

RELENTLESS

Relentless: Making the South Competitive with Paid Relational

Our plan to leverage paid relational to expand Democrats' Senate map and path to 270 electoral votes

Overview

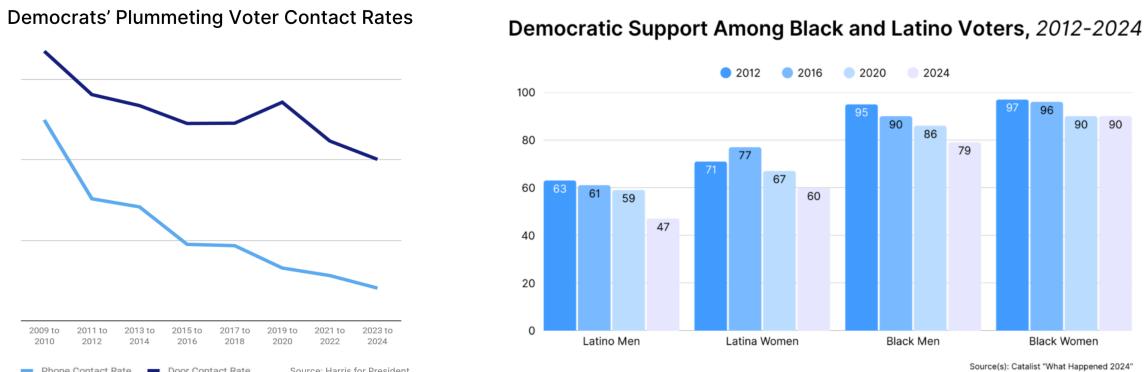
Relentless paid relational programs hire tens of thousands of low-turnout target voters and compensate them as they persuade and mobilize their friends and family to vote. From its origins [flipping the Senate in 2021](#) to its deployment of [30,000 participants across battleground states in 2024](#), this model has been proven to work, specifically among populations that traditional voter contact struggles to reach: young people, people of color, low-income voters, and low-propensity voters. As we run these programs, we build a durable social graph of critical voters that can be activated year after year.

In 2026, Relentless will take this program to the most critical battleground states (**Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin**) and begin its expansion into the next generation of battlegrounds, starting with **Mississippi**.

This program is positioned to win critical races right now, while also laying the groundwork of a durable organizing infrastructure that persists and gets more cost-effective cycle-over-cycle. **The goal of this program over the next decade is to expand Democrats' Senate map, elect Democratic governors, win critical downballot races, and widen our path to 270 electoral votes.**

Why paid relational – and why right now

Trump's 2024 victory was powered by a more racially and ethnically diverse voter coalition than in 2016 or 2020 ([Pew](#)). Meanwhile, Democrats are struggling to successfully reach and persuade voters. We're seeing this reflected in our polling and our contact rates: Democrats are losing support across every demographic, while experiencing lower-than-ever contact rates at the doors and on the phones.



(Source: DNC 2024 data, Chaotic Era 2024 report)

Democrats cannot win back voters that we cannot even reach – and the voters that we do reach are increasingly unlikely to change their beliefs or behavior based upon a single conversation with a stranger. We must invest in reaching voters through their personal relationships, which we know are the strongest and most consistent drivers of ideological and behavioral change. That's what Relentless paid relational programs do: **effectively reach, persuade, and mobilize critical low-information, low-propensity voters, not just once but cycle after cycle.**

Our timeframe to act is limited. Democrats are on track for generational Senate losses; we're at risk of becoming the permanent minority party at the federal level. In 2026, 20 out of 22 Republican Senate seats up for election are in states that Trump carried by at least 10 points in 2024 ([New York Times](#)). Democrats' only chance at taking back Senate control is to widen our map, investing in new states with the long-term goal of making them competitive.

Democrats are also expected to lose 9 electoral college votes in safe blue states in the 2030 census, dramatically narrowing our path to 270 ([New York Times](#)). We need to expand our battleground states map *now* to make new states competitive in order to win future presidential elections.

