

# NEBRASKA DEMOCRATIC PARTY

## 2018 Coordinated Campaign Preliminary General Report

### OVERVIEW

The Nebraska Democratic Party (NDP) Coordinated Campaign, allies, county parties and candidates across the state worked hard to increase Democratic turnout in the General Election.

More than 850 Democrats stepped up and put their names on the ballot in urban and rural communities. That represented the most diverse group of Democratic candidates the state has ever seen, with veterans, nonprofit leaders, mothers, teachers, farmers, union members and business owners running strong campaigns across the state.

The Coordinated Campaign strategy was unique and focused on our Democratic base, along with reaching out to Independent voters. The Coordinated Campaign staff is proud of what we accomplished together with candidates and Party leaders.

Vote-by-Mail efforts (VBM) and Get-Out the-Vote (GOTV) efforts were run by the NDP Coordinated Campaign and allies who share our values, including candidate campaigns and interest groups. We worked with candidates and counties to coordinate persuasion and GOTV in order to turn out the maximum number of voters.

The General Report documents the work and successes of the Coordinated Campaign.

# SUMMARY OF NDP STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN EFFORTS

The NDP ran a strong, statewide campaign both in the Primary and General Election. This report lays out the results from the General Election. To see the figures and results of our efforts in the Primary Election, simply request a copy from the NDP staff.

- For the first time, the NDP created Voter Guides listing all the Democratic candidates in each of Nebraska's 93 counties. Those were mailed to each Democratic household in Nebraska and also were listed online. More than 325,000 Voter Guides were delivered at doors and by mail.
- The NDP mailed and distributed some 115,000 Vote-by-Mail applications to potential voters across Nebraska.
- A total of 72,356 Democrats requested Vote-by-Mail ballots for the General elections in 2018, compared to 42,708 in 2014 – an increase of some 69 percent.
- A total of 67,673 Democratic ballots were returned statewide in 2018, according to the Nebraska Secretary of State's office. That's a nearly 80 percent increase from 2014, when 37,403 Democrats voted early.
- The NDP sent 280,655 texts to 260,462 voters in the General election. This number does not include what candidates sent using the NDP tool, please see next bullet for that number.
- New voter contact technology was available to candidates up and down the ballot that resulted in an impressive 760,832 text contacts with voters by candidates using the NDP tool and utilized a state-of-the-art Voter File to win elections.
- The NDP contacted an additional 19,090 voters thru robo and live calls to support the entire Democratic slate.
- The NDP's virtual phone bank also was available to candidates up and down the ballot, which resulted in an impressive 111,305 phone calls to voters in the General election.
- The NDP opened six offices across Nebraska and hired 16 canvassers in CD2 alone.
- The NDP founded a Candidates of Color Fund, distributing money to candidates representing African-American, Asian, Latinx and Native American communities adding needed diversity to our ticket.
- The NDP recruited and trained over 550 volunteer "Block Captains" to encourage people to vote in the Nov. 6 election and to register voters in their communities. Block Captains were each assigned 50 voters in their neighborhood – knocking on their doors at least two times this election cycle – resulting in more than 27,000 volunteer contacts with voters.

