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# *Report: Year Of The Woman—2018 Political Ads By Women Challengers*

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- ***The Scope:*** The researchers examined 52 ads by 25 women challengers running for the House, Senate, or governor positions in the 2018 general election (29 ads by nine Republican women and 23 ads by 16 Democratic women) (see appendix).
- ***The Research Focus:*** This report examines: a) how women challengers, nominated by their party, depicted their candidacy in the “Year of the Woman;” and b) how ads produced by Democrats compared to ads produced by Republicans.
- ***The Themes:*** Character, Community, and Country
- ***The Major Takeaway:*** The candidate ads examined in this study reinforce partisan divisions facing the country concerning women’s equity, constituent diversity, and national unity. Yet, the ads also share more commonalities than anticipated in the ways that they emphasize the strength of the individual, allegiance to the community, and a shared belief in a flawed government. While the partisan rancor portends a more pessimistic political future, the commonalities provide a trace of optimism, especially if this new generation of political women work together in support of the public good.

## *Report: Year Of The Woman—2018 Political Ads By Women Challengers*

Campaign 2018—like 1992—was dubbed the “Year of the Woman.” Like 1992, excitement surrounded the number of women who launched political campaigns in the aftermath of scandals linked to sexual harassment and sexual assault (Thomas-Hill hearings in 1992 and the #MeToo movement in 2018).<sup>1</sup> Many women were also incited to run by an anger over Hillary Clinton’s loss to Donald Trump,<sup>2</sup> especially given what many saw as candidate Trump’s long-standing “degradation of women” (e.g., his *Access Hollywood* comments, his Megyn Kelly remarks, his derogatory references to political women [“nasty woman”], his “sexual assault allegations”).<sup>3</sup> And many women were inspired to run for office because of their ongoing treatment in the workplace and their lack of representation in American politics.<sup>4</sup> As Lina Hidalgo, candidate for judge in Texas, observed, “It was an army of women taking on an army of out-of-touch men.”<sup>5</sup>

Records were ultimately broken in 2018. Some 255 women ran for national office (governor, Senate, House positions) on the Democratic and Republican tickets. And as of this writing, nearly half of the Democratic women have won their contests (competing for 93 seats) and approximately one quarter of Republican women were victorious in their bid for 13 seats.<sup>6</sup> The Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University reported on November 20, 2018 that “at least 125 women” will serve in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress—an increase from 20 to 23 percent. A record number of “non-incumbent women” were also elected to congress (36 women challengers). And the number of women governors will reach the record highs set in 2004 and 2006.<sup>7</sup>

This report – conducted by researchers with the University of Maryland’s *Political Advertising Resource Center* – offers insight into the campaign ads of women who vied for political office in 2018. We studied a representative sampling of ads based on the following criteria:

- Women candidates (Republicans and Democrats) running for House, Senate, governor positions
- General election ads
- Women candidates challenging for a position they never held before
- Women candidates who were in competitive races (10 points or less separated the candidates as of September 30, 2018)
- Thirty second to one minute ads (with five longer ads)
- Twenty-nine ads by nine Republican women candidates and 23 ads by 16 Democratic women candidates (see appendix A)

Our mission in this project was to examine how women made meaning of their candidacies during this Year of the Woman campaign. That this campaign took place in the highly volatile mid-term election of 2018—the first election since President Donald Trump’s presidential victory in 2016—made these ads all the more compelling objects of study. We were particularly interested in examining convergences and divergences between ads sponsored by Republican and Democratic women candidates. We realize that ads never capture the totality of the candidate’s message. Yet our focus turned to campaign ads as one indicator of the messages circulated by women challengers across television, radio, and social media. Such ads provide insight into how candidates attempt to “reach voters” and seek their “popular consent” to govern.<sup>8</sup>

Our major thesis is this: The Democratic and Republican ads produced by women challengers in our study reinforced the entrenched divide facing the country, especially relating to depictions of women's equity, constituent diversity, and national unity. As irreconcilable as these divides seem, the ads also shared more in common than one might expect. Candidates on both sides of the aisle focused on the strength of the individual candidates, a valorization of the local community, and a belief in a flawed government that they can help fix. In these divisive times, such commonalities provide a glimmer of optimism amidst the deep-seated pessimism that pervades contemporary politics. In organizing our results by the themes of character, community, and country, we study how women portrayed their candidacies in this Year of the Woman—2018.

### **SECTION ONE: CHARACTER**

Campaigns are often viewed as a referendum on a candidate's character.<sup>9</sup> In helping to authenticate a candidate's "true self," campaign messages often front a personal identity that candidates believe will gain the trust and favor of voters.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Commonalities*

Our reading of the ads in this study suggests that both Democratic and Republican women worked to overcome perceptions of women's weaknesses by emphasizing their own strength and toughness. Many emphasized their own individualism as a fighter that enabled them to push back against obstacles blocking their progress or their advancement of the public good. Such messages showed the candidates' ability to succeed in more male-dominated careers.

#### *Democratic Ads*

Many of the Democratic candidates evidenced their strength through terms like "tough," "not afraid," and "fight." They demonstrated such strength across a diversity of contexts and

careers—contexts historically associated with men (sports, hunting, military). In her “Ring” ad, Sharice Davis (House, KS) featured images of herself hitting a punching bag as a former MMA fighter. The ad described her as “fierce” and a “fighter,” “never back[ing] down.” And despite the mellow tone of her voiceover in “Hunt,” Xochitl Torres Small (House, NM) pointed a rifle at birds throughout most of her ad. In her “Doors” ad, M. J. Hegar (House, TX) is portrayed as saving lives in the U.S.-Afghanistan war, where she deployed as a combat search and rescue pilot. Also advancing the military motif, Elaine Luria (House, VA) focused on her career as a navy commander in “Sea Change,” where she was shown piloting a warship.

Some candidates also played up their career achievements. In her “Door” ad, Dr. Kim Schrier (House, WA) was identified as a “Local Pediatrician” as she spoke to the camera wearing her white doctor’s coat. Schrier characterized her medical career as a “fight” for women’s rights against those, like Donald Trump, who have attacked “Planned Parenthood.” Lisa Brown’s (House, WA) “Economist” ad began with, “So I’m Lisa Brown, I’m an economist,” followed by images of her teaching an economics class.

Other candidates reinforced their strengths through their political battles and victories. In her ad, “Get it Done,” Gretchen Whitmer (Governor, MI) recalled that she was the first woman to be chosen as a leader in the Michigan Senate. She claimed this is “where I took on the tough fight, like expanding Medicaid and increasing the minimum wage.” In “Tough,” Abby Finkenauer (House, IA) raised her fist as the voiceover said “...then they said a girl still paying her student loans wasn’t tough enough to beat a millionaire for Congress. Well, I say, watch me.”

