

# Primary Victory for Darren Soto in FL-09

## OVERVIEW

The Latino Victory Fund provided an independent expenditure in support of Darren Soto, before the Democratic primary to replace Alan Grayson's 9th Congressional District seat in Florida. During this campaign, we were hired to turn a small budget and a small number of electorates into successful ideas and outcomes. We did this through our mail, phone, and digital services. This is considered to be safely Democratic<sup>1</sup>, meaning we needed a plan that would propel Soto to solidify a primary win. Florida primaries face challenges in voter turnout since they take place at the end of the summer, so we had to ensure we reached our target audience thoroughly.

## BACKGROUND ON THE RACE:

When Alan Grayson decided not to run for US Senate, it opened up his Orlando based Florida Congressional district. The district was originally drawn with Latinos in mind to run and capture this seat, but they have historically underperformed in primaries and Grayson himself had close victories every cycle. The district's self-identified Latino population is 45.7%. Based on past contested primary results, we expected around 40,000 of the registered voters to be Puerto Rican. Darren was running in the Democratic primary against 3 opponents - Susannah Randolph (Grayson's former District Director), Dena Grayson (Grayson's wife), and Valleri Crabtree. Susannah Randolph received resources and support from the progressive movement while Dena Grayson had help from her husband's team. This Democratic primary ballot had a total of three Grayson's on the ballot, with his son also in the run.

## OUR STRATEGY:

Given the district's large Puerto Rican population, we decided that highlighting Darren's Puerto Rican background was very important. Our strategy was to target Democratic Latino primary voters through a multi-layered communications strategy. The average strategy most people would have relied on for a race like this would have been to target male primary voters to expand the electorate. While determining counts, we found that only about 12,000 Latinos voted in at least one of the last three Congressional primaries in Florida, so we expanded our target. As a firm that understands Latinos, we went with a strategy that additionally targeted the 7,000 newly registered Democratic voters, and created a universe of about **19,000** Latino voters.

We are a Latino owned and operated political consulting firm and therefore have an understanding of the the Latino communities in many states. We knew that Puerto Ricans had recently moved to central Florida in large numbers because of the downturn in the Puerto Rican economy. We were also aware of the frustration in the community about the recent Government bailout bill that took power away from local politicians. Puerto Ricans are very proud of their roots and love their island home so acknowledging all the factors behind their frustrations and communicating that Soto was ready to fight for them was our mission.

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<sup>1</sup>According to The Cook Political Report,

**CAMPAIGN TOOLS:**

With a \$150,000 budget and four weeks to run this campaign, we reached out to Latino voters in the following ways: **84,590 bilingual mail** pieces with a strong Puerto Rican influenced message and early voting reminders. A total of **16,965 bilingual calls** were made to both landlines and mobile phones with a persuasive message, as well as voting reminders.

We also ran 30 second ads on Pandora with audio and display of Soto’s message to give Puerto Ricans a voice in Congress. These ads generated **2,423,953 impressions** from listeners who had the option to click on the banner and be directed to Latino Victory’s endorsement page on their website. Pandora was an innovative way to reach the Puerto Rican voters who had recently relocated to the Orlando area. Statistically, they consume digital radio at a higher rate than regular radio. The cultural need and strong ties to the music of the island and Puerto Rican culture was important to understand and cater to the demographic through such a strong indicator of how Puerto Ricans receive their information. The ads were specifically targeted to users in Florida’s 9th Congressional district who were Spanish-language music listeners, bilingual audiences, and music listeners of the Latin genre including salsa, bachata, reggaeton, and cumbia.

**THE RESULTS:**

The ever-growing Latino support, primarily from Puerto Rican voters, gained Soto a lead in the race, which proved that the targeting was an essential piece in securing the win for Soto. Darren Soto secured the victory over his biggest contender, Susannah Randolph by over 3,000 votes in a race where voter turnout totaled 39,951 votes. Soto gained a total of **14,387 votes, 36.3%** of all voters. In his last election in 2014, Latino turnout was 13%, this number increased to 31% in the 2016 primary. Darren Soto got this percentage of the vote, in a district where 41% of the population is Latino.

44%

In Osceolo County<sup>2</sup>

38%

In Orange County<sup>2</sup>

In this primary, Latinos were able to single handily elect one of their own to represent them in Congress. Soto is on track to becoming the first Puerto Rican Member of Congress from Florida, thanks to the campaign’s work through Latino Victory Fund and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus’ BOLD PAC.



**16,965 Bilingual Calls**



**2,423,953 Impressions**



**84,590 Bilingual Mail Pieces**



**SOLIDARITY STRATEGIES**

<sup>2</sup> According to the Orlando Sentinel