

PLAYING TO WIN.

**HOW THE IOWA DEMOCRATIC PARTY CAN
BUILD BACK BETTER.**

MAY 14, 2021

WHY THIS PROJECT?

The genesis for this report was the experiences of two of its authors being first-time candidates in 2020, and all three of us being active in our local Democratic county parties. In our professional lives, we all work in marketing and therefore have an interest in strategy, messaging, and how organizations can effectively execute on both messaging and strategy.

After experiencing the challenges of being a candidate firsthand, and like so many Iowa Democrats being deeply disappointed at the results-down ballots in 2020, we decided to dig deeper into what happened by listening to other candidates around Iowa in state- and county-level races. We wanted to learn how to better support and position Iowa Democrats for success in the future.

While there have been many valuable postmortems completed by other passionate, committed Democrats across Iowa around the topics of voter registration and turnout, we felt we could gather some unique insights into candidate experiences that would complement these other efforts.

This report is to serve as both a conversation-starter and jumping-off point for Iowa Democrats to better serve our talented candidates and elected officials as they work hard to get the chance to serve the public. Some of our recommendations are simple and practical, while some represent a paradigm shift that may be difficult to achieve.



Photo: Melina Mara/Washington Post/Getty Images

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dave Miglin ran for Broadlawns Board of Trustees in 2020, is communications co-chair for Polk County Democrats, and professionally is vice president for media and digital services and principal at Strategic America, a Des Moines integrated marketing firm.

Kathryn Kaul-Goodman ran for Mahaska County Supervisor in 2020, a red and rural county in southeast Iowa; is a former delegate to the Iowa Democratic Party state convention, and multiple-time caucus chair for her precinct; and is current chair of the Mahaska County Democrats. Professionally Kathryn is a consumer insights manager for Strategy Analytics, a technology-focused market research agency based in Newton, MA, and Milton Keynes, UK.

Jean Kaul-Brown assisted both Dave and Kathryn in their campaigns, is communications co-chair for Polk County Democrats, was a GOTV volunteer coordinator in 2020 and

caucus chair for her precinct. Jean is an account supervisor for Spinutech, a web design and digital marketing agency, with locations in Des Moines and across the country. And last but not least, she is Kathryn's younger but taller sister.

OUR METHODOLOGY

We spoke with 10 Democratic candidates who ran in 2020 that we knew through our networks, as well as candidates we did not personally know and identified through lists from the Secretary of State as well as Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board filings. Some of the campaign managers (both paid and volunteer) of these candidates took part in the interviews with their candidate or we interviewed them separately. We also had an additional six county supervisor candidates who completed our online survey but were not interested in being interviewed.

We did our best to get a mix of candidates to cover a broad range of experiences and demographics, including:

- Candidates for state House, state Senate, and county supervisor
- Candidates whose races were both targeted and not targeted by the Truman Fund (for state House races) or the Senate Majority Fund (for state Senate races)
- Candidates who both won and lost their races
- Candidates located in all four congressional districts of Iowa
- Candidates who were running for the very first time and candidates who had run multiple times, including those with 30+ years in elected office
- Candidates ranging in age from 25 to 72

We conducted a mix of both in-depth interviews (60-minutes to 90-minutes long) as well as online surveys followed up by 30-minute interviews. Each candidate was asked the same general questions:

- Biographical information (career, education, previous experience, etc.)
- Motivating factors that influenced their decision to run for office
- If they received any candidate training and if so, what?
- Details about their campaign organization, fundraising, volunteers, and marketing
- Support from third-party groups (local and national)
- Messaging (their campaign and their opponent's)
- The election results – what worked and what didn't?

We started with the long interview format and then moved to the online survey, followed by the shorter interview format to more efficiently cover the candidates' background information and allow more time for digging into the finer points of the candidates' campaigns.

REFLECTING ON THE 2020 RACES.

OUR CANDIDATES

We were impressed by the qualifications, dedication, and backgrounds of the candidates we interviewed. **While some were encouraged to run by local contacts, none were formally recruited by their county or state party to do so; this presents an area of opportunity.** Despite often having to reduce hours or take temporary leave from their paid work, as well as sacrificing personal and family time, they chose to run because they felt strongly they needed to do so, often because no other Democrat was stepping forward. We shouldn't count on that bench always being there.

