

Memorandum

To: Interested Parties

Re: Reproductive health care was a deciding issue for Virginia voters

Date: Wednesday, November 8, 2017

Memo: Reproductive health care was a deciding issue for Virginia voters

In a decisive victory for the women, men and families of the Commonwealth, Virginians elected reproductive health champions Dr. Ralph Northam for governor and Justin Fairfax for Lieutenant Governor, and re-elected Attorney General Mark Herring in a clean sweep of the statewide offices. Reproductive health care was a driving factor in this race, and data indicate that it was decisive with voters who candidates needed to bring home the victory.

In addition, historic wins in the Virginia General Assembly indicate a clear rejection of the Trump agenda, including:

- Danica Roem - first out transgender public official in Virginia
- Hala Ayala and Elizabeth Guzman - first Latinas elected to the Virginia General Assembly
- Kathy Tran - first Asian-American woman elected to the Virginia General Assembly
- Dawn Adams - first out lesbian in the Virginia General Assembly

According to [early exits](#) Ralph Northam won women by 22 points and lost men by 2 points. [Black women](#) led the charge in overwhelming numbers with 91% voting in support of Ralph Northam. Additionally, voters named health care as their top priority by a margin of 22 points.

There are three key ways that Planned Parenthood advocacy and political organizations and reproductive rights played a decisive role in this election.

First: [Reproductive health and rights were at stake in this election.](#)

Candidates ran on these issues. Statewide candidates and delegate candidates made it a point to run on reproductive health care issues, including running campaign TV spots, mail and digital ads on abortion and reproductive health care issues.

- [Ralph Northam: "Want to See"](#)
- [Justin Fairfax: "Justin Fairfax Will Fight for Women"](#)
- [Mark Herring: "Women's Health"](#)

During the campaign, Ed Gillespie stated that he would block access to safe, legal abortion and prevent women from getting the care they need at Planned Parenthood health centers.

Second: Reproductive health and rights were deciding issues for Virginia voters.

Planned Parenthood Votes [polling](#) (see below) in the days before the election pointed to a series of key takeaways that shaped the outcome of the Virginia election. While abortion has been framed as a divisive issue within the Democratic coalition, late October Planned Parenthood Votes polling found that talking about reproductive health care resulted in vote gains among key constituencies even in the final days of the race, and maintained solid support among voters who had already decided to support Northam.

1. Reproductive health care moved Black voters by double digits.

Women's health care messages moved Black voters by nearly 20 points. When Black voters were prompted with a women's health care message, they supported Northam by 64 pts, 80% - 16%, nearly 20 pts above the support Northam got with Black voters without first hearing reproductive health messaging.

2. Reproductive health care was critical in mobilizing the Democratic coalition.

Among “Lean Democrats,” voters with partisanship scores between 60 and 79, [Northam saw a net +4 point increase in support with women’s health care messaging](#). Messaging on reproductive health care was a critical and important message in the closing days of the 2017 Virginia Governor’s race.

3. Planned Parenthood advocacy and political organizations are trusted messengers

Planned Parenthood advocacy and political organizations were important messengers in the closing days of the race with a range of important voters. Likely voters have a net 16-point favorable view of Planned Parenthood, Northam voters have a net +67 point favorable view of Planned Parenthood, and Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC, supported by Planned Parenthood Votes, was essential GOTV messengers in the black community where Planned Parenthood has a +36 pt favorability.

4. One in Five Gillespie voters disagreed with him on reproductive health care.

While Northam supporters are overwhelmingly pro-choice, 21% of Gillespie voters disagreed with Ed Gillespie on choice. Pro-women’s-health-care messaging also decreased Gillespie support among lean Republicans by 2 points. Meanwhile, Northam voters were overwhelmingly supportive of reproductive choice.

Third: Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC, supported by Planned Parenthood Votes, ran their biggest campaign ever in Virginia.

Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC, with the support of Planned Parenthood Votes, ran a \$3 million campaign - its largest campaign in Virginia history - that knocked on more than 353,000 doors, reached more than 1.1 million voters online through an innovative digital campaign, over 500,000 mail pieces to 347,123 voters, and energized college students on more than 20 Virginia campuses. In 2013, Planned Parenthood Votes, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, and Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC, invested \$2.4 million in a campaign that knocked on 90,000 doors, ran 2 TV ads, and reached 115,000 voters by mail.

Ground: As of November 7th, Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC canvassers and volunteers have...

- Knocked on more than 353,000 doors
- Held 858 events
- Coordinated more than 1,330 volunteer shifts

Young people and young people of color have been central in leading that fight in Virginia.

- At Hampton University, students founded a new [Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia Generation Action chapter](#), which launched with 60 members. Student members have canvassed with Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC and coalition partners every weekend since October.
- In collaboration with Next Gen Virginia, Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC hosted a massive “[Reclaiming My Health](#)” day of action at 20 college campuses across the Commonwealth that reached 2,759 voters.
- Students at the [University of Virginia](#) and across the Commonwealth organized voter registration drives where young people pledged their support for Planned Parenthood. “I don’t want Planned Parenthood to be taken away [and] I don’t want the rights of minority groups to be unnoticed,” first-year College student Alexis Allen said. ‘Especially with everything that happened on U.Va. Grounds, I want someone who will impact that for the better.’”

Digital: The Virginia Coordinated Digital Campaign, convened by Planned Parenthood Votes and Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC, collaborated with partners to conduct a cutting-edge \$2.9 million digital-first persuasion and mobilization program to elect Ralph Northam the next governor of Virginia. This effort reached more than 2.4 million commonwealth voters in total between September 1st and Election Day. Other organizations that participated in this effort were Priorities

USA Action, Virginia League of Conservation Voters PAC, NextGen America, ACRONYM and the National Democratic Redistricting Committee.

The coordinated digital program has been described as a possible [model for the future of campaigns](#) and shows what is possible through digital coordination amongst partner organizations.

Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC and Planned Parenthood Votes played a central role in coordinating digital programs and centralizing communication between groups running digital programs in the commonwealth. Collectively, Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC ran a \$500,000 digital persuasion program to reach all of the campaign's female persuasion targets from early September through Election Day, as well as a \$250,000 mobilization program to reach all female GOTV targets from mid October through Election Day with all digital-first creative.



Mail: In the last two weeks of the election, Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC sent out over 500,000 pieces of mail to get out the vote and showcase our candidates, including candidate-specific mail for over 50 candidates for delegate.

The bottom line is that when reproductive health and rights are on the line, candidates who talk about their support for these issues win votes and elections. Politicians in DC and across the country should take note: attacks on women's health will not only hurt constituents, it will cost you votes on Election Day.