To: Attorney General Mike DeWine

From: Liam Collins

Re: October 2018 Strategy Memo – Ohio Gubernatorial Election

Date: September 30, 2018

Issue:
Despite Ohio coming off of a general election where the state elected three Republicans statewide (President Donald Trump in the electoral college, Governor John Kasich, and Senator Rob Portman), the state, as it stands now is a toss-up. The people of Ohio trusted you enough to elect you over your opponent Richard Cordray in the 2010 Ohio Attorney General's race, and they have no reason not to do the same in this election.

The state faces new challenges now, however. Since that election, Donald Trump has won the presidency, divided the party into pro-Trump and anti-Trump conservatives, and has created a challenge for moderate Republicans like you – align yourself with the President and risk alienating the John Kasich Republican, or distance yourself from Mr. Trump and risk losing support from the Ohioans who supported him two years ago, and continue to support him today.

With this election being so close, every single word is so critically important to ensure the campaign's victory on November 6th. Republicans can be majorly disadvantaged in this election naturally with the election theory of surge and decline. Ohio is a swing state, with neither having a significant advantage – therefore, it is so important that our campaign makes every single move necessary to mobilize our base to get to the polls on election day.

Proposal:
Our key strategy to win the Ohio Governorship needs to be getting our base excited. This may seem obvious and non-exclusive to this campaign, but in this state, getting voters excited for Mike DeWine, and arguable more importantly *not* excited for Rich Cordray, is going to be the difference between a decisive victory for the Governor's Mansion and, at best, a tight one. There are many ways to get voters excited about a campaign, but based on the current national political climate, which will most likely be reflected in the state of Ohio this cycle, there are three main strategies this campaign should play to energize Republicans and sway moderate voters: Presidential & Gubernatorial Campaign visits, attack advertisements, and highlighting your authoritative statewide positions while also highlighting your opponent's time in federal office.

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Campaign Events from Party Leaders

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The Trump Effect

Ohio helped elect Donald Trump to the presidency in the general election in 2016. But Governor John Kasich, in his bid for the Republican nomination for President in 2016, was able to win the state in the party's primary. These two leaders largely represent what has become two different

factions within the party, Governor Kasich representing a moderate more mainstream Republican, and Donald Trump representing a more anti-establishment faction of the party. It would be a major advantage to work with these two leaders and secure not only their nominations but their active support for your candidacy and campaign.

The effect that presidential campaign visits can have on voter excitement and voter turnout is an effect which cannot be ignored. Sellers & Denton (2006) found that presidential visits to competitive races had a positive effect on voter turnout in favor of the candidate the President was campaigning with. Even though Donald Trump's popularity in Ohio has fallen sharply since he was inaugurated in 2017, Sellers & Denton argue that the President's appearance in Ohio would create an insurgency of support for you, Mr. DeWine. This is largely because the President arriving in the state generates more media coverage from local and national news outlets, meaning that campaign events would have a higher attendance and would increase your name recognition through direct candidate contact with voters.

Donald Trump represents a faction of the party which has not traditionally voted and was, and still is, energized by Trump's "tell it like it is" campaign and presidency. Although I think it would be politically dangerous to tie yourself directly to Donald Trump, being physically close to Donald Trump, if for nothing else a photo-op, would energize his supporters for you, and could be the persuadable factor in the election.

Mid-Term Referendum

Mid-term elections are often seen as a referendum on the current national administration, specifically the economy, and the President's party is often on the receiving end of the electorate's disapproval for the federal government (Jacobson, 2015). Therefore, the best strategy to take in this election when talking about President Trump would be to defend his administration and tout the economic success that his administration has achieved in two years. If this campaign is tying yourself very loosely to Donald Trump, which I believe would be a great strategy for this campaign, then you should be defending the positive aspects of the administration's work over the last two years.