#### Republican Ads

Like their Democratic counterparts, Republican women challengers communicated strength with similar words of power: “Proven,” “Fight,” “Underestimated,” “Prepared,”

“Fearless,” and “My Time.” Like the Democrats, many Republican candidates similarly associated themselves with individualism and achievement.<sup>11</sup> Like other military veterans, Martha McSally (Senate, AZ) stressed her military achievements and positioned herself as the first woman to fly a fighter jet in active duty (“Deployed”). Young Kim (House, CA) defined herself as a “self-made” businesswoman who would never “give up” (“My Community”). And Lena Epstein (House, MI) also drew on her work achievements, mentioning that she “has an MBA and has created hundreds of jobs” (“Underestimated”).

Although some Republicans emphasized their professional achievements, others grounded their strength more in the struggles and accomplishments in their private lives. Katie Arrington (Senate, SC), for example, demonstrated strength by overcoming life-altering obstacles: recovering from a car wreck, defeating breast cancer, and raising a child with special needs. Such experiences reinforced the theme of Arrington’s “Prepared” ad that “challenges make us stronger.” Leah Vukmir (Senate, WI) presented herself as an effective problem-solver, observing that moms “jump right in and get stuff done” (“Sidelines”). One of Kristi Noem’s (Governor, SD) ads featured testimony from her children and her husband. Rather than accentuate her political expertise in Congress, Noem’s “Slow Dance” ad diminished her achievements and framed simplicity as a strength, jokingly brushing off her inability to “dance” or “swim.” Noem accounted for her lack of skill by assuring voters she could perform tasks usually expected of men (and women in South Dakota): “But I can still ride a horse, I can still shoot a gun, so what else do you need in the state of South Dakota?” These attributes have little to do with her political preparedness as the state’s governor. Yet, these skills aligned her strengths with average male voters in South Dakota who may have doubts about electing the first woman governor to their state.<sup>12</sup> Rather than accentuating her gender, Noem honored the culture of her constituents with guns and horses.

## *Differences*

Republican candidates were more likely to align themselves with men more than women, and they are also more likely to treat women, particularly Democratic women, as political threats. And rather than championing women's rights, Democratic candidates did not take up women's issues in their ads as many expected in this Year of the Woman campaign. Instead, Democratic candidates focused on their own strengths and accomplishments in order to signal their individual ability to break down barriers to gender equity.

## *Republican Ads*

Republican women more than Democratic women expressed a sense of loyalty to powerful men—particularly to President Trump. Candidates in states where President Trump won, like Carol Miller (House, WV), Martha McSally (Senate, AZ), and Marsha Blackburn (Senate, TN), equated their loyalty to Trump with a loyalty to country. They used Trump's endorsement of their candidacy as a positive endorsement of their own character. Connected to the patriotic appeals of country, Miller ridiculed her Democratic opponent (Richard Ojeda) for not showing the same support for President Trump, calling him "Radical Richard." In one scene, she is surrounded by strong white men—veterans and coal miners of muscular stature—at the end of her ad ("Greatest"). McSally's ads also stressed her relationship to Trump, highlighting his descriptions of her as a reliable friend, the "real deal," and "tough." In "Deployed," McSally used her relationship with the president to deepen her character with a 2017 headline from the *Arizona Republic* that called her "Arizona's most reliable vote for Trump's agenda." Blackburn's ads frequently showed her hugging the president, furthering the idea that his endorsement communicated a positive message about her qualifications and character.



While some Republican candidates recognized their own gender accomplishments, they were also more likely than Democrats to use gender stereotypes to shame their opponents. Images and commentary used in McSally's ads do celebrate her status as the first female fighter pilot. Yet she also belittled her opponent (Kyrsten Sinema) with feminine depictions of her in a pink tutu protesting U.S. aggressions in the aftermath of 9/11 ("Sinema Tutu"). Many of McSally's qualifications, such as her "26 years" of military service, are also reinforced through male voiceovers testifying to her credibility. The dominance of men in her ads and her relationship with Trump signaled that she had earned a seal of approval from men in power ("Deployed"). Elizabeth Heng (House, CA) also used gender to discredit her male opponent—Jim Costa—a middle-aged white male. In her "Walk" ad, Heng demeaned Costa in fictional depictions of him walking the streets in red high heels. In mocking ways, the voiceover quipped: "Costa's walking in Nancy Pelosi's shoes." Lina Epstein (House, MI) also attempted to humiliate her opponent, Haley Stevens, as a "resume-inflating liberal who lives at her mom's house." Epstein portrayed herself as the more independent option for Michigan voters because no one, including the line of men in suits standing behind her in the ad, would "stop [her] from working hard" ("Underestimated"). And many Republican candidates used other political women (Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Maxine Waters) to debase their opponents (e.g., Noem, "Independent," "Issues"; Carol Miller, House, WV, "Should Be"; Arrington, "The Stakes"). Gender in these instances was not used to build the candidates' ethos but to undermine their opponents.

In sum, Republican ads in our study commonly portrayed the candidates as strong. The candidates' strength derived through their diversity of experiences in more male-dominated activities (serving in the military, riding a horse, shooting a gun). Their ads stand out from the Democratic ads by demonstrating their loyalty to men, especially the current Republican president.

And they showed such loyalty in part by attacking the character of other women who have long been attacked by Republican operatives.

### Democratic Ads

One Democratic candidate did feature an ad where she championed her own fight against structural barriers. M. J. Hegar's (House, TX) "Doors" ad stood out because it showed her challenging barriers facing women. She relayed her fight against restrictions facing women in the "military" and "combat." She talked about "kicking through every door that was in my way," including suing the "Pentagon" for its "ban on women serving in all combat jobs." Hegar's ad captured the anger of women who stepped forward to challenge the sexist obstacles facing too many women.

Yet, the Democratic ads more commonly suggested we live in a post-sexist society, where the discrimination facing women was part of the past.<sup>13</sup> As our previous discussion showed, their individual achievements showed that their ability to break gender barriers prepared them for political office. They challenged the ways in which they individually defied the stereotype that women were weaker than men, showing how they succeeded in settings typically dominated by men (military, martial arts, politics). Focusing on their own strengths of course made sense given that campaigns are designed to showcase an individual's qualities as a candidate.<sup>14</sup> Yet their choices were especially curious when considering that many Democratic women in particular were drawn into politics because of the alleged sexism displayed in the loss of Hillary Clinton to Donald Trump in 2016 and the furor over the #MeToo disclosures that followed.<sup>15</sup>

### *Takeaways About Character*

Many of the ads from both Democrat and Republican women were more preoccupied with their own achievements in male-dominated fields than the conditions facing women—conditions that inspired a surge of women candidates into the mid-terms. Many Democratic women ran more to the middle in the general election, helping to explain the commonalities across Democratic and Republican ads in this study. Running toward the middle not only attracts more independent voters but also helps tamp down threats their candidacy might pose for more “swing voters.”<sup>16</sup> Republican candidates more than Democratic women, however, worked more actively to blunt the threat of a woman’s candidacy by using gender as a means to shame or attack their opponents than as a positive attribute of their own character.