Most candidates have been involved with a Democratic group or cause and the majority were women. Many were especially motivated to get further involved politically and run for office by certain issues (and Republican positions) such as education and mental health.

Informal ties outside the party structure were key in nurturing candidates' interest in politics and supporting them in their campaigns. For example, one of the candidate's volunteer campaign managers was a long-time friend and neighbor while another candidate's was someone they met volunteering for the same caucus candidate.

Although many of the groups that have sprung up outside the Democratic Party have focused on encouraging and training those who are younger and/or more progressive to run, we feel those age 55+ are an untapped source, especially on the county level, for candidates. While they may require additional assistance on technical aspects such as social media, that is more than balanced out by their deep connections and experience in

their communities and often having fewer of the time-intensive family and/or career commitments that can be a barrier to younger people running.

Obviously, COVID-19 hampered the traditional outreach efforts that candidates used to develop awareness, share their message, and most importantly, connect with registered voters. As a result, candidates depended heavily on telecommunications, online marketing, and direct response. Most of the candidates respected the Democratic Party's wishes to abstain from in-person contact with voters, despite the fact that the opposition was ignoring such guidance.



Photo: John Pemble / IPR

THEMES THAT EMERGED

While we obviously had a diversity of candidates and there were often specific local dynamics at play in a given race, we nonetheless heard several key themes repeatedly:

Money wasn't the issue.

In 2020, Democrats showed they became the masters of small-dollar fundraising and many of the state-level candidates, especially those in targeted races, raised eye-watering amounts of money in addition to the in-kind contributions from the Truman Fund and Senate Majority Fund. However, the heavy financial focus on media didn't necessarily seem to drive results, and some of the candidates bemoaned not knowing what to do with the money they received. Meanwhile, non-targeted and county-level races often had very small amounts of funds and/or were often primarily self-financed, especially on the county level. While hindsight is always 20/20, it seemed like investments in longer-term organizing efforts may support overall candidate success better than incredibly heavy media spends on a handful of races in a very fractured media environment.

Supporting candidates the right way isn't easy.

Many state-level candidates felt unsupported and unsure how to best run their campaigns if their race wasn't one that was initially targeted, or if they lived in an area of non-Democratic dominance. For those in targeted races, while the support and resources from the Truman Fund or Senate Majority Fund was very welcome, it also at times felt heavy-handed and tone deaf to the specifics of their particular race, especially on messaging-related topics. For county-level candidates, the lack of support they felt from the Democratic Party was pretty clear. They were very dependent on the strength of their local county party. As we know from a multitude of sources, county party strength and resources vary wildly, and the support these candidates got reflect that. Most candidates received minimal support.

As marketers who have experience crafting campaigns across a variety of platforms to promote products and services, and "outsiders" in that none of us have worked in an official capacity as a campaign staffer or worked for the Iowa Democrat Party (IDP),

learning about lowan candidates' experiences finding resources and working to build their campaign infrastructure was fascinating.

Also, this was the area of our research and interview sessions that garnered much of the feedback from candidates, and seemed to be where the Iowa Democratic Party had the most opportunity to make immediate impacts or "quick wins" that could positively affect our Democratic candidates' election results.

LOSE SMARTER TO WIN LATER

While we may still lose, there are ways to run better. In one of our most touching interviews, one losing Democratic candidate said, "I lost the vote, but we didn't lose the election cycle because I showed up and was the voice for those who haven't gotten heard." While we will not be able to overcome these deficits and challenges in one or more campaign cycles, we can start making changes that can make a difference for our longer-term success. While we may still lose some heartbreaking races for another cycle or two, we can lose "smarter."

Many candidates felt like they were the recipients of the feast or famine approach. If you're in a targeted race, there's so much oversight, support, and money flowing in that it's hard to feel like you're in control of your own destiny. On the other hand, if you're in a non-targeted race or in non-Democratic stronghold, you're lacking resources and support to the point where candidates feel rudderless. There seems like there's an opportunity to reach more of a middle ground to meet candidates where they need to be met in order to feel like they can succeed - win or lose.

