



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 1, 2013

Koch Brothers Revamp Strategies for 2014

At the Koch Brothers' [donors' strategy meeting](#) at the Renaissance Esmeralda golf resort in Palm Springs, California, last week, the atmosphere was a blend of reality and optimism. The reality was stated [in an e-mail from Charles Koch](#) that was sent to potential participants back in January explaining why the meeting was being postponed to April:



Despite November's disappointing election results, I am convinced that America's long-term decline is far from a foregone conclusion. Our goal of advancing a free and prosperous America is even more difficult than we envisioned, but it is essential that we continue, rather than abandon, this struggle.

We are working hard to understand the election results and, based on that analysis, to re-examine our vision and the strategies and capabilities required for success. This is a painstaking and time-consuming process. Although some of the needed changes are already evident, it will be several months before the state data necessary to complete this analysis is available.

For that reason, we are postponing the date of our winter meeting from January ... to April ...

The summer seminar, which will build on April's meeting, will follow on August 4-5.

The optimism was that the analysis of what worked, and what didn't, last November would be used to make changes and additions that could turn control of the Senate back to the Republicans and set the stage for a Republican presidential victory in 2016.

Among the 200 attendees at the weekend event were several of those who might be political participants in, and possible beneficiaries of, those Koch-funded and directed strategies, including Dr. Ben Carson, Governors Nikki Haley (R-S.C.) and John Kasich (R-Ohio), and Senators Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.).

While many of the meetings were private, it was clear that some changes needed to be made. As Robert Tappan, a Koch spokesman, explained, "We took a long hard look at the effectiveness of the organizations we support — what they did well, what worked, and areas where we can be more effective."

One major change has already taken place at the Koch Brothers' key project, Americans for Prosperity (AFP). Founded in 2004 to educate and motivate concerned citizens about economic policy and political action for lower taxes and less government, in 2012 AFP invested [more than \\$140 million](#) in political ads and door-to-door canvassing efforts with disappointing results. The group's chief operating officer was terminated along with most of its staff and several fundraisers, but two key Koch employees were placed on its board.



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It's likely that support for the 60 Plus Association will be reduced while funding for [Generation Opportunity](#), geared more to younger voters, and [The Libre Initiative](#), which focuses on Hispanics and Latinos, will be increased in time for the 2014 elections.

The big news, however, is the creation of a new tax-exempt group, the [Association for American Innovation](#), which will be run by a former AFP strategist and will coordinate state efforts to reduce taxes and limit government spending.

In addition, heavy investment will be made in a voter-mining and management software program called Themis in an attempt to catch up with the Democrats' successful data management strategy that gave them a significant strategic advantage in that party's messaging during last year's election campaign. It will likely be managed by a key Koch employee, Kevin Gentry, who will use it to target advertising buys on cable as well as focus on registering new voters and staying in touch with them on an ongoing basis.

At present there are 53 Democratic senators plus 2 independents that reliably vote with that party, and 45 Republicans. On November 4, 2014, 35 of those seats will be up for election: 14 held by Republicans and 21 by Democrats. At the moment, most of the Republican seats appear to be safe, [according to Bethany Blankley of Christian Post](#), while 7 of the 21 Democratic senators are from states that voted for Romney in 2012. CNN Polling Director Keating Holland said that

if 2014 is similar to past midterm elections, the demographics of the people who turn out to vote will be very different from the electorate in the presidential elections of 2008 or 2012. If history is any guide, the 2014 midterm electorate ... could easily benefit Republican candidates.

There's also the "sixth-year itch" which, as Professor Larry Sabato of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics noted, is bad for the second-term president's party.

And then there's Nate Silver, the pollster who correctly called the 2012 national election as well as the winner in each of the 50 states, who said that the combination of midterm elections and more retirements than usual could create "the largest turnover in the Senate in nearly 40 years."

The meeting in Palm Springs, sponsored by the Koch Brothers, might just turn out to be the beginning of the change so many are hoping for that will begin the long journey back to sensible policies and the restoration of limited government. The timing couldn't be better.

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