**CANDIDATE TEAMS**

**Campaigns and Elections: Democracy in Action**

Welcome to campaign headquarters for the 2012 presidential election. Money will fly, accusations will run rampant, voters will be convinced and when the dust clears the country will have selected the President. As a team you will be instrumental in helping Americans make that choice.

**Your mission is simple: Win.**

*Getting there is the trick.*

**Here’s what you’ll learn:**

* All about *interest groups* and their real and imagined impact on campaigns.
* All about the *media* and how it establishes the parameters of all elections, sometimes despite the candidate’s best efforts.
* How *candidates* are nominated and how they campaign
* The role of *political parties* in elections
* The electoral behavior of American citizens
* The difference between federal, state, and local *elections*
* The *money* game and how the government tries to control elections to make them more fair
* How to construct an argument that will sway voters
* How to manage the resources of a *campaign*: particularly money and time.
* How to defeat your opponents through rhetorical skill

**What you’ll do:**

You will be assigned to a team that will represent one of the candidates at play in this election. Your task will be to develop and execute a strategy that will convince your teacher and your peers that you not only know your stuff, but that you would have convinced the majority of voters in your district securing your electoral domination.

**What you’ll produce:**

* A stump speech and an analysis of what you must do to win
* A media plan with a campaign ad
* Answers to questions in a primary debate or two (2) campaign ads
* A campaign plan with a campaign ad
* Answers to questions in a general debate and Sunday Morning Spin

**The Race for the Presidency**

**The Current Political State of the Country:**
Democrats had been making big gains in the last 8 years taking control of both houses of Congress and the White House, but losing the House of Representatives. Now the political winds are shifting. Anger over the President’s policies has given rise to an active conservative movement that has been quite successful in pushing more mainstream GOP candidates out, and making compromise less and less appealing to many.

On the Democratic side, many party activists are frustrated with the moderate policies coming out of Washington and are disappointed in the leadership they aren’t seeing. Many of these activists would prefer a more committed liberal to be their nominee, and want the incumbent to represent a more liberal, activist base.

Candidates must establish themselves as true representatives of the people of their state who are not going to be swayed by Washington insiders. They must show they understand the particular issues of their state and have a plan about how they will take those to Washington and demand action.

**The Issues:**

**The Economy**: When Bill Clinton ran for the Presidency in 1992, his mantra was “It’s the economy, stupid!” Now that we’re in the 2012 election cycle, that mantra is equally critical. Voters care the most about issues that impact them personally and nothing is more personal than their paychecks and their bills. The housing crisis has hit a number of communities very hard and job losses are an issue in every state. Candidates need to have a very strong message on the economy that is pretty central to their theme. While Interest Groups are not particularly concerned about the economy as their focus, they should think about how they can support their candidates in making an economic statement.

**The War and Foreign Policy:** The United States is engaged in two wars—in Iraq and in Afghanistan. The wars are very popular among Republicans who see them as a necessary evil in the fight against terrorism. Democrats see these as the wrong wars in the wrong places at the wrong times. Allegations of torture of suspected enemy combatants have only made this worse. While the President has promised that the US will be out of Iraq in a matter of months, he has dramatically increased the number of troops in Afghanistan often to the detriment of states who lose their National Guardsmen and women for extended deployments.

**Social Issues:** Education has been a major issue that has dominated state budget negotiations. While most people believe accountability for teachers and students is a good thing, the new requirements did not come with enough funding attached and school districts are forced to lay off teachers in order to hire testers. For candidates who are governors this is a great wedge issue to show how out of touch Washington is. For candidates in Congress they are going to need to find a narrative that will help them explain why they did not take better care with this issue initially. Another social issue getting play is the robustness of the safety net for people who lose their jobs and slip into poverty. This is another area where state vs federal experience will come into play since so much of the issue is budgeting and access.

**Health Care and the Environment:** Health care has been a perennial issue in American politics for many years, but this year candidates have something concrete to discuss—Obama’s health care plan that passed in the fall of 2009. This plan would require all Americans to have health insurance and would impose tax penalties if they fail to purchase insurance and they meet specific income guidelines. People on the right say this is an incredible denial of individual rights and possibly not Constitutional. Liberals feel that the policy doesn’t go far enough because it doesn’t guarantee health care to everyone, and it doesn’t make it more affordable for people. Both sides still have room to define themselves on the issue as they will be responsible for budgeting for the program and will have the opportunity to repeal the act.