# GENERAL ELECTION HIGHLIGHTS

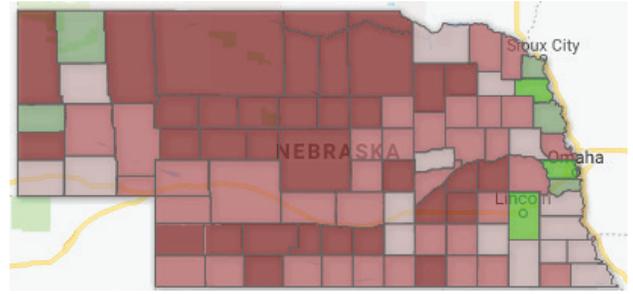
- More than **850 Democrats** were on the ballot, representing a diverse ticket that looked and sounded like our Nebraska friends and neighbors. For the first time in our state's history, **60 percent of our top of the ticket candidates were women** and a record number of candidates from communities of color ran across the state.
- **69.42 percent increase (a total of 29,648) in Democratic VBM ballot requests over the 2014 Midterm Election**, the last midterm in which there was both a United States Senate seat and a Governor seat in play. The GOP, by comparison, has seen an 89.62 percent increase from 2014 — showing that they have learned our strategy of using VBM to increase turnout.
- **80.9 percent increase in Democratic VBM ballot returns.**
  - 2014: Dems returned 37,403 VBM ballots
  - 2018: Dems returned 67,673 VBM ballots
  - Dems returned 30,270 more VBM ballots in 2018 than in 2014
- **Statewide turnout increased by 10 percent from 2014.**
  - 696,053 votes cast out of 1,219,644 registered voters in 2018, versus 552,115 votes cast out of 1,158,840
- **Voter registration increased by 5.25 percent from 2014.**
  - Democrats had 357,835 registered voters in 2014 compared to 359,990 in 2018.
  - Non-Partisans had 235,922 registered voters in 2014 compared to 258,143 in 2018.
  - Republicans had 559,364 registered voters in 2014 compared to 582,319 in 2018.
- The turnout of Democrats in the three most populous counties (Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy) exceeded the state average turnout for all voters — which was only 57.07 percent across Nebraska, mostly because Republicans' turnout was down significantly:
  - **Douglas: 56.18 percent**
    - 10.85 percent increase from 2014
  - **Lancaster: 60.18 percent**
    - 12.36 percent increase from 2014
  - **Sarpy: 59.67 percent**
    - 14.90 percent increase from 2014

# DEMOCRATIC WINS

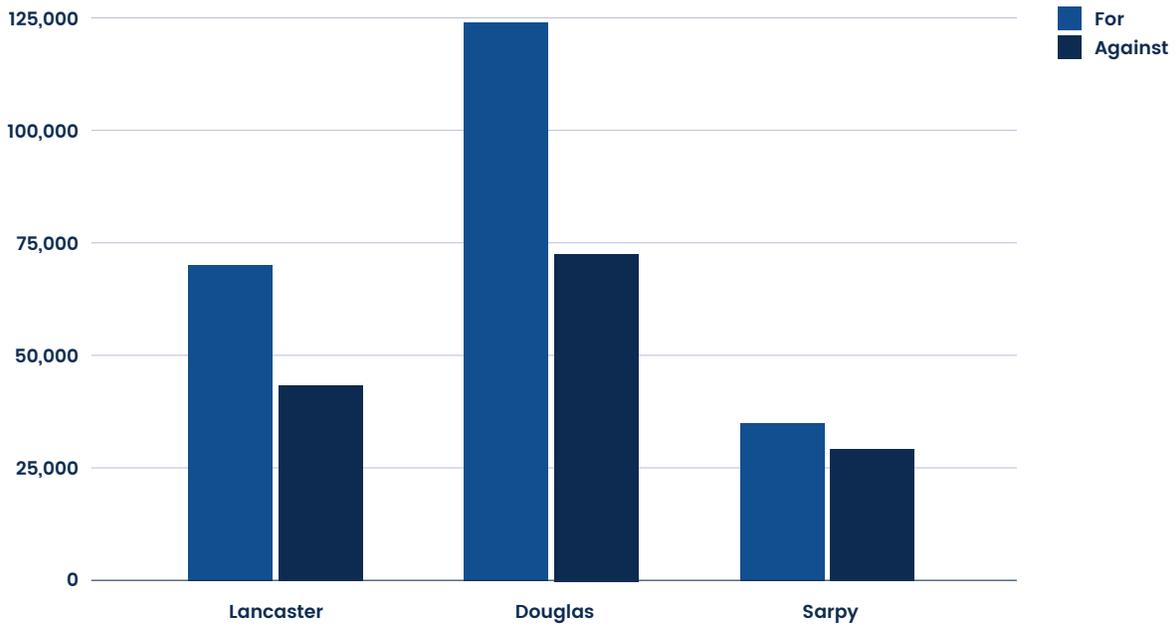
- **The Nebraska Democratic Party flipped 3 Legislative Seats:**
  - LD6: Machaela Cavanaugh
  - LD10: Wendy DeBoer
  - LD12: Steve Lathrop
- **The NDP protected four seats:**
  - LD8: Megan Hunt won departing Sen. Burke Harr's seat
  - LD26: Sen. Matt Hansen
  - LD28: Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks
  - LD40: Sen. Adam Morfeld
- **2 women were elected to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents (only 4 have been elected in the board's history).**
  - Barbara Weitz
  - Elizabeth O'Connor
- **850 Democrats ran in races across the state and had a 73 percent win rate.**
- **41 of 47 Democrats who ran for a Natural Resources District seat were elected.**
- **Lancaster County is the new Blue Dot.**
  - Jane Raybould, who ran for U.S. Senate, won Lancaster county by more than 11 points.
  - Jessica McClure, who ran for Congress in CD1, won Lancaster County by more than one point — a more than 20 percent increase from 2014.
- **Every Democrat who ran for a county seat in Lancaster County won.**
  - Rachel Garver for County Treasurer
  - Dan Nolte for County Clerk
  - Joe Nigro for County Public Defender
- **Democrats took the majority on the Lancaster County Board.**
  - Sean Flowerday and Rick Vest were elected.
  - You can read more about these data points by requesting access to more detailed data tracking.