Volunteer recruitment success was highly varied. Candidates in strongholds like Polk County could count on the support of community groups and volunteers for support. On the other hand, in areas of the state that aren't Democratic hotbeds, we spoke to candidates who felt like they were competing with their fellow candidates for volunteers or had difficulties finding any volunteers at all. State Senate and House candidates felt like they were competing for the same pool of volunteers, and the same pool of dollars. Some candidates noted that if they had needed to door-knock, this lack would have been exacerbated.

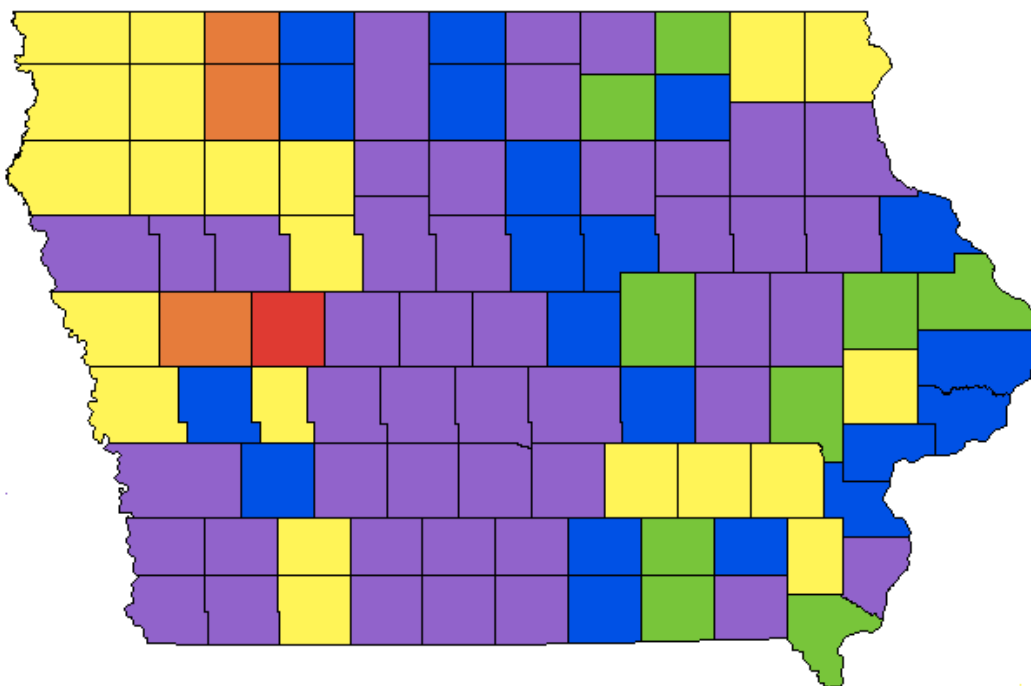
Most candidates felt like they were running their own race, and not tied to a larger Democratic strategy. Staffers for candidates felt like they were competing for volunteers amongst their fellow campaign staff. After speaking with candidates, we're confident this is an area the party can overcome, and campaigns can be run more efficiently at the state-level. The bifurcated approach from the Senate Majority Fund and Truman House Fund didn't seem to do their candidates much good.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES WITH CANDIDATES AND DATA

We certainly understand that resources are finite and that not all races and candidates can receive equal support, but our current model, where certain candidates receive so much monetary support while others receive little to no financial or advisory support (little VAN training, no one to discuss messaging or strategy with, etc.), seems like a lost opportunity.

That missed opportunity? In some cases, that's a high-quality candidate who we want to keep supporting and motivating. This cycle or race may not have been one where that candidate was positioned to win, however, next time, it may be an office and a race they are extremely well-suited to. **After poor experiences, most of the candidates we spoke to mentioned feeling burned out and unsure if they would ever want to run again.**

Poorly resourced and trained campaigns also can affect our ability to capture highly valuable data. The fewer places we run well-trained campaigns focused on quality data collection, the poorer our data becomes year after year.



