

## Catalist for Victory

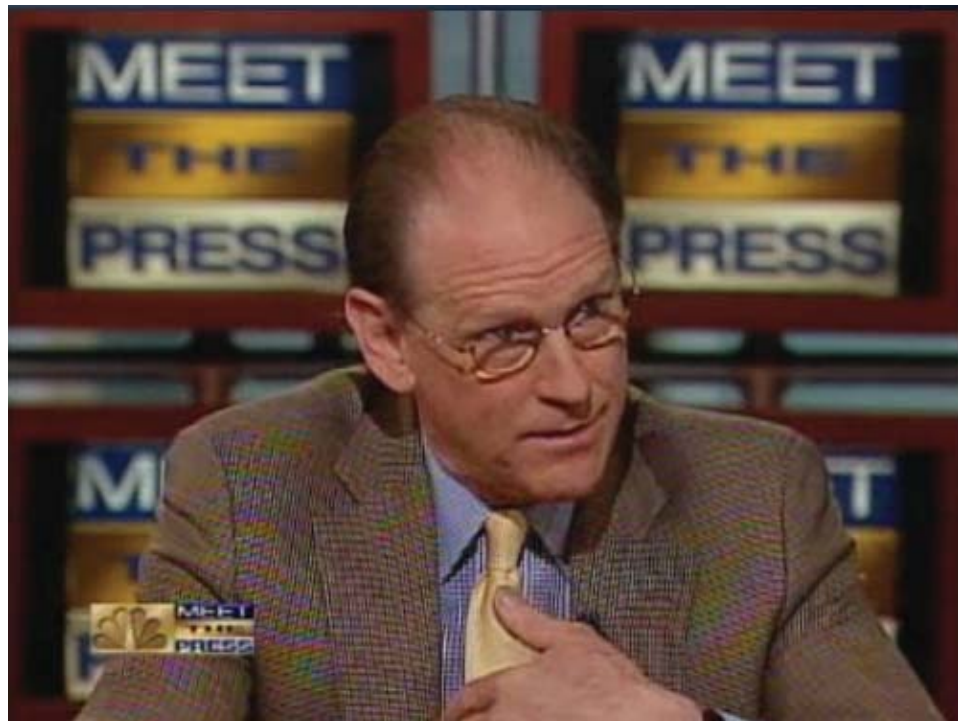
### *How Nonprofits and Unions Have Struggled to Re-elect President Obama*

By Neil Maghami

*Summary: Supposedly nonpartisan nonprofits on the Left and their union allies have exploited the latest “microtargeting” technology as they’ve worked feverishly to elect Democrats. The most powerful weapon in their arsenal is Catalist LLC, a state-of-the-art data firm that services both “nonpartisan” nonprofits and every would-be Democrat officeholder who can afford it. (Note: This study went to press shortly before the election.)*

Winning in war, quipped a Southern leader in the Civil War, is all about getting to the battlefield “firstest with the mostest.” That’s a formula for victory in presidential politics, too. When it comes to mustering all possible support on Election Day 2012 for the Democratic Party, unions and tax-exempt left-wing groups have played a critical role in the party’s get-out-the-vote strategy. Since 2006 a high-tech operation called Catalist LLC has helped both unions and tax-exempt groups fine-tune their electoral influence to the point that they may well provide the Democrats the edge they need.

Catalist boasts it was vital to President Obama’s 2008 victory. By its own admission, “over 90 organizations, campaigns and committees” used the company’s services. “Based on data that was loaded into the Catalist databases and then standardized,” a Catalist analysis of the 2008 cycle says, “progressive organizations, the Obama campaign, and federal party committees attempted to contact more than 106 million people. This means that the progressive community attempted to



**Harold Ickes: mob lawyer, political power broker, president of Catalist LLC.**

contact over 46% of the U.S. adult population. Contacts were delivered in-person, over the phone, by mail and over the internet.”

