

THINKING OF

Running

FOR

Office



A GUIDE FOR DEMOCRATIC WOMEN CANDIDATES

About EMILY's List

EMILY's List, an acronym for "Early Money is Like Yeast" (it makes the dough rise), is a full-service political organization that helps pro-choice Democratic women candidates running for office.

The largest political action committee in the country, EMILY's List has changed the face of U.S. government. Since its founding in 1985, EMILY's List has helped elect 55 pro-choice Democratic women to the U.S. House, 11 to the U.S. Senate, seven pro-choice Democratic women governors, and hundreds of pro-choice Democratic women to state legislatures and other key local offices. EMILY's List WOMEN VOTE! helps Democrats up and down the ticket by mobilizing voters in key areas around the country. In the 2002 election cycle, EMILY's List and its more than 76,000 members contributed nearly \$9.7 million to pro-choice Democratic women candidates; members contributed \$23 million to fund EMILY's List and its political programs.

EMILY's List helps candidates in the following ways:

- Providing political training and support to help candidates build strong campaigns;
- Conducting intensive training on all aspects of campaigning;
- Providing financial assistance to pro-choice Democratic women running for office;
- Recruiting and training political staff to help women win; and
- Providing strategic support to campaigns by advising campaigns on planning, fundraising, message development, and media strategy.

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CHAPTER ONE

Thinking of Running for Office?

This guide is designed to help you decide whether you might want to run for office this year or sometime in the future. It is intended to give you the facts about what you'll need to do if you decide to run and how you can position yourself to be a strong candidate long before your name is on the ballot. It also will guide you through things to consider as you make your decision.

Included is information that will help you:

- Assess why you want to run for office;
- Analyze the political climate in your area to see if it's possible to win;
- Consider the time and commitment necessary to win;
- Begin developing a campaign plan;
- Create a framework to raise early money;
- Articulate your message to voters through the media;
- Build a team of active supporters who will work hard to help you win; and
- Reach out to targeted voters.

Keep in mind that this is not a substitute for a comprehensive campaign plan. Creating that plan is the first thing you will do once you decide to run. This guide provides basic information of what should be included in your campaign plan. Many of the ideas you have when you read this guide will become important elements of your plan when the time comes to write it.

Running for office is more than just a political decision; it's a deeply personal one. Before you decide that you want to serve in public office, you must be sure that you are personally ready for the grueling and exhilarating months of campaigning ahead.

As you consider whether you want to run for office, during the early days of your candidacy and throughout your campaign, EMILY's List can help you. You can be sure that you will receive unbiased, confidential, and direct assistance, as our only goal is to help elect pro-choice Democratic women.



CHAPTER TWO

Getting Started

One of the most challenging aspects of running for office is getting started on the right track, whether you are running this year or in the future. Whether you have already decided to run or are seriously considering running and want to test the waters, there are a few key factors to consider and some early activities that can make you a stronger candidate if and when you declare your candidacy.

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RAISING THE MONEY

Running a winning campaign will require raising money. Campaign budgets vary dramatically depending upon the office you are seeking and where you live. For example, running for town supervisor in some areas may cost a few thousand dollars, but a race for state senate in California can cost more than \$1 million. No matter how much you need to raise, fundraising will likely take a great deal of your time. You must be an active participant in this process — while others can help, you are the centerpiece of any successful fundraising effort. You must consider whether you are willing and able to commit yourself to this endeavor.

Fundraising is an important indicator of a candidate