

**Party-on-the-Periphery:
The 2008 Presidential Campaign in Mahoning County**

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The political science literature on local political parties and national presidential campaigns gives relatively little attention to the relationship between these two political actors (Hershey 2007). This paper addresses this lacuna by looking at the interaction between the national Democratic presidential campaign and a particular Democratic local party in five presidential elections, the most recent being 2008. The locale is Mahoning County, Ohio, a key Democratic county in a battleground state.

Between 1992 and 2008, the Democratic presidential campaigns found ways to obtain grassroots services for voter registration and mobilization in Mahoning County, a key element of party activities in the “service” model (Aldrich 1995). However, the presidential candidates obtained these services in different ways with different degrees of integration between the presidential campaigns and local party organizations. This variation ranged from a highly integrated effort to a lack of integration, with numerous permutations between the two types. The 2008 Obama campaign represents one of these variations, a separate, single purpose organization created to advance the presidential candidate, and one that put the local party organization on the periphery of the campaign.

Mahoning County is a good source of case studies on such issues because of the colorful history of local Democrats. The Mahoning County Democratic Party became a major player in Ohio politics, in 1949, when Jack Sulligan (1949-1975) took control of the organization and teamed with long-serving Congressman Michael Kirwan. Statewide and presidential candidates paid court to the local party, which was an effective grassroots organization. A successor to Sulligan, Don Hanni (1978-1994) attempted to maintain this organization but with less success.

Nonetheless, statewide and presidential hopefuls banked on heavy voter turnout in the county where Democrats outnumber Republicans by nearly a six-to-one margin.

In 1994, Hanni was toppled by “Democrats for Change,” a group of reformers that waged an extraordinary campaign that elected a majority of precinct committee members. One of the reform leaders, Michael Morley (1994-2000), became chair and brought the local party into service of the statewide and presidential campaigns, including a sophisticated grassroots effort in 1996. By 2000, Morley had passed on the local organization to a hand-picked successor a fellow reformer and township trustee, David Ditzler (2000-2003), who was unable to maintain the same level of sophistication. Similar problems haunted his successor, another fellow reformer and the party’s operations director, Lisa Antonini (2003-2009). The local party was much less central to the grassroots efforts, in 2004, and largely absent in 2008.

Despite the local leadership and style, the area remained central to the political fortunes of statewide and presidential candidates. However, the party’s role differed from one presidential race to another. What follows is a brief description of the various permutations of the Democratic Coordinated Campaign in Mahoning County, and then a description of the 2008 campaign.

The Democratic Coordinated Campaigns in Mahoning County

The Democratic Coordinated Campaign has been described as “an infrastructure designed to mobilize the vote” (Corrado 1996:69) that was developed in the 1980s as part of the DNC’s modernization efforts (Herrnson 1990). Eventually the concept was extended to all levels of the party organization, but it has retained a special emphasis on integrating the presidential campaign with state and local party organizations as well as down ticket candidates

and interest group allies (Trish 1994). In Mahoning County, the Coordinate Campaign took different forms between 1992 and 2008.

Reliance on the Local Party in 1992. The 1992 Coordinated Campaign was an oddity, as there were essentially two parallel operations in Mahoning County. The “official” campaign was headquartered at Chairman Hanni’s downtown law office and run by his hand-picked field director. The “unofficial” campaign was housed at Michael Morley’s law office in an upscale suburb. Morley and his law partner, David Engler, were laying the groundwork for their revolt against Hanni in 1994, “Democrats for Change.” Bill Clinton’s presidential advance team shuttled between the two offices, campaigning at the “official” headquarters and strategizing at the “unofficial” one (Binning, Blumberg, and Green 1995). Hanni carried on the bulk of the campaign, a “labor-intensive, street-level politics” (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2003: 204). This is the kind of campaign Hanni waged in 1988 on behalf of Michale Dukakis, and in both 1988 and 1992, the Coordinated Campaign achieved a moderate level of integration between the presidential and local party efforts. But, in effect, the Clinton campaign delegated the local campaign to the local party organization(s), with only modest and informal integration with the presidential campaign itself. Bill Clinton carried the county by 3,540 votes, with Ross Perot siphoning 29,417 from both major parties (Ohio Secretary of State 1992).