This study suggests that more women running for office does not necessarily mean a shift in the masculine campaign culture that has long dominated politics. Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster, issued the following warning to women candidates in her report—“Modern Family: How Women Candidates Can Talk About Politics, Parenting, and Their Personal Lives”: “Despite sweeping societal changes, traditional gender roles remain powerful, influencing what we perceive to be acceptable and appropriate behavior for men and women.”<sup>17</sup>

That both Democratic women and Republican women celebrated their career successes challenges Lake’s cautionary message. Yet, there is also plenty of evidence that women candidates still had to tread carefully in the messages they sent about women and politics. As Sociologist Robert D. Francis explains, “modern sexism” presumes that “discrimination against women has been overcome,” resulting in a rise in “resentment . . . toward women” who disrupt gender tranquility by continuing to talk about “sexism” and to ask for “special favors.”<sup>18</sup> In the ads we studied, candidates demonstrated their preparedness for office by emphasizing their ability to hold

their own in male-dominated careers, championing stereotypically male interests – like guns and hunting, and signaling loyalty to powerful men.

## **SECTION TWO: COMMUNITY**

Political ads, like political discourse more generally, often reinforce the commonplace that all “politics is local.”<sup>19</sup> In House, Senate, and gubernatorial races from 2018, the candidates we studied spoke to how the state and the district shaped the core values of communities and individuals. The candidates also explained how political issues affect residents of their home states. Such a community-based focus reinforced positive identification with the state more than the nation writ large.

### *Commonalities*

Both Republican and Democratic candidates treat their states—made up of land and values—as socializing forces shaping community identity. The shared allegiance to their state and their districts helped candidates forge a bond with voters and create doubt about their opponent’s genuine affiliation to the state they seek to represent. Candidates across the political spectrum also align the issues and policies they champion to the interests of the state more than the country as a whole.

### *Republican Ads*

Republican women used themes of community to identify with their constituents by framing themselves as “one of the people”—a people uniquely shaped by the affiliation and values of their state. Leah Vukmir’s (Senate, WI) ad, “Wisconsin Way,” emphasized her blue-collar roots by paralleling her life with the lives of blue-collar workers featured in the shots. Vukmir claimed that she “knows what it’s like” for Wisconsinites because she has worked “sixteen-hour days to

make ends meet.” Lena Epstein (House, MI) touched on community when arguing she overcame adversity in the workplace “because I’m from Michigan, and working hard is what we do” (“Underestimated”). And Marsha Blackburn (Senate, TN) touted her commitment to “Strong Tennessee Values” (“Better Shape”). Candidates used such populist rhetoric to fuse the identities of candidate and voter, treating their states as the moral compass in a politically-chaotic and corrupt world.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, many candidates described themselves as “in touch” with voters but frustrated with politicians, often their opponents, who did not understand the hardships their constituents face. Katie Arrington (House, SC) promised to put the “low country first,” in contrast to her opponent, Joe Cunningham, who she portrayed as one of the “out-of-touch D.C. Democrats” who was out-of-step with South Carolinians (“The Stakes”). Elizabeth Heng’s (House, CA) ads followed a similar pattern as she attacked her opponent, Jim Costa, for doing nothing for her district during his 14 years in office (“Announcement Video”). She made clear that Costa had turned his back on his home district and had become one of the Washington, D.C. insiders: “after a lifetime of politics, Costa is no longer one of us” (“Walk”).

Young Kim (House, CA) and Martha McSally (Senate, AZ) continued the critique of political insiders by denouncing the “establishment” and Washington elites. Kim championed bipartisanship and built community by identifying with a sense of frustration that voters feel for government “dysfunction” in “Washington and Sacramento” (“My Community”). In “Deployed,” McSally created an “us vs. them” binary that emphasized her military past: “now I’m deployed to D.C. to fight for Arizona” and the “liberals in the Senate don’t scare me one bit.” Portraying Washington “elites” as beltway “insiders” suggested they were more interested in their own power and detached from the daily lives and values of their home communities. The candidates using this

rhetoric framed themselves as “populist-style” insurgents who recognized their community’s needs and promised to singlehandedly reform politics-as-usual in the nation’s capital.<sup>21</sup>

To gain support for their platforms, candidates grounded policy decisions in community values. For instance, in “Better Shape,” Marsha Blackburn (Senate, TN) appealed to community by re-enforcing common family lessons passed down from generation to generation: “leave things in a better shape than you found them,” and “always give back more than you take.” She then translated her “Strong Tennessee Values” into recognizable Republican policies like tax cuts and stricter immigration reform. Similarly, Kristi Noem’s (Governor, SD) insisted that her inability to swim or dance (“Slow Dance”) was not important to the people of South Dakota because for them, a commitment to family, an ability to shoot a gun and ride a horse, matter more. Her ads emphasized “Four Pillars of Protection,” including issues that matter to Red states like South Dakota: “keeping taxes low,” “controlling spending,” “limiting government intrusion,” and “making the government open and honest” (“Four Pillars”). Even though these issues were national in scope, Noem’s kids, who narrated the ad, described their mother’s platform as a “Plan for South Dakota.”

The candidates appealed to their community not only to demonstrate that they were in touch with their constituents, but also to reinforce their individual strength of character—a character strong enough to broker policies as ambassadors of their states. Martha McSally (Senate, AZ), for example, argued that “jobs” and the “A-10” (fighter jets made in Arizona) were particularly important to Arizonans (“Deployed”) while Carol Miller (House, WV) attacked her opponent’s inattention to coal-mining jobs and Medicare as tantamount to waging “War on West Virginia” (“War”). Aligning policy and community values fostered what Richard F. Fenno, Jr. has

called a “home style” of political engagement that reinforced the importance of state matters and state identity to candidates and constituents.<sup>22</sup>

### Democratic Ads

Democratic candidates also played up their commitment to community and state. In her “Independent” ad, Kyrsten Sinema (Senate, AZ) coupled artful displays of the Arizona desert with a statement that the people of Arizona “have the desert in their blood.” In such phrasing, Sinema fused her own personal identity with the state of Arizona and the mantra that she was “independent—just like Arizona.” Michelle Lujan Grisham (Governor, NM) likewise romanticized the land in her “Always Moving” ad, referring to the Native American “Sandia Pueblo” as “sacred land.” Xochitil Torres Small (House, NM) made clear that she shared the values of New Mexico voters in her “Hunt” ad. As a Democrat running in rural New Mexico, she reassured nervous voters that she was a supporter of guns and a tough-nosed broker for her state by shooting a gun while saying, “New Mexicans don’t care which party gets the credit or the blame, we just want someone to deliver. That’s what I’ve done. That’s what I’ll do.”<sup>23</sup> And in her “Tough” ad, Abby Finkenauer (House, IA) connected with her Iowa district through the visual of her father wringing sweat from his leather belt after a hard day’s work. She attributed her strength to her experiences in “eastern Iowa,” where Finkenauer argued her constituents “invented tough,” saying, “tough is small town, big heart.” She then referenced herself as a fighter for the middle class and an individual struggling with student debt—qualities she gained from growing up in a state where “We take care of business and we take care of each other.”

