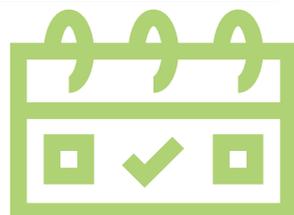


Lessons Learned in the Campaign Trenches

A 10-Part Series Leading Up to Election Day

Lesson #2:



Election Day is not on Election Day.

Election Day is statutorily defined as “the Tuesday next after the first Monday in the month of November” when it comes to a general election. However, in developing a timeline for a bond campaign, Election Day should be defined as “the day that the first vote is cast and every day thereafter until the statutorily set date of the election.”

All states allow voters to request an absentee ballot. In fact, about two-thirds of the states allow any qualified voter to vote absentee without offering a reason. Some states, like Michigan, offer voters the opportunity to be on a permanent absentee ballot list in which they automatically receive an absentee ballot each election.

There are currently nine states that will automatically mail a ballot to every eligible voter. In

all-mail states, ballots are typically mailed well in advance of Election Day. For example, in Colorado, ballots are mailed 18 to 22 days before Election Day.

About four-fifths of the states allow early, in-person voting. This takes place during a designated period prior to Election Day. In many states, early voting starts about two weeks in advance of Election Day.

There’s nothing worse than knocking on doors, making phone calls or having mail arrive after voters have already voted.

It’s critical that campaigns identify when and how voters can vote, segment voters based on when they will likely vote based on historical voter data (if available) and create unique timelines to target

each voter segment. In states without all-mail elections, voters typically fall into these categories: absentee voters, early voters and Election Day voters.

For states in which a large percentage of the electorate will take advantage of absentee or early voting, as well as all-mail states, it’s important that direct mail, canvassing and literature drops, phone banking, earned media and other campaign strategies are properly timed.

At the same time, a campaign cannot take their foot off the gas before the last vote is cast. This even holds true in all-mail states, given the large percentage of voters who wait until the very end to mail in their ballot or drop it off at a designated drop-box. In the 2014 and 2016 general elections in Colorado, about one-third of the ballots did not arrive until the last two days of the election.

Northbrook/Glenview School District 30, IL

In Illinois, early voting has become increasingly popular, and it’s not just in high-turnout general elections. Primaries and consolidated general elections are also seeing an increase in early voting.

In 2017, *Citizens for District 30 Bond Referendum*, a campaign committee advocating for a \$36.3 million bond measure to fund a new middle school, worked overtime to get their message out early. Two factors drove their decision to implement canvassing and other campaign

strategies many weeks in advance of Election Day. First, they knew that a large percentage of high-propensity voters would vote early. Second, many voters—including parents of District 30 students—would be on spring break during at least half of the early voting days.

The campaign committee’s efforts to accelerate the campaign timeline paid off. Before spring break started, many parents and other supportive voters had cast their vote. In the end, the referendum passed with 76% support.

In the Spotlight



This 10-part series brings together some of the most important campaign lessons that members of the Beyond Your Base team have learned throughout the past 28 years. We also provide a behind-the-scenes look at strategies employed by citizen-led campaign committees that were highly successful.

Beyond Your Base (BYB) is a public affairs and pre-referendum consulting group of Wight & Company that develops and implements comprehensive public engagement programs that incorporate voter analytics, public opinion research and strategic communications.

BYB’s focus is on engaging taxpayers and other stakeholders to deliver capital improvement projects that are truly community-driven.

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When will the first vote likely be cast in the November 3, 2020 Election?

Based on information available as of August 2020, below are estimates as to how many days in advance of Election Day the first vote will be cast this fall in various states.

5

Oklahoma ¹

10 to 15

Alaska
Arkansas ¹
DC ⁶
Delaware ²
Florida
Hawaii ³
Idaho ¹
Illinois

Louisiana
Maryland
Massachusetts
New York
North Dakota
Utah
West Virginia
Wisconsin ¹

17 to 22

Colorado
Georgia
Kansas
Kentucky
Nevada ⁶
New Mexico

North Carolina
Oregon
Tennessee
Texas
Washington

26 to 31

Arizona
California ⁶
Connecticut
Indiana ¹
Iowa ¹

Maine ⁵
Montana ¹
Nebraska
Ohio ⁴

40 to 45

Michigan ¹
Minnesota ¹
New Jersey ⁶
South Dakota ¹

Vermont ⁶
Virginia
Wyoming ¹

Dates that absentee ballots will be mailing in Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and South Carolina were not identified.

- ¹ In-person absentee
- ² At least 10 days
- ³ 10 working days prior
- ⁴ On Tuesday before Election Day for some counties
- ⁵ 30 to 45 days (as soon as absentee ballots are ready)
- ⁶ Moving to all mail-in ballot – days may change



Some voters vote early and some voters vote late. In fact, about one-third of Colorado’s mail-in ballots arrived the last two days of the 2016 Presidential Election.