Catalist says that “data stored by all progressive groups (over 90 organizations, campaigns and committees) working with [us] in the 2008 cycle shows that presidential [voter] ID activity alone reached 15,452,954 people—a difference of over 80% [compared to 2004]. Overall, Catalist customers were responsible for generating over 7 million voter registration applications. They completed over 127 million contacts to over 49 million unique individuals. Of these individuals, 28 million voted on Election Day, representing

over 20% of all votes cast. Furthermore, 82% of progressive activities occurred in 16 highly contested states. Progressives contacted 37% of all the people who voted in the 16 battlegrounds.”

### November 2012 CONTENTS

Catalist for Victory  
Page 1

Briefly Noted  
Page 8

# Organization Trends

If this is what Catalist and its allies could achieve in 2008, imagine their goals for 2012, after four more years of refining their techniques. This edition of *Organization Trends* examines the who's, why's, and how's of Catalist. We'll also explore Catalist's link to George Soros, the Left's Daddy Warbucks. And we'll look at some of Catalist's known customers in the 501(c)(3) tax-exempt community and among labor unions.

## What is Catalist?

According to its website ([www.catalist.us](http://www.catalist.us)), Catalist is

the data 'utility' to support progressive organizations—large and small; local, regional, and national; advocacy, issue, and election focused. We compile, enhance, store and dynamically update person-level data for the entire U.S. adult population and provide the tools and expertise necessary to plan, analyze, and execute data-driven progressive programs.

As a unique national data consortium, Catalist provides an unparalleled combination of dynamically updated data from billions of actual individual civic

behaviors collected from widely diverse sources synthesized into easy to use and potent variables for targeting your communications.

Catalist maintains a 270+ million 50 state and DC database of voting age persons that combines the best in class commercial data with the most rigorous and thorough national voter file. Catalist is nationally recognized for the superior quality of its voter database, and has distinguished itself nationally for world-class database matching ability.... We carry data on more than 180 million registered voters, including their party registration, vote history, as well as other variables from official voter rolls, such as date of birth, registration date, race, and political geography. Unregistered adults are also carefully screened, and Catalist carries over 85 million unregistered adults. We then combine the best commercial, census, and specialty data available, producing over 700 fields of data for modeling and analysis purposes.

Catalist, a for-profit company, was created in 2006 after the Democrats' electoral wipeout in 2004. Left-wing activists felt Republicans owed George W. Bush's re-election victory to heavy investments in voter contact technology, including databases.

Harold Ickes, a former Clinton aide, can claim credit for Catalist's creation. As Sasha Issenberg writes in *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*, Ickes's arguments in 2006 for a "data utility" found a receptive audience in billionaire George Soros, the first to commit \$1 million to the new venture. Ickes says Soros wanted to help Catalist because he "comes from the European mentality and I think he was very enthusiastic about voter contact, much more than media—he didn't give the back of his hand to media but thought voter contact was something that we ought to, as progressives, get involved in."

Issenberg continues the story: "When clients signed on [in 2006], Catalist account

representatives would ask for old voter IDs compiled from canvassers and phone banks. The best-case scenario was often being introduced to a desk drawer filled with records from past elections that the groups had never synthesized into a permanent file. In Catalist's hands, each individual ID would be another data point that the algorithms could use as they profiled individuals. Catalist's 'ballots cast' table—the simple voter-file category of who voted in which election—quickly had well over a billion pieces of data."

Soros wasn't the only person enthusiastic about this new approach. The leadership of the now-notorious Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) was so taken with Catalist that they rhapsodized about it in a 2006 internal document. Under "Goals and Objectives for 2007," ACORN declared "our access to sophisticated data has taken a giant leap forward through our involvement with the [data] warehouse Catalist." Catalist's services would augment ACORN's already-strong ability to produce "research on eligible voting age populations, voter turnout, and voter demographics."

## Catalist and "the real world of politics"

The nonpartisan Campaign Finance Institute (CFI) at George Washington University highlighted some important aspects of Catalist's work in a 2009 report, taking a "top-down" view of Catalist's activities. This top-down perspective is vital, because if you think of Catalist merely in terms of its client base, or its funders, you miss the larger story of how it works to enshrine the political power of the far Left in Washington.

The report emphasized that America's "campaign finance regime" is so complex that it "obscure[s] political reality and obstruct[s] coherent thought about" how that regime works:

Real world political actors see the world more clearly. An instructive example is provided by Catalist, a three-year-old limited liability corporation which produces a national database of approximately 230 million voting age Ameri-

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cans. This voter file integrates data on individual voting history with consumer information, helping campaigns define their target audiences and produce effective messages.

