



# Webinar 6: Values, Voters, Congress, and Our Future **STARTS SOON**

***Elections are too important to be  
left in the hands of candidates,  
parties, political consultants, and  
megadonors.***

***We can do better!***

**[www.valuestovotes.com](http://www.valuestovotes.com)**



# Webinar 6 – Values, Voters, Congress, and Our Future

## Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 Central

### Making the 2026 Congressional Elections a Game Changer for Our Children: The Imperative for 501c3 Electoral Advocacy

[www.valuestovotes.com](http://www.valuestovotes.com)





# Webinar 6: Values, Voters, Congress, and Our Future



## About Me (Charlie Bruner):

- 150,000 hours experience thinking and working to link research, policy and politics to support children and families
- Freelance child policy agitator and manager of Values to Votes Project and website
- Old, white, DEI guy sign holder
- **Grandfather and Single Value Voter (kids)**



Color her future  
Bright.

# Making the 2026 Elections a Game Changer for Our Future Key Points

1. The 2026 Congressional elections are up for grabs.
2. Partisan campaign strategies are stuck in a rut.
3. Persuadable voters will decide the election.
4. The stakes are incredibly high for children.
5. Child, parent and family electoral advocacy can be key with persuadable constituencies.
6. 501c3 advocacy strategies, using grassroots influencers, are key.

# 1. 2026 Congressional Elections Are Up For Grabs

**The New York Times**

## **Control of Congress 2026: Latest Polls**

Generic poll on party preferences of  
30 most recent polls (December)

**45% Democrat**

**42% Republican**

**13% Undecided**

**(Democrats need to outperform Republicans by 3 percent overall to gain House majority)**

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/polls/congressional-vote-2026.html>



**One  
percent  
is HUGE**



## 2. Partisan Campaign Strategies Are Stuck in a Rut

\$10 billion will be raised and spent in partisan efforts to influence 2026 Congressional elections, producing:

- Voter fatigue
- Suspicion of motives of candidates
- Lack of faith in government

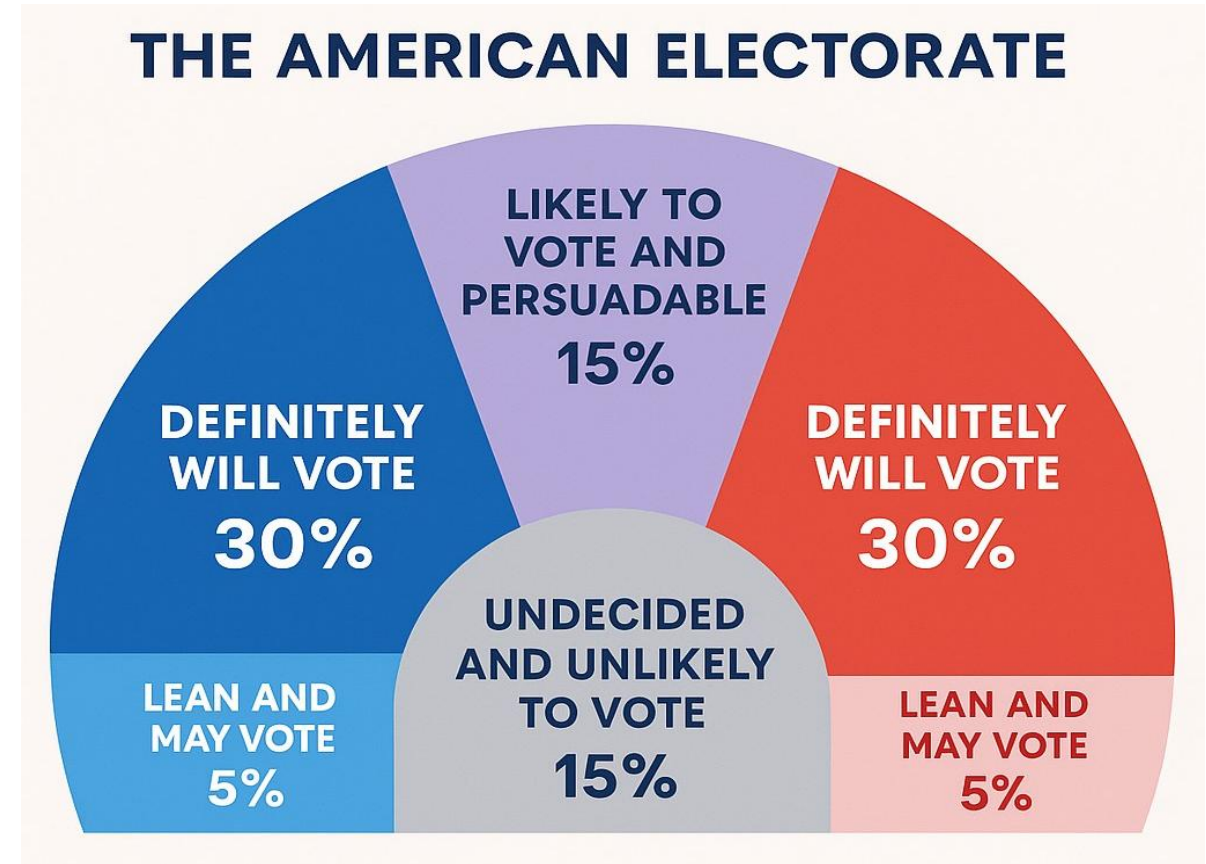
*Elections are too important to be left in the hands of candidates, parties, political consultants, and megadonors.*