Strictly tying yourself to Donald Trump's success could be an issue in the swing state of Ohio, however. Trump does have a larger disapproval than approval rating in the state. Therefore, simply focusing on the positives of the Trump administration likely would not win you all of the votes you need to win this election. A politically strategic decision to make on this front would be to tout the administration's successes, but promise to call Donald Trump out on his administration's shortcomings. If a candidate's support for President Trump could be placed on a spectrum of -10 to 10, -10 being most against the President, 10 being most supportive of the President and 0 being neither against nor in support of the President, it would be ideal to place yourself in the range of 2 to 4 – more in support of the President, but willing to actively oppose more extreme positions that the administration takes.

Where to Campaign

The biggest stronghold in the election is, without a doubt, Cleveland. Based on the 2016 Presidential election data, Democrat Hillary Clinton won the county that the city is located in by about 30 points, therefore, it would be a waste for either candidate to waste time or resources campaigning in this area, because the democratic candidate already has some solid momentum going into this election. However, the next two largest cities, each without 1 million people, give or take, are up for viable for either candidate to make some major leeway in this election. The cities of Columbus and Cincinatti both went to Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016, but those counties were won by less than 15% of the vote, making it a perfectly viable option for either parties this cycle.

Therefore, the following counties are counties where the winning 2016 Presidential candidate in 2016 won by less than 15% of the vote, and could be considered toss-ups for either major party: Montgomery, Greene, Clark, Delaware, Trumbull, Lake, Wood, Portage, Stark and Medina. All of the preceding counties had significant populations, over one hundred thousand, and were counties where President Trump won by less than 15% of the vote, making it a viable option for either candidate to win. In addition, Mahoning and Lorain Counties are both counties with more than one hundred thousand people, a significant segment of the population, and where Hillary Clinton won by less than 15% of the vote. Therefore, I make the argument that a majority of resources should be targeted toward the preceding counties as well as the cities of Cincinnati and Columbus. By adding up the total populations of these counties, you get about 7.3 million citizens, assuming these counties live up to the state-wide trend where 75% of the population is eligible to vote, and going off the predicted voter turnout number mentioned previously, 55.2%, that would give us about 3 million people expected to vote in these counties. Given that each candidate would need to win about 50% of each county, that gives us about 1.5 million voters each candidate would need to win over, or about 12.8% of the vote. Given that Donald Trump beat Hillary Clinton in Ohio by about 8% of the vote in 2016, and that Senator Rob Portman beat challenger Ted Strickland by about 11% of the vote in the same year, this is a significant and highly persuadable portion of the electorate that could heavily decide the result of the election.

Since it is understood what counties are up for grabs in this election, it's also important to understand what exact resources should be directed where in order to make a presidential visit the most sustainable and impactful. I am going to make the argument that, when communicating a visit with President Trump, plans should be made to host that visit in one of the following counties: Montgomery, Greene, Clark, Delaware, Trumbull, Lake, Wood, Portage, Stark and Medina.

Ideally, the event would take place in Montgomery, Greene or Clark counties, given a new poll released by Baldwin Wallace University which showed a large geographical gap for in Donald Trump's approval ratings (Tobias, 2018). The southeast portion of the state, where these counties are located, have the tightest gap for President Trump of .2% in favor of disapproval.

Given the counties larger populations and clear persuadable population, a visit from Donald Trump in one of these areas would make the most amount of splash of support for you. Donald Trump was able to win a majority of the vote in these counties in 2016, and, with his help, you should be able to as well in November.

Governor John Kasich

In addition to needing to be able to win over active Trump supporters, there's also a need to win over the disenfranchised Republican represented by Governor Kasich. Kasich is seen as a moderate Republican and a Trump-opposition voice and leader. Because of Governor Kasich's prominence and popularity in the state, it would be incredibly politically wise to take advantage of Governor Kasich and work with the Governor for his active support. Although there is no evidence that campaign events with Governors have any statistical significance in turning out as many voters or even generating as much media coverage as a similar event with a sitting President, Governor Kasich's state popularity combined with his national name recognition from his presidential run in 2016 could make for a larger amount of publicity and attendance from the non-Trump faction of the party, as well as political moderates and independents.

