

5-3-2012

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Recommended Citation

Eyre, John; Ostrander, Cowles; and Ring, Michele, "Jim Renacci" (2012). *Media and Politics TV ads*. 2.
https://openworks.wooster.edu/political_science_tv_ads/2

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Media & Politics

April 3, 2012

Communication Plan: U.S. Representative Jim Renacci

Race Overview

In 2010, Ohio lawmakers redrew congressional district lines after census results revealed a drop in Ohio's population (Warren 2011). As a result, Ohio's 16th District was expanded to include part of Ohio's 13th District, currently held by Democratic Congresswoman Betty Sutton (Warren 2011). Currently serving Ohio's 16th District is Republican Jim Renacci, who was first elected in 2010 (Warren 2011). This readjustment of district lines has resulted in the unlikely scenario of two incumbents competing for one district (Warren 2011). As campaign advisors to Rep. Jim Renacci, our goal is to design and develop an effective campaign strategy that will secure his re-election.

Before developing specific campaign strategies, it is important to document the qualifications of Renacci and Sutton. Additionally, it is imperative to identify the demographics of potential voters in Ohio's 16th district. Representative Renacci previously has served as a public accountant and also formed LTC Management Services which owned and operated several nursing homes in Ohio ("About Jim"). He also served as a volunteer firefighter from 1984-1988 and was Mayor of Wadsworth from 2004-2008 ("About Jim"). Renacci's economic record while serving as mayor was impressive. He converted a multi-million dollar deficit into a surplus, balanced the city's budget, and helped create numerous jobs in the region. ("About Jim"). Renacci also never raised taxes during his tenure as mayor ("About Jim"). Representative Renacci defines his political agenda as "common sense conservatism, fiscal responsibility and government accountability" ("About Jim"). Finally, it is important to note Renacci also identified himself as a social conservative and has advocated pro-life policies ("About Jim").

Renacci's opponent, Democrat Betty Sutton, is a strong supporter of labor unions and she has served as the representative for Ohio's 13th district since 2006 ("About Betty"). Sutton was a key supporter of the American Clean Energy and Security Act, also known as the Cap and Trade Bill, which many conservatives believed would negatively affect job creation ("Issues and Legislation"). Furthermore, she was a strong advocate of the recent Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which is scheduled to be reviewed by the Supreme Court later this month to determine its constitutionality ("Issues and Legislation"). Rep. Sutton also serves on the House Armed Services Committee and has expressed some support for the Keystone Pipeline as she feels the steel needed for the project could be produced in Ohio ("Issues and Legislation"). Though Rep. Sutton could be classified as a moderate, she is a much stronger advocate of government involvement and spending than Rep. Renacci.

Background of 16th District

Ohio's 16th District represents the middle class because the median income is around \$50,000, and over a third of the population has incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (New "Ohio's 16th District"). Less than 15 percent of the population makes more than \$100,000 ("Ohio's 16th District"). Because a Democrat has only been in office for one term since 1951, the 16th District

is traditionally viewed as conservative (Walsh 2010). However, this term was in the 111th Congress between 2009 and 2011 (Warren 2011). This suggests there is likely an increased amount of support for an alternative candidate. Furthermore, with the addition of part of the 13th district, there may be an increased amount of supporters for Democrat Betty Sutton (Warren 2011). The 16th District includes manufacturing and agricultural industries as well as a large amount of retirees (“Ohio’s 16th District”). Therefore, it is important for Representative Renacci to showcase his strong economic record to attract middle and working class families as well as retirees interested in preserving their retirement funds.

Campaign Funding

To run a successful campaign, a candidate must have ample funds to advertise their qualifications through commercials, community events, and mailings. Congressman Renacci has reported 572 contributions of \$200 or more which add up to \$633,520. Top donors include Suarez Corporation, Timken Company, and FirstEnergy Corporation. However, it is important to note that the companies themselves do not directly donate but rather individual members of the company (Renacci Campaign Finance 2012). Rep. Renacci’s strong business and healthcare background has inspired donations from both of these industries. Rep. Renacci has raised over 1.2 million dollars if one includes money received from various PACs. Rep. Renacci has spent nearly \$300,000 (Renacci Campaign Finance 2012). Challenger Betty Sutton has raised \$821,034 and has already spent \$419,485. Many of her top donors include organizations such as United Steelworkers, various lawyers and law firms, and also trade and industrial unions (Sutton Campaign Finance 2012). It is important to recognize that Rep. Renacci has great personal wealth. He is worth between \$32,345,756 and \$51,775,662 and is one of the wealthiest members of Congress (Renacci Personal Finances 2012). Therefore, it seems likely that he will use some of this wealth to aid his campaign.

