

Clear Strategy Strong Knocks Can't Lose

***Seed the Vote 2022
Evaluation Report***



SEED THE VOTE
WIN ELECTIONS, BUILD OUR MOVEMENTS



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CONTEXT & SUMMARY OF *SEED THE VOTE'S* WORK

Seed the Vote (STV) started as a project to help defeat Trump and to grow the power of movement electoral organizations in the process. In 2020 we connected volunteers in non-battleground states to organizations in swing states that were rooted in working class communities and communities of color, and that were leading voter outreach efforts in their regions. We then mobilized many of these same volunteers for the January 2021 senate runoff election in Georgia.

The 2020 Seed the Vote team thought this project would only exist through the end of that election. However, **after the exponential growth of the project resulted in over 9,000 volunteers participating in door knocking and phone banking efforts with STV and our partners**, an evaluation process and report that highlighted the value STV brought to the movement electoral landscape, and the ongoing threat posed by the Right, it was decided to continue this project into the 2022 midterm elections and beyond—at least through 2028.



Heading into the 2022 **congressional midterm elections**, STV knew we were dealing with a different political landscape than we had in 2020. The unifying threat that Trump presented was no longer there, though Trumpism still loomed large within the Republican party. While some segments of the Left were still aligned on the threat that the Right presented to our movements and the importance of ongoing struggle within the electoral arena, others were disappointed in what they felt were minimal tangible victories achieved by the Biden administration. Voters' morale was low, due to a confluence of issues: inflation was rising, gun and police violence was a major concern in many cities, and centrist Democrats were blocking key legislation. People were suffering and not seeing a sufficient government response. Adding to this the historic trends of a party losing badly in their first midterm election after capturing the presidency, and volunteers not turning out as strongly for midterm elections, and the outlook didn't look good. But it made the importance of groups like STV even clearer. Eventually, as the election drew closer, the political conditions shifted, in particular due to the Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade. This added energy and momentum to our plans that were already under way.

Seed the Vote started **rebuilding our operations** in late 2021, with most of our small core staff team starting in early-to-mid-2022. We made the assessment that the Democrats were more likely to retain the Senate than the House, and that given our size and relationships we should focus our efforts on key Senate races, and where possible House races in overlapping geographies. This assessment, plus key conversations with partner organizations, led us to focus our field efforts on **Pennsylvania, Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina and Wisconsin**.



HONING *SEED THE VOTE'S* ROLE & NICHE



Our 2020 evaluation highlighted the importance of our **door knocking program**, both on impact in key races and with volunteer morale. The pandemic initially forced all organizations to shift their primary voter outreach tactic to phone banking rather than in-person communication with voters. However, our experience door knocking with partners during the final weeks of the 2020 cycle showed us that volunteers were making a larger impact, felt more connected to STV and our partners, and had an increased commitment to continuing with this work.

This assessment inspired us to shift our focus for 2022. We were confident in our ability to run a **COVID-safe program**, and two years further into the pandemic, we believed that many volunteers would be even more interested in in-person work, as opposed to remote opportunities. We pivoted our program to put a heightened focus on door knocking, and shrunk our phone bank program to primarily focus on connecting our volunteers to our partners' existing phone bank operations instead of running our own, with a few exceptions.

For the 2022 midterms, Seed the Vote ran or supported door knocking programs in **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Atlanta, Georgia; Phoenix, Arizona; Reno, Nevada; and Durham, North Carolina**. We supported our partners' phone bank programs in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Wisconsin, and ran a phone bank program in Arizona in partnership with **LUCHA**. The nature of each partnership differed, depending on the needs and capacity of each partner. In Philadelphia, Reno and Phoenix we partnered with **UNITE HERE**, and hired field leads to run volunteer programs that operated alongside UNITE HERE's paid member door knocking program. This meant that UNITE HERE staff could focus their efforts on their paid member door knocking program, and STV held all of the training, canvass support and logistics for volunteers. In Durham we connected volunteers to **Durham for All's** existing door knocking program, and in Atlanta we did the same with **SURJ**. We set up a late partnership with **PA United**, in Western Pennsylvania, and sent a few volunteers out to join their door knocking program. Our partnership with **AAAF (Asian American Advocacy Fund) PAC**, also in Atlanta, was a hybrid: we plugged out of state volunteers into their existing program but had a STV volunteer leader play a role in leading our volunteers. And in the December run-off we used a similar model but with an STV staff member supporting the AAAPAC volunteer team on the ground. We also partnered with UNITE HERE for the December runoff in Georgia, leading two volunteer teams working with different union locals in neighboring Atlanta counties.



