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Smoke Filled Back Hollars: The Impact of Traditional Barbecue on Modern Political Campaigns Within Western Virginia

Presented to the
Department of Political Science
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree with honors
of Bachelor of Arts

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Hollins University

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Abstract: The first political barbecue took place in Virginia during the Colonial period. Since then, barbecue has remained an essential part of American civic life. Western Virginia, defined for the purposes of this thesis as the political borders of the sixth and ninth Congressional Districts in Virginia as drawn in 2021, is largely a rural area, considered by most political consultants to be heavily Republican and *not winnable* seats for Democratic candidates. The state Democratic Party of Virginia has rarely earmarked funds or support for candidates within those districts for the past two decades. Ironically, the Democratic party controlled this same area from the founding of Virginia until the 1990s. This thesis examines the rural divide that exists between the local Democrats who work within the western Virginia region and the hierarchical Democratic party at the state and national level. This paper also examines the historical significance of barbecue - both food and events - on the political participation of western Virginians, as well as rural Virginia culture through first-person interviews, surveys, and discourse analysis of news media, partisan state party materials, and historical documents. This analysis reveals that creating community through direct action, in particular using barbecue as a political tool, has a positive effect on electoral engagement.

Keywords: Barbecue, political perception of western Virginia, Appalachian culture

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Table of Contents:

Introduction	pg 5
Research Questions	pg 9
Methodology	pg 10
Literature Review	pg 14
Chapter One	pg 19
The Historie of Virginia Barbecue	
The Modern Cue	
The 2022 Lewis Barbecue	
Chapter Two	pg 35
The Region	
The Southeast Experiment	
Chapter Three	pg 49
Organizing	
The Dueling Democratic Campaign Strategies	
Conclusion	pg 57
Bibliography	
Appendix A - Survey Questions	
Appendix B - Survey Responses	
Appendix C - Semi-structured Interview Questions	
Appendix D - A Campaign Strategy for Western Virginia	
Appendix E - A Man with a Plan	
Endnotes	pg 89

“What New Englanders managed by a caucus, the Virginians preferred to accomplish by a barbecue.”

- Connecticut State Librarian John Trumbull, 1854.¹

Introduction:

In a hazy story passed down through southwestern Virginia Democratic party history, Harry Truman was speechifying on the Presidential campaign trail somewhere near Wythe County to Democrats in the late 1940s, a full glass of bourbon in his gesturing hand, satisfied and happy after partaking in barbecue. Truman proclaimed, “I see acres and acres of Democrats.”

I regret to inform you that this story did not actually happen. Harry F. Byrd, who dominated Virginia politics through what was referred to as the Byrd political machine throughout much of the first half of the 20th century, ruled Virginia politics with an iron fist, and Byrd believed Truman to be a socialist. Sen. Byrd fought against Truman with everything he had, including Byrd’s implicit threat of violence should Truman campaign in Virginia². Truman never came to Virginia during his campaigns. But there are some truths readers should take away from this untrue story. 1. Southwestern Virginians have a long-lasting oral tradition of Democratic events in their mountains. 2. Even non-existent political events can make a great shared story. And 3. Southwestern Virginia barbecue is legendary.

The Purpose of this Thesis

It is not a surprise to anyone who is paying attention to the fraught nature of modern United States politics that the Democratic Party has a monumental and costly problem in appealing to rural voters. Over the past few decades, hostility has grown between opposing political party adherents, and rural districts are often written off as unwinnable for Democrats. This thesis is the culmination of my theoretical research under Hollins University tutelage, and my eight years worth of firsthand experience within the political campaign climate of rural western Virginia as a representative of the Democratic Party. I believe that the national political consultants are incorrect in some basic assessments of how rural people make their political decisions.

Furthermore, after spending a summer knocking rural doors in the one-size-fits-all Democratic party prescribed approach to canvassing taught me that each precinct should be organized with individual strategies and tactics, using locally generated specific goals for that precinct. In 2018, I created and printed out paper lists of every person that 'leaned' Democrat or had 'unknown' status for the Buchanan precinct in Botetourt County. I was sure that I would zip through this precinct, and rapidly move on to the next. I canvassed with a partner - a high school age political junkie who was invaluable in appealing to the people who opened their doors to us. We did have some good conversations, but they were few and far between. People who lived in that precinct were living in houses that could be a mile off the road. While canvassing in dense city blocks, I average about 20 houses per hour. In Buchanan, I was averaging about 8 houses per hour, wasting gas, and putting gravel dents in my car. Once, I was seriously concerned

for our lives when a man became irate because we were on his property. I put a stop to canvassing for the rest of the week while I re-worked my plans on who and how we were approaching. There was no appreciable difference in the Buchanan precinct's voting numbers during the 2018 general election, either in more than expected number of total votes or in percentage change of the normal partisanship voting. That summer was a fool's errand, and, anecdotally, actually increased partisan hostility, at least against me and my canvassing partner.

That being said, through this and other trial and error situations, I believe there is a solution for our partisan problem, and it involves spices, tangy sauce, and plenty of authentic smoke. There is a western Virginia bedrock community of barbecue culture that has existed in Virginia for longer than written records exist. In this thesis, I discuss actual events that have affected civic participation, and talk shop with Virginians who are currently engaged in the hard work of electing Democrats in rural districts. In particular, The Rural Ground Game, conceived of in 2019, was created as an opportunity for county-level Democratic committees and rural candidates to get training on how to use the tools of the Democratic party, but create hyperlocal-focused strategies that work for that specific committee and candidate, with the implementation and regional knowledge coming from the community's residents. Rural Ground Game's slogan is "we believe that we bring the engine, you bring the gas."³

Important takeaways from my research are: 1. Barbecue foodways are unique to local traditions, 2. Western Virginia has a long intertwined history of combining politics with barbecue events, 3. Psychological research has shown that shared social events are amplified, both pleasant and unpleasant

experiences, and 4. Barbecue is damn pleasant, and thus should be amplified. Smoked meat and the community events that go alongside the tantalizing food is an underutilized tool in modern political campaigning, and should be used as part of a holistic approach towards changing partisan election outcomes. Barbecue is a social magnet that crosses class and ethnicity. I think my research bears this theory out.

The first chapter of this thesis tells the political history and current situation of western Virginia and the political usage of barbecue in the Commonwealth, obviously with an emphasis on barbecue in rural Virginia. The second chapter gives a theoretical foundation for the research, with various hypotheses in the social sciences research literature supporting my findings, as well as first-person community organizing accounts. This includes my own first-person account of hosting a barbecue for a Congressional candidate (there were issues) and an anonymous survey of the barbecue attendees. I include a bonus third chapter - Appendix D - which is a how-to manual for running as a Democratic candidate in western Virginia. The campaign manual is based on personal experiences with political campaigns and candid interviews with political candidates and campaign managers.

In this thesis, I strive to prove my theory that a barbecue event will motivate voters to go to the polls and vote for the candidate who provided the meat.

Research Questions

Do current political campaigns rely too heavily on the lofty exchange of ideas and values? Should there be some kind of material goods involved in public campaign discourse? Politics and barbecue have been intertwined throughout Virginian history, starting before the Revolutionary War. In fact, Nat Turner's Rebellion took off during a Sunday afternoon barbecue. The first celebrations of the early Republic were barbecues, with George Washington presiding over the pits. Political parties proudly chose different styles of cooking and serving meat during campaigns to highlight differences in governing approaches. Prior to television ads, a common outreach strategy in the American South was a pig roast. Given this history, I am particularly interested in why and how barbecue has recently fallen out of favor with modern political consultants as a winning strategy. The body of this thesis provides greater detail on how roasting meat is one key tactic in western Virginia to win over voters and, as such, should be brought back into modern campaign usage.

The research delves into the historical impact of barbecue in U.S. politics, exploring how barbecue events can be used as a tool to drive electoral engagement and examining how rural voters in particular respond when meat is on the table. I also examine the race, gender, and class divisions within barbecue, both historically and currently - as the barbecue tradition seems to undergo a seismic shift from a food of the lower classes to represented in media and marketed in public by white, upper-middle-class men - and how this could affect current political campaigns.

This thesis considers two important questions: Can barbecue be used as a partisan tool to bring about higher civic participation in the political system that exists in the western Virginia region? Has there been a historical importance to barbecue in western Virginia? To put it bluntly - can the Democratic party or a Democratic candidate start changing the political conversation by giving voters grilled or smoked meat?

With barbecue as a tangy backdrop, this thesis also contains in Appendix D a Democratic candidate campaign strategy guide specific to western Virginia. It is not magic, the strategy requires a good amount of hard work and goes back to a dependence on relational campaigns, and to be perfectly clear, most likely candidates will require several election cycles before winning. But this thesis offers winning tactics for Democrats in a hostile Republican stronghold.

Methodology

This thesis relies heavily on first-person conversations and semi-structured interviews - in particular interviews with the people most publicly invested in the work of changing the political trajectory of western Virginia from Republican to Democrat. I used a semi-structured interview style to collect qualitative data during my conversations. My interview questions are in Appendix C.

I began this project intending it to be neutral, non-partisan research on how barbecue can build civic engagement regardless of party; unfortunately, I was unable to gain interviews with the Republican elected officials I initially contacted. Thus for practical reasons, the concept of this study was changed to a

more partisan approach, and any Republican slanted opinions were gathered through social media posts, published print interviews, and campaign information of Virginia Delegate Marie March and Virginia State Senator David Sutterlein. Del. March owns two barbecue restaurants in the area. She participated in the January 6th rally/insurrection at the U.S. Capitol Building, and has been said to have entered her delegate race as a response to blow back on social media and retaliatory reviews left on her restaurant's web presence. Sen. Sutterlein has built his local Republican committees through competent grassroots organizing that includes social gatherings.

The Democratic affiliated people who agreed to be interviewed come from diverse backgrounds that offer a wide variety of experiences within western Virginia culture. Chuck Simpson is a labor organizer who grew up in Floyd, Va. His father was a Republican state delegate in the 1950s who held social gatherings as part of his campaigning. Simpson hosts several barbecues for volunteers each election cycle during 'Labor Walks.' Delegate Sam Rasoul became the first Muslim elected in a state level race in the Commonwealth of Virginia when he won his seat in 2014. He represents the majority of Roanoke City. Rasoul began an initiative called the Democratic Promise out of his business consulting office in 2017. His organization offers free assistance to those who need help and initiates contacts with the right people in the right government agencies, which he conceived of as a non-corrupt Tammany Hall style political operation. Del. Rasoul participates in Democratic party oriented barbecues throughout the state. Roanoke City Councilwoman Vivian Sanchez-Jones hosts an (almost) yearly free barbecue in her backyard, geared specifically towards introducing the Hispanic

community of southwestern Virginia to political leaders. There is often a voter registration table set up as people enter the event. Sanchez-Jones is currently running for re-election. Jennifer Lewis is the current Congressional candidate for Virginia Congressional District 6, and has participated in political barbecues in the past. Josh Stanfield, Virginia politics scholar, founder of Activate Virginia (an anti-corruption non-profit) and former campaign manager of Jennifer Lewis. Christopher Fury, pitmaster to multiple political barbecue events since 2016. Jennifer Kitchen, financial director of Rural Groundgame, and two time candidate in the Augusta County delegate race.

The research is written through the lens of Saul Alinsky's Theory of Community Organizing. I was introduced to Alinsky while canvassing door to door in Radford, Virginia for the 2016 Bernie Sanders campaign. My interactions with possible voters were perfunctory at best, but I watched my canvassing partner hold animated conversations for 10-15 minutes and literally change people's minds, the discussions ending with friendly handshakes. He had studied under Alinsky in Chicago in the 1960s. My new friend told me that you should never start with "What do you think about ..." but instead "How do you *feel* about..." because it introduces completely separate brain responses, and the emotional response is more likely to elicit an openness to new ideas. Alinsky's theory can be summarized as: the power lies in the grassroots and not inside institutions. There is obviously much more to Alinsky, but that is the basic floor of his Community Organizing Theoretical Approach, and the core truth in this study on how barbecue events can help build a political change. Underpinning my Alinsky lens is Kropotkin's Mutual Aid Theory. Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread*

elucidates clearly how freely offering smoked meat to rural Virginians could lead to greater political power within the grassroots.

Tangentially, using Alinsky as a lens forces me to explain why Alinsky is such a boogeyman within the right side of the political spectrum. There is some projection, as the Tea Party used *Rules for Radicals* as their own handbook for community organizing, at the time being touted by Dick Armey and James O'Keefe as a successful blueprint for community organizing, regardless of the partisanship of the organizer. The backlash started in the alt-right blogosphere and from published heavy hitters such as David Brooks in 2008 during the Democratic presidential primary when Barack Obama named Alinsky as a hero, and Hilary Clinton spoke of her mentorship under Alinsky, as well as Clinton writing her senior thesis on Alinsky and his ideas. Most damning of all, in the acknowledgements of *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky praised Lucifer as the first radical. While to most eyes, it looks like a tongue in cheek joke, to 2008 Conservatives, it gained outsize status and inferred that Alinsky was actually evil.

Alinsky's theories are truly nonpartisan. As the success of the Tea Party's ascension shows, anyone in the political spectrum can use his ideas to attain organizing success. From a 1972 interview with Playboy magazine, Alinsky summarized his own strategies and tactics.

[...]But to accomplish anything you've got to have power and you'll only get it through organization. Now, power comes in two forms--money and people. You haven't got any money, but you do have people, and here's what you can do with them...⁴

Literature Review

How can political campaigns drive citizens to greater electoral engagement? This thesis endeavors to show both correlation and causation in the “punch and pie” theory working to boost attendance at political campaign events, and capitalizing on that anticipated excitement to create increased participation in electoral contests. In particular, this thesis looks at how the act of barbecue can create community within a set of voters in the western Virginia region. I also include an overview of the historical importance of political barbecue within the southern United States and of the current applications of barbecue usage within the political arena of western Virginia.