It's time to pivot from defense to offense. Instead of only running programs in existing battleground states to protect seats or win currently competitive elections, **Relentless is ready to make a historic investment in “offensive battlegrounds” across the South with the long-term goal of making them competitive in the 2032 and 2036 presidential elections and flipping Senate and governor seats.**

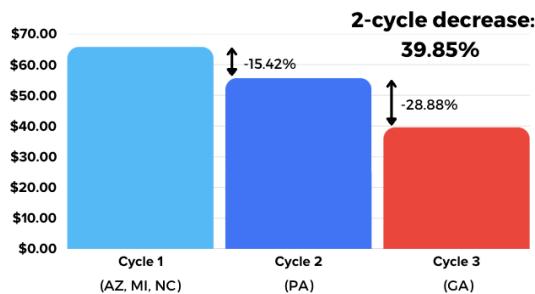
Relentless' paid relational program model

Relentless is a pioneer in paid relational programs, first piloting the tactic on Jon Ossoff's 2021 Senate runoff election. This program model is uniquely equipped for the challenge of organizing in the South, with demonstrated success at achieving the three major pillars required: reaching

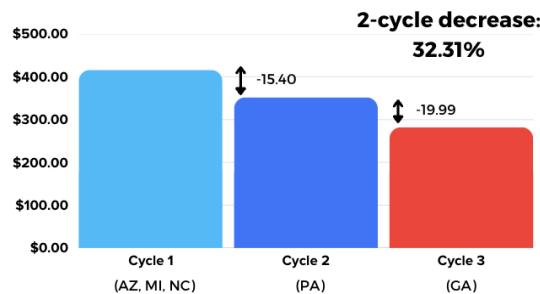
the voters we need to reach, effectively persuading and mobilizing even low-information and hard-to-reach voters, and building a permanent infrastructure – in this case, in the form of a social graph – that can be activated cycle after cycle.

- Reaching the right voters:
 - **Hard-to-reach voters:** A 2022 RCT of our program in PA found that over half of the voters reached by our program did not have contact information in the voter file, so were unable to be reached by door or phone.
 - **Black voters:** On average, over 75% of Relentless participants identify as Black. In our 2023 Mississippi program, Black voters made up 87% of participants and 82% of contacts.
- **Persuading:** Relentless programs have been found to effectively persuade voters to support Democrats by as much as **6.8pp**.
- **Mobilizing:** Relentless programs have been found to increase turnout among low-turnout voters by **1.4pp - 2.2pp**. A 2022 RCT also found that Relentless programs increase turnout in participants themselves by **9.0pp**.
- **Multi-cycle gains:** In 2024, a study of cycle-over-cycle paid relational investment in our program states found that in states receiving a multi-cycle treatment, the cost per net Democratic vote decreased by an average of **18%** each year that the program ran in that state, demonstrating that relational investment builds durable infrastructure that pays off in both the short and long-term.

COST PER APPLICANT



COST PER NET DEM VOTE



You can read more about these graphs and the above-referenced studies [here](#).

Paid relational programs work by recruiting low-propensity voters, delivering in-depth civic literacy and persuasion training, and compensating them as they talk to their friends and family about the importance of voting in an election and voting specifically for Democrats.

Over the past three election cycles, Relentless has run paid relational programs across 8 battleground states, building a force of **50,000 activated low-propensity voters who have mapped 1.5 million friends and family** in Rally, Relentless' relational platform.

Our plan: expanding into the South in 2026

Over the course of the next decade, beginning in 2026, Relentless will run paid relational programs in targeted Southern states around statewide elections. These programs will persuade and mobilize hard-to-reach voters with the goal of flipping Senate seats across the South.

We do this by systematically eroding Republican majorities via aggressive statewide relational programming that cycle-over cycle narrows the statewide margin, increases the number of registered target voters, pervades target communities with civic literacy and voter education resourcing, and trains and incentivizes community members to repeatedly engage in persuasion conversations with contacts over the course of multiple years. In doing so, we will build a warm social network that scales at a progressively lower recruitment cost each cycle.

This plan starts with significant investment in Mississippi in 2026, where Relentless is ready to leverage its existing social graph of 74,230 voters; depending on funding, we can also expand into Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina. Relentless will also continue its multi-cycle persuasion and mobilization investment in the traditional battlegrounds of Georgia, Michigan, and North Carolina.

Mississippi

In 2023, Relentless ran a program in Mississippi for the gubernatorial race. Our program reached 74,230 voters, 82% of whom were Black, and over 50% of whom had not voted in the last gubernatorial race in 2019. This program contributed to the closest margin achieved by a statewide Democratic candidate since 1999. Our Mississippi network has continued to stay actively engaged with Relentless in the years since, despite their disproportionately low average propensity score.

In 2026, we'll run a fully-fledged offensive program for the Mississippi Senate race.

