

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Pete Maysmith, League of Conservation Voters SVP for Campaigns
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SUBJECT: LCV's 2018 Preview Part One: States take renewed focus

Despite the Trump administration's countless environmental attacks (and yes, [we tried to count](#)), 2017 showed that the clean energy revolution can't be stopped. Voters want climate action, and with states leading the way, we've seen progress coast to coast – from California renewing its groundbreaking carbon trading program to the Maryland Legislature overriding a veto and increasing the state's clean energy standard to 25 percent by 2020.

And it's not just the Democrats leading the way. With record polarization in Congress, states and local governments are proving that clean energy crosses party lines. Republican governors in Michigan and Ohio both acted to increase or defend renewable energy standards. And the Republican governor of Massachusetts plans to invest in offshore wind.

State-level work, long a part of what makes our work as the Conservation Voter Movement unique and effective, is more important than ever as a countervailing force to the Trump administration. Since Trump was elected, LCV's state partners have helped win significant climate and clean energy victories in at least a dozen states, often with bipartisan support.

That is why LCV and its state affiliates will be making our biggest-ever investment in state-level elections around the country this year.¹ For the 2017-2018 cycle, we are committing to invest at least \$20 million in state-level races, which will make this nearly double our previous record cycle investment in local elections during our nearly 50 year history.

What follows is an examination of some 2017 lessons learned and a brief preview of the kinds of state races that state LCVs expect to work on in 2018. Stay tuned for a preview of our plans to retake a green majority in Congress – it's going to be a busy year.

2017 Victories Centered on States

Our 2017 election work was hyper-local, supporting our state leagues' work to invest more than \$5.3 million in key governor, state legislature and other local campaigns. We won all 12 of our priority races – which included defeating the first two members of our 2017-2018 Dirty Dozen in the States, Ed Gillespie and Kris Greene – and our state league partners celebrated victories in nearly every local race they invested in during 2017.

Some highlights:

Washington State Senate and Port Commission – Out West, Washington Conservation Voters Action Fund went toe-to-toe with oil industry money in two targeted races. Winning a single state Senate special election tipped the balance of power in the legislature to a pro-environment majority and secured a West Coast “green curtain” of state governments opposed to the Trump administration's environmental attacks. The winner of that special election, Manka Dhingra, proved that addressing climate change is a winning issue. Polling indicated that the environment was the

¹ The activities described in this memo will be conducted by the appropriate LCV state league entity, to be determined.

most persuasive issue to turn out voters when they learned about her opponent's anti-environmental positions. Additionally, WCV AF helped defeat a port commission candidate bankrolled almost entirely by an oil company that hoped to rubberstamp their plan to build the largest oil export terminal in North America. Voters roundly rejected his bought-and-paid-for campaign, and the oil terminal was voted down at the commission's very first meeting.

Virginia Governor and Legislature – The governor's race in Virginia was the first true electoral test of Trump's attacks on our clean air and water. While Ralph Northam became the first statewide candidate to criticize his opponent for opposing the Paris Climate Agreement and produced two ads focused on the environment, Ed Gillespie tethered himself to the fossil fuel industry by saying he'd fast track their infrastructure and expand offshore drilling. Yet even Gillespie realized that the impacts of climate change are too devastating to ignore – he released a plan to mitigate rising sea levels along Virginia's coast that was mocked for refusing to draw the connection to climate change. Voters responded strongly to environmental messaging in Virginia, with internal polling showing that electing someone who will stand up to Trump's attacks on our clean air and water ranked just as important as opposing cuts to healthcare. Virginia LCV PAC was the second-largest outside spender in the race, investing over \$4 million in a field program, digital advertising and directly supporting the campaigns of environmental champions up and down the ballot – leading to nearly retaking a pro-environment majority in the state legislature.

New Jersey Governor – After eight years under Chris Christie, voters in New Jersey were ready for a change. Phil Murphy is a stark break from the Garden State's Trumpian legacy under Christie – who decimated the staff of the Department of Environmental Protection, appointed political cronies to voting positions on the Highlands and Pinelands councils, raided hundreds of millions in clean energy funds, and withdrew New Jersey from a nine-state greenhouse gas reduction pact. Murphy earned New Jersey LCV's endorsement early in the primary by becoming the first candidate to commit to 100 percent clean energy by 2050 – the strongest clean energy goal in the continental United States. This pledge quickly became a cornerstone of Murphy's campaign, breaking through with both voters and the media. And as governor, Murphy has already followed through by rejoining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, restarting New Jersey's plan for offshore wind, and calling for a ban on fracking in the Delaware River watershed.