We know that fielding quality Democratic candidates that can serve as the voice of Iowans in our state and county governments is essential because it's the right thing to do, but there may be signs that it's also essential to do so in the red areas of Iowa if we want to try to consistently win statewide elections. The perception of this "feast vs famine" approach amongst prospective candidates, activists and organizers also makes candidates more wary of running again or even running for the first time, and this is dangerous. **We will never win where we don't run.**

The message needs a lot of work.

We have high-quality candidates but they could be better supported in shaping their messaging. In a highly challenging environment for Democrats, we expect them to be able to confidently define themselves. Many quality candidates who would be excellent legislators need help defining and differentiating their message in impactful ways. The Iowa Democratic Party and our candidates need to clearly draw distinctions between Democrats and Republicans in Iowa outside of broad strokes and generic slogans.

A theme that came out repeatedly with candidates at all levels was that merely being labelled a "Democrat" put them at a significant disadvantage. Even dedicated, smart campaigning, and in cases of the targeted state House and state Senate races, major financial investments over \$200,000 (cash and in-kind contributions) were too late and too fragmented. In short, it was not enough to overcome the negative narrative created in the market for the Democratic brand.

Republicans have been very effective at defining the Democratic brand negatively while we as Democrats have been ineffective at defining ourselves or hitting back against Republican attacks. What Democratic messaging there was was often generic and anodyne and failed to clearly draw distinctions between us and Republicans. Additionally, even down to the county level all races are now effectively nationalized.

NEGATIVE NATIONAL MESSAGES STUCK TO OUR CANDIDATES

Candidates repeatedly mentioned how they had to spend a lot of time and energy responding to hot button Republican messaging especially around charges of socialism and defunding the police. These were not put out by the local candidate, but were so prominent in voters' minds from national coverage they were a significant factor in the

PLAYING TO WIN.

race nonetheless. As one state Senate candidate said regarding the top issues of concern to voters: *"It was COVID, COVID, and fund our police."*

In fact these messages and negative branding of Democrats was so effective that many of the candidates we talked to in county or non-targeted state House races said that their Republican competitor did virtually no campaigning but nonetheless managed to win handily. A state House candidate said of her Republican opponent's campaign, *"He didn't send out a mailer, he didn't do anything this time, he didn't spend any money - nothing, absolutely nothing. And the fact that he did so well and people don't even know who he is, tells you that we have got a real problem with messaging."*

Our own messages were unexciting, defensive, and did not draw clear distinctions between candidates, nor a compelling-enough reason for an Independent or Republican to shift their vote to Democrat.



Source: Urbandale Area Democrats

Looking at the offensive side of messaging, it also suffered from the “feast or famine issue” discussed above. Many non-targeted candidates struggled to effectively and concisely identify or articulate their messages and did not have resources available to help them do so.

Meanwhile, the candidates in targeted races often felt they received too much direction and prescription from the IDP in their messaging. The message topics and tone seemed to be set before the campaign manager came onboard. Messaging didn’t seem very nuanced or aware of differences around each candidate, or sometimes even of the local conditions on the ground in Iowa. For example, one state House candidate mentioned that consultants assisting her campaign with mailings wanted to include messaging around getting businesses back open following COVID restrictions and were unaware that businesses in Iowa were already open.

Local candidates were tied to the national conversation.

Whether it was Trump’s labeling Democrats as “socialists” or the national dialogue about “defund the police,” regardless of the race, Republicans were effective in tying the local candidates to these national anchors. In some instances, it was not a label being perpetuated by the local GOP competitor, but in others, there was a deliberate attempt to equate Iowa Democrats with the most high-profile national Democrats. Negative mailers from Republicans often invoked figures like Nancy Pelosi, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Bernie Sanders when talking about their Iowan Democratic opponents. Conversely, we were not aware of any Democratic messaging that tied state or local-level Republican candidates to Trump or other high-profile Republicans.

As a result of the Democratic brand being tarred with these misleading stereotypes, many of our candidates were forced to defend themselves on these topics. The lack of door knocking and other in-person engagements really challenged us, and candidates felt like they couldn’t overcome being demonized as out-of-touch coastal liberals without meeting their fellow Iowans face-to-face at their doors. Ultimately, we wondered: In Iowa, does “D” mean Disqualified? For many of our candidates in specific districts across Iowa, it very much felt like “yes.”



