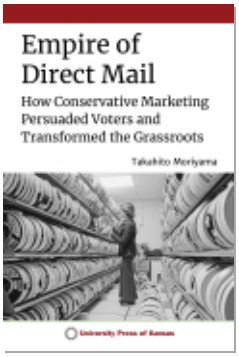
Chapter 4 After Goldwater



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CHAPTER 4

After Goldwater

RICHARD A. VIGUERIE VISITED the office of the clerk of the House of Representatives for several weeks after the 1964 presidential election. In December 1964, Viguerie resigned from Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) where he had worked as a fundraiser, then established his own direct mail firm, the Richard A. Viguerie Company (RAVCO). His new consulting company initially had just YAF as the major client, which he lost within a few years. After founding the RAVCO in Falls Church, Virginia, Viguerie went down to the office of the clerk that housed the files of those who had contributed $50 or more to the Barry Goldwater campaign. In the mid-1960s, such information was open to the public, but photocopying was prohibited. So Viguerie, and several women he had hired, copied down the names and addresses of Goldwater supporters across the nation, compiling a handwritten list of 12,500 donors. It was the beginning of his well-known direct mail list, "without which I wouldn't be in business today," as Viguerie would later recall.[1]

In direct mail politics of the 1960s, Viguerie rose to prominence as the most successful political fundraiser of the time. The conservative consultant has claimed that he was the pioneer of direct mail solicitation, insisting that almost nobody paid attention to the significance of the promising medium at that time. In fact, however, the mid-1960s witnessed a burst of direct mail fundraising as many other conservatives, moderates in the RNC, and even Democrats mailed out solicitation letters. Nevertheless Viguerie handled direct mail most effectively, not because other activists and candidates dismissed the political medium, but because he was keenly aware that partisanship, ideology, and emotion were the keys to the success of political direct mail. To borrow Viguerie's words, he elaborately institutionalized "ideological direct mail" to stand out in the highly competitive market.[2] In this sense, the evolution of direct mail politics went hand in hand with the development of partisanship, factionalism, and offensive ad campaigns.

Direct mail not only raised political funds but also impacted the organizational structure of the Republican Party and conservative groups in the 1960s.

While Viguerie set up his new direct mail firm primarily for the conservative movement, Republican leaders sought to rebuild the party. On the heels of Goldwater's debacle on November 3, 1964, moderate and conservative wings seriously divided the Republican Party. Grassroots conservatives built their strength through local chapters in the South and Southwest as the John Birch Society (JBS) made some important strides in Republican organizations such as the Young Republicans. However, out of fear that "the radical right" might take over the Grand Old Party, moderate Republicans reorganized the party in the mid-1960s. Party leaders entrusted Ray C. Bliss, a newly elected chairman of the Republican National Committee (RNC), with the task of reforming the party structure following the 1964 election. The chairman constructed the "Bliss model," the blueprint for party organization based on professional staff, systematic fundraising, extensive voter outreach, and the integration of national, state, and local party committees. Bliss's reform laid the groundwork for party organization for Republicans, and later for Democrats alike, in the 1960s and beyond.[3]

As moderates and conservatives struggled to gain control of the Republican Party after 1964, fundraising became one of the most significant foci for the intraparty conflicts. As Bliss stressed the "nuts and bolts" strategy, which focused on basic tasks such as precinct organization, finances, and the selection of attractive candidates, he attempted to concentrate fundraising operations under the RNC in order to stabilize and expand the party's financial base. Yet conservative political consultants, such as Viguerie and his direct mail mentor Marvin Liebman, developed direct mail solicitation solely for conservative causes. The fundraising activities of conservatives intensified tensions within the Republican Party because their solicitation drives resulted in the diffusion of financial power and widened ideological divisions within the party. As such, direct mail politics developed in connection with Republican intraparty partisanship in the latter part of the 1960s.

Simultaneously, direct mail played a major role in branding conservatism in the 1960s by offering a channel to bypass what they believed was a liberal-dominated national media. Several conservative "splinter" groups arose to mobilize conservative individuals after the Goldwater campaign. These groups needed to tackle the label of "the radical right" that liberal media and intellectuals had given to the conservative movement. And the organizations faced the question of how to differentiate themselves from the JBS founder Robert Welch, whose conspiracy theory and fierce grassroots activities provided liberals with opportunities to portray conservatives as "extremists" or "fanatics." The American Conservative Union (ACU), which Liebman and

William F. Buckley Jr. established to direct the conservative movement in the post-Goldwater era, was at odds with the JBS as well as Republican moderates, and criticized them through publications and direct mail.

The branding of conservatism was accompanied by a transformation in mobilization style, which diverted from grassroots activism. Historians have interpreted the contest within the conservative movement as a struggle for "respectability" that was quintessential for conservatives to gain wider support in American society. As Frank Meyer, a columnist in *National Review* and a leading theorist of modern American conservatism, argued, "the establishment of responsible leadership" was the primary concern of many conservative activists in the mid-1960s.[4] But more fundamentally, the competition within the conservative movement demonstrated that the ACU and political consultants turned away from the grassroots movement on the JBS model by transforming the relationship of conservative leaders with the rank and file. Instead of organizing local chapters and financing itself with membership fees, the ACU depended on direct mailing for raising money and generating support across the nation. Since the Goldwater movement, direct mail promoted the shift from face-to-face membership toward masses of individual contributions within the conservative movement. The widespread use of direct mail by moderates and liberals reinforced the newly defined "grassroots" activism in American politics as the accumulation of individual contributions, rather than direct interactions at the local level.

Liberals lagged behind conservatives in direct mail fundraising partly due to their complacency. The 1964 race seemingly reconfirmed the ascendancy of liberalism since the 1930s, and the national mass media, including prominent newspapers, radio, and television, largely endorsed liberal policies. Yet visionary Democrats, such as George McGovern and Eugene McCarthy, devoted attention to political direct mail by the end of the 1960s. Liberals' mailings contrasted with conservatives' emotional appeals by using more positive rhetoric for raising money. The 1960s witnessed the expansion and diversity of direct mail politics but ended up demonstrating that emotion and populism attracted more money.

Reorganizing the Republican Party

In the wake of Goldwater's resounding defeat, Republican leaders set out to reform the RNC. Indeed, there was little criticism of Dean Burch, a member of Goldwater's "Arizona Mafia" and the chairman of the RNC in the 1964 campaign. But several Republicans thought that they needed to remove him because

they believed that it was a necessary symbolic step toward a reorganization of the party on the national and state levels. As an RNC member mentioned, nearly every Republican state committee was divided over the issue of Goldwater, and many Republicans were worried about Goldwater's continued influence on the party apparatus through Burch. For such concerned Republicans, the assignment of a new chairman was obligatory for the unity of the party.[5]

Raymond C. Bliss was elected as the director of the RNC in 1965. Bliss had served as the Republican state chairman in Ohio for sixteen years and transformed the state party from an ailing organization into "one of the best-oiled political organizations in the nation."[6] Beginning as a volunteer of the mayoralty campaign of 1931, Bliss climbed up the ladder of state politics step by step. While maintaining his insurance and real estate business in Akron, Ohio, he helped Republican candidates as a precinct committeeman and then a member of the State Central Committee by 1944. After Republicans went through a devastating defeat in 1948, Senator Robert A. Taft and other party leaders in Ohio asked Bliss to become state chairman, and he showed his genius for party organization, using advanced techniques such as confidential polling. By the time of the 1964 presidential election, the Ohioan became preeminent in the Republican Party as "the organizational man."[7]