A Highly Integrated Effort in 1996. In 1996, reform Chairman Morley orchestrated a Coordinated Campaign that remains unmatched in sophistication and integration with the presidential effort. Morley, for a time, wielded influence with the presidential campaign not seen since the Sulligan era. So important was the Morley organization that he was able to marshal extensive support from the Clinton White House, including patronage in the form of a

\$115 million Federal Aviation Administration grant to expand the Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 1999; Galvin 1997). Armed with the “rich patronage plum” (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 1999: 154) and the respect of Ohio Democratic Party chair, David Leland, Morley helped create a political juggernaut that resulted in record increases in both targeted and untargeted precincts in addition to all city wards (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 1999). This campaign was also a model on integration of the local organization with the state organization and the presidential campaign. Mahoning County delivered Clinton close to a 62 percent majority (69.8 percent of the two-party vote), which was 15 points higher than his statewide margin and more than a 10-point increase from four years earlier (Niquette 1996; Ohio Secretary of State 1996). These results occurred with Perot still on the ballot and drawing considerable support.

A Weakly Integrated Campaign in 2000. By 2000, David Ditzler, Morley’s anointed successor and Austintown Township trustee, was at the party’s helm. Unlike Hanni and Morley, Chairman Ditzler was a part-time chair and was unable to devote as much attention to the 1996 campaign. In addition, this was a campaign fraught with problems. At the local level there was infighting among local party activists and ongoing investigations into political corruption, which ultimately resulted in the conviction of more than 70 elected officials and attorneys, including Congressman James Traficant (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2003). As a consequence, many of the local party faithful were “disillusioned” (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2003: 204). At the state level, Chairman Leland “was underutilized by the Gore/Lieberman campaign and not given credit for his understanding of presidential politics in the Buckeye State” (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2003: 205). And the national campaign operatives turned a deaf ear to locals, as the

outsiders assumed they were more politically savvy than those who had been working for years in the local political trenches. The schism resulted in micromanagement, strained communications, overlapping activities, and no long-range planning. In sum, the 1996 Coordinated Campaign was disarray and only weakly integrated with the national effort (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2003). As a consequence, Al Gore fell 3,504 votes short of Clinton's 1996 total, while Bush picked up 9,063 votes more than Dole had garnered. (Ohio Secretary of State 1996, 2000).¹

Outsourcing GOTV Services in 2004. In 2004, much of the grassroots effort in Mahoning County was "outsourced" to new organizations, such as Americans Coming Together (ACT). The result was three separate campaigns with the goal of mobilizing voters for the Kerry-Edwards ticket. In part due to the campaign finance laws, ACT, the presidential campaign, and the local party organization waged an "uncoordinated" campaign.

ACT mounted a three-pronged effort to take back the White House: a massive voter registration drive, a voter canvassing program, and an aggressive GOTV campaign. Organized labor developed a sophisticated 10-point program, "Take Back Ohio," which included personal visits to homes of all AFL-CIO affiliated members and an impressive GOTV push (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2007). The Kerry-Edwards campaign had several local centers of operation, one "official" office, an additional center set up to manage an influx of volunteers and other resources late in the campaign, and the local party headquarters. However, local chair Lisa Antonini, the successor to Ditzer, was hampered by a full-time county job, limited personal

¹ See Blumberg, Binning, and Green (2003) for an in-depth analysis of the 2000 Coordinated Campaign in Mahoning County, Ohio.

resources, and waning interest by her fellow reformers. In addition, she devoted what resources she had to unseating the juvenile court judge who was appointed by Governor Bob Taft to fill an unanticipated vacancy. Even leaving organizations such as ACT aside, the 1996 Coordinated Campaign had “multiple power and management centers” (Blumberg, Binning, and Green 2007: 194). Despite this lack of integration, John Kerry won the county with 63 percent of the two-party vote, getting nearly 14,000 more votes than Gore received in 2000. George W. Bush, however, picked up an additional 8,301 votes over his 2000 total (Ohio Secretary of State 2000, 2004), which helped neutralize Kerry’s county and statewide gains.