**The Candidates: President Barry Washington (D)**

President Barry Washington has been the United States President since his landmark election in 2008. Therefore, President Washington is an incumbent; he currently holds the office of the Presidency and is running for re-election. Prior to his election, he served as a Senator from the state of Illinois

He has used his time in office to become known as a compromiser, one who will walk across the party lines to try to reach agreements between the opposing political views. President Washington’s policy decisions have addressed a global financial crisis, legislation to reform the health care system, foreign policy initiatives, and dealing with war in Afghanistan and troops in Iraq.

**What he has going FOR him:**

President Washington has had success in a difficult legislative arena. He pushed for major healthcare reform, the end of discrimination against homosexuals in the military, and financial regulatory reform.

President Washington and his administration announced in May 2011 the operation that resulted in the death of the infamous terrorist Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden, the man behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, had been hunted for almost 10 years and President Washington was able to capitalize on the success of this operation.

President Washington has been incredibly popular. When he entered office in 2009, his approval rating was 82%. Throughout his first two years as President, his approval ratings stayed above 50%, often well into the 60% range. He does incredibly well in front of audiences and projects a calm, encouraging demeanor on camera that really works with female votes particularly. The three words most often used to describe him are steadfast, loyal, and compassionate.

**What he has going AGAINST him:**

Policy gridlock in Congress has been a consistent problem for President Washington. Since 2010, the House of Representatives has been controlled by Republicans while the Democrats have control of the Senate. Because he doesn’t take a strong stand on the issues and tries to play the middle ground, he is not usually viewed as a leader. Who wants a follower for President?

President Washington is faced with the slow recovery of the US economy. After pushing for passage of stimulus bill called the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act” in 2009, many Americans expected a quicker economic recovery. Unemployment is still high and Americans are frustrated with the slow progress.

While his favorable numbers are high among moderate voters, his approval ratings have dropped among liberal voters who don’t think he’s liberal enough and conservative voters who are looking to replace him with a Republican leader.

**Notable Supporters:**

President Washington enjoys support from traditional democratic allies and has a fairly easy time raising money from them for his re-elections for the Presidency.

**The Bottom Line:**

**President Washington has an incredible opportunity to make himself the dependable, cautious leader that is needed during this time of chaos but he has to do it fast. If his opponents define him first, he may not get another chance with the voters.**

**The Candidates: Representative Maria Mills (R)**

Maria Mills is a member of the United States House of Representative, representing Minnesota 6th congressional district, and a candidate for the Republican nomination in the 2012 U.S. presidential election.  As the first Republican to be elected to the U.S. House from Minnesota, she has built an impressive record as a supporter of conservative social issues spanning from anti-abortion to banning gay marriage. Mills attributes much of her political ideology to her strong Evangelical Christian beliefs, which shapes her views on education, fiscal, and social policies.

Mills has gained national attention when she was elected into the U.S. House of Representatives as the first Republican from Minnesota in 2006.  Her political activism began when she and her husband were
inspired to join the pro-life movement in 1976.  Disappointed with the recent liberal approach to public policies, Mills ran for Minnesota Senate in 2000, defeating an 18-year incumbent.  Following her political success in the Minnesota Senate, Mills successfully won the 6th Congressional seat with support largely from social conservative backings.  Most recently, she has become the face of the Tea Party Movement.

**What she has going FOR her:**
She's passionate about social issues.  She has a charismatic personality.  Her work with foster children, who have eating disorders, has gained praise and approval from politicians across the political spectrum.  Her devotion to her family resonates well with many conservative American beliefs.

Her voter base loves her.  In the eyes of social conservatives, she has become the leader of their crusade, as a supporter of the Tea Party Movement.  She has gained media attention since announcing her candidacy for the Republican nomination, with her voter base growing as people become disenchanted with the current bureaucracy.

**What she has going AGAINST her:**
The current incumbent president is extremely popular.  She is not as well-known across the nation as some candidates.  While she is wildly popular with social conservatives, others may see her as an rightwing extremist.

While voters in other parts of the country don't know her well, polling consistently shows that Americans don't believe a woman will be as effective as a man in the role of President.  She has to convince them of both women generally and of herself as the right woman for the job.

**Notable Supporters:**
Social Conservatives, Evangelical Christians, women, and Members and supports of the Tea Party Movement.

