

STORMING THE STATE HOUSE

*The Campaign that Liberated Alabama from 136 Years
of Democrat Rule*

Mike Hubbard
with David Azbell

and with a foreword by U.S. Representative Mike Rogers

NewSouth Books
105 S. Court Street
Montgomery, AL 36104

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ISBN-13: 978-1-58838-283-2
ebook ISBN: 978-1-60306-117-9
LCCN: 2012003262

For more information about this book, visit www.newsouthbooks.com/statehouse or www.StormingtheStateHouse.com.

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in each district, whoever we chose had to handle the massive capacity we demanded, provide quick turnaround, and be willing to have conference calls with a combination of John Ross, Dax Swatek, McLaughlin, Marsh, and me to tailor the message to the survey data.

We settled upon Majority Strategies, a Florida-based direct mail firm whose promotional material boasted that they were responsible for creating, printing, and sending a half-billion political mail pieces since its founding in 1996. We had worked with Randy Kammerdiener, a senior consultant with the firm, on our 2006 legislative efforts and found him to be both creative and reliable. I personally liked the fact that Majority Strategies tried to include a certain amount of humor in some of the mail they produced, which made it more memorable and helped deliver a strong dose of political attack without leaving voters with a bitter taste. In 2006, due to budget constraints, we forced Kammerdiener to use the same designs and message in multiple races. This time, we would be smarter and better-funded.

Another important item gleaned from *The Thumpin'* as well as from our 2006 experience was the need to prioritize and carefully target districts. We had to have the discipline to compete only in races that offered a reasonable chance of victory. Spreading ourselves too thin and spending money based on affection for a candidate rather than their probability of victory was a costly and painful lesson we had learned, a mistake that would not be repeated in 2010.

To begin ranking districts and determining which districts to target, the party hired consultant Scott Stone to conduct an infinitely more in-depth analysis than the one produced four years earlier. John Ross and I had interviewed Stone for the party's political director position before settling on Michael Joffrion for that job. Stone had been memorably cordial and impressive during his interview and when told that the party job was going elsewhere. Ross and I remembered him and reached out a few weeks later to hire him to conduct the painstaking study.

Stone developed a formula based on historical election results, district demographics, and numerous other factors and ranked each House and Senate district. The most vulnerable Democrats were obvious, but his report was extremely helpful in developing the second- and third-tier targets that we would eventually fund. Stone's study also included the population centers of each district so we knew where to focus our recruitment efforts to increase the potential for votes.

One reason Emanuel and the Democrats had gained control of the U.S. House by taking 29 seats held by the GOP lay with their success in tarnishing the Republican brand, according to *The Thumpin'*. Of course, President Bush and Congressional Republicans had basically given Democrats the bullets to load their guns in the first place. A general feeling among Americans that the war in Iraq was going poorly, the botched response to Hurricane Katrina, and a growing series of Republican ethics scandals were being exploited by Democratic