Republican Cindy Hyde-Smith is running for re-election; she was reelected in 2020 with only 54.1% of the vote. We will leverage our existing social graph of 74,230 voters and expand this network by recruiting additional participants for a total program size of 5,000 participants and a program reach of 230,000 voters. The total budget for this program is **\$2,201,298**.

We will also use our Mississippi program to refine and measure our offensive battleground model and identify key metric guideposts to inform our projections as we expand into additional offensive states for 2028. Specifically, we will learn the percentage participant growth we can expect year over year within this state profile, as well as what year-over-year per-applicant and per-NDV cost decreases look like in nontraditional battlegrounds.

State	Cost	Participants	Voters reached	NDVs	CPNDV
Mississippi (2026)	\$2,201,298	5,000	225,000	10,755	\$205

AL, LA, SC Pilots

With the infrastructure and staff in place to power Mississippi's scaled 2026 program, we can expand to roll out initial statewide pilots in Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

- **Alabama** has open seats for Senate, Governor, and Attorney General. Republican Senator Tommy Tuberville is running for governor of Alabama in 2026, opening the US Senate seat; Republican Governor Kay Ivey and Attorney General Steve Marshall are term-limited and ineligible to run for re-election.
- In **Louisiana**, Republican Senator Bill Cassidy is running for his third term as US Senator; however, Cassidy's vote to convict Donald Trump in his second impeachment trial has led to primary challenges against him and may make him vulnerable.
- In **South Carolina**, Lindsey Graham is up for reelection for the US Senate. The governor and attorney general races will be open seats: Governor Henry McMaster is term-limited and ineligible to seek a third consecutive term, and Attorney General Alan Wilson is retiring to run for governor.

Small pilots: These pilots can be added at no additional overhead cost, only the operational costs of hiring and compensating participants. At a cost of **\$510,383** per state, we can recruit and compensate 850 low-turnout voters who will reach a total of 38,250 friends and family.

Program	Cost	Participants	Voters reached	NDVs	CPNDV
Small pilot	\$510,383	850	38,250	1,828	\$279

2026 budget by state

State	Cost	Participants	Voters reached	NDVs	CPNDV
Mississippi	\$2,201,298	5,000	225,000	10,755	\$205
Alabama (add-on)	\$510,383	850	38,250	1,828	\$279
Louisiana (add-on)	\$510,383	850	38,250	1,828	\$279
South Carolina (add-on)	\$510,383	850	38,250	1,828	\$279
Total	\$3,732,447	7,550	339,750	16,239	\$230

What we need now

In order to implement the Mississippi program, as well as any additional add-on states, Relentless needs funding by early 2026.

By April 1, 2026, we need \$79,688 to be able to run our Mississippi program. We then need two tranches covered by July 1 and September 1, 2026. The initial \$79,688 covers our operations and first round of participant recruitment; the July and September tranches expand to cover additional participant recruitment, participant pay and processing.

Any additional state pilots (AL, LA, or SC) need to be funded by September 1, 2026. We can also intake late money after September 1, 2026 to add participants to any funded state, without needing to add any overhead costs to the program.

Amount needed by April 1, 2026 (Mississippi)	\$79,688
Amount needed by July 1, 2026 (Mississippi)	\$630,687
Amount needed by September 1, 2026 (Mississippi)	\$1,490,924
Amount needed by September 1, 2026 (Alabama - optional)	\$510,383
Amount needed by September 1, 2026 (Louisiana - optional)	\$510,383
Amount needed by September 1, 2026 (South Carolina - optional)	\$510,383
Total	\$2,201,298

Broader 2026 program

This is part of Relentless' broader 2026 paid relational plan, which will run paid relational programming in Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. This program has three programmatic tracks: Statewide Battlegrounds, Taking Back the House, and Southern Expansion (this plan). Funders may direct their investments to the overall program or to a specific programmatic track.

- [Statewide Battlegrounds](#): We will engage low-propensity voters in GA, MI, NC, PA, and WI to persuade and mobilize their personal networks to vote in key congressional, senate, and gubernatorial races. Read the full plan [here](#).
- [Taking Back the House](#): Within our statewide programs, we will run a dedicated program to hire a minimum of 750 additional participants in 11 critical House districts: MI-03,

MI-07, MI-08, MI-10, NC-01, PA-01, PA-07, PA-08, PA-10, WI-01, and WI-03. Read the full House plan [here](#).