What conclusion can we draw? (Admittedly, this may not be CFI's intended conclusion.) In the "real world" of politics, Catalist is a key, perhaps even central element, in a well-thought-out, well-integrated strategy to mobilize specific interest groups on behalf of partisan interests seeking power. Catalist is serious about its goals, clear-eyed about who it has to mobilize, and what instruments it can use to mobilize them.

## How Catalist works

To understand how Catalist works with unions, nonprofits, and political campaigns, let's look at a real-life example using a Catalist client—the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). SEIU has praised Catalist's aid in the 2008 election:

"Over the past two years, Catalist has become such an integral part of the way in which [the SEIU] communicates with our members and the general public on politics that it is now truly indispensable. Catalist's talented staff and enriched data have helped SEIU target the right voters in the right place at the right time when it really matters."

In the 2008 cycle, Catalist provided data services to SEIU. This means, for example, that as SEIU collected voter ID information from its voter contact list work, the union updated the information gathered to a Catalist database. Catalist, in turn, helped SEIU analyze this data so that the union could better focus its outreach efforts.

In its internal analysis of its 2008 work, SEIU uses the example of Indiana to show how Catalist helped SEIU concentrate its energies and boost voter turnout for Obama. Using Catalist's breakdown of voter information and projection of voter behavior, SEIU

concentrated on "infrequent Democratic voters" and "African American and Latino voters," particularly in two key congressional districts.

"Based on the targeting model built through Catalist, SEIU members knocked on 118,765 doors, made 186,145 calls and registered 14,003 voters" in these two districts. Armed with Catalist's analysis of voter information, SEIU could direct its efforts where they would most aid Obama. Catalist significantly improved the accuracy of SEIU's outreach.

Did Catalist's assistance make a difference? SEIU certainly thinks so: "In a state [Indiana] where Obama won by only 25,836 votes, our work in Lake County made a difference. There were 23,000 more Democratic votes in 2008 than in 2004, combined with 4,000 fewer Republican voters." And "in Indiana, after subtracting the work of the Obama campaign, more than 40 percent of all voter contact was done by SEIU. SEIU also had large shares of unique contacts in other highly contested states, including New Mexico (30 percent), New Hampshire (15 percent), and Oregon and Colorado (10 percent)."

Based on Catalist's nation-wide post-election analysis, SEIU believes its 2008 voter contact efforts:

- \*increased vote share for Obama by about 1 percent to 4 percent;
- \*increased Obama favorability by about 5 percent to 6 percent;
- \*decreased McCain favorability by about 8 percent to 10 percent;
- \*increased the belief that Obama is better suited than McCain to deal with the issues of jobs and economy by 7 percent to 9 percent; and
- \*increased the belief that Obama is better suited than McCain to deal with the issue of healthcare by 2 percent to 5 percent.

In the 2008 cycle, SEIU claims over 3,000 members, leaders, and staff "voluntarily took time off of their jobs to go into the field" and work for Obama's victory. "They were joined by more than 100,000 of their fellow nurses, janitors, childcare providers and other workers who volunteered after work and on weekends in battleground states and districts."

## What is microtargeting?

To understand how Catalist and its data services help SEIU deploy resources more efficiently, we need to understand "microtargeting." We all know the blizzard of ads, phone calls, and door-knocking campaigns that both parties bring to bear during presidential election years. "But in races decided by one or two percentage points, or less," Stephen Baker writes in *The Numerati*, "the party that pinpoints a few thousand individual voters here and there could come out on top." That realization has fueled an emerging industry of political number-crunchers who try to identify pockets of in-play eligible voters and then help campaigns fashion winning appeals to them. This "microtargeting" is Catalist's specialty.

One of the best definitions of microtargeting appears in *Dancing without Partners: How Candidates, Parties, and Interest Groups Interact in the Presidential Campaign*:

Microtargeting combines voter registration information (some demographics, party registration, voter history) with data collected through large surveys seeking to identify likely supporters [of a candidate]. This additional information includes demographic information such as marital status, number of children, religious affiliation, and religious observance. Policy views on topics likely to impact voting behavior are also included in such surveys. Together, the combined database allows parties and interest groups to microtarget specific audiences.