Source: Media Matters / Fox News

The Iowa Democratic Party needs to commit to transparency and two-way conversations.

Many candidates we spoke to felt disconnected from the IDP and even in some cases, somewhat distrustful of the party. While state-level candidates in targeted races were thankful for the support they did receive and felt like the state party was working hard on their behalf, it was clear that in many cases, the candidates and the IDP were far from working in lockstep. Candidates who weren't in targeted races felt at sea, candidates who were in targeted races seemed unsure of how to best work with the Truman Fund or Senate Majority Fund, and local county candidates had little to no interaction with IDP officials.

As we queried candidates about their experiences, there seemed to be a distrust of the perceived Iowa Democratic Party establishment. While generally very thankful for IDP support of their campaigns, it bubbled up in several interviews that the state party was heavily involved in areas like candidate messaging, but lighter in other areas, like data training and support, where candidates would have appreciated additional assistance.

Candidates also mentioned feeling frustrated by the prescribed nature of messaging. For those whose races were targeted, it often felt like the IDP was so concerned with projecting a moderate image that candidates didn't feel like their authentic selves were being communicated via the IDP-mandated campaign materials.

In the words of one candidate, *"It felt like you got patted on the head a lot, and it didn't feel like IDP was really sharing what their strategy was."*

Focus on communicating the strategy broadly. Simply put, if we can't communicate effectively among ourselves, then we can't communicate effectively to voters. Many candidates described a fairly narrow communication funnel. Their campaign manager would hear from their supervisor at the Truman or Senate Majority Fund and communicate strategy from there. While the narrow funnel may keep things efficient, it also seemed like it kept candidates feeling separated from other candidates and their efforts, and also kept the candidates feeling "in the dark" around the overall strategies. Regular communication from party leadership throughout the campaign cycle on overall strategy across the state for the county, state and federal races would help make sure candidates and activists can understand the game plan, and all begin rowing in the same direction.

Collaboration around media and messaging. There is a general understanding amongst the candidates that IDP is well-suited to handling the large media buys and large direct mail programs that are often a part of campaigns. While candidates felt good knowing that IDP was managing the technical side of these sometimes complicated tactics, there was a request for more transparency and background around the decisions IDP makes in their campaign strategy efforts. Sharing more of the "why" may not solve all the disagreements between candidates and the IDP, however, it will help the candidate and IDP be in more of a position of collaboration rather than prescription.

While candidates had the final "yay" or "nay" approval on IDP-produced materials, they often felt pressured to accept what was created for them and like the messaging produced in that material was either too generic or felt uncreative. In order to overcome these objections, and also create materials that are reflective of candidates' authentic messages, more collaboration around messaging at the beginning of the campaign is important.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2022 AND BEYOND.

A STRATEGY TO CONSIDER

Iowa has the potential to be a purple state, but it won't be easy. Out of the 175 years that have passed since its founding in December 1846, Republicans have occupied the Governor's Office 127 years (73%). Despite their anti-everything positions (anti-education, anti-taxes, anti-women, anti-immigrant, anti-workers, anti-environment, etc.), citizens and communities that are most negatively impacted by Republican policies continue to vote in large numbers for that party. There are countless analysis about why this trend has happened, but one thing is for certain: Democrats need to get on the same page and address those topics that could, if executed well, snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Here are a few suggestions (in no particular priority):

1. Hire Iowans.

Hire local operatives and activists who are from Iowa or are committed to staying in Iowa to serve as the campaign managers hired by the Iowa Democratic Party on behalf of state House and Senate candidates. In cases where local operatives aren't as politically sophisticated as an out-of-state campaign manager, they can be trained to overcome these gaps, and the party's investment will be kept in-state to help build the party from within here in Iowa. Many of these local operatives may have backgrounds that differ from the prototypical campaign staffer, but they do exist on the ground in Iowa. It may just take a reframing of what's the best fit for the role in order to find and encourage these folks to step up. We spoke to several candidates who had highly-talented volunteer campaign managers and volunteer candidate staff who did work very worthy of being paid. **There are many wonderful volunteers and activists who are already doing tremendous work supporting candidates and organizing for candidates already and know our communities well - let's pay them for that hard work.**