In total in 2022, we mobilized:

- **590** door knocking volunteers to make **644** out-of-state trips, totalling over **2,000** days of canvassing. These volunteers knocked over **105,000** doors.
- We mobilized over **600** phone banking volunteers to participate in over **1,500** phone bank shifts.
- We mobilized over **1,300** donors, **45** grassroots fundraisers, and **15** core behind the scenes volunteers to make this work possible. Many donors were also current or former volunteers.
- Lastly, more than **30** STV volunteers deepened their leadership experience by participating as field team leads or phone bank captains.

Our door knocking and phone banking programs were focused on **key Senate races**, and other important statewide races including **Governor and Secretary of State**. Following the leadership of our partners, our conversations at the doors also incorporated **movement building components**, ranging from asking voters to sign rent control petitions to informing them about good union job training programs for which they were eligible. Our door knocking programs, under the leadership of our partners, helped to make the difference in a number of these key races.



In Nevada we knocked on over **37,000 doors**, in a senate race won by fewer than 9,000 votes.



We knocked on over **40,000 doors** for the Georgia runoff, in a race won by under 100k votes.

It's also worth noting the huge impact of our partners' entire programs: UNITE HERE, for example, knocked **1 million doors** in Nevada. AAAF PAC knocked over **84,000 doors** for the Georgia runoff. Seed the Vote made a key contribution to the work of these organizations, and together we helped to **win the key races** that decided control of the Senate and multiple Governor and Secretary of State races crucial to the **2024 presidential race**.

Generation Rising, **the youth of color fellowship program** within Seed the Vote, partnered with five grassroots organizations in three states: PA Stands Up, PA United and Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance in Pennsylvania; Durham for all in North Carolina; and AAAF PAC in Georgia. Fellows were recruited by partner organizations and lived in the local communities where these groups based their work. **Nine fellows** completed the fellowship, which consisted of 20 hours of field work with their partners and 6-8 hours of remote community building, skills building and political education with the Generation Rising cohort.





BUILDING OUR MOVEMENTS



CONTEXT & SUMMARY

ROLE & NICHE

KEY LESSONS

THE FUTURE





Key Lessons

While there were many lessons for us in 2022, below are some key take-aways.

1

In-person canvassing with key partnerships:

In-person canvassing alongside our grassroots partners was the most impactful voter outreach tactic and created the most meaningful experience for volunteers. Nothing can replicate the profound in-person connection with a voter who wants to know where to vote, or who doesn't realize an election is coming up but wants to vote, or who wants to know that other people care whether their voice is heard at the polls. The strong training provided by Seed the Vote and our partners helped our volunteers have meaningful conversations at the doors that directly translated into increased voter turnout.

2

Consistency builds trust and impact:

Building with the same grassroots organizations over multiple election cycles, and bringing volunteers back to the same region multiple times, allows STV, our volunteers and our partners to deepen our relationships, trust, and overall impact.

3

Intentionality deepens partnerships:

Our most successful partnerships were ones where we had sufficient and intentional time to build trust with partners, where staff at our partner organizations saw the value and understood the structure of STV, where partners had preliminary field plans in place by the end of the summer, and where we were able to recruit enough volunteers to make a meaningful difference in their voter outreach work.