# Organization Trends

Once you have a large enough database, you can segment the population into subunits. For example, the Nathan Cummings Foundation's 2009 update to its "Roadmap for a Progressive Majority" document divided the U.S. voting population into no less than 15 subgroups. The paper helpfully adds that "working in partnership with Catalyst, LLC, we now have the ability to help progressive groups find individual voters in each of the 15 segments on the ground."

The five voter segments most closely aligned with the Democratic Party were called: "Engaged Optimists"; "Adamant Activists"; "Fast Lane Progressives"; "Marginalized Fatalists," and "Hopeless Dreamers." Those segments most opposed to the Democrats were "Town Square Sociables"; "Obedient Shelter-seekers"; "Self-assured Champs"; "Consistent Conservatives"; and "Country Club Patriots." Finally, swing voters were divided into five streams: "Non-ideological Neighbors"; "Unleashed Materialists"; "Resigned Believers"; "Practical Opportunists"; "Anti-authoritarian Tribalists."

This approach creates an incentive for competing candidates to stop appealing to the general public (or average voter, if you like), and instead take more of a single issue approach. MoveOn's Eli Pariser has written, "if a congressional campaign can determine [which issue is] most likely to persuade me, why bother filling me in on all the other issues?"

In addition, the fewer voters one is trying to reach, the less attractive TV commercials become and the more reliant campaigns become on direct mail and other tactics less public in nature (and therefore less likely to come under direct media scrutiny).

Whatever long-term effects these developments may have, the important point for this article is the way microtargeting lets campaigns and candidates identify different messages for different demographic groups and then shape appeals to voters through email, regular mail, phone messages, etc. For the Democratic Party, this increases the value of interest groups, whether they are unions,

churches, or nonprofit groups active on issues like the environment or abortion.

And it makes Catalyst, which can help all these groups sharpen their appeal to their supporters, valuable indeed.

## Who funds Catalyst?

Who funds Catalyst? We already mentioned George Soros's \$1 million seed money. We also know the shadowy Tides Foundation has assisted unknown parties to shift money to Catalyst, to help subsidize the cost of Catalyst's services to unspecified nonprofits. Tides disclosed \$1,025,000 in funding to Catalyst in 2006; \$1,008,880 in 2007; \$801,000 in 2008; nothing in 2009; and \$811,823 in 2010.

Another source of information on Catalyst's links to activists comes via the IRS Form 990s that all tax-exempt bodies must file annually, disclosing the "five highest compensated independent contractors that received more than \$100,000 of compensation" from the nonprofit. For example, Sierra Club disclosed it paid Catalyst \$200,000 in 2008 for serving as a "data provider." In an endorsement that once appeared on Catalyst's website and has since been taken down, the Sierra Club described Catalyst as "an invaluable resource that has helped us better pinpoint the targeted universes we need to reach according to the specific theme and messaging of our programs."

The League of Conservation Voters' Education Fund disclosed that it paid Catalyst almost \$265,000 for a "voter list." The National Abortion Rights League and Planned Parenthood are also known clients, though how much they've paid Catalyst is not public knowledge.

In another endorsement that no longer appears on Catalyst's website, Planned Parenthood and its Action Fund called Catalyst "an indispensable tool for targeting voters, supporters and even volunteers. Using Catalyst, we were able to build a national model of pro-choice women voters, then reach a million of these women in targeted states to help elect Barack Obama, make substantial gains in Congress...."

Although not a Catalyst client per se, the U.S. Justice Department has a link to the company worth noting. In March, the department ruled that a Texas law requiring voters to show a state ID card violated federal law. Justice's lawyers claimed the state law effectively disenfranchised Hispanic voters. A court battle between Justice and the state government ensued.

During that court battle, according to a July 5, 2012 letter from Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas) to Attorney General Eric Holder, "the Department of Justice hired ... Catalyst to provide the data by which it is justifying its decision to block implementation of Texas' voter identification law. According to reports submitted by the government's expert witnesses in the case of *State of Texas v. Holder* ... the Department of Justice directly paid Catalyst to provide the data on which the Department's experts based their analysis." (Smith is referring to Harvard academic Stephen D. Ansolabehere, retained by Justice to bolster its case against Texas; Ansolabehere acknowledged using Catalyst data in a formal deposition.)