• **Initiative 427 to expand Medicaid passed!**

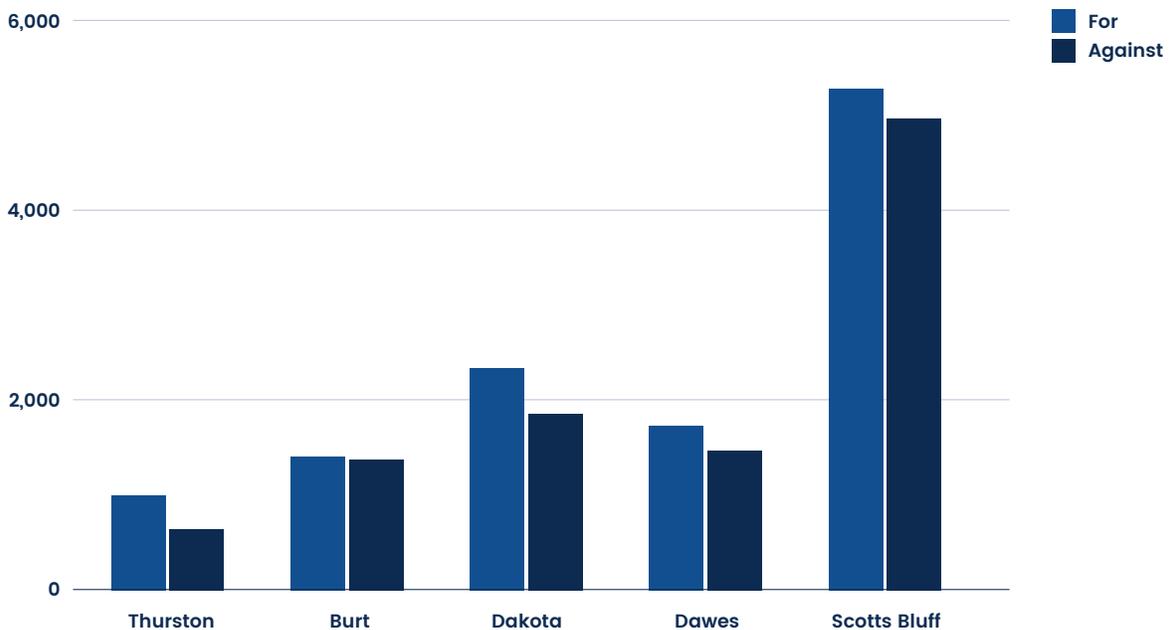
- To the right is a map that shows the counties that passed the measure (in green) and the counties that rejected the measure (in red).
- This also shows the road to electing a statewide or federal Democrat.