A Separate, Single Purpose Campaign Organization in 2008. In 2008, Barack Obama rewrote Coordinated Campaign “rules” on two levels. First, the campaign rewrote “the rules on how to reach voters, raise money, organize supporters, manage the news media, track and mold public opinion, and wage—and withstand—political attacks, including many carried by blogs that did not exist” (Nagourney 2008) in previous presidential elections. It also rewrote the rules on the Coordinated Campaign, replacing the integration between the presidential candidates and local parties with a novel kind of integration: the integration of resources and activities in a separate, single purpose organization. This innovation left the local party organization on the periphery of the presidential campaign. The backdrop to this innovation lies in the 2006 election in Ohio.

The Perfect Storm(s)

Prior to the 2008 presidential primary, Ohio Democratic Party (ODP) chair Chris Redfern, executive director Doug Kelly, and targeting and field director John Hagner, briefed the media on the party’s plan to put Ohio in the blue column regardless of the eventual presidential

nominee. Fresh from the 2006 party sweep of four statewide offices (governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and treasurer) and gains in the state legislature, they were convinced the trend would continue through the presidential election if the 2006 strategy was followed to the letter. The key was to court those who voted for George W. Bush, in 2004, then, in 2006, voted for Ted Strickland and Sherrod Brown (Spinelli 2008). Kelly and Hagner—the latter masterminded Sherrod Brown’s win over Mike DeWine—unveiled *The Perfect Storm*, which was to serve as the model for 2008.

The report explained that the new approach was to “build from the bottom up, not the top down, and that collaborative approaches using data, tools, technology and strategic assistance” (Spinelli 2008). It cited Kerry’s failure to carry 72 of the 88 counties, in 2004, and vowed that 2008 would be different, noting that Strickland won 72 counties and Brown carried 30 counties in 2006 (Spinelli 2008). Traditionally, the ODP has banked on Democratic strongholds, such as Cuyahoga, Lucas and Mahoning counties, to compensate for losses in rural areas. The ODP aimed at cutting into the vote in exurban areas lost by Strickland and Brown and appeal to the 2006 crossovers. The idea was to concentrate on issues important to the area voters rather than make the election a referendum on personalities (Spinelli 2008). Under Redfern’s leadership, the ODP had developed the resources to implement such a strategy: staff had increased eightfold from five full-time employees to 42, and the state party had invested in sophisticated technology, which allows it to target the “community level” and “individual households” (Spinelli 2008).

Ohio Republican Party chair Bob Bennett, in response to the party’s 2006 losses said, “Democrats took advantage of a perfect storm.” (Karfield 2006). Two years later, and slightly

over a month from the presidential election, another perfect storm hit. Larry Sabato said, “The fundamentals of this election year could not be more Democratic. You’ve got a terrible economy, a deeply unpopular president and an unpopular war. You put these elements together and it’s going to produce a Democratic victory. . . . The only question is what size” (Sherman 2008).

In 2008, Governor Strickland first schooled Hillary Clinton in the Ohio presidential primary, and then Barack Obama at the Democratic Convention on how to win Ohio. He said they could try the Kerry-Edwards method by focusing on metropolitan strongholds or do it the Strickland-Brown way by including “suburban cities and counties as well as the rural areas” (Miller 2008b). The Obama team adopted the blueprint that was implemented jointly by the campaign, the ODP, and its interest group allies, including organized labor (Rosen 2008).

