

CONTRASTING OUR GOP OPPONENTS

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October 22nd meeting

Good Afternoon Making Waves for Democracy and Happy October!

I can't believe that Halloween is only about a week away but apparently the nightmare is already raging in Washington among House Republicans! In just a few weeks we have watched the Republican Conference fire Kevin, pass on Scalise and Jordan, and head back this Tuesday to try and figure out who wants to be humiliated next on national television – we even saw our very own MAGA Mike Garcia receive a vote for Speaker. All the while, the world needs America at its best and ready to lead – this only further drives home why losing the House isn't an option next year and we need to beat House Republicans at the ballot box next November.

Now we are all well aware that defeating incumbents isn't easy – they're an incumbent for a reason. So today I want to dive into why contrasting and in the spirit of Halloween, villainizing our Republican opponents when we are talking to voters is a cornerstone of a successful campaign to oust a House incumbent. It's part of how one picks the lock, so to speak.

For campaigns, when we are crafting positive messaging, we are aiming to develop a narrative arc throughout the course of a race that will help people understand WHY our candidate is running and connect it with their values or priorities, so that voters can then trust the candidate's vision and after elected, future actions or votes. This foundation also serves as the bulwark against negative hits to candidates – there's nothing better than a campaign that builds a durable voter base that when the negative ads come, voters say, that's not the person I know. That doesn't sound like them.

In the inverse when we aim to villainize our Republican opponents, our goal is to undermine their narrative arc and reassign new motivations; which makes all future attacks stickier –

So, I want to show you this in a case study of the old CA25, now our CA27 represented by the former member of Congress, Steve Knight. A family legacy of service in the Antelope Valley, his father Pete Knight was a test flight pilot who went Mach 6.7 then served as Mayor of Palmdale and as our local state senator. This is a legacy that looms large. Steve Knight would jokingly say to folks in private, "folks out here think they're voting for my dad" – voters for years saw the Knight family as civic leaders and whose example of pro-defense industry, Christian conservative values reflected the then overwhelmingly republican AV of the 90s.

This proved to be durable as:

In 2012, Steve Knight beat a Democrat by 17% in a district President Obama lost by a couple points.

In 2014, in a Republican on Republican race Steve Knight was the choice of a majority of Democrats.

In 2016 when he was facing one of the first real Democratic challengers of his career, Steve Knight had a net positive approval rating with Antelope Valley Democrats

In fact, while canvassing in 2016, I remember speaking to a Latino Democratic voter who voted for Clinton and almost every Democrat on the ballot ... and Steve knight
When i asked him why he voted for Steve Knight

Bewildered... That's Steve Knight – why wouldn't I?

That's an uphill climb. Where do you even get started?

After decades, the Knight family built a durable reputation of service to the community, even after their policies and priorities no longer reflected that of the ever changing demographics of the communities they served.

Starting in 2016, we saw a sustained effort by Democrats to break this veneer. We went from complaining about votes to hammering home that Steve Knight has gone to Washington and forgotten who he represents – that he's an out of touch politician who wanted to take away our healthcare and give tax cuts to the wealthiest few.

By the end of 2018, Steve Knight's name was practically a swear word. Vote after vote we made sure voters knew that he voted for his interests, not ours, – that he was nothing but a lying politician – and our communities suffered because of his failures.

Steve Knight lost by one of the largest margins of any incumbent House Republican in the country in 2018 — so bad that he couldn't beat then nobody Mike Garcia in the 2020 primary and came in third place.

Now we need to do it again to MAGA Mike Garcia...

- Whose made it harder for seniors to afford insulin and other prescription drugs
- Supported the insurrection
- Made it harder for low-income families to access SNAP benefits
- Oppose child care funding
- Voted against funding affordable housing projects, homeless service funding, and even putting folks to work on solar panel installation
- While having a history of skipping out on tax payments, whose buying and trading stocks in companies he's supposed to regulate, and claims that Jim Jordan was his idea of a model member of Congress

We can't let that just be a vote or a mistake in the eyes of voters but a testament to his character as a craven self-interested politician who thinks the rules don't apply to him while he isn't focused on addressing the needs and concerns of his constituents back home.

So, now that we talked about our goal, let's talk about how we can work on delivering that message together at the doors in the coming weeks and months ahead of us.

When canvassing this far out from an election to lower propensity Democratic voters, we want to have deep conversations when we can to identify their issues and concerns and connect that to the actions of MAGA Mike – that the source of their frustrations and the failures of Washington can be found in their local member of Congress, that they can make a difference because they are in a unique position to do something about it with tremendous influence.

Just last month I was out canvassing in Santa Clarita where I met a Latino Democrat who shared that while he was opposed to Donald Trump and does not want to see him back in the White House, that did not mean he was voting Democrats down the ticket without doing his homework. He had voted for Mike last year. He knew Mike to be a veteran who served his country, he being a veteran too believed those values would be good in Congress.

Then I was in my element...

I helped the voter know that Mike Garcia has turned his back on his country and supports Trump's big lie, voted with him 95% of the time, and still supports Trump.

We spoke more and I learned about how healthcare was a big focus for him since he took care of his mom. He didn't know Mike voted to make her insulin more expensive and supported cuts to her Medicaid coverage.

He pledged to vote for Democrats next year. All of them.

To talk about how they villainize Mike at the door and motivate folks to cast a ballot, Xiomara, please take it away!