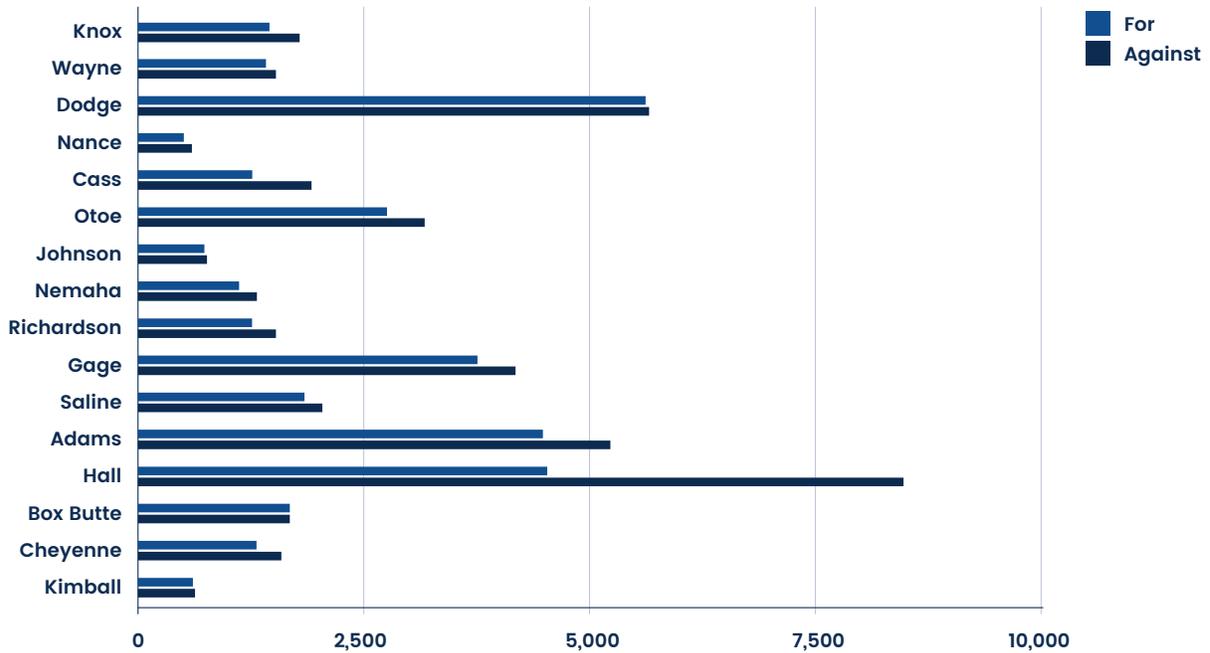
**MAJOR COUNTIES MEDICAL EXPANSION VOTE RESULTS**



**RURAL COUNTIES THAT PASSED MEDICAID EXPANSION**



## DEMOCRATIC COUNTY TRENDING MEDICAID EXPANSION RESULTS



Congressional District Comparisons	Vote Counts	Counties not counted
<b>CD1</b>		
Jessica McClure	91,427	
Jeff Fortenberry	140,248	
Bob Krist/Lynne Walz	91,861	No Sarpy or Dixon
Pete Ricketts/Mike Foley	116,756	No Sarpy or Dixon
For Medicaid Expansion	108,186	No Sarpy or Dixon
Against Medicaid Expansion	91,801	No Sarpy or Dixon
<b>CD2</b>		
Kara Eastman	118,225	
Don Bacon	124,721	
Bob Krist/Lynne Walz	104,857	No Sarpy
Pete Ricketts/Mike Foley	94,330	No Sarpy
For Medicaid Expansion	120,320	No Sarpy
Against Medicaid Expansion	71,073	No Sarpy
<b>CD3</b>		
Paul Theobald	49,339	
Adrian Smith	162,597	
Bob Krist/Lynne Walz	55,801	No Dixon
Pete Ricketts/Mike Foley	155,131	No Dixon
For Medicaid Expansion	86,545	No Dixon
Against Medicaid Expansion	112,672	No Dixon

# RURAL COUNTY RESULTS

While the top three counties (Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy) proved to have substantial increases in voter participation as noted above, it is important to note that Democrats don't just live in those three counties alone. We have Democrats living in every county, and they are turning out to support Democratic candidates.

Below depicts four "counties to watch" that had moderate increases in voter participation, and have active Democratic parties working hard to turnout voters for the Democratic candidates running there. Adams, Buffalo, Hall, and Saline all increased their voter turnouts by an average of 5.8 percent.