# 3. Persuadable Voters Will Decide the Election

## The Persuadable 15%

- Not captive to a media bubble or wedded to partisan messaging
- Frustrated with elections
- Distrustful of politicians
- Concerned about their (and their children's) future – including pocketbook but also broader life values
- Connected to friends and community
- Wanting their vote to count



# 4. The Stakes Are Incredibly High for Children, Parents, and Families

## GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS IN CHILD AND FAMILY POLICIES AND SERVICES (Follow the Money)

- **Congressional Republicans Today:** Corporate and individual tax cuts to the wealthiest to spur growth and cuts to health, education, and human services to pay for them and conditions restricting support to those who deserve them (\$7 trillion in tax cuts and \$2+ trillion in spending cuts)
- **Congressional Democrats Today:** Corporate and individual tax increases to pay fair share and investments in health, education, and human services that reduce inequities and recognize special needs (\$4 trillion in tax increases and \$3 trillion in investments)

## GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO VALUING FAMILIES

- **Congressional Republicans Today:** Valuing only working, “traditional” families as the standard and legislating morality around them
- **Congressional Democrats Today:** Providing support enabling all families to get by, raise their children, and participate in society (DEI)



# The Basics of Current Federal Budget Directions

**Trump and Congressional Republicans – 2017-20, 2025 (Now permanent)**

**\$7 Trillion in Tax Cuts Overall (\$5 Trillion to Wealthiest)**

**\$2+ Trillion in Health, Nutrition, Education, and Family Security Expenditure Cuts**

**Biden-Harris and Congressional Democrats 2021-24 (Temporary) and 2025 Proposals**

**\$4 Trillion in Tax Increases to Wealthiest**

**\$3 Trillion in Health, Nutrition, Education, and Family Security Expenditure Increases & Refundable Credits**

# Congress Going Forward – Opportunity to Review and Redo (Annualized Estimates) 2017-2025 Actions

## Review/Redo Taxes

Reduce corporate tax rate cut by ½ (to 28%) – **\$90B**

Revise estate tax to 2016 rates -- **\$25B**