Additionally, Republican leaders considered Bliss the best choice for rebuilding the party due to his nonideological position. "Most people know that I have been a desk chairman in Ohio," Bliss explained in his typical practical tone. He had worked largely behind the scenes in Ohio and stated that he would continue this stance in Washington, adding, "I have always felt that as chairman it was my duty to build up others."[8] When former president Dwight Eisenhower asked him to become national chairman, Bliss clarified again his focus on pragmatic tasks in the RNC by saying, "I don't want to get into degrees of Republicanism. Once a man is nominated, I will support him."[9] As David S. Broder of the *New York Times Magazine* observed, such modesty was one of the reasons why his colleagues regarded Bliss as a "safe man" when the Republican Party was ideologically divided.[10]

As national chairman, Bliss devoted most of his energy to fostering the unity of the Republican Party, as he directed the vital areas of fundraising and party organization in ways that his predecessors had never done. Having learned lessons from his experience in Ohio, Bliss firmly believed that unified fundraising was important so that "donors are not repeatedly solicited by a succession of party committees."[11] More critically, Bliss asserted that the unified fundraising was necessary for integrating the party on the local, state, and national levels.

Prior to the 1960s, the RNC had had few reliable resources and depended on state committees. In Ohio, Bliss had insisted on his right as state chairman to allocate funds among candidates and state and county committees. Affirming that party interests were undermined by officeholders who became too profoundly indebted to particular big contributors, Bliss battled against any candidates and donors who tried to short-circuit the official channel of campaign finance. "Establishing the national chairmanship as a similar financial fulcrum," a *New York Times Magazine* article pointed out, "will be Bliss's first and most important test in Washington."[12]

Bliss reinforced the financial capacity of the Republican Party with direct mail as the backbone of the party solicitation. Back in 1962, the RNC had launched a direct mail "sustaining membership" program to collect money from small contributors. This program brought $500,000 to the party coffers in its first year, and in 1963 netted over $1.2 million, which was 45 percent of all money available to the national committee that year. Assigning General Lucius D. Clay as financial chairman in 1965, Bliss enormously expanded the RNC's direct mail programs. The RNC under Bliss raised $4 million in 1965, and later in 1966 $7.1 million, a record for a midterm election year. By 1967, Bliss's programs of direct mail solicitation offered 82 percent of the funds raised by the RNC. Direct mail provided a reliable, sustainable, and substantial revenue source, which was indispensable for a permanent, professional, and service-oriented national party headquarters. By the late 1960s, Bliss succeeded in constructing a financially independent national headquarters, reducing state party dominance over the national committee as the RNC no longer relied on state party assessments for revenue. Now, the national committee headquarters reversed the flow of money by allotting revenues to candidates and state committees.[13]

Bliss cautiously continued to be ideologically neutral in order to keep the party unified. Although he opposed Goldwater's nomination in 1964, Bliss stated that Goldwaterites had their place in the party, saying, "Certainly I consider Goldwater and his people must be in the spirit of his party. We need to hold the party together."[14] Bliss's innovative strategy of fundraising also helped promote his shift away from ideological debates within the party. In a meeting with Republican state chairmen in January 1966, for example, the most extensively discussed item was a report on the Michigan state committee's use of a computer to process its fundraising. "That item, uninteresting in itself, speaks volumes about the shift in the mood" of the RNC, an article in the *New York Times* reported.[15] Contemporary reporters and pundits found that Bliss averted the focus of the GOP from the ideological arguments of the 1964 campaign toward

the practical necessities of preparing for ensuing elections. The focus on technologies, such as computerized direct mail solicitation, was important not only for integrating national and state committees, but also for maintaining Republicans' unity regardless of their ideologies following the Goldwater campaign.

Republican leaders and mass media expected that Bliss would lead the RNC as a nonideological manager. However, as David Broder of the *New York Times* accurately mentioned, this prediction was incorrect. Bliss had strong views on the condition of the Republican Party and on his role as national chairman that "inevitably will produce conflict."[16] Despite Bliss's efforts to integrate moderates and conservatives in the party, conservatives doubted his blueprint. "Bliss' job is to hold the Republican Party together as best he can," William F. Buckley Jr. wrote, "But such an uneasy alliance will not save the GOP."[17] For Buckley, it was merely a hallucination that conservatives and moderates worked together by putting ideological differences aside. "Ecumenism is in the air, but so, the world continues to discover, is sectarianism," observed Buckley.[18]

Conflicts between Bliss and conservatives began immediately after his assignment as national chairman. Because Bliss emphasized party finance as the foundation of his organization strategy, Bliss brought his Ohio colleagues to the RNC, replacing committee members who had been selected by Goldwater with his "Ohio Mafia."[19] Furthermore, in order to prevent the diffusion of funds in the Republican Party, Bliss needed to deal with in-party and side-party organizations, which mushroomed after the 1964 campaign. Among conservative splinter groups was the Free Society Association (FSA), which Denison Kitchel, Goldwater's campaign manager, founded to organize Goldwater supporters after the election. When establishing the conservative group, Kitchel used $150,000 from the treasury of the Citizens for Goldwater–Miller that was inaccessible to the RNC, and then launched solicitation drives that diverted Republicans into third-party efforts.[20] Such a movement did not go unnoticed by Bliss and other party leaders. Bliss rejected any attempts to diffuse the money and energy of the Republican Party, saying he was "against political splinter groups in general and against Barry Goldwater's Free Society Association in particular."[21]

The American Conservative Union

The Free Society Association was not the only conservative organization that annoyed the Republican Party in the mid-1960s. When the 1964 presidential election resulted in the crashing defeat of Barry Goldwater, conservative political consultants were quick to organize a post-Goldwater movement. "Splinter"

groups mushroomed to mobilize conservatives around the nation, and the American Conservative Union emerged shortly thereafter as the most preeminent group in the conservative movement.

Anticipating that Goldwater could not win the presidential election, Robert Bauman, chairman of Young Americans for Freedom, called political consultant Marvin Liebman in October 1964. The young activist maintained that conservatives needed to turn the expected defeat into grounds for their movement by founding "a conservative umbrella group." Liebman, who had helped establish YAF for student conservatives four years earlier, was pleased because he also had conceived the idea of "a senior organization" of YAF to augment the conservative movement.[22] The young activist and consultant contacted conservative politicians about the creation of their new group. They sent a letter to Congressman Donald C. Bruce of Indiana just the day after the election, suggesting the formation of a new political organization to be known as the American Conservative Union (ACU). Liebman and Bauman explained that the general objectives of the ACU included "consolidating the over-all strength of the American conservative movement through unified leadership and action," "molding public opinion," and "stimulating and directing responsible political action."[23]

In early December, Liebman invited several conservative leaders to the ACU's founding meeting that was to be held at the Statler-Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC, on December 18 and 19, claiming, "There are literally millions of American citizens who seek conservative leadership in the months and years ahead."[24] Due to his close relationship with Liebman as a fellow conservative activist, William F. Buckley Jr. received the invitation and attended the meeting. Other participants in the founding meeting included William A. Rusher, the publisher of Buckley's *National Review*; Frank Meyer, an editor and writer for the magazine; and John Dos Passos, an ex-communist conservative novelist. At the ACU first meeting, Bruce was elected chairman with Congressman John Ashbrook of Ohio as vice chairman.[25]