Pro-environment Republicans Prevail – Following Murphy's lead, Democrats in New Jersey swept nearly every competitive down ballot race – save for the two state Senate races where New Jersey LCV Victory Fund supported pro-environment Republicans. Kip Bateman – one of the greenest Republicans in the country – was reelected to the state Senate in a district with rapidly shifting demographics that voted for Murphy by over five percent. Similarly, Republican Chris Brown was elected to his first term in a district that also strongly backed Murphy. And in South Carolina, our affiliate helped elevate two pro-conservation Republicans to replace outgoing members, leading to a 100 percent win rate in 2017's state House special elections. Candidates should take note: rejecting Trump's environmental attacks and instead supporting climate and clean energy proposals might be the deciding factor in a wave year.

Oil and Gas Money Fails to Buy Votes – Like in Washington, Colorado saw a surge of oil and gas money flooding into local races. Industry groups spent \$328,000 supporting city council candidates who would block local fracking safeguards, yet Conservation Colorado Grassroots Action and partners led their candidates to victories. Looks like voters have had enough of Big Oil's talking points – but with the Koch network already planning to spend a record \$400 million for 2018, don't expect them to bow out anytime soon.

****BONUS WIN** Wisconsin State Senate** – We kicked off 2018 on a high note with another special election win in the Wisconsin State Senate. Despite outside spending propping up Adam Jarchow, voters refused to look past his anti-conservation record of attacking environmental protections and local control. Wisconsin LCV endorsed and worked to mobilize conservation voters to elect Patty Schachtner instead, showing again that protecting our air, land and water trumps a pro-polluter agenda.

These victories built on the bright spots of 2016, which also centered on state wins in governors' races in Montana and North Carolina, as well as electing pro-environment majorities to the Nevada and New Mexico legislatures and defeating a \$26 million utility-sponsored ballot initiative that would have destroyed solar in Florida. LCV and our state affiliates invested \$9.5 million in state elections during the 2015-2016 cycle, and additionally raised or contributed nearly \$3 million directly to state and local candidates through GiveGreen in the States, a project of LCV Political Engagement Fund and NextGen America.

Thinking Local in 2018

The national potential for climate action looks bleak through Trump's remaining three years in office. But with 36 governors' seats up for election and several state legislatures inching closer to pro-environment majorities, voters in 2018 have an opportunity to double down on local progress and advance clean energy, climate and conservation policies.

LCV has state affiliates in 24 of the 36 states with governors races. We will weigh our investments based on the potential for climate and clean energy legislation in each state, strengths of candidates and their opponents, and whether the position is key to redistricting in 2021.

While we're still deciding where we can have the strongest impact, some of the states with the greatest potential for electing a pro-environment governor who could change climate politics in the state include Maine, New Mexico and Nevada:

Maine – As Trump protégé and current Governor Paul LePage leaves office, Maine voters have an opportunity to finally enact several clean energy policies he has vetoed. That includes legislation to increase access to solar power and develop offshore wind energy. The primaries on both sides are wide open, and Maine Conservation Voters is watching to see which environmental champion emerges.

New Mexico – Our state partner helped regain pro-environment leadership in the state legislature in 2016, so New Mexico is poised to enact proactive climate legislation if departing Governor Susana Martinez is replaced by an environmental champion. Conservation Voters New Mexico Action Fund recognized Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham as the best choice for the state and endorsed her campaign for governor early on. Her likely opponent, Congressman Steve Pearce, has a pathetic four percent lifetime LCV score and would bring Trump's environmental attacks to a state that values public lands and a healthy environment.

Nevada – Current Governor Brian Sandoval has been on the right side of many environmental issues, but has refused to go the distance in the climate fight. Nevada's pro-environment legislature made real progress in 2017, but electing a stronger governor will give the state a chance to increase

the renewable energy standard and retire their remaining coal plants. Attorney General Adam Laxalt is the likely Republican nominee and has a terrible record on public lands and clean energy – key issues for Nevada voters. Nevada Conservation League will again be at the forefront of the race, working to elect a champion.

LCV and our affiliates will also focus resources in states like Colorado, where once again winning just one seat in the state Senate would flip the chamber to a pro-environment majority. And we're keeping an eye on state legislative races in places like Florida, Michigan, and North Carolina, where 2021 redistricting hangs in the balance – as well as the Nevada legislature, where baseless recalls already threaten their pro-climate majority.

While investing more than ever before in state-level races, we will, of course, continue our work at the federal level where members of Congress who refuse to stand up to the administration's dozens and dozens of unpopular environmental rollbacks will have to defend them at the polls. We will have more information about our federal elections activities in the near future.

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