County	Voting Percent Increase
Adams	5.15 percent
Buffalo	6.85 percent
Hall	5.87 percent
Saline	5.84 percent

County	# of Dems Elected	# of Dems Who Ran	Percent Won
Adams	16	21	76.19 percent
Buffalo	2	5	40 percent
Butler	18	21	85.7 percent
Hall	7	11	63.64 percent
Knox	31	40	77.5 percent
Saline	21	23	91.30 percent
Sherman	12	12	100 percent
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>80.45 percent</b>

The above table depicts the counties to watch — with the number of Democrats who ran in local races in the county versus the number of Democrats who won in those races. The average win rate for this cycle was 73 percent and almost every one of these counties exceeded that percentage by a considerable margin.

This is not something to ignore, as it is evident that Democrats are running and winning in their rural communities. Hence, we need to expand our investments in Rural communities.

# VOTER REGISTRATION

Nebraska has 1,214,942 registered voters (a 1.2 percent increase from the Primary). This increase in voter registration came from a large bump during the last three weeks of the voter registration window. The “Taylor Swift voters” accounted for a majority of the bump.

Party	Total Voters
Democratic	359,990
Non Partisan	258,143
Republican	582,319
Other	14,490
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,214,942</b>

## VOTE-BY-MAIL

The NDP sent out 117,642 VBM applications to Democrats and Non-Partisans across the state in counties in which there is a legislative race with a Democratic candidate, and pushed additional applications at events during the application window.

In total – including the Primary VBM and ones we gave out at the doors – we distributed 201,013 VBM Applications.

In the Vote-by-Mail program, the Coordinated Campaign targeted Democrats who voted in 3 out of the last 5 general elections. The campaign also targeted Nonpartisan women, as well as newly registered Democrats and Nonpartisans

We acknowledge the great work of other allied groups and candidates who ran VBM programs separate from the NDP. Politics, done correctly, is a team sport as well as a contact sport. The numbers below are specific to the NDP Coordinated Campaign.

During the Primary Election, our goal was a 4 percent return rate of our VBM applications, but from our efforts, we achieved a 13 percent return rate. After an overwhelmingly positive response to our efforts in the Primary Election, our goal for the General Election was a 15 percent return rate.

**Final numbers show a 23.11 percent return rate for mailed VBM applications and a total number of 27,185 applications returned specifically for the program the NDP ran.** This return rate exceeds experiments and reports from groups like the Analyst Institute, where the average return rate was 4 percent as well as our adjusted expected return rate of 13 percent from the Primary Election.

The goals of the Coordinated Campaign included increased turnout among irregular and unlikely voters. Of these, 23,070 returned their ballots equaling a rate of 84.8 percent. A 13 percent increase from the Primary Election.

## Vote By Mail Apps Returned By NDP Target

CD	General Voting				Total People
	0 of 3	1 of 3	2 of 3	3 of 3	
001	859	1,208	1,701	3,417	7,185
002	1,811	2,826	4,000	6,301	14,938
003	257	221	363	406	1,247
<b>Total People</b>	<b>2,927</b>	<b>4,255</b>	<b>6,064</b>	<b>10,124</b>	<b>23,370</b>

The above table shows the number of people who returned the Vote-by-Mail ballots of those were sent applications broken down by Congressional District, and number of the last three General Elections they voted in (2016, 2014, 2012).

Note that 0 of 3 is individuals who have voted in 0 of the last 3 General Elections, 1 of 3 is individuals who have voted in 1 of the last 3 General Elections, etc.

This breakdown gives a clear representation of our goal for the Vote-by-Mail program, which was to re-engage irregular voters. Additionally, we were able to ensure regular voters made time to cast their ballot.

VBM Application Requests	Dems	Non-Partisans	GOP
Increase from 2014 Mid-Term	69.42 percent increase	97.48 percent increase	89.63 percent increase

VBM Ballots Returned	Dems	Non-Partisans	GOP
Increase from 2014 Mid-Term	80.93 percent increase	117.88 percent increase	96.05 percent increase

The tables above depict the incredible increases of VBM application and ballot return rates. In the Primary election we saw Democrats with skyrocketing VBM numbers and the GOP trailing behind.