Negative Partisanship Model

The great debate raging in U.S. political campaign popular talk is whether swing voters are statistically relevant. Is there such a thing as a true “swing voter” who can be persuaded, or has our democratic system moved to a negative partisanship? While Rachel Bitecofer is not a peer-reviewed source per se, I am including the conversation because it is important to my thesis, and I am an advocate of Bitecofer’s⁵ compelling research in which she argues that swing voters no longer exist. She suggests that elections depend on turnout, instead of ideological persuasion. I include the arguments against Bitecofer’s theory within these pages, notably Rick Thau of Engagious⁶ and Matt Yglesias of Vox,⁷ both of whom have built their careers around methods of persuading people to change their political views. The persuasion strategy that Thau and Yglesias enthusiastically espouse, is, of course, not their own creation, but the bedrock of U.S. political campaign thought built on decades of research. Bitecofer is saying

that times have changed and political consultants need to change with the times, if they want to win elections.

Bitecofer became the biggest name in television political forecasting in 2020 with her voting models using the negative partisanship theory.⁸ Bitecofer's mentor, Alan Abramowitz, an Emory University professor, was one of the early adoptees of the negative partisanship theory, and he succinctly explains it as "Over the past few decades, American politics has become like a bitter sports rivalry, in which the parties hang together mainly out of sheer hatred of the other team, rather than a shared sense of purpose."² In early 2019, Bitecofer prognosticated that it did not matter who the Democratic party nominated, the Democratic candidate would win the majority of electoral college votes. She says she was proven correct, although debate still rages over *why* Bitecofer was correct, particularly as there is no way to prove that any Democratic candidate who had gotten the nomination would have secured the electoral college vote. This assumption is part of the reason Bitecofer is a divisive figure among current political consultants.

Bitecofer is quoted as saying that her analysis consists of "flipping giant paradigms of electoral theory upside down." Her forecasting models are based on the idea that elections in the United States are not won by changing people's minds about who they will vote for, but in motivating the people who already align with you to vote in the first place. In contrast, long-held political theory focuses on the Rational Actor Model, and interesting research has been recently published regarding how social media has altered who is likely to participate politically and how. Christian Vaccari and Augusto Valeriani in their recently

published research *Outside the Bubble*,¹⁰ make compelling arguments that social media has changed the political discourse and activities for large portions of formerly apolitical people, and thus the Rational Actor Model and the Political Persuasion theories still hold water. I suspect that while social media will continue to influence political behavior, the heyday of political social media occurred from 2016-2020, and we are in the process of returning to an in person relationship building model, while continuing to deal with the fall-out of things like pizzagate and Q-Anon.

Rural Politics and Shared Social Experiences

There is much written about the current urban-rural political divide in America. A treasure trove of data can be found in Gimpel, et al *The Urban-Rural Gulf in American Political Behavior*.¹¹ The authors used over 15 years of polling data to infer that rural areas are more conservative based on social context, and self-selecting mobility. Education, income, age or race have little to do with political party loyalty, but shared social experiences affect a community's likes and dislikes, with a lack of population density meaning differences are not easily hidden. This data driven research is backed with Boothby, et al psychosocial experimental research that used food and taste sensations to see how shared experiences changed perceptions - both positive and negative.¹² Summarized, the amplified experience research found that two people engaged in the same activity in the same space found that activity much more pleasing or onerous, than the same activity alone, or with a person in the room that was doing a different activity. Furthermore, there is interesting research being done on the

failure of the Democratic party to connect and communicate with the rural parts of America. The amplified shared experiences are going in a very bad direction. According to Chip Berlet and Spencer Sunshine, the rural areas have moved past contempt for the Democratic party, on to rage.¹³ This rage manifests itself in the 'Patriot' movement and such events as the January 6th Insurrection. Is it too late to calm hostilities in rural regions?

Barbecue and Food History

The question of what constitutes barbecue is examined in great detail in increasingly popular historical food research. Andrew Warnes' *Savage Barbecue*¹⁴ makes a somewhat convincing case that while almost all cultures have roasted meat for centuries, the concept of American barbecue was an outgrowth of white supremacy to mark the difference between "white" and "not white" throughout Europe as specific countries colonized the Americas. The problem with his arguments is that sometimes he uses the absence of evidence to prove his point. Warnes is peer-reviewed scholarly research. Barbecue as a subject is an emerging trend, but unfortunately, most of the literature that speaks directly of barbecue history, traditions, and current trajectory are not peer reviewed. I believe that more attention should be paid to this surging interest in food research. In multiple other food history books focused more on the act of barbecue, there are clear connections between U.S. politics and barbecue events. I lean heavily on much of the barbecue research found in on Auchmutey's *Smokelore*,¹⁵ Moss' *Barbecue: The History of an American Institution*,¹⁶ and Miller's *Black Smoke: African Americans and the United States of Barbecue*.¹⁷ Haynes' *Virginia Barbecue: A History*¹⁸ will begin to tie in barbecue specifically to the

traditions and politics of Virginia. These books are based on historical records and have less theoretical controversy attached to them, but have all advanced the historical barbecue culture that is unique to the United States.

Chapter One

THE HISTORIE OF VIRGINIA BARBECUE

If you want to get a lot of people together, barbecue is the way to do it. And it has been this way for a very long time.

-Robert Moss¹⁹

The concept of modern American barbecue began with the indigenous population that lived on this land before European colonists arrived, and so it is important that I acknowledge those Native American people. I am writing this thesis in Roanoke, Virginia on the ancestral land of the Tutelo or Toterro people. The Tutelo's first recorded settlement was on the banks of the Roanoke River, where the present day City of Salem is located. The Tuterro applied a wood smoking practice to preserve meat, fish and cultivated crops (usually corn) over the winter months, and were a part of Virginia barbecue lore.²⁰

The Commonwealth of Virginia has a rich history of politically-entwined barbecues. As the colonial powers explored the land that would become Virginia, they found American Indians using smoking as a food preservation technique, which the people colonizing the land studied and employed for their own interests. John Smith in his *Generall Historie* wrote of the 'hurdle' used by Indigenous Virginians - an early smoking pit that Powhatan's tribe used to immediately preserve fish after a haul, in lieu of the salt preservation methods used by the English.²¹ Anglicized, the process was called 'jerk.' As Virginia became more settled by western European colonists, roasting meat over coals and out of doors became an established tradition, with large plantations hosting barbecue

parties for the whole neighborhood every weekend from May till September, each household taking their turn. Before the Virginia House of Burgesses was even created, barbecues - usually referred to as 'an entertainment' during the colonial period, was a well established feature of hosting visitors, weddings and funerals. George Washington's parents gave several barbecues during the weeks following their wedding on March 6, 1731, as friends and participants often traveled a far distance, and would remain as visitors for several weeks.²²

Virginia was where barbecue as a political event was born. These events were called 'treatings'.²³ There was an unwritten gentleman's agreement that the wealthy landed gentry seeking seats in Virginia's House of Burgesses would display their generous and civic minded spirits, but should a candidate appear to be buying votes outright, the election could be voided. When George Washington ran for his county seat in 1758, he spent about \$3000 in today's money on alcohol alone for Election Day, in a county that fielded only 341 eligible voters. In that same election year, Matthew Marable from Lunenburg County was found to have provided seven barbecued lambs and thirty gallons of rum to one militia company, and he was removed from the House of Burgesses, his election voided.

As evident from the given examples, Virginia barbecues were also known as 'drinking parties' due to the particular social customs involved. There was the informal 'Barbecue Law' that held that the "only excuse for excusing a round of drinking was unconsciousness."²⁴ Colonial barbecues were often rowdy, boisterous, sometimes murderous affairs. Thomas Jefferson publicly ended the practice of forcing drinks on his guests when he presided over the White House,

but it took until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the temperance movement before 'barbecue law' was truly a relic of the past.

Enslaved people in Virginia developed their own barbecue traditions during this era. Two yearly barbecues were officially sanctioned and paid for by slave masters - Christmas and Fourth of July - these events were generally regarded as a reward for hard work during the year, and a chance to show off benevolence on the part of the owners.²⁵ In addition to the propaganda of beneficence barbecues, enslaved workers often held their own events during their days off, where friends from neighboring plantations would visit. These barbecues were occasionally a cover to plan uprisings, and the unsanctioned barbecues were curtailed after a few incidents - including Gabriel's Rebellion in Henrico County, which was strategized and began implementation at a barbecue in the slave quarters. White public sentiment against black barbecues again rose precipitously in 1831, when Nathaniel Turner, an enslaved man who lived in Southhampton County, fomented a rebellion. Turner had recently become part of an inheritance, under a new master:

"In the woods on the plantation of Joseph Travis, upon the Sunday just named, six slaves met at noon for what is called in the Northern States a picnic and in the Southern a barbecue. The bill of fare was to be simple: one brought a pig, and another some brandy, giving to the meeting an aspect so cheaply convivial that no one would have imagined it to be the final consummation of a conspiracy which had been for six months in preparation."²⁶

Nat Turner and his compatriots had decided to battle for their liberty, and Turner's Rebellion, a bloody, violent fight that thoroughly scared the white people of Virginia, began that night - the revolutionaries eventually killing 55 people. The aftermath of the short-lived conflagration found Virginia citizens in a killing,

murderous mood that pervaded the entire commonwealth. White people killed unknown numbers of black people (both free and enslaved) with absolutely no consequences. Along with the terroristic murders committed by the populace at large, the Virginia Assembly made it illegal for black people to gather in even small numbers outside of their immediate family, or in the company of slavers. Free black people lost several legal judiciary rights as they would now be tried and judged through the same courts that existed for enslaved people.²⁷ Northampton County force deported every single free black person within its borders to Liberia.²⁸ Nat Turner's Rebellion started with a barbecue, and the powerful people in charge of Virginia were determined to make sure that would not happen again.²⁹

During the Reconstruction period of Virginia, black men were elected to both state and federal offices, generally as Republican party affiliated politicians. Coalitions were formed within the black community to vote with one voice. For a brief moment in Virginia history, a bi-racial, somewhat progressive state level party arose - the Readjustor Party, founded by a former Confederate general, and a lawyer from the Virginia town of Woodstock. The Readjustor party won all major statewide offices - the governorship, lieutenant governor, and attorney general in 1881, and sent a Readjustor Senator to D.C. Their power lasted for about two decades from the 1870s to the 1880s. While holding the majority legislature, the party abolished the whipping post and poll taxes, and appointed black men to key government offices. The Readjustors pulled their support from a coalition of mostly white voters in western Virginia, and mostly black voters in the Piedmont and coastal cities.

And, of course, barbecue played a role in civic engagement after the Civil War. Included below is a printed broadsheet advertising a political barbecue marketed specifically to an African-American political club. The club was founded in 1865. This particular barbecue featured both black and white speakers, and the poster expressed that the barbecue was for, “every colored voter in favor of the equal political and civil rights of the colored and white man.”³⁰

**GRAND BARBECUE
OF THE
WALKER COLORED VOTERS!!
OF
RICHMOND AND HENRICO.**

We, a portion of the Walker Colored Voters of Richmond City and Henrico County, intend giving a Barbecue to our Colored Political friends, on
**FRIDAY AFTERNOON, AT 3 O'CLOCK, JULY 2,
ON VAUXALL ISLAND, MAYO'S BRIDGE.**

Every colored voter in favor of the equal political and civil rights of the colored and white man; who is in favor of expurgating from the Constitution the Test Oath and the Disfranchising Clause; who is in favor of the adoption of the Constitution when amended; who favors the election of the **WALKER TICKET**, and desires a sincere, lasting peace between the White and the Colored race, is earnestly invited to attend and participate. Good speakers, white and colored, will address the meeting. The committee of arrangements will take all necessary measures to insure good order and the comfort of the guests.

COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

Lomax B Smith, Chm'n R C Hobson Jno H Cooley Joseph Louis F C H Cole John Clark Abram Hall	Jas H Clark George Keys John Scott Jas Hopes Isaac H Hunter Robt P Bolling Wm Bradley	Elmore Brown Wm Thornton Albert Cook Moses Rison Patrick Jackson John West John Jackson
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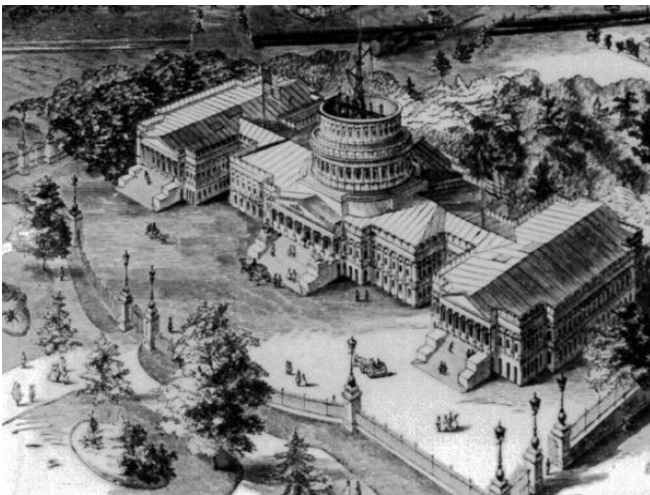
*Kept by Moses Rison
July 1, 1860*

In 1788, the nation's first Barbecue Club was established in Virginia, just outside of Richmond. Chief Justice John Marshall was a founding member of the Buchanan Spring Barbecue Club³¹, and he regularly donated money to it. The Club

met once every two weeks throughout the spring and summer, and while the location of the barbecue moved, the Club was still holding barbecue events until a few months after the start of the Civil War.

