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Marcia Fudge for House of Representatives

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Media and Politics
CCP: Marcia Fudge
3/2/12

Marcia Fudge is a life-long Ohioan, born in Cleveland in 1952. Representative Fudge is currently 59 years old and a strong Democrat serving her 3rd term in the US House of Representatives for the 11th district of Ohio. Representative Fudge has never been married or had children, but she is a member of the Baptist Church and has been a leader since very early in her life. She currently serves on the Agriculture and Science, Space and Technology committees, as well as three sub-committees and two caucuses. Representative Fudge's priority issues are the economy, education, child nutrition, foreclosure prevention, supporting small businesses and advocating for voting rights.

Representative Fudge has a Bachelors degree in Business Administration from Ohio State University in addition to a law degree from Cleveland State University. Representative Fudge was the first African American mayor of Warrensville Heights, Ohio; she served in this office from 2000-2008. She also served as the chief administrator for Stephanie Tubbs Jones, at that time the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor. Later, when Tubbs Jones was elected the representative for Ohio's 11th District, Fudge became her Chief of Staff. Tubbs Jones passed away unexpectedly in 2008, and Fudge was elected by special ballot and has been serving the 11th district since November of the same year. Redistricting of many of Ohio's congressional districts was proposed in 2011. One of the proposed boundary changes would have extended the 11th district south to include a large area of Akron, which would have increased the Republican voice within the district. However, this redraw was also proposed as a way to ensure that an African American politician retained the seat, as the area of Akron which district 11 would have been expanded to include is a predominantly black area. This attempt at redistricting did not pass, and the 11th District therefore remained unaffected¹.

Representative Fudge is now the incumbent candidate, trying to hold on to her seat for a 4th term in the US House of Representatives. Gerald Henley and Isaac Powell are the challengers, both of whom are also Democrats. Henley is an ex-Cleveland School Board member, and Powell is a retired school employee. Neither challenger has received any noteworthy coverage in the media. Fudge won her primary election on March 6, 2012 with 89.5% of the vote, with Gerald Henley bringing in 6.2% of the vote and Isaac Powell with 4.3%. These results were largely anticipated. Moving into the general election, Representative Fudge does not have any Republican challengers to worry about, and is therefore essentially unopposed in her pursuit of a 4th term. In 2010 Fudge was challenged by Republican Thomas Pekarek, but she still maintained an extraordinarily strong grasp on her seat, winning 83% of the vote in the general election while Pekarek only received 17%².

Ohio's 11th District is comprised of 23 municipalities, and it contains most of the city of Cleveland as well as many of its surrounding areas including Shaker Heights, Cleveland Heights, and Euclid. There are approximately 540,500 residents in the 11th District, 78.6% of who are white, 16.7% are black, and less than 5% of the population representing all other ethnicities³. According to the US Census, the city of Cleveland experienced a 17.1% population drop between 2000 and 2010, while Ohio as a whole experienced a 1.6% population rise. The differences in racial patterns between Cleveland and the whole of Ohio are staggering; 53.3% of Cleveland's population is black while 37.3% is white, whereas Ohio as a whole is 12.2% black and 82.7% white. This signifies that racial issues may be a key concern of the 11th District. Economic issues are also key in the Cleveland area. The average household income was \$27,349 between 2006 and 2010, with 31.2% of the population falling below the poverty line, a figure which is 17% higher than Ohio as a whole⁴. Manufacturing is the dominant industry in the area and has been, historically speaking. However, the 11th District is also home to 11 companies on the Fortune 500 list. The technology, science, and engineering fields (especially informational technology industries) have become a more prominent force within the economy of the 11th District in more recent times. Institutions of higher education are also prominent members of the 11th District community. The largest industries in the 11th District (excluding agriculture) by number of people employed are: trade/transportation/utilities (19%), educational and health services (15%), government (13%), professional and business services (12%), and manufacturing (7%)⁵. The unemployment rate in Ohio was 7.7% in March of 2012⁶.