Budget by fund	
Statewide Battlegrounds	\$22,761,664
Taking Back the House	\$4,230,194
Southern Expansion	\$2,201,298
Total	\$29,193,156

Appendix: A generational persuasion opportunity

Republicans' 2025 budget bill presents a unique, specific opportunity to persuade voters against Republicans. This generationally harmful bill directly attacks low-income Americans and Americans of color – the exact voters reached by our paid relational programs.

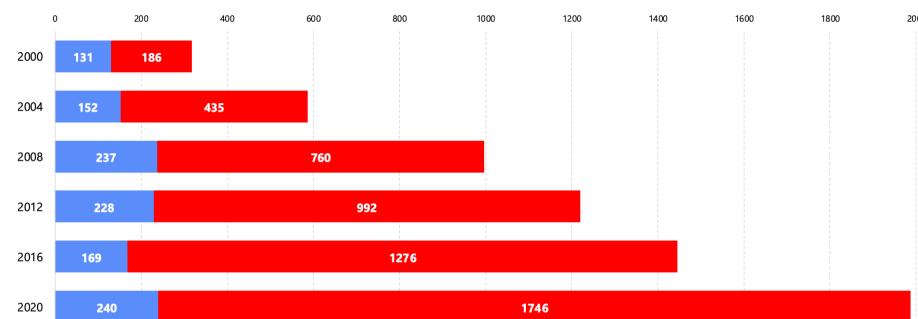
In our paid relational programs over the next decade, we will connect the real-life negative impacts of this bill – rural hospital closures, cuts to Medicaid, families losing access to SNAP – to Trump and to Republicans, using this legislation not just to win elections short-term but turn today's generation of low-income voters against Republicans.

Our paid relational programs will continue to place an emphasis on recruiting and reaching low-income, low-propensity voters of color – specifically Black voters and young voters. These are the voters Democrats have lost ground with over the past decade, and this program is specifically designed to win them back through persuasion and messaging delivered through trusted messengers (their friends and family). Relentless paid relational programs have one of the highest persuasion effects of any program or tactic: a 2022 RCT found persuasion effects of 6.8pp, and an analysis of our 2024 program found that we moved votes to Kamala Harris by an effect of 5.5pp.

We will also tailor our persuasion messaging specifically to these voters, particularly Black Americans. This budget bill is specifically harmful to the Black community – Black Americans rely on services like Medicaid, SNAP, and federal student loans at [higher rates](#), and cuts to them will disproportionately burden these communities and their families. We also know that the number of Americans who rely on government aid has increased significantly since 2000, and that counties where these voters live [overwhelmingly vote](#) Republican – presenting a chance for us to erode GOP support by doing consistent, long-term persuasion around the real-life devastating impacts of this bill.

The number of Americans who are reliant on government aid has increased significantly since 2000

County voting shows that these areas overwhelmingly support Republicans



Significant assistance equates to 25% or more of a county's total person income

This is also a unique persuasion opportunity because most Americans today don't know what's in this bill ([Priorities USA](#)) – and early data shows that when people learn what's in this bill, they are not in favor of it (a June 2025 [Quinnipiac](#) survey found that just 27 percent of voters were in favor of the bill, compared to 53 percent who opposed it). This provides Democrats with a persuasion opportunity, specifically among our paid relational participants and the voters they reach – other low-information, low-propensity voters, predominantly voters of color – not just now, but over the next decade, as the real-world impacts of the bill affect the lives of these economically vulnerable Americans and their families.

State	% of pop. on <u>Medicaid or CHIP</u>	% of pop. on <u>SNAP</u>	% of pop. below <u>poverty line</u>	People who will <u>lose health care</u> under GOP bill
AL	24%	15%	16%	73,000
LA	42%	18%	20%	210,000
MS	27%	13%	19%	63,000
SC	24%	11%	15%	99,000

Our paid relational programs won't just disseminate anti-Republican messaging as a persuasion tactic. We will also train our participants to talk to their networks about how Democratic candidates and policies will improve their lives, specifically economically, at both a federal and local level.

By building out this social graph of critical voters, we can also poll these voters frequently and accurately, filling one of the most stark and consequential gaps in Democratic polling (low-turnout voters are disproportionately young, low-income, and people of color; they are [less likely](#) to participate in surveys, potentially skewing results and misrepresenting their preferences). We can engage with these voters repeatedly, through messengers these voters trust; we can also hear about what these voters care about and what they're hearing online and offline, especially in an age of active misinformation and disinformation campaigns.