


Politics matters. A lot.

This assertion might strike as the epitome of obviousness, but when it comes to Earth Day, there is a tendency to get away from the hard work of blocking and tackling and more toward thinking about Our Relationship With The Earth on a conceptual level.

At this point, I'm sick of concepts. No Administration has ever threatened the planet more than this one; together with a Supreme Court that often seems devoting to destroying environmental law, that puts defenders of the planet on the back foot. My philosophy is if you are frustrated at powerlessness, you should start thinking about ways of getting some power.

That is where the Environmental Voter Project comes in.

EVP has what seems to me to be a highly effective model for voter engagement. Use big data to identify voters who care about the environment. Here is an excellent six-minute video about how it works:

That might seem odd, but it isn't. Why do you get certain ads in your social media feeds and not others? Why do some vendors and companies contact you and not others? Because they know your buying and viewing habits, scooped up by data mining.

EVP does this with voters. It has developed an algorithm about which voters will

tend to care about the environment: usually young, often people of color and.or women, who have purchased certain kinds of products and services and consume certain kinds of media. (An obvious example might someone who has an REI membership),

But here is the twist: it does not try to identify all of those voters, but rather the ***low-propensity*** ones. Probably every contributor on this page would come up in an algorithm to identify pro-environmental voters, but EVP does not care about us and for a very good reason: we all vote.

EVP's strategy is to contact those voters and get them to vote. It does not attempt to persuade them to vote for or against a particular candidate. *It is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit: it cannot and does not endorse candidates.* It just tries to get people to vote. The idea is to get the Law of Large Numbers to kick in, so that the majority (perhaps even the supermajority) of the voters it contacts will vote for the more pro-environment candidate.

***But wait!!*** Why in the world would this matter *now?* The election was last November, and people forget about things. Patience, Grasshopper: in states all over the country, there are state and local elections. Earlier this month, there was a crucial election for state Supreme Court in Wisconsin (where Elon Musk spent more than $20 million and came up with absolutely nothing to show for it). In large parts of Michigan, there are school board elections coming up.

And if we can get low-propensity pro-environmental voters to vote in low turnout specials, then the odds are very high that they will vote in bigger elections. Voting is a habit, and a sticky one: if people get used to voting, then they will vote on a regular basis.

The thing I really like about EVP is that they rigorously test their models with randon controlled studies: in every election, they use 20% of their target as the control group, and then test to see voter turnout between treatment and control groups. They also track voter behavior over several cycles to see the results, and make those results public.

I was particularly impressed when, a couple of years ago during another hotly contested Wisconsin Supreme Court race that attracted national attention, EVP said it would stay out. Why? Because it didn't care? No: because *they could not find sufficient low-propensity voters to use their model.* It would have been very easy for

them to have raised money for this, but EVP didn't. I respect that.

Of course this all requires money, but it also requires labor. And that is where you come in.

EVP is now calling voters for special and local elections in Michigan and Texas. It needs your help to call these voters, and help them to vote. It is running phone banks especially for Earth Week. It needs you. Register to phonebank here.

I know: you hate phonebanking. So do I. But it's a lot more effective than going on an Earth Day hike, or even going to a symposium. Politics matters. If it were easy and comfortable, then it would have been done already. Register here.

And importantly, I have found that phonebanking with EVP is a very user-friendly way to do it. I don't have to persuade a voter whom to vote for (again, as a 501c4, EVP cannot do this). All I have to do is give them information and help them make a voting plan. People actually often appreciate it.

The rock band Ten Years After, only a few months after the first Earth Day, famously sang "I'd Love To Change The World/But I Don't Know What To Do."
Problem solved!! You now know what to do! ***So do it.***