2. Start earlier.

Earlier embedding of IDP campaign managers within the targeted districts would increase candidate and IDP collaboration. We understand the concern that IDP can't be shown to be "picking a horse" too early in the primary, however, the IDP-placed manager can become an "interloper" or not part of the candidate's inner circle. Food for thought: If a candidate in a targeted race has an existing campaign manager, why not forgo placing an IDP-hired manager, and instead set expectations and requirements upon the campaign to release funding and resources.

3. Re-imagine the relationship between House Truman Fund + Senate Majority Fund.

There definitely seems to be opportunity for the Iowa House Truman Fund and the Senate Majority Fund to coordinate more clearly with each other in the field. While the staff members may be cooperating and coordinating behind the scenes, this was not felt by the candidates we interviewed. Pooling resources and staff members could help cut down on the competitiveness the candidates felt amongst each other. As an example, could an IDP-hired campaign manager support one House and one Senate candidate rather than two Senate candidates? It seems to make more sense to group the targeted campaigns by candidate working style and overlapping House and Senate districts rather than whether the race is for House or Senate. While we understand there's a model set from a federal perspective, we feel like there's an opportunity for a radical reimagining that may put the Iowa Democratic Party in a better position to fight back.

4. Provide some resources and support to non-targeted races.

There is so much opportunity to support non-targeted races and county-wide candidates with resources. Many county supervisor candidates reviewed from the Secretary of State's list did not appear to have even filed a campaign committee with the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board, implying that they spent under \$1,000 in their race.

To encourage quality Democratic candidates to step up in areas where our path to victory isn't clear, we need to let prospective candidates and voters in those districts know that

the Iowa Democratic Party is ready to fight for Democratic ideals in every corner of the state and in every race. To help with recruitment, candidates in these tough districts and races could get started with a \$1,500 signing bonus from the IDP; for county-level races, it could be a \$500 or \$750 bonus. Candidates in these races could unlock access to additional funds if their campaign accomplishes certain key benchmarks: number of doors knocked, voter contact totals and good data management. The IDP could also partner with political science departments to get campaign experience for underclassmen by having them help on campaigns for internship credits.



Source: Gallup

5. Work on recruiting candidates.

Currently the recruitment process appears to be completely left up to individuals deciding to step up. Consequently, many races in red areas and on the county level are left uncontested. Don't overlook those age 55+ or those with less typical backgrounds as potential candidates - both these groups often have deep community ties that are very valuable.

6. Walk alongside the candidates.

Provide intense, but productive campaign training that is practical and deliverable-focused. Host well-promoted, intensive hands-on workshops that are really focused for candidates to get their hands wrapped around getting the basics of their campaign infrastructure up and running ahead of the primary season. If candidates attend, they know by the end of the weekend they will have a logo, a basic website built, their social media calendar created, and a campaign plan in-hand. These workshops could be available to local, county-level, and state-level candidates. Candidates we spoke to mentioned preferring a hands-on, deliverables-focused campaign training to some of the other candidate trainings they had been a part of that were generic and left candidates still needing to do all the work on their own following the training.

There appears to be a niche for campaign consultants providing affordable assistance to candidates in smaller races - whether a la carte or complete “campaign in a box” services. A possible model is the Ship Creek Group in Alaska (www.shipcreekgroup.com). There are also many talented Iowa Democrats with skills in graphic design, web design, videography, and other areas that would be very useful to campaigns whether on a volunteer or paid basis. A database of these individuals that could be contacted by campaigns would be an extremely valuable resource, whether put together by the IDP or another group.

7. Collaborate on messaging.

IDP-hosted messaging workshops before primary season with interested activists and candidates could really help individual candidates define their messaging, hear directly from activists on what they are hearing in their communities, and let candidates use both their fellow candidates and activists as sounding boards and friendly challengers before they face voters and the opposition.