Close other corporate tax preferences and loopholes -- **\$120B**

Enact other multinational corporate provisions -- **\$70B**

Increase top personal income tax to 39.6% -- **\$20B**

Limit preferential treatment of pass-through income for high income -- **\$25B**

Close other individual tax preferences and loopholes -- **\$35B**

Restore IRS enforcement for high income taxpayers -- **\$15B**

Adopt ARPA CTC EITC provisions -- **\$90B**

Adopt ARPA ACA Premiums Credits – **\$30B**

Do all of above **\$280B**

## Review/Redo Spending

Restore Medicaid cuts -- **\$80B**

Restore SNAP cuts -- **\$30B**

Expand child care/preschool -- **\$40B**

Expand home and community services -- **\$40B**

Restore DOGE/Executive Order cuts

Do all of above **\$190B**

**A note on the CTC – Republican actions basically a wash, increasing CTC while eliminating the personal exemption. Democratic actions a major increase by adding an additional \$1000-\$1600 to CTC AND making it refundable (necessary for families making less than \$75,000 to get the full value)**

# The Care Agenda is the Presentation of a Core Child, Parent, and Family Agenda and Is on the Table

***If we want the best economy in the world, we need the best care economy in the world –***

-- President Biden



- Expanded and refundable child tax credit
  - Paid family leave
  - Expanded child care and preschool
  - Home and community services
- 
- \$2+ trillion funded by increased tax collections from the wealthiest individuals and corporations

# 5. Child Electoral Advocacy Strategies Can Be Key with Several Persuadable Constituencies

## Parents (and Grandparents):

- Refundable Child Tax Credit
- Child care/preschool
- Child and family health care
- Paid family leave

Parents 22 percent of the electorate  
Grandparents 25 percent of the electorate

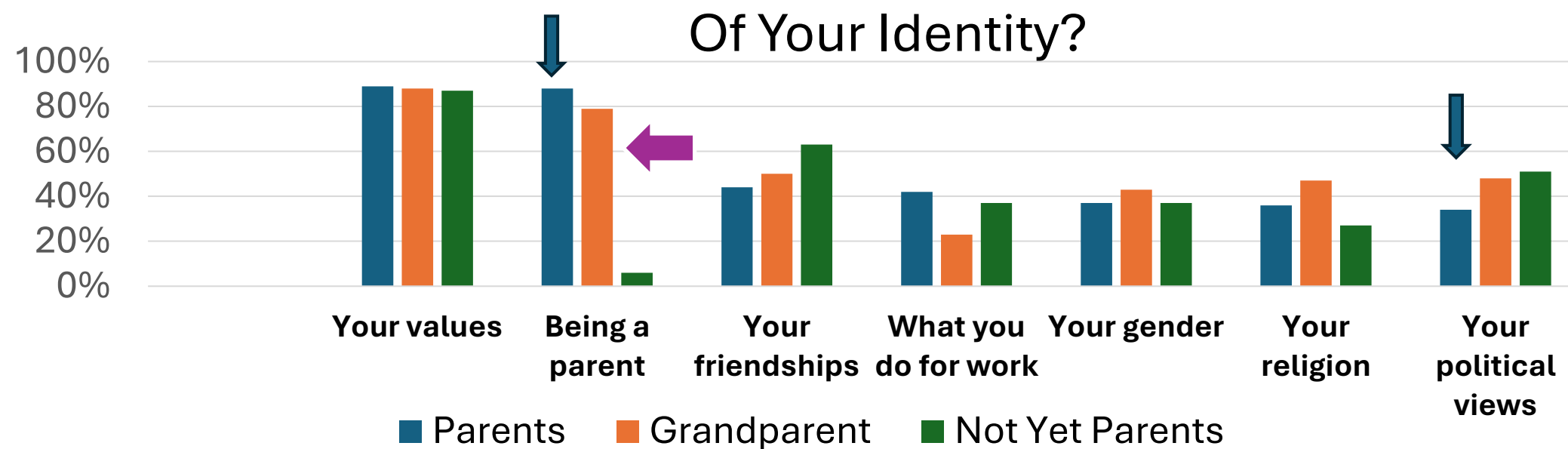
## Workers in the Care and Education Community:

- Decent pay and working conditions
- Valued for the work they do
- Benefits to those they serve

Frontline workers 8 percent of the electorate

## 5. Parents (and Grandparents) as Core Persuadable Electorate

To What Extent are Each of These A Big Part Of Your Identity?