Representative Fudge defies many of the norms of a successful politician; she is not a white man with a family, and is therefore disadvantaged in several ways. One of the best ways to overcome this is to emphasize her experience in the House of Representatives. Representative Fudge is currently in her 3rd term, and as such, is in an excellent place to relate to the public her experience in Washington over the past few years. Representative Fudge has secured places in multiple important committees and has worked to address the issues most important to the constituents of the 11th district. Rather than attempt to sell voters on what she wants to do in Congress, she can explain what she has already done and will continue doing when reelected. By emphasizing that she has experience with working on projects and across party lines, she can work together with people to get things accomplished. Representative Fudge's challengers are all Democrats as well, so one of the best and most effective distinguishing factors between her and the challengers is to emphasize her experience, which the other candidates do not have. Capitalizing on her experience is a particularly valuable and valid strategy because Representative Fudge does not fit the typical mold of a woman or politician, and as such, drawing out her success and competency will serve her well, and ultimately get her reelected.

To encourage voter turnout on Election Day and to make Representative Fudge's name known to a wider audience, door-to-door canvassing should be used as a strategy. While it is a large number of doors to reach, this will not pose as dramatic

of a challenge because the 11th district is fairly consolidated, geographically speaking. Other strategies such as direct mailings and telephone calls have extremely limited effectiveness and are therefore not recommended. Door-to-door canvassing can use the time of volunteers and will therefore prove to be a relatively low cost and effective method of getting voters to the polls as well as widening the knowledge of Representative Fudge and her candidacy.

Including and emphasizing the fact that she is the incumbent and has been the Representative for District 11 for four years would be a key strategy. By emphasizing this point, she is gaining recognition for her work as a representative for four years and that she has been competent enough for continued reelection in the area. By talking about the fact that she is an incumbent she can emphasize all the efforts that she has already made to improve the district and help constituents in her area.

Because Representative Fudge is a female candidate, she is already in a minority as a woman. Being female in a campaign is an inherent disadvantage because women are perceived as less competent on a variety of issues and their messages are not received as positively or covered to the same extent in the media. Citizens tend to associate positive leadership traits with men's leadership skills and abilities, rather than women's. Men are considered to be superior in coping with issues related to national security, terrorism, the economy, and foreign policy. Women are believed to be better at handling issues like education, poverty, health care, and topics related to gender equality. These stereotypes can be a challenge not only to the electability of a female candidate, but also to the perceived influence and success they have once in office. It is extremely difficult for female politicians to appear competent on a variety of issues while still hanging on to their femininity. Sometimes the most advantageous way to cope with these challenges is to be seen as the stereotypical woman, so that voters, while they may not view the female candidate as the most competent on male-owned issues, can at least fit the woman into a recognizable mold, and they therefore will be more likely to vote for her⁷. However, Representative Fudge is not the stereotypical woman. She is single and does not have children. Her issue priorities are not all typical female political issues, and this makes it even more difficult for the citizenry and the media to make sense of her messages. For these reasons, it will be the most advantageous to downplay Representative Fudge's gender. This can be done by avoiding extensive discussion on her (lack of) family life, and even wearing more masculinized clothing, without "crossing the line" to the extent where voters may question her sexuality; even in an extremely Democratic area, being a sexual minority is not an advantage on election day. By somewhat masculinizing her campaign, Representative Fudge will be easier for her constituents and the media to place into socially and politically understood categories, therefore making her more relatable and electable.

She can also emphasize her "owned" issues, one of which includes women's issues. Since she is a woman and a working woman, issues specifically pertaining to women's rights (abortion, birth control, etc.) should be emphasized in some of her

campaigning. This would help gain momentum to pick up female supporters in the area because by showing a vested interest in protecting women's rights, she would be showing that she has a vested interest in her constituents and she cares about protecting their rights.

Another owned issue would be civil rights or race relations. Since she is African-American, these issues will impact her, so this is another way to connect with her constituents. While the 11th District is predominately white, the actual city is predominately black. By connecting to a densely populated, largely black community, she can emphasize how she is connected to them to garner support.