The participation of these activists, intellectuals, and politicians in the ACU was crucial to its objectives to "mobilize the moral, political and intellectual leadership of the American conservative movement."[26] The presence of the two lawmakers in leadership positions confirmed the connection of the new conservative organization with the Republican Party. The ACU's proposal made it clear that one of the most immediate tasks for the conservative organization was the revitalization of the two-party system. The "Republican Party must be brought to life," the memo announced, by providing "new and positive leadership, new creative programs, a new image." While endorsing the Republican

Party, the ACU also stressed that the GOP was divided and leaderless like the Democratic Party had been during the late 1920s and early 1930s. The ACU founding members obviously aimed to turn the party rightward to fight against Democrats and liberals, declaring, "To reshape, to revitalize, to build and employ the GOP: that is ACU's role."[27]

From its beginning, the ACU was intimately connected with YAF. Young conservatives cut their teeth in YAF as they were engaged in conservative politics on campus. YAF members organized rallies for conservative candidates in election years and began to conflict with New Left students during the 1960s. Some of the young activists continued to participate in the conservative movement as they shifted to the ACU after graduating. When Bauman was assigned as a secretary in 1965, ACU directors indicated that the ACU would recruit promising YAF "graduates" so that young conservatives could be professional activists or politicians in the future.[28] Simultaneously, the ACU strengthened its grassroots activities in cooperation with YAF chapters throughout the nation. As an internal memorandum described, the ACU was designed to play a role as the "brainpower" of the conservative movement, while YAF "would furnish the manpower."[29]

As a public relations activist, Liebman stressed the role of the ACU in shaping public opinion as one of the goals of the new conservative organization. In his memo, Liebman asserted that conservatives needed to build up a movement "willing to speak and act in terms easily understood and generally acceptable to the public."[30] The ACU began to publish its monthly newsletter, *Battle Line*, informing members of what was going on at the White House, in Congress, in party organizations, and in state politics. *Battle Line* looked more formal than newsletters of other right-wing groups, such as the John Birch Society's *Bulletin*, helping to project an image of respectability for the ACU in the conservative movement.[31]

A fundamental problem that the ACU faced from its establishment was how to gain respectability in American politics. In order to make conservatism an alternative to liberalism, conservatives needed to avoid the image of the extreme right and become a movement acceptable to more Americans. This issue of being perceived as a respectable conservative organization inevitably forced ACU directors to distinguish themselves from the JBS. During and immediately after the 1964 presidential election, the JBS was the largest grassroots anticommunist group. Birchers were active at the precinct level and played a central role in contacting millions of people throughout the campaign. Therefore, the JBS attracted popular and academic attention, casting a public image of American conservatism. Most national media coverage deemed the JBS "extremists" whose

ideology was replete with conspiracy theories, and intellectuals such as Daniel Bell, Richard Hofstadter, and other "consensus" scholars scrutinized the rise of the "radical right" by focusing on the JBS.[32] Scholars, liberal media, and the public usually linked the image of the JBS to the modern American conservative movement as a whole. This indictment of conservatism annoyed right-wing groups in the post-Goldwater years.

At the founding meeting in Washington, Buckley proposed nobody in the JBS's leadership be permitted to join the board of directors and the advisory assembly of the ACU. "The question inevitably arises, What is the relationship between the American Conservative Union and the John Birch Society?" A public statement issued by the ACU declared, "the answer is: There is no relation between the two organizations."[33] Similarly, Liebman proposed that the ACU aim for a "'leadership cadre' rather than a mass group," believing that the respectable conservative movement needed to engage in top-down operations rather than grassroots activism.[34] Rusher also suggested that the ACU direct the conservative movement and support itself in a different way from the JBS:

> I most emphatically do not encourage you to assume that we can (or that we should) best Robert Welch at his own game. The ACU will probably not amass a membership as large as that of the John Birch Society; certainly it won't command anything like the same financial resources. . . . But, provided you do not set your sights impossibly high, I think the ACU may reasonably hope to serve as a substitute medium of effective action of the salvageable members of the John Birch Society.[35]

If the ACU was to be a "leadership cadre" rather than a "mass group," as Rusher mentioned, they were required to construct a new financial model. The JBS was well-financed as it depended on the membership fees collected from the rank and file around the nation. Alternatively, without tens of thousands of members, the ACU had to search for new financial resources immediately after its foundation. The founding members of the ACU understood the problem caused by their deviance from the JBS model. "As had been anticipated, our primary problem is a question of finance," ACU Chairman Bruce said to Liebman in late January. "A study of our financial situation would almost incline one to a feeling of despair. There is no question but what the next few weeks may well be the most critical period for the ACU."[36]

The conservative business community was among the first contributors to the ACU. Liebman sent letters to wealthy conservatives to invite them to join

the Advisory Assembly and to appeal for "seed" money. Henry Salvatori of Los Angeles donated $5,000, and Jeremiah Milbank of New York gave $1,000 in December 1964. In February 1965, Walter Knott of Orange County, Eli Lilly of Indianapolis, and Roger Milliken of Spartanburg, South Carolina, contributed over $500 to the ACU.[37] Furthermore, these conservative magnates helped raise funds by solicitating other businesspeople and philanthropists in areas such as Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Texas, Milwaukee, and Georgia.[38] Yet the ACU was not able to rely exclusively on such business conservatives because "the big-money boys seem to be in a mood to wait and see before putting really heavy support behind the ACU."[39] The big money interests did not offer enough money to sustain the ACU; instead, the organization had to demonstrate its ability to collect substantial funds from other sources.

As the ACU was confronted with a financial crisis in the first months, the Marin Liebman Associates took the responsibility for "all facets of all direct mail fundraising campaigns" on behalf of the organization.[40] Liebman and his colleague Richard Viguerie began to raise funds for the ACU. However, despite the two political consultants' experience and expertise, ACU leaders were skeptical about their ability to raise funds from direct mail. It was not because they doubted the effectiveness of the medium but because they recognized the market of political direct mail was highly competitive within the conservative movement. "Over 2,700 autonomous organizations are currently competing for the 'conservative dollar' to finance their operations," the ACU's report of fundraising program indicated in 1965. "It appears that most of these organizations use the direct mail technique."[41] Concerned over "the truly alarming proliferation of conservative fund appeals," Rusher accurately observed that the Goldwater campaign accelerated the competition for political funds as lists of contributors grew during the election.[42] Viguerie was one of the first, but not the only operative who astutely realized the significance of contributor lists in direct mail politics. James M. Day, a former staff member of the National Citizens for Goldwater and Miller, Neil McCaffrey of the Conservative Book Club, and many other conservative activists successfully employed direct mail by targeting those who had contributed to Goldwater. Buckley, who had worked with Liebman since the mid-1950s, felt that their privileged position in direct mail politics was being undermined. "[I]t is very disturbing that people are discovering how to raise money by mail. I think we probably pioneered that route—we and Marvin."[43]

Liebman attempted to overcome the ACU's financial predicament with several additional fundraising projects. He planned to decentralize the financial burden by naming chairmen in fifty states and asking them to fill annual quotas.

