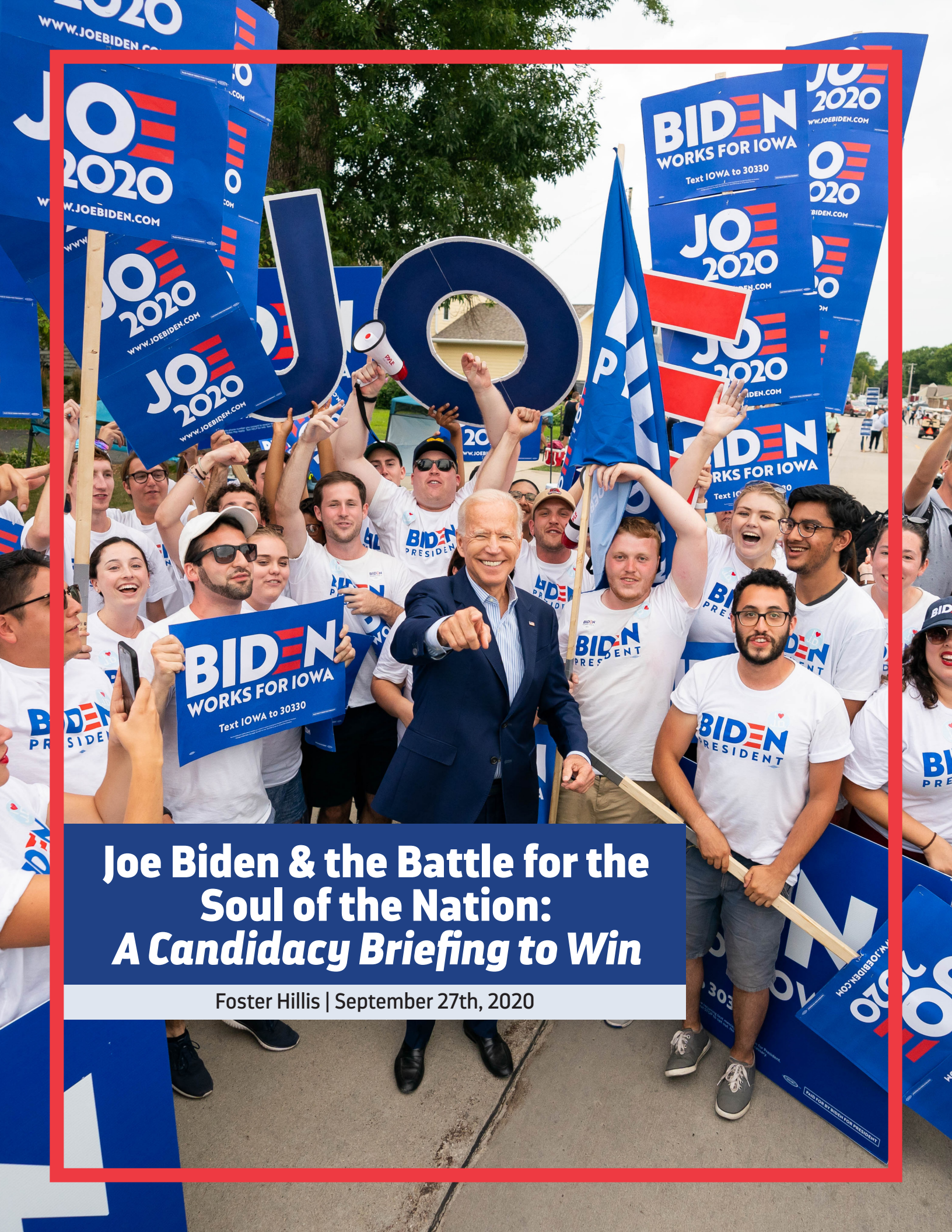


Joe Biden & the Battle for the Soul of the Nation: *A Candidacy Briefing to Win*

Foster Hillis | September 27th, 2020

Introduction

Waking up from a short nap before going out with friends on the night of September 18th, 2020, was a news story I did not think I would see—Associate Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has passed. As a member of the LGBTQ+ Community, she expanded and protected my rights while also furthering the rights of women, and other equality movements. Former Vice President Joe Biden said it best in his Op-Ed article in The Atlantic after Trump's commendation of the KKK rally in Charlottesville in August of 2017: "We are in the Battle for the Soul of the Nation" (Joe Biden, "We Are Living…"). Although said for every Presidential election in recent memory—this is an election like no other. No election before this has so much riding on it for the Democratic Party: the current economic crisis due to the mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic, the looming climate crisis, the increasing nationalism in foreign policy, racial injustice across America, and now the possibility of a 6/3 majority in our Highest Court.

