



TO: **Interested Parties**
FROM: **Heather Williams, President of the DLCC**
DATE: **February 26, 2024**
RE: **DLCC's 2024 Multi-Cycle Investment Strategy**

Republicans have been playing the long game in the states and playing it well. They have used underhanded tactics and gerrymandering to dig themselves into power and they have funneled hundreds of millions of dollars to take over state legislative chambers around the country. Countering these efforts takes resources and investments, and it also requires a clear strategy that sets a long-term path to power.

As the official party committee dedicated to electing Democrats to statehouses across the country, the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee is uniquely positioned to make immediate electoral gains while laying the groundwork to build Democratic power over the many election cycles to come. We are the permanent, year-round presence overseeing work in all 50 states, and we focus our early investments and partnerships to craft the long-term strategy and winning agenda for the state legislative level of the ballot.

And recent elections show our strategy is paying off. In 2016, state Democrats controlled just 29 of the 99 state legislative chambers, but with increased resources and growth for the DLCC, we have fought back and now hold 41 majorities – a significant shift in political power in this country. For the first time in more than a decade, more people live under Democratic trifectas than under Republican trifectas, and those Democratic trifectas are passing legislation to deliver on their promises to voters by protecting fundamental freedoms and fighting for their communities.

As we gear up for the 2024 cycle, the DLCC has a target \$60 million budget – our largest ever – to achieve our most ambitious goals yet. We have a bold, evidence-based plan to win majorities and build a path to 50 chambers by 2030, with clear power-building objectives for every cycle. To make that a reality, the Democratic Party and our allies must think beyond single cycles.

Today, the DLCC is unveiling our 2024 multi-cycle strategy, which outlines our plan to build sustainable, long-lasting Democratic power in the states. This memo outlines how to shift away from cycle-by-cycle thinking and instead prioritize a long-term winning strategy. This path to building institutional state knowledge, creating pathways for resource-sharing, and recruiting the next generation of leaders fuels victory for Democrats at all levels of the ballot. With the future of our country, our fundamental freedoms, and democracy on the line in the states, we must invest in building power and majorities in state legislative chambers.

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DEFINING A MULTI-CYCLE STRATEGY

As we look ahead to 2024, we have opportunities to build our momentum and expand power by investing in cycle-over-cycle opportunities. Currently, much of our 2024 budget will be spent on states where majorities are within reach or must be protected. We don't take any of our majorities for granted and will continue working to defend them while simultaneously mounting aggressive challenges in vulnerable Republican-controlled chambers. Additional resources would enable us to support programs in the states where multi-cycle plays are critical this cycle and where the DLCC has a multi-faceted plan to push deeper into Republican territory where majorities are possible this decade.

That multi-faceted plan includes:

- 1 Breaking Republican supermajorities in states with a Democratic governor.** State Republicans across the country have repeatedly wielded their toxic supermajorities to override the vetoes of Democratic governors to enact their MAGA agenda. To stop this crusade of dangerous legislation from becoming law, restoring the veto power of Democratic governors in red states is essential. The DLCC's 2024 target map includes Kansas, North Carolina, and Wisconsin to break up or prevent Republican supermajorities and empower Democratic governors. Making good on that promise, the DLCC invested \$24,000 in Wisconsin and \$15,000 in North Carolina as part of the first round of battleground investments announced in December. More investments will come throughout the year.
- 2 Pushing deeper into Republican territory to build Democratic power.** States with Republican trifectas are hotbeds for MAGA extremism – they are often the originators of dangerous anti-democratic policy that is then replicated by Republicans across the country. Building infrastructure to elect Democrats in red states that are emerging battlegrounds and where Democrats are winning statewide helps limit Republicans' ability to enact their agenda. Working cycle-over-cycle to gradually chip away at Republicans' trifectas in these states is critical, which is why states prime for political change, like Georgia, are on the DLCC's 2024 target map.
- 3 Setting the stage for new Democratic trifectas.** Many states do not hold elections for governor and a full legislature in the same year, requiring multiple cycles of Democratic success to establish governing trifectas. For example, holding the Senate in Virginia in 2023 was essential for giving Democrats an opportunity to establish a trifecta in 2025, when only the House of Delegates will be on the ballot alongside an open governor's race. Similarly, one of our key target states in 2024 is Pennsylvania, where only half the Senate is on the ballot this year. While we fight to defend our majority in the Pennsylvania House, we know that gaining seats in the Senate this year will be essential for ensuring an opportunity to cement a trifecta in 2026, when the other half of the seats will be up alongside a competitive Governor's race.

