

CORRIDOR PARTNERS

TO: **Interested Parties**
FROM: **Corridor Partners**
DATE: **February 27, 2015**
RE: **Using Voter Registration to Reshape the U.S. Electorate**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document and the attached appendix offer a rationale for using large-scale, multi-year voter registration programs to significantly transform the American electorate. ~~This ambitious case was developed by program and data experts retained by Corridor Partners, supplemented by input from voter registration specialists with years of non-profit and political experience.~~

In presenting an argument for large-scale, multi-year voter registration, Corridor gave these experts license to think big, developing an ~~aggressive six~~6-year (2015-2020) ~~aggressive~~ strategy to reshape the electorate in as many states as possible. ~~Their ideas are ambitious, even audacious, and the costs are not for the faint of heart.~~ But, if funding was available and the suggested program was executed at scale, it could have a dramatic impact on U.S. elections and public policy for years to come.

Specifically, their analysis calls for registering hundreds of thousands of voters in ~~between eight~~8 ~~and to~~ 13 states at a total, ~~six~~6-year cost ranging from \$105 million to \$210 million. If fully implemented, the program suggested by Corridor's analysts could have far-reaching implications for reshape the electorate in statewide elections in places as diverse as Florida, Georgia, and Arizona by 2020.

These are bold ~~claims~~assertions, but the quantitative analysis underpinning their study is compelling ~~and~~ grounded in rigorous models and prudent, even conservative assumptions. Although much more work is needed to flesh out a full plan, particularly on the important challenge of program implementation, the quantitative analysis is intriguing and the potential voter participation ~~political~~ outcomes are enormous.

Below is a brief overview of the impact ~~of~~ low voter engagement has had on American politics and policy, the role voter registration can play in substantially increasing voter participation, and a possible scenario ~~—d—~~developed by Corridor's expert team ~~—t—~~to deploy targeted? resources over the next ~~6~~ six years in order to significantly change/alter the electorate in ~~between eight~~8 ~~and to~~ 13 states.

INTRODUCTION: WHY VOTER REGISTRATION MATTERS

Overview. Although the United States takes pride in its participatory democracy, a surprisingly large percentage of Americans fail to vote in federal, state, and local elections. ~~This lack of participation has many causes, but one of the most prominent is the failure of millions of citizens to complete the voter registration process, a prerequisite to voting.~~ In states like Georgia ~~or~~ and

Florida, for example, as many as 28 to 33 percent of eligible citizens cannot vote because they are simply not registered to do so.¹

The lack of voter participation by millions of citizens has almost certainly had an impact on both national and state policy. -With a large percentage of the public sitting on the sidelines, a relatively small fraction of voters end up **deciding determining** who is elected to federal, state, and local office. -These habitual voters have an outsized voice in our national discourse as candidates running for office tailor their positions to align with these likely voters, even when the broader public has opposing views.²

Although there are a variety of strategies to increase voter participation and engagement, ~~including focused get-out-the-vote drives and longer-term policy changes to make it easier to participate in elections,~~ one of the most cost-effective, short-term ways to increase electoral engagement is through voter registration programs. ~~Recent research has shown that, dollar for dollar, the simple step of registering a citizen to vote is the one of the most cost-effective ways to increase voter participation.~~ **Furthermore, voter registration** is often more effective than partisan and non-partisan get-out-the-vote programs, ~~more than~~ paid television ads, and ~~more than~~ many other tactics commonly used in election campaigns. -Unlike any of these other efforts, voter registration also pays long-term dividends because those **citizens** registered to vote today are more likely to vote ~~—~~ without further prompting ~~—~~ in future elections.³

To determine the potential reach and impact of a concentrated, multi-year voter registration program, Corridor Partners retained two experts, Joanne Wright and Joel Hartig.⁴ They, in turn, consulted a number of organizations and experts with deep voter registration experience, including Page Gardner of the Voter Participation Center, and Jeremy Bird, who ran the voter registration programs for both of President Obama's **election-presidential** campaigns. -They also reviewed the research literature on voter registration programs, particularly reports by the New Organizing Institute, to inform their analysis.

What they **ultimately** put together is a bold scenario for multi-year voter registration that has the potential to fundamentally reshape the electorate in as many as 13 states, affecting both statewide and even national elections. -Undertaking a registration effort of this magnitude is expensive, costing between \$105 million and \$210 million over ~~6-six~~ years. -But, if it were fully implemented at the scale suggested by our experts' analysis, the program has the potential to impact **public** policies **affecting that affect** millions of citizens **across a broad range of issues, and guiding hundreds of billions of dollars of in government funding into to environment, health, energy, and other initiatives.**

It is important to note that this is a *draft* scenario **to,** illustrating what is possible **by making through** a sustained, sizable investment in voter registration over the next six years. -Before moving forward, more work is needed to validate the underlying assumptions, to better define

¹ United States Census Current Population Survey, November Voting and Registration Supplement, 2012, Table 4a. -Reported Voting and Registration of the Citizen Voting-Age Population, for States: November 2012. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>

² An October 2014 report by Demos compiled recent research showing that a lack of participation in voting, particularly by low-income citizens, has had a direct impact on policy. -Sean McElewee, "Why the Voting Gap Matters," Demos, October 23, 2014. <http://www.demos.org/publication/why-voting-gap-matters>.

³ Alexander Coppock and Donald P. Green, "Is Voting Habit Forming? New Evidence Suggests that Habit-Formation Varies by Election Type", Columbia University, August 26, 2013. <http://polisci.columbia.edu/files/polisci/u377/Coppock%20Green%20Habit.pdf>

⁴ Wright oversaw large-scale voter registration programs for 10 years at ACORN. -Hartig is a data analyst who has extensive political experience with President Obama's campaigns in 2008 and 2012, as well as numerous state and federal elections.

costs, and, most importantly, to identify the organizations and overall management required to implement such a program. This last point is critical. Even if the analysis is convincing, considerable additional work must be done to determine whether there are enough new and/or existing organizations with sufficient skill, experience, and management capacity to undertake a program of this size.

Before detailing the specific scenario developed by Corridor's expert team, it is worth briefly describing the magnitude of the voter participation problem, the potential impact it may be having on elections, and why voter registration is a cost-effective choice to ameliorate the problem.

A Small Percentage of Americans Decide U.S. Elections. As noted above, vast numbers of Americans who could participate in our democracy choose not to do so. In presidential elections since 1996, only about 58 to 64 percent of those eligible to vote typically cast a ballot.⁵ Or, stated another way, less than a third of the voting-age population decides who is elected President. In non-presidential election years like 2014, the problem is even worse. Since 1998, during these "midterm" elections, since 1998, only 45 to 48 percent of those who could vote end up participating, which means that, on average, only 23 to 25 percent of all eligible voters will pick the winner.⁶

Not only is poor voter participation turnout a problem in both presidential and non-presidential election years, it is even worse among people of color, young people, and single women, thereby skewing the demographic of likely voters to be substantially more wealthy, white, and older than the general public.⁷ For example, in the mid-term election in 2010, roughly 46 percent of those eligible to vote cast a ballot, but only 38 percent of the eligible African-American/Hispanic population voted.⁸

Voter participation by people of color has improved somewhat in recent years, but their continued absence from the political process has almost certainly had a skewed impact on both elections and policy. Here are three illustrative examples from recent elections:

Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) won his re-election in 2012 by only 11,576 votes out of 997,805 votes cast, with 62 percent of the eligible African-American population and 52 percent of the eligible Latino population voting. But, in that same year, Nevada had 178,000 African-Americans and Hispanics who were eligible to vote, but had failed to register. If only half of that group had registered, and those new registrants cast ballots at no higher a percentage than other newly registered African-Americans and Hispanics, they would have added another 59,937 votes to the Nevada electorate, potentially altering the outcome of the race.