While the party platform sets the course and broad strokes, there’s a great opportunity for two-way collaboration, as the IDP shares research and voter survey data with candidates and prospective candidates heading into the next election cycle, and as candidates share how they think those messages apply to their particular community and race on both the state and county level.

8. Support county-level candidates.

County candidates need to have a certain level of support. We often talk about county-level races being essential to building our Democratic bench, but there isn't active, coordinated support of county-level candidates. We believe there's a need to do an even deeper dive into county-level races and candidate experiences in order to understand how to best support these candidates. However, there are some immediate ways to make an immediate impact:

- Give county candidates the opportunity to participate in the campaign workshops and messaging workshops outlined above
- Offer specific trainings to county candidates on VAN and data
- Striking/eliminating VAN fees after the primary
- Develop a comprehensive resource manual or directory for county candidates on local Iowa resources:
 - Union printers
 - Graphic designers
 - Web designers



Source: Plymouth County, Iowa

9. Do a debrief.

Win or lose, this is our simplest recommendation, and the one that may be easiest to implement. We spoke to candidates from December to February, and during that time, no candidates mentioned having any sort of opportunity for a formal debrief with the Iowa Democratic Party about their experiences as a candidate. **This lack of outreach from the IDP was very concerning for candidates, and contributed to them feeling like IDP wasn't willing to learn or hear from someone other than consultants.** This debrief could take the form of candidate roundtables, surveys and 1:1 interviews, but it needs to happen. There's great feedback and learnings that can be gleaned from candidates if they are asked. This debrief should happen with both state and county candidates.

10. Have a two-way conversation.

Our previous recommendation leads directly into this one. Fairly or not, the IDP was inscrutable to many of the candidates. Candidates need to feel like the IDP isn't a monolith stocked by establishment figures and consultants who aren't interested in learning from them. However, communication does need to be open both ways as candidates need to listen and learn when it comes to messaging, strategy and positioning. The IDP needs to set the standard and encourage openness, constructive disruption and transparency in order to get candidates onboard. The strategy needs to feel shared, not handed down from on high. It won't be perfect, but we can make progress.

11. Build the Iowa Democratic brand year-round.

Having the main focus of the party be on electing individual candidates is too little, too late (while also being expensive), when merely having a "D" behind a candidate's name is a major hindrance in many parts of the state. Thanks to the current environment, the old saw "All politics are local" has been stood on its head and "All politics are national" is now instead the case. **This means that the focus of the IDP needs to shift to building the Iowa Democratic brand year-round.** Hiring permanent local organizers to be on the ground and develop long-term relationships (rather than having well-meaning outsiders parachute in for a few months before election day and then leave) is a key part of this, as well as teaching local party members tools such as deep canvassing and employing

tactics like the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program, as well as giving monetary support and additional guidance to the county parties.

Our Iowa Democratic brand image also needs a major reboot. As Democrats, we like to pride ourselves as being factual and logical and avoiding emotions but then our messaging either becomes so dry or so insipid (“Education is great!” “Healthcare is great!”) that it does not give Iowans a compelling reason to vote for our candidates. Any marketer will tell you that emotions are key to inspiring a response, so we need to stop being afraid of them. We also need to take our gloves off and not hesitate to spell out how our Republican opponents’ policies will have negative consequences on the lives of everyday Iowans. There seems to be a major aversion against “negative campaigning” by the current party decision makers, but avoiding pointing out true negative things about the policies of our opponents is not taking the high road, it’s walking around with our head in the clouds while we’re beaten on the ground.

CONCLUSION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

This report is one of many to assess the 2020 election results in Iowa, and by no means are we suggesting that our findings and recommendations will, unto themselves, address the steep challenge Democratic candidates will face in the years ahead. But we sincerely hope that this self-reflection will open eyes, minds, and opportunities for future candidates to be successful.

To that end, we welcome your questions and conversations. Feel free to connect with us; below is our contact information:

Dave Miglin - DaveMiglin@yahoo.com

Kathryn Kaul-Goodman - mkkaul@hotmail.com

Jean Kaul-Brown - kaul.Jean@gmail.com