Setting the goal of collecting $10,000 each month, Liebman's fundraising plan also included $100-a-place fundraising dinners, programs to increase ACU membership, and "special projects" for producing rental films on conservatism.[44]

Still, the ACU proved that direct mail was the most profitable way of fundraising. Direct mailings by Liebman and Viguerie for the ACU stood out in the conservative movement of the mid-1960s in part because Viguerie obtained Goldwater's contributor lists, which enabled the fundraisers to reach many prospective donors. More important, as he described it himself, Viguerie elaborately turned political direct mail into "ideological" direct mail by stressing partisanship and highlighting emotion most effectively. Liebman and Viguerie differentiated their appeals from many other political solicitations by aggressively asserting that the ACU was the authentic conservative organization that took over the Goldwater movement and that it was a respectable "grassroots" organization that fought with both the Republican establishment and right-wing extremists in the conservative movement.[45]

The ACU launched a series of fundraising campaigns against the request of RNC Chairman Bliss to refrain from independent solicitation. In late June 1965, Bliss called on conservative splinter organizations, including the ACU, for a moratorium on fundraising. Bliss said, "We will never have a strong, united party until our fund-raising efforts are also united and coordinated." Nevertheless, in August, Liebman and Viguerie initiated a direct mail fundraising program for the ACU, which was in effect an effort by conservatives to challenge mainstream Republicans in the wake of the 1964 campaign. ACU Vice Chairman Ashbrook declared, "The battle for control of the Republican party is underway."[46]

The direct mailing of August 14 indicated how the ACU carved out its position in the Republican Party. The ACU sent thousands of solicitation letters to conservatives who had donated money to the Goldwater campaign in 1964. While applauding Goldwater's nomination as the achievement of conservatives, the appeal partook of a conspiratorial denunciation as it claimed Goldwater lost the general election because liberals in the GOP were more interested in maintaining control of the party than in electing the Republican nominee to the presidency: "Despite the clear mandate of the convention, the liberal minority took its revenge for our delegate victory." Similarly, the appeal implicitly criticized the Bliss group in the RNC, saying that "the liberal minority has become reestablished in a position of political control of the National Committee" since the presidential election.[47]

The direct mailing was characterized by populist rhetoric manipulation that contrasted the "majority of grassroots Republicans" with the "liberal minority."

Goldwater's nomination at the national convention was proof, in the words of the appeal, that "it is still possible for the grassroots to be heard in a national political convention, and that the vast majority of grass roots Republicans are still devoted to the traditional principles of conservatism." If the conservative movement was properly coordinated and inspired, the ACU's fundraising letter went on, conservatives "can achieve control of the Party's national machinery."[48] Another direct mailing similarly demonstrated the ACU was dedicated to taking over the Republican Party rather than forming a third party. In the spring of 1966, Liebman mailed out an appeal that maintained that the GOP was not over. "The opportunity remains," the direct mailing contended, "to make the Republican Party not only an effective opposition force, but also truly reflective of conservative political philosophy."[49] The direct mail drive aimed at prospective supporters with antielitism, accelerating ideological partisanship not merely against liberals but also against moderates of the Republican Party.

Whereas the ACU challenged the Republican establishment, ACU leaders criticized the John Birch Society to emphasize that they represented a respectable conservative movement. The ACU directors, as well as many other conservatives, were aware of the major and negative impact of the JBS on their movement. As the ACU's document mentioned, "The public . . . equate [the JBS] with all conservative groups and our effectiveness is damaged."[50] For as long as the public image of the JBS as extremists was applied to the whole conservative movement, Republicans would continue to purge conservatives from the party and the ACU would remain unable to generate wide support in American politics.

Under the leadership of Buckley, *National Review* and the ACU launched the campaign against the JBS through direct mail and publication. In August 1965, Buckley made statements to condemn Robert Welch's leadership by describing the JBS founder as "paranoid and unpatriotic," and Buckley also criticized the JBS membership for staying in the extreme anticommunist organization. In October, moreover, *National Review* published more denunciations by several prominent conservatives.[51] The ACU sent nearly fifty thousand letters from January 15 to February 14, 1966, based on multiple mailing lists of organizations, including conservative magazine *Human Event* and the Conservative Action Party. While 29 percent of all mail was about the ACU's programs, 30 percent of all mail dealt with the JBS, mentioning the *National Review* article criticizing the JBS and the fact that ACU board of directors and the advisory assembly were opposed to the JBS.[52]

National Review's criticism of Welch immediately received reactions from the JBS membership. "I do not want to write lengthily but basically I cannot support *NR* so long as you so vehemently disagree with Robert Welch and the

JBS," a Birch member wrote to *National Review*. This was part of "the flood" of letters from the JBS.[53] Because many Birchers also subscribed to *National Review*, they received direct mailings from the magazine and predictably reacted to the appeals with anger. Another Birch member said it was "a very unfortunate approach to raising money," and many JBS members stopped contributing to *National Review* or sent a storm of protest letters.[54]

Although the influence of the JBS remained strong in the mid-1960s, the ACU directors expected that the radical right group would shortly lose its centripetal force. In addition to the *National Review*'s article, national media, academics, and politicians accused the JBS of promoting extreme ideology. This avalanche of attack took a toll on the JBS, and the Birch membership declined over the latter part of the 1960s.[55] Emphasizing "leadership cadre" rather than "mass movement," the ACU never attempted to fill the void left by the JBS. The ACU managed to support itself by amassing funds through direct mail solicitation instead of membership fees, and in election years, the ACU rallied support for conservative candidates by sending out mails from the ACU headquarters to prospective contributors throughout the country. In 1969, the ACU created its political action committee, Conservative Victory Fund, which provided politicians with funds collected from the conservative ranks. The ACU also sponsored several programs to strengthen the conservative leadership in education, journalism, and state legislatures by establishing the ACU Education and Research Foundation, the National Journalism Center, and the American Legislative Exchange Council.[56]

However, discontent smoldered within the ACU over its grassroots mobilization. William J. Gill in Pennsylvania sent ACU Chairman Donald Bruce a letter, which mentioned that he and his friends were disappointed that the ACU was hesitant to form local chapters. "My own feeling is that you have to build from the grass roots up," Gill said. He made his case that the ACU needed to construct closer relationships with the grassroots by organizing more conservatives through means other than just direct mail, stressing, "They must have something to do, besides write checks."[57] Likewise, Leo Synnestvedt of the Philadelphia area was critical of the ACU activities based primarily in Washington, DC. The "ACU *must organize locally*," Synnestvedt urged, arguing that local conservatives lived in a local world and therefore the ACU was not able to maintain their interests by the operations from Washington that seemed so often "out of our hands."[58]

Responding to the calls for more local activities, the ACU made some efforts to mobilize grassroots conservatives. The anti-John Birch Society campaign carefully distinguished the JBS rank and file from their leader. The *National*

Review article blamed Welch for his conspiracy theory without attacking his followers. Simultaneously, the ACU attempted to attract grassroots conservatives from the right-wing organization. Before *National Review* issued the anti-JBS article, Rusher was assigned to organize a division of the ACU to "receive JBS members and others who desire a JBS-type relationship."[59] Rusher's political action programs were an important step in making the ACU a broadly based organization. An example of such attempts to broaden the ACU's membership base was the organization's political action handbook, which instructed its members on "how to get active in the affairs of their local party organizations; how to work upward toward real influence in them; etc."[60] Although the ACU sought to develop an echelon of conservative leaders at its foundation, it also tried to reach rank-and-file conservatives by offering local programs and establishing chapters around nation as the JBS did.