The first US President (on historical record) to have hosted a barbecue on the White House grounds was Andrew Jackson. Andrew Jackson also oversaw the planting of 'The Barbecue Trees' on US Capitol Grounds - one grove for the Whigs, one grove for the Democrats. Barbecues were deemed necessary to grease the political gears of the nation. The trees were removed in the 1870s, as they had not been properly maintained during the Civil War. The *Washington Times* printed this image and copy in 1903:

"South of the Washington Elm are the Barbecue Trees planted during Jackson's Administration by James Maher, a Jolly Irishman who owed his appointment as superintendent of the Capitol Grounds to the President's personal friendship. These trees are relics of two circular groves intended for barbecue celebrations one for Democrats the other for Whigs."³²



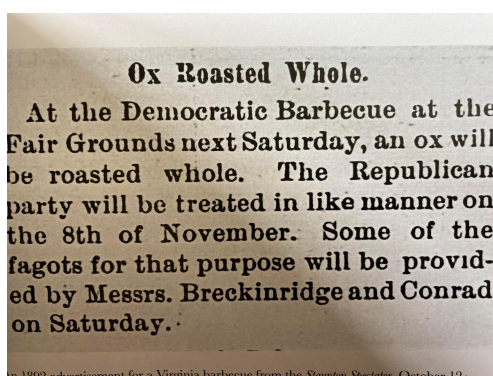
Interestingly enough, Andrew Jackson was also the first US President to be physically assaulted in office, while on his way to a barbecue in Fredericksburg! The 70 year old President ran into Lt. R.B Randolph who was angry regarding a

recent military punishment. The young officer grabbed President Jackson's nose and wrung it sharply, in a manner described as 'reckless and brutal.' Randolph escaped on a fast horse. Jackson downplayed it, and continued to the Virginia styled beef barbecue, still gushing blood.³³

Marion Harland grew up near Richmond, Virginia, and wrote of multiple political barbecues that she attended with her family in the 1840s. This wonderful chant was noted during a pro-Whig event in 1844:

Democrats –
They eat rats!
But Whigs
Eat Pigs!

There is oral lore of political barbecues that took place in southwestern Virginia, but it has been a long time since free and open barbecues were the prevailing campaign strategy here. But there are a few relics left from the barbecue days, like this advertisement in the Staunton Spectator, October 12, 1892:



THE MODERN 'CUE

Through semi-structured group interviews, which took place on March 7th and 11th, 2022, I collected first hand accounts of impromptu barbecues in Floyd and Allegheny counties that took place in the 70s, 80s and 90s. Invariably, they involved copious amounts of alcohol, both legal and illegally made. They also unquestionably centered on friendship and community. One experienced hand at these country barbecues that continued up into the 1990s explained that generally between 60-70 people would take part. He described the participants as mostly “old messed up hippie boys.” It would be way back in the hills, located off derelict camping trails, where no one would bother the group, since you needed both local knowledge and a four wheel drive to get in and out. There was a camping spot out at Pott’s Mountain that was used every year through those decades; the men had early on dug a pit, and created a smoke box, fire barrel, and grates out of stolen road signs. In Chuck Simpson’s words: “The hog, you carried the hog in a copper box, and you put him down stomach first on the grill. Because he had to warm up to where he would spread out enough for you to really start cooking. And then you gotta have somebody who's going to be of sound mind enough and sober enough to not burn that hog up while they're cooking it.”³⁴ In this group interview, everyone hastened to add that after you spent just one night cooking with a group of friends, you quickly learned to have a designated fire watcher, or either a.) the whole hog would be burnt to a cinder or b.) your friends were eating raw pig and then drunkenly throwing it back on the grill.

Sometimes deer hunters did stumble in on the cooking camp, and the strangers were quickly assimilated into the group, expanding the camaraderie.

The “country boys” were building community, with no official or governmental oversight (although the commonwealth of Virginia certainly helped out with its contribution of 8 by 8 state highway signs) so how do we take this commonplace occurrence and transport it wholesale into the political arena to use as a tool?

One thing that was crystal clear in these interviews is that the old barbecues were looked on with golden nostalgia, and a sense of loss for good memories and friends that have since passed. These emotions can and absolutely should be used in driving civic engagement. (Perhaps with less road sign-stealing felonies.)

At this current moment in Virginia politics, political barbecue events are still used, but not in the way they could be for maximum civic engagement. There are four kinds of political barbecues: 1. A barbecue held for volunteers after they have exerted energy in knocking doors or phone banking for a set amount of time. I have not found any of these barbecue activities to be paid for by the campaigns themselves. It is almost always a pot-luck or hosted by the volunteers themselves, or in the case of the Union Labor Walks, the food is paid for through the union as part of the operating costs of the canvassing action. 2. Barbecue as a fundraiser. These are either hosted by a volunteer that fields the costs, or paid for by a campaign or Democratic Committee with an eye for recouping the costs through donations and ticket sales. Generally, some tickets are comped for lower income committee members, but overall, no one is reached outside the social bubble of the candidate or the committee members. It is a great way to socialize with friends. 3. Senator Mark Warner’s semi-annual Pig Roast. This might be the only ‘free’ political barbecue left in Virginia. He invites Democrats with some standing in the party to his home, where there is catered barbecue, hayrides,

kayaks along the Rappahannock River, a volleyball court set up, tours of his stables, and a chance to speak with the Senator. Most of the activities are not utilized, as the majority of attendees are elderly. This is more of a reward for state party involvement, and less a chance to do general voter outreach. As a member of the Democratic Party of Virginia's Central Committee, I have attended, and thus feel free to comment on the somewhat annual event. 4. The huge free-wheelin', everybody invited party that is free to attend and anyone can meet the candidate. I have been unable to find any current instances of this kind of political barbecue being utilized in modern campaigning. That should change.

When asked about political barbecue events, the politicians I interviewed for my research always brought up Acres of Democrats, a successful and beloved Democratic party institution hosted yearly by the 9th Congressional District Democrats. It was my first thought also, as I have attended in the past. It is a catered affair, not a pig-picking, but I (and others) considered it a barbecue, eaten inside in nice clothing. When I spoke to the organizers, though, they absolutely did not consider it to be a barbecue, but a 'catered lunch.' In the past, it has been more of a barbecue, including the year that John F. Kennedy attended. As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, the name came about from oral legends regarding Pres. Harry Truman. When I attempted to source it, obviously, Truman was not in Wytheville at the beginning of the annual barbecues. But sometimes tall tales are better barometers of barbecue stories than boring, inert facts. Thus Truman named it: **Acres of Democrats**.

Regardless of the organizer's feelings on the matter, everyone else, including political candidates, multiple Democratic committee members and

elected officials brought it up as a barbecue that could not be missed during campaign season, so, much like its name, the factuality of Acres of Democrats being a barbecue event is less important than the emotions attached to it.

Del. Sam Rasoul is one of the few elected officials holding a state-level office based out of western Virginia. During our one on one interview, Rasoul stated that, "One place that I've enjoyed, one event that I've always just felt super at home is Acres Of Democrats. It's always just made me feel warm, welcome, comfortable with the people in the room." Rasoul is a practicing Muslim with religious food restrictions that could make barbecue events tricky, but he has said that while he has never specifically shared that he does not eat pork to event organizers, he has never gone to a political gathering that is food centered without finding that there is something he can eat. There are so many people with various dietary requirements, that organizers build into the preparation a need for food for vegetarians, those who do not eat pork, those who are allergic to nuts, etc. Rasoul states, however, that he also makes sure he does not show up starving. Because, to him, although he always makes sure to load up a plate to show gratitude to the efforts of the people who made the event, and he genuinely enjoys the food, for Rasoul, a barbecue event - whether explicitly political, or a community centered event that organizations such as churches put on - is a chance to make friends and hold conversations with people he has not seen in a while, and barbecues are places where people feel comfortable.³⁵

In 2018, I helped organize *Moonshine and Democrats* for the Roanoke City Democratic Committee, which was a fundraiser that served barbecue and (legal) moonshine along with train rides at the Roanoke Transportation Museum. Like

Acres of Democrats, Moonshine and Democrats was a fundraiser, so most of the participants were already active in the local Democratic party circles. M&D was continued in 2019, but stopped during Covid. Preliminary plans are being made to host another M&D in 2022. Harrisonburg Democratic Committee (pre-Covid) has found annual fundraising success with a barbecue rib event called *Dem Ribs*. In 2018, they were able to parlay their annual fundraising efforts into a substantially larger event, and used the monies raised to fund purchasing a building, renovating it, and creating a Democratic Office serving the city of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.

THE 2022 LEWIS BARBECUE

Well, that was disappointing.

-Monica Thomas Fury

As part of my research for this thesis, I hosted a barbecue for Jennifer Lewis, who was running for the CD6 Democratic nomination in the 2022 Democratic Primary. The event was free to attend and unticketed, however, the event information/invitations were mainly disseminated through Democratic committees and local Democratic facebook groups, so the attendees consisted of people who are already politically involved within the Democratic party circles. Unfortunately, on March 15th 2022, the day of the barbecue, we got freezing cold weather and snow, lightly here, but more heavily up in Waynesboro, where Lewis lives. She was unable to make it down. I had created a survey, and expected to get

about 35-50 responses from the barbecue participants, based on RSVPs. When the barbecue was canceled, I now had 24 pounds of perfect, smoky prime brisket on hand, so I invited people I knew over to my house, and handed out surveys there. I got back 16 survey responses, and since I have several friends and family that consider themselves Republican, I now had some self-selecting survey takers that were outside my expected partisan group. I would also like to point out that everyone who took the survey was sitting around the same table, eating barbecue together, with extremely divergent political views. No fights broke out. All 16 survey responders live in Virginia, and are registered to vote in Virginia.

Out of my respondents, eleven people self-identify as members of the Democratic Party, one Republican Party member, two Independants, and one Libertarian. In Virginia, voters do not register by party, but can self-identify with whatever party they wish. During primaries, voters can choose which party's primary to vote in, so one year, they can choose to vote in the Democratic party primary, the next year in the Republican party primary with no change in voter registration. Nine respondents had previously participated in a political barbecue, seven had not.

I had open text boxes to allow people full reign to describe the Democratic Party, the Republican party and barbecue in general. I got many varied responses. Even though the majority of respondents self-identified as Democrats, the two most-used words to describe the Democratic Party were "corrupt" and "progressive" at three counts each. The Democratic party responses were mixed between positive and negative, showing a lack of trust in the party that the respondents affiliated with, but with some expectation of change. The

Republican party responses were overwhelmingly negative, as I expected. Four words got two votes each - 'corrupt', 'fascist', 'business', and 'rich.'

Outside of the partisan reactions to the political parties, the barbecue description words were very positive. Highest word usage went to 'smoke' with four votes, and 'social' at three. Full survey responses are included in Appendix A. The takeaway from this survey is that there is rancor towards both parties, but overall high satisfaction with the idea of barbecue, and used appropriately, could be a bridge between partisan behaviors.

I am glad about one thing from my survey debacle - I did get Republican aligned voter's feedback. When I began my research, I had hoped to include the political views and barbecue aligned campaign strategies of Republicans, and have this be a more neutral, non-partisan campaign research. Unfortunately, I was unable to secure interviews with Republican politicians. However, I know that local Republican political figures do take part in barbecues - in much the same way as their Democratic colleagues do, generally as fundraisers or thank you events for the faithful. State Senator David Sutterlein interviewed with journalist Mason Adams of the *Roanoke Rambler*, and discussed frankly his grassroots organizing strategy to rebuild the Roanoke County Republican committee, beginning in 2008, after seeing steadily declining numbers of Republican votes over the past decade. Sutterlein has been credited with solidifying the Republican base in the county, as the rest of Virginia's suburbs have trended blue. He focused on engaging self-identified Republicans to become active members of the committee, and on issues-based canvassing door

to door. Unfortunately, Sutterlein did not discuss any barbecue matters during his interview, so it is impossible to know his exact barbecue strategy.

Another local Republican that is linked with barbecue is Delegate Marie March. Del. March owns several small businesses in southwestern Virginia, including two barbecue restaurants. Del. March attended the January 6th Rally, and faced some social media blowback on her business pages after she posted that she attended, and that (in a since deleted post) expected a coming Civil War, and she would 'fight and die' for her side.³⁶ Another local Democratic delegate (Chris Hurst) also posted on social media regarding her attendance at the rally, and a small public kerfluffle ensued between the two. The result? Incumbent Chris Hurst lost his seat and Marie March won her open election. (They ran in two different, but bordering districts.) I have heard unconfirmed rumors that March decided to run for office because of the social media dust-up, but I cannot say that for certain. Unfortunately, Del. March was unable to schedule an interview. Although unable to confirm with Republican politicians specific barbecue proclivities, I have found several barbecue-focused political fundraisers in Botetourt and Augusta Counties that seem very similar to Democratic fundraisers within the same area.

Interestingly, in neighboring North Carolina, a non-partisan barbecue hosted by a Mallard Creek Presbyterian Church in Charlotte draws up to 20,000 people per year, and national-level politicians from both parties have been a prominent part of this barbecue. This brings up an important point in political barbecues. In order to reach outside the self-selecting partisan crowd that surrounds candidate events, it is often a necessity of a campaign to find events

that already exist as opposed to trying to create a large event and reach people who are not already part of the political social bubble.

Chapter Two

THE REGION

Almost heaven. West[ern] Virginia. Blue Ridge Mountains. Shenandoah River.