She has shown that she has empathy through not only appearances, but through bills and work in Congress. She has made appearances at the Veterans Hospital in Cleveland and various schools. Fudge has said that she will always support education improvements to strengthen the schools for District 11. She has emphasized her support with school programs like pre-school and head start. She has also emphasized the importance of improved funding for education to improve the chances of children in the Cleveland area to succeed in their careers.

As a representative of Cleveland, one of her main issues is the economy. As the city experienced massive decline with industries leaving, the city has experienced the negative effects of the recession. She has supported acts to help bring jobs to Cleveland to help it get over the recession bump to provide jobs and to improve infrastructure in the city.

For our Representative, Marcia Fudge, we would have a television ad that would put emphasis on her work on the economy and education. Her work includes several acts passed in congress improving the quality of both. Since when she last ran against a challenger, she gained over 80 percent of the popular vote, by emphasizing in her ad that she has continued to please and accomplish what her constituents want and demand would be a key strategy. Since she does not have a strong opponent or opposition to her candidacy, there is no real point to run any negative ads for her campaign. The ads would have an uplifting message, or "feel good" ads¹⁰, and have bright colors to focus on a bright future for the Cleveland area. Areas to focus on in the commercial would be going through various acts that she has voted for to improve the condition of the area and the infrastructure of the city. Including a visual of the area that has been improved by the acts could emphasize these acts and their positive influence on the city. Proving her competence by visually showing that she has indeed improved the district increases her chances of re-election. Another emphasis of the ad would be her improvements to the education system in the district and the improvement of the health of children in the district. To show her improvements, children would need to be used not only to emphasize her work in the school system but to show the improvements in their nutrition as well. This also adds credibility to her work in the "family" aspect of politics, even though she is single. Moreover, using children also adds empathy to her campaign, because it shows she has a vested interest in the area by improving children's prospects. By

showing that she wants to improve prospects in the area, it shows the voters that have families, that even though she is single, she is still working for the improvement of the education systems in District 11 and therefore their child's education. While we do believe Fudge's ad should be informative, ads that appear unimpassioned do not tend to sway voters and are generally ineffective. Because emotionality in an ad is known to be one of the best ways to win a vote, this part of the ad concerning families and children will be a great place to make an emotional tie and bring out Representative Fudge's empathy¹⁰. By emphasizing what she has already done, not only is this showing that she is trying to fix the problems that have been occurring in the Cleveland area, but that she has been acting as an incumbent and has been improving the quality of the city since she has been able to act as a Representative.

Representative Fudge should seek to advertise in markets that share her more liberal viewpoints. Audiences and voters tend to consume media that share views similar to their own, so in order to maximize her advertising abilities and resources, Fudge should choose to run her ad in more Democratic markets; more Democratic television stations and surrounding more liberal newscasts⁸. Because Representative Fudge already has a decent website, it would be beneficial for her to use this as a fundraising resource. Because citizens who visit campaign websites are normally partisan, the internet is most successful not for swaying voters, but for raising funds. Because the 11th District is so strongly Democratic, this trend can be used to Representative Fudge's advantage, since there are more Democratic voters in general, there are more potential donors⁹. Additionally, Representative Fudge has facebook, twitter, and flickr accounts which allow her to connect with diverse groups of constituents and voters. Maintaining a presence on the internet in a variety of sources is to her advantage, and as her campaign continues, Fudge should continue using and updating these social media sources on a regular basis.

Overall, the campaign would be run focusing on her main positions and viewpoints. They include: her leadership skills, her incumbency and lack of real competition, her connection to her constituents (through being a woman, African-American, and from the Cleveland area), her empathy with her constituents (her work to create jobs, improve education, and improve children's health in the area), and her work to improve the overall economy in Cleveland. By including these aspects of her past position as the District 11 Representative, she would increase the knowledge that voters have and would utilize for voting.

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