Charged Smith: "Though Catalyst is technically a private, for-profit company, it is really an agent of the Democratic Party. And Catalyst's involvement in the Department's election law litigation against Texas creates a clear conflict of interest." Smith expressed concern as well that "nothing in the record indicates that the Department conducted an open bidding process when it obtained Catalyst's data services."

## Who is Catalyst?

**Harold Ickes, President** – former top aide to President Clinton; described on Catalyst's website as "an architect of the President's 1996 re-election campaign (the first successful re-election campaign of a Democratic president since FDR), the 1996 Democratic National Convention, and the 1997 Presidential Inaugural"; trained as a lawyer, with particular expertise in election law and labor law (on the union side).

CRC editor Matthew Vadum has observed that "as a lawyer Ickes represented Local

100 of HERE (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union) which DiscoverTheNetworks reports 'was jointly controlled by the Colombo and Gambino crime families.' He acted for the Gambino-controlled New York City District Council of Carpenters, and for Teamsters Local 851, 'which ran the air freight rackets at JFK airport for the Lucchese crime family.'" Vadum quotes Dick Morris on Ickes: "Whenever there was something that [Bill Clinton] thought required ruthlessness or vengeance or sharp elbows and sharp knees or, frankly, skullduggery, he would give it to Harold."

Ickes's work in the 2012 election involves much more than just Catalist. He serves as president of the Priorities USA Action Super PAC, which produced the vicious ad in which a widowed steelworker blames his wife's death from cancer on the Republican presidential nominee.

**Laura Quinn**, *Chief Executive Officer* – has led Catalist's "day-to-day management since its inception in 2006"; was "founding partner of QRS Newmedia," whose clients have included "the DNC [Democratic National Committee] and every Democratic Presidential campaign from 1996 through 2008; a wide of range of progressive organizations and non-profits; and other corporate and academic institutions." Quinn previously worked for Vice President Al Gore and Sens. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), and Carl Levin (D-Mich.).

**Gayatri Bhalla**, *Chief Operating Officer* – has primarily worked in the private sector, with an early stint on Capitol Hill.

**Jeff Crigler**, *Chief Technology Officer* – technology industry veteran.

**Gary Gruver**, *Chief Financial Officer* – former Comptroller and Assistant Treasurer of the Gore 2000 Presidential Campaign and the CFO of the Joe Lieberman 2004 presidential campaign; also "served as the CFO of America Coming Together during 2004 and 2005, and most recently at America Votes."

**Will Loman**, *General Counsel* – veteran of BearingPoint, the management consulting company.

**Amy C. Young**, *Chief Client Officer* – former Executive Director for Women's Voices Women Vote; "has also worked for ACLU, Voices For Working Families, the Democratic National Committee, and SEIU, among other national organizations. A native of Ohio, Ms Young worked at nearly every level of politics in Ohio, from the state house to the state party."

**Robert Blaemire**, *Director of Business Development* – came to Catalist after Blaemire Communications—a "political computer services firm serving Democratic campaigns, progressive organizations and political consultants" that he founded—was purchased by Catalist in 2007; from 1991 to its purchase by Catalist, Blaemire "managed more Democratic state party voter file projects than any other vendor."

**Yair Ghitza**, *Senior Scientist* – before joining Catalist "played a key role in the proliferation of microtargeting models throughout the Progressive community, producing dozens of models and analyses for Gubernatorial, Senatorial, and Congressional campaigns."