-Bill Danoff, Taffy Nivert, John Denver³²

Driving along Interstate 81 in Virginia, you run into a lot of semi-truck traffic. Beyond the geographic reality of the road being a main trade artery from the southern United States to the highly populated and wealthy northern Virginia, the freeway traffic also comes from local economic powerhouses like the Swift Trucking hub in Christiansburg, the Volvo manufacturing plant in Dublin, the Westvaco paper mill in Covington. The private non-profit Carilion Hospital system is creating a world-renowned neurological center in Roanoke, and is the region's largest employer. Two major universities also lie along the south/north route - Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg and James Madison University in Harrisonburg, as well as such highly respected private institutions like Hollins University in Roanoke. Economically, the area is in decline. The once powerful railroad that built Roanoke has recently moved their corporate headquarters to Atlanta, Georgia, and the far western Virginia coal fields are nearly shuttered in formerly prosperous places like Dickinson and Grayson Counties. The disappearing coal mine jobs have changed the economic outlook of previously flourishing communities, as the mobile population leaves for better opportunities. While Virginia as a whole has gained both population and wealth as shown in the 2020 Census, the area under our consideration has

lost political clout and financial resources over the last half-century³⁸. The further west you venture off I-81, the lower the economic stability. In 2018, 115,460 households in Southwest Virginia — 51% — could not afford basic needs such as housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology.³⁹

All of this is a somewhat recent development. Even 50 years ago, there was strong union activity in the area, and good wages, with high employment rates, and bustling small entrepreneurial activity. Nic Smith is a fast food worker who grew up in a Dickinson County coal mining family, and who personally went on strike in 2016 during the Fight for \$15 movement. Smith can currently be found on Saturday mornings in front of a unionizing Starbucks in Roanoke, holding up signs and protesting with the beleaguered baristas. He described the current state of affairs of his hometown in his 2016 *Washington Post* editorial:

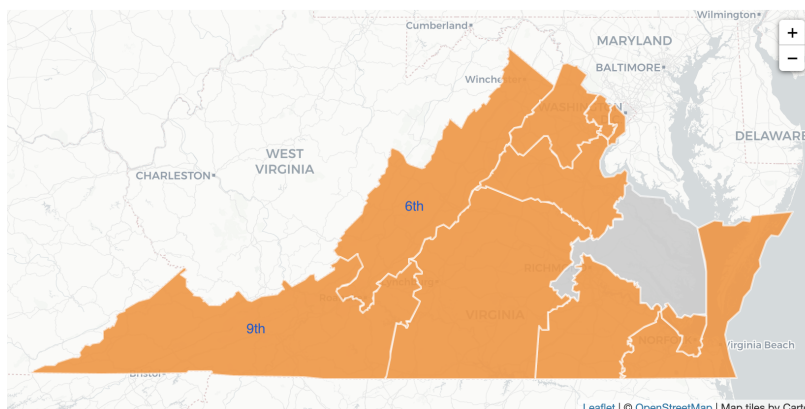
“Close to 30 years later, coal country isn’t what it used to be. Corporate greed, mechanization and the rise of fracking have forced people in Dickenson County into lower-paying, less stable work. Now 25 percent of people in Dickenson live under the poverty line, and the average income is under \$20,000 a year. There are not enough jobs to go around, and the jobs we can get pay next to nothing. Corporations are emboldened to cut wages and benefits with no regard for the working people who drive companies’ profits. Mineworker families have been forced to accept pennies because we don’t have another choice. My family was on welfare when I was a kid, and I’ve seen schools shut down and people lose their homes. I’ve seen neighbors lose their jobs and scrape by struggling to pick up work. Some people I know fell victim to addiction, others turned to selling drugs to survive. Meth and OxyContin have ravaged towns across the coalfields.”⁴⁰

Another local worker is Kristy Lee Vance, a unionized grocery store employee, who lives in Grayson County. Her employer, a major grocery chain, closed all of its stores in the Virginia coal fields area in March 2014. Since then,

she has driven 72 miles one way to get to her job each shift.⁴¹ Vance graduated with an accounting degree from Virginia Tech, but has been unable to secure a job in that field that would be nearer to home and also paying a higher wage than the grocery store than she is currently employed at. For various reasons, she is not able to move from her current house. Using publicly available census data, there is a clear decline in retail revenues within the past twenty years in the area under discussion.⁴²

All is not gloom and doom in the western part of Virginia. Should you go to any of these county's websites, you would see government proposed economic shifts towards highlighting the natural beauty of the area, a clear plan to try and acquire tourism dollars, and hopeful strategies to retain the people who make this land home. Western Virginia is undeniably beautiful, and the communities found throughout the region are made up of good people. Appalachians are publicly perceived as salt of the earth, hard-working, and known to pull together to help each other out. Regardless, the current economic reality is grim.

The definition of western Virginia, for the purpose of this thesis is delineated as the following:: the newly drawn 2021 boundaries for the Sixth and Ninth Virginia U.S. Congressional Districts.

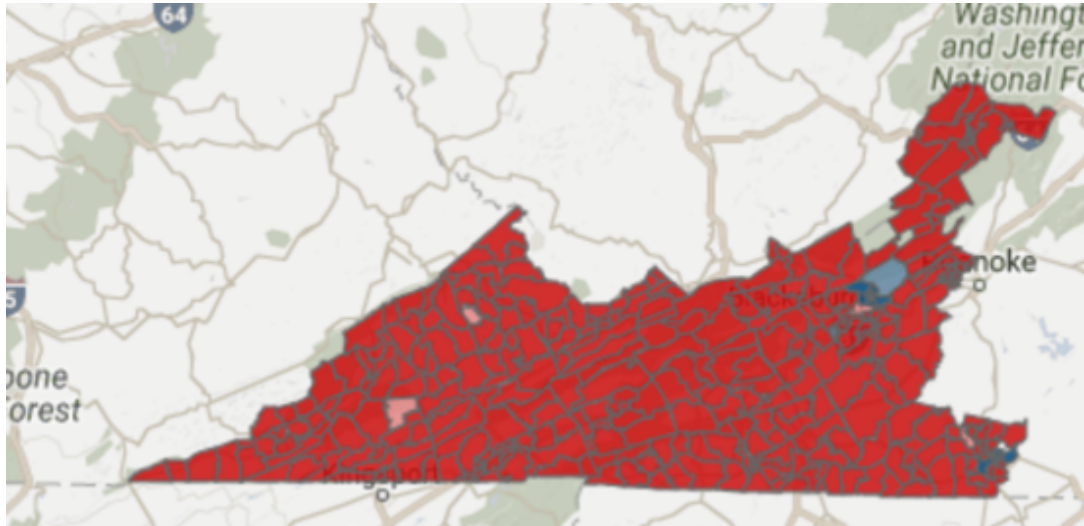


These same political maps tell a story of Republican electoral dominance. The 6th and 9th Districts look to be a sea of red, with little dots of blue found within incorporated cities like Radford, Staunton, Lexington, Harrisonburg, Blacksburg and Roanoke.

My friend Oliver Keene, writing a 2017 Daily Kos blog under the pseudonym The Tazewell Devil succinctly summed up the political trajectory of southwestern Virginia. “We knew it was going to be bad when we began to see life-long Democrats putting up Trump signs. My county here in central Appalachia went 83% for Trump last November. It was not always this way. Southwest Virginia, especially the Coalfields in the farthest corner of Southwest Virginia, places like Buchanan County, and Russell County were once the strongholds of the Democratic Party in the state.”⁴³ Keene was the youngest Democratic Committee Chair in Virginia when he wrote this blog. He found that paid canvassers and official Democratic party people sent to his community at the last moments of the 2016 election to swing votes for Clinton were negatively affecting the chances for people voting Democratic, even for local Democrats unconnected to the national levels, as the outsiders inevitably went hard on abortion rights and anti-gun rhetoric during their door to door scripted canvassing. Keene went on to point out that while federal and statewide elections were overwhelmingly Republican votes - his county - Tazewell - went 83% for Trump in 2016, yet in the very same elections, local Democrats retained their seats as elected local county officials.

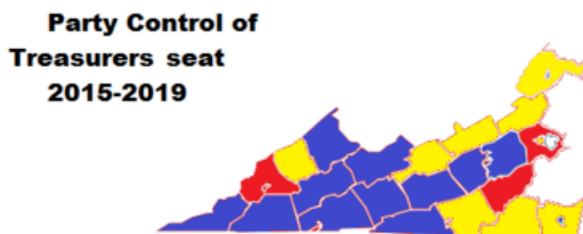
As Keene stated, Virginia’s Ninth Congressional District voted over 70% for Trump in 2016, with similar numbers for Rep. Morgan Griffith running for

Congress. Following is a map of Virginia's 9th Congressional District, that shows Presidential partisan voter percentages by counties. Deep red is over 70% Trump, pink is 50-70% Republican, light blue is 50-70% Democratic voting, Deep blue is over 70% for Hilary Clinton.



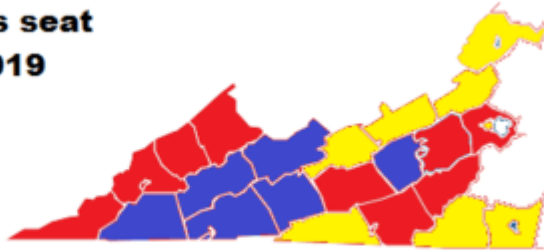
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It looks grim for Democrats, doesn't it? But the maps do not show local races. In Virginia, each county and independent city holds elections for Treasurer, Commonwealth's Attorney, Sheriff, and Commissioner of the Revenue. In that same 2016 bloodshed of an election, this is who held control of the Treasurer offices throughout the 9th.



And the Sheriff's office:

**Party Control of
Sheriff's seat
2015-2019**

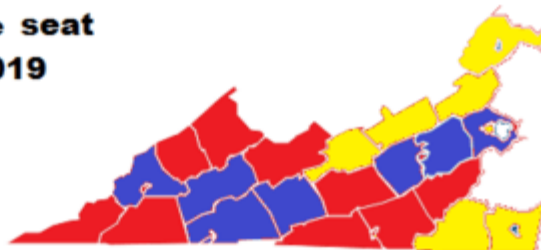


The Commonwealth's Attorney:



And the Commissioner of the Revenue:

**Party Control of
Commissioner of Revenue seat
2015-2019**



So, obviously, there is still room for Democrats within western Virginia elections. Virginia State Senator Creigh Deeds has held on to his rural seat based

out of Bath County. First elected in 1991 as a delegate to the Virginia General Assembly, he grew up in a world of Virginia politics controlled by the Democratic Party. He has seen that one-party control switch hands in his neck of the woods. When interviewed by John Dorman at the *Insider*, he stated that “for Virginia Democrats to retain rural support, they must deal with three ‘simple and complex issues. In politics, showing up is a big part of getting the job done ... you've got to show up. In Virginia, no successful Democratic statewide candidate has focused on rural areas since Mark Warner ran for governor in '01 and for the Senate in '08. Number two, you can just say it's a cultural divide between traditional rural voters and the rest of Virginia. But the third thing is that Virginia has changed so much. There's been a general outmigration of voters from rural areas.”⁴⁶

Retired politician Virgil Goode, Jr., Rocky Mount, was a conservative Democratic State Senator running for U.S. Congress as the Democratic nominee in 1996. He switched parties in 2000. There are some great stories of the notoriously cheap campaigner. He always gave out items with his name on it, so people felt like they were getting something from him. He never liked people to leave his events empty-handed. His father, Virgil Goode Sr. had been known for giving out kitchen utensils with his name on them. He attended every barbecue in his district. When he left his house, he made multiple stops to purchase small items to give him an opportunity to speak to business owners and retail workers who might otherwise not meet him. One story about Goode is told by a family friend who accompanied him on a trip to buy tires for his car. Mimicking his accent: “He bought one ‘tar’ at each of four different service stations and got them aligned at a fifth shop, each in a different part of [his state Senate] district.”⁴⁷

The general consensus by people who live here is that southwestern Virginia is currently likely to vote for Republican candidates on the national and state level, but hyper-local political candidates can win if they have a good ground game and have built relationships within their community. Anthony Flaccavento in Wytheville is a founding member of the Rural Urban Bridge Initiative (RUBI), a think tank with a directive to repair the divide between rural and urban America. On their website, under Community Works, they give a glimpse into what they want to accomplish. One example includes the democratic committee in the city of Martinsville opening a community pantry.⁴⁸ Flaccavento has mounted a campaign for Congress twice in his heavily red district, so he understands the heartbreak of inexorable electoral math. The only way that he can change attitudes is by doing the work of and building relationships with the voters of his congressional district. Both Flaccavento and the Rural Urban Bridge believe that it is a myth that rural life and community is in a decline from which it is impossible to recover. Neither political nor economic. Refuting that concept is germane to seeing rural, western Virginia as a viable business location, economic powerhouse and healthy political base. When I interviewed Flaccavento, he said that RUBI was attempting to secure funding to open centers in six different rural locations. The expectation is that these spots would become community gathering places, where people could receive what they needed, when they needed it - whether that was free advice from a tax attorney, basic pantry staples, or a cup of coffee in a cozy room with their friends. At the moment, Flaccavento believes that rural America is so hostile to the concept of the Democratic Party,

that even material goods would not make a difference in how people vote on the national level. But generating trust now will affect the world going forward.

Returning to Keene's blog: "Elections in rural America are won on the ground. No amount of TV ads or social media presences can replace a solid door to door ground game. This is how Democrats in Southwest Virginia on the local level are still winning and winning big."⁴⁹

The Southeast Experiment

Mike Jarvis⁵⁰ moved into the city of Roanoke's Southeast neighborhood in December 2016. Jarvis describes himself as a nomad, and his first action when moving into a new spot is to introduce himself to everyone in a one-block radius of his house. Within a few weeks of living in Roanoke, he had spoken to over 120 people.

Jarvis is friendly, non judgemental, and outspokenly liberal. Due to the rancor of the recent election, the Trump or Hilary conversation gambit would invariably be raised. Out of the 120 plus people Jarvis chatted with, 17 had voted for Trump, 8 had voted for Hilary, and the rest had not voted.

Everyone who had not voted gave the same general answer when asked why: It made no difference in their lives who won, so why bother? What was the point? Jarvis frankly agreed with their personal assessment. Southeast Precinct is a majority white, working-class neighborhood that has gone through a precipitous decline within the last decade, largely because of opioid abuse. The largest homeless shelter in southwestern Virginia lies just one street over the precinct's border, and the crime rate has gone up exponentially within the past twenty years.⁵¹

In 2018, Jarvis joined the Jennifer Lewis (D) congressional campaign as a volunteer. Although he did want her to win, his personal decision to devote his time and efforts to her political campaign was more about introducing her to his neighborhood and driving at least a portion of her campaign into appreciating and highlighting a precinct that needs political attention.

For the previous twenty years, Southeast Precinct had voted solidly Republican by 12-15 points, translating to about a 200 vote difference between the parties. Through his continued conversations with his neighbors, Jarvis was convinced that if the non-voters chose to vote this election, the precinct would tilt Democratic. Jarvis advocated various strategies to win the precinct and kept the campaign abreast of neighborhood activities.

The Lewis campaign was committed to spending the majority of their campaign money on actual voter outreach, and did not employ or pay to contract outside political consultants. Based partly on Jarvis' recommendation, the Lewis campaign held pancake breakfasts, hosted several meet and greets at the Belmont Public Library, decorated cars and handed out candy at Trunk or Treats, attempted to give away yard signs within the neighborhood, and, most importantly, gave away soda at a neighborhood cookout called the I <3 (heart) SE Festival.

A local church, Belmont Baptist, conceived of the I <3 SE Festival as a way to build pride and community within the neighborhood. It was a nonpartisan family-friendly event, and members of the church had spent the last two months going door to door, dropping flyers, and extending personal invitations. The festival would have free hamburgers, hot dogs, a kid's bouncy castle, music, and

fun social activities. It was very well marketed - if you lived in the neighborhood, you knew it was coming.