The Campaign for Change

The Obama campaign established two organizations with which to carry out the ODP’s plan for winning the 2008 general election in Ohio.² The first was fairly typical, a state-level division of the national campaign, “Obama for America.” The second was unusual: The campaign and the ODP jointly established a separate, single purpose campaign organization called the “Campaign for Change.” The Ohio chapter of Obama for America handled the “air war” and candidate appearances, while the Campaign for Change handled the “ground war,” including direct mail, telephone banking, voter registration and GOTV. The Campaign for Change integrated volunteers and other resources from the presidential campaign, allied

² This section relies heavily on Coffey et al. 2009.

interest groups, and country party organizations into a single campaign organization. It eventually had 24 regional field directors, 71 local offices plus about a dozen local auxiliary offices opened late in the campaign. In turn, the local offices supervised some 1,200 teams of grassroots canvassers, with approximately one canvasser for 50 targeted voters.

The Campaign for Change was built from the “bottom up” but directed from the “top down.” The Obama campaign was in control of the operations but worked in close cooperation with the ODP. In fact, the ODP created the Campaign for Change, including all purchasing and hiring authority. Not surprising, the Campaign for Change mirrored Strickland’s 2006 winning team (as did much of the Ohio divisions of Obama for America). When possible, the ODP sought to tap local activists to staff the Campaign for Change and serve as canvassers as they were more trusted than outsiders. The combined experience of these Ohio state and local level activists proved to be an invaluable asset to the Obama campaign; however, the Campaign for Change also included operatives recruited from out of state and it was not above ignoring local leaders and their opinions.

At the state-level, all three centers of activity—Obama for America, the ODP, and the Campaign for Change--were in constant communication, with five to ten telephone calls a day between the principals. Largely because of this high level of cooperation at the top, the Campaign for Change operated as a cohesive unit at the local level, with almost no contact with other organizations. In this sense, the Campaign for Change fulfilled the concept of the Coordinated Campaign. It avoided the problems of relying on local party organizations (and their internal factionalism) as well as the problem of having multiple uncoordinated efforts (as in 2004). It also achieved a high degree of integration—not of partisan organizations, but of

partisan activity and resources at the grassroots. Indeed, the ODP and local party organizations continued to operate on their own for other purposes, such as election of state legislators and local candidates. In this sense, the Campaign for Change violated one of the concepts of the Coordinated Campaign.

Another key feature of the 2008 campaign was finances. Obama's decision to forego general election public financing and his ability to raise a record breaking amount on money provided the Campaign for Change an unheard of level of campaign resources. All told, the Campaign for Change spent \$25 million in Ohio, with some \$15 million provided directly by the Obama campaign. These funds provided 300 paid staffers in the state and supported at least 10,000 volunteers. The ODP invested approximately \$400,000 for software to help it understand and target "voters through polling, computer modeling and micro-targeting [using] consumer and demographic data," drawing heavily on the technical expertise of the Obama campaign and the DNC (Rosen 2008). The Campaign for Change organization produced 48 unique pieces of direct mail, 27 unique telephone calls, 400,000 home visits, and 1.5 million large, glossy door hangers to homes throughout Ohio, with details on the exact polling place for each voter, including the street address (Coffee et al. 2009).

Former ODP chair David Leland, the architect of the Clinton wins in 1992 and 1996, said, "I'm telling you I have never seen the kind of ground game the Democratic Party is putting together this year, just in numbers, size, intensity and enthusiasm" (Torry and Riskind 2008). But the truly unique feature of the campaign was the single purpose nature Campaign for Change. The Obama campaign and its allies, including the ODP, built the Campaign for Change apart from the permanent structure of the Democratic Party with its own resources, strategy,

operatives and activists with the capacity—and some times the desire—to operate without the advice and special knowledge of the local party organizations. To paraphrase Frank Sinatra: The Obama campaign did it their way.

