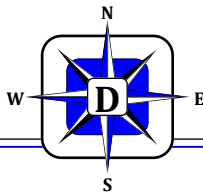


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Secret Report Says Liberal Consortium Drove 2008 Turnout

Turnout success rate was 74.6% as compared to the national average of 60.4%

John N. Davis, President

*John Davis Political Report is an in-depth summary of the key political trends impacting North Carolina politics. Following an introductory period during October, the report will be copyrighted and available exclusively to subscribers. See details: www.johndavisconsulting.com. John Davis has followed NC politics for 24 years, serving as President of NCFREE, a political research group, where he was Editor of the *Almanac of North Carolina Politics*. As head of John Davis Consulting, Davis specializes in tracking political trends and forecasting.*

"Catalist's member groups contacted 49 million adults more than 127 million times. A total of 28 million of those contacted voted, representing more than 20% of all votes cast. An astounding 82% of their work occurred in 16 swing states, accounting for 37% of all votes cast in these states, including North Carolina."¹

The Atlantic, Oct. 5-7, 2009,
"How Democrats Won the Data War in 2008," by Marc Ambinder

Trying to find out how Democrats and allied groups succeeded in registering and turning out voters in record numbers in 2008 is like the plot in the *Da Vinci Code*; mysterious societies and trails of clues ... documents written in backwards script hidden in rosewood boxes.

This week *The Atlantic* magazine, in a three-part series beginning with, "How Democrats Won the Data War in 2008," disclosed that it had obtained a secret document, an official "Proprietary and Confidential – Not for Distribution" after-action summary report² revealing that a heretofore unknown consortium of liberal groups were networked by a common database of likely voters.

The after-action summary report was written by *Catalist*, the company that provided data and microtargeting services in 2008 for Democrats and allied groups totaling over 90 campaigns, committees and organizations, like SEIU (Service Employees International Union), who spent in excess of \$80 million in 2008 working to influence the outcome of elections.

¹ *The Atlantic*, Oct. 5-7, 2009, "How Democrats Won the Data War in 2008," by Marc Ambinder

² "Aggregate Activities of Progressive Organizations in 2008," Data from Catalist Subscribers, Summer 2009

The unprecedented get-out-the-vote operation boasts the following collaborative results:

- More than 1 million volunteers were mobilized by *Catalist* groups on election day
- Registered voters contacted by *Catalist* groups turned out at a rate of 74.6% as compared to the national average of about 60.4%
- In North Carolina, the number of votes cast by new voters registered by *Catalist* groups exceeded Obama's margin of victory. *For emphasis:* Even if only 60% of new voters registered by *Catalist* groups voted for Obama, it would still be greater than Obama's margin of victory in North Carolina
- *Catalist's* groups contacted 49 million adults more than 127 million times
- 28 million of those contacted adults voted, representing more than 20% of all votes cast
- 82% of this work occurred in 16 hotly contested battleground states, accounting for 37% of all votes cast in those states, including North Carolina

Even though the folks at *Catalist* are careful to note that a correlation between their microtargeting and actual voting does not necessarily mean causation, most political observers would agree that microtargeting improves messaging and the ability to carefully invest only in those voters most likely to support your candidate.

Although microtargeting has been around for several election cycles, and get-out-the-vote programs have been around at least since Abraham Lincoln, it's the sheer magnitude of the increased effort and results that are so astounding.

In the 2004 presidential campaign, the Kerry campaign and ACT (*America Coming Together*) mounted what they described as "the largest voter contact program in history." Working with 33 progressive organizations under the *American Votes* umbrella, they contacted 8.5 million individuals in an effort to identify those most likely to vote for the Democratic ticket.

Charlie Cook, political analyst and head of the Cook Political Report, was so impressed with the liberal turnout machine in 2004 that he wrote, "[D]emocrats, chiefly through *America Coming Together*, mounted what was not only the most sophisticated get-out-the-vote operation in the party's history, but it was probably the best field work by a factor of at least 10."³

In contrast, the 90 organizations, campaigns and committees working with *Catalist* in 2008 contacted 15,452,954 people ... an increase of 80% over Kerry/ACT in 2004. Obama did better where more "progressive groups" registered and conducted get-out-the-vote operations. No one can argue with the *Catalist* report's finding that registered voters with a history of voting who were contacted by progressive organizations turned out at a rate of 74.6%, while those who received no contact from coalition organizations turned out at a rate of 60.4%.

Republicans have a comparable state-of-the-art microtargeting database called "Voter Vault," but, according to *The Atlantic*, "... have yet to set up a data consortium like *Catalist*." GOP strategists are aware of the need for a "Catalist Right," the story says.

³ The Almanac of American Politics, January 11, 2005, Charlie Cook analysis of 2004 Presidential Election

Political Take Away for 2010: Sans *Catalist*, Perdue Would Not Be Governor

So now we know how Democrats and allied groups succeeded in registering and turning out voters in record numbers in 2008. We know that it was not about mysterious documents written in backwards script hidden in rosewood boxes or clues written in ultra violet light on papyrus. Democrats beat Republicans at their own game, the game of high-tech targeting of resources.

Catalist gave over 90 progressive organizations a highly-reliable, low-cost national data source that allowed those groups to break all records in their voter registration and turnout operations. All messaging was data-driven; all registration drives were data-driven; all get-out-the-vote initiatives were data-driven. These groups wasted no time or money on voters who were predetermined to have a low likelihood of supporting their candidates and turning out to vote.

Here in North Carolina we saw astounding voter registration and turnout operations being conducted by Democrats ... particularly the Obama campaign. We knew that money made a big difference and that Obama had an unlimited supply. We knew that paid staff made a big difference and that Obama had over 400 paid workers operating out of 47 local headquarters. What we didn't know until this week was that all of that work was based on a sophisticated database from a single source, *Catalist*, that predetermined every door to door visit, every phone call, every e-mail, every direct mailing, every robo call, every TV ad placement and every personal appearance by Barack Obama.

The results speak for themselves:

- 967,804 new voters registered in North Carolina during 2008
- 49% of new voters in North Carolina in 2008 registered as a Democrat, 29% registered Unaffiliated, and only 22% registered Republican
- 2.4 million North Carolinians voted before Election Day 2008, as compared to only 984,000 who voted early in the fall of 2004
- 51% of early voters were Democrats, 19% were Unaffiliated, and 30% were Republican
- 28% of early voters were African-Americans, compared to 19% in 2004
- More than 1 million African-Americans voted in North Carolina in 2008, a record 74% turnout, surpassing white voter turnout (69%) for the first time in North Carolina history
- Same-day registrations added 122,000 new voters to the rolls, most of them Democrats
- For the first time in 48 years, Tar Heel voters gave Democrats a sweep of the top three offices, President, Governor and United States Senator.

The closing point in *Atlantic's* report is that a get-out-the-vote program alone is not enough to drive turnout, but that a "competitive election that matters" is essential. The presidential and gubernatorial elections in our state last year were among the most transformative and competitive in modern history, the closest state races in the country for president and governor. Democrats enjoyed good success in 2008 in part because of a charismatic presidential candidate, an unpopular Republican president and a weak GOP presidential nominee. However, without a data-driven and well-staffed voter registration and turnout organization, Obama would not have carried North Carolina and Beverly Perdue would not be Governor.