In 2012, Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) won his election by 67,915 votes in 2012 out of 2,245,609 votes cast, with 46 percent of the eligible African-American population and 40 percent of the eligible Latino population voting. Like Nevada, Arizona also had hundreds of thousands (529,000) of unregistered Hispanics and African-Americans who were otherwise eligible to vote. If only 50 percent of that group had been registered and had voted at the same rate as other newly registered

⁵ Table A-1. Reported Voting and Registration by Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex and Age Groups: November 1964 to 2012.

<https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/historical/>

⁶ Project Vote, An Analysis of Who Voted (and Who Didn't Vote) in the 2010 Election.

<http://projectvote.org/images/publications/2010Electorate.pdf>

⁷ Project Vote, An Analysis of Who Voted (and Who Didn't Vote) in the 2010 Election.

<http://projectvote.org/images/publications/2010Electorate.pdf>

⁸ Voter files from the 2014 elections have not yet been updated, but Election Day exit polls suggest a similar pattern in this year's election.

~~African-Americans and Hispanics, they would have added another 177,953 votes to the Arizona electorate.~~

~~Finally, Governor Rick Scott (R-FL) won his election in 2010 by 61,550 votes out of 5,359,735 votes cast, with 42 percent of the eligible African-American population and 41 percent of the eligible Latino population voting. There were over 1.5 million eligible African-Americans and Hispanics Floridians who failed to register to vote in 2010. Assuming average voting rates again, registering half of that group, and again assuming average voting rates, would have added another 281,678 ballots in to the 2010 election.⁹ As these examples show, greater participation by African-Americans and Hispanics in each of these three states could have affected the election outcome. That, and having that power influence, regardless of who actually won, would have almost certainly compelled candidates to take seriously the policy views and opinions of these new registrants.~~

Registration Programs are a Cost-Effective Way to Improve Voter Participation. Based on recent research, including a number of randomized controlled experiments, a proven, cost-effective way to increase voter participation is simply registering unregistered voters. A wide range of strategies ~~isare~~ used to motivate people to vote, including door-to-door canvassing, mail programs ~~and~~, phone calls, ~~and other tactics~~, but simply registering an unregistered voter turns out to be one of the least expensive methods to increase voter participation. The chart below compares the costs of several tactics to get a voter to cast a ballot who would otherwise stay home. Clearly, investments in voter registration offer a very high return on investment.

Type of Contact	Average Cost Per Vote ¹⁰
GOTV Call - Commercial Phone Bank	\$306
GOTV Mail - Traditional Non-Partisan Message	\$222
GOTV Call - Volunteer Phone Bank	\$155
GOTV Door Knocking (Canvassing)	\$86
Voter Registration - 2016 Cycle Estimate	\$73
GOTV Mail - With "Thank You For Voting" Message	\$32
GOTV Mail - With Social Pressure Message	\$15

In addition to lower costs, programs to help citizens register to vote for the first time, or help update their registration with a new address, appear to have a motivating effect on turnout. Citizens registered through these programs consistently had higher turnout rates compared with people who registered on their own.¹¹

⁹~~Turnout rates based on data collected and presented in New Organizing Institute's 2010 Voter Registration Analysis, p. 5, 35-37, and New Organizing Institute, Independent Voter Registration Report 2012, p. 14-16, 69-71. Election results collected through Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections (<http://uselectionatlas.org>). Unregistered Population Estimates based on the United States Census Current Population Survey, November Voting and Registration Supplement, 2010 and 2012.~~

¹⁰ Cost per vote estimates for GOTV efforts based on findings in: Donald P. Green, Mary C. McGrath & Peter M. Aronow (2013) Field Experiments and the Study of Voter Turnout, Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, 23:1, 27-48, DOI: 10.1080/17457289.2012.728223.

¹¹ National Organizing Institute, "Independent Voter Registration Report 2012 – An Analysis of Independent Voter Registration Efforts from the 2012 Election Cycle".

Adding to the impact of registration programs, a number of peer-reviewed studies have shown that registering and voting in one election substantially increases one's likelihood to vote in *subsequent* elections.¹² For example, in analyzing a collection of 15 experiments with minority voters in California over a series of primary and general elections from 2006 to 2008, one research team found that voting in one election increases the probability of voting in a subsequent election by 23 percent.¹³ -In short, registering a voter today will continue to pay dividends in elections to come.

Registration Programs Have Been Underfunded and Episodic. -Despite the clear need to increase voter participation and the obvious advantages of voter registration to meet that ~~need~~**demand**, investment in registration programs has been episodic and small.- Historically, funding for voter registration programs, [which typically comes from foundations and individual donors](#), is not [made available](#) ~~provided~~ until the spring of an election year, requiring a rapid and costly ramp-up in registration efforts.¹⁴ Voter registration funding almost never reaches organizations in the year before the election, and funding these programs in the context of a strategic, multi-cycle plan has simply never been done.

Though there are a number of theories [as to](#) why more has ~~no~~**t** been invested in registration efforts, one of the likely reasons is that individual and institutional donors tend to focus their spending on specific issues—the environment, women's issues, immigration—~~r~~**r** rather than [using employ](#) a strategy like voter registration to lift the political voice of affected populations across a range of issues.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF MULTI-YEAR, LARGE-SCALE VOTER REGISTRATION

Building on what is known about the effectiveness of voter registration programs, Corridor asked its expert team to answer a simple question: *Where, and at what scale, would one invest in voter registration programs over the next six years (2015-2020) to achieve a fundamental shift in the composition of the electorate?*

To answer to this question, the team plumbed multiple data sources, rigorously tested their assumptions, employed conservative cost estimates, and, most importantly, crafted [the analytical toolkit algorithms](#) to pull it all together. -The result is an ambitious scenario to [change the composition of the electorate alter the electoral balance](#) in as many as 13 states.¹⁵

Specifically, the analysts undertook the following steps:

- First, they calculated on a state-by-state basis the potential of voter registration programs to substantially alter the makeup of the electorate. -Although there are millions of citizens who are currently unregistered, the expert team focused only on unregistered African-American, Hispanic, and other non-white citizens. -These cohorts are historically under-represented in the electoral process, and increasing their participation will not only alter

¹² Alexander Coppock and Donald P. Green, "Is Voting Habit Forming? New Evidence Suggests that Habit-Formation Varies by Election Type", Columbia University, August 26, 2013. <http://polisci.columbia.edu/files/polisci/u377/Coppock%20Green%20Habit.pdf>

¹³ Lisa García Bedolla and Melissa R. Michelson, "Mobilizing Inclusion: Transforming the Electorate through Get-Out-the-Vote Campaigns". <http://yalepress.yale.edu/book.asp?isbn=9780300166781>

¹⁴ A good example of this pattern is the New Georgia Project, which developed a program to register more than 100,000 new voters before the 2014 elections. Because the program got such a late start, the Project had trouble ensuring that as many as 40,000 of its new registrants actually made it onto the rolls before Election Day and had to resort to litigation to make sure its programs had impact.

¹⁵ In course of developing their analysis the expert team also crafted a set of analytical tools to produce alternative scenarios, with more or fewer states, and a broader swath of voters.- In short, the scenario presented here can be tweaked and tuned to fit the needs of specific funders and organizations.

the numbers of voters in a given state, but also change the demographic mix of voters to better reflect the views of the general public.

- ~~Second, the team assumed that any difference in the composition of the electorate had to be achieved *only* using voter registration programs. Although other efforts over the next six years, such as changes in election administration policies, may shift the composition of the electorate, ~~such as changes in election administration policies~~, this scenario does not depend on those efforts to achieve its goals and outcomes.~~
- Third, after calculating the potential pool of new registrants and the new votes that would likely be added in each state, the team compared these estimated new votes to the state's vote margins in recent elections to determine whether the bloc of new voters would be large enough to capture the attention of candidates in future statewide elections.
- ~~Third, after calculating the potential pool of new registrants in each state, the team compared those estimates with the vote margins in a number of recent statewide elections to determine whether the views of these new registrants would matter to candidates in future elections.~~
- ~~And, finally, in estimating costs, the team relied only on proven tactics and techniques with well-established operating expenses. Actual costs, particularly with the advent of much less expensive online voter registration in the next few years, could be considerably less.~~

Below is a short description of each of these methodological issues, along with specific cost estimates to implement a program of this magnitude.