The 2008 Coordinated Campaign in Mahoning County

From the perspective of Mahoning County politics, the presidential campaign was as “uncoordinated” as in 2004. James Lewis, a field organizer at the Canfield and Sebring Campaign for Change offices, recalled little formal interaction between the Obama operation and local party. According to Lewis, the Ohio Campaign for Change staff was discouraged from working with the county party (Lewis 2009). He noted that “[w]ith the exception of accidentally coordinated activities, the Mahoning County Democratic Party and Obama campaign operated independently.” This extended to voter registration drives, campaign events, and GOTV activities. The only instance he recalled when Campaign for Change and formal party operatives mixed involved a one-day training seminar in Columbus. Both teams were encouraged “to mobilize potential Obama supporters as well as the Democratic base” (Lewis 2009). Once everyone went into the field, the Obama campaign and party organization operates functioned separately.

The Mahoning County Democratic Party may have had even less interaction with the Campaign for Change than other local party organizations. This is because Chair Antonini’s relationship with the ODP was strained. In 2005, she backed Dennis Lieberman over Chris Redfern for state party chair and, in 2006, she backed Michael Coleman over Ted Strickland in the gubernatorial race. Her candidates lost on both occasions. Antonini claimed she was “excluded from state party politics” (Skolnick 2009) after voting against Redfern, but Refern

explained it differently. He said that she distanced herself from the state party by not attending any executive committee meetings since he won the chairmanship (Skolnick 2009). According to a party insider, Antonini was “blacklisted” by both Strickland and Redfern who have long memories. In 2008, she exacerbated the rift by openly backing an independent candidate who ran against the popular Democratic county prosecutor. She lacked the resources to make amends. The stage was set for a nearly complete sidelining the county party in the presidential election directly and indirectly via the Campaign for Change.

The peripheral role of the local party organization was apparent in other respects. The Obama campaign had three offices, Boardman (the suburban hub operation), Canfield (the reddest suburb in the county), and Sebring (the outer county), with some 35 paid staffers. The non-presidential ODP operation was housed at Democratic Party Headquarters in downtown Youngstown. The Mahoning Valley Campaign for Change field coordinator who was also based at county party headquarters had to clear everything with the head of the field director for the Obama campaign in Mahoning County. Although they spoke daily, there was always an element of secrecy. For example, the advance team would ask her to find venues for events, but no one would tell her who was coming to the area. According to some reports, she often felt as though she was marginalized.

There were negative consequences of keeping the local party out of the loop. Attendance was low at all campaign events, save for the 1,500 people who came to see Bill Clinton. David Skolnick, *The Vindicator* political writer, said if it were not for organized labor, senior citizens, and school children, some events, such as Joe Biden’s area visit, would have been lucky to draw

100 people. The major problems were poor scheduling and the inability to rouse the party faithful in Mahoning County.

The relationship between the local Campaign for Change Obama campaign staff and Mahoning Democratic chair was almost nonexistent. An insider said, "If Lisa [Antonini] would have walked into Obama Headquarters, they would not even know who she was." Indeed, the county party chair had no role in the presidential campaign except for speaking at select rallies. She attended most events, but was not seated with the VIPs. As one person put it, "She was not on the Governor's list."

The separation also was evident with regard to information sharing. It was a one-way arrangement with the Obama campaign not sharing new voter information with the county party, but the local party providing the Obama campaign with its list of elected officials, area labor and business leaders, and campaign volunteers. The lists were annotated with rich information, such as who should be invited to events and who was dependable.