"We are in the Battle for the Soul of the Nation."
- Joe Biden, August 2017

Former Vice President and now Democratic Presidential Nominee Joe Biden (Biden hereinafter) has been doing well in the election so far; however, like we learned in 2016—the polls can be deceiving. With a current forecast from FiveThirtyEight (as of September 21, 2020) in over 40,000 projections, Biden has won 77% of the elections (Nate Silver, "2020 Election Forecast"). So one can assume that this is Biden's election to lose. But, like aforementioned, Hillary Clinton was in the same situation just four short years ago, with a 71% chance of winning (as of November 8th, 2016) versus now President Donald Trump (Nate Silver, "2016 Election Forecast").

In this briefing, I hope to portray my three-point strategy in order to secure Biden the 46th Presidency of the United States. However, Biden will need everything going in his favor against his biggest challenger yet. I will focus on emphasizing Biden's plans and policies in the media, highlighting Donald Trump's failures to all Americans, and to securing a victory with a Get Out The Vote (GOTV) strategy unseen by any other modern-day campaign.

Background

Biden, a career politician, has flirted with the idea of running for President multiple times—in fact this is not his first official bid for the role. After 15 years as the Delaware Senator, his first bid was in 1988. That bid was muddled with controversy both about plagiarism of a speech and his academic record and he ultimately dropped out of the race just three short months after he joined (Flegenheimer).



Joe & Jill Biden walking into the Capitol Building.

Staying in the U.S. Senate, Biden took control of the powerhouse Senate Judiciary Committee. His biggest success in the Committee was his authorship and passage of "The Violence Against Women Act of 1994", which established the "Office on Violence Against Women" under the Department of Justice, increased funding for investigations and prosecution of crimes, and imposed automatic sentences. Biden said on his Senate website, "I consider the Violence Against Women Act the single most significant legislation that I've crafted during my 35-year tenure in the Senate" ("Senator Joe Biden..."). He had blunders in the committee too, however, most notability allowing for his committee to poke and prod Anita Hill during the Supreme Court Justice nomination hearings of Clarence Thomas (Rodrigo).

Then again, on January 7th, 2007, Biden announced his second candidacy for the highest office. This time, comments that were a bit too candied and Obama's rising national fame, restricted the Biden campaign to finishing fifth and receive less than 1% of vote share point in the Iowa primaries (Cooper). Which, in turn, forced the Biden campaign to end their bid. This run, however, did last just four days under of one whole year, making it longer than his first run. Additionally, this run, his vast

experience on Capitol Hill, and being a (relatively) notable Senator got him the Veep position under Obama.

Biden consistently drew significant assignments, such as implementing the economic stimulus plan, negotiating various budget deals with Republican congressional leaders, and leading numerous missions to international trouble stopts.

During his Vice Presidency, Biden was able to put his name on a relatively large amount of major initiatives in the Obama Administration, "Biden consistently drew significant assignments, such as implementing the economic stimulus plan, negotiating various budget deals with Republican congressional leaders, and leading numerous missions to international trouble spots" (Goldstein). Furthermore, Biden was able to meet more people—more importantly constituents—than he could in the small state of Vermont; in fact, the White House reported he traveled 1.2 million miles during his tenure ("Vice President Joe Biden"). This all strengthened his public image and made him a household name.

Moving into the 2016 presidential election, Biden was seen as one of the strongest contenders for President, riding on the coattails of President Obama. However, when his son (the Delaware Attorney General) Beau Biden died on January 6th, 2015, he ended his bid (McCarthy, Gambino, Roberts). The loss of Beau in 2015, and his first wife Neilia and his young daughter Naomi in 1972, has played a huge role in Biden's life, and it is now story line in his fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although being a hardworking Vice President, the limited memory that I have during his time in office is skewed by his juvenile attitude during the 2014 State of the Union Address. He sat behind Obama (as normal) by then Speaker of the House John Boehner and shot "finger guns" at members of the Legislature. This can work in his favor, however—being a career politician without the "dirty" connotation that the title carries (especially in the Democratic Party).

One of the last agenda items that Obama crossed off his list before retiring as the 44th President was to award Biden with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction. This higher level of the already high prestige has only been given to three individuals before him, according to Obama

("President Obama Surprises"). This has strengthened his character and regard from American families.