Determining the Number of Potential New Registrants. To determine the registration potential in a given state, the team relied on Census data to estimate the unregistered population of African-Americans, Hispanics and other non-white citizens. Those estimates are adjusted between 2015 and 2020 as younger citizens turn 18 and become eligible to vote. Then, using state-by-state estimates, they removed a certain percentage of adults from the voting eligible population who are barred from voter registration due to felony convictions. The calculations are also changed to reflect the fact that, in all states, when a voter moves from one residence to another, he/she must re-register at their new address in order to vote on a regular ballot.¹⁶ Accordingly, the team's scenario factors in annual "moving rates" to ~~make sure ensure~~ these newly unregistered voters are included in the estimates. The following chart shows the estimated number of unregistered voters and movers who would require re-registration within the African-American, Hispanic, and other non-white populations for each state starting in 2015-16.¹⁷

¹⁶ There are a very small number of exceptions to this rule, as explained in the Appendix.

¹⁷ As explained in the Appendix, this data is generated using the unregistered data from the Census's November 2012 release. While the unregistered electorate will be slightly different, the data below is actually more conservative than the actual unregistered populations. This is explained in more detail in the Appendix.

State	Est. Non-White Unregistered Voting-Eligible Population By 2016	Est. Non-White Movers Requiring Re-Registration By 2016	Total
Alaska	54,061	24,311	78,372
Alabama	222,185	205,621	427,806
Arkansas	185,412	70,563	255,975
Arizona	667,205	238,121	905,326
California	4,906,373	1,852,096	6,758,469
Colorado	336,359	120,084	456,442
Connecticut	230,039	97,017	327,056
Delaware	48,827	33,361	82,189
Florida	972,977	876,736	1,849,713
Georgia	707,420	521,251	1,228,671
Hawaii	354,443	97,594	452,037
Iowa	74,491	28,003	102,494
Idaho	54,746	14,929	69,675
Illinois	821,370	475,661	1,297,031
Indiana	190,159	120,407	310,566
Kansas	137,441	49,579	187,021
Kentucky	38,501	64,882	103,383
Louisiana	231,197	255,392	486,589
Massachusetts	315,150	166,333	481,483
Maryland	441,951	308,196	750,147
Maine	17,729	6,940	24,669
Michigan	425,686	288,399	714,085
Minnesota	113,845	73,950	187,795
Missouri	143,407	154,544	297,951
Mississippi	47,227	212,128	259,355

State	Est. Non-White Unregistered Voting-Eligible Population By 2016	Est. Non-White Movers Requiring Re-Registration By 2016	Total
Montana	24,156	14,699	38,855
North Carolina	362,645	457,469	820,114
North Dakota	26,483	10,220	36,703
Nebraska	67,725	22,026	89,751
New Hampshire	19,318	10,276	29,594
New Jersey	608,199	361,816	970,015
New Mexico	282,386	121,883	404,269
Nevada	238,294	107,806	346,099
New York	1,680,650	802,256	2,482,906
Ohio	335,078	281,652	616,730
Oklahoma	341,974	134,359	476,333
Oregon	172,044	65,852	237,896
Pennsylvania	545,169	295,684	840,853
Rhode Island	40,478	22,863	63,340
South Carolina	265,147	225,634	490,782
South Dakota	28,935	15,189	44,124
Tennessee	163,923	193,062	356,984
Texas	3,032,038	1,321,201	4,353,239
Utah	149,410	29,430	178,840
Virginia	237,517	315,798	553,315
Vermont	8,421	4,884	13,305
Washington	371,707	177,826	549,533
Wisconsin	173,949	101,512	275,460
West Virginia	28,687	10,866	39,553
Wyoming	26,200	5,197	31,397

Estimating the Number of New Voters from Voter Registration. Of course, even within a large universe of potential new registrants and re-registrants, only a portion can cost-effectively be registered and only a fraction of those will actually turn out to vote. In order to estimate the number of new voters from voter registration programs in a particular state, several variables had to be considered. Specifically, the team had to calculate (1) the number of unregistered voters who could feasibly be registered in a state; (2) how many of those new registrants are likely to vote in a presidential election year and in a mid-term election; and (3) how the cumulative effect of multi-year registration would affect the number of new voters in elections between 2015 and 2020. Each of these issues is discussed below.

- First, registration programs cannot realistically register every eligible voter. The costs and logistics make it virtually impossible to reach a 100 percent registration rate. In fact, experience with a variety of registration tactics over many years suggests that the number of voter registration applications that an aggressive, but realistic program can collect is approximately 50 percent of the unregistered population. The team then calculated how many of those registrations will make it onto the voter rolls, and how many of those registrations will come from people who would not have registered without the efforts of the voter registration drive. This determines the number of “net” registrants.
- Second, registering a voter does not mean that person will vote. To calculate the number of new voters from voter registration efforts requires estimating how many of those registered are likely to go to the polls. Fortunately, recent in-depth studies of registration programs conducted in 2010 and 2012¹⁸ provide fairly precise estimates of so-called “turnout rates” for new registrants in both presidential and mid-term elections.
- Finally, to accurately estimate the number of new votes, the analysis took into account the cumulative effect of a multi-year registration program. This turned out to be a complex set of calculations, accounting for the year-to-year impact of registration efforts, the ongoing need to re-register voters who fall off the rolls, as well as other miscellaneous factors that can either grow or shrink the number of new registrants/voters each year. Although the calculations are complex, it is important to avoid excluding a state where a two-year registration effort may not be enough to give under-represented populations a meaningful voice in statewide elections, but where a three- or four-year effort might achieve that goal.

Selecting States with Competitive Elections. For this scenario, the expert team focused on states that were likely to have competitive elections in the next six years. Based on their experience, echoed by other experts, large-scale voter registration drives are more successful in states with high-profile elections where other actors are also communicating with voters about the upcoming election, increasing both awareness and excitement. In addition, the team felt it would be easier to motivate under-represented constituencies if they could honestly say that their

¹⁸ National Organizing Institute, “Independent Voter Registration Report 2012 – An Analysis of Independent Voter Registration Efforts from the 2012 Election Cycle” and National Organizing Institute, “2010 Voter Registration Analysis – An Evaluation of Independent Voter Registration Efforts from the 2010 Election Cycle.” These analyses involve matching data-entered lists of voter registration applicants from the organizations to state voter registration rolls after the election.

participation was likely to matter. Academic research confirms that voter interest, particularly for low propensity voters, is closely tied to the competitiveness salience outcome of an election.¹⁹ .

To identify states with a history of competitive elections, the expert team looked at the vote margin between winning and losing candidates the winner and loser in six of six of the most recent statewide elections for president, governor, or and U.S. senator, including the 2014 elections. They then ~~They~~ dropped the two most lop-sided results largest margins and averaged the remaining four to calculate an average vote margin for each state. It is important to note that these margins were calculated without regard to the party affiliation of the winning candidate, combining elections won by Democrats as well as Republicans to derive the vote margin.

~~Using an average over a number of elections gives greater confidence that the margin would likely be comparable in upcoming elections. This average margin provides a target to shoot for with registration programs. If those programs can close the margin in a particular state, the newly registered voters could have the potential leverage to influence the policy positions of candidates in upcoming elections. At the same time, if the margin is too large to overcome or nearly overcome, even after conducting an aggressive voter registration effort, it may not make sense to invest in that state, at least in the next six years.~~

The upshot of all of these calculations is presented in the two charts below. -The first chart shows all 50 states, with the second column showing representing the projected **vote margin** discussed above. -The third, fourth, and fifth columns show the potential new votes from multi-year voter registration efforts in each of the states for each electoral cycle. -It should be noted that turnout is higher in presidential election years compared to midterm election years, which is why the votes generated in 2018 are significantly lower than in 2020.