**The Bottom Line:**

**Mills has a long ways to go to convince Americans that a woman can lead, but if she has a strong political base to help her get started. If she can overcome the stigma of being too conservative, she will have a good chance in winning the Republican Nomination and the presidency.The Candidates: Governor Mike Lewis, (R)**

Mike Lewis has wanted to be President ever since his high school government class and has been building his resume ever since. He started by coming from a good family—his father George Lewis was Governor of Texas and also a cabinet official. Governor Lewis went to the University of Texas where he majored in business. Soon after graduating he opened a construction business that has become one of the most successful businesses in the area. He is known for not only being a great businessman, but also for treating his employees incredibly well. He was elected Governor of Texas after the Republican Party was unable to find a good candidate and drafted him. He ran on an aggressively positive platform and was called “The Golden Boy”. He is fiscally very conservative and cut taxes every year of his term.

**What he has going FOR him:**
As the popular Governor of a state with 34 electoral votes he has the potential to initiate a land slide of an election if he can hold it.

He looks the part; he’s young and has a beautiful family who are the pillars of their community. Because of their work for charity and his business there is no end to the “Mike Lewis helped me” stories which make for great commercials. His Texan roots give him some Southern appeal.

**What he has going AGAINST him:**While Governor Lewis has made few enemies as governor, he also hasn’t made a lot of friends. He doesn’t inspire people and while they like him, they also don’t really remember a lot about him. He’s going to have to get some fire.

He’s not a great public speaker. He’s decent and open to training but that all takes time.

At the beginning of his career he bought out a rival company which made a lot of people unhappy. It wouldn’t take much to find one of these people to accuse him of unethical business practices which he’s never been able to respond well to.

**Notable Supporters:**He’s supported by general Republican supporters—small businessmen, the NRA, and anti-big government groups. If he can prove himself on issues close to social and religious conservatives he could easily become their candidate of choice.

**The Bottom Line:**

**Governor Lewis needs to show Americans that he has a lot more going for him than just his good looks and easy manner. Showing his intelligence on conservative issues and the depth that he has will benefit him tremendously in the national race.**

**The Candidates: Representative Taylor Hanson, (R)**

Taylor Hanson was never interested in politics until about half way through the Bush Administration when he realized that his brand of conservatism wasn’t being represented anywhere. He took his argument to the airwaves in Massachusetts and was then elected to Congress in the most surprising race of the year—he unseated an incumbent Republican in the primary and then crushed his Democratic opponent. He is unexpected, he was the manager of a Wal-Mart before he got into Congress but he has a dedicated group of followers who see him as the only true conservative in Congress at a time when liberalism is run amok.

In Congress he has declined leadership roles because he believes the current party system to be fraught with liars who don’t really want to help America. He instead focused his staff on providing excellent constituent service and publishing regular dispatches called “The Real Washington” where he called out colleagues by name for what he perceived to be crises of conscience. Consequently, his support inside DC is weak.

**What he has going FOR him**:
Congressman Hanson has the most committed group of supporters who routinely give him money and service for his campaigns. There is nothing they won’t do to keep him in office.

Hanson has a strong online fundraising base which allows him to spend relatively little of his time raising money and a lot of his time interacting with voters.

Hanson has a really clear, strong message that resonates with voters in Massachusetts. He is very black and white in his view of issues and is not shy about stating his views. For independent voters who are tired of politicians, he is a breath of fresh air.

Hanson is a compelling public speaker who has a strong story of his own disillusionment with politics over his life. He talks about rekindling his fire through his outreach to other voters just like him in an incredibly compelling way.

**What he has going AGAINST him:**He does not want to convince voters that he’s right on the issues. He believes that voters will either see it his way or they are hopelessly ignorant which turns off anyone who likes his style but disagrees with him on some issues.

He is very distrustful of the mainstream press and sees them all as liberal propagandists. His suspicions often lead to his refusing to work with the traditional press and to only work with bloggers perceived to be on his side.

**Notable Supporters:**
Extremely conservative independents like him a lot. He was supported by the NRA in his Congressional race as well as Pro-Life America. American’s for Tax Reform also support him and send a lot of money his way.

**The Bottom Line:**

**Many voters are looking to be inspired in a Presidential campaign and Hanson has that possibility if his team can convince him to allow some grey to come into the issues. The challenge will be to keep his honesty as they try to smooth his edges.**

**The Strategy Guide**

**Roles:**

Each campaign has three principal actors: the Candidate, the Manager, and the Press Officer. Your first task is to decide who will fulfill which role and to help, please refer to the following job descriptions:

*The Candidate*: The candidate’s job is to get themselves elected. They are the voice and the face of the campaign and will deliver all speeches and prepared remarks as well as grant interviews to the media and attempt to woo interest group support. They have the most public role so any issues with the campaign plan, media strategy, or fundraising will reflect directly on them.