It is evident that the GOP has learned our strategy of banking votes and turning out infrequent voters by investing in a strong VBM program. While it is unfortunate they have incorporated our strategy, this is not to dwindle the incredible work done by the Coordinated Campaign, the campaigns, county parties, and allied groups working hand in hand to turn out voters for such a critical election.

Additionally, it can be noted how Nonpartisan engagement has increased exponentially. **Of the three groups depicted in the tables above, the Nonpartisans had by far the largest growth in VBM engagement. Democrats cannot win in this state without the support of Nonpartisans, and if not for Nonpartisans, Medicaid expansion likely would not have passed.** This can be credited to the incredible amount of hard work in engaging Nonpartisans.

The hard work of the campaigns, county parties, volunteers, and allied groups along with the efforts of the Coordinated Campaign will help us to confidently move into future Elections.

## GET OUT THE VOTE

The Coordinated Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) effort started October 26th and ran until polls closed on Election Day, November 6th. But field began in March with the kickoff of the Coordinated Campaign.

GOTV consisted of five means of field tactics: door knocking, live dials, paid calls, predictive dials, and texting.

	Totals
Phone Calls	19,090
Texting	280,665

With the introduction of Hustle — a high-powered texting tool which the NDP opened to all candidates free of charge — campaigns send an extraordinary number of text messages to voters across the state.

The Coordinated Campaign used Hustle for the GOTV and VBM ballot chase programs, which proved to be more effective at contacting voters and reminding them where and when to vote.

Responses from the texting campaign were overwhelmingly positive. Below are just a few of the messages we received from voters:

- I was there at 8:30 this morning. :) Thanks for your work getting out the vote!
- Love this! Thanks for sending a text reminder.
- Done and done! I had just left when I got this 😊
- Thank you so much for the message. I moved very recently and already went to vote this afternoon. Thanks for all you do!!
- Thank you! I intend to go within an hour!
- Yes, all Democrat. Done. Thank you.

And finally, an email about the texting program received from a voter:

- I received many text messages on Primary day. THIS IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL I HAVE EVER SEEN. I felt engaged and appreciated. Please expand this tool and keep it up!!

Texting is a fast, effective way to personally contact voters. The response rate is higher than with door-to-door and phone efforts, and individuals feel appreciated.

# FURTHER READING ON NUMBERS

- Our Vote By Mail program, including historical data and further breakdowns, are tracked and documented in reports that dig deeper into LDs and county numbers. You can request access through NDP staff.
- Detailed General Election results for top-of-the-ticket races can be accessed by asking NDP staff. We kept detailed trackers of this data.
- In addition to this General Election Report, we have a report on the Primary Election actions and results. Just request a copy from an NDP staff member.

# KEY LESSONS INCLUDE

- Strengthen the Candidate/Ally/Party Leader MOU and VAN Agreement to assist with expectations and understandings of what the NDP offers and expects of campaigns.
- Further educate all stakeholders — including donors — in the benefits of working with the State Party in a Coordinated Campaign basis including savings on mail, staff, time and other resources.
- Offer more trainings, beyond the comprehensive training we conducted at the beginning of the 2018 election cycle. We learned candidates, allies and county party leaders need different trainings at the different stages of the campaign.

The Coordinated Campaign and the NDP are proud of the work we have done this cycle, and we are looking forward to moving onto the next to elect more Democrats, and end the current one-party rule in our great state.

# CONGRATULATIONS

## STATE LEGISLATURE

MACHAELA CAVANAUGH • MEGAN HUNT  
WENDY DEBOER • STEVE LATHROP • MATT HANSEN  
PATTY PANSING BROOKS • ADAM MORFELD

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

MAUREEN NICKELS • DEBORAH NEARY

## BOARD OF REGENTS

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## INITIATIVE 427 MEDICAID EXPANSION

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### THANK YOU TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE AND STAFF THAT WORKED ON WRITING AND EDITING THIS REPORT:

Jane Kleeb, Patty Zieg, John Yoakum, Joe Shaw, Ben Cass, Maureen Monohan,  
Judy Vohland, Evan Mehne.

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