State	Vote Margin	Estimated Net Votes Generated By Cycle Under VR Program			State	Vote Margin	Estimated Net Votes Generated By Cycle Under VR Program		
		2016	2018	2020			2016	2018	2020
Alaska	33,945	17,543	14,064	41,871	Montana	25,506	2,700	2,568	6,480
Alabama	365,133	24,833	27,662	70,163	North Carolina	74,926	40,532	44,624	116,077
Arkansas	160,099	20,723	20,489	49,315	North Dakota	46,268	2,960	3,069	7,660
Arizona	153,657	74,573	79,341	198,635	Nebraska	128,234	7,569	7,895	19,341
California	1,554,423	548,378	553,262	1,362,548	New Hampshire	37,256	2,159	2,313	5,894
Colorado	67,520	37,594	37,777	92,832	New Jersey	348,058	67,978	69,691	176,162
Connecticut	87,281	25,711	26,625	65,064	New Mexico	53,381	31,562	31,443	77,626
Delaware	88,053	5,457	5,911	14,753	Nevada	51,246	26,634	27,288	70,099
Florida	110,701	108,748	117,212	300,663	New York	1,273,185	187,844	186,879	460,995
Georgia	216,431	79,067	83,753	218,487	Ohio	208,163	37,451	39,323	98,923
Hawaii	92,005	39,616	39,563	94,695	Oklahoma	277,422	38,222	37,953	93,977
Iowa	110,267	8,326	8,656	21,236	Oregon	142,720	19,229	19,833	49,413
Idaho	121,193	6,119	6,196	15,604	Pennsylvania	270,071	60,933	63,538	157,168
Illinois	149,779	91,803	94,547	236,252	Rhode Island	74,050	4,524	4,883	12,486

¹⁹ Kevin Arceneaux, David Nickerson, "Who is Mobilized to Vote? A Re-Analysis of 11 Field Experiments," American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 53, No. 1, January 2009.

Indiana	126,425	21,254	22,499	57,120	South Carolina	151,305	29,635	30,894	77,116
Kansas	182,541	15,362	15,264	37,570	South Dakota	57,256	3,234	3,334	8,327
Kentucky	182,904	4,303	4,772	13,359	Tennessee	454,359	18,321	19,496	50,816
Louisiana	240,913	25,841	29,710	76,310	Texas	946,241	338,886	346,386	861,804
Massachusetts	230,830	35,224	37,578	97,070	Utah	253,374	16,699	17,260	42,407
Maryland	374,927	49,396	51,596	128,894	Virginia	111,566	26,547	30,727	80,694
Maine	92,477	1,982	1,983	4,799	Vermont	53,469	941	1,072	2,753
Michigan	394,823	47,578	48,131	123,128	Washington	218,166	41,545	42,739	104,689
Minnesota	136,846	12,724	14,842	38,248	Wisconsin	133,566	19,442	20,949	53,731
Missouri	215,191	16,028	17,062	42,493	West Virginia	64,183	3,206	3,117	7,708
Mississippi	144,135	5,279	9,242	29,225	Wyoming	76,426	2,928	2,914	7,073

From this 50-state summary chart, [the team identified eight~~8~~ specific states where the projected number of new votes from registration efforts would exceed that state's vote margin in either 2016, 2018, or 2020 elections. Registration programs in an additional five~~5~~ additional states were identified where registration efforts would come fairly close to equaling the vote margin is nearly closed by 2020.²⁰ The team recommended focusing on this subset of states because, although voter registration efforts would be helpful in every state, the voice of underrepresented citizens is likely to be "louder" and more impactful in states where the voting bloc of new registrants is roughly equal to the state's average vote margin. Candidates from across the political spectrum are more likely to consider the concerns of these new voters if, as a group, they contributed enough new votes to affect election outcomes.](#)

State	Years When Vote Margin is Closed (With Nearly Closed Years in Parentheses)	State	Years When Vote Margin is Nearly Closed
Arizona	(2018), 2020	Connecticut	2020
Colorado	(2016), (2018), 2020	Pennsylvania	2020
Florida	(2016), 2018, 2020	South Carolina	2020
Georgia	2020	Texas	2020
Illinois	(2016), (2018), 2020	Virginia	2020
North Carolina	(2016), (2018), 2020		
New Mexico	(2016), (2018), 2020		
Nevada	(2016), (2018), 2020		

To provide some additional context, we created a set of three charts that show the number of net votes that could be gained through registration efforts alone in these 13 states broken out by race and ethnicity, with one chart per election cycle:

²⁰ A state qualified for this group if both of the following criteria were met: (1) voter registration efforts would narrow the vote margin to under 150,000 votes, and (2) the new votes generated would be more than 50 percent % of the current vote margin.

Estimated Net Votes Generated By VR Program, By Race and Ethnicity, 2016 Election						
State	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	Other Non-White	Total Non-White	Vote Margin
Arizona	6,988	49,884	11,976	5,725	74,573	153,657
Colorado	5,483	23,848	6,718	1,546	37,594	67,520
Connecticut	9,964	9,763	4,785	1,198	25,711	87,281
Florida	31,588	51,800	19,112	6,249	108,748	110,701
Georgia	51,880	11,327	12,428	3,432	79,067	216,431
Illinois	34,962	41,308	14,546	987	91,803	149,779
North Carolina	24,487	6,674	2,925	6,446	40,532	74,926
New Mexico	1,394	22,103	996	7,070	31,562	53,381
Nevada	4,695	14,480	3,156	4,304	26,634	51,246
Pennsylvania	28,619	19,089	5,428	7,797	60,933	270,071
South Carolina	24,236	2,106	1,418	1,875	29,635	151,305
Texas	53,339	254,033	22,347	9,167	338,886	946,241
Virginia	11,014	4,243	8,638	2,652	26,547	111,566

Estimated Net Votes Generated By VR Program, By Race and Ethnicity, 2016 Election						
State	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	Other Non-White	Total Non-White	Vote Margin
Arizona	6,988	49,884	11,976	5,725	74,573	-153,657
Colorado	5,483	23,848	6,718	1,546	37,594	-67,520
Connecticut	9,964	9,763	4,785	1,198	25,711	-87,281
Florida	31,588	51,800	19,112	6,249	108,748	-110,701
Georgia	51,880	11,327	12,428	3,432	79,067	-216,431
Illinois	34,962	41,308	14,546	987	91,803	-149,779
North Carolina	24,487	6,674	2,925	6,446	40,532	-74,926
New Mexico	1,394	22,103	996	7,070	31,562	-53,381
Nevada	4,695	14,480	3,156	4,304	26,634	-51,246
Pennsylvania	28,619	19,089	5,428	7,797	60,933	-270,071
South Carolina	24,236	2,106	1,418	1,875	29,635	-151,305
Texas	53,339	254,033	22,347	9,167	338,886	-946,241
Virginia	11,014	4,243	8,638	2,652	26,547	-111,566

Estimated Net Votes Generated By VR Program, By Race and Ethnicity, 2018 Election						
State	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	Other Non-White	Total Non-White	Vote Margin
Arizona	7,532	52,789	11,320	7,699	79,341	153,657
Colorado	5,385	24,494	6,463	1,436	37,777	67,520
Connecticut	3,848	3,770	1,848	463	9,928	87,281
Florida	35,237	57,100	18,517	6,357	117,212	110,701
Georgia	54,477	12,628	12,170	4,479	83,753	216,431
Illinois	37,104	42,131	14,108	1,203	94,547	149,779
North Carolina	27,818	7,657	2,948	6,200	44,624	74,926
New Mexico	1,295	21,866	1,040	7,242	31,443	53,381
Nevada	4,617	15,328	3,039	4,304	27,288	51,246
Pennsylvania	30,262	19,697	5,328	8,251	63,538	270,071
South Carolina	25,689	1,956	1,318	1,931	30,894	151,305
Texas	55,517	259,541	22,045	9,284	346,386	946,241
Virginia	4,253	1,638	3,335	1,024	10,251	111,566