## *Differences*

Subtle yet important differences also exist across the ads produced by Democrat and Republican women. The ads, through words and images, put forth community ideals of candidates. At least implicitly, Democrats more often celebrated diversity while Republicans more often portrayed diversity as a threat to the safety and morality of their communities.

## *Democratic Ads*

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (House, NY) in "Courage to Change" made the case that New Yorkers deserved a candidate that looked like them and was from places where they were from. Although the ad debuted in her primary, it continued to serve as a formative bio ad throughout her candidacy. After filming Ocasio-Cortez doing her makeup in the mirror, the ad shifted to pictures of her parents while she explained that her mother was from Puerto Rico and her father was from the South Bronx. The camera then cut from action shot to action shot of Ocasio-Cortez interacting with would-be constituents. In each image, the people represented the multiculturalism of state and nation—Asian, black, white, Latinx. As Ocasio-Cortez critiqued the “same [old] representation” in New York, the ad featured an overlay image of a Joseph Crowley—her Democratic opponent in the primary—a white man who served the district for 13 years. When Ocasio-Cortez made the point that every day was harder "for families like mine," we see a visual of a mother of color with two sons. In the process, Ocasio-Cortez reinforced a class binary by depicting herself as one with her constituents (“one of us”) and aligning her opponent with the “wealthy and powerful”—someone “who doesn’t work here . . . drink our water or breathe our air.” Ocasio-Cortez’s message called for the 14<sup>th</sup> district to replace a white male with a woman of color, extolling the virtues of the city’s diversity.



Stacey Abrams (Governor, GA) also celebrated diversity in her appeals to Georgian voters. She opened her ad with the sights and sounds of a small town and the accompanying statement: "I come from solid foundation, built by a librarian mother and a ship yard worker father." After featuring images of her father and mother, Abrams's narrative fused her family life story with the life story of the larger community: "they taught that our community struggles are shared struggles." The ad zoomed in on a Black family holding hands around the kitchen table saying grace. In using the sharing of food as a powerful symbol of community, Abrams was shown giving food to members of the African American community and delivering food to the home of a white woman. Abram's takeaway message was one of unity. She continued this theme when romanticizing Georgian dirt—land as shared heritage that unified blacks and whites—descendants of slaves and slave owners: "the red clay beneath our feet has been the foundation for what's possible for generations of Georgians." Abram's nod to heritage and diversity was shown in the common phrase: "never forget where you came from."

Democratic candidates routinely integrated images of a diverse community as a backdrop to their messages. As Veronica Escobar (House, TX) talked about the need to "Take care of Each Other" against the threat of "Donald Trump," she featured shots of Latinxs, whites, and Native Americans working side-by-side to strengthen their community. Katie Porter (House, WA), in her ad, "Two Senators," featured testimony by two U.S. Senators—one African American and one white—Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). As they talked about community issues, we are introduced to the diversity of people who made up Porter's district. Such inclusivity also served as the backdrop of Kyrsten Sinema's (Senate, AZ) ads ("Independent" and "Protect") as well as an ad ("Always Moving") by Michelle Lujan Grisham (Governor, NM).<sup>24</sup>

## Republican Ads

In contrast to the Democratic ads, Republicans consistently featured communities of white people in their ads. In the 28 Republican ads that we studied, few candidates featured a visibly diverse constituency except for the diverse candidates who came from more diverse states (e.g., Elizabeth Heng, House, CA; Young Kim, House, CA). In her ads, Heng (“Elizabeth Heng for Congress”) offered a more positive message on immigration (“we can fix . . . immigration. And Kim (“Proven”) made clear that her family immigrated from Korea to fulfill the American Dream through their strong work ethic (“because we wanted the opportunity to succeed on our own”) (“My Community”).<sup>25</sup> Martha McSally (Senate, AZ) integrated photos of African American soldiers in her ads. Yet, in portraying the Arizona community, she relied on stock footage of whites (“Deployed”).

Most Republicans more often romanticized white communities and associated threats with people of color and Democratic leaders who represented and championed diversity. In her “Greatest” ad, Carol Miller (House, WV) aligned Colin Kaepernick—the San Francisco 49er quarterback who knelt during the National Anthem—with her opponent, concluding, “Richard Ojeda’s not for us.” Republicans more routinely turned to immigration as a means to reinforce the threat that Democrats posed to their communities. Lena Epstein (House, MI) suggested her opponent, Haley Stevens, believed “illegal immigrants need jobs first” (“Slacker”). Others equated the Democratic view on immigration with references to “open borders.” Katie Arrington (House, SC), for instance, displayed threatening, blurred images of males walking with backpacks when equating the idea of “open borders” with her opponent, Joe Cunningham (“The Stakes”). When Arrington linked Cunningham with Nancy Pelosi and Maxine Waters, she pictured them against a backdrop of a diverse constituency—juxtaposing white Republicans with diverse Democrats. And

when Martha McSally (Senate, AZ) called for “securing the border,” she turned to the threat of “terrorists” by claiming that she stood up to Muslims in Saudi Arabia by refusing to wear “Muslim garb . . . over her [Air Force] uniform” while deployed there. McSally boasted that she “absolutely refused to bow down to Sharia law” (“Deployed”).

The overall theme of “us vs. them” is particularly vivid in the Republican ads. Leah Vukmir (Senate, WI) (who identified herself as an “immigrant” from Greece) expressed this theme in attacking Senator Tammy Baldwin—the “first openly gay” American to serve in the U.S. Senate.<sup>26</sup> In the ad, “One of Us,” the male narrator hammered home the message that “Leah Vukmir. Nurse. Leader. A mom with a cause. Leah Vukmir, one of us, for the Senate.” The implication is that Tammy Baldwin is not “one of us.”

### *Takeaways About Community*

In our analysis of the political ads, communities functioned as a source of positive identity for both Democrats and Republicans. Candidates often wrapped themselves in the romanticism of the land and values that shaped their state’s identity. In political campaigns, a candidate’s geographic ties to the state helped authenticate a person’s “political identity” and inauthenticate their opponent’s genuine affinity to the state.<sup>27</sup>

The ways in which candidates envision their communities tells us much about the deep divisions between “red” and “blue” states. Blue states are routinely associated with diverse populations that blurs the lines of segregation between whites and persons of color. In contrast, red states are commonly perceived as more segregated or home to more homogenously white populations where persons of color are seemingly missing from their community imaginary. These divisions, Arnold Kling argued, stir beliefs of “moral superiority” over those who live in segments of the country different from their own.<sup>28</sup> The messages in the Republican ads combined with the

visual imagery to suggest that persons of difference (based on race, religion, nationality) represented threats to the tranquility of local communities. The consequences is a deepening fissure between red and blue states that has reinforced “racial resentment.”<sup>29</sup> These ads celebrated the local while portraying the national as splintering over matters of race—a splintering that has defined the country from its founding.<sup>30</sup>

### **SECTION THREE: COUNTRY**

Campaigns become moments to reaffirm the values and commitments of the country. As Roderick P. Hart explained, “a democracy is re-performed” every two years with campaigns, turning a “population” into a “citizenry.”<sup>31</sup> The ads included in this study offer important insights into how candidates—vying to represent their states either in Washington, D.C. or in the governor’s mansion—conceive of their country and the institutions they seek to join. With this theme, the commonalities dominated the differences.