Catalist Board Members:

**Patricia Bauman**, *Co-Chair* -- President of the Bauman Foundation; Vice-Chair of the Natural Resources Defense Council (listed on Catalist's website as a client). Since 1997, Bauman has donated \$436,149 to Democratic candidates and pro-Democratic political action committees, according to the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

**Michael Podhorzer**, *Co-Chair* – Political Director, AFL-CIO since 1997; "most recently designed and managed the AFL-CIO's pioneering 2004 'swing voter program' which combined voter file database analytics and clinical trial-style message testing for direct mail, telemarketing, email and neighborhood canvassing. (AFL-CIO is a Catalist client.) Issenberg's *Victory Lab* includes helpful additional details about Podhorzer's links with

Catalist. Starting with his youthful interest in baseball statistics, Podhorzer has, in his own words, always thought intensely about "probabilities and statistical outcomes and so on." This habit grew into regularly seeking out ways, over multiple election cycles, to maximize turnout of AFL members at the polls. At the same time Ickes & Co. were fostering Catalist in 2006-2007, Podhorzer was helping build the Analyst Institute, a kind of think tank where the Left's microtargeters and data whizzes can privately update each other on their latest work and swap techniques and tips. Cooperation between Catalist and

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# Organization Trends

the Analyst Institute, Issenberg writes, was “destiny.” According to the FEC, since 2004, Podhorzer has given only one political donation, \$1,750, to America Coming Together, the disgraced “527 group” forced to shut down after it was revealed it had violated campaign finance laws.

**Andrew Hohns** – Principal of Cohen and Company, a Philadelphia-based asset management company. Since 2004, Hohns has donated \$80,200 to Democratic candidates and pro-Democratic political action committees.

**Harold Ickes** – President, Catalist. Ickes has given \$203,393 to Democratic candidates and PACs since 1997, according to the FEC.

**Tom Novick** – Executive Vice President at M+R Strategic Services, a Washington, DC-based firm offering “campaign strategy and services to leading nonprofits working on behalf of the public interest.” Novick is a former Oregon legislator. He once worked for the far-Left Oregon State Public Interest Research Group as Executive Director. According to M+R’s website, Novick “has evaluated and consulted on dozens of campaigns and movements including America Coming Together, America Votes, Center for Community Change, League of Conservation Voters, Health Care for America Now, Clean Energy Works, and many others. He has conducted assessments for dozens of funders and philanthropists including the Beldon Fund, the Energy Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, the Packard Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropies, and many more.”

**Laura Quinn** – CEO, Catalist.

**Gerald Rosenfeld** – Senior Advisor and Vice Chairman, US Investment Banking, Lazard LTD. Since 1998, has contributed \$91,200 to Democratic candidates and committees.

**Luchelle Stevens** – Data and Technology Director, SEIU. Catalist’s website says she “serves as the Data and Technology Director of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), after years of work in Minnesota where she was Executive Director and Po-

litical Director of SEIU MN State Council. Before joining SEIU in 2003, Stevens worked at the Office of the Minnesota State Auditor and as a field advisor on electoral campaigns at the local, state, and national levels.

“Since joining SEIU, Stevens has played key roles in presidential, gubernatorial, congressional, and legislative campaigns developing electoral and legislative strategies. In addition, she has been on the front lines of integrating state-of-the-art technology into SEIU’s political operation, and has served on national advisory committees spearheading the effective integration of voter data, targeting, polling, research and voter contact.” Since 2004, Stevens has given \$2,750 to Democratic candidates and PACs, according to the FEC.

**Michael Warren** – Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director, Stonebridge International (a “global strategy firm”). Placed by Obama on the board of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, an “independent” government agency, he earlier served in the White House Office of Presidential Personnel and on the Obama-Biden transition team. In the Clinton administration, he was Executive Director of the President’s National Economic Council and also worked for the U.S. Labor Secretary.

## Nonprofits and their roles in presidential elections

Although the U.S. tax code in theory limits nonprofits’ partisan activities, the reality, as political scientist David Magleby has observed, is that nonprofits and other interest groups “have also been important cue givers to voters in U.S. elections. Endorsements, newsletters to particular groups comparing candidate positions on issues of interest, and invitations to candidates to speak to members of a group all are means groups use to signal to voters which candidates will best represent their interests. Often endorsements are conveyed personally by a member of the same religious congregation or by a fellow volunteer in an activist group.”

In 2009, Magleby predicted that the galaxy of interest groups aligned with the Democratic

Party would give the Left an edge in 2012: “Another way Democratic interest group teammates provide more support going into 2010 and 2012 is through their active and involved membership organizations. Unions, teachers, and members of environmental and pro-choice groups are predictably active for Democrats. These groups not only provide money but also volunteer hours and personal contacts with friends and work associates—networks that have historically helped the Democrats more than the Republicans ... as we look to the next set of contests, the Democrats must clearly be favored.”