*The Manager*: The manager is responsible for managing the candidate and as such is responsible for developing the campaign plan, the media strategy, and the fundraising plan. Their job is to provide background comments for the media, to coordinate the efforts of interest groups who will help and be the first point of communication for other campaigns to the candidate. The manager is the gate keeper and no one gets to the candidate without their approval.

*The Press Officer:* The press officer’s job is to have all of the information and to support the Manager and the Candidate in using it to get elected. The press officer is responsible for working with the candidate to draft all written statements, to help the candidate prep for the debate, and to provide any information needed by the manager to successfully complete the campaign plan. This role is principally responsible for communicating with the press and working hard to ensure that their candidate is in the news media regularly and that those stories are positive. The also want to make sure anything negative about their opponents is front-page news.

**The Candidate:** No one can make the case better than the candidate and scheduling their time is incredibly tricky. They need to be a part of big events and they need to be prepared for those events.

**People:** Each candidate has a core base of support that will go out and do the so called “foot work” of a campaign: knock on doors and make phone calls to gauge support, sway undecided voters, and get confirmed voters to the polls. The more people you have to do this, the more effective you’ll be in getting your message out there.

**Money:** Money pays for staff. Money pays for ads. Money pays for yard signs. All of these things are necessary to succeed. Incumbent Barry Washington has raised almost $10 million in the last election and opponents will have to compete with that amount in order to even be in the game by getting Interest Group endorsements and Political Party cash.

**Media:**  The media strategy involves not only managing the newspapers and other media outlets, it also includes your online presence, and your radio and TV ads. You need to be mentioned at least once a week by the media. You can create media opportunities such as speeches, press conferences, and rallies and you can also respond to the media opportunities of your opponents.

**The Assignments: Candidate Teams**

**Task 1 Race Analysis and Stump Speech Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

The Task: Each campaign team will draft a race analysis and deliver their stump speech to the class. The Race Analysis lays out what the candidate needs to do to win. The stump speech showcases how the candidate will frame the issues and should be 4-5 minutes in length.

Who can help: The Race Analysis should be the focus of the campaign manager while the candidate and the press officer work on the speech to make sure they will be pushing the same story for the duration of the primary.

**Task 2 Media Plan Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**The Task: Each campaign team will need to draft a strategy memo for how they will deal with the media. This memo should address the five media types involved in this race. Also included in the media plan is your first advertisement for your candidate in the form of a direct mail piece.

Who can help: The media plan is principally the job of the press officer but the manager and candidate need to give final approval. To get full points there must be evidence of collaboration on the final product. While the press officer works on this, the manager and the candidate should be educating themselves in preparation for the debate.

**Task 3 Primary Debate / Two Campaign Ads Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

The Task: For Republicans: The Republican candidates will engage in a 30 minute debate on the issues in order to distinguish themselves from other candidates. Campaign teams will not receive questions in advance so they need to be prepared to answer factually on a variety of issues. The debate will take place in class.

The Task: For Democratic Incumbent: You need to create at least 2 ads (television / radio as you have TONS of money) that will be played on the day of the debate. This is your chance to set the agenda for the upcoming election and spin your last four years.

Who can help: This is a total team effort with the manager and candidate focusing on getting facts and figures, writing possible ad outlines, and working with the press officer to craft a message for the ads.

**Task 4: Campaign Plan Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**The Task: Congratulations to all teams continuing beyond the Primary! Now it’s time to really go after your opponent on the other side and analyze the parameters of the race given the consolidation of the candidates. The campaign plan is to outline how you plan to go after the electoral votes of each state. Also included is your second advertisement for your candidate.

Who can help: This is largely the responsibility of the campaign manager to produce after consulting with the interest groups and their party to attempt to put forth the most coordinated effort possible. The candidate and the press officer are in debate prep as they work on ways to destroy your opponent while ensuring the topics covered are your areas of strength.

**Task 5: General Debate / Sunday Morning Spin Due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**The Task: It’s crunch time. The two candidates will engage in a 40-minute debate with 20 minutes dedicated to issues of domestic policy and 20 minutes dedicated to foreign policy. Questions will come from the media so both teams must be ready for anything! Press Officers and Managers better take good notes, the press officer will be on a panel the very next day dissecting what happened in the debate and working hard to make your candidate look good and your opponent look weak. This is your chance to really get in the game and showcase your knowledge of the issues and what will make your candidate successful.

Who can help: Your party committee should be working hard with you here on your research and debate prep. Your team should be a well-oiled machine by now. Sympathetic bloggers and interest groups may also be willing to share information and questions.