Strategy 1: Highlight Key Differences between Renacci & Sutton

One strategy we have for getting Renacci re-elected is our plan to attack Betty Sutton on a few key issues. One key issue is that of health care. Sutton’s plan for health care will have many negative consequences, including the killing of many jobs, increasing taxes on smaller businesses, and forcing millions of Americans from their current health care coverage, all with a new government takeover of the health care system. Sutton voted for the 2010 health care bill, and proceeded to advocate for a complete government takeover of health care. The 2010 health care bill, passed into law, failed to address the main causes of high health care costs and also created a multitude of new problems that threatened to lessen the quality of medical care that Americans have to this day. Sutton also opposed the budget plan put forth in order to preserve and protect Medicare, instead choosing not to act as an alternative to preserving Medicare and consequently letting Medicare disappear into bankruptcy. Renacci believes the key to making health care more affordable for everyone lies with the concept of increasing competition among groups and eliminating unnecessary overhead costs in the health care system (“Issues: Health Care”).

Sutton also supported and voted for the American Clean Energy and Security Act, a proposed cap-and-trade system aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions. The ACES Act was aimed at reducing domestic emissions, while a global agreement would have been needed in order to fully tackle the carbon dioxide emission problem. The ACES act would have imposed an additional monetary cost on individual households, all while only addressing the emission problem in the

U.S. context, as opposed to addressing the problem in a global context. Therefore, Rep. Sutton was advocating on behalf of and voting for a costly policy that would have penalized Americans, all while having little effect on the issue of global warming with regards to the international system.

Spending is another issue we will focus on to highlight the differences between Reps. Renacci and Sutton. Rep. Sutton opposed the Balanced Budget Amendment, supported more debt and spending while fiscal order was trying to be restored in Washington, and supported the stimulus-spending package that racked up the largest single-year deficit in American history (“Issues: Spending”). Rep. Renacci voted for the Balanced Budget Amendment, voted for the House budget that saved Medicare and restored fiscal order to Washington, and opposed the wasteful stimulus package. As a campaign strategy, we intend on emphasizing Rep. Renacci’s economic and business experience and expertise within our advertisement and campaign. This is in line with **Huddy and Terkildsen’s** article, because they state that one belief stereotype is men are seen as more competent than women on issues pertinent to the economy and consequently, underlying issues of spending **(2003)**.

An additional issue that we plan on attacking Congresswoman Sutton on is the issue of taxes. The tax issue is one that has great importance and one that our constituency within the 16th district cares deeply about. Rep. Sutton has endlessly raised taxes among all Ohioans and especially the 16th district through a multitude of ways. First, she voted to raise income taxes among all Ohioans, and was in opposition to the repeal of the Death Tax, a tax that essentially would allow the transfer of property at your death to be taxed. Additionally, Rep. Sutton voted for a payroll tax increase in December of 2011 that struck the middle class families the hardest, while at the same time voting to give to herself a pay raise (“Issues: Taxes”). This is especially opportune for us, as we wish to mobilize the middle class voters within the 16th district around Congressman Renacci’s ideas and future plans because the middle class makes up a great part of the 16th district. Rep. Renacci believes strongly in the fact that if taxes were to be raised, this would inevitably result in halted progress towards American economic recovery. We will have Rep. Renacci use his extensive past private sector experience as a small business owner and C.P.A. to justify his decisions in producing a simple and fair tax code through multiple ways. Renacci proposes to simplify the tax system by reducing tax rates and eliminating loopholes, while also permanently repealing the Death Tax and the \$500 billion tax increase found within President Obama’s 2010 health care bill. Additionally, Rep. Renacci plans on reducing America’s corporate tax rate in order to stimulate competitiveness among American businesses and allow business growth to take place on a domestic level (“Issues: Taxes”).

One final salient issue that we plan on attacking Congresswoman Sutton with and that resonates with importance within citizens in our constituency is the jobs issue. We plan on really emphasizing the importance and quality of Congressman Renacci’s experience with creating jobs while serving as the 16th district House Representative, alongside Rep. Renacci’s innate knowledge on how to create more and maintain more jobs right here within Ohio for citizens. Rep. Sutton’s plan with jobs involves the support of higher taxes and added government intervention in order to ensure the creation of jobs. Rep. Renacci believes that the key to creating jobs to maintain a prosperous economy lies with American workers and employers, as opposed to career politicians who turn to Washington to answer every problem (“Issues: Jobs”). The expanded government plans and variety of regulations have produced nothing but poor results for America. Rep. Sutton was also a supporter and one of the key architects of the Nancy Pelosi

cap and trade bill, a bill that would have made the coal industry suffer, and thus, thousands of jobs in Ohio would have been killed. In order for Rep. Renacci to be able to create jobs, he will strive for the creation of competitiveness among American businesses in order so they may compete on a global scale (“Issues: Jobs”). This action will ensure the continual success of American workers and businesses so that they in return will be able to contribute to the overall health of maintaining jobs within Ohio and more specifically, the 16th district.

