



# Colorado Alliance

SCOTT GESSLER CHAIRMAN

## MEMORANDUM

**From:** Colorado Alliance

**Date:** December 21, 2018

**Re:** Initial Findings

### **Introduction:**

Our election review is ongoing; we continue to interview political leaders, review surveys, collect data, and analyze messaging. To date, we have reviewed a portion of over 1,500 survey responses, interviewed over two dozen political readers, and analyzed a substantial amount of commentary, research, and political analysis conducted by others.

Nonetheless, there remains a lot of work to do. Analyzing 1,500 responses takes time, as does interviewing scores and scores of party activists, leaders, and candidates. But we believe this is the deepest and most thorough post-election analysis ever done by conservatives in Colorado. And it's perhaps the first to ask for many, many grass-roots opinions, rather than rely on a small, sometimes insular group of party insiders.

These preliminary findings are meant to update Colorado Alliance members on our progress. But soon, we will begin offering plans. And then, we hope to start the hard work of winning elections and turning Colorado around!

### **Initial Results:**

1. A large number of grass-roots respondents recognize that we face systemic problems and a lack of infrastructure level.



## Colorado Alliance

SCOTT GESSLER CHAIRMAN

Indeed, a historical review of election results shows that Republican problems extend far deeper than just the 2018 results. Year after year, Colorado Republicans have underperformed the national environment. 2010 and 2014 saw a red waves wash over the country, yet both times Colorado Republicans lost the gubernatorial race, held on to only one legislative chamber by the thinnest of margins, and lost a U.S. Senate race in 2010. Meanwhile a moderate, national blue wave in 2018 became a blue tsunami in Colorado, wiping out every statewide candidate, defeating a five-term congressman, and producing strong Democrat majorities in both legislative chambers. The 2018 losses are the result of repeated failures, over many years.

2. While many pollsters tell us we should be quick to blame Donald Trump, that view might not be entirely accurate.

It is easy to look at Trump's 2016 loss in Colorado and blame the 2018 election results on his unpopularity among unaffiliated voters. And at least one credible survey supports the view that unaffiliated voters chose Democrats in large part because they disliked the president. But it may be a mistake for candidates to simply distance themselves from Trump.

First, our survey responses show that Colorado's conservative grass roots strongly support Trump. And a strong majority believe that our candidates lost in part because they did not fully embrace the president. Indeed, several candidates (and others) reported that disenchantment among conservative voters depressed Republican turnout – many didn't vote because they believed Colorado Republicans did not adequately support President Trump. This may create a dilemma for Republican candidates: Align closely, and lose independent voters. Distance yourself, and lose conservatives.

Second, as a practical matter those candidates who distanced themselves from President Trump lost just as badly as other candidates. Those unaffiliated voters who were motivated by dislike of President Trump did not seem to care whether Republican candidates supported or opposed the president.



## Colorado Alliance

SCOTT GESSLER CHAIRMAN

Third, President Trump will be on the ballot in 2020, and perhaps in 2022. He isn't going anywhere. Colorado Republicans will have to figure out how to approach the President, in a way that retains conservative support yet minimizes losses among those who dislike Trump.

### 3. Colorado Republicans have fallen behind in voter registration.

Republicans talk about voter registration, but year after year they don't do anything about it. And eroding voter registration margins badly hurt Republicans. For the first time, Republicans now lag behind Democrat and unaffiliated voters. Practically, Republicans lost two State Senate races due to an erosion in Republican voter registration. In Senate Districts 16 and 24 the Republican candidate had to get a higher percentage of unaffiliated voters than ever before, because of Republican registration fall off.

Democrats and Colorado liberal organizations maintain full time voter registration efforts, targeting liberal neighborhoods and events likely to attract Democrat-leaning voters. Republicans and conservatives must do the same, but at events likely to attract conservative voters, such as gun shows, country music concerts, Christian music concerts, etc. These are cost effective ways to register conservative voters, and Republicans continue to miss the boat.

### **Final thoughts:**

We continue to analyze the failures of the 2018 election, and by early February we hope to publish the most authoritative analysis ever done by Conservatives in Colorado. Stay tuned!

And finally, I want to personally thank you for your help. Because we need to work together, every step of the way.



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Regards,

Scott Gessler  
Chairman  
Colorado Alliance