

I Really Can't Cast Your Ballot for You, Ma'am

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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"The fight of my life..."; "Republicans take a sledgehammer to Medicare..."; "Triple your impact to STOP..."; "Lowering our chance..."; "What's at stake? Everything..."; "Last chance..."; "Numbers don't lie..."; "They're scared we'll win...", warns yet another slogan, and on and on. As if to say: "We (the Democratic Party) are scared, and we want you to be scared too". Each threat is followed by appeals that we'll win with just a \$3. pledge; victory secured if you can manage five dollars. It seems the Dems hired a squad of copy editors blasting out five-word threats in the subject line of my (and hundreds of thousands, millions, of others') email and twitter accounts.

You get the picture. Several times daily these bulletins promise that if I give even the price of a cup-of-coffee to Stacey in Georgia, Fred in Iowa, and Heidi in North Dakota (or is it Oregon?), then the good guys win, the Trump nightmare ends, and Democrats will provide all the nice things intelligent-college-educated-white Americans deserve (something for minorities too)—full employment, free universal healthcare, cancellation of student debt, repeal of the second amendment (gun rights), an end to big pharma's control of politicians, pre-industrial era clear blue skies, reforested cities, and restoration of Obama's post-racial America. (No mention of reduced military spending or freeing US foreign policy of Israel's grip.)

Delete, delete, delete; this although I'm not a Republican and never knowingly voted for one, not even when, as often happens at state and district levels, they run unopposed.

Do people who run these campaigns really think fear tactics are effective? In [2016 the vote-Hillary-or-else](#) strategy didn't work; I doubt if it's a winner this time. It's a hollow, misguided device. As [many concerned analysts](#) evidence, the Party is simply out of touch.

At ground level Democratic Party managers claim the algorithms they employ guarantee victory. Formulae based on data amassed from social media posts, phone records and past balloting (adopted perhaps from Mercer's [Cambridge Analytica, initially exposed by Observer](#) writer Carole Cadwalladr, a scheme Trump's campaign reportedly used) inform Democratic campaign chiefs.



So a bouquet of lists is presented to me and other volunteer fieldworkers; we're mainly retirees, not the under 30s who prefer spectacles with celebrities offering graphic encounters to share on instagram. (Young people's voting record is in fact shoddy.) I'm a sucker for joining local campaigns though. Toiling naively through a summer afternoon, I learn that few in my 'registered voter list' know whose running in upcoming (NY) state primaries or who's challenging the incumbent congressman.

And these lists? My paid teenage supervisor firmly believes that personally reaching out to algorithm-generated lists is a winning strategy. (Like scare tactics?)

I'm presented with lists, and more lists: a register of under 50s; a list of anyone who may have voted across party lines; a list of over 70s, folks more likely to be home in the morning (no cell phones?); independents who usually don't vote; dependable Democrats we will solicit to volunteer with us; those we'll phone a month before; those we'll phone a week before; those who are first time voters. Doubtless there are lists of Blacks, Latinos, South Asians, Evangelical Christians, maybe Jews too. Lists likely come in degrees of education as well.

My Sunday morning was productive, sort of: 25% of voters I call respond in person: 40% of them disconnect abruptly, hearing the name of the candidate I represent; 25% are uncertain; one snaps "We don't get involved in politics", another asks "Who's he running against?" The 20% who say "We support him; he's got our vote" sustain me. Too many registered Dems really are unsure of which candidate is running in which race; it doesn't help that lawn signs littering our roadsides don't indicate if the name printed represents a Democrat, Republican, or Conservative. New York State registered Democrats are notoriously negligent in the primaries. Barely 25% cast ballots in any primary election.

Voter ignorance about candidates, even if they peruse all their emails in what we call midterm elections, is common. Midterm (off season or non-president) elections somehow can't attract voters; primaries seem inconsequential, like midterm exams or penalty shots in football. Nothing much happens in midterms, we suppose.

Yet this semi-annual ballot determines all congressional seats. In November—435 seats are up for re-election. (63 of these, held by Republicans, are said to be vulnerable, and Democrats need to win 23 of those to take control of the House.) Primary wins like those by Ocasio-Cortez in New York and Tlaib in Michigan are generating excitement and optimism among some Dems. Yes, national media highlight even the most marginal state primary win, but for a day or two only.

It seems our US public—voters, would-be voters, and those who “don’t get involved in politics”—prefers to devote its time to the president and presidency. My neighbors and colleagues, following the media’s obsession with the leadership, spend hours gasping, chortling, quoting—they repeat his tweets; they shudder at his braggadocio; they weep over his legal proclamations; they opine on White House personalities. This compared to blank stares and ambiguity regarding the women and men they actually can vote in (or out) at their neighborhood polling station September 13th (NY primary day) and November 6th.

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This article was originally published on the author’s webpage: www.radiotahrir.org.

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