The Lewis campaign, at the behest of Jarvis, reached out to Belmont Baptist to be a festival sponsor and agreed to provide soda and water for over 1,000 people at a Jennifer Lewis booth. Lewis herself was not at the Festival, she was in Warren County for an already scheduled event. But Roanoke-area volunteers wore her shirts, handed out homemade cookies in baggies with Lewis stickers on them, and graciously made sure everyone at the Festival never got thirsty. Multiple men wearing Trump hats made grumpy noises at taking soda from a Democrat, but the Coca-Cola was handed over and accepted by the slightly mollified men.

While the I <3 SE Festival was not organized by the campaign, the number of volunteers wearing colorful Jennifer shirts, the number of free yard signs given out, and the central location they operated out of right next to the grills caused many in the neighborhood to think that the Lewis contribution was bigger than it actually was. And, over the next few months until the election, door-to-door canvassers heard about how nice it was that Jennifer was handing out food, even though, in actuality, she had been three hours north of Roanoke that day.⁵²

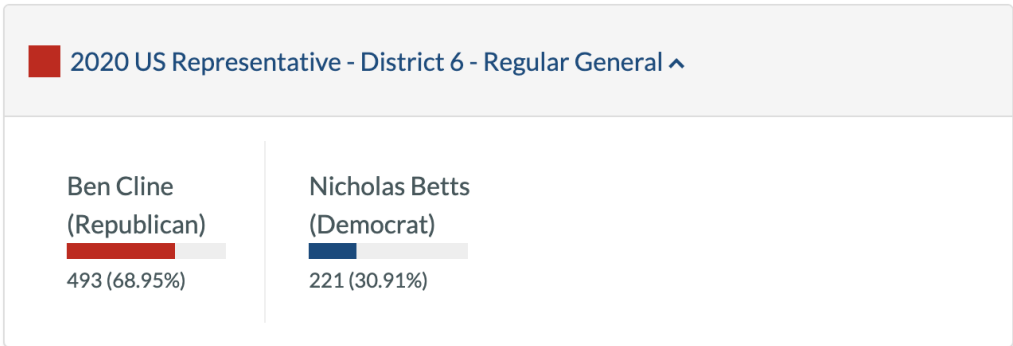
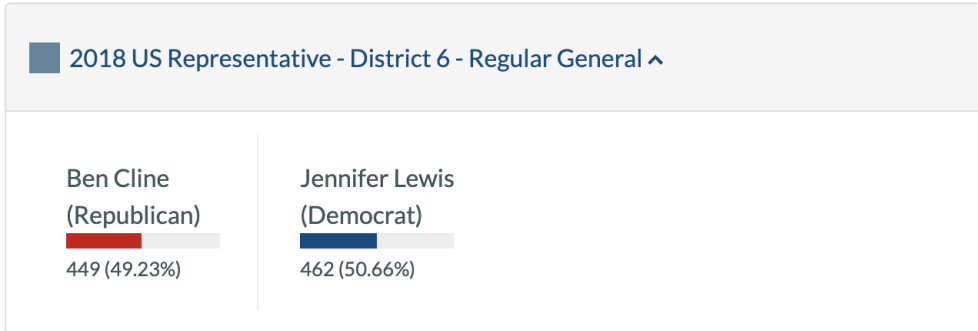
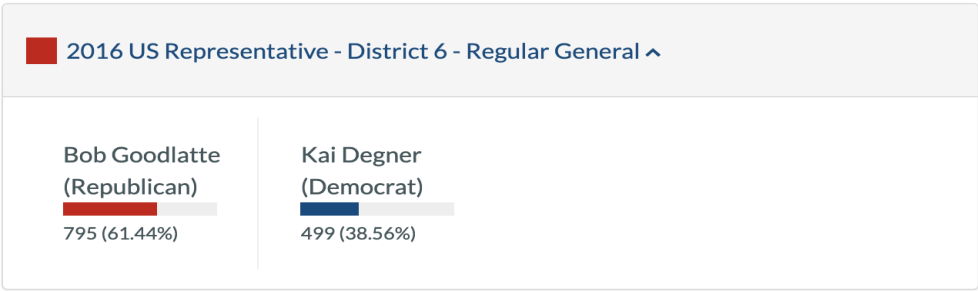
Because Southeast Precinct had been targeted for intense canvassing both before and after the festival, the campaign was able to collect good feedback from the people living within the neighborhood. An almost immediate impact was that dozens of yard signs popped up in front yards. People were more likely to share their experiences with canvassers after the event with free food than before. And most importantly, voters were aware that she existed.

There had been an earlier attempt with free food with a campaign-hosted pancake breakfast. Unfortunately, the door-to-door flyering by volunteer canvassers inviting people to attend an early Saturday morning “carb-fest” and meet the candidate did not meet the same rate of success. The people who came to the Pancake Breakfast were already loyal supporters from outside the neighborhood. The differences in the two events are obvious and can be explained with two major points. One event was about the candidate, and the other event was about community; one event had outsiders coming in to market it, and the successful event was created and organized by people within the neighborhood.

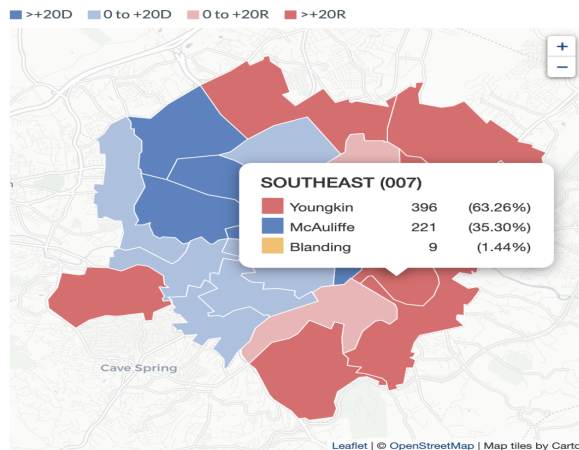
On Election Day, Lewis stood outside the Southeast precinct doors for half an hour, greeting voters. One man she spoke to had come specifically to vote against Sen. Tim Kaine and the voter had some negative words to describe Democrats in general, but promised Lewis that because she was there, and he had seen her signs in his neighbor’s yard, he would vote for her.

Lewis won the precinct by 12 votes.

The following images are from vpap.org (Virginia Public Access Project, 2021)⁵³ showing the results of the 2016, 2018, and 2020 Congressional race and the 2021 Va. Governor election.



Close Races	Statewide	State House	Local
	McAuliffe 57.56% 16,690	Youngkin 41.39% 12,002	Blanding 0.93% 269



With our anecdotal exception of the anti-Kaine voter, the 2018 voter percentage difference suggests not that Lewis was able to transform Republican voters into Democratic voters. The difference in Lewis winning that precinct in 2018 suggests she was able to persuade non-voters into becoming voters. And this, as I argue in this thesis, was at least partially due to barbecue.

Chapter Three

ORGANIZING

Free Weed and Food

-Signs posted by Chris Smalls & Derrick Palmer, Amazon Union Organizers²⁴

In 2022, America is reeling from a not-quite ended pandemic, and a feeling of loss and grief permeates the country. There is also a rising anti-work sentiment, a national consciousness of despair that the American dream is no longer achievable. I do not know how to attribute these remarks of general malaise. I have been told these feelings by college age Generation Z kids, by retired parents worried for the world their children are inheriting, by full-time employed thirty-years olds that are getting priced out of the rental market and are looking at precarious housing, possibly homelessness. The time is ripe for some serious changes in governance, worker's rights, housing rights, prisoner's rights, a better social safety net. The time is right for organizing.

In early April 2022, union organizers at Amazon won an historic victory as the Staten Island facility became the first to unionize. In a livestream hosted by Jacobin, the Amazon organizers explained exactly what tactics and strategies they were able to successfully use to persuade co-workers into joining the union efforts. When Eric Blanc from Jacobin asked the organizers to fully explain what they meant by 'you need to bring people together' asking them how that worked exactly, in specifics: "If you had to pick one thing that worked for you, what was it?" And Chris Small replied "I always said it from the beginning. Food is the way to

the heart. You know, it's as simple as that. You want to bring people together, you feed them."⁵⁵ The Amazon organizers hosted a daily barbecue, located in a union tent across the bus stop for the facility. Amazon schedules did not align with the public transportation schedules, so people would often spend 45 minutes waiting for their bus home. The tent offered a welcome respite from weather as well as free food. One can conclude that decades of anti-worker propaganda requires grilled meats to overcome the initial union hesitance. When the daily barbecues generated positive responses from the workforce, Amazon put up a barbed wire fence around their building instead of offering better food within. This did not go unnoticed by Amazon employees. The ALU spent their money on food in order to create more opportunities for face to face organizing and relationship building.



56

There are, of course, several keys to successful organizing. The first is Purpose. What, why, where, who are you organizing for and with? Without a clearly defined and articulated goal, there is no reason for others to join you. In the case of the Amazon organizers it was to solidify worker's rights. To ensure reasonable scheduling, and to uphold the labor laws already in existence. While

the focus of much of this paper has been on Democratic candidate campaigns, the principles I am writing about can easily be applied to values or special interest oriented campaigns, like groups that focus on environmental concerns, or that want to support teachers and public education. As you start to organize, just be clear, both with yourself and with the others you invite to join you what the end goal is.

What the organizer seeks is power. What will that power be used for? Alinsky in his *Rules for Radicals* has a quote that an organizer should take to heart: "To know power and not fear it is essential to its constructive use and control."

The Dueling Democratic Campaigning Strategies

I have been a volunteer in electoral campaigns since the 2016 Democratic Primary. Canvassing - the activity where campaign volunteers go door to door and hopefully the doors are correctly precision targeted through voter data - is the tried and true method that the Democratic party uses to persuade citizens to vote on Election Day.

There are several components to canvassing. One, you leave literature with the candidate's name whether the door is opened or not. Two, if you find someone at home that is willing to have a conversation with you, there is a script the campaign expects you to follow, and that script includes getting a confirmation that the person will vote, and helping them formulate a plan on how/when/where they will vote. "Do you plan to vote in the morning, the

afternoon, or the evening? Will you vote in person, or by mail? Do you need help requesting a mail-in ballot?"

I have knocked on doors in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and Iowa as part of campaigns using the Voter Action Network, a proprietary voter data system used exclusively by Democrats. I do not think that the standard canvassing has kept up with the otherwise modern political campaigns.

In 2018, as an unpaid volunteer, I was named Field Director of Jennifer Lewis' Congressional Campaign in the Virginia 6th District. My turf covered Roanoke City and County, and Botetourt County. Prior to Lewis securing the Democratic nomination, she took part in a primary with three other candidates. Lewis' home is in Waynesboro and she is neither wealthy nor famous. Two candidates from Roanoke had good name recognition in the Roanoke area, and the fourth candidate owned a family business in Harrisonburg, the other large urban area in the district.

Primaries have a much lower turnout than general elections. Most people barely know they are even happening. The Lewis campaign had printed sticky notes - it was campaign literature, with an adhesive best described as post-it note like. We got those notes from the printer the week before the Primary Election. In Roanoke, I spent a couple of hours scouting out high population areas - large apartment complexes, very dense walkable residential neighborhoods. Myself and three other friends spent a day hitting all of those spots. We did it in one car, we stopped for breaks, we had a fantastic lunch! We did not 'canvass', we only spoke to people we ran into who called us over to talk, we did not knock on doors. Later, we called it the All-Walk, No-Talk Canvass. We got over 6000 of those sticky

notes out in one day. It was non-targeted campaigning - as in I did target neighborhoods, but not specific voters. It was the first primary in the sixth district since 1974, so I do not have data on how many more people participated than normal from those apartment buildings. This same sticky note brute force approach was done throughout the 6th District by other supporters. And Lewis won in a four way race with 47.67% of the vote.⁵⁷

During the General Election, I maintained a separate mobile office (literally mobile, it was my car) from the Coordinated Campaign led by the DPVA. I changed locations throughout the last weekend, as we were just creating shaded maps using google and then sending volunteers out to slap a sticky note on every door. We had an amazing response from our volunteers. They loved it. This was how they wanted to campaign. There was an alternate campaign weekend going on at the coordinated office lead by Tim Kaine staff. There were some recriminations and anger between staffers and volunteers, and we got more volunteers throughout the weekend as they quit volunteering with the coordinated campaign, and came to us, looking for a way to volunteer that better met their own needs..

Let me say that there are some very bad status quo expectations for volunteers set up at this point that need to be re-examined. I ran a canvassing office for the DPVA in 2017 for the coordinated Ralph Northam campaign when a paid staffer became sick. (Again, I was unpaid, because I am a sucker.) In 2017, the statewide races and the local delegate races did not mesh well together, and I had to play conciliator more often than I thought should have been necessary. At the last minute, promises were broken by the statewide campaigns, and both

priorities and strategies shifted. There had been multiple older women who had been given turf in high crime neighborhoods, who refused the assignment, and rather than give them a neighborhood that the women would feel more comfortable in, the person training me berated the women and shamed them, until the women took the turf and left. Let me be clear that the expectation of the paid statewide campaign is that volunteers will be ALONE, so they can hit more doors, that volunteers will sign up for one turf, but be given two, and those turfs will be 60-80 doors instead of the more palatable 30-35 doors. Paid staffers are given bonuses based on the metrics of how many doors were knocked, specifically the doors required by the campaign that day. No deviations.. This obviously can lead to unsafe situations. One woman did not come back, but her husband did. He flung the papers at the desk. She had called him in tears as she sat in her car, too scared to leave the safety of her Toyota. He told the office that his wife would never be volunteering again. The office did not seem to care, and there were certainly no modifications made for the safety of future volunteers, or any attempt to retain the volunteers we already had.