Moving on, though, on April 25th, 2019, Biden officially announced his campaign. This would be the first campaign to last more than one-year and also his first campaign to secure him the Democratic Party nomination. With the front runner position on lock, for most of the campaign, the only thing he had to worry about was the attacks from the other candidates, and attacked he was.

Most notability in the very first Democratic Nomination debate, he was assailed by his now running-mate Kamala Harris. She belabored him on the issue of racial integration via busing, claiming that "You also worked with them (US Senators Eastland and Talmadge) to oppose busing" (Allen). He then immediately rebuked the claim stating that it was a "mischaracterization of my position across the board" (Allen). This whole back and forth lasted for about 4 and ½ minutes. His record on race relations and this powerful attack, however, did not largely affect his polling numbers. In fact, after winning the very white state (in reference to a lack of diversity) of Iowa's nomination, he swept his competition (then Bernie Sanders, Pete Buttigieg, Tulsi Gabbard, Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren, and Tom Steyer) away in the very diverse state of South Carolina with about 75% of their state delegates (winning 39 out of their 54 delegates) (McMinn).

After the attacks from Harris subsided, his next "main" threat was from Warren, who succeeded him in the polls shortly in October. Although, after her announcement of her "Medicare for All" plan, which was very progressive (in reference to other candidate's plans on healthcare) lost her that 1st place position.

With no help of the impeachment trial in the Senate for Trump, Biden had a decrease in the media during the Senate fiasco. With Sanders, Warren, Klobuchar and Michael Bennet all having to go back to Washington, all the other candidates canceled their events to allow the negative media attention to take its course on Trump. While ultimately not passing the Senate, his impeachment trial is something that the Biden Campaign used against Trump back during the primary and now during the general election.

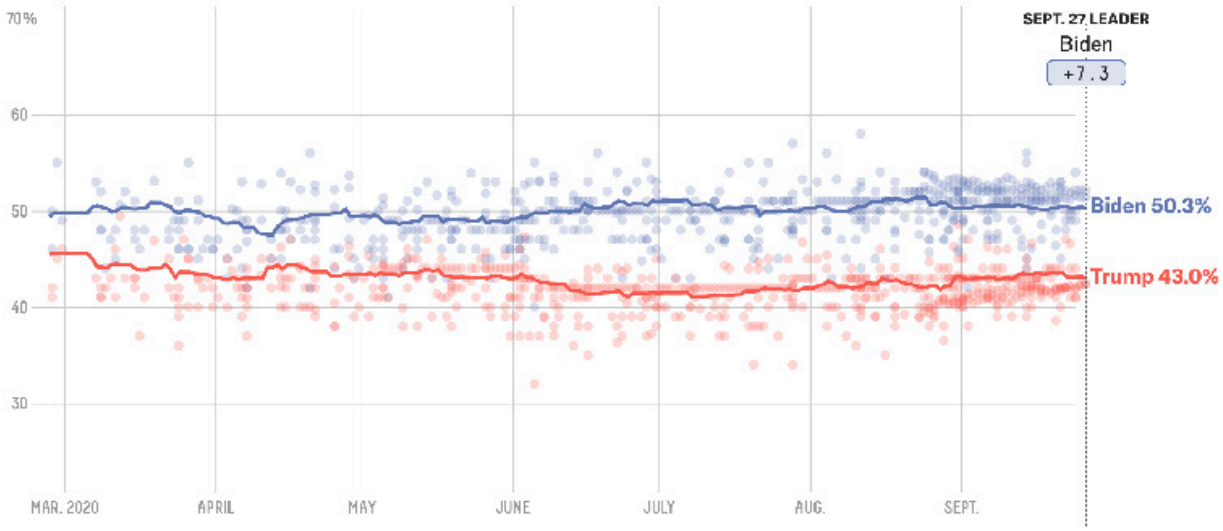
The turn of the new month, March 2020, and the introduction of the global pandemic that we all know of as COVID-19, allowed the candidates all a main enemy, including Trump. However,



State of COVID-19 briefing with Biden & Harris.

it was evident to the American public that Trump was not (and still is not) equipped to handle this deadly virus. The virus brought many new pivots to the presidential race, but especially noteworthy was a debate between Biden and Bernie without an audience, on March 15th, 2020. With Biden stating in the debate immediately before this one that he would nominate a black woman to the Supreme Court, he went a step further and confirmed that he would, "commit that I will in fact pick a woman to be Vice President" (Pramuk). In other debates and interviews, Biden openly confirmed that he would pick a diverse Cabinet and Administration, being one of the only candidates (and in my opinion the candidate with the most emphasis on it) to do so.