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4 Combating Republican gerrymandering. Republicans' sweeping legislative majorities across the country in 2020 afforded them opportunities to draw state legislative maps that undemocratically preserved their party's power. Deeply gerrymandered states like Georgia and North Carolina have overwhelming Republican majorities in the legislature, even though they elect Democrats to statewide office. The DLCC will continue to support our allies' efforts for representative maps across the country, as we continue building infrastructure to elect Democratic legislators that reflect the diversity of their districts and states as a whole.

5 Tracking other races that alter the balance of power in state legislatures. State supreme courts, lieutenant governors, and ballot initiatives can play a powerful role in determining the landscape of power in the states – from redistricting to voting rights. The DLCC has expanded the scope of work we do with our in-state partners, including most recently investing six figures to hold a crucial seat on the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court in 2023. The DLCC will continue to identify opportunities to meaningfully shape the balance of power in states cycle-over-cycle.

6 Taking advantage of special elections. The DLCC is a year-round operation because special elections throughout the year represent critical chances to expand Democratic power in key chambers and across the map, one seat at a time. The DLCC overperformed in special elections by six points on average last year, compared to Biden's performance in 2020. We also kicked off 2024 with an impressive legislative flip in a battleground Florida district and an important majority-deciding hold in Pennsylvania. There are must-win special elections now coming in the Michigan House that will determine the majority. If Republicans win this majority, they'll legislate the state backward as they have in the past; if Democrats win, we'll continue protecting fundamental freedoms and advancing our democracy. Special elections demonstrate why Democrats must pay attention and invest in state legislatures beyond November elections.

SUCCESS STORIES OF MULTI-CYCLE STRATEGIES

The DLCC made history in 2022, and it was not by accident. These midterms were the first time since at least 1934 that the party in power didn't lose a single state legislative chamber in a midterm election year. Not only that, but we flipped four chambers and gained four new trifectas. While we worked incredibly hard in 2022 to secure these wins, they were also a decade in the making and came as a result of years of building infrastructure and bringing the top minds together to strategize winning plans.

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Building Democratic trifectas in Michigan and Minnesota were two of our proudest achievements and examples of our multi-cycle strategy at work:



In Michigan, Democrats gained the first trifecta in [almost 40 years](#) in 2022. In 2016, Michigan Republicans held a whopping 27-11 seat majority in the Senate and 63-47 majority in the House. Because of targeted investments, the DLCC gradually chipped away at Republican majorities, narrowing Republicans' leading margins to 22-16 in the Senate and 58-52 in the House in the 2018 cycle. In 2022, Democrats finally flipped both chambers, earning a 2-seat majority in both chambers. In the 2022 cycle, the DLCC spent \$1.2 million on earning the majority in the Michigan Senate and \$613K on the Michigan House. Since earning their majorities, Democrats passed legislation to repeal an abortion ban, prevent gun violence, enshrine LGBTQ+ protections, and repeal right-to-work. The trifecta has also [strengthened democratic institutions](#) in the state, including passing an expansive set of election reforms and investing in election efficiency.



In Minnesota, Democrats gained their first trifecta [in a decade](#) in 2022 and ushered in the most diverse legislature in state history. That came after years of hard work. In 2016, DFLers lost six seats in the Senate, costing them the majority, and Republicans gained a 76-57 advantage in the House. The DLCC made key investments to build back Democratic power, and in 2018 we flipped back to DFL control of the House. In the 2022 cycle, the DLCC spent \$1 million to successfully flip the Minnesota Senate with a 1-seat majority, and \$1.2 million to preserve a 6-seat majority in the Minnesota House. The DFL trifecta in Minnesota has since enshrined abortion rights into state law, funded free breakfast and lunch for K-12 students, increased health care services, and expanded paid family and medical leave programs. The trifecta also [passed legislation](#) that strengthened voting rights, including allowing former felons to vote, strengthening automatic voter registration, criminalizing voter intimidation, and investing in disability access.