#### *Commonalities*

Certainly, some of the candidates acknowledged their ability to collaborate with colleagues across the political aisle. Republican Leah Vukmir (Senate, WI) emphasized bipartisanship in her ads when portraying herself as someone who can “work together” with others, something, she insisted, “we could use more of . . . in Washington” (“Sidelines”). And Democrat Kyrsten Sinema (Senate, AZ) was also celebrated for “working across the aisle.” She made clear in her “Independent” ad that she is committed to “forming relationships, identifying common ground, and just getting stuff done.”

Yet the ads analyzed in our study were typically more divisive, expressing a belief in a flawed government by making clear that the federal government is broken and in need of universal

reform. Rather than celebrating American values and commitments, these ads more often reinforced a partisan message over a unifying one. The candidates often treated the opposing party as a threat to the country's morality and stability and their own party's principles as the standard-bearer for national ideals. Muffled in these messages was a rhetoric of unity that transcends the deep partisan divide.

### Republican Ads

Republicans, who characteristically believe in smaller government,<sup>32</sup> are often hard pressed to issue a pro-government or positive vision of Washington, D.C. Such criticisms range from small digs to more substantive rebukes. Young Kim ("My Community") (House, CA) argued, for instance, that "the dysfunction in Sacramento and Washington has made California unaffordable." Marsha Blackburn (Senate, TN) positioned her candidacy as one motivated by the problems in Washington, D.C.: "The United States Senate. It's totally dysfunctional and it's enough to drive you nuts" ("Why I'm Running"). And Martha McSally (Senator, AZ), retired Air Force fighter pilot, talked about being "deployed to DC," relying on a war zone metaphor to encapsulate her negative impressions of the nation's capital ("Deployed"). Republicans routinely wrapped their animosity for Washington, D.C. in a partisan rhetoric where Democrats and liberals were credited for everything that has gone wrong with American politics. Katie Arrington (House, SD) described her opponent—Joe Cunningham—as a "DC Democrat," and an "out of touch Democrat" who is part of the "obstruction" and "division" in the nation's capital ("The Stakes"). Liberals often served as the biggest threat for many Republicans. In her "Neighbors" ad, Kristy Noem (Governor, SD) called on her neighbors to testify to her opponent's (Billie Sutton's) fitness for office. She used his political values to denounce him. One of their neighbors talked of Sutton's "liberal philosophy" that "we don't need . . . in South Dakota." And in her "Friends" ad, Noem

equated Sutton with Bernie Sanders – someone even more liberal than Hillary Clinton – suggesting that Sutton is actually “a liberal hiding under a Cowboy hat.” And even though Martha Blackburn (Senate, TN) nods to a more transcendent conception of patriotism, she did so by coupling her victory over her Democratic opponent with the preservation of these national ideals: “I am in this fight so that we can win, and the ‘we’ is the people, the Constitution, the country” (“Better Shape”).

Some Republicans ratcheted up their negativity in targeting Democratic opponents. Leah Vukmir (Senate, WI) equated her opponent—Tammy Baldwin—with “extremists,” the “radical left,” “failing our vets,” and “socialist health care” (“One of Us”). And Carol Miller’s (House, WV) ad, “Greatest,” featured West Virginia veterans wearing National Rifle Association (NRA) hats and blaming Miller’s opponent (Richard Ojeda) for “stepping on the graves of every dead soldier” because he questioned American greatness. The *ad hominem* attack by the veterans solidified Ojeda’s threat and betrayal to the country.

### Democratic Ads

Democrats also sounded the drumbeat of anti-Washington attacks. Elaine Luria (House, VA) offered her critique of government from the perspective of her naval career where she positioned herself as a political outsider. She ended her “Sea Change” ad with these words: “it will take leaders from way outside Washington to bring a sea change to Congress.” Kyrsten Sinema (Senate, AZ) walked a fine line between supporting her country but not her government in her “Independent” ad: “We love our country. We’re skeptical of our government.” Veronica Escobar (House, TX) offered a more ominous observation when she talked of “corruption in government” and “new threats from . . . Washington, D.C.” And Lisa Brown (House, WA) and her opponent, Cathy McMorris Rogers, exchanged barbs that reflected the disregard each candidate held for one

another. After Rogers called Brown “desperate,” Brown used her ad to retaliate, dubbing Rogers “a 14-year D.C. insider” whose “special interests . . . have her in their pocket” (“Dangerous”).

Democrats also aimed their own partisan attacks at Donald Trump (and their opponents)—the embodiment, they believed, of tainted Republican values. Washington State congressional candidate, Dr. Kim Schrier, ended her ad with an endorsement of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. She clearly positioned herself as anti-Trump and pro-choice: “So when politicians like Donald Trump and Dino Rossi [her opponent] attack Planned Parenthood and try to restrict women's rights to make our own health care choices, I say there's no room for politicians between doctors and patients. And I will lead the fight to keep them out” (“Door”). Michigan gubernatorial candidate Gretchen Whitmer, in her ad, “Get it Done,” referenced her work as leader of the Michigan Senate to highlight the partisan, contentious issues of welfare and wages (“where I took on the tough fights, like expanding Medicaid and increasing the minimum wage”). She also criticized Republicans and President Trump directly: “Now, I'm running for Governor because I've had it with Republicans like Donald Trump blowing up health care while your costs go up and up.” Schrier’s statement, “I say there’s no room,” and Whitmer’s words, “I’ve had it,” offer clear indictments of Republicans (especially Donald Trump) and the state of national politics in our study.

### *Takeaways About Country*

These messages suggested that unifying themes about the country are drowned out by the partisan malice of their opponents. Some Republican candidates elevated the vitriol of their campaigns with references to Democrats as “extremists” and “stepping on the graves of dead soldiers.” Yet, as shown, the ads of both Democrats and Republicans contributed to the inability of leaders to transcend political differences, amplifying the country’s split along partisan lines.

