instinct checks, so roll two 20-sided dice and take the higher of them on an Instinct check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack The election challenger makes one attack with a **digital ad buy**. If that attack hits, the challenger makes one **television ad buy** attack against the target.

Digital ad buy *Attack:* +4 to hit. *Hit* 2d6 + 2 damage

Television ad buy. *Attack:* +4 to hit. *Hit* 1d6 + 2 damage

DID YOU WIN?

Congratulations! Welcome back. Mark **one additional term** at the top of your sheet. You're out of campaign season, feel free to use your non-combat moves.

DID YOU LOSE?

See you on K Street. Hope you like lobbying. If you'd like, try the game again with a different starter character.

“When I was running for the congressional seat, but even when I ran for county commission, I was told over and over again to wait my turn,” she said. “We constantly hear young people being told that narrative as if these policy decisions aren't going to impact us. You can't just keep saying, ‘Oh, we want to excite young voters,’ but then you don't actually create an opportunity for them.”

- Nida Allam, a 28-year-old Durham County commissioner who unsuccessfully ran to represent North Carolina's 4th Congressional District.

REDISTRICTING

News just dropped out of the Department of Commerce.

Your state lost population, and if you want to stay in Congress you're going to have to deal with redistricting.

Every decade, the country measures its population to try to figure out how best to divvy up 435 congressional seats.

Unfortunately, your state's governor is in the other party. She's looking to carve up some seats.

You've still got some friends in the State House, though, and they're going to try to keep an eye out for their own.

Spend a longer time in politics, you'll have more time to amass a local political operation that can attain your local goals, develop relationships with down ballot candidates, and get allies not just in federal government but also local and state government.

One time that this will come in handy is in the decennial redistricting process.

You're going to need to lobby what friends you have in the State House to do everything they can to ensure your interests are handled, regardless of what map the governor signs. Let's go through the options.

- The best case scenario is that **your district gets a little bit safer**. You'd be able to sleep a little easier knowing that your chances of going down in an election are just a little bit lower.
- At minimum, what you'd want is that **your district remains pretty similar** to the territory you cover now. You know this territory, you've won here before, and you'll win here again.
- What you want to avoid is getting a lot of **your district merged with a neighboring district**. That would ding your reputation in the area, as you'll have to appeal to voters who are just meeting you for the very first time.
- What you absolutely want to avoid is **getting drawn out of your own district**, having it chopped to bits across the region. You'd have to compete in an area where only a small fraction of the population would know you well. That'd really hurt your chances here. Even if you did get back into office, it'd take years to rebuild your district services and develop a good reputation.

FIGHTS OVER POLITICAL LINES HAVE FUELED THE AGING OF AMERICA'S GOVERNMENT. BUT THAT MAY BE CHANGING.

- "Over the decades, intentional partisan gerrymandering — and the inevitable reshuffling that comes along with states losing districts and redrawing their lines — have dashed many congressional careers and aspirations."
- "Partisan gerrymandering and internal party struggle over district lines can also prevent young candidates or candidates from diverse backgrounds from getting elected to Congress in the first place."
- "Partisan gerrymandering, the redrawing of political district lines to favor one political party over the other, has gotten increasingly tactical. State lawmakers, in addition to utilizing the process to kneecap the opposing party, **also make strategic choices about which members of Congress to sacrifice.**"
- *Grace Panetta and Walt Hickey*

LET'S LOBBY THE STATEHOUSE.

Roll a d20, and add your **Statehouse** modifier plus your **Seniority** modifier.

- If the outcome is 20 or higher, congratulations, your influence campaign worked. The governor is happy to pack as many votes into a safer district to shore up her own party, and so now your district is just a teensy bit safer. **For the next two cycles, if you face a general election rival add +1 to your Reputation.** This bonus does not apply to primaries.
- If the outcome is 15 to 19, your district remains intact. **You don't suffer any impact to your reputation.**
- If the outcome of the roll is 10 to 14, bad news, your district has moved a bit. You still have your core base, but **for the next election cycles take -1 to reputation.**
- If the outcome is 9 or lower, you've got trouble. Your power base has dissipated. Parts of your district has been spread across other districts. Now, colleagues you've long considered neighbors are now rivals. You'll be able to run again in a competitive seat, but **for the next two cycles you're taking a -2 hit to reputation** until your district offices can rebuild the trust you have with this new, unfamiliar territory.

MEMBER VS. MEMBER PRIMARY

It's the worst-case scenario for a redistricting process. Not only have you had to try to shore up your own seat, a member of your own party is going to be competing in the same district you are. You're both well-funded, well-connected, and hungry to remain in Congress.