Estimated Net Votes Generated By VR Program, By Race and Ethnicity, 2020 Election						
State	African-American	Hispanic-American	Asian-American	Other Non-White	Total Non-White	Vote Margin
Arizona	18,750	133,584	26,981	19,321	198,635	153,657
Colorado	13,219	59,779	15,846	3,989	92,832	67,520
Connecticut	18,837	17,831	8,460	2,595	47,722	87,281
Florida	51,666	83,860	27,713	9,444	172,684	110,701
Georgia	144,931	31,969	29,057	12,531	218,487	216,431
Illinois	94,483	104,866	33,684	3,219	236,252	149,779
North Carolina	72,498	21,214	6,880	15,485	116,077	74,926
New Mexico	3,411	53,904	2,438	17,872	77,626	53,381
Nevada	11,570	40,580	7,419	10,529	70,099	51,246
Pennsylvania	75,129	49,086	12,918	20,036	157,168	270,071
South Carolina	64,000	4,753	3,043	5,321	77,116	151,305
Texas	140,208	644,360	53,016	24,220	861,804	946,241
Virginia	26,974	10,354	15,272	6,828	59,427	111,566

Calculating Costs.—To estimate the cost of registering voters in these 13 states, the team used two proven registration methods:—direct mail and so-called “site-based” programs (e.g., collecting registration forms at a shopping center or other public setting).—Thanks to the work of several groups over a number of years, there is now fairly reliable data on the costs of mail and site-based programs.²¹—Because mail-based programs can register voters for as little as one-third the cost of site-based programs, the calculations below assume that each state’s program starts with mail until mail-based efforts reach a point of diminishing returns.—Having acquired as many new registrants as possible using mail, the team’s scenario relies on site-based programs to complete the

²¹ Costs for mail programs were obtained from the Voter Participation Center.—Costs for site-based programs came from Project Vote and Fair Share, two groups with years of experience in site-based voter registration.

registration program, with the ~~combination of both~~ programs achieving a combined registration goal of 50 percent of the eligible pool of unregistered voters.

The chart below shows the ~~six~~6-year cost of reaching registration goals in each of the 13 target states, broken out by mail and site-based collection methods.

Target Type	State	Contact Method	
		Mail	Site-Based
States Where Vote Margin Can Be Closed Through Voter Registration Alone	Arizona	\$3,366,298	\$14,007,744
	Colorado	\$1,582,822	\$6,583,632
	Florida	\$3,249,117	\$13,558,767
	Georgia	\$3,679,775	\$15,126,570
	Illinois	\$4,011,868	\$16,624,970
	North Carolina	\$1,952,122	\$8,025,355
	New Mexico	\$1,323,170	\$5,494,898
	Nevada	\$1,185,472	\$4,914,293
States Where Vote Margin Can Be Nearly Closed Through Voter Registration Alone	Connecticut	\$785,241	\$3,201,165
	Pennsylvania	\$2,671,521	\$11,019,395
	South Carolina	\$1,308,910	\$5,373,257
	Texas	\$14,650,729	\$61,135,024
	Virginia	\$955,436	\$3,859,148

Optimizing the Allocation of Resources Over Time. -For each of the 13 states listed above, the team also tried to optimize the *timing* of voter registration efforts over the next ~~six~~6 years. -In Florida, for example, voter registration efforts would exceed the vote margin in both the 2018 and 2020 elections. -But to achieve this impact in these two election years requires *only* investing in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. -New voters from registration programs in 2015-18 will be enough to cover the vote margin in the 2018 and 2020 elections.

In this last chart, the team’s scenario shows how to spread these costs across the 2015-2020 time period based on the optimization approach described above.

Target Type	State	Costs						
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
States Where Vote Margin Can Be Closed Through Voter Registration Alone	Arizona	\$1,406,076	\$4,030,517	\$1,541,382	\$4,452,370	\$1,537,239	\$4,406,457	\$17,374,042
	Colorado	\$708,705	\$2,031,344	\$709,327	\$2,048,932	\$690,105	\$1,978,041	\$8,166,454
	Florida	\$2,042,469	\$5,845,677	\$2,293,843	\$6,625,895	\$0	\$0	\$16,807,884
	Georgia	\$1,474,680	\$4,208,870	\$1,623,019	\$4,688,182	\$1,767,502	\$5,044,091	\$18,806,345
	Illinois	\$1,724,698	\$4,936,744	\$1,802,187	\$5,205,718	\$1,804,043	\$5,163,448	\$20,636,839
	North Carolina	\$755,015	\$2,153,791	\$883,518	\$2,552,093	\$942,599	\$2,690,462	\$9,977,477
	New Mexico	\$594,253	\$1,702,462	\$587,198	\$1,696,155	\$579,114	\$1,658,887	\$6,818,069
	Nevada	\$500,156	\$1,431,402	\$518,530	\$1,497,804	\$556,908	\$1,594,964	\$6,099,764
States Where Vote Margin Can Be Nearly Closed	Connecticut	\$481,955	\$1,378,314	\$0	\$0	\$550,898	\$1,575,238	\$3,986,406
	Pennsylvania	\$1,139,279	\$3,254,844	\$1,220,099	\$3,524,324	\$1,180,262	\$3,372,109	\$13,690,916
	South Carolina	\$551,848	\$1,574,019	\$593,136	\$1,713,307	\$584,123	\$1,665,734	\$6,682,167
	Texas	\$6,408,232	\$18,390,148	\$6,572,570	\$18,985,240	\$6,571,567	\$18,857,996	\$75,785,753
	Virginia	\$494,562	\$1,410,880	\$0	\$0	\$754,985	\$2,154,157	\$4,814,584
States Where Vote Margin Can Be Closed Through Voter Registration Alone	\$9,206,052	\$26,340,807	\$9,959,006	\$28,767,148	\$7,877,510	\$22,536,350	\$104,686,873	
States Where Vote Margin Can Be Nearly Closed Through Voter Registration Alone	\$9,075,876	\$26,008,205	\$8,385,805	\$24,222,870	\$9,641,835	\$27,625,234	\$104,959,826	
Total Spending on All Recommended Targets	\$18,281,928	\$52,349,013	\$18,344,811	\$52,990,019	\$17,519,345	\$50,161,583	\$209,646,699	

CONCLUSION

Although there is no simple solution to the low rates of voter participation, the surprisingly simple act of registering unregistered voters can provide a substantial boost to voter engagement, not only increasing the overall number of voters, but also diversifying the makeup of the electorate to better reflect the composition of the general public.

The experts retained by Corridor have taken the first step by providing an analysis showing how voter registration programs could substantially alter the electorate in 13 states. Their scenario is grounded in proven registration techniques, rigorous data analysis, and realistic cost estimates. Although expensive, this registration program, if implemented, could do more to enhance voter participation in the U.S. ~~in~~ **over** the next six years, **and** at lower cost, than any other set of strategies or tactics.

The next important step is ~~to have for~~ other experts to evaluate and stress test the team's assumptions, estimates, and conclusions. -If they hold up, then ~~one must design~~ an implementation plan must be designed at the scale necessary to meet this scenario's ambitious goals. ~~—~~ ~~a~~ And, that requires a hard look at whether there are new or existing groups capable of running programs at this scale, whether the number of registrations can be obtained in the timelines suggested, and what kind of overarching management layer is needed to achieve the complex, multi-state, multi-year goals suggested by this analysis.

APPENDIX

This appendix provides additional detail about the assumptions and methodology used in this analysis.