Even before these political challengers stepped into their new roles, these ads took for granted the toxicity of governing. Hart and his co-authors recognize that “government” often “gets a drubbing” from campaign challengers, becoming “a convenient punching bag.”<sup>33</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In many ways, our report on the ads from the “Year of the Women—2018” provides a dim view of our political process and the leaders who sought our consent to govern. That women’s issues (e.g., abortion, sexual harassment, pay equity) did not dominate Democratic ads indicated the anxiety surrounding women’s empowerment in the electoral process. And within the differences across Republican and Democrat ads, we saw deep splits on matters of diversity, particularly with gender, race, and immigration, and we also saw a hardening of partisan divisions. The issues rarely addressed in the ads – the conspicuous silences on gender equity and the dissonance over diversity – suggested that there was still an unease and a backlash (especially among some Republicans) over women’s full inclusion and over the role of diversity in enriching communities. Such unsettled disputes contributed to the difficulty in finding a message that unified the country. That American politics is increasingly called “tribal” helps capture a sense of the pessimism and despair that many Americans feel about the state of our politics and the lack of optimism about our political future.<sup>34</sup> Trying to locate threads of hopefulness in this report was certainly challenging. Yet, we believe in the importance of at least considering a promising path forward. “Hope” after all represents an integral part of democratic thought in fortifying governments and offering a source of inspiration in times of national trauma and partisan rancor.<sup>35</sup> Daniel Innerarity puts forth the idea of “democratic hope” and “reasonable hope” that open up spaces of “possibilities,” pushing back against naivety but pushing toward “tinge[s] of optimism.”<sup>36</sup>



We see this tinge of optimism in the three commonalities that cut across the political ads in our study. First, Republican and Democratic women challengers evidenced a *deep belief in themselves as political agents*, able to confront and overcome challenges, even amidst the trials now before us. These leaders acknowledged the uphill battle that awaits them, but they still exuded a sense of audacity in their ads. Seeing more and more women step forward to take on these challenges is necessary to ensure that government resembles the people that it serves. In considering the results of the midterm elections, several barriers were shattered by the number of firsts achieved in the Year of the Women—2018:

- First Native American women elected to the House of Representatives: Sharice Davids (D-KS), Deb Haaland (D-NM)
- First Muslim women elected to Congress: Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Ilhan Omar (D-MN)
- Youngest woman elected to Congress: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY)
- First African American woman elected to Congress from Massachusetts: Ayanna Pressley (D-MA)
- First women elected to the House from Iowa: Abby Finkenauer (D-IA), Cindy Axne (D-IA)
- First woman senator from Tennessee: Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)
- First female governor from South Dakota: Kristi Noem (R-SD)
- First female governor from New Mexico and first Democratic Latina governor of New Mexico: Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM)<sup>37</sup>
- Record numbers of “women of color in the House” (43); “Black women” (22); “Latinas” (12); “Asian/Pacific Islander” (6), “Native American” (2)<sup>38</sup>

In spite of the barriers facing leaders, these bold women leaned in more than out. And by forming coalitions, they stand a better chance of influencing political outcomes and shaping political practice. Two Republican women senators, Susan Collins (ME) and Lisa Murkowski (AK), were part of a coalition that defeated Republican efforts to erode Obamacare (with Senator John McCain, AZ). And before Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed (with Collins's support), the coalition that Collins and Murkowski forged with other Republicans and Democrats, made sure the FBI conducted a limited investigation into allegations of sexual assault.<sup>39</sup> Increasing the number of women in Congress some 20 percent will offer more opportunities for women lawmakers to practice “coalition” politics—the life blood of compromise, policymaking, and incremental political change.<sup>40</sup>

Second, the candidates also expressed a *deep-seated loyalty to their communities, the people they seek to serve, and the values that animate community and people*. Although this state-based vision can intensify the national divisions that have long splintered the country,<sup>41</sup> an affinity for the local also helps counteract alienation and inspire social belonging among the people of that state. State bonds also affirm a belief in the moral integrity of the places that forge our individual and community character. A candidate's loyalty to one's community ultimately helps ensure that our political leaders keep their pledges to their constituents when seated in the governor's mansion or the congressional chambers.

Third, *discontent with our government turns constituents into political leaders and activists*. Recognizing government as inherently flawed ensures that we understand such structures (state and federal) as “imperfect institutions . . . of self-government,”<sup>42</sup> as quests for “a more perfect union.”<sup>43</sup> Government and politics are “messy” but both are our mess.<sup>44</sup> Our founders designed our system of government to foster and withstand conflict, making change purposefully

hard.<sup>45</sup> That we have witnessed a greater diversity of citizens stepping forward to confront this new generation of challenges provides a sense of hopefulness that can help sustain us. “[I]ntense struggle” is after all the progenitor of “hope.”<sup>46</sup>

The commonalities across these ads affirm core democratic principles of “self-governance:” *a belief that (women’s) individual strengths and the promise of community values serve as the antidote to a flawed government.* Blending a commitment to liberalism (championing individuals/individual rights) and republicanism (championing the public good) imagines women’s full participation in political life,<sup>47</sup> portending a future where the “Year of the Woman” will be a relic of our past.<sup>48</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For more on the 1992 “Year of the Woman,” see: Mary Douglas Vavrus, “Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Crisis of White Patriarchal Authority,” *Postfeminist News: Political Women in Media Culture* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 37-73.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Jordan and Dan Balz, “Women Will Decide the Election. Here’s What They Think,” *Washington Post*, November 2, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/suburban-women-midterms-2018/?utm\\_term=.13a0850a3c3d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/suburban-women-midterms-2018/?utm_term=.13a0850a3c3d).

<sup>3</sup> Anne Gearan, “Trump ‘Sexism,’ a Key Target for Pro-Clinton Advocates, Super Pacs,” *Washington Post*, March 5, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/03/05/trump-sexism-a-key-target-for-pro-clinton-advocates-super-pacs/?utm\\_term=.f0e2ba85f580](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/03/05/trump-sexism-a-key-target-for-pro-clinton-advocates-super-pacs/?utm_term=.f0e2ba85f580); and Taryn Hilln, “Here’s Every Wildly Sexist Moment From the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Business Insider*, November 6, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/heres-every-wildly-sexist-moment-from-the-2016-presidential-election-2016-11>.

<sup>4</sup> Heather Caygle, “Record-Breaking Number of Women Run For Office,” *Politico*, March 8, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/08/women-rule-midterms-443267>.

<sup>5</sup> Charlotte Alter, “A Year Ago, They Marched: Now a Record Number of Women Running for Office,” *Time*, January 18, 2018, <http://time.com/5107499/record-number-of-women-are-running-for-office/>.

<sup>6</sup> Elaine Kamarck, “2018: Another ‘Year of the Woman,’” Brookings Institute, November 7, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2018/11/07/2018-another-year-of-the-woman/>.

<sup>7</sup> “Results: Women Candidates in the 2018 Elections,” Press Release, Center for American Women and Politics, November 8, 2018, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/press-releases>; and “Results: Women Candidates in the 2018 Elections,” Press Release, Center for American Women and Politics, November 20, 2018, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/press-releases>.

<sup>8</sup> Darrell M. West, *Air Wars: Television Advertising and Social Media in Election Campaigns, 1952-2012*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 2, 162.

<sup>9</sup> David B. Holian and Charles L. Prysby, *Candidate Character Traits in Presidential Elections* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 10-13.

<sup>10</sup> Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 6-7; and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *Hillary Clinton in the News: Gender and Authenticity in American Politics* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 3-6.