The Campaign for Change discouraged its paid staff from networking with the local party operation so it could concentrate on meeting its voter contact goals. According to Lewis (2009), job performance was based on the number of houses visited, completed phone calls, volunteers recruited, and commitments to vote early. Like Obama for America, the Campaign for Change had a singular goal: Elected Obama. The Mahoning Valley Campaign for Change operation focused primarily on local contests. Some party volunteers migrated to the Obama campaign, although most opted to stay downtown at party headquarters. The separation continued through Election Day. The Campaign for Change regional field director was instructed to rent office space for 35 attorneys who were deployed from out-of-state to check

voter turnout in all precincts against the Democratic Performance Index (DPI). They sat at their laptops watching for signs of vote fraud.

The traditional coordinating of the presidential and with down-ticket campaigns was largely absent from the local Campaign for Change. Obama's campaign and the ODP had announced congressional and state legislative candidates would be included in the GOTV effort.

Canvassers were supposed to ask voters for whom they planned to vote then the information would be entered into the party's database that could be used for targeting (Miller 2008a). The Obama campaign omitted all other contests from its local phone banking script, although the party left some candidates on its. The same was true for literature drops: The Obama for America volunteers only distributed Obama campaign materials, while the party volunteers included Obama's hand-outs in their packets. Chris Bowers, *Open Left* editor, noticed the contradiction in Iowa, and wondered if the same would hold in Ohio (*Ohio Daily Blog* 2008, July 8). The ODP responded almost immediately with a memo, "Unprecedented Cooperation between the Obama Campaign and the Ohio Democratic Party" (*Ohio Daily Blog* 2008, July 10), which outlined the joint efforts. The down-ticket races were not addressed in the memo (Potts 2008) unless one counts the technology infrastructure and voter registration.

The ODP "Neighborhood Leader Plan" was an elaborate blueprint to energize the electorate. An army of Neighborhood Leaders, who were tantamount to unelected precinct captains and ward leaders, was expected to network with a "family, friends, co-workers, neighbors," (Ohio Democratic Party n.d.), and congregants to discuss the importance of electing the Democratic slate. Specifically, the volunteers were asked to go door-to-door to speak with targeted voters and identify potential voters; arrange an event in their homes or communities;

and, provide the state party with data for VoteBuilder (ODP's voter file). The coded walking lists indicated whether the person should collect information for the presidential race or include congressional, state legislative, and other down-ticket candidates (Ohio Democratic Party n.d.). This helps to explain why down-ticket contests were omitted from the ODP memo because some canvassers could include down-ticket races in their scripts and others could not.

GOTV efforts were kept separate, save for training. The Campaign for Change had its own detailed plan for walking precincts and phone banking, which did not include the state- and local-level ODP operation. This caused an unnecessary overlap as well as hard feelings within the local party ranks. Numerous party faithful who had been instrumental in many presidential elections felt ignored by the Obama campaign. The local Campaign for Change included mostly people with little knowledge of Mahoning County and Ohio politics. Several Obama workers encouraged family and acquaintances to volunteer in the county, which "inadvertently perpetuated the separation" (Lewis 2009) between the two camps.

The Obama campaign's success at young voter outreach on college campuses and local communities is evidenced by the increase in voter turnout among 18 to 29 year-olds and their overwhelming support for the Democratic presidential ticket (Abramowitz 2009). The campaign, however, had its problems at Youngstown State University (YSU). According to Joni Koneval, YSU College Democrats president, the student organization and Obama staff "got off to a good start, but the relationship deteriorated rather quickly." The first Obama staffer assigned to campus was from South Carolina. He worked closely with the group, and understood constraints under which students groups operate. Two of the three who replaced him "didn't care" about University regulations, such as signage locations and using campus food

services. Koneval warned them about the possibility of being sanctioned, but the response was, “This is the way it is done on other Ohio campuses.”