Magleby stresses how tax-exempt groups, unions, churches, etc. function as “campaign intermediaries” and can be more effective than official campaigns. Consider: If you’re a candidate who wants environmentalists’ votes, instead of writing voters yourself, it’s usually better to have environmentalist organizations issue direct (or subtle) statements supporting you.

Jarol Manheim, Emeritus Professor of Media and Public Affairs and of Political Science at George Washington University, observes that using simulations of voter behavior based on data started much earlier than many people think. Take the Simulmatics project of the early 1960s, where university researchers carried out a study for John F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign to project possible voter behavior. Based on Simulmatics’ findings, the Kennedy camp invested in TV commercials directed towards self-identified Catholic voters, to mobilize them for the presidential contest.

“This whole notion of voter targeting, and of gathering data on voters—these tools are being used to manage the risk element that is always present in the kinds of mass communications used in political campaigns,” Manheim says. That is, targeting gives campaigns another way to “control the message.”

Thus, a group like Catalist helps “maximize the effectiveness of money towards its desired impact.” Manheim adds that “microtargeting techniques are becoming more effective over time, and databases could be refined to the

point that someone can approach a specific individual with a specific message, based on data indicating what that person will want to hear about. This is called ‘nano-targeting.’”

What makes a tax-exempt group’s membership list potentially very powerful in an election? Manheim explains that they spend money attracting “people who have expressed an affinity for their organization’s goals.” And so to assist a political candidate, “the group can send out a pre-framed message to an audience made up of like-minded people, with little risk that that message will leak out or reach unintended audiences, or create negative effects. The more narrowly you can target a message, the less likely that specific message will attract the attention of the other side.”

Manheim adds that in a political campaign, “you use surrogates mainly to motivate and mobilize your supporters. So when we look at the role of non-profits in voter mobilization efforts, we need to remember—it’s not the money [that goes into those efforts] that counts as much as the brand that these groups can put on well-timed messages to their members. The money provides the means to facilitate the branding.”

The role of surrogate nonprofits is not to

say, “there is a political campaign on.” It is “giving meaning and credibility to candidate messages that are already independently circulating in public, and that are already known to voters.” A group can do so, for example, by highlighting candidate statements on an issue important to its members, and giving those statements favorable attention in a members-only newsletter or mass e-mail. “But more importantly,” Manheim says, “and more to the point, a group can accomplish this simply by identifying itself (and by extension its members or those who feel an affinity) with those statements.”

### Measuring Catalist’s effectiveness

How do political marketing experts gauge Catalist’s strength? We turned to the legendary Richard A. Viguerie, political direct mail pioneer and chairman of American Target Advertising, for his perspective.

“Catalist is effective, and a strong asset for the Left,” Viguerie said in an exclusive interview. Reflecting on his decades of experience in the field, Viguerie says that “to this day, in my opinion, the Left generally does a better job of political marketing than conservatives. Conservatives have produced very good marketers, but the Left can often call upon what you might describe as ‘better quality’ marketers, and Catalist is in that tradition.”

“The political direct mail industry is very mature, in terms of the lists compiled by both the Left and the Right. There’s no doubt that the more sophisticated you are in your approach, the more successful you are going to be in your microtargeting.

“We are talking about something very powerful here, the ‘sleeping giant’ of political marketing, if you will. We’re talking about a form of political marketing that, with the right list, for example, allows you to target a strong message to registered independent/undecided voters—instead of hit-or-miss approaches, like TV commercials or radio spots, reaching audiences made up 95 percent of people who have already made up their minds about a candidate, and will not shift.”

Viguerie cautions those who see micro-targeting as a kind of political wonder weapon: “As important as having the latest technology is, you cannot fall in love with the technology. You have to know it and understand how to use it, of course. At the end of the day, it is the ideas you convey that move people. Some people think it is sufficient just to have the technology, but you must have content. You have to speak to issues that people feel strongly about.” “If all you do in your direct mail is beat up on the other side, without getting into real specificity and actual ideas, then this content-free direct mail will be unsuccessful. You can’t be bland. You can’t be weak on the issues. Feel-good direct mail won’t work. And the Left generally avoids that mistake.”