Quantifying Potential Registrants

In order to estimate unregistered populations, the expert team, like the top organizations in voter registration, relied on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 November Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey. To extract data from the Supplement, the team used DataFerrett, one of the Census' official data extraction tools, to organize the data by state, race, ethnicity, and age. The analysis starts with the number of non-white or Hispanic eligible unregistered citizens per state, and included those who identified themselves on the Census as Black, Hispanic (white or non-white), Asian, or other nonwhite groups.²²

For the data presented here, the numbers of unregistered citizens for 2015 were assumed to be the same as in 2012. This is a conservative estimate and most likely underestimates the size of the 2014 unregistered citizen population since the number of unregistered eligible voters will almost certainly increase. Since 1996, based on the November Voting and Registration Supplements for each even-numbered year, every midterm election has seen a rise of unregistered voters compared to the previous presidential election year. Despite the likelihood that the unregistered voter population will have increased by 2014, the analysis uses the 2012 numbers as the starting point to the program because there is no way to know with certainty what the 2014 numbers will be, and it is important not to overestimate the size of the unregistered population.²³

In order to calculate a following year's unregistered population, the team calculated the number of citizens who will be turning 18 in the years after the start of the program and incorporated those numbers into the calculations for each year from 2015-2020. They also subtracted the number of registrations gathered in the previous year from the unregistered pool.²⁴

Since some portion of the people registered in one cycle will move and require re-registration, a portion of registrants are added back into the population requiring re-registration in the subsequent cycle based on established rates.

Felon Disenfranchisement

After consulting Fair Share and Project Vote, the team decided to reduce the size of the Voting Age Population of African-Americans in each state by how many are estimated to be ineligible due to felony convictions. At their recommendation, we used state-by-state data from the Sentencing Project from 2010 to estimate the number of African-American adults in each state who were ineligible due to state laws restricting the right of ex-felons to vote.²⁵ The Sentencing Project is the pre-eminent research and advocacy organization in the field of criminal justice reform and voting rights. The team was not able to locate data more recent than 2010. They felt it was important to

²² In the US Census, Hispanic origin is classified as an ethnicity, not a race. So those who identify as Hispanic could also be white or non-white.

²³ Once the U.S. Census releases its 2014 November Voting and Registration Supplement, likely in May 2015, the scenario can easily be updated to reflect the most recent information available.

²⁴ Another source of the unregistered population comes from immigrants gaining citizenship status. Because there are no reliable estimates of how many people will gain citizenship in each state, they are not factored into these calculations. This is another area where the analysis tries to be conservative and not overestimate the size of the unregistered population.

²⁵ http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/fd_State_Level_Estimates_of_Felon_Disen_2010.pdf

include this data because, on average, one in 13 African-American adults are disenfranchised, and in Florida, Kentucky and Virginia more than one in five African-American adults are disenfranchised.

Focusing Program in Key Years

The goal is to generate an adequate number of voters to exceed the vote margin in years when key elections are happening. Sometimes it was only necessary to start a voter registration program the year before a key election in order to generate an adequate number of voters. But, sometimes it is necessary to get a head start and begin the program two or four years before in order to have time to produce the necessary voter registration applications. From year to year, the analysis incorporates the estimated effect of the previous year's registration program into the target election year.

Each cycle, the voter registration programs add more voters to the electorate who not only vote that year but do so in years to come. In some states, one cycle's voter registration program is enough to exceed the vote margin not only in that cycle but in the next one as well, without spending additional money on voter registration efforts in the second cycle.

Voter Registration Modes

The team tried to determine the level of voter registration needed to close the vote margin. In order to do that in the most cost-effective way, they first maximized the amount of voter registration by mail before turning to the more expensive (but much larger scale) site-based registration method. Based on feedback from experts in mail voter registration programs, the analysis estimated the maximum number of new registrants who could be acquired from that mode. With the remaining pool of unregistered voters in the state, the analysis then maximized site-based voter registration, using data provided by experts in that voter registration mode.²⁶

To determine the methodology and cost for the mail voter registration program, the expert team worked with the Voter Participation Center, the nation's premier mail voter registration organization. Site-based registration (such as at supermarkets, transit hubs and churches) is the second most cost-effective voter registration methodology. In order to estimate the potential scope of this mode, the team worked with two of the largest, most experienced voter registration organizations doing site-based registrations in communities of color: Project Vote and the Fair Share Community Voters Project.

Types of Voter Registrations: New Registrants and Movers

Many of the voter registration applications collected in the program outlined here will come from people who are registering for the first time. However, a substantial portion of voter registration applications will come from people who were previously registered but needed to re-register because they moved.

²⁶ Currently, programs that collect voter registration applications via door-to-door canvassing have a very high cost per net new vote. Experiments by VPC / Project Vote conducted in 2014 may reveal ways to lower the cost of this mode, but those results will not be available until late 2015. As for third-party online voter registration, the available data on efficacy and costs simply does not exist. More experiments are needed to fully assess this mode.

Most states require a voter to re-register if he or she moves. Although some states allow voters who are at the “wrong” polling place to fill out provisional ballots, experience has shown that a patchwork of laws and practices effectively disenfranchises voters of color unless their registration is updated. Therefore, in addition to registering new voters, registering “movers” is an important goal.²⁷

To calculate in-state moving rates, the team relied once again on the 2012 November Voting and Registration Supplement to the Current Population Survey. As part of the survey that informed the November Voting and Registration Supplement, all citizens above 18 were asked how long they had lived at the current address. Mobility rates were calculated based on registered voters for each demographic group who were 20 years old and over. This particular subset of registered voters was selected because they would have already had the opportunity to register for a previous even-year election and move in a two-year timeframe. The team then calculated the mobility rate by comparing the number of 20+-year-old registered voters who claimed that they had moved in the past two years to the total number of 20+-year-old registered voters.

Estimating the Number of Applications That Can Be Collected

As mentioned earlier, site-based programs use the data on eligible unregistered citizens from the U.S. Census to estimate how many applications they can collect in a given population. From past experience, these groups estimate that the number of voter registration applications they can collect is 50 percent of the eligible unregistered population.²⁸

Estimating the Number of Applications That Are Successful, Matched, and Roll-Changing

In any voter registration drive, one must account for people who are already registered at their current address but forget that they are and fill out another application. One must also account for incomplete applications with critical missing information. Sophisticated voter registration drives track and set goals for what are called roll-changing applications—applications that are complete, successful, and are either first-time registrants or contain some crucial update (last name, address) that must be made to the voter registration rolls in order for the applicant’s vote to count on Election Day.

Because organizations have participated in the voter registration analysis performed by Catalist and the National Organizing Institute (NOI), as detailed in NOI’s 2010 and 2012 voter registration reports²⁹, it is now possible to identify the average percent of roll-changing applications from various modes.³⁰ According to the NOI report, the rate of successful roll-changing applications for

²⁷ A very small number of states allow a voter to move within the state and vote on a regular ballot without re-registering. A very small number of states allow you to move within the county and vote on a regular ballot without re-registering. Several of the same-day registration states allow movers to show up at their new polling place or in some cases at a centralized voting location and vote on a regular ballot once they update their voter registration. However, it is unclear whether any of these variations in legal requirements affect voter registration rates.

²⁸ In subsequent conversations, Fair Share increased that percentage to 75 percent, but the more conservative Project Vote estimate of 50 percent was used in this analysis.

²⁹ National Organizing Institute, “Independent Voter Registration Report 2012 – An Analysis of Independent Voter Registration Efforts from the 2012 Election Cycle” and National Organizing Institute, “2010 Voter Registration Analysis – An Evaluation of Independent Voter Registration Efforts from the 2010 Election Cycle”. These analyses involve matching data-entered lists of voter registration applicants from the organizations to state voter registration rolls after the election.

³⁰ In order for Catalist to quantify the rates and number of successful roll-changing applicants, it must first match the records submitted by organizations to voter registration rolls. There has been some debate regarding the effectiveness of Catalist’s matching procedures, but because it is the best data currently available to quantify the number of roll-changing applications, their matching rates are used in this report. Again, this is a conservative approach, since a higher rate of matches will result in a higher rate of known roll-changing applications.

mail-based work is 89 percent, a statistic that was confirmed by the Voter Participation Center.³¹ To generate a similar number for site-based work, the team also used data from the NOI reports and averaged the rate of successful roll changing applications from Fair Share and Project Vote, to arrive at 71 percent.