- <sup>11</sup> Michael J. Lee, *Creating Conservatism: Postwar Words that Made an American Movement* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 6-10.
- <sup>12</sup> David Lias, "Noem Will Be the State's First Woman Governor," *Vermillion Plain Talk*, November 9, 2018, [https://www.plaintalk.net/local\\_news/article\\_33056bca-e3e1-11e8-bc67-2f8279bc5cee.html](https://www.plaintalk.net/local_news/article_33056bca-e3e1-11e8-bc67-2f8279bc5cee.html).
- <sup>13</sup> Danny Hayes and Jennifer L. Lawless, *Women on the Run: Gender, Media, and Political Campaigns in a Polarized Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 8-13, 132-135; and Amy Chozick, "Hillary Clinton Ignited a Feminist Movement. By Losing," *New York Times*, January 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/13/sunday-review/hillary-clinton-feminist-movement.html>.
- <sup>14</sup> Roderick P. Hart, *Campaign Talk: Why Elections Are Good For Us* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 128-131.
- <sup>15</sup> Mark Mellman, "Sexism in 2016," *The Hill*, October 17, 2017, <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/355931-sexism-in-2016>; and Alex Seitz-Wald, "Meet the Women Candidates Taking #MeToo to the Ballot Box," *NBC News*, July 24, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/meet-women-candidates-taking-metoo-ballot-box-n894106>.
- <sup>16</sup> Martin A. Levin and Daniel DiSalvo, "The Electoral Connection and the Dissonant Game of Coalition Building in an Era of Partisan Policymaking," in *Building Coalitions, Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Presidencies*, ed. Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and Martin M. Shapiro (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2012), 17-18.
- <sup>17</sup> Celinda Lake, "Modern Family: How Woman Candidates Can Talk About Politics, Parenting, and Their Personal Lives," Barbara Lee Family Foundation, <https://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/research/modern-family/>.
- <sup>18</sup> Robert D. Francis, "Him, Not Her: Why Working-Class White Men Reluctant About Trump Still Made Him President of the United States," *Socius*, 4 (2018): 3.
- <sup>19</sup> Jeff Berkowitz, "To Survive 2018 Midterms, GOP Must Remember 'All Politics is Local,'" *The Hill*, May 3, 2018, <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/386072-to-survive-2018-midterms-gop-must-remember-all-politics-is-local>.
- <sup>20</sup> Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 8.
- <sup>21</sup> A "populist style" refers to "a grassroots mode of persuasion" that replaces "obfuscating jargon" with the plain language of "ordinary people" striving to fulfill the ideals of "democracy" from the bottom up. See: Sophia Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: A Political History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6-7.
- <sup>22</sup> Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978).
- <sup>23</sup> Jack Turman, "New Mexico Democratic Congressional Candidate Showcases Her Gun Skills in Ad," *CBS*, October, 2, 2018. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-mexico-democratic-congressional-candidate-showcases-her-gun-skills-in-ad/>.
- <sup>24</sup> Certainly, Democrats also produced ads that lacked a sense of diversity and featured shots of only white people (e.g., Kim Schrier, "Boys," "Doors," WA; Elaine Luria, VA—"Tell Me"). And Jacky Rosen (Senate, NV) portrayed immigration as a threat. She displayed images of "M13" gangs in "Spineless Lies," when she promised to "secure our borders and fix our immigration system."
- <sup>25</sup> Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8-10.
- <sup>26</sup> Emanuella Grinberg, "Wisconsin's Tammy Baldwin First Openly Gay Person Elected to the Senate," *CNN*, November 7, 2012, <https://www.cnn.com/2012/11/07/politics/wisconsin-tammy-baldwin-senate/index.html>.
- <sup>27</sup> Parry-Giles, *Hillary Clinton in the News*, 146.
- <sup>28</sup> Arnold Kling, *The Three Languages of Politics: Talking Across the Political Divides* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2017), 3.
- <sup>29</sup> Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 85-87; and Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: New Press, 2016), 146-147.
- <sup>30</sup> Desmond S. King and Rogers M. Smith, *Still a House Divided: Race and Politics in Obama's America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 249.
- <sup>31</sup> Hart, *Campaign Talk*, 9.
- <sup>32</sup> Matt Grossmann and David A. Hopkins, *Asymmetrical Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 21.
- <sup>33</sup> Roderick P. Hart, Sharon E. Jarvis, William P. Jennings, and Deborah Smith-Howell, *Political Keywords: Using Language That Uses Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71-73.
- <sup>34</sup> Kling, *The Three Languages of Politics*, 6-7.

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- <sup>35</sup> Roderick P. Hart, *Civic Hope: How Ordinary Americans Keep Democracy Alive* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 257.
- <sup>36</sup> Daniel Innerarity, *The Future and Its Enemies: In Defense of Political Hope* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 121-125.
- <sup>37</sup> Deborah J. Vagins, "Analysis: What the 2018 Midterm Results Mean for Women," AAUW, November 13, 2018, <https://www.aauw.org/2018/11/13/analysis-what-the-2018-midterm-results-mean-for-women/>.
- <sup>38</sup> "Results: Women Candidates in the 2018 Elections," November 20, 2018.
- <sup>39</sup> Elana Schor, "'They Expect More From Women': Collins and Murkowski Face Extra Pressure in Kavanaugh Fight," *Politico*, October 3, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/10/03/collins-murkowski-kavanaugh-ford-867740>; and Matthew Rozsa, "Will Two Republican Women in the Senate Stop Brett Kavanaugh," *Salon*, September 26, 2018, <https://www.salon.com/2018/09/26/republican-women-in-the-senate-show-a-willingness-to-stop-brett-kavanaugh/>.
- <sup>40</sup> Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and David Emer, "Getting Past No: Building Coalitions and Making Policy From Clinton to Bush to Obama, in Building Coalitions," *Making Policy: The Politics of the Clinton, Bush and Obama Presidencies*, ed. Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo, and Martin M. Shapiro (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 1-4.
- <sup>41</sup> Colin Woodard, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 5-13.
- <sup>42</sup> Christopher L. Eisgruber, *Constitutional Self-Government* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 52. See also: Hart, *Civic Hope*, 10.
- <sup>43</sup> Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-34>.
- <sup>44</sup> Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Embracing the Mess: Reflections on Campaign 2000," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 735.
- <sup>45</sup> Peter M. Shane, *Madison's Nightmare: How Executive Power Threatens American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 9-13.
- <sup>46</sup> Hart, *Civic Hope*, 6.
- <sup>47</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1971), 16, 233-234.
- <sup>48</sup> Amy Choick, "Down With the Year of the Woman," *New York Times*, October 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/20/sunday-review/down-with-the-year-of-the-woman.html>.

