



Case Study

Ron Johnson Reigns in
Badger State Battleground
(2022)

Senator Ron Johnson is no stranger to a tough race. From unseating Russ Feingold in 2010 to his shocking come-from-behind victory in 2016 after having been left for dead by many pundits and prognosticators, we expected 2022 would be another hard-fought battle.

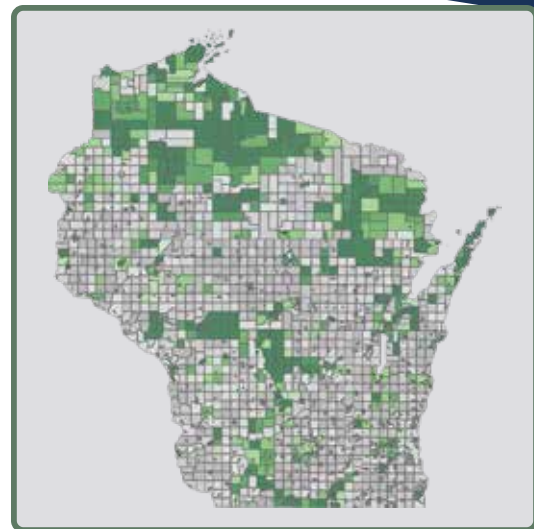
The Challenge: Unfavorable Political Trends

With a Democratic Governor up for re election and contested, late primary between his Republican challengers, Democrats efficiently cleaned out their primary before Election Day and settled on Mandela Barnes, a statewide elected official with more than 1.3 million votes under his belt from 2018.

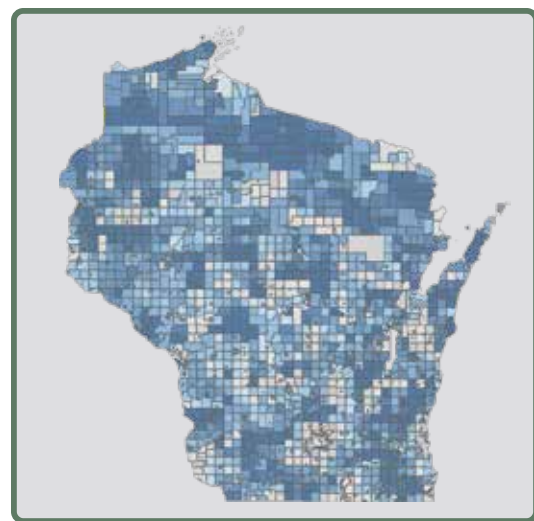
One year out from Election Day, President Biden had a 43-52 job approval in our data, with a comparable 44-51 approval among persuadable voters. This margin continued to get worse through mid-May, bottoming out at 40-52 among all voters and 39-52 among persuadable voters.

After the tragedy in Uvalde, TX and the overturning of Roe v. Wade, Biden's job approval began a sustained climb in our data that put him net positive among 2022 voters by Election Day, and with nearly a 51% job approval rating among persuadable voters by that time. As we saw around the country, national events causing Democrats to realign with their President and persuadable voters narrowing the gap led to the "Red Wave" being something less than advertised.

Senator Johnson defied that trend line. Even while Biden's job approval steadily improved through November 8, Senator Johnson's vote share improbably did the same, with perfect alignment to his 50.5% share of the vote by Election Day. This was not a coincidence, as we saw Democrat candidates for Governor and Attorney General both land roughly around the 51% marker in their own right.



Grassroots Targeting identified 653,717 "persuadable middle" voters that will be key to this election's outcome. On March 6, Ron Johnson trails slightly at 45-46 among these voters, while Biden's job approval with them stands at 44-52.



In August, after Uvalde, TX shooting and overturning of Roe v. Wade, Biden's approval with the persuadable middle improves to 44-47, while Johnson trails 44-50. We redouble our efforts with these voters.

The Solution: Identifying and Turning Our Persuadable Voters

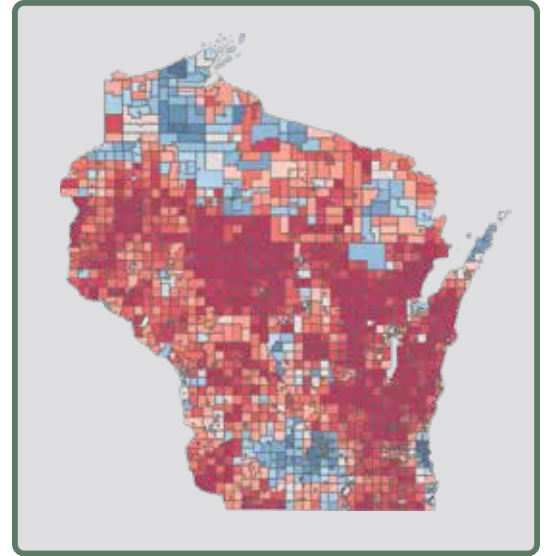
Johnson defied the trend because we identified and tracked throughout the election a series of vital persuadable voters where we needed to generate real and sustained ticket splitting in order to come out on top. We find that, despite Biden's job approval estimated in the 50-43 range among persuadable voters by Election Day, Johnson received the same 50.5% of the vote among these targets as he did statewide.

Our turnout efforts were determinative as well. Wisconsin is a very difficult state to target voters in; demographically it is very homogenous, and the voter file does not reliably distinguish Republican primary voters from Democrats. With no party registration at all, simply knowing who your base voters are (and are not) is a major part of the data analytics battle.

The Result: Victory

In this case, we correctly identified more than 1 million likely Republicans and just under 1 million likely Democrats, leaving less than a quarter of the Wisconsin electorate in the middle. Compared to the 2018 election, we turned out +96,736 more Republicans. Democrats turned out just +59,378 more of their voters, for a net Republican advantage of +37,358. Senator Johnson was re-elected by 26,718 votes. Our turnout advantage likely made up 72 percent of his margin of victory.

While Republicans failed to win key seats nationally and in Wisconsin, Ron Johnson's big win in the Badger State stands out.



By the end of September, we see Johnson campaign efforts are working. While Biden's approval continues to increase (46-47 with persuadable middle), Johnson surges to 49-48 lead among persuadable middle.

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