Estimating Rates of “Net” Applications

In order to quantify the true impact of both site-based and mail-based efforts, the expert team needed to find out how many registrations were collected that would not have been submitted without the presence of a site-based or mail-based program. This is often called the “net” number of registrations.

By quantifying the number of net registrations generated, it is possible to quantify the number of additional votes added to the electorate, also known as the “net” votes added. Because quantifying the number of people added into the electorate is a key component to quantifying the true impact of voter registration drives, organizations have run experiments to identify how many registrations who, but for their programs, would not have been added to the rolls.

The Voter Participation Center has run detailed experiments to identify this rate. They were able to calculate that 35 percent of applications successfully returned via mail would not have registered otherwise. Multiplying this rate by the 89 percent rate of successful roll-changing applications for mail-based work (identified in the previous section), we find that approximately 31 percent of applications successfully returned via mail were roll-changing applicants who would not have registered otherwise.

Project Vote carried out a set of experiments 2011, in part to find out how many applicants would not have registered without the assistance of site-based programs. They found that 30 percent of applications successfully collected via site were roll-changing applicants who would not have registered otherwise. The sample size of this experiment was quite small, but it is currently the only reliable study that revealed this rate, which is crucial in determining the impact of site-based work. In 2014, Project Vote, the Voter Participation Center and the Analyst Institute carried out a similar set of experiments, but this time on a much larger scale. Preliminary findings are encouraging, but the results have yet to be finalized, mainly because some states’ official voter files have yet to be updated from the 2014 cycle. Once a final rate is identified, the underlying calculations will be adjusted accordingly.

Distribution of New Registrants vs. Other Roll-Changing Applicants

Applications collected by site-based registration groups can be divided into two subsets—those that are from new registrants (those who have never registered before), and those that have been previously registered but need to update their registrations due to a change in status (i.e., moving to a new address). In registration drives in 2012, approximately 43 percent of successful and unique roll-changing applications collected by Fair Share and Project Vote were from new registrants. The remaining 57 percent were from applicants who were previously registered.

³¹ In discussing with VPC the rates in the NOI reports of how many mail applications collected result in roll-changing applications, they expressed a greater deal of confidence in the methodology NOI used in 2010 to make this calculation. The NOI report used 88.9 percent for 2010 and 82.9 percent for 2012. At their suggestion, the team is using the 2010 rate for both Presidential and Midterm cycles in our calculations.

Costs

As noted above, the team designed their scenario to achieve enough registrations to exceed each year's vote margin in the most cost-effective way. Therefore, the analysis starts by maximizing mail voter registration. Relying on input from the Voter Participation Center, it was possible to identify the costs and success rates for mail-based registration.³²

Mail costs were calculated using the following formula:

Cost of Registering a Segment of the Population Via Mail = (Number of People in Population Segment) X (Mailability Rate) X (Cost per Mail Piece) X (Number of Mailings)

- The **Number of People in Population Segment** is based on the number of people requiring registration in a given population segment.
- The **Mailability Rate** is the percent of people for whom the team expects to find complete addresses that can be mailed. This was identified to be 50 percent.³³
- The **Cost per Mail Piece** decreases as the number of pieces increases, as mail houses lower rates the more mail that is printed and mailed. Because of the large-scale nature of the program, the estimated cost is \$0.455 per mail piece.³⁴
- Because the analysis calls for registration efforts far before registration deadlines, it is possible to send out multiple mailings. The Voter Participation Center ideally would send out seven distinct mailings in a two-year election cycle, roughly once a quarter, so the team set the **Number of Mailings** to 3.5 per year. They mail to a targeted universe without a significant drop-off in response rates.³⁵

The rate calculation for successfully collecting registrations by mail in a given population is below:

Mail Success Rate = (Mailability Rate) X (Group's Specific Response Rate To Mail) X (Number of Mailings) X (% of Roll-Changing Applications)

- As explained above, the **Mailability Rate** is the amount of people who have addresses that can be mailed at all. This was estimated to be 50 percent.

³² While one would normally gather information on a voter registration mode from a variety of organizations, the Voter Participation Center is the only organization that engages in voter registration by mail at scale (LCVEF and NAACP have funded large-scale mail voter registration programs that were carried out by VPC using their names). VPC is also one of the most data and evidence-driven organizations in voter registration, so there is reason to have confidence in their recommendations.

³³ VPC determined this mailability rate by analyzing a sample of records from Catalist and other sources of African-Americans that fit the profile that VPC would normally mail, and then adjusting it down slightly to be more conservative.

³⁴ VPC based this estimate on their past experience with large-scale mail programs, in which the cost to print and mail a single piece ranges from \$0.43 to \$0.48. The team balanced the large size of our proposed program with the potential for future increases in the cost of postage and paper, and the cost of continuing to embed experiments into every mailing, as is VPC's current practice. The team therefore went with \$0.455 per piece in our calculations.

³⁵ It should be noted that after each mailing, some people will be removed from the next mailing, and others will be added, so the actual mail universe will change slightly in each mailing. People will be removed who responded successfully with an application as will people whose letters came back with bad addresses. While this reduces the size of the next mailing, other people are added in, such as those who just turned 18, anybody who has recently moved, and any other new unregistered people who were previously unidentified. Ultimately this evens out the universe so mailings would go to roughly the same number of people in each mailing, even if the people themselves are different.

- VPC has found that response rates—the rate at which voters respond to a mailing by filling out an application and mailing it in—varies by ethnic/racial group, so different rates are applied to different groups based on VPC’s data.³⁶
- As explained above, we set the **Number of Mailings** to 3.5 per year.
- As explained in the section devoted to roll-changing applicants, the **% of Roll-Changing Applications** in a mail campaign is 89 percent.

With the Mail Success Rate calculated, the team then calculated the cost of collecting the remaining applications through site-based methods.

Site-Based Cost of Registering Remaining Segment of the Population = (Number of People in Population Segment) X (Site-Based Cost per Application) X ((Expected Site-Based Success Rate – (Mail Success Rate X Net Rate of Roll-Changing Applications Submitted By Mail))

- The **Number of People in Population Segment** is based on the number of people requiring registration in a given population segment.
- After consulting with experienced voter registration organizations that focus on site-based registration methods, the analysis assumes a **Site-Based Cost per Application Collected** of \$15.00.
- The **Expected Site-Based Success Rate** is the amount of total registrations expected to be collected via site-based registration from a given population. As explained above, the analysis assumes this number is 50 percent of the unregistered population.
- The **Mail Success Rate** calculation is explained above.
- The **Net Rate of Roll-Changing Applications Submitted By Mail** is 31 percent, as described earlier.

To find the total cost, the mail-based cost and site-based cost were combined.

Allocation of Funds Spent Between Two Years of Election Cycle

In reviewing the underlying methodology with Project Vote and Fair Share, both groups suggested that all site-based voter registrations be collected in the election year, rather than spread between the election year and the preceding non-election year. Based on their experience, the targeted populations move frequently, which makes it likely that a number of citizens registered in non-election years will have to be re-registered in the election year. Also, interest by the targeted

³⁶ “2012 Mail-Based Voter Registration Report,” The Voter Participation Center, September 6, 2013. At VPC’s suggestion, the team subtracted 0.5 percentage points to each group’s response rate in 2012 to make a conservative estimate of response rates for a Presidential year, and used a response rate of 4.5 percent for all racial / ethnic groups for a midterm election cycle, based on VPC’s preliminary analysis of their 2013-2014 mail program. Exact response rates to mail by racial / ethnic group in a midterm election cycle will be available from VPC later in 2015.

populations is much higher in election years than non-election years, making it easier for site-based programs to cost-effectively collect applications in election years.

