

## MEMORANDUM

From: David Betras

To: Aaron Pickerell,, Chairman David Pepper, Congressman Tim Ryan and others

Date: May 12<sup>th</sup> 2016

**RE: Blue Collar Families for HRC**

I don't have to make the case that blue collar voters are, to put it mildly, less than enthusiastic about HRC's positions on trade and the economy. The results of the Michigan and West Virginia primaries, the large number of Rust Belt Democrats who pulled GOP ballots in order to vote for Trump, and the latest Quinnipiac Poll clearly demonstrates the dilemma the campaign faces in states like Ohio.

As chair of the county Democratic Party in an area that's been devastated by the effects of trade agreements like NAFTA and deindustrialization, I'm more than familiar with the way in which these issues impact elections. **For example, Tim Ryan won his first election to Congress by repeatedly beating Congressman Tom Sawyer, his most credible primary opponent, over the head with his "Yes" vote on NAFTA.**

It's certainly not surprising that Ryan's use of the trade agreement was effective: no area in Ohio has suffered more from its effects than Trumbull County. Today, more than two decades after its enactment, NAFTA remains a red flag for area voters who rightly or wrongly blame trade for the devastating job losses that took place at Packard Electric, GM, GE, numerous steel companies as well as the firms that supplied those major employers.

It's important to note that the negative impact and connotation of international trade isn't solely attributable to past events. It's every bit as alive, well, and resonant today as it was in the 1990s. That's because popular elected officials including Congressman Ryan and Senator Sherrod Brown are constant and vocal critics of deals like the TPP and because thousands of workers in Ohio, both here in the Valley and in places like Lorain County, continue to qualify for Trade Readjustment Act assistance because their jobs are being shipped overseas.

Given the fact that this is a contemporary issue, **the HRC campaign should disabuse itself of any notion that it can convince voters that trade is good.** That would be like trying to convince coal miners that they should vote for the candidate who is "...going to put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business..."

Blue Collar voters' rejection of trade and Trump's willingness to demagogue on the issue may well erode HRC's plurality in areas like the Mahoning Valley, Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Lucas counties and other areas of Ohio and the nation that have suffered significant job losses due to foreign competition. That will clearly put states that should be easy wins for us, including Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, in play for the General Election.

I've given considerable thought to how the campaign can best deal with this situation. Clearly, HRC lacks credibility on the issue—at least in the minds of blue collar voters. Bill Clinton gave

us NAFTA and HRC changed her positions on the TPP will make it easy for Trump to paint her as a flip-flopper on this critically important issue. I would note she did vote no on CAFTA but the change on TPP and Bill's signing of NAFTA are hurtful. And while Ryan, Brown and Marci Kaptur could mount an aggressive defense of her position, I believe blue collar workers will ignore them and attribute whatever they say to political expediency.

In my view, the only people capable of blunting the issue's negative impact are the very people who have been effected by it. With that in mind I developed this concept: Blue Collar Families for HRC (BCF). BCF would feature members of blue collar families in a series of direct mail, TV, radio and web-based ads that are targeted by geography and demographics. To be effective the ads should feature workers from each region in which BCF is implemented because **localization is key to credibility—and credibility is essential given the way blue collar voters view HRC**. This really needs to be neighbor talking to neighbor about shared experiences and visions for the future.

Fortunately, or perhaps I should say unfortunately, thousands of people who have been hurt by trade live in the BCF target areas. BCF would identify HRC supporters in each region and have them talk about the issues that matter to blue collar families. The messages can't be about job retraining. These folks have heard it a million times and, frankly, they think it's complete and total bullshit. BCF should focus on the reinvigoration of American manufacturing, and I don't mean real high tech stuff because they've heard that a million times before and they aren't buying it.

Talk about policies that will incentivize companies to repatriate manufacturing jobs. Talk about infrastructure—digging ditches, paving roads, building buildings and producing the materials needed to do it all. **The workers we're talking about don't want to run computers, they want to run back hoes, dig ditches, sling concrete block**. They're not embarrassed about the fact that they get their hands dirty doing backbreaking work. They love it and they want to be respected and honored for it. And they'll react positively if they believe HRC will give them and their kids the opportunity to break their backs for another ten or twenty or thirty years. Somewhere along the line we forgot that not everyone *wants* to be white collar, we stopped recognizing the intrinsic value of hard work. BCF can be the vehicle for doing just that.

Don't talk about providing job retraining or college for workers in their 40s and 50s, talk about making higher education affordable for their kids, because that's what people here in the Valley and other parts of the Rust Belt really care about.

Here's the other thing blue collar workers in their 40s, 50s and early 60s care about: **pensions**. They've put in 20, 25, 30 years, they're looking forward to retirement, but they worry every day that their pension won't be there. Want to move Ohio's 50,000 retired Teamsters and their family members to the HRC camp: use them in ads in which they talk about how much they appreciate the fact she will find a way to keep the Central States Pension Fund solvent that doesn't involve gutting their monthly check and health care benefits. And do the same types of ads in the other states affected by the Central States crisis. I can tell you from personal experience that these workers and their family members are scared to death of what may happen and that **means they will respond to and vote for the candidate who pledges to fix the problem**.

Those are just some of the themes that will work with blue collar folks. **But here's the key, the messages are only believable if they're delivered by blue collar folks. No politicians, no actors, not HRC. (she of course has to talk about these issues and stress them) This has to be done the way union organizing was done: worker to worker. It simply won't fly in my opinion any other way.**

One final thought: to enhance BCF's credibility it could be suggested that it be organized and implemented by an independent group or Super PAC rather than the campaign. If the campaign does it I suggest a point person who we allow do the talking and let them run with the idea.

Those are my thoughts/concepts. I am, of course, more than willing to discuss the plan in greater detail and, as always, I am here to help HRC in any way I can.

Tonight I am pitching these thoughts and others to my first meeting of BCF for HRC and obtain their perspectives.

Thanks for reading this memo it was done bc I want to win and I know HRC is genuine, I know I am just a chairman but I am a chairman in the trenches.

David Betras  
Mahoning County Democratic Party Chair