4

Building a new base of volunteers & donors:

We see the potential of building a new base of volunteers and donors in our movement. In our volunteer survey after the election, over 60% of respondents said that their work with STV increased their confidence in each of the following areas: leading at times and following at other times, pivoting when there is new information, making and adapting a plan, working with a diversity of people and viewpoints, balancing realism and optimism, participating in political conversations, leveraging volunteer capacities, and fostering teamwork and collaboration. The STV volunteer base is hungry to deepen their political learning and grow their outreach skills. We have leaders in our network who have the potential to grow, either into STV staff members or movement leaders more generally, if we commit the time and resources to invest in them between election cycles. In addition, many of our volunteers are also donors and volunteer fundraisers.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Seed the Vote made a tangible contribution in 2022. We mobilized over 1,000 volunteers to knock doors and make calls with grassroots organizations rooted in **battleground states** that were focused on winning important races and building long-term people power. We helped to win key races so Democrats could maintain control of the Senate and hold the Governorship and Secretary of State in key swing states. The work of Seed the Vote's volunteers and partner organizations helped ensure victories the Right was counting on never materialized, and **sowed seeds** for future organizing efforts.



As we head into 2023, Seed the Vote is planning for what's to come. We know our work is far from over. Although we were able to win a Senate majority, the GOP control of the House and MAGA control of the GOP will make it harder to pass meaningful legislation that will benefit our communities for the long run. Now is the time for our movements to organize the Democrats to fight for **a bold agenda**, and to prepare to stop the Right from winning all three branches of government in the 2024 elections. We won't stop until we can **shift the balance of power** in Washington and win federal victories on **climate, healthcare, housing, good jobs, immigration, policing, reproductive justice**, and more.

We were proud to contribute to the wins of Senators Fetterman in Pennsylvania, Cortez Masto in Nevada, Kelly in Arizona, and Warnock in Georgia. By helping the Democrats get to **51 votes in the Senate**, these victories will impact committee assignments and judge appointments, and stop a single centrist Democrat from blocking key legislation. They pave the way for our movements to fight for bigger, bolder action over the next two years. This election further demonstrated what we first learned in 2020:

A majority of people in this country will vote to reject the white supremacist, fascist, anti-democratic Right, if they make it to the polls.

Despite that, the threat of the MAGA coalition is growing, evidenced by the House election results, Trump and Desantis' upcoming bids for president, the role of the Freedom Caucus in the chaotic Speaker's race, and the swiftness with which the Republican party has begun to set the stage for 2024 election denial and move forward hateful policies. We delivered the Right a setback last year. But they are counting on a favorable **2024 electoral map**, ongoing voter suppression, gerrymandering efforts, and their new power in the House and Supreme Court, to help them do what they failed to do in 2020 and take power by any means necessary. The 2024 presidential, **senate and house elections** will be a crucial test of their power, and we must prepare to show up bigger than ever before, alongside our partners on the ground who know what it will take to meaningfully engage people in their communities for the long haul and to win.



In 2023, STV will deepen and expand our work to show up powerfully for the 2024 election. Some if not most activities will be conducted by STV Education Fund. That will include:

1 Continuing to fight voter suppression attacks and protect election integrity

- Supporting groups fighting state-specific voter suppression attacks
- Putting pressure on Congress/Biden to prioritize national voter protection efforts that are in their power to implement

2 Expanding political education and leadership development for STV volunteers

- Working with Convergence Magazine and national partners to host events that keep STV volunteers updated on what is and is not being accomplished in the federal government, and implications for our movements
- Working with partners to offer trainings to increase skills and leadership of key volunteers who will play key roles in 2024

3 Deepening relationships with partner organizations by showing up for their ongoing organizing needs

- Making coordinated calls to put pressure on a key campaign target
- Helping with behind the scenes work to support their organizing for 2024
- Where possible, add volunteer capacity to partner organization's on-going organizing campaigns

4 Strengthening infrastructure and systems to support our 2024 organizing work

- Evaluating tech and operations systems from 2022 and making shifts for 2024

5 Building new volunteer relationships to expand our reach

- Exploring building volunteer networks in areas that can support key races in the Southwest and Midwest
- Building STV branches in 2024 with a new set of non-battleground organizations (branches recruit their members to door knock or phone bank together through STV's systems)

We are excited to build off of the momentum and lessons from 2022, and to bring Seed the Vote into the next chapter so we can continue to win elections and grow our movements in the year to come.