Yet, as Rusher acknowledged in his memoir, the ACU did "not always successfully" organize local conservatives.[61] In his reply to Synnestvedt who insisted the ACU build local chapters, Rusher agreed that the ACU had an important function in the field of political action but noted that "the Board [of Directors of the ACU], for reasons it has deemed sufficient, has chosen to go slowly in this matter."[62] Rusher and other ACU leaders were afraid that local chapters frequently drifted away from national programs into other "more immediately rewarding forms of political activity," such as local campaigns.[63] Despite the increasing number of requests for authorization to establish ACU local organizations over the course of the late 1960s, Rusher continued to disappoint many local activists by letting them know that "we are prepared to continue along the same line of inaction locally," or "we do not feel that time is ripe for the organization of a chapter of the ACU in Oregon."[64]

The ACU maintained its top-down structure to direct the conservative movement. Instead of organizing the conservative ranks through local and state chapters, ACU directors defined "political action" as working on national politics. In consultation with other members, Rusher set forth his proposals for political actions that included "research on issues" for use by incumbent conservative congressmen and candidates for offices, or a program to put the RNC "under surveillance."[65] For this purpose, the ACU disseminated research materials to conservative politicians so that they could choose and develop their issues, while attacking the moderate policies under the RNC.[66] Eventually, the ACU settled into the position of a membership organization. But unlike the JBS, which kept its members active in neighborhoods and precincts, the ACU made its members pay their dues to Washington. In 1969, the ACU founded a

Conservative Victory Fund that made contributions to candidates who deserved conservative support. In Rusher's view, the fund was "a very useful device for conservatives who may not have the time or facilities to research such matters themselves but who don't want to make contributions through party channels." Additionally, the ACU created institutions such as the ACU Education and Research Foundation, which in turn financed the National Journalism Center that trained conservative journalists, and the American Legislative Exchange Council, which specialized in activities of the state legislatures.[67]

The Development of Political Direct Mail

Like Viguerie, a new generation of direct mail operatives contributed to the expansion of conservative politics, competing sometimes with older right-wingers over financial sources. Neil McCaffrey was among the ambitious and entrepreneurial conservative activists. Born to a Catholic family in the Bronx, McCaffrey began his professional career in publishing. He worked for Doubleday as an editor and direct mail copywriter for six years before Macmillan hired him to set up a mail order department in 1961. McCaffrey expressed interest in nascent conservatism during the 1950s. In 1957, he wrote to Buckley's *National Review*, saying that he could increase the magazine's readership through his expertise in advertising. He promoted *National Review* with a direct mail program that he believed helped increase the circulation of the political magazine from 17,000 to 142,000 during the Goldwater campaign.[68] McCaffrey comprehended how to reach out to new consumers by means of extensive but selective direct mail advertising, saying, "This simple device will speak more loudly than a dozen salesmen."[69]

McCaffrey was dedicated particularly to promoting conservative bookstores in the post-Goldwater years as the president of the Conservative Book Club that he founded in April 1964. Using the list of active subscribers to *National Review*, the book club shortly gained about thirty thousand members, to whom McCaffrey mailed a selection of right-wing books at discounted prices each month. In its turn, the Conservative Book Club provided its mailing lists to Liebman when the political consultant launched direct mail solicitation in 1965. McCaffrey's direct mail promoting broke through the publishing wall that conservative writers and publishers faced in the 1960s. Conservative publishing companies, such as Regnery Publishing and Devin Garrity of Devin-Adair Publishing, signed contracts with the club to sell their books directly with potential conservative readers. By 1967 the Conservative Book Club had average sales of fifteen to twenty thousand conservative books a month.[70]

But at the same time, McCaffrey began to menace older right-wing publishers. In late 1964 McCaffrey founded his own publishing company, Arlington House, to explore the market for works written by "responsible conservatives." "Most houses barely scratch the surface of this market," McCaffrey claimed, contrasting conventional publishers with his direct mail operations. While average publishers used one-third of a page in a magazine for advertising a book, he asserted, the direct mail was more effective in "selling directly to consumers." Although publishers traditionally asked bookstores to order a sufficient stock of a book before the publication, McCaffrey's new publishing company attempted to generate demand by direct mail promotion.[71] Henry Regnery, the founder of Regnery Publishing that had contributed to conservatism by publishing books including Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* and Russel Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, faced the new competition. To meet the threat posed by the newly emerging publishing company, Regnery teamed with other conservative publishers to organize their own book club to rival McCaffrey's business. Regnery shortly abolished his plan to found the joint book club, but he remained concerned about the competition from the direct mail promoter.[72]

The older generation of conservatives thought that the new wave of conservative activism decreased their revenues within a small pie of the conservative movement. However, Viguerie argued that direct mail helped enlarge the market of conservatism. He developed political direct mail during the 1960s, learning how to carve out niches in American politics. Viguerie especially stressed the importance of branding. In the early 1960s when he raised funds for Young Americans for Freedom, he discovered that solicitation did not work well if his appeals only explained YAF's programs for the Goldwater campaign; instead, his direct mail was more successful in collecting money if his letters detailed the group's activities on campus. Recognizing that fighting against the New Left in universities was what the "Republican campaign groups weren't going to do," direct mail of Viguerie and other conservatives highlighted brand identity in their direct mail to make their clients stand out in the conservative movement.[73]

Over the course of the 1960s, the conservative student organization maintained its policy of sticking to its brand by sending direct mailings that stressed its fight against young left-wingers. In the early 1960s, the main target of YAF was left-wing students in the National Student Association (NSA). Founded in 1947, the NSA was a national student organization intended to promote the interests of university students, but conservative students were concerned over the liberal orientation of the group. In 1961, YAF created the Committee for a Responsible National Student Organization, headquartered in YAF's New York

offices, to advance their opposition to the NSA. Viguerie's direct mail highlighted the fight against the NSA as one of YAF's main campus issues in the early 1960s. Naming the NSA "the far left-wing," Viguerie announced that YAF had initiated a nationwide campaign to drive the NSA off college campuses when his direct mailings solicited funds for the activities of young conservatives.[74]

As the Vietnam War sparked a series of antiwar protests and the New Left movement, the late 1960s witnessed the rise of student uprisings on campuses from coast to coast. Facing the emergence of the New Left and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), YAF branded themselves as the student organization that resisted left-wing "radicals." A letter in 1969 aggressively remarked that the "Student Revolution . . . is a growing menace to our educational institutions and to the whole structure of our society."[75] YAF direct mail fundraising at the end of the decade frequently stressed patriotism. While American soldiers were making "the supreme sacrifice for Flag and Country," a letter said, protesters were "making mockery of the patriotic sacrifice of our beloved sons with anti-war, peace at any price demonstrations and electioneering."[76] Another appeal, apparently designed for adults who had children, emphasized violence on campus to stir up fear and antipathy for SDS. "If you had a son or daughter who was beaten up or had their life threatened by SDS hooligans," the direct mailing noted, "I'm sure you would be fighting mad and want to take immediate action." With an enclosed memo that listed reports of "SDS terror tactics," the letter was designed to stress the New Left's "radicals," the term that had been applied to the conservative movement just a few years before.[77]