Of all voters, parents say they are most likely to change their votes and party preferences based upon their values and what candidates say. Grandparents are the second most likely.

**Parents were much bigger “swing voters” than nonparents** in their choices for President from 2020 and 2024. ABC Exit Polls of Shift – Men with children 10% swing to R, Women with children 9% swing to R; Men without children 6% swing to R, Women without children 0% swing.



# 6. 501c3 Advocacy Strategies, Using Grassroots Influencers, Are Key



**Persuadable Voter:** White, working class, rural, paycheck-to-paycheck, mom with husband working long hours and primary caregiver for preschooler and elementary school child and working part-time to supplement family income.

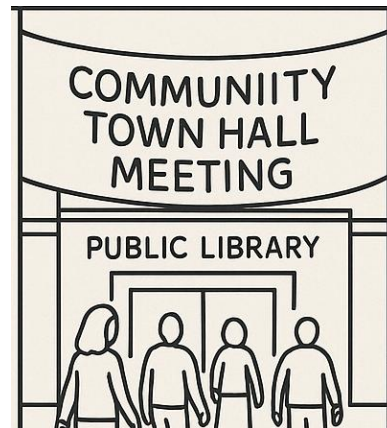
## **Possible Influencers:**

- Day care provider who got her a sliding fee slot that makes care almost affordable.
- Co-worker in nursing home who advocates for better pay
- Next-door neighbor who lends a hand when needed
- Member of Board of State Child Policy Advocacy organization
- ParentsTogether website offering information about child development

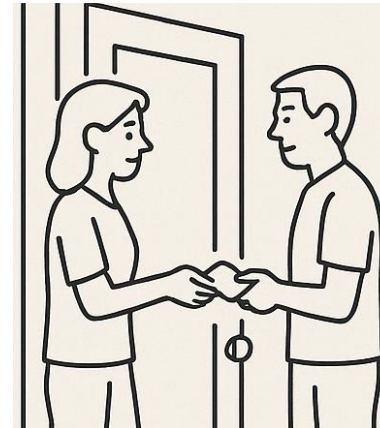
# Venues and Options for Persuasion: The 501c3 Wheelhouse

Voters respond to:

- People they know and trust
- Information directed to what they care about
- Settings they feel welcome
- Agendas that support dialogue/exchange and listening to what they care about



**Forums/Coffees**



**Conversations**

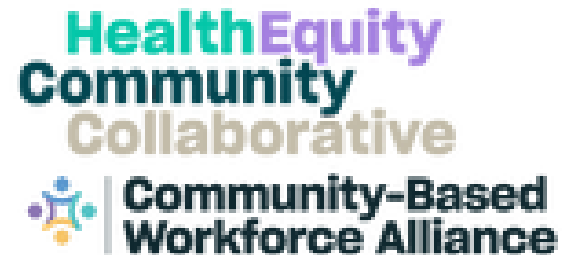
# 501c3 Organizations and Members as Key to Engaging, Educating, Dialoguing with, and Energizing Voters (Provided they Have Resources to Do So)

## National Organizations



**Children's Budget Coalition**

## National Networks with Grassroots Members



# Finding the Funding Niche

**Candidates, Parties and PACs – \$10 Billion** 2026  
Congressional Campaigns

Gotcha Media  
Partisan Messages  
Some GOV

A little more nonpartisan  
grassroots activity -- **\$100M**  
(Almost none to grassroots and state  
education and dialogue leading to  
persuasion)

Movement Voter Project/  
Battleground Alliance, etc.

**Values-to-  
Votes  
Dialogues on  
Elections  
and Child  
Policy**

**??? \$M**

**Philanthropy and Nonprofits – \$40 Billion** (health,  
education, and public good)

Supplemental services and supports  
to what government provides

Research and demonstration

A little public education  
Almost no direct lobbying/advocacy  
(State and national child policy  
advocacy groups -- **\$100 M/\$1 Million**  
Electoral Education and Advocacy)

Packard, Kellogg, Casey, Ford, Pew,  
Soros, etc.