I sent my friend out by herself the day of the 2017 election. It was a high crime neighborhood, but she said she would be fine. Instead, she came very close to getting sexually assaulted as a man trapped her in an apartment's hallway. She was young, she was in great shape - she runs every morning - and she was able to get away, albeit traumatized. The situation affected my own attitude towards the statewide coordinated campaigns, and I re-examined my own priorities, and my own likelihood in 'following orders.'. When my friend came back to the office, since I was nominally in charge of that small office, I took real control, and

processes were changed. No one was going out alone for the rest of the Northam campaign out of MY office! A few years later, when I was approached in 2018 to work for the DPVA, I said no. When I accepted a lead volunteer position with the Lewis campaign, they invited me to the Coordinated Office and were going to give me a desk so I could work for Jennifer from their central location. I said thank you, and I rarely went back. Political campaigns need to re-examine how canvassing and volunteer efforts are run, with an actual look at volunteer satisfaction, safety, and going back to the drawing board regarding metrics and staff pay. All of the volunteer satisfaction -oriented metrics should be used for pay scales instead of door knocking, to change the efficacy and safety of volunteer canvassing.

While interviewing Josh Stanfield, former campaign manager for Jennifer Lewis for Congress, and legislative staffer with Del. Lee Carter, he hit upon an intriguing idea on how barbecue could also be used on the campaign trail. As soon as the campaign begins in earnest, the candidate should host a barbecue, free to all, hosted as a public service, by one who wishes to be a public servant, and the campaign staff should cook and organize the event. He laughingly described how you would see one staffer be directed to put something in the oven, do it, and then immediately go sit on a chair and watch their phone until directed to do something else. He surmised one staffer would immediately take charge and make lists. "You'd learn a lot about your staff from that one kitchen experience preparing for the event. Right? People should do that."⁵⁸

There are extensive ways that barbecue can be used in the right way, for the right candidate, and for the right set of voters. Those answers come from relying

on local knowledge and building relationships within a community. There is no magic wand to make it happen. While interviewing and connecting with local Democratic affiliated groups and politicians, I have been requested to plan and run political barbecues on their behalf. One would be for a campaign that culminates this November, another would be for a local politician without a current campaign but he sees it as an opportunity to connect with his neighbors and district.

CONCLUSION

Adrian Miller, a former Clinton White House staffer, current public policy advisor, lawyer and food historian, wrote about the Theology of Barbecue in his book *Black Smoke*. “Barbecue brings people together, creating a space where we can recognize the divine in each other, reaffirm our individual and collective humanity, and live the good life — here, now, not waiting until the afterlife.”

As presented within this thesis, barbecue has historically been intertwined with American political campaigning and civic events before written records existed. The western Virginia region has unique barbecue-lore and stories, and while any type of food at any political event is a good thing, enhancing the social pleasure and creating community within that event, barbecue in particular evokes specific authenticity within the western Virginia back-roads, small towns, and hollars. Could a barbecue provide the opportunity for like-minded people to gather together to begin or finalize plans to make a difference in the world? Given the history of political barbecue events in Virginia, I am particularly interested in why and how barbecue has recently fallen out of favor with modern political consultants as a winning strategy. The body of this thesis provided greater detail on how the simple act of the promise of roasted meat is one key tactic in western Virginia to win over voters, to bring together like-minded voters and as a way to celebrate. As such, the historically precedent Virginia barbecues should be brought back into modern campaign usage.

Food history and foodways is an emerging scholarship, and more peer-reviewed research is needed to examine the impact of barbecue on civic engagement. There are some fascinating current popular nonfiction books that

have unearthed stories of barbecues from the past, but because the historical documents regarding food are so ephemeral, it is like looking for needles in haystacks to find the juicy smoked tidbits. Furthermore, modern political usage of barbecue events focuses on fundraising for the campaign, or pulling in only people that are already within the campaigning bubble. More research must be conducted with the act of distributing free food at convivial events as a winning tactic in a political campaign's arsenal.

Appendix A

BBQ Survey Administered March 12, 2022

1. Are you a Registered Voter of Virginia?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. Do you consider yourself
 - a. Member of Democratic Party
 - b. Independent, but beliefs generally align with Democratic Party
 - c. Independent, but beliefs generally align with Republican Party
 - d. Member of the Republican Party
 - e. Other

3. Have you ever attended a political barbecue
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Please give three words that describe the Democratic Party to you.
 - a. TEXT BOX
 - b. TEXT BOX
 - c. TEXT BOX

5. Please give three words that describe the Republican party to you
 - a. TEXT BOX
 - b. TEXT BOX
 - c. TEXT BOX

6. Please give three words that describe barbecue to you
 - a. TEXT BOX
 - b. TEXT BOX
 - c. TEXT BOX

7. Do you plan to support Jennifer Lewis? (Living in the 6th Congressional District is not a requirement, as supporting can take place through volunteering, donating funds, etc.)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure

8. Has your attendance at a BBQ influenced your decision?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I would like to add a comment!

9. Gender

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Nonbinary
- d. Other

10. Age

- a. Under 21
- b. 21-45
- c. 46-69
- d. 69-115
- e. Prefer not to say

11. Past Election History

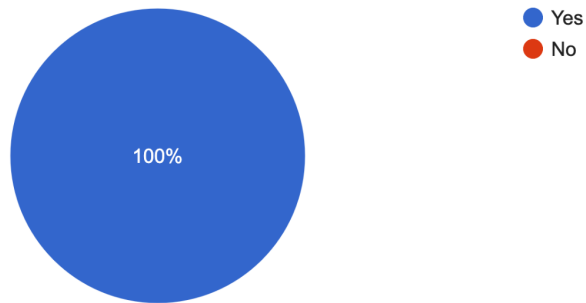
- a. Vote in every election
- b. Vote in most elections
- c. Sometimes vote
- d. Rarely vote
- e. This will be my first time voting
- f. Will not be voting in this election

Appendix B

Survey Responses

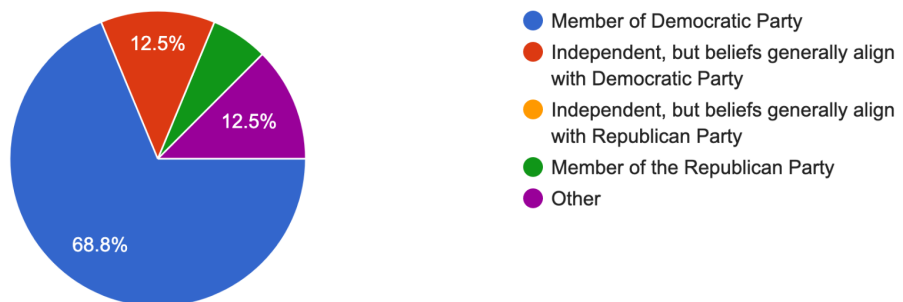
Are you a Registered Voter of Virginia?

16 responses



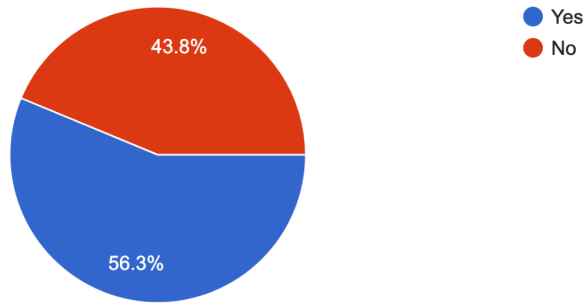
Do you consider yourself

16 responses

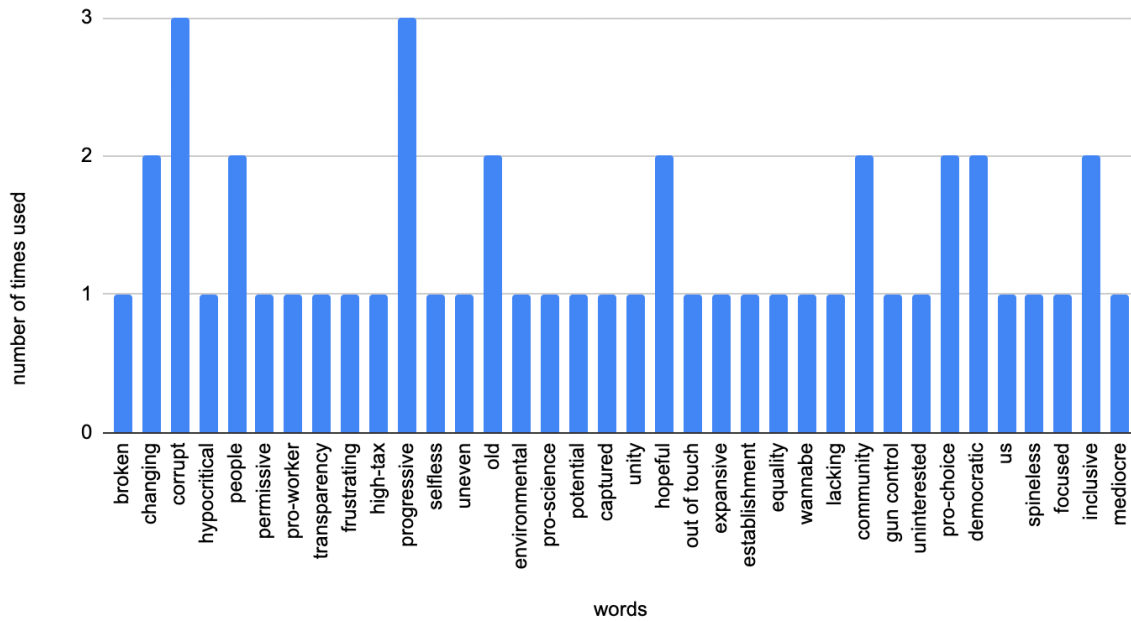


Have you ever attended a political barbecue

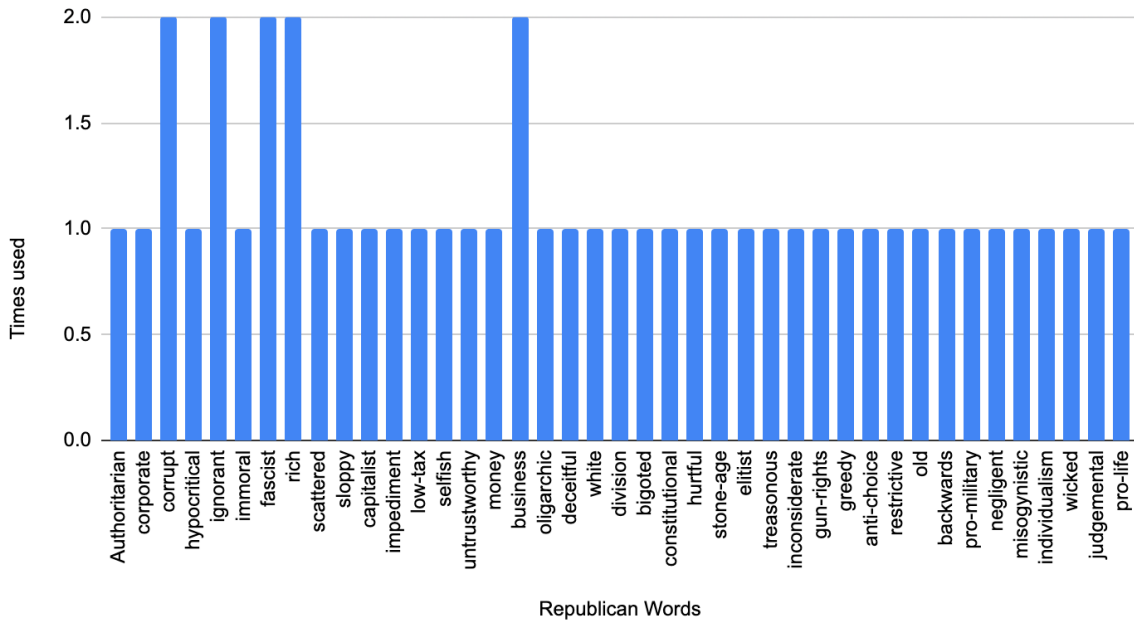
16 responses



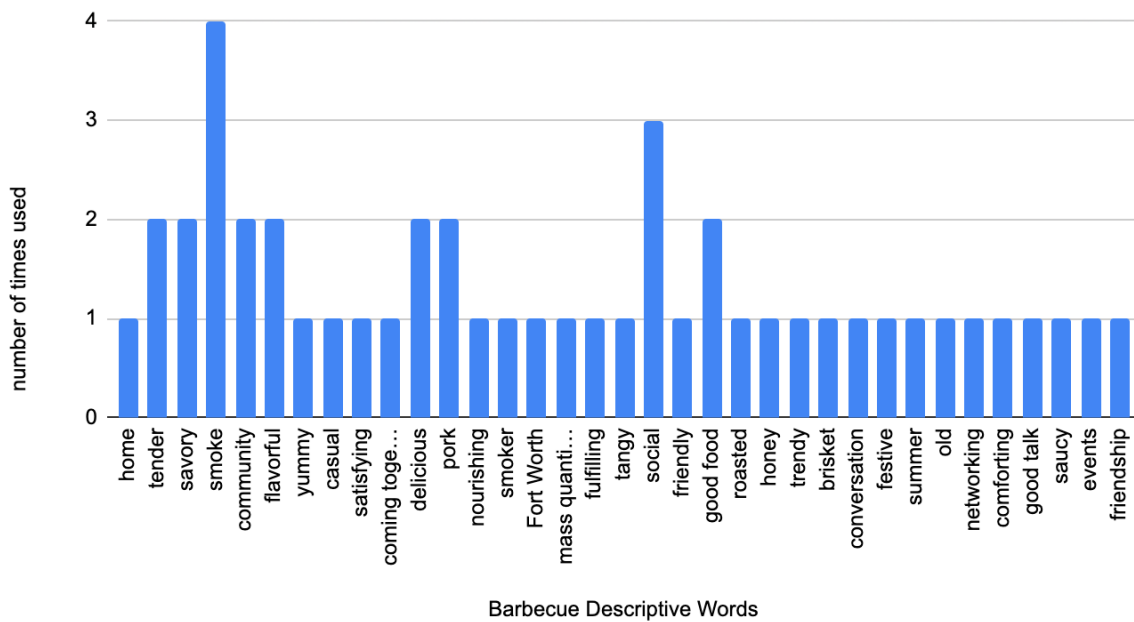
Words Describing the Democratic Party



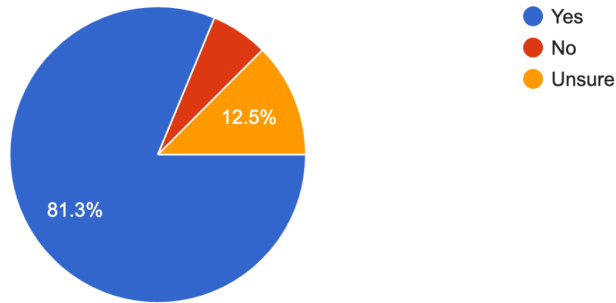
Republican Descriptive Words



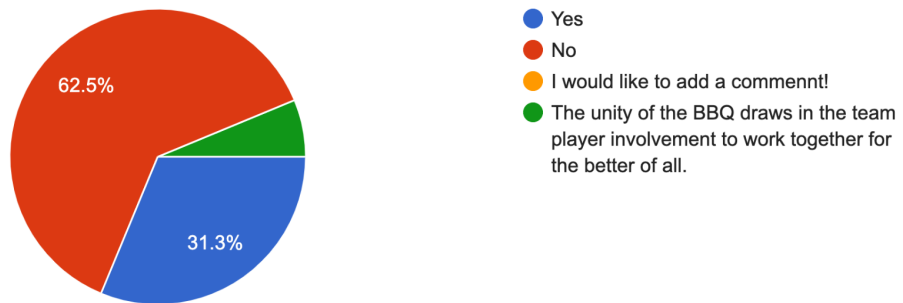
Barbecue Descriptive Words



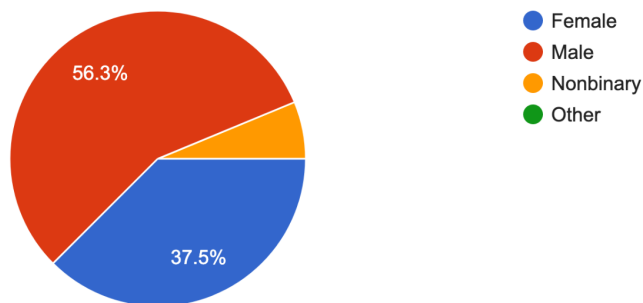
Do you plan to support Jennifer Lewis? (Living in the 6th Congressional District is not a requirement, as supporting can take place through volunteering, donating funds, etc.)
16 responses