By 1968, direct mail solicitation brought increased sums of funds to many conservative groups. The American Conservative Union (ACU) was still struggling financially as the organization began the year with a deficit of $10,641.[78] After the debt grew to $20,826 in April, the ACU launched a direct mail fundraising campaign. With a return rate of over 18 percent and an average contribution of $8, this solicitation drive successfully reduced the ACU's debt to $6,053 by July.[79] This improved ACU financial picture resulted from its efforts to increase the effectiveness of direct mail fundraising. For instance, the ACU kept their fundraising cost down by using YAF's offset machines to print their letters and promotion inserts.[80] The ACU also tried to amass funds at minimal costs by employing selective lists, instead of bigger lists including unlikely donors, to gain a higher percentage of return.[81] Joint appeal was another method used to maximize the profit of direct mail. In 1969, the ACU, *Human Events*, and the Conservative Book Club joined together in a cooperative direct mailing so that they "cut our costs by nearly two-thirds."[82] As a consequence, the ACU's improved finances

remained so stable that a report mentioned, "ACU's financial base is such that we can continue to meet our monthly budget without difficulty."[83]

Democratic organizations and politicians, too, became aware that political direct mail was immensely beneficial by the time they entered the electoral cycle in 1968. Among liberal groups that began to deploy direct mail was the Democratic Study Group (DSG). Organized as a contender to the conservative Republican-Dixiecrat coalition in 1959, the DSG engaged in research and analysis of political agendas, legislative proposals, and policy issues for Democratic policy makers. The organization promoted information exchange among Democrats by circulating *Legislative Report*, as a weekly summary of bills; *Fact Sheet*, a report with comprehensive analysis of major legislation; and other periodicals. Simultaneously, the DSG offered its support to candidates for office in key congressional elections. For these activities, the Democratic group collected money for liberal politicians during the 1960s, but its methodology transformed over the years.[84]

During the election year of 1968, the DSG implemented its first direct mail fundraising campaign, discovering that the medium brought about a great amount of financial benefit. The DSG collected campaign funds of approximately $15,000 in 1968, "the largest in its history," raising more than $90,000 through direct mail in the year. As a result of the appeals, the DSG also gained a mailing list of nearly ten thousand contributors, whose names were recorded on computer and would be used in ensuing campaigns.[85] The success of direct mail dramatically altered the DSG's view of fundraising. In 1964, the DSG and the Democratic National Committee had shared the conventional wisdom that the best way of fundraising was to ask people, whether they were a few wealthy millionaires or a mass of small donors. A memo of the DNC strongly recommended that candidates rely on direct solicitation by asking for funds in person, while saying that direct mail was not "as effective as face-to-face confrontation or even a telephone campaign."[86] However, by the early 1970s, a guideline entitled "How to Shake the Money Tree" emphasized that direct mail "can be quite successful if your lists are selective and your appeal is well written," and it recommended personal visits be limited to "potential big donors."[87]

Democratic politicians and candidates were also intrigued by direct mail by the end of the 1960s. Probably the most unusual anecdote about political direct mail in those years was George McGovern's contact with Viguerie. According to Viguerie's autobiography, the Democratic senator telephoned the conservative political consultant in 1967, requesting his direct mail fundraising services for the 1968 senatorial campaign. After a long chat, Viguerie declined McGovern's request due to their ideological distinctiveness. But Viguerie was pleased by the

liberal senator's appreciation of direct mail when most politicians did not understand its effectiveness. McGovern found another direct mail fundraiser who was politically closer to him and successfully raised campaign funds in 1968. After his reelection, McGovern advised his liberal colleagues to employ direct mail, and more Democrats acknowledged the efficacy of the political device in raking in money.[88] Antiwar liberal Eugene McCarthy also contacted Steven Winchell, vice president of the Ricard A. Viguerie Company (RAVCO), to ask for direct mail solicitation in the 1972 campaign. But again, the RAVCO did not assist the liberal politician, confining its fundraising efforts solely to conservative politics.[89] Although the RAVCO did not work with liberals in their campaigning, these episodes indicated that conservatives and liberals alike considered Viguerie the godfather of direct mail, even just a few years after the foundation of his consulting firm.

Compared with conservative direct mail, the language of liberal fundraising letters was designed to appeal to ideals rather than stirring up anxieties. Harold Oram, a New York liberal consultant who had engaged in direct mail fundraising from the 1940s and briefly mentored Liebman, was involved with educational programs for peace when the antiwar movement was in its heyday. "It is a crime against nature for the young to die first," stated a direct mailing with the signature of Martin Luther King Sr., which pointed to the casualties in the Vietnam War. This contrasted with conservative direct mailings that gave weight to the patriotism of American soldiers. Soliciting funds for the Fund for Peace that established a Peace Fellowship Program to financially support students of peace and international affairs, the letter made rather lofty remarks: "We must stop the arms race. We must develop new systems to resolve conflict, systems to match the new world in which we live."[90] Similarly, another appeal signed by J. William Fulbright called for financial support by stressing idealism. "Against the concrete, dramatic face of war," a writer of the letter stated, "peace seems a remote ideal, but the building of peace requires commitment to this idea." The appeal went on that there was no ready answer to the question of how to build peace, but there was "hope" that consisted primarily in "the creative power of education."[91] Unlike Liebman's and Viguerie's fundraising letters, these direct mailings by liberal Oram did not bring partisanship to the fore in the late 1960s.

However, sharing several characteristics with conservatives' direct mail, the rhetoric of liberals' solicitation letters sometimes highlighted ideology. When the Oram, Inc. mailed out fundraising letters for a peace educational program, an appeal with the signature of David Riesman noted that he had been concerned over peace since he had left his position as war contract termination director at

Sperry Gyroscope Company in 1946. But the letter's writer said that the public did not take the issue seriously, and pointed to the "injection of right-wing chauvinism into our national life," including not only McCarthyism but also 1960s conservatism, which had discouraged many liberals from devoting themselves to problems of international politics.[92]

The DSG launched direct mailings with rather harsh language characterized by a sense of urgency and partisanship. In the solicitation letter during the 1968 election, the liberal group asserted that an "ugly tide of racial backlash" had swept through the political landscape, threatening liberal social programs. The direct mailing mentioned that, with the "backlash coalition" comprised of traditional Republicans, southern conservatives, and the racially fearful lower middle class, the Nixon and Wallace campaigns caused "the repressive forces" that created "political and social disaster."[93] Whereas some liberal direct mail attempted to raise funds without partisan rhetoric, many consultants relied on the common wisdom that contests, fears, and menaces effectively urged individual donors to send checks. This iron law was slowly but surely becoming more common among direct mail consultants beyond political tendencies over the years.