In the new month, April 2020, Sanders dropped out of the race, making Biden the de facto nominee. Also, in the new month, the US surpassed 1,000,000 COVID-19 cases and in May of 2020, the US surpassed 100,000 COVID-19 deaths (Barry, et al.). This all mentioned because this now sets the



FiveThirtyEight's 2020 national polling average.

stage for where we are now. A Trump vs. Biden election in which so much is riding on it, but mostly the election is a check on how the US public thinks of our 45th president, and more importantly, *should he get four more years?*



The Bidens and the Harris/Emhoffs at a virtual fundraiser.

In just about every poll, including ones conducted by the Trump Campaign, Biden is projected to win the popular vote—no problem. In fact, Biden had a 9.6% lead on the current President back on June 30th (55.1/41.5), and now a comfortable lead of 7.3% (50.4/43.2), according to FiveThirtyEight's national polling averages (Bycoffe). But I have said it once, and I will say it again, the polls don't matter, the popular vote doesn't even matter, what matters is the Electoral College (EC). With Biden having a comfortable hold on 222 EC Votes and Trump with only 125 EC Votes, Biden needs to secure just a few more states (I'm looking at the Rust belt, maybe Florida, Arizona, maybe Ohio, and others) (Real Clear Politics – 2020 Electoral Maps…").

Finally, just two more important dates to know, April 12th, 2020, Biden officially chooses his former rival (and a friend of his late son) Harris as his running-mate. On August 18th, 2020, the Biden/Harris ticket officially receives the nomination of the Democratic Party. I quickly mention these two dates, because while they are both important, Biden really didn't receive a sustained "bump" in the polls. All things being fair though, Trump also didn't receive a sustained "bump" on/after his official GOP nomination.

With two enemies for the Biden campaign (Trump & COVID-19), his numbers in just about every poll, and the support of almost every other Democratic Nominee hopeful, Biden should have this "in the bag"—if he can garner the votes like the polls have been suggesting.

Strategy

Just as was said for Clinton, Biden is projected to win by a clear victory, but like aforementioned, Biden will need everything in his favor to beat the most sui generis incumbent in presidential election history. While attempting to not rule out a single different strategy, I believe the following three points will allow the Biden Campaign the pathway to the Presidency.

Emphasizing Biden's Plans & Policies

Although a very complex theory, each US political party "owns" certain policies and policy points (Theiss-Morse et al.). Biden needs to come out as a strong candidate with expertise of both side's policies. His campaign has done a good job so far by publishing his plans on his website and other social medias, but the average-undecided voter likely will not take the time to read every single policy point that is on his website, and the same can be said about Trump's website too.

In fact, in my opinion, Trump has done a very poor job in relaying his policy points (either carrying over from his last campaign or adding new points) to the average voter. His last campaign was headlined by "Build that Wall" and "Make America Great Again (MAGA)", but this campaign doesn't have a strong message other than "Keep America Great (KAG)" which is not as strong as MAGA.



Biden & Harris at a People's Magizine interview.

One of the strongest policy points to run on is enlarging the US economy; however, that policy point is "owned" by the Grand Old Party. One of Clinton's largest downfalls was her loss of the Rust Belt—a grouping of states that has been ravaged by deindustrialization, which included the loss of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan all by narrow

margins because of her lackluster economic plan promotion (Brownstein). With Biden's "Build Back Better" plan, most centered at jobs lost because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of industry jobs, I believe this is one of his strongest yet most under promoted platform points ("Build Back Better…").

The other important policy points that Biden should be expounding on is his push for a 100% clean energy economy by 2050 ("Plan for Climate Change…"), his push for racial equality ("The Biden Plan to Build Back Better…"), and his plan for LGBTQ+ equality in the US and across the world ("The Biden Plan to Advance LGBTQ+ Equality…"). I believe these policy points should be expounded on, but not as hardly pushed because of how decisive these issues are in the US. The ads containing these plans can be targeted to individual voters as listed in the "GOTV Like No Other" section.

Highlighting Donald Trump's Failures to All Americans

> Voters are "disapproving of his response, disbelieving of his rhetoric on the virus and critical of what they view as his lagging approach to containing it."

With the COVID-19 pandemic on everyone's mind currently, this is the best way to attack Trump's Presidency. In fact, a new poll states his approval rating on his handling of the pandemic at 35%, a basal amount, with the survey concluding that voters are "disapproving of his response, disbelieving of his rhetoric on the virus and critical of what they view as his lagging approach to containing it" ("Deep Skepticism for Trump's…").