“I sometimes give a hard time to Washington consultants on this aspect of their direct mail. Many of them come from the big business community, and so they don’t want to talk about the hot-button issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and so on. This transfers over to their political TV commercials, their radio spots, their direct mail, and so on. But if the other side is constantly attacking you on those hot button issues, and you do not push back, then those attacks will inevitably stick.”

Love it or hate it, Catalist—thanks to the people behind it, the funders moving money to it via the Tides Foundation, and the activist groups and unions using its services right now in hopes of ensuring a second Obama term—has emerged as a major asset for the far Left.

Will its microtargeting work for the Left provide the edge the President needs to win? Soon after I write these words, we’ll know.

*Neil Maghami, a freelance writer, is a frequent contributor to CRC publications.*

**OT**

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Many thanks.

Terrence Scanlon  
President



# Briefly Noted

All throughout **ACORN's** terminal scandal that began with the undercover videos in 2009, Democrats ran away from the toxic radical leftist group as fast as they could. No more. At the Democratic Party's summertime convention in Charlotte, a video tribute honoring the late Sen. **Edward Kennedy** (D-Mass.) was played. The video shows Kennedy speaking at an ACORN-sponsored minimum wage rally with an ACORN logo right beside him. President Obama represented ACORN in court and worked for its voter mobilization arm, **Project Vote**, in Chicago in 1992.

Did a **George Soros**-funded, left-wing magazine spike a story because it placed Soros in a bad light? *Mother Jones* initially reported on its website in late September that Soros was "panicked" that **Mitt Romney**, then gaining in the polls, could win the presidential election. Less than 24 hours later, the magazine abruptly took down the story, claiming its anonymous source recanted, but the editors never explained what exactly the source took back. The magazine's 501(c)(3) nonprofit, **Foundation for National Progress**, has received funding through Soros's philanthropies, **Open Society Institute** (\$225,000 since 2008) and **Foundation to Promote Open Society** (\$100,000 since 2010).

The left-wing Latino racial grievance group, **National Council of La Raza**, was accused of voter fraud last month. Florida Division of Elections spokesman **Chris Cate** told the *Tampa Bay Times* that La Raza and another group were involved in "potential irregular voter registration activities" that "constituted a legally sufficient complaint of voter registration fraud." Hundreds of dubious voter registration forms have been found in a dozen counties across Florida.

The Left's war against the **American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)** continues: **Common Cause** and the **Center for Media and Democracy** now claim in a lawsuit that five Republican members of the Wisconsin legislature have violated the state's public records law by allegedly withholding emails that may or may not have referenced ALEC, which encourages lawmakers to promote pro-free market model legislation. State Rep. **Pat Strachota** (R-West Bend), who is named in the lawsuit, said she has never introduced ALEC-backed legislation and doesn't understand why she was targeted. "I don't feel this is a real complaint," she said. "I feel it's a political witch hunt. I think it's unfortunate they're wasting people's time and energy. It just dumbfounds me."

The Obama administration may soon classify Arab-Americans as a "socially and economically disadvantaged group" entitled to receive taxpayer-funded business assistance from the Commerce Department. The **American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)**, founded by far-left former U.S. Sen. **James Abourezk** (D-S.D.), petitioned the Minority Business Development Agency for special status on January 4 of this year. It's not clear how Americans of Arab ancestry are disadvantaged. They enjoy a mean individual income that is 27 percent above what Americans typically earn. Their median household income weighs in at \$59,000, which is more than 10 percent higher than the national average. Almost half of Arab-Americans hold a college degree, and they are twice as likely as a typical U.S. resident to have earned a Ph.D, *National Review* reports.

Former Congressman **Artur Davis** (D-Ala.) explained to a **Heritage Foundation** audience why state laws requiring voters to present government-issued photo identification in order to cast their ballots are eminently sensible. Americans have to present photo ID to enter federal buildings and board an airplane, Davis said. "How can it be a burden to ask people to do something they do all the time?"