One way in which we plan on attacking Congresswoman Sutton is through building up Congressman Renacci and really driving home the points why Rep. Renacci’s policies and past experiences hold more value over those of Rep. Sutton. A first way in which to build up Rep. Renacci is by appealing to editorials in order to gain newspaper endorsements for Rep. Renacci. **Druckman and Parkin (2005)** found that citizens hold candidates in higher regard if they have achieved the endorsement from a particular newspaper. Such endorsements also translate to a higher praise and evaluation of that endorsed candidate. If we can get some local newspapers to endorse Rep. Renacci by means of appealing to them with explaining Rep. Renacci’s policy choices, this can really give our campaign a great boost over Rep. Sutton. Additionally, we plan to attack Rep. Sutton with emphasizing the fact that issues that are most important to the 16th district (jobs, spending, taxes, economy, etc.) are ones that are predominantly owned by the Republican Party. **As Petrocik (1996)** points out, it is not only the issue ownership by party that gets taken into effect, but also personal characteristics can be utilized in order to convey additional competence on a particular issue. In this regard, we plan on combining and really pushing Congressman Renacci’s competence from his past private sector business and jobs experience. The fact that being Republican gives off the hint that he is the right man for the job when it comes to relating with voters of the 16th district on terms of jobs, spending, taxes, and further economy issues that our constituency feels are very important issues.

Strategy 2: Present Congressman Renacci as Personable

In addition to showcasing differences between his own views and Representative Sutton’s and touting his strong record in Congress, it is imperative that Jim Renacci portray himself as personable, qualified, assertive, and confident. As emphasized in numerous class discussions, a candidate needs to be able to effectively relate to audiences by expressing various emotions and personality traits that potential voters find attractive and appealing. In the study by Leonie Huddy and Nayda Terkildsen, the different stereotypes of male and female candidates were analyzed and researched (Huddy 2003). The authors designed an experiment based on the perceptions of college students to determine if these stereotypes played an important role in deciding the outcome of a respective race (Huddy 2003). Their data suggested that males are associated with assertiveness, aggressiveness, and self-confidence and that women were viewed as more compassionate toward humanitarian issues such as education and healthcare (Huddy 2003). Those candidates who demonstrated more typical male traits were viewed as more competent and qualified with respect to economic issues (Huddy 2003). Therefore, it is important for Jim Renacci to be confident and decisive in his presentations, speeches, and advertisements to potential voters as the economy will likely be a main focus of the 2012 elections. Additionally, the authors found that those candidates who demonstrated “male traits” were more likely to get elected (Huddy 2003). Therefore, as advisors to Renacci, we believe that he should showcase his strong business background and leadership qualities as evidenced by his experience owning and operating numerous industries inclusive of nursing homes and an automobile dealership (“About Jim”).

It is also important for Renacci to emphasize his strong leadership as Mayor of Wadsworth and volunteer firefighter (“About Jim”). It is our belief that voters in Ohio are looking for strong leaders to restore jobs and economic security to the region. Therefore, Renacci must appear strong, focused, and competent. Our campaign ad will work to connect these ideals to Renacci. Additionally, in Fridkin Khan’s article, it was found that incumbents are more likely to be covered by the media due to their notoriety (Khan 1993). Therefore, we need to ensure that Renacci capitalizes on this coverage by emphasizing strong personality traits when media is present. However, the article suggests that because his opponent is female, she will be portrayed as more compassionate among voting blocks (Huddy 2003). Therefore, it is important that Renacci portray himself as understanding of healthcare through his nursing home experience, as a strong family man, and also express a desire to achieve bi-partisan initiatives (“About Jim”). In conclusion, the campaign strategy as described above includes emphasizing various personality traits and connecting them to the experiences and actions of Representative Renacci.

It is also imperative that Renacci present himself as possessing strong integrity. Evidence presented by Schultz and Pancer suggest that perceived integrity of a candidate is one of the most important issues among voters. Interestingly, the authors find that voters of the same gender as the candidate perceived the candidate to have more integrity when they attacked their opponent. Conversely, candidates of an opposite gender were viewed as having less integrity when they attacked their opponent (Schultz and Pancer 1997). Essentially if a male candidate attacked his opponent, male voters would perceive him as having more integrity and female voters would perceive him as having less integrity. Therefore, we encourage Renacci to avoid personal attacks on Betty Sutton and focus on a contrast of records. Though evidence suggests that attacking Sutton may inspire male voters to vote for Renacci, it may also isolate female voters (Schultz and Pancer 1997). The candidate that wins this election will need support from multiple demographics to secure victory. Shawn W. Rosenberg et al. also suggest that candidates are largely judged on their appearance on fliers and other images. It is important for candidates to demonstrate integrity, honesty, and competence. The authors suggest that a candidate should smile, show compassion, confidence, and be approachable (Rosenberg et. al. 1986). Therefore, we advise Renacci to adopt these image recommendations to convey integrity to potential voters.

