

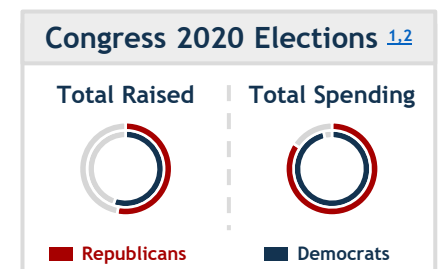
## MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES  
 FROM: RAGNAR RESEARCH  
 SUBJECT: IMPACT OF SPENDING IN AT-RISK REPUBLICAN DISTRICTS  
 DATE: May 11, 2020

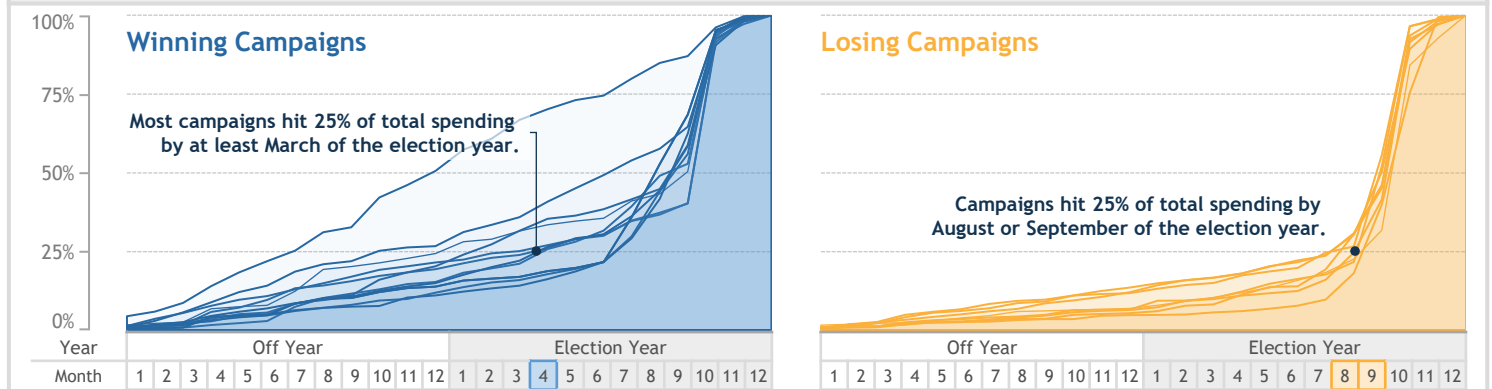
### The Impact of Spending in At-Risk Republican Districts

Ragnar Research has analyzed historic data on campaign spending in districts considered to be at-risk Republican districts to better understand the impact that timing has on a candidate's likelihood to win.

- **Analysis indicates campaigns that were spending earlier in the election year were more likely to win in November.** Most winning campaigns hit 25% of total spending by no later than March.
- **Winning campaigns were also steadier spenders.** They maintained consistent spending efforts until around August or September, then spent the remainder of their budgets in a final push over the finish line.
- In contrast, losing campaigns only hit 25% of total spending around August or September. They spent the majority of their budgets in the months just before the election.
- At this time, Congressional campaigns in both parties' have raised similar amounts. However, Democratic campaigns are drastically outspending Republicans. **Based on our analysis of past campaigns, it is critical that Republican campaigns start spending in order to stay competitive, especially in at-risk districts.**



#### Republican Campaign Spending Among Toss Up & Lean Republican Congressional Seats (2006, 2008, 2018) <sup>3</sup>



- Campaigns included were rated as either toss-up or lean Republican districts by the Cook Political Report in the Fall before the election year. Nearly all were incumbent Republicans who were not Freshmen and no open seats were included.
- Campaigns were selected from 2006 and 2008 to further inform how spending timelines during a national financial crisis impacts success. Campaigns were also selected from 2018 to evaluate if trends seen in 2006 and 2008 hold in today's political climate.
- We found that trends were consistent across all three years. They were also consistent regardless of the total amount spent on the campaign or in cases where the Republican was outspent by their Democratic opponent.

## 2020 Remaining State Primary Schedule (June - September) <sup>4</sup>

(Note: Dates accurate to the day of memo's release)

COVID-19 has had significant impacts on the state of the election year. Two of the most important are:

- Relaxing absentee standards to encourage vote by mail (see previous [memo](#) <sup>5</sup> for the impact of voting by mail).
- Delaying state primaries and primary runoffs by months.

These measures make sense for controlling the spread of the pandemic. They also proactively calm the public outcry that some states, like Wisconsin, have suffered from not moving their primaries.

**However, both actions significantly impact the window of voter contact for both Republican Primary Voters (RPVs) and Likely Voters (LVs) in the general election.**

For primaries, pushing back the date ostensibly lengthens the amount of time campaigns have to persuade their base. However, based on Ragnar Research's analysis of daily ballot returns in states that heavily vote by mail, we found that 25% of ballots are decided and returned two weeks before election. As we expect a large increase in voting by mail, primary campaigns need to be proactive in capturing these early ballots.

**For generals, this means the time campaigns have to message to LVs is condensed, in some cases, by months.** As shown on the previous page, campaigns that waited until August or September to ramp up spending were much more likely to lose.

**Republican campaigns need to be prepared for earlier, more aggressive, and sustained spending.** This is particularly true for states effected by a change in primary (highlighted **gold** in the table to the right).

Given this environment, campaigns need to be on top of their message and checking in on their voters.

While no two campaigns are identical, Ragnar Research normally recommends an initial **Benchmark** survey to establish a candidate's baseline and determine which messages resonate with voters. After paid contact has had a chance to reach voters and stick, we recommend **Brushfire** surveys to check in on how well messaging is moving the needle as often as timing and budget will allow. Given the rapidly changing environment, it is important for campaigns to consider testing additional messaging should their candidate need to pivot. **Regardless, we urge campaigns to continue polling when they can, as every decision needs to be that much better informed when there's so much less time to make them.**

June						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

State Primaries by Day	
June 2	Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Dakota
June 9	Georgia, Nevada, North Dakota, South Carolina, West Virginia
June 23	Kentucky, Mississippi (Runoff), New York, North Carolina, South Carolina (Runoff), Virginia
June 30	Colorado, Oklahoma, Utah
July 7	New Jersey
July 14	Alabama (Runoff), Maine, Texas (Runoff)
Aug 4	Arizona, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Washington
Aug 6	Tennessee
Aug 8	Hawaii
Aug 11	Connecticut, Georgia (Runoff), Minnesota, South Dakota (Runoff), Vermont, Wisconsin
Aug 18	Alaska, Florida, Wyoming
Aug 25	Oklahoma (Runoff)
Sept 1	Massachusetts
Sept 8	New Hampshire, Rhode Island
Sept 15	Delaware

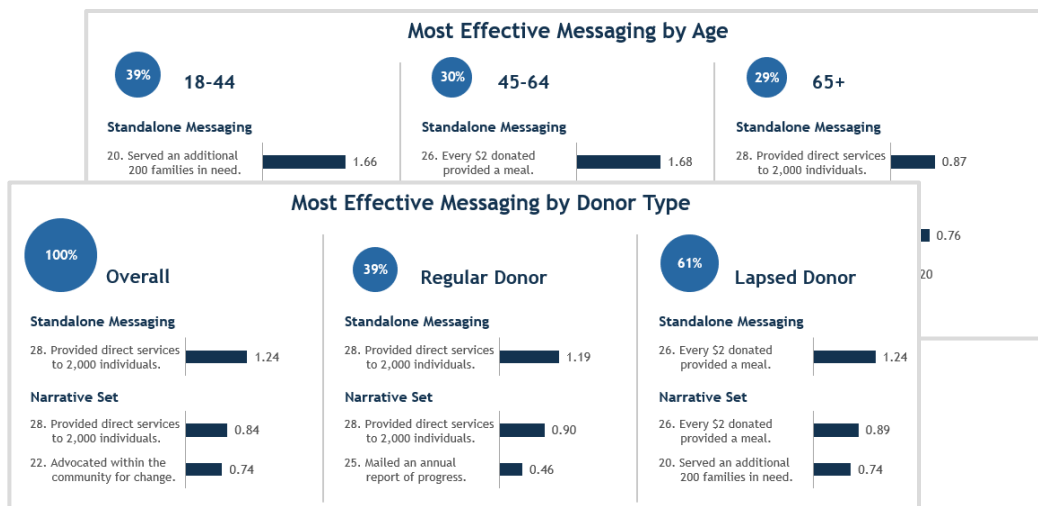
## Messaging Research Is a Science

Your campaign needs the right message to reach voters in the current pandemic. Ragnar Research's SMART analysis identifies not only what the best message is overall, but which sets of messages work together to spur action. The Ragnar Research SMART messaging analysis targets the unstated motivations of human behavior.

The messaging portion of a survey acts as a stimulus to our respondents, allowing us to identify what messages decisively affect their actions.

Ragnar Research uses a non-traditional question setup that allows us to get a clear read on the way messaging information is interpreted by respondents. Rather than asking respondents to guess at their reaction to information, we measure which messages changed behavior.

### SMART - Scientific Method And Regression Testing



This messaging analysis helps ensure you're saying the right thing to the right person, so that every messaging effort has a greater chance of success. If you would like more information on our campaign research approach, please let us know.

## About Ragnar Research

With over 40 years of combined experience in public opinion research, the partners at Ragnar Research have a track record of getting the numbers right on behalf of candidates, colleges and universities, and Fortune 500 companies. The principals at Ragnar have conducted public opinion research in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

## Data Sources

<sup>1</sup> Congress 2020 Elections - Total Raised; <https://www.fec.gov/data/raising-bythenumbers/>

<sup>2</sup> Congress 2020 Elections - Total Spending; <https://www.fec.gov/data/spending-bythenumbers/>

<sup>3</sup> Campaign Spending Among Toss Up & Lean Republican Congressional Seats (2006, 2008, 2018); <https://www.fec.gov/>

<sup>4</sup> 2020 Remaining State Primary Schedule (June - September); <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/2020-state-primary-election-dates.aspx#Chronological>

<sup>5</sup> The Impact of Voting By Mail; [https://www.ragnarresearch.com/mail\\_voting.html](https://www.ragnarresearch.com/mail_voting.html)