

# Do October Surprises Matter When a Strong Ground Game is in Place?



By Andrew Ricci, Vice President, [LEVICK](#)

[October surprises](#) are nothing new to election campaigns. In fact, there has been some kind of late-election release or event in nearly every modern election since the 1964 race pitting incumbent Lyndon Johnson against Republican candidate Barry Goldwater. And this election cycle, after more than a year of hard fought and brass knuckles campaigning, has certainly been no different.

The [Clinton](#) campaign got their own October surprise early in the month, when the *Washington Post* broke the now infamous Access Hollywood tape in which Republican candidate was caught making lewd comments about women and bragging about his celebrity status. That set the tone of both campaigns for the next two debates and much of the rest of the month.

Until, with 11 days to go until Election Day, FBI Director James Comey resurrected the issue of Clinton's emails and thrust them back into the spotlight. The Clinton campaign had assumed this issue had been put to bed in July when Comey announced the FBI's recommendation that the United States Department of Justice file no criminal charges related to the investigation. Despite attempts by the [Trump](#) campaign and his backers to keep it in the public consciousness, the public,

too, seemed ready to put it to bed.

The question, now, which has electrified the political world and pundits nationwide, is whether the issue still has legs and whether it will make a difference, that is, whether it will dampen enthusiasm among many who are caught in the middle – a group that is already less likely to vote on election day if it's raining.



At this point in a campaign cycle, the name of the game is [Get Out the Vote](#) (GOTV). Turn out your voters. Bank as many votes as you can by getting supporters to vote early where possible and prepare for an all-out mobilization effort on November 8. The ground game is where campaigns can be won or lost, and it is where months of organization and voter

identification come to bear fruit.

To her credit, Mr. Comey's announcement seems to have been handled haphazardly, and that has given the Clinton campaign a strong line of counterattack. Insiders have noted the ways that the announcement has breached longstanding protocols and the Clinton campaign has been quick to highlight these points and offer complete [transparency](#) to investigators. The Trump campaign, however, has doubled down on his attempts to portray his opponent as corrupt.

The truth, though, is that most voters have made up their minds about who they are voting for, and 18 million Americans already voted before Mr. Comey made his announcement last Friday. There is a saturation point by which voters are fatigued by hearing about an issue, and Clinton's voters have by and large reached that point.

The core group of supporters for either candidate are unlikely to see this as an issue that will sway their votes, and it is this core group that should be in each candidate's GOTV universe.

To wit, as but one example, I spoke with Tony Baker, a political strategist who has worked for Democratic candidates throughout Northeast Ohio for the last four presidential elections. Mr. Baker, who has gone door to door talking to Ohio voters, reported that "people have decided on the emails and have decided what they think about Hillary a long time ago. The response at the doors and on the phones hasn't changed, and better than expected numbers of people voted early over the weekend in Democratic areas of Lorain and Summit counties."

In other words, Hillary for America has spent the past year laying infrastructure for this ground game, and her strategy to deal with the email issue is to plow forward with voter mobilization. "The only thing Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin can do to slow Hillary's path to the White House is to remove the street address numbers from people's homes in Ohio, North Carolina, and Florida," Mr. Baker said in another reference to the Clinton campaign's ground efforts.

Both campaigns have one more week to make their case and continue to mobilize voters. In the end, campaigns are always about numbers, and the only numbers that count are the ones that show up.

For me, though, if I never hear the word "emails" again, I will be incredibly grateful.

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