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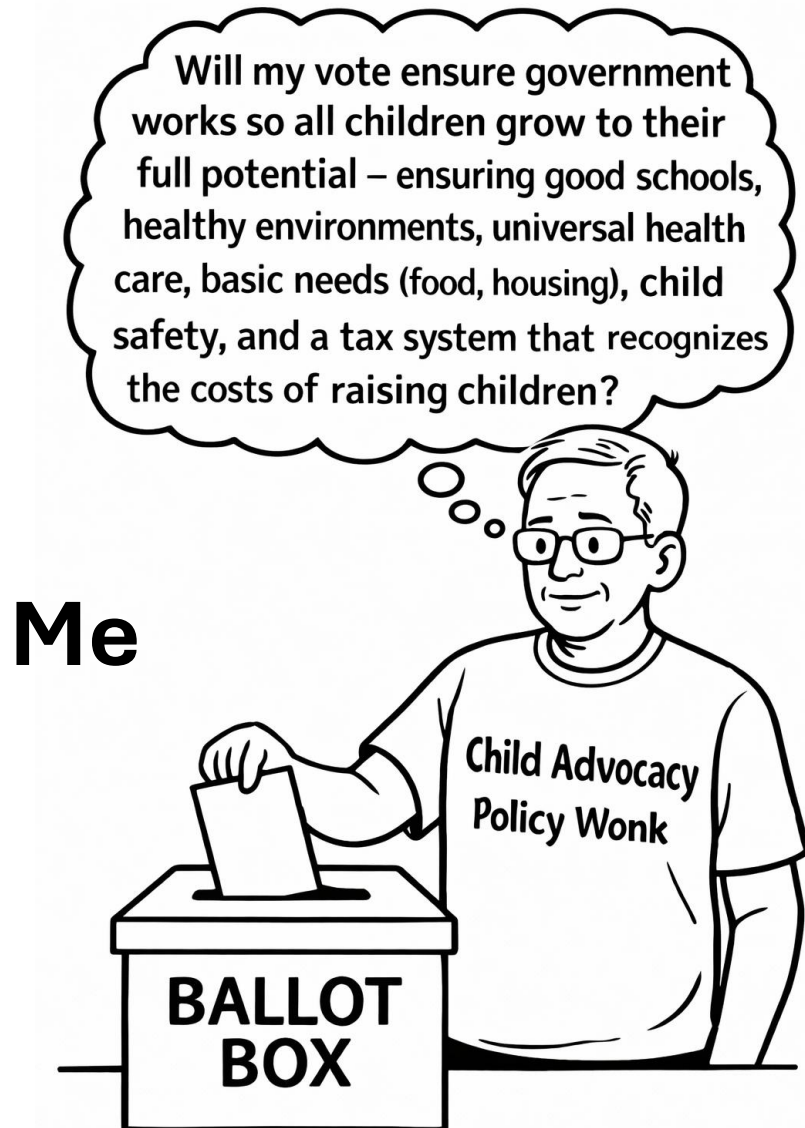
## Key Points

1. The 2026 Congressional elections are up for grabs.
2. Partisan campaign strategies are stuck in a rut.
3. Persuadable voters will decide the election.
4. The stakes are incredibly high for children and families.
5. Child and family electoral advocacy can be key with persuadable constituencies.
6. 501c3 advocacy strategies, using grassroots influencers, are key.
7. My goal -- My goal – to be a pro bono “senior strategist” kitchen cabinet member to maximize the impact of funding directed to this work

**Discussion – What can we do to advance 501c3 electoral education and advocacy? Your goal?**



# Single Value Voter – Child, Parent, and Family Policy



## Many Parents (if they know)



# Your Turn

# **APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL SLIDES**

**More on the Federal Budget**

**The Niche for 501c3  
Advocacy**

**My Single Value Voter  
Bottom Line**

# Explaining the Congressional Budget Choices – Two Different Directions

Reduce government taxation and oversight on private sector and personal wealth to spur economic growth