## APPENDIX A: CAMPAIGN ADVERTISEMENTS

Table 1: Democratic Campaign Advertisements

Democratic Candidates	Race	Opponent	Result	Ads Analysed	Length	Link
Stacey Abrams	Gubernatorial—GA	Brian Kemp (R) / Ted Metz (L)	Lost	“Foundation”	2:47	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6O8fMzIHMK8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6O8fMzIHMK8</a>
Lisa Brown	House—5 <sup>th</sup> District—WA	Cathy McMorris Rodgers	Lost	“Economist”	1:00	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6tyajrmOKo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6tyajrmOKo</a>
				“Dangerous”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4L8T-8sBPwE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4L8T-8sBPwE</a>
Diane Mitsch Bush	House—3 <sup>rd</sup> District—CO	Scott Tipton	Lost	“Working For Us”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4vZV7_UoAc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4vZV7_UoAc</a>
Sharice Davids	House—3 <sup>rd</sup> District—KS	Kevin Yoder (R) / Chris Clemmons	Won	“Ring”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quH2kl6Sbis">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quH2kl6Sbis</a>
Veronica Escobar	House—16 <sup>th</sup> District—TX	Rick Seberger	Won	“Take Care of Each Other”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTu5bNzLkqI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTu5bNzLkqI</a>
Abby Finkenauer	House—1 <sup>st</sup> District—IA	Rod Blum (R) and (L) Troy Hageman (L)	Won	“Good Lives”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEcarecWBw4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEcarecWBw4</a>
				“Tough”	1.28	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e23Sm3ip6ns">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e23Sm3ip6ns</a>
M.J. Hegar	House—31 <sup>st</sup> District—TX	John Carter	Lost	“Doors”	3.28	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zi6v4CYNSIQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zi6v4CYNSIQ</a>
Michelle Lujan Grisham	Gubernatorial—NM	Steve Pearce	Won	“Always Moving”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpY7d7iajig">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpY7d7iajig</a>
Elaine Luria	House—2 <sup>nd</sup> District—VA	Scott Taylor	Won	“Sea Change”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkB3KIFYwa4&amp;index=8&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkB3KIFYwa4&amp;index=8&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6</a>
				“Tell You”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCd4zyUKxJ0&amp;index=9&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCd4zyUKxJ0&amp;index=9&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6</a>
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	House—14 <sup>th</sup> District—NY	Joseph Crowley	Won	“Courage to Change”	2:08	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq3QXIVR0bs&amp;t=5s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq3QXIVR0bs&amp;t=5s</a>
Katherine Porter	House—45 <sup>th</sup> District—CA	Mimi Walters	Lost	“Minivan”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXSOGOhlknM&amp;index=7&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6&amp;t=0s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXSOGOhlknM&amp;index=7&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6&amp;t=0s</a>
				“Two Senators”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3VU8fm1JsY&amp;index=2&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3VU8fm1JsY&amp;index=2&amp;list=PL8d0tb6WcsG-fFnzAc12qLNb97xiq5ux6</a>
Jacky Rosen	Senate—NV	Dean Heller	Won	“Spineless Lie”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo7NWZXjBfQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo7NWZXjBfQ</a>

<b>Kim Schrier</b>	House—8 <sup>th</sup> District—WA	Dino Rossi	Won	“Boys”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh504hNjiHM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh504hNjiHM</a>
				“Door”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25DYMbnU94s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25DYMbnU94s</a>
<b>Kyrsten Sinema</b>	Senate—AZ	Martha McSally	Won	“Independent”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy9YPuZwFkA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy9YPuZwFkA</a>
				“Protect”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_d3qkINIB8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_d3qkINIB8</a>
<b>Xochitl Torres Small</b>	House—2 <sup>nd</sup> District— NM	Yvette Herrell	Won	“Hunt”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHVipTnf3IQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHVipTnf3IQ</a>
				“Life”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIW2u5OtiVs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIW2u5OtiVs</a>
<b>Gretchen Whitmer</b>	Gubernatorial— MI	Bill Schuette	Won	“Get it Done”	0:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EP88Xl8fbY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EP88Xl8fbY</a>

Table 2: Republican Campaign Advertisements

Republican Candidates	Race	Opponent	Result	Ads Analyzed	Length	Links
<b>Katie Arrington</b>	House—1 <sup>st</sup> District—SC	Joe Cunningham	LOST	“Prepared”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSV9WZW6yqY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSV9WZW6yqY</a>
				“The Stakes”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9Rj4-YHlsY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9Rj4-YHlsY</a>
<b>Marsha Blackburn</b>	Senate—TN	Phil Bredesen	WON	“Believe”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itQoGaRncf0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itQoGaRncf0</a>
				“Better Shape”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wg8Z7vCtVwQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wg8Z7vCtVwQ</a>
				“Great”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK2gMAUP19M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK2gMAUP19M</a>
				“Let’s Win This Race”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZK4YSM71c3A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZK4YSM71c3A</a>
				“Why I’m Running”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxSPO4V7FYI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxSPO4V7FYI</a>
<b>Lena Epstein</b>	House—11 <sup>th</sup> District—MI	Haley Stevens	LOST	“Underestimated”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRxxvpM0P_s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRxxvpM0P_s</a>
				“Slacker”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmGSKMcgGMw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmGSKMcgGMw</a>
<b>Elizabeth Heng</b>	House—16 <sup>th</sup> District—CA	Jim Costa	LOST	“Elizabeth Heng for Congress”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liWdI_2dleA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liWdI_2dleA</a>
				“Walk”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEUvNBqqC4E">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEUvNBqqC4E</a>
<b>Young Kim</b>	House—39 <sup>th</sup> District—CA	Gil Cisneros	LOST	“Proven”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mU9abTKmDN0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mU9abTKmDN0</a>
				“My Community”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMog10gDg9E">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMog10gDg9E</a>
<b>Martha McSally</b>	Senate—AZ	Krysten Sinema	LOST	“Deployed TV Ad”	1:01	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obHIECvtrEs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obHIECvtrEs</a>
				“Sinema Tutu”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKiWO8f_rBY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKiWO8f_rBY</a>

<b>Carol Miller</b>	House—3rd District—WV	Richard Ojeda	WON	“Should Be”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UljwzujGWzU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UljwzujGWzU</a>
				“Fight”	:31	<a href="https://twitter.com/CarolMillerWV/status/1044980015115509760">https://twitter.com/CarolMillerWV/status/1044980015115509760</a>
				“War”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHYSWDGeKgU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHYSWDGeKgU</a>
				“Greatest”	:31	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJvEPIESgJ4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJvEPIESgJ4</a>
<b>Kristi Noem</b>	Gubernatorial—SD	Billie Sutton	WON	“Slow Dance”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-5MNOgLaNk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-5MNOgLaNk</a>
				“4 Pillars”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGgKTGlllNQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGgKTGlllNQ</a>
				“Independent”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4935s71fpI4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4935s71fpI4</a>
				“Issues”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qesDTpq1fIE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qesDTpq1fIE</a>
				“My Time”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gL4Dnnk43M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gL4Dnnk43M</a>
				“Opportunity”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFOXTHj2fHs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFOXTHj2fHs</a>
				“Neighbors”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTqoOKWWTrc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTqoOKWWTrc</a>
				“Friends”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7EQWHxJKh0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7EQWHxJKh0</a>
<b>Leah Vukmir</b>	Senate—WI	Tammy Baldwin	LOST	“Sidelines”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onHU5l-2yYc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onHU5l-2yYc</a>
				“Wisconsin Way”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNwDJqw51DI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNwDJqw51DI</a>
				“One of Us”	:30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uW8xIzJPEWw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uW8xIzJPEWw</a>