

2014 -- Voter Turnout Is The Key

Report to National Committee meeting
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Today marks 54 days to the November 4 election. Most Governor and U.S. Senate races are toss ups. This election could go either way. It depends on voter turnout. The results of this election will have a big impact on our lives either negative like in 2010, or positive with new opportunities to move forward.

I am going to make four brief framing points to supplement the national board report and chart of priority races that was sent out. Then we will hear directly from nine states where the Governor and or U. S. Senate race is now a toss-up, about our strategy, tactics and activities. This will give us the understanding we need to analyze and draw conclusions about the main challenges for our collective work to November 4.

1. Our strategy

Our immediate strategy to build broad labor and people's unity to defeat the extreme right wing is a major contribution. It is the foundation of all our work, not just electoral.

One recent example of its application is Tim Wheeler's account in the People's World of the organizing in Sequim, WA that routed ALEC 's attempt to impose a "union free environment" in their town. Another example was the amazing movement that repealed SB 5 in Ohio last year. That's what the whole country is challenged to do, and struggling to do, right now.

During the convention period we further developed the point that our strategy to defeat the extreme right wing and change the political balance of forces is not only an end in itself. It is part of the long-term revolutionary process to achieve political power for the working class and allies so that our slogan "People and Nature before Profits." can become reality.

Right now millions of people are struggling to survive. Economic, racial and gender inequality continues to widen. More radical reforms, including public investment in living wage jobs for a sustainable, non-militarized economy have majority support.

Republican sabotage has blocked even mild proposals from the President. If Republicans win control of the Senate, repeal of healthcare and women's reproductive rights and government shutdowns are already promised. Republican governors have gone on a rampage.

The Koch Brothers et al, who represent the most reactionary, aggressive and predatory section of the capitalist class, are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to disrupt and suppress the vote. Still, most Senate and Governor races are tossups, with poll ratings shifting every day.

Defeating the extreme right wing in this election comes down to voter turnout. This huge fight to get out the vote can result in a stronger movement going forward.

There are key races in several states where we do not have organization. Our emphasis is on those races where we are active and involved.

Our starting point is not so much the candidates as it is building the movement on issues and building the strength and independent political structures of labor, women, youth, African American, Latino, Asian Pacific and Native communities which have the most progressive trends and have the most at stake.

Our responsibility is to build for the long term by raising class consciousness and helping forge stronger and stronger unity. In that context special activities and materials including our media that present our views and invite people to join our ranks are an important contribution to the campaign.

These election campaigns enable us to participate with the most politically involved sections of the working class, in the first place the labor movement. Where Communist Party or YCL collectives or members have their own grass roots base, our electoral participation can mobilize, solidify and expand our base and bring in new members.

2. New trends

There are important new progressive independent trends emerging in this election which warrant further study. To mention two:

The political landscape is beginning to change in the historically deep red Southern states. The Moral Monday movement has spread to 12 states now, including Indiana. It is a multi-issue, multi-racial movement that is taking on racism and other divisions. Sen. Bernie Sanders has toured southern states with this message. The racist police killing in Ferguson, Missouri and the expose of lack of representation there is also inspiring voter registration in the south and nationally.

Also of note is the expanding role of progressive third parties and progressive independents within the Democratic Party. In Vermont a Progressive Party candidate is running a strong campaign against the incumbent Republican Lieutenant Governor. In New York, Working Families Party tactics are pushing Governor Cuomo to more progressive positions, and the large vote for primary challenger Zephyr Teachout adds to this push.

3. Big issues

The ferment in our country has to be connected to voter turnout. It is not spontaneous.

Within the People's Climate March, within the fast food organizing for \$15 and a union, and within the movement to end racial profiling and police brutality and stop deportations the arguments have to be presented that connect these big struggles with expanding the electorate and pulling out the vote as necessary to win.

This is also true in relation to issues where we disagree with President Obama, and where disappointment or cynicism could end up in voters staying home.

Today, following President Obama's discussion of air strikes on Syria, the demand for no air strikes and finding other than military solutions is taking hold. The Congressional Progressive Caucus is calling for the matter to come before Congress for decision (under the War Powers Act). A victory for the extreme right-wing in these elections will only strengthen the hand of the military industrial complex on policy and create an even more dangerous situation now and in the 2016 elections.

Last week's announcement by President Obama that he would wait until after the election to act on ending deportations has created a horrible situation for immigrant families. The approach of one immigrant rights organization, which has singled out the most viciously anti-immigrant members of Congress for defeat, gives a good lead.

4. Proposals

As a National Committee we are responsible for making sure that our Party gives its best all-out fight in the next 54 days. The Political Action Commission and National Board have discussed some ideas for what we can do to assist the work on the ground:

- a. Emphasize connecting economic and social issues where people are in motion with the elections including low wage worker organizing and other economic issues, climate change, student debt, and ending racial profiling and deportations. Utilize articles in the People's World, the Communist Party weekly message and in our organizing on the ground.
- b. People's World and other materials. Produce three People's World promo cards connecting voting with climate change, the minimum wage, and voting rights to be used as Memes on social media and e-mail, and formatted for download locally. We should set up a system to measure how many new hits are generated. Solicit regular articles from the battleground states for the People's World. Issue the comparison chart showing why it matters to working people who controls the Senate and House. Establish a method of sharing local materials around the country as they are developed (including FL's pledge to vote; CT's "We Are Not Wisconsin" video; OH's recruiting pamphlet)
- c. Work with Labor 2014 and others door to door and at phone banks to register voters and get out the vote. Build the Communist Party in specific voting districts with post-election reports and discussion. If possible send teams to work with members, friends, allies in Kentucky, Kansas, North Carolina, New Hampshire.

I want to appreciate all the members of the Political Action Commission for their on-going work. We are always open to suggestions and new ideas. Also appreciation to all the battleground districts for their work and reports that show we are deeply involved in this giant battle in a way to build for the long term.