It is also important to for Renacci to address his personal wealth in the campaign. In a poor economic environment and recent resentment directed toward income inequality as evidenced by the Occupy Movement, Renacci will likely come under fire for his personal wealth. One could predict that Representative Sutton will attempt to portray Renacci as out of touch with the average middle class citizen. Jeffrey Milyo and Timothy Groseclose suggests that voters may view wealthy candidates with more disdain and may be inclined to vote for another candidate. However, evidence presented by the authors suggests that a wealthy candidate has no real advantage or disadvantage in an election. However, various demographics may interpret a candidate’s wealth with different attitudes. The authors suggest that wealth may be associated with qualities such as competence, intelligence, and a strong work ethic (Milyo and Groseclose 1999). As advisors to Renacci, we believe that it is important that Renacci be honest about his monetary success. Renacci also needs to demonstrate that he uses his wealth as a businessman to provide jobs to local areas. Furthermore, he must use his wealth as evidence for his strong business qualifications and expertise on economic issues.

Strategy 3: Emphasize Congressman Renacci’s Economic Record

Our last strategy for Congressman Renacci is to emphasize his economic record while in Congress. With his background in business prior to his election in 2010 as well as his consistent record as a fiscal conservative throughout his first term in office, his large middle class constituency will look highly upon his record during this uncertain economic time. First, decreasing the unemployment rate has been one of Congressman Renacci's main goals during the last two years. Most recently, he voted in favor of the conference report for "The Middle Class Tax Relief and Jobs Creation Act" which included part of Congressman Renacci's proposed jobs bill ("Renacci Jobs Bill..."). The part included in the bill would allow states to redirect unemployment benefits to employers who employ an unemployed worker ("Renacci Jobs Bill..."). With the unemployment rate still at 8.5% nationally and 8.6% in Ashland County, there is still a ways to go in terms of jobs ("Local Area Unemployment Statistics: Ohio"). However, while Congressman Renacci has been in office, the unemployment rate in Wayne and Stark counties has dropped drastically since he took office in January 2011.

Another measure Congressman Renacci has been an adamant supporter of during his short tenure in the House is the extension of the payroll tax cut. He voted for the House's one-year extension in December 2011 ("Renacci: Americans Need a Break in Their Pay Checks..."). He also spoke out against the Senate's decision to only extend the tax cut for 60 days by saying, "The Senate's decision to pass an unworkable short-term extension and leave town is just the latest example of Washington politics at its worst. The American people deserve far better" ("Renacci: Americans Need a Break in Their Pay Checks..."). By supporting the extension of the payroll tax, Congressman Renacci shows he is listening to the needs of his constituents, especially those in the middle class.

Besides showing support for middle class interests, Congressman Renacci has also shown support for businesses during his time in Congress. In November 2011, Congressman Renacci co-sponsored a bill with Congressman Carney (D-DE) to encourage companies to repatriate their foreign earnings and invest in the U.S. economy ("Reps. Renacci and Carney Introduce..."). Because of the United States' high corporate tax rate, the two representatives are proposing a "long-term repatriation holiday" with an effective tax rate of 5.25% over 10 years ("Reps. Renacci and Carney Introduce..."). The goal of this legislation is to allow companies to repatriate their foreign earnings well below the corporate tax rate and in return they will invest this money in the U.S. economy and potentially hire new workers.

Overview of Campaign Commercial

Through our research it has become evident that Representative Renacci is most competent in economics, business, and spending. Therefore, our ad will incorporate these issues as they are popular among constituents in Ohio. According to Iyengar and McGrady, candidates should target specific audiences and emphasize those issues that the respective candidate's party "owns" (2007, 42-3). Therefore, our ad will work to appeal to middle class families and encourage job growth, fiscal responsibility, and limited government spending. Additionally, according to Sigelman and Kugler, those ads which are negative are more likely to reduce voter turnout (2003). Therefore, our ad will remain positive and emphasize common values and goals. Furthermore, our ad will also work to show contrast between the policies of Representative Sutton and Representative Renacci with regard to their economic policies and records. Additionally, we want our ad to air on free media mediums such as news sites because the use of these technologies often increase candidate favorability and popularity (Jasperson and Fan).

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