That being said, there is a bit of an age difference, and when that's the case the older member tends to have the advantage.

- Incumbency is the best predictor of whether a candidate wins an election.
- In 20 incumbent-on-incumbent contests since 1992 where there was an age difference of at least two years between the candidates, 12 were won by the older member and eight by the younger member.
- The 2012 cycle, where the more senior representative won eight of 11 such contests following redistricting, was particularly brutal for younger incumbents.

RIVAL MEMBER OF CONGRESS

A powerful friend-turned-rival

Reputation 17

Financial Health 38

Machine	Instincts	Donors	Statehouse	Policy	Charisma
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Instincts +3, Donors +3, Policy +2, Charisma +3

Languages English, Spanish

You were once friends, now only one will remain.

This adversary will go first, and will open with a *oppo dump* on their first turn. That will take a lot out of them, and they'll need to recharge for 5 turns of combat. Over those turns, they're going to use *compare the records*, but then again on the seventh turn they're going to blast you again with *oppo dump*. That process will continue until the turn is over.

ACTIONS

Compare the records Attack: +4 to hit. Hit 1d10 + 5 damage.

Oppo dump (Recharge 5-6) The opponent reveals damaging opposition research about you that they've accumulated over years serving alongside you in Congress. See if your backers stand by you by making a Donor Base saving throw. If you roll 10 or lower, take 6d6 damage. If you roll 11 or higher, take 3d6 damage.

DID YOU WIN?

Congratulations! Welcome back. Mark **one additional term** at the top of your sheet. You're out of campaign season, feel free to use your non-combat moves.

DID YOU LOSE?

Orc America News Network is the only one offering you a contract. Tough breaks. If you'd like, try the game again with a different starter character.

MAKE AN IMPRESSION

You've just emerged from a bruising primary, but after cruising to re-election in your state you're one of the few faces from your party in the area.

You're going to try to parlay this into a national brand, so you decide to make a TikTok to reach the emerging voters.

LET'S TURN SOCIAL MEDIA INTO VOTES!

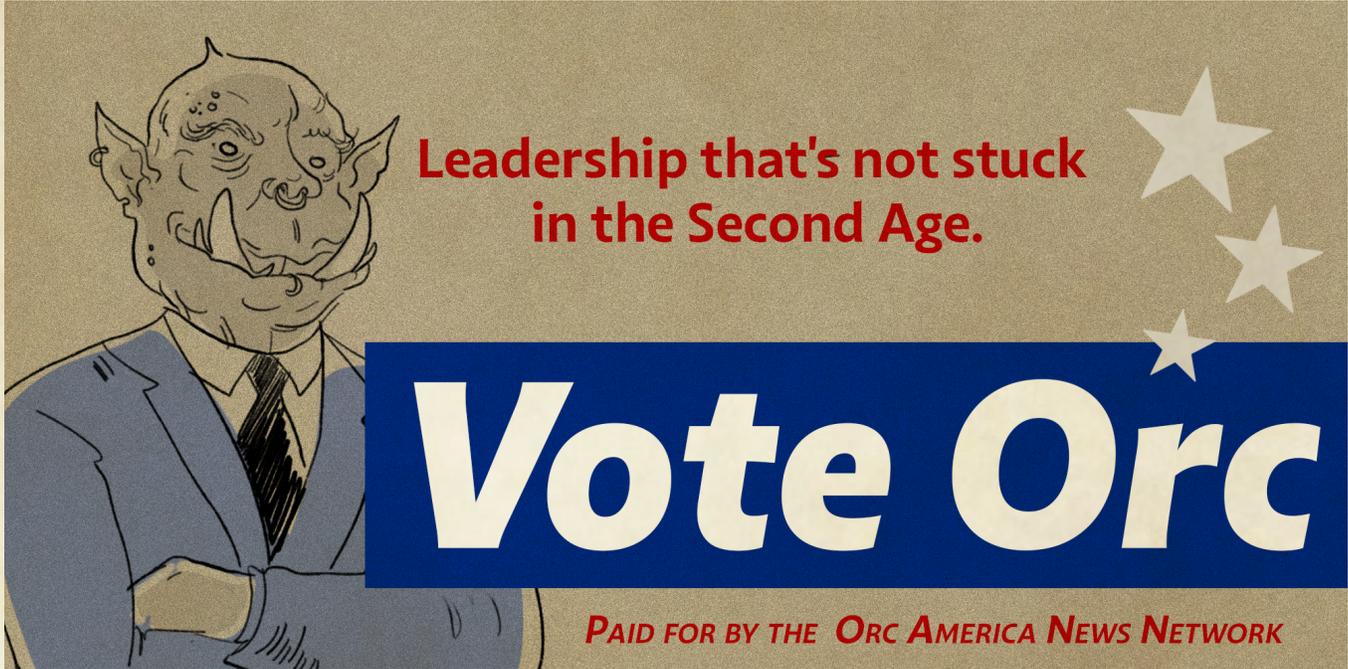
Roll a d20 plus your **Charisma** modifier to see if it works.