2024 MULTI-CYCLE INVESTMENT TARGETS

After a decade of gaining ground in the states, including historic wins in 2022 and 2023, 2024 will be a pivotal year for state Democrats. The DLCC is ready to defend our gains and go on offense to push further into Republican territory and shift the balance of power in the states. Now is the time to build infrastructure, recruit strong candidates, operationalize campaigns, and develop sharp strategies that center campaigns on the issues that matter most to voters. We cannot win battleground states in the future and protect our democracy without laying the foundation for success now. The path to reach a majority of state legislatures this decade depends on our efforts and investments in 2024.

The DLCC's multi-cycle strategy will be at play in target chambers this cycle including:

- **Pennsylvania Senate:** State Republicans currently hold the majority, 28-22. Following a net gain of one seat for Democrats in 2022, the Pennsylvania Senate currently has its closest margin in a decade, and Democrats need to gain just three more seats to tie the chamber. Half of the seats in the Senate will be on the ballot in 2024, and the DLCC has identified critical opportunities to win seats and chip away at the Republican majority. Capitalizing on opportunities this year will best position Democrats to flip the chamber in 2026, when the other half of the seats will be in play.
- **Wisconsin Assembly and Senate:** State Republicans currently hold a supermajority of 22-10 in the State Senate and a majority of 64-35 in the State Assembly. This cycle, all 99 seats in the Assembly will be on the ballot, as well as half of the seats in the Senate chamber. Though Democrats are competitive statewide in Wisconsin, state legislative maps have been so gerrymandered in Wisconsin that Republicans are dug in deep. With new maps enacted for this cycle, we could see significant gains in the legislature in play for the first time in a decade, and the DLCC is committed to ensuring that we first protect Governor Evers' veto power while building the infrastructure to make gains to eventually flip both chambers.
- **North Carolina House and Senate:** State Republicans currently hold a supermajority in both chambers, 30-20 in the State Senate and 72-48 in the House. All seats in both chambers are on the ballot this year. North Carolina is one of the nation's fastest-growing states and a true purple battleground when voters are able to fairly choose their elected officials. Republican gerrymandering has long played a role in Democrats competing closely in statewide races but not in local races, and the DLCC will continue to push for fair maps as we build infrastructure to gain seats this cycle. To restore the Democratic Governor's veto power, North Carolina's legislators have recruited a candidate in every Senate race and 119 of 120 House races. We're working hand-in-hand with both the North Carolina House and Senate caucuses to continue building infrastructure and supporting these candidates where the opportunities are best.
- **Kansas House and Senate:** State Republicans currently hold supermajorities in both chambers, 29-11 in the State Senate and 85-40 in the House. All seats in both chambers are on the ballot this year. Democrats are two seats away from breaking the supermajority in the House, and three seats away in the Senate. As we target both chambers, Democrats only need to break the supermajority in one to give significant protection to Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's veto power. While the majority is not in play in 2024, our investments this year will make meaningful gains for Democrats' ability to stop Republicans' attacks on fundamental freedoms. As we build infrastructure toward the end of the decade, we'll continue to fight and push to win more seats in Kansas.

- **Georgia House:** State Republicans currently hold the majority in the State House by a margin of 100-78. All 180 seats will be on the November 2024 ballot. Recent statewide elections have shown that Democrats are competitive in Georgia, but state Republicans have a deeply rooted history of voter suppression and racial gerrymandering. As we fight for fair maps, the DLCC has identified opportunities to make gains in the Georgia House this year – but Democrats can only win competitive districts with dedicated attention and resources. As Georgia continues to rapidly diversify, Democrats cannot afford to let opportunities pass us by this cycle to defend and win seats.

CONCLUSION

With fundamental freedoms and the future of democracy being decided in the states, this ballot level continues to be critical for the Democratic Party’s success. The DLCC is fighting every day to set our candidates, partners, and in-state allies up for success because we know that what happens in 2024 will shape the arc of Democratic power in the states for the decade. The critical building blocks begin now – 2024 investments are multipliers that will allow us to continue to build infrastructure in the years to come. There are ample opportunities to make both an immediate impact and an impact towards the ultimate goal of reaching a majority of state legislative chambers by 2030. Investing in races at this level of the ballot maximizes every dollar spent with an outsized impact on policy that affects the lives of everyday Americans.

We have a plan to win the decade that must be funded accordingly. More than ever, an investment in the DLCC this cycle will strengthen Democrats’ ability to capitalize on the wealth of opportunities in 2024 and beyond.