However, in order for site-based voter registration programs to hit the ground running at the start of an election year, site-based organizations need to hire and train staff toward the end of the non-election year. For this reason, we have allocated 20 percent of the funds required for site-based programs to the non-election year and the remaining funds to the election year.

For mail-based programs, it is assumed that 50 percent of the applications are collected in the non-election year and that the remaining applications are collected during the election year. These estimates are based on a set of experiments by VPC that show that those who are about to turn 18 and those who have recently moved are highly responsive to mail appeals at or near the time of their birthday and their move, whether or not those events occur in a non-election or election year.

Although the exact proportion of “movers” and “birthday” registrants compared with all eligible but unregistered people of color is unclear, for now the analysis in this report assumes mail-based efforts can be split evenly between the non-election and election years.

Turnout Rates for Registrants

In order to calculate the estimated turnout of new registrations, the team relied primarily on the New Organizing Institute’s 2010 and 2012 Voter Registration reports, which evaluated independent voter registration efforts. For this proposal, the expert team assumed that the turnout rates for 2016 and 2020 would be similar to 2012, as they are all presidential election years, and that the turnout rates for 2018 would be similar to 2010, as they are both midterm election years.

The 2012 NOI report analyzed registrations gathered through 93 organizations, while the 2010 report analyzed registrations gathered by 25 organizations. These organizations submitted their registration application data to Catalist, which processed the records and then matched them to state voter file data. Because of this tracking mechanism, turnout rates could be calculated in a systematic and accurate way.

Turnout Rates: First-Time Registrants

All turnout rates used here were derived from rates either explicitly or implicitly presented in the New Organizing Institute’s 2010 and 2012 reports.

Based on NOI’s analysis, the 2012 turnout rate for new registrants whose registrations were collected by independent organizations was 67 percent. In NOI’s 2010 report, they presented turnout for all roll-changing applicants rather than separating these applicants into new registrants and roll-changing applicants who were previously registered, so there was not a rate presented for new registrants alone. However, using other data presented in both reports, it is possible to approximate 2010 turnout for new registrants at 37 percent. The expert team is confident that this number is accurate within a few percentage points. Any potential small deviation from this rate would not affect the final data-driven target state or target cycle recommendations.

Because the suggested scenario calls for a multi-year registration effort, the estimates had to take into account the turnout rates for new registrants in successive elections. The 2012 and 2010 NOI reports were able to supply this information as well. Based on these reports, new registrants whose

registrations were collected by independent organizations in the 2008 cycle had a 2010 turnout rate of 21 percent and a 2012 turnout rate of 48 percent. Based also on their calculations, it was possible to estimate the 2012 turnout rate to be 55 percent for new registrants whose registrations were collected by independent organizations in the 2010 cycle. Like the other turnout rates, these estimates should be correct for those elections within a few percentage points, and any small difference would likely not affect the final targeting recommendations.³⁷

Turnout Rates: Roll-Changing Applicants Who Were Previously Registered

In order to calculate the turnout effect of gathering registrations from roll-changing applicants who were previously registered, the analysis once again relies on the NOI report.³⁸ Based on their calculations, 80 percent of previously registered roll-changing applicants whose registrations were collected by independent organizations voted in 2012.³⁹

Because the NOI report for 2010 did not have comparable rates for previously registered roll-changing applicants, the team estimated this rate based on other data within the two reports. They assumed that the 2010 turnout was approximately 54 percent for previously registered roll-changing applicants whose registrations were collected by independent organizations.

Once again, we need to account for the turnout rates for these registrants in successive elections. The 2012 and 2010 NOI reports were able to supply this information as well. Based on these reports, registrants who were previously registered but submitted roll-changing applications in the 2008 cycle had a 2010 turnout rate of 35 percent, and a 2012 turnout rate of 57 percent. Those that registered in 2010 had a turnout rate of 62 percent in 2012.

Incorporating Voter Roll Drop-Off in Subsequent Elections

Some of the registrations gathered during one election cycle will become invalid in subsequent elections when voters move to a new address. In the 2010 and 2012 NOI Registration Reports, the amount of dropped registrants from the 2008 and 2010 efforts are explicitly provided. For registrations collected in the 2008 cycle, 7 percent dropped off the rolls directly following the 2010 elections, and 12 percent dropped directly following the 2012 elections. For registrations collected during the 2010 cycle, 5 percent dropped directly following the 2012 elections. These rates were applied to the applications generated in the team's scenario, treating presidential years like other presidential years, and midterms like other midterms. These "drop off" registrants were then brought into the subsequent pools of estimated movers and incorporated into the calculations for those subsequent years.

Factors That Could Impact Registration Rates

Same Day Registration

³⁷ The expert team is currently in communication with the New Organizing Institute to determine whether they can supply additional source data from their 2010 and 2012 reports. If the team can access the source data or the aggregated data, it might reveal slightly different turnout rates than the ones shown here. However, since the possible differences are small, any of the possible deviations from the current estimated rates would likely not affect the final state and yearly recommendations.

³⁸ The somewhat complicated term "roll-changing applicants who were previously registered" can be translated to "movers." The team used different calculations for first-time registrants and movers because movers are people who already took the action to register once before and have different probabilities of registering and voting than those who never have before.

³⁹ Voter turnout of people of color has been increasing in presidential elections for many cycles, regardless of who was on the top of the ticket, so these turnout rates were not adjusted downward for future non-Obama election years.

The impact of same-day registration would likely show up in lower rates of net registrants from applicants collected, since a higher number of those registered by third-party registration drives could have registered some other way in same-day registration states. However, there is no data available to measure the potential impact that same-day registration may have on voter registration drives so the team could not factor that impact into its estimates.

State-Administered Online Voter Registration

State-run online voter registration systems allow registrants to fill out an online form that is then processed electronically. Twenty states currently offer online voter registration and four states have passed legislation that has yet to be implemented. Anecdotal evidence indicates that state-run online voter registration systems significantly boost the number of voter registrations that are initiated or updated through the Department of Motor Vehicles. This likely impacts the number of people who need to be registered and could affect the success rate of voter registration drives. Again, because no data is available to measure these impacts, the team's calculations could not be modified.

Pew Charitable Trusts' Electronic Registration Information Center Program

The Pew Charitable Trusts has developed a program called the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) to encourage states to reach out to potentially eligible but currently unregistered voters. Because some states recommended for investment in the original and revised reports are or could become members of the ERIC program, we were asked to assess the potential impact of ERIC membership on the planning assumptions used by Corridor's expert team.

Currently, three states recommended for investment are part of the ERIC program: Colorado, Nevada, and Virginia. Member states commit to contact eligible but unregistered residents identified by ERIC, as well as voters whose registration information is identified by ERIC as inaccurate or outdated. The state is required to mail these individuals a postcard at least once before the registration deadline of the next federal general election, giving these voters information on how they might register. In the three years it has been in operation, ERIC has identified nearly 12 million potential voters or movers in 11 states.

Over time, it is expected that ERIC will significantly diminish the number of eligible unregistered voters in member states and reduce the number of movers needing re-registration by third-party organizations. However, ERIC currently has very little data to determine whether or how much its program might minimize registration costs. Although early data on ERIC's impact are promising, the information is incomplete and confidential.

Absent more readily available and complete information from ERIC, Corridor's team does not recommend changing its suggested investments at this time. However, these recommendations should be re-evaluated in the coming years as more data becomes available from ERIC.

Harsh State Laws Regarding Third-Party Voter Registration

Florida passed a law in 2012 requiring organizations that register voters to turn in forms they collect to the board of elections within 48 hours or face criminal penalties. This so crippled third-party registration efforts that several organizations suspended their voter registration work completely. The law was later enjoined by the courts and is not in effect. New Mexico currently has implemented a 48-hour turnaround law as well, but organizations in that state report that they have been able to adapt and continue to do high-volume voter registration. If additional states pass similar legislation, it could impact this project's voter registration rates.