- If you got 15 or higher, congrats, you're developing a national audience. **Add 1d6 damage to the next blow you land in a political fight.**
- If you got 8 to 14, **you did fine.** Not good, just fine.
- If you got 7 or less, you accidentally revealed that you have not personally sent an email in the past decade. You're seen as *a bit* out of touch. **The next time you take a hit in a political contest, add 1d6 to the damage.**

TECH LEADERS DISH ON HOW ASININE IT IS TO TRY TO DESCRIBE THEIR COMPANIES, PRODUCTS, AND WORTH TO CONGRESS

The majority of politicians are not digital natives — and they are the ones who ultimately cast votes. "It's a problem, and not just limited to tech," the ex-aide said. "With anything complex, it really takes a level of expertise. And as things get more and more complex, it gets more challenging for lawmakers to be able to wrap their heads around it."

- Hanna Kang and Kayla Gallagher



THE FIGHT OF YOUR POLITICAL LIFE

After that last redistricting contest and the brutal member-vs-member primary you endured, the other party smells blood in the water.

The state party is ascendant after the last election wiped out a lot of your colleagues thanks to their redistricting success, and since there are fewer targets to pick off and you're still around they think it's time to try to send you to the political graveyard. They're bankrolling the best they got.

The squad at the the Drow Necromancer Council (DNC) pulled some strings and made sure that you won't have to contend with a bruising primary before this particular one, and the Dwarven Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) are giving you a heads up that this is the time to make sure you're ready for a tough fight. So, make sure to make your final preparations before the campaign starts.

FUN FACT!

It's not just that the oldest members of Congress are getting older. Even the younger members of Congress are, on balance, getting older.

This is driving up the average age of a member of Congress past 60 years old.

From 1950 to 1990, an average of 10% of Congress was under the age of 40. This got as high as 17% in the early 1980s.

But today, as older members stay longer, the average has been just 4% since 2000.

SEASONED, WELL-FUNDED RIVAL

The other team's best play.

Reputation 14

Financial Health 68

Machine	Instincts	Donors	Statehouse	Policy	Charisma
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Languages English

The other team wants to flip your district. They've sent the best. This enemy will always multiattack, starting with **campaign rallies** and then alternating between **PAC and super PAC ads** and **campaign rallies**. If enemy runs out of rallies, it will rely on ads.

ABILITIES

Only so many hours in a day. The Seasoned, Well-Funded Rival can do a maximum of twenty-four campaign rallies.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Seasoned, Well-Funded Rival makes three attacks per turn: either one with its PAC ad and two with its SuperPAC ads, or three with its campaign rallies.

PAC ad. Attack: +5 to hit. Hit 1d8 + 3 damage.

Super PAC ad. Attack: +5 to hit. Hit 1d6 + 3 damage.

Campaign rally. Ranged Attack: +5 to hit. Hit 1d8 + 3 damage.



TYLER LE

DID YOU WIN?

Congratulations! Welcome back. Mark **one additional term** at the top of your sheet. You're a star, jump over to the *Bonus Game* section.

DID YOU LOSE?

Congrats, the monstrously powerful Gibbering Moulder News (GMN) just offered you a television contract, plus your phone is blowing up with offers from the Center for Abolethian Progress and the powerful Phylactery Researching Necromancers of America (PhRNA) lobby. It's easy street for you. If you'd like, try the game again with a different starter character.

BONUS GAMES

Wow, you really are a political survivor. First of all, congratulations! Add one to your *Seniority* bonus.

From here on out, every election cycle you'll have to roll to see what outcome happens. Just add your **seniority** bonus. See how long you can survive. Be sure to do a redistricting cycle every five cycles.

- 20 or higher: Unchallenged for re-election
- 17 to 19: Weak election opponent
- 13 to 16: Primary challenger
- 10 to 12: Solid general election challenger
- 7 to 9: Two primary challengers simultaneously
- 5 to 8: Primary challenger, followed by Solid general election challenger
- 4 or less: Seasoned general election challenger

Good Luck!

WRITTEN BY WALT HICKEY

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AND VICKY LETA**

MADE WITH THE HOMEBREWERY

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