

INDIA WALTON CASE STUDY

Won 2021 Democratic primary
for mayor of Buffalo, New York



OVERVIEW

India Walton, a young Black woman and democratic socialist, ran a progressive campaign against four-term incumbent Byron Brown.

Brown was first elected mayor of Buffalo in 2005 and won re-election three times. Until 2021, Brown had won the four preceding Democratic mayoral primaries by an average margin of 26.5 percentage points.

- ✓ Brown won 2017 Democratic primary by 51.62 – 35.17% margin
- ✓ Walton received endorsements from the Working Families Party of New York, which had endorsed Brown in all of his previous runs for mayor

CHALLENGE

Walton was an unproven, first-time candidate going up against a well known sitting mayor. Brown had plenty of cash on hand, as well as existing endorsements and support.



Lack of fundraising infrastructure

Although excitement surrounded Walton's campaign, there was a clear need to build structure and strategy to reach donors



Establishment war chest

Brown was a four-term incumbent, with the backing of statewide leadership and local name recognition.



SOLUTION

Using targeting, GAC developed and implemented creative solutions to expand Walton's donor pool, reaching a large group of progressive donors.

Donors who focus on progressive insurgent campaigns

With Walton running as a self-described democratic socialist, GAC capitalized on donors who give to progressive insurgent campaigns, challengers, and DSA supporters. Donors were also identified through their significantly higher likelihood to give to progressive Black women in New York.

Leveraging small-dollar donors

GAC identified frequent, small-dollar donors to give – and give often – in Walton's challenge of Brown.

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"She's got a national following that she can raise from and that's only going to grow. We've seen in Democratic politics that people who are willing to send \$5, \$15 once are often really willing to do that again and it's a source for an awful lot of fundraising."
Jack O'Donnell, Democratic analyst

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RESULTS

Utilizing different variables for targeted outreach, with a particular focus on small- and mid-dollar DSA donors nationwide to help develop creative call time sheets and strategies, GAC was able to help Walton and her team enhance their early fundraising operation, resulting in:

- ✓ Boosted fundraising from \$35,957 raised to \$289,000 raised – a **703% increase** – from one filing report to the next after signing with GAC
- ✓ Ability to capitalize on Walton's community trust and activism when connecting with small-dollar donors outside of Buffalo
- ✓ Nearly \$178,000 in donations received in the three weeks following Walton's win over Brown