Where to Campaign

Two counties with more than 100,000, Mahoning and Lorain, were won by Hillary Clinton in 2016 by less than 15% of the vote. Because he didn't have much success in these parts of the state in his presidential campaign, having Donald Trump campaign in these counties would not be successful. However, a more moderate party leader, Governor Kasich, could have a much deeper impact on the electorate. Therefore, when coordinating with Governor Kasich in planning a campaign event, I recommend planning an event in one of these counties to maximize profitability.

Going Negative

As it stands now, the race is in an exact tie. The most recent poll in the race, from NBC News and Marist, 44% of likely voters said they would vote for you, and 44% of likely voters also said that they would vote for your opponent (NBC News/Marist, 2018).

Research from Krupnikov (2011) shows that now is the perfect time to go negative. Krupnikov's research explains that while a negative campaign in general does not have any effect on voter turnout, the timing of negative campaigning does. This research explains that if a voter sees a negative advertisement about the candidate who they have already chosen to support, they would be less likely to show up to vote by a statistically significant margin. The date that Krupnikov gave for when these negative attack advertisements were most effective in suppressing the opponent's voter turnout was October 1st – tomorrow.

Just as important as encouraging your voting base to show up for you is crafting creative ways to get your opponent's voting base *not* to show up for them. In order to do this, we should craft creative and multi-faceted ways to get Richard Cordray's supporters to stay home on election day.

For starters, an issue that we should continue to hit home is the rape kits that your office tested upon assuming office as Ohio Attorney General in 2010. Not only does this highlight a major and positive accomplishment of your office, it also highlights a shortcoming of the previous administration – which Cordray was a part of. This attack also has the added benefit of swaying

the female vote at a time where women's issues are a major point of contention in our national political environment. We should use this point as a major talking point in tying Cordray to the Strickland administration as well as emphasizing that Cordray would not be good for Ohio women.

In addition to this attack, a beneficial attack would be tying Cordray to the former Governor Ted Strickland. Cordray served as a part of Strickland's administration, but Strickland does not remain as popular as Republican leaders in the state do. Strickland lost his re-election bid to Governor Kasich in 2010 by only about 2%, but when Strickland ran for Senate against Senator Portman in 2016, he was rejected by Ohioans by nearly 22%. Emphasize that Ohioans rejected Strickland in his last two statewide campaigns, and that Ohioans showed that they are much more interested in having Republican leadership represent the Buckeye State. Tying Cordray to Strickland very closely could associate Cordray with Strickland's unpopularity while also having the bilateral impact of delegitimizing Cordray's most recent statewide elected office – which is an issue I will touch upon with more detail in the next section. With a little more than a month away from election day, negative campaigning is in its peak time for effectiveness.

Emphasizing Your Statewide Elected Position

State Attorney General is one of the highest statewide elected positions a state official can hold – emphasize it. The research shows that emphasizing this position will work for you. Squire (1992) argues that statewide elected office gives a candidate one of the highest rating of candidate quality in an election with a score of 4 (out of 6). At the same time with the same scale, Squire also argues that non-elected political positions, federal appointed offices, give the candidate a quality rating of 1. This is incredibly good news for our campaign if we can use this strategically. Cordray's most recent position, the position that he stepped down from in order to run in this election, was the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which he was appointed to in 2011 by President Obama. This means, judging strictly off of this research and the most recent positions held by you and your opponent, you are a much more quality candidate than Cordray. However, of course, you did succeed Cordray as State Attorney General, so Cordray does have a platform to argue, from the basis of this research, that he is just as qualified as you are. That's why it is so important for us to 1. Emphasize and legitimize your role as State Attorney General to give yourself the platform to argue that you are a quality and qualified candidate for Governor. 2. Emphasize Richard Cordray's time as a federal appointed bureaucrat to make him look very Washington and very out-of-touch with Ohioans, as well as having the added benefit of politically tying him to Barack Obama. And 3. Delegitimize Richard Cordray's time as State Attorney General so that Cordray cannot argue that he is as qualified as you are.

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