In addition to his response to the virus, I also believe that Biden can bring up his impeachment trial. While then it was seen as a partisan issue, I believe now more Americans see his impeachment as a stain on his Presidency.

Finally, and very importantly, Biden needs to hit home with voters by emphasizing Trump's racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic comments. Reminding undecided voters of his approval of the KKK protest in Charlottesville, his sexual assault level comments included in the "Access Hollywood tapes," and his mismanagement of the border crisis by separating children from their families and now his lack of attention to the forced sterilization of women at the border. In fact, negative ads about someone (in this case negative about Trump) causes an emotional reaction and therefore makes the

ad more impactful to the viewers (Theiss-Morse et al). Biden needs to get across to every American that Trump is only here for himself and people like him—by using his words against him.

GOTV Like NO Other

Normally, the GOTV phase of campaigns happens in the last weeks to days before the election. Ensuring that all known and suspected supporters actually follow through and vote is the most essential function of any campaign. However, we are in a very unique situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As states open up their absentee and mail-in ballot laws (although the same), a reported 11 states have already surpassed their total 2016 ballot requests and 65.5 million ballots have already been sent out (and that is only in 32 States and DC) (Gamio, Keefe, Lu). In fact, according to a New York Times report, 2,009,000 Pennsylvanians have requested an absentee ballot this year, which is a 1,861% increase from 2016, with these huge increases of non-traditional voters becoming a standard in this pandemic (Gamio, Keefe, Lu).



Biden's GOTV strategy must have conventional TV, radio, newspaper, and other normal means of outreach, but also tap into a modern side by using micro-influencers, just like the Obama campaign in 2008, had with texting voters (Theiss-Morse et al). Think of small creators (from 1,000 – 100,000 followers) that are in niche industries rather than huge "name brand" celebrities with broad appeal (like the Kardashians) (Ismail). Harvesting the power and trustworthiness that they hold over their audience will allow for the influencing of undecided voters jumping onboard the campaign while also reminding key likely or lean supporters of voting. This idea has already been used, actually, the Bloomberg Campaign paid micro-influencers $150 per post to essentially say

why they were supporting him. (Bixby). Although his campaign fell through, this media route did garner a lot of attention in my generation of voters.



Biden with supporter at the South Carolina Democratic Party Convention.

Furthermore, via resources similar to the NGP VAN platform, the Biden Campaign must target strong Biden supporters with low turnout, likely Biden supporters with medium turnout, and lean Biden supporters with high turnout, and other broad demographics with medium and strong turnout such as likely Catholics (Biden's faith) and Baptists (Harris' faith) with phone, text, physical literature, and door-to-door communication.

He should continue the use the advertising targeting features on most all large social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, and other sites like Google Search in order to identify trends in user's affiliation to target specific messaging in order to harvest their support and more importantly their vote.

This being said, GOTV season has already started. The Biden Campaign must act as quickly as possible and ensure that "all cannons are firing" for his GOTV strategy, now!

Conclusion

With Biden having his "No Malarky" tour across America and then up to Iowa to start the caucuses, it stands true to this day if he wants to win our Highest Office, his campaign can withstand, No Malarky.



No Malarkey! bus tour kickoff event in Council Bluffs, IA.

The Biden Campaign must emphasize his plans and policies of securing the rights and freedoms of all Americans while concurrently highlighting Trump's failures to us while also mobilizing all supporters and voters with the most up-to-date GOTV strategy. He must accomplish this by harnessing the power of big data, voter files, and other means to ensure his campaign speaks to those Americans that are likely to vote, but might not be a confirmed Trump voter (voters in the persuasion universe). GOTV is more important than ever, with only 11% of voters reporting to be actually undecided, getting his votes counted is even more important and cost-effective than winning over Trump supporters (Beer).

The Biden campaign must brace for the "October Surprise," whether that be in favor of the campaign or not. I believe our October Surprise will come at one of the upcoming presidential debates, but a surprise could be hiding behind any corner.

The Biden Campaign must be able to reap the investments that it sowed during this long and hard-fought campaign and use those resources, supporters, and connections to secure the vote come this November 3rd, 2020.

The passing of Justice Ginsburg was tragic, we will honestly never have someone else on the Court like her that can stand up against the conservative justices and fight for the rights of everybody in the US. Her passing, though, should now teach every single Democrat, liberal, progressive, and everyone that believes that our "best days still lie ahead" (Biden, Twitter).

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