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With the benefit of hindsight, the year of 1968 was the turning point of American politics in several senses. In this year, the Democratic Party was breaking asunder over the Vietnam War and urban unrest. Running as an antiwar candidate, Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota stunned Americans by winning a 41 percent against President Lyndon B. Johnson in the New Hampshire primary on March 12. At the end of the vote, LBJ announced his withdrawal from the race. Senator Robert Kennedy was assassinated immediately after winning the California primary on June 5. To make matters worse, George Wallace ran as a third-party candidate and pulled up southern votes from the Democratic Party.[94]

Richard Nixon triumphantly returned to the national stage of the Republican National Convention in August 1968, whereas a violent and gloomy atmosphere hung in the air at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where the Chicago police responded to street protests. The war in Vietnam also cast a shadow on the Republican Party, as George Romney had ruined his campaign by claiming that he had supported the war due to "brainwashing" by American generals and diplomats. Nelson Rockefeller, the standard-bearer for moderate Republicans, participated in the presidential race too late to place his name on state ballots. Ronald Reagan, whose 1964 speech "A Time for Choosing" had propelled him into prominence among conservatives, was not ready for the presidential election

just two years after he was elected governor of California in 1966. Alternatively, Nixon had gained the endorsement of Barry Goldwater in early 1965 and William Buckley in 1967, followed by many conservative politicians and activists.[95]

However, conservatives were not as zealous in 1968 as they had been four years earlier. William Rusher, Buckley's comrade in *National Review* and the American Conservative Union, supported Nixon because he was "conservative enough," though not as conservative as Reagan. F. Clifton White, another veteran of the 1964 Goldwater campaign, similarly calculated that conservatives' support was only "skin-deep." Richard Viguerie also mentioned that conservatives upheld Nixon because of "who his opponents were, but he was not one of us."[96] Anticipating Reagan could hardly be nominated at the convention, conservatives had few other choices than to back Nixon as a candidate against moderates like Rockefeller.

Despite the lack of enthusiasm among many conservatives, the Nixon campaign keenly realized that the future Republican Party hinged on their support. Kevin Phillips, a young New Yorker hired as an assistant by the Nixon campaign, designed the "southern strategy" during the 1968 election. In his 1969 monograph, *Emerging Republican Majority*, Phillips argued that "the revolt against established political interest has to be 'conservative,'" observing that the votes in the South, the West, and middle-class suburbia were increasingly the keys to winning elections. He considered 1968 a turning point that represented these shifts in ideology, population movement, and regionalism, pointing to the post–World War II migration of many White Americans to suburbs across the Sunbelt and the "Negro problem" that was transformed to a national issue as the result of the northern movement of African Americans since the 1920s.[97]

Coupled with the southern strategy, public relations consulting played a key role in the 1968 Nixon campaign. In 1969 Joe McGinniss published his book, *The Selling of the President*, which revealed how advertising agencies were engaged in image making on behalf of Nixon. Echoing political scientist Stanley Kelley who had warned the impacts of the advertising business on American politics in the 1950s, McGinniss stressed how "television men" and "TV politicians" altered truth in politics. Drawing from Daniel Boorstin's 1962 work, *The Image*, McGinniss outlined "a reshaping of our concept of truth" in the political use of television: "Television seems particularly useful to the politicians who can be charming but lacks idea. Print is for ideas. . . . On television it matters less that he does not have ideas. His personality is what the viewers want to share." In his book, McGinniss recounted how politicians and advertising agencies, such as Harry Treleaven, Frank Shakespeare, and others, worked together to sell Nixon to voters.[98]

The Selling of the Presidency called public attention to the cooperation of advertising agencies with political candidates, which had taken firm root in the national elections in 1952. However, McGinniss simultaneously demonstrated the divide among political operatives. The campaign manager John Mitchell and White House Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman doubted the value of television. Nixon never trusted television either. He disliked looking at himself on the display and refused to use a teleprompter, no matter how long his speech was. Advertising agencies in the Nixon campaign were frequently interrupted by politicians. "The perfect campaign, the computer campaign, the technicians' campaign, the television campaign . . . had collapsed beneath the weight of Nixon's grayness," Treleaven was quoted as saying. "The total split between the advertising and political people was very bad."[99]

As McGinniss indicated the significance and tension in political television ads, the late 1960s witnessed a sea change in the relationship between Capitol Hill and Madison Avenue. As advertising agencies worked for candidates during the 1950s and 1960s, political consultants gradually shifted from general to specialized consulting. Back in the 1952 presidential election, press editor Robert Humphreys had comprehensively directed the Dwight Eisenhower campaign, crafting his basic plans for public relations, fundraising, volunteer mobilization, and so on. By the end of the 1960s, however, candidates for office turned to political consultants with a specialized expertise in one area of electioneering such as polling, television advertising, filmmaking, direct mail fundraising, and computer campaigning, among others. The specialized consultants were involved with political campaigns as full-time professionals, focusing solely on political activities. In tandem with this professionalization, the advertising industry on Madison Avenue was gradually distancing itself from the political arena, partly because it did not fit into the heightened partisanship. Filling the void in the political consulting industry, professional political consultants, including Viguerie, moved from New York to Washington to work more closely with candidates and political organizations. The professionalization of consultancy and the separation of political consulting from the advertising business accelerated ideological partisanship in American elections.[100]

The formation of the November Group, Nixon's in-house advertising agency in 1972, evinced the geographical shift of political consulting from New York to Washington. This shift occurred in part because an in-house agency was less expensive as the Nixon campaign staff expected that they could save as much as $1,200,000 by forming an agency in Washington. But the main reason was political. A memorandum of the Nixon campaign team indicated that they decided

to set up an independent agency in Washington because the White House could directly control its campaign advertising. Jeb S. Magruder, who managed the Committee for the Re-Election of the President (CRP), assumed that quite a few ad agencies in New York and Chicago were left-leaning and that "all agencies would have difficulty putting their best people on our account because of their political affiliations." As an advertising magazine article similarly pointed out, the Nixon campaign created its own agency in DC because "it's being argued so many young people in ad agencies were anti-Nixon."[101]

Gathering ad agents from several cities, the November Group produced campaign advertisements during the 1972 election. Peter H. Dailey, president of Dailey and Associates of Los Angeles, presided over the in-house agency. Other members were Phil Joanou from Doyle Dane Bernbach's Los Angeles office, William Taylor from Ogilvy & Mather in New York, and others. The general advertising strategy and its implementation were overseen by an advisory board that included prominent ad agencies such as Richard O'Reilly, executive vice president of Wells, Rich, Greene, and Henry Schachte, who was president of J. Walter Thompson. The staff produced ads, including print, film, radio, and television spins, for the CRP and Democrats for Nixon throughout the campaign.[102]

In addition to mass media advertising under the November Group, the Nixon campaign launched direct mail drives. In April 1971, Viguerie's firm tried to contact Nixon's campaign. Stephen Winchell, vice president of the RAVCO, sent a letter to Robert C. Odle, who was a friend since college days and later served as staff assistant to the president from 1969 to 1971, explaining that direct mail was effective in raising funds and reaching out to voters. The RAVCO offered their expertise to raise money, solicit votes, enlist volunteers, and increase the percentage of Nixon votes in primary states, while suggesting that its direct mail would raise $14,500,000 net to the Nixon campaign and develop a list of 950,000 contributors as well as 1,800,000 Nixon supporters. Although the Nixon campaign did not sign a contract with the RAVCO, Nixon's staff paid attention to the function of the personalized medium to reach individuals, especially Independents and swing voters.[103]

