ProKanDo Case Study of the 2006 General Election  
Attorney General Race in Kansas

Overview:

This case study reviews the successful impact of ProKanDo, a pro-choice state-wide Political Action Committee, on the outcome of the 2006 Kansas Attorney General Race. In this race, Democrat Paul Morrison challenged, and beat, incumbent Republican Phill Kline amidst a firestorm of controversy. Phill Kline was accused by many of overstepping his bounds as Attorney General by demanding the medical records of 90 women and girls who had received abortions at two facilities in Kansas, claiming that the abortions were performed illegally.

ProKanDo worked actively to elect Paul Morrison and defeat Phill Kline. Through direct electoral work and advocacy, ProKanDo spent approximately $650,000 to defeat Phill Kline.

Biographies of ProKanDo and Candidates:

ProKanDo:

ProKanDo, which was founded in 2002, is a Kansas-based pro-choice, pro-woman political action committee dedicated to electing pro-choice, pro-woman candidates to all levels of state office. Since its inception, the PAC has consistently been ranked as one of the top Kansas PACs in terms of both income and expenditures according to reports filed with the Kansas Ethics Commission.

In 2002, ProKanDo participated in the open gubernatorial race in which the former Speaker of the House Tim Shallenburger (R) ran against Insurance Commissioner Kathleen Sebelius (D). ProKanDo helped Sebelius claim victory by moving three to four percent of the electorate. Kathleen Sebelius claimed victory in 2002 with 52.7% of the vote. Additionally, ProKanDo worked vigorously to defeat Phill Kline who ran against a virtual unknown, Chris Biggs, for Attorney General. Unfortunately, Kline won the seat with 50.3% of the vote.

In 2004, ProKanDo was instrumental in holding the line on pro-choice seats in the State Senate. After analyzing the wins and losses on Election Day, ProKanDo found that in each race targeted by ProKanDo and ultra-conservative groups such as Americans for Prosperity and Club for Growth – pro-choice candidates won. In these successful races, ProKanDo was able to help retain pro-choice incumbents, pick up open seats and defeat an anti-choice incumbent. This victory revealed that the so-called mandate by the right wing in Kansas is that of smoke and mirrors.
Paul Morrison (D): Challenger:

Democrat Paul Morrison was elected to the office of Attorney General by 16 percentage points over incumbent Phill Kline in 2006. In 2005, he changed his party affiliation from Republican to Democrat in preparation for the Attorney General race.

Prior to being elected Attorney General, he served as Johnson County’s District Attorney (Kansas City metropolitan area) since 1989, winning re-election to that post four times.

He attended Kansas State University and Washburn School of Law, graduating in 1980.

Phill Kline (R): Incumbent:

In 2006, Johnson County District Attorney Phill Kline was nominated by the Johnson County Republican Precinct Committeepersons. Ironically, this seat was vacated by Paul Morrison after he left to become the Attorney General of Kansas. The candidates essentially switched jobs.

In 2002, Kline narrowly won his first term as Kansas Attorney General. A relatively unknown democrat, Chris Biggs, who was a novice to the intensity of the campaign process, made a run on the democratic ticket against Phill Kline. Remarkably, Biggs garnered 49.74% of the vote, leaving him only 4,287 votes away from victory. This was a stunning result to democrats around the state, who had wrongly assumed that the moderate republican candidate would win the August 2002 primary election; thus, going on to win the General Election in November 2002.

In 2000, Kline ran unsuccessfully for Congress against incumbent Dennis Moore (D). The margin of defeat in the 3rd Congressional District for Kline was 46.86% to Moore’s 50.05%. Before that, he served his Kansas City district in the Kansas House of Representatives from 1992 to 2000.