She is convinced that it would have been easier to coordinate activities, such as voter registration and rallies, with hometown volunteers rather than “outsiders.” The rift resulted in the College Democrats breaking from Obama for Change, and creating its own group, Students for Change. Approximately one-half of the College Democrats membership wanted nothing to do with the Obama staff. According to Koneval, the YSU College Democrats were virtually ignored at campaign events, including when Obama visited the area. The cleavage led to other problems. The Obama campaign mounted early voting efforts, which fizzled. It tried to convince commuter students to leave campus in a large white van with a “stranger” so they could vote at the Board of Elections. Another plan was to have students sleep outside the Board of Elections, which is in a high-crime area, so they would be there when the doors opened. Students were rightfully leery of both plans.

Unlike the local party organization, labor unions were a linchpin of the Campaign for Change in Ohio as in other industrial states. Its twofold strategy centered on convincing union households and nonunion white working class voters to support the Obama-Biden ticket (Russo 2008). Working America, the AFL-CIO campaign organization, had 200 paid staffers on the ground in Ohio. The SEIU has another 175 paid organizers who targeted African-American areas, while groups like MoveOn and the Public Interest Research Group covered the suburbs (Russo 2008). Ohio union voters were lukewarm about Obama: Just 58 percent of union members voted for him as compared to 71 percent in Michigan and 68 percent in Pennsylvania (Russo 2008). According to John Russo (2008), YSU Center for Working Class Studies director,

area union members who staffed phone banks met with resistance from UAW and building trade members when asked to vote for Obama. Working America was more effective in mobilizing nonunion households to vote for Obama than it was convincing union members to vote for him. Russo (2008) suggests that race may have played a part in Obama's poor showing among Mahoning Valley union members, but there is no hard evidence to support the claim. However, campaign watchers report that the Obama campaign showed little respect for area union leaders, never learning their names or what unions they headed. The Mahoning Valley Campaign for Change field director invited them to press conferences and campaign events, acknowledging their importance to Democratic fortunes.

Party-on-the Periphery in 2008

In many respects, Obama's innovative presidential campaign bypassed the Mahoning Valley, and certainly bypassed the local party organization. Some local pundits question whether the Obama campaign really cared about Mahoning County, as Clinton carried it in the primary 13,076 to 9,611 (Ohio Secretary of State 2008a). Even if Obama had ignored the county, chances are he would carry it with at least 55 percent of the two-party vote, and his time would be better spent in Cuyahoga (Cleveland) and Franklin (Columbus) counties where there are more voters. Three pieces of evidence refute the claim: Obama staff remained in the area after losing the Ohio primary, and did not leave until after Election Day; the Campaign for Change maintained three area offices with 35 paid staff at the central location; and, on Election Day, Obama for America had 35 attorneys working in the county as a precautionary measure. Obama cared about the Mahoning Valley, but conducted the campaign on his own terms. Even

so, the persistence of the view that Obama did not care about Mahoning County is evidence of the hard feelings left behind by the Campaign for Change.

There were more tangible costs as well: Although Obama carried Mahoning County by a large margin on his way to a narrow win at the state level, he fell more than 4,000 votes short of Kerry's Mahoning County total and McCain best Bush's 2004 showing by nearly 600 votes (Ohio Secretary of State 2004, 2008b). Obama only received about the same margin in the county as Gore and Kerry, with comparable levels of turnout. In 2008, Obama received higher margins in four other counties: Cuyahoga (Cleveland); Franklin (Columbus); Lucas (Toledo), and Summit (Akron). This level of performance in Mahoning County might have made a difference under other circumstances; however, more important, it reveals the weakness of integrating resources and activities, but not organizations in a presidential campaign.

The Campaign for Change represents another variation in the relationship of presidential campaigns to local party organizations, namely the creation of a separate, single purpose campaign organization that draws on both the endowments of the state party and the presidential candidate's own campaign operation. The 2008 Obama campaign is an unusual version of the Coordinated Campaign. It is quite different from the highly integrated organizational effort of the 1996 Clinton campaign and somewhat weaker 2000 Gore effort. It also is a far cry from the "uncoordinated" campaign of 2004, when the Democrats outsourced their local services to ACT and other interest group allies.

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