Unlike the RAVCO's direct mail fundraising, Nixon's direct mail operations were intended mainly to solicit votes and recruit volunteers. There were three objectives of the direct mail campaign: "1) To provide a highly personalized mass medium to communicate with and influence the voter to support the President, 2) To increase the voter turnout of those supporting the President, and 3) To motivate a large number of people to involve themselves in the campaign as volunteers."[104] The Nixon campaign staff deployed direct mail on

two levels. The "mega-level" operation aimed at politicizing tens of millions of independent and swing voters by Election Day. These voters had no particular relationship to Nixon and the Republican Party, and Nixon's direct mail operatives attempted to acquire the names through a public vendor. The other level of mail operation focused on voters who supported Nixon or the GOP, calling on them to engage in the campaign effort. The mailing lists for these voters came from the White House and the RNC. "There is reason to believe that direct mail can be highly effective in striking narrow yet highly responsive cords among fertile voters," an operative stressed; thus, "direct mail [should] be viewed as a major campaign thrust."[105]

Robert Morgan participated in massive direct mail campaigns on behalf of Nixon. He was a professional direct mailer and was employed by the CRP during the 1972 election. Issues that Morgan emphasized in direct mail were unemployment, Vietnam, environment, health care, the economy, drugs, crime, and foreign policy. Understanding the importance of selectivity for direct mail, Morgan disseminated effective messages targeted at specific groups. For example, in California, he identified diverse voters such as high-income and low-income citizens, Italian, Jewish, Los Angeles Spanish, San Diego Spanish, other Spanish, and other ethnic groups. The Nixon campaign sent out appeals stressing "Social Security, e.g., Humanitarian, Israel, Education, Environment, Defense, Peace" for Jewish Americans, while emphasizing "Drugs, Defense, Inflation & Taxes, Busing" for middle-income voters.[106] Direct mailings in each state had local prominent Republicans' signatures. When Californians received a solicitation letter, they discovered Ronald Reagan's signature. And direct mailings in New York usually contained the signatures of well-known figures: James L. Buckley, William F. Buckley's brother and conservative New York senator; Jacob K. Javits, a towering liberal Republican senator; and Harold Jacobs, a leader of the American Jewish community in New York.[107] Morgan and his staff organized their mailing operations so that direct mail's function of personalization worked well to gain as much support as possible.

Like the Nixon campaign, George McGovern's campaign carried out direct mail drives in 1972. McGovern was no match for Nixon, who raked in a record amount of campaign money during the presidential election. But in the sense that the McGovern insurgency was a combination of centralized program and grassroots fervor, the Democratic presidential candidate was more successful than Nixon in marshaling direct mail in populist ways. Morris Dees was a central figure in the direct mail campaigns for McGovern. Based in Montgomery, Alabama, Dees had developed one of the largest direct mail businesses outside

New York and Chicago by 1969 when he sold his company and became a public interest lawyer. When the McGovern campaign was continually confronted with financial crises in 1971, Dees became an unpaid consultant to the campaign and assumed a role in raising funds. The direct mail operations under Dees built on a centralized model. Transferring donors' names from cards, lists, and tapes to computer tapes, the campaign managed the information of hundreds of thousands of supporters and efficiently sent deliberate appeals to them.[108]

The McGovern campaign was financed largely by people with modest incomes. Observing the 1972 presidential election, journalist Theodore H. White wrote that McGovern was the most successful candidate in gaining "grass-roots money," by which he meant funds raised by direct mail or televised solicitation.[109] McGovernites estimated the total of contributions that the campaign received throughout the presidential election reached between $20 and $25 million, most of which came from small contributors. Dees conceived a direct mail program through the McGovern for President Club, which McGovern supporters joined and contributed $10 each month throughout the campaign. Club members received monthly "insider's newsletters" and coupon books, which enclosed payment slips. The McGovern for President Club took shape after Dees sent invitations to twenty-two thousand individuals who had contributed to the McGovern campaign. The membership started at roughly four thousand in March 1971 and grew to almost ten thousand by January 1972, with over 90 percent of the participants paying their monthly dues. In early 1972, the club generated nearly $100, each month, keeping the McGovern campaign afloat. Pointing to the tradition of associational democracy in the United States, Dees said that the ardent engagement indicated that "Alexis de Tocqueville was right when he observed almost 150 years ago that America was a nation of joiners."[110]

McGovern also applauded the financing of his campaign, contrasting his small donations from ordinary Americans and Nixon's campaign cash donated by the few. In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in July, McGovern highlighted the difference of the two campaigns by saying, "Let the opposition collect their $10 million in secret money from the privileged. And let us find one million ordinary Americans who will contribute $25 each to this campaign."[111] White, too, emphasized in his book that the McGovern campaign's direct mail collected an "altruistic kind of money," adding that "its success may have begun a hopeful revolution for the future."[112] As liberals implemented direct mail fundraising campaigns, they optimistically regarded the computerized medium as drawing clean money in an open way, spurring political activism among the grassroots and providing opportunities for American democracy.

However, unlike Dees's remarks on Tocqueville, individual contributions to the McGovern campaign were not necessarily rooted in American tradition of grassroots participation. The small contributors were grassroots in the sense that they were the gathering of small involvements, but they were selected and targeted by the campaign's computer database, instead of being mobilized through organizations and communities from the bottom up. In fact, the McGovern campaign's centralized mobilization through data analysis at times conflicted grassroots fieldworkers. For instance, Miles Rubin, a California entrepreneur, helped the McGovern campaign in the state with his expertise on marketing and computers. When Rubin organized county registration data and crafted canvassing plans for the volunteers in the field, many organizers in the campaign felt antipathy to the centralized computer system because, they claimed, it undermined the autonomy of McGovern's grassroots army.[113]

Besides, when McGovern appraised his small funds by making a contrast with Nixon's big money, he ironically shared the antiestablishment tenets with Viguerie. Direct mail's "grassroots" mobilization frequently worked with a sort of populism that drew out contrasts with the elite, as antithesis to the establishment, summoning up great enthusiasm on both the left and right beginning in the late 1960s. Alternatively, computerized direct mail was predicated on a centralized system, which was pursued by RNC Chair Ray Bliss but occasionally incompatible with grassroots liberals. As the new political technology was accompanied with antielite populism and sometimes at odds with a conventional fashion of the grassroots, direct mail gradually transformed political participation among many Americans.

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The post-Goldwater years saw the expansion of direct mail politics. Richard Viguerie has been considered the pioneer of political direct mail. However, by the time he founded his direct mail firm in 1965, the political use of computerized direct mail was already popular among right-wing activists, conservative Christians, moderate Republicans, and liberals. As many candidates and political organizations launched fundraising campaigns, there were several methodologies of direct mail operation. Bliss employed direct mail fundraising to gloss over ideological conflicts within the Republican Party by focusing on the practical issue of political money. When Democrats and liberal organizations used direct mail, they attempted to raise funds by illustrating hopes and progressive changes. Yet conservatives capitalized on negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and frustration, to call for political contributions and immediate actions.

Among diverse direct mailings, Viguerie's appeals proved that his alchemy to turn fear into money was most successful in collecting money.

Money and corruption riveted public attention as one of the key issues by the end of the 1960s. Because television ads in political races had skyrocketed from the early 1950s on, several political scientists and lawmakers warned that swelling campaign finance caused ethical problems in American politics. During the 1972 race, McGovern made fundraising efforts that appealed to the "little people" who were confronted with the "rich cat," including the Nixon administration, with intimate relationships with big business. Democrats condemned President Nixon's acceptance of tremendous amounts of contributions from giant corporations in the early 1970s, and immediately after the Watergate scandal, the Democratic-controlled Congress passed Amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act in 1974. This campaign finance reform championed by Democrats, however, would accelerate the ascendancy of Viguerie's ideological direct mail in the 1970s.