Campaign:

Lay of the Land - Summer 2006

Morrison Name ID: 42%

Morrison Favorable/Unfavorable: 23%/9%

Kline Name ID: 79%

Kline Favorable/Unfavorable: 33%/34%

Political Environment:

Phill Kline had literally inserted himself into the national spotlight during his term as Attorney General, with his inquisition and fishing expedition into women’s private medical and abortion records and his backing of the state board of education’s agenda to place creationism alongside scientific evidence regarding the origin of life into the public school system.
Shortly after taking office, Kline subpoenaed abortion records from two Kansas abortion providers. Kline said his intention was to find cases of child rape, as well as determine if illegal third-trimester abortions had been performed. (Kansas law says that post-viability abortions are legal only to preserve the life of the mother or if the pregnancy will cause “substantial and irreversible impairment” to the mother).

Opponents accused him of trying to criminalize doctors who perform abortions and of attempting to set up a challenge to *Roe v. Wade*, which is codified by Kansas state law. Due to the political climate at the national level, and with the confirmation of two new Supreme Court Justices by President Bush, ProKanDo felt Kline had to be stopped.

Governor Kathleen Sebelius was very popular during this time (a 63% approval rating). Due in part to her popularity, she was successful in convincing Paul Morrison to switch parties and run against Phill Kline in the 2006 election. Not surprisingly, Sebelius went on to win re-election in 2006 with nearly 58 % of the vote.

**ProKanDo’s Winning Strategy**

- **Polling:**
  Benchmark polling was done in both 2005 (with a generic democratic candidate) and in 2006 (with the announced democratic candidate). Both polls showed that AG Phill Kline’s name recognition was high, but that only 35% of voters said he was going a good to excellent job. The numbers clearly indicated that Phill Kline could be defeated, as the polling numbers showed that Kline/Morrison numbers were 40 to 44 – a statistical dead heat. It was a clear indication that ProKanDo had to implement a surgically precise campaign that had the ability to cherry pick voters across the state.

- **Modeling:**
  Based on polling data, it was determined that specific groups of people were more likely to vote for Paul Morrison if properly targeted by ProKanDo. The modeling indicated that 50.3% of voters had serious doubts about Phill Kline. Additionally, the modeling data reinforced the findings of the polling data, as it put the candidates in a virtual dead heat for the Attorney General seat.

- **Micro-Targeting:**
  Using the results from polling and modeling, specific groups of voters were targeted for a number of efforts including:

  **Direct Mail:**
  The now famous, or rather infamous, “Snoop Dog Kline” mail pieces dropped in a series of six separate mailings. ProKanDo partnered with an issue advocacy organization that was responsible for the mail pieces. The pieces focused on Kline’s invasion of private medical records, which through polling and modeling was found to be a persuasive issue among constituents.
Phones:
A series of phone calls, which included voter identification calls, auto calls and interactive calls, were made to constituents who were found to have serious doubts about the leadership of Phill Kline.

Media
After careful targeting, a radio buy was integrated into the program to continue chipping away at Phill Kline’s credibility as Attorney General.

Election Day Results:
The 2006 Attorney General’s race became the most contentious and closely watched in Kansas. November 7, 2006 saw nearly 52% overall voter turnout, or 864,083 total voters. Careful planning and targeting garnered huge results on Election Day for pro-choice constituents: Paul Morrison: 58% and Phill Kline: 42%.

Conclusions:
Nationally, eyes were on Kansas due to the stronghold by the right wing of the Republican Party in the state and because of the precedent that Kline had set through policy making and through the courts to further his extremist agenda. With a credible challenger and with strategic planning, this competitive, state-level race was one of the most watched races across the nation.

In a radically “red state,” the mere idea of retaining a pro-choice executive and defeating an anti-choice Attorney General could seem laughable to the casual observer. ProKanDo was anything but casual in its efforts. Through exhaustive measures, ProKanDo calculated and executed a precise campaign plan that facilitated an appreciable tip in the balance of power.

In just a few short years, ProKanDo has become the largest and most powerful PAC in the state of Kansas. Professional tactics and a keen awareness of the political landscape have been key to the success of this organization. The 2006 election cycle is a prime example of ProKanDo’s accomplishments.