Has your attendance at a BBQ influenced your decision?
16 responses

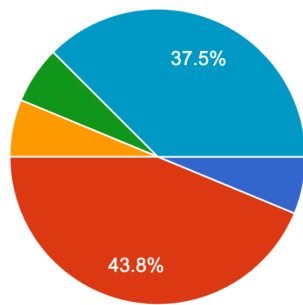


Gender
16 responses



Age

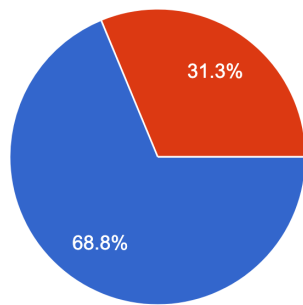
16 responses



- Under 21
- 21-45
- 46-69
- 69-115
- Prefer not to say
- 45-69

past Election History

16 responses



- Vote in every election
- Vote in most elections
- Sometimes vote
- Rarely vote
- This will be my first time voting
- Will not be voting in this election

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- 1) For demographic purposes, could you please confirm your name?
- 2) And which political party do you most identify with?
- 3) Are you a current or former elected official? What office?
- 4) This study is centered within the southwestern Virginia region. How long have you lived in this area, and what drew you here?
- 5) Have you ever participated in campaign events? Either hosting or as a guest.
- 6) When you think back, could you describe one of your favorite political events? Why is it one of your best? What feelings does it evoke? What was your level of participation within that event?
- 7) What do you think is the most important factor in making a campaign event a success? How do you define success?
- 8) Have you ever participated specifically in a political barbecue?
- 9) Besides the meat, were there any obvious differences with the experience of the barbecue compared with other food events (i.e, wine & cheese, spaghetti supper, etc.)
- 10) Would you consider yourself a barbecue aficionado?

11) Do you personally cook barbecue? What is your local spot to get bbq? 12) What is your favorite BBQ dish?

13) Are there any religious or ethical concerns you have regarding BBQ? Dietary restrictions?

14) When you campaign (or volunteer for campaigns) what do you feel is the most important aspect of campaigning that motivates people to vote in the way you hope they do?

15) Based on your personal experience, in the future, would you consider using barbecue as a relationship building tool within a campaign?

Appendix D

A Campaign Strategy for Western Virginia

The key to winning office is relational organizing.

Running for office is not easy. Elections are a popularity contest, and can be demoralizing, particularly when you have a personal stake invested. The candidate must be one hundred percent committed to the campaign before they start. People respond to genuineness. The candidate needs to be able to articulate to herself first the WHY she is running for office. Everything that happens in the campaign will be building off the answer to this question. You are seeking power, and you must know why and how you plan to use that power to benefit your community.

Before the campaign starts, the candidate needs to have done the work to build relationships within the community they want to serve. The candidate will want to be popular and well-known before the campaign announcement ever happens. Talk to everyone you know. Ask for advice. The reason is twofold: one, you might get good advice. Two, the person being asked feels heard, the asking and listening solidifies the relationship, and the person being asked is more likely to buy into and support your campaign. Your job is to value the people you come into contact with, both because that is just a nicer way to live, and also, so that they will value you.

Campaign Strategy Worksheet

Every campaign is different. This is a basic strategy guide, but you know your own town or county better than I do. Take the time to write your own campaign working strategy document. Just as you would never start a business without a solid business plan, you should never run for office without a written document that can be referred to and possibly updated throughout your campaign.

The Team

Put your team together, whether that is wholly volunteers or paid staff, or a mixture. One person can fulfill several of these roles, but while writing your personal plan to win, think about who you will need to succeed.

Campaign Manager

The Campaign Manager should be writing this plan with you. The candidate should NOT be the campaign manager, either explicitly or implicitly. The candidate needs to focus on building relationships and talking directly to voters, not spending time on small details like sourcing office supplies or filling out minutiae on required forms. The Campaign Manager will need to tell people NO, and the candidate should not be the one telling people no. It is better to have people upset at the manager, and not the candidate. The Campaign Manager is literally the manager of your campaign, so trust her.

Field Director

The Field Director will be creating a voter outreach plan. This includes targeting people likely to vote for you, creating persuasion scripts for canvassing, overseeing canvassing and phone banking, finding community events that your campaign can be a part of. The Field Director oversees paid staff field activities, and directs volunteer efforts.

Volunteer Coordinator

While the Field Director is usually the de facto Volunteer Coordinator, this role still needs to be clearly defined. The bulk of the campaign work will be done by volunteers, and making sure that volunteers feel comfortable and useful is key to ensuring those same volunteers come back to help you throughout your campaign. Designate a person in charge - someone that volunteers can go to if there are any problems. Responsibilities can be designated, but the Volunteer Coordinator makes sure that volunteers are welcomed into the office, volunteers are correctly trained, and volunteers feel as though they are a valued part of the campaign. Make sure to take feedback seriously.

Communications Director

This is who makes sure social media is on point, emails get sent, Thank You letters get sent to those who donate. The Communications Director approves all campaign literature. The ideal communications director has a good and valid press release list, has built a good relationship with the local press - papers, radio, television, even local blogs and podcasts, and is able to create a message and keep

that message discipline. ALL CAMPAIGN MATERIAL - including tweets - should go through the communications director before being published.

Treasurer

The only part of the campaign team that is required by Virginia law. All campaign committees must designate a treasurer within ten days of accepting a donation, spending money or filing for office. If you do not, then the candidate will be considered the treasurer. From the State Electoral Board:

§ 24.2-947.3. Campaign committee treasurer requirements and responsibilities.⁵⁹

A. Upon meeting any of the requirements of subsection A of § 24.2-947.1, the candidate shall appoint a single campaign treasurer who shall be a registered voter in Virginia. Every treasurer so appointed shall accept the appointment, in writing on the statement of organization, prior to the filing thereof. No individual shall act as treasurer unless the required statement of appointment has been filed. The same person may serve as campaign treasurer for more than one candidate.

Treasurer is often also the Fundraising/Finance Director. This person will plan a budget, and keep the campaign within the budget parameters. Your campaign will need money. There must be some kind of revenue coming in to see you through to Election Day. Get used to the idea of asking for money now.

Once you have your written plan and your core team in place, announce your candidacy, and file all the forms required. This document assumes that the candidate has already filed required paperwork with the Board of Elections, which includes candidate name, campaign organization, treasurer, banking information, contact information, and any required signature petitions. Talk to

both the local Democratic Committee that covers your county or city, and also contact your local Registrar's Office, who is happy to sit down and go over the small details with you. Also, carefully read over the legalese yourself. In particular if you are filing for a primary against a Democratic Incumbent. The last election, a candidate did not make the ballot because he filed his signatures with the incorrect Registrar, and that Registrar took his signatures and said nothing about it being the wrong office. Don't be paranoid, but look out very carefully to make sure you understand the rules. Also, you will need to know the rules very well to function and wield power in public office, so start being particular now about understanding the rules during the campaign.

All of this will get you on the ballot. Now the fun begins. As part of your election strategy, you will need to canvass as well as reach out to voters by participating in community food events.

THE WIN NUMBER

In order to win on election day, as part of your written plan, decide your Win Number. The first step? Calculate the number of voters who need to go to the polls and vote for you on Election Day. The key number is 50% of votes +1, but projecting voter turnout can be tricky. It would be best to calculate 55% so you have more of a buffer.

Virginia State Board of Elections Historical Elections Results:

<https://historical.elections.virginia.gov/> Using this link, search for previous elections involving this office.

In looking at past election data, it's important to note whether the office was contested. Contested elections generally drive up voter turnout by 200% or more. If you're running for an office that has not been contested in several election cycles, it may be helpful to look at similar races. Once you have determined the bare minimum of voters that you need to win, you now have a goal to work for.

As a Democratic candidate, you will likely work with Votebuilder. (Also known as the VAN - Voter Activation Network.) It's proprietary software, and you must gain access to it through the Democratic Party of Virginia. The cost for access will depend on the size of your voter base. You can contact the DPVA through their website at <https://vademocrats.org/>. Better yet, find the local Democratic committee that meets monthly in your county or city and get the direct lines to DPVA staff.

Votebuilder is not simply a list of voters, but a database of all registered voters from which you can pull a series of lists depending upon your volunteer activity. From the beginning, VAN can be helpful in giving rough estimates of the political leanings and voter history of people within your district. For your race, you can run searches for how many voters are classified as Strong or Lean Democrats and have voted in at least 2 of the last 5 elections.

In smaller rural counties, the database is not as well updated with voter classifications. However, the VAN is still the best way to target your voters. The data that your campaign collects in your rural district will help future campaigns.

CANVASS TARGETING YOUR VOTERS

Use VAN/Votebuilder to establish who your most likely supporters are. This can serve multiple purposes. Generally, voters are put in these buckets:

- Strong Democrats/Frequent Voters - these folks will show up on Election Day without much persuasion and they may even serve as volunteers or donors to your campaign. Talk to them ASAP and get them on board early!
- Lean Democrats/Independents/Frequent Voters - these folks may also support you and might volunteer.
- Strong/Lean Democrats/Infrequent Voters - these voters might support you, but it often takes a lot of campaign resources and multiple reminders to get them to vote. They usually only vote in the Presidential Elections, so they're not accustomed to voting otherwise. If some of your friends and family fall into this category, by all means you should include those individuals in your campaign. The fact remains that mobilizing infrequent voters can be expensive and time consuming, so it's generally best to skip them if your election does not fall in November in a presidential year.
- Lean Republicans/Frequent Voters - these voters will vote on election day, but they may not vote for you. You can try to reach out to them, but prepare yourself for being rebuffed. Some will, some won't, so what, move on.
- Strong Republicans/Frequent or Infrequent Voters - these voters will not vote for you unless they have personally known you since birth. Reaching out to them is not only time consuming and expensive, you may

accidentally motivate them to vote against you on Election Day. We don't need to mobilize them; that's a job for the other side. Skip them completely.

- No Data/Unknown - we don't know much about these voters. They're registered to vote, but they don't vote often. Maybe they're young and don't have a long voter history. Maybe they've never answered a survey about what candidates they support. They might vote for you, but they also might scream at you. Approach if they vote frequently enough and if you need them in your Win Number.

REACHING YOUR VOTERS

Once you've established your Win Number, you need to figure out how you plan to reach those voters. As you know, it is important that you attend and sponsor community events. The in person communication within enhanced social experiences are what builds relationships between you and your voters.

Modern campaigning also includes knocking the doors of your targeted voters and making phone calls directly to your targeted voters. You may have established that you need approximately 3000 voters on Election Day, but you will need to contact at least 6000 (2 times your win number) to locate your 3000 voters. Methods of contact include:

Canvass/Door Knocking:

You send out volunteers to knock on the doors of targeted voters. This is critically important because it introduces you and your campaign to the actual voters in the neighborhood. All you need are volunteers, literature about your campaign, a list of voters and clipboards (taking extra voter registration or absentee ballot

forms might be helpful, too). This activity is best done at times when people are at home: evenings during the week, Saturdays, and Sunday afternoons. You might even get some volunteers or donations as you're out and about. Be sure to record responses as you go, so you know exactly which voters are supporting you and which ones you should not be reminding them that the election is coming. Then enter that information back into Votebuilder so you can track your progress to reach your win number.

Canvassing is highly dependent on the area where you are running for election. Generally, in rural areas, people do not like you driving up their half mile drives to drop literature. Know your constituency! As in, literally know your constituency. If you want to talk to someone, find a mutual friend to introduce you. The canvassing is best done in population dense neighborhoods, and town areas. If your district is extremely rural, don't knock at houses that are half a mile from the road. These houses are best approached relationally, as in, you have a mutual friend that can introduce you. Keep safety in mind.

The first pass through the neighborhoods is to reach your Win Number, so you need to do this early. Additional runs through these neighborhoods might be to expand your targeted voter base or to remind people of the election. If you have the volunteer capacity, call or knock these doors on Election Day so you can verify that they voted.

Make sure that all campaign literature is printed by a union printer, and contains a union bug. You can go outside of Virginia if you prefer, but there is a union print shop in Virginia. Contact Pete at gibsonprint.com for quotes.