Cut expenditures to narrow the federal safety net of services to only those who deserve and need them

**Tax Cut and Jobs Act/One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Executive Orders, DOGE**

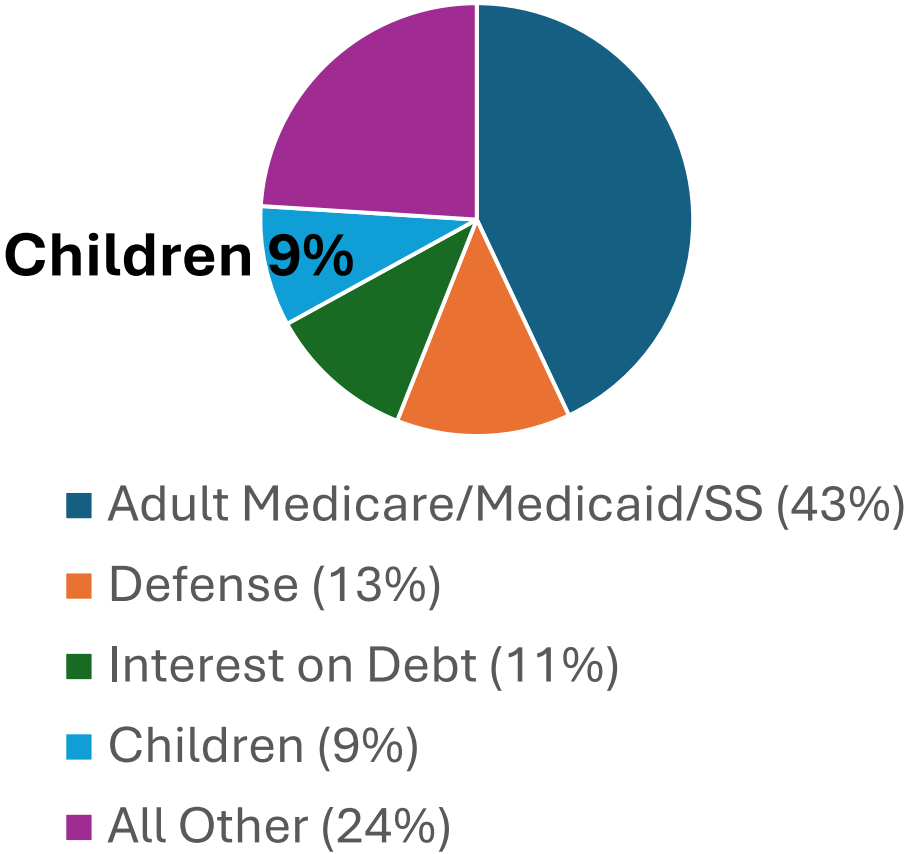
Increase government taxation and oversight on the wealthiest individuals and corporations to pay fair share and fund necessary public sector services, and eliminate abuse and diseconomies

Providing a public infrastructure for affordable health care and investments in education and human services

**American Rescue Plan Act, Build Back Better, Harris-Biden Care Agenda, Executive Orders**

# Follow the Money: The ABC's of the Congressional Budget for Children

Federal Budget  
Breakdown 2023



2023 Child Expenditures (in \$billions)

Health Care	157	30.9%
Nutrition	95	18.5%
Refundable Tax Credits	84	16.4%
Education CC	89	17.4%
SS/SSI/VA Benefits	49	9.5%
TANF/AA/Foster Care	22	4.3%
All Other	15	3.0%
	511	100.0%

Federal expenditures represent 42% of all state/local/federal expenditures on children.

Source: Urban Institute Kids Share 2024.