PHONE BANKING:

Phone banking is another way to reach your targeted voter list. You will find, though, that most people will not answer phone calls from numbers they do not know. Much like the doors, people tend to be home and able to answer the phone in the evenings or on weekends, but it's possible to do phone banks to older voters during the weekdays. Just like canvasses, be sure you record responses and input back into Votebuilder so you can track progress to your Win Number. Costs may include purchasing and activating prepaid phones and purchasing minutes, plus scheduling volunteers.

In most campaigns, volunteers use their own phones and minutes to make calls. But be mindful of volunteer expectations. Determine if the cost for burner phones is worth it for everyone's peace of mind. Yet again, communication between volunteers and the campaign is key.

DIRECT MAIL:

Direct Mail is a great way to reach the households of targeted voters, but there is no feedback to know whether those voters are ultimately your supporters. It's also not cheap, so use it wisely. You might consider a direct mail fundraising push to people who have donated to past candidates or a final weekend reminder to

vote postcard to some of the infrequent voters. Again, make sure that all printed material has a union bug.

YARD SIGNS:

Yard Signs raise visibility of you and your campaign. And they also are a great way to gift something to a supporter. Do yard signs vote? No. But they are a key part of building relationships during a campaign. I remind you of the union bug.

BUTTONS:

Like yard signs, they make your supporters happy, so get a few of them. Buttons will not make or break your campaign. Stickers are a cheaper alternative and can lend credence to your volunteers who are knocking doors, so you could do that instead. Union Bug.

BILLBOARDS/RADIO/TV

These are traditional campaign activities that fall into the “shotgun approach” category, as they’re terribly expensive and you get little feedback on how and how these advertisements are reaching voters.. You are paying to reach all the drivers/listeners/viewers, many of whom live in surrounding counties or outside of your targeted voters. You get no feedback to help you reach your Win Number. You help mobilize the other side by reminding people of the election. If you have money in your campaign account, there are much better ways of reaching voters. Like, say sponsoring football games and church barbecues.

CAMPAIGN OFFICE:

You likely do not need one. Get one only if you have so much volunteer activity that you need one and have extra money or free rental space. For municipal races, plan to work from someone's home, meet for canvasses in public places, and borrow space from a church or community center.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

You are running for office. People want to see you and you want to be seen. As per this research, you should be spending time with voters that exist beyond your personal and campaign bubble. You can reach some supporters, volunteers, or donors by sponsoring community events, attending churches, meetings, festivals, trade shows, charity functions, etc. Talk with community organizations like the Jaycees and Kiwanis to see how you can integrate your campaign in a supportive way into that community. Pay for drinks, sponsor tables, etc. You are seeking to be a public servant. Use campaign money to serve others.

GET VOLUNTEERS

You cannot do this alone. Even if you think you can do this alone, you cannot do this alone. You will need an army of volunteers to help you do all the campaign activities, including raising money.

- **Family and Friends:** First outreach. Get them to make calls for fundraising or to recruit more volunteers, have them knock doors, ask them to compile a mailing, let them organize a fundraiser, or ask them to feed your dog and mow your lawn while you're out campaigning.

- **Strong Democrats:** Some of them may not live in your district or be able to give a lot of money, but they love to help. Get them to recruit volunteers, make phone calls, knock doors, or set up GOTV.
- **Early Supporters:** During your first pass canvassing, ask supporters to volunteer. They may not have a ton of experience, but they'll probably go ask their neighbors to vote for you.

BUDGET/FUNDRAISING

Beyond your Win Number, you live by your campaign budget. You can have the best message in the world, but you must spend money to spread that message. It's hard, it may be painful, but whether you can hire staff or fund your campaign activity is completely dependent upon your budget. You don't have to raise and spend the most amount of money. You need to use the money you DO have in the most advantageous way, i.e, some way that involves voter outreach. ***NOTE: Every penny collected or expended by your campaign must go through the campaign account. This is not a suggestion, it is the law. Failure to properly report campaign contributions or expenditures can result in legal charges.***

How Much to Raise

This number will vary by race and by candidate. Use <http://www.vpap.org/> to research what prior campaigns have raised and spent, including from whom they raised money and how they spent it.

Create a Budget

Prioritize low-cost highly-effective campaign techniques to reach your voters. You will have to spend some money on literature and yard signs, but include phone minutes and paid staff if you need them. Spend money on community event sponsorships. Direct mail is a great tool, but printing and postage can add up quickly. If you feel very strongly about radio or billboards, include those costs in your initial budget.

Raise the Money

Who to Ask: It's one thing to have a budget of \$19,000, but it's another thing to raise that money. There are 4 basic categories of fundraising:

- **People who love you** - these are family and close friends who have known you for years and who want you to be happy. Call your parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents, best friends, and even the in-laws and ask them for a specific amount of money that is within their ability. For some of these folks, \$100 may be too much of an ask. Others might give you \$1,000 or more. But even Great Aunt Mildred would be proud of you getting elected and might be able to scramble up \$25.
- **People who know and trust you** - these are coworkers, church friends, people you volunteer with, people in your book club, people who have seen you out and about, know what you're capable of, believe that you can do a good job, and who will support you - even if they live outside the district and can't vote for you. Make that initial call. It can be scary to ask people for money. If you want this, you must ask people for money.

- **People who dislike your opponent** - these people don't know you, but they hate your opponent. This is fairly infrequent in municipal races, but it's not impossible. You may well have someone send a small dollar contribution just because they want to unseat your opponent.
- **PACs/Corporations/Lobbyists/Power Brokers** - these are political organizations who make calculated investments in campaigns because they want to be on the side of the winner after election day. Some of these entities will even give to both candidates in a race, simply to be on the winner's side after the election. Not only are they basically unheard of in municipal races, but they demand documentation on the strength of your campaign. Their contribution is an investment in the winner, so they want to see that you're winning.

Specific and Appropriate Ask:

You must ask for a specific amount of money and explain how that money will be used - barbecue, yard signs, literature, phone minutes, etc. Look back at prior contribution history through vpap.org and base your specific ask around that.

Just because someone donated \$1000 to Barack Obama does not mean that they will donate \$1000 to you. You may find that they donate \$1000 to Presidential, \$500 to statewide races, and \$100 to state house or senate races. They might donate \$100 to you, but don't ruin it by asking for an inappropriate amount.

Smaller Ask: If they choke on the idea of giving you \$100, ask if they can do \$50.

You might even ask for \$500 and they end up giving \$250 or \$100. This is normal.

In the Bank: Funds have to get in the bank to be counted. Someone might tell you that they're going to give you \$500, but that money needs to be in the bank to count. Carry donation envelopes with you and wait while people fill them out and write the check. If someone tells you over the phone that they're going to donate, process their contribution using Actblue or your website while they're still on the phone. Promises and pledges do not fund your campaign.

Thank You Notes: Send them. Thank people. This is a great way to get follow-up contributions.

Resolicit: It's easier to get someone to give again than it is to find a new donor. So if Uncle Harry gave you \$100 to get started, give him a call with a campaign update of all the wonderful things your volunteers are doing, then ask if he can give again. He might only give \$50 this time, but that's \$50 you didn't have before.

Fundraiser Events: If someone wants to throw you a fundraiser, take them up on it! All expenditures must be reported as in-kind donations, you will want staff or volunteers to collect donation envelopes, and you'll need to speak to the crowd about why you're so great, what you're doing to get elected, and how you're going to spend the money. Invite people who will donate. Invite your best volunteers just because they volunteer so much.

Raise Money Early: By the final weeks of the campaign, you should have your Win Number voters located and your sole focus is ensuring those voters actually show up and vote for you on Election Day! Set a deadline to raise all the money you need at least 2 weeks in advance of Election Day. You'll know how much money you have to spend and can fund the final push.

Revisit your Budget

Every two weeks, go back to your ideal budget and look at the money you have raised. Chances are good that you'll need to make changes. Maybe you didn't raise as much as you thought you would or you spent more on unexpected expenditures or you had to order more literature and broaden your targeted voters. Be really honest about what money you have to work with and make the hard choices.

Spend the Money

You cannot keep money after Election Day for personal expenses. Raise as much as you can and spend it for the election. After the election, you can leave anything left in the campaign account, so long as you continue to file quarterly finance reports with SBE. You can also disburse the money to other political organizations or to non-profits, in accordance with SBE regulations.

GET OUT THE VOTE! (GOTV)

This day is ALL THE THINGS! You must get your supporters to the polls to meet or exceed your Win Number. This will be the busiest day of the entire campaign.

- **Flush Out Your Voters:** You have been keeping track through VAN. You need to make certain that every one of your identified supporters votes. If you have the volunteer capacity to knock doors, send people out to knock doors. Call supporters and ask them if they have voted yet. You need to remind them to get to the polls with their ID before 7PM and to stay in line if necessary. You cannot let people forget to vote.

- **Rides to the Polls:** If you have a couple people willing to drive voters to the polls, get them arranged ahead of time. Set up a phone number for people to call for rides. Send a car out to get the voters. If you have canvassing or phone banks flushing out voters, have those volunteers call for a ride if someone needs one. You will find more people willing to drive than you have people needing rides. So keep those drivers on standby while they canvass neighborhoods, and have one person monitoring the phone and dispatching rides as needed.
- **Greet Your Voters:** People like to feel as though they are being welcomed to the polls. If you can work with your local Democratic Committee, the committee should help to find poll volunteers for you. Also, you might want to make placards with your name and all other democratic candidate names that the volunteers can wear around their necks, so even the people who don't want to be spoken to can see your name. You want to make sure you have campaign yard signs out at the voting precinct before polls open at 6AM. Multiples. Ask your supporters to bring them from their own yard when they show up to vote that day. Virginia law requires all campaign signs remain 50 feet from the door.

Volunteers should:

- Welcome voters to the polls
- Offer a sample ballot
- Thank people for voting
- Report any voting problems to the local committee's point person or the Registrar's Office

Do NOT engage in extended debate or argument with voters or other volunteers

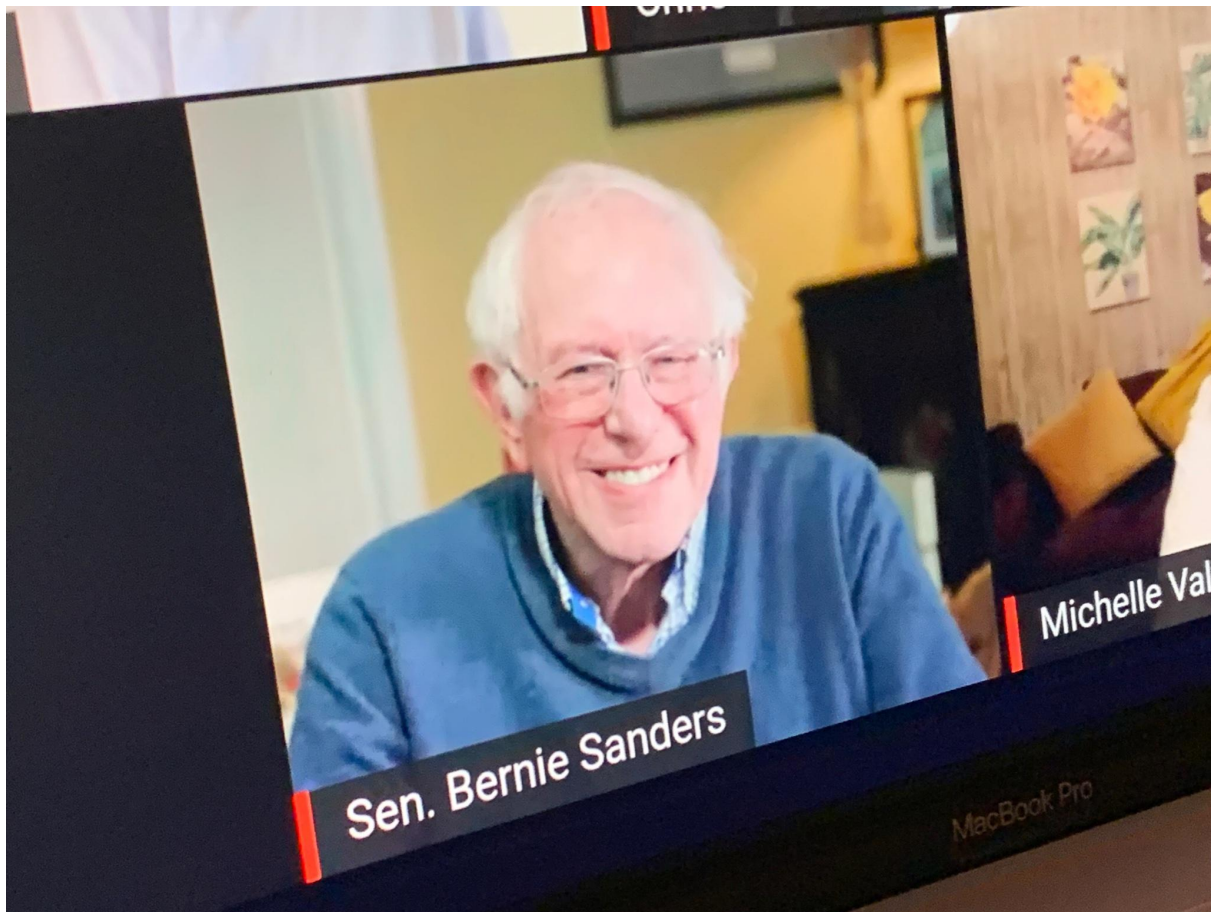
You may not have enough volunteers to staff each precinct all day. This is unfortunate, but it does happen. Signs at the precincts are often enough, but there may be spare volunteers who show up and ask where they can be helpful, so send them out to cover gaps as needed.

Clean up the Precincts: All campaign signs must be taken down after the polls close. Ask the last shift of volunteers to pack up or get a volunteer to run around to each precinct and make sure all tables, chairs, and signs are packed up. If a single campaign sign is left out at a precinct, you can expect an early morning phone call from the Registrar's Office on Wednesday.

APPENDIX E

Why I Got Started

I'm including a photo from a Jacobin Magazine hosted livestream with the grassroots Amazon worker organizers and Bernie Sanders that Angelika Maldonado tweeted out with the quote: "our boy just absolutely giddy to be talking about unionizing Amazon."⁶⁰



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