# The Niche for 501c3 Advocacy

**MESSAGES**



**KNOWLEDGE**

## Mobilizing

Maximizing Participation at  
Rallies, Protests, Twitter Storms

Energizing a Strong Vocal Base

Showing Support for a Different Path

Raising Money

## Organizing

Building the Base of Advocates  
and Expanding their Activities

Doing Outreach to the Less Engaged

Energizing and Getting Out the Vote

## 501c3 Persuading

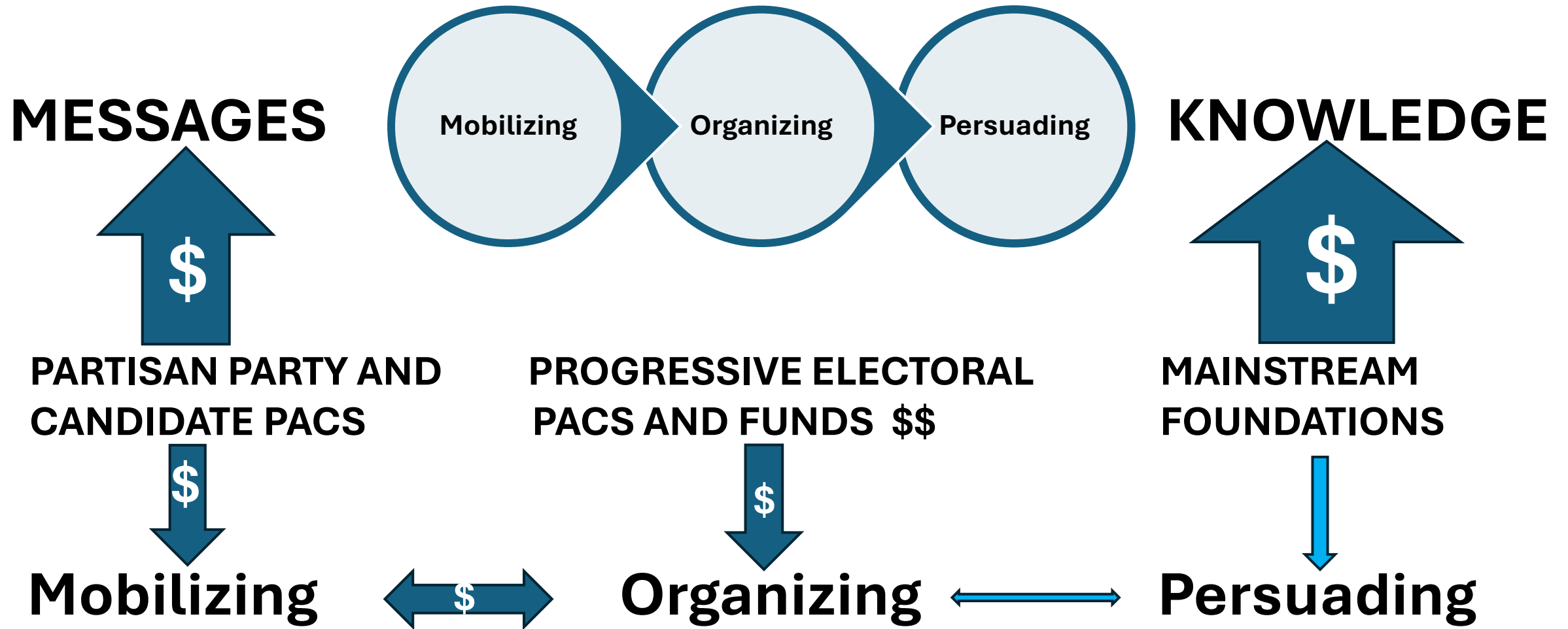
Engaging Persuadable Voters  
on their Own Ground

Bringing Information to the Table

Engaging in Dialogue

Following up

# The Niche for 501c3 Advocacy



# Charlie as Single Value Voter – What I Want Congresspeople to Do for Children

## FISCAL/INVESTMENT/SPENDING

- Tax system that recognizes expenses of raising children
- Good schools for all children
- Universal child health coverage
- Child protection and response to special needs
- Basic needs/nutrition and housing
- Safe homes and communities
- Supports for parents in nurturing roles (child care, paid leave, home visiting, etc.)

## REGULATORY/ENFORCEMENT

- Child rights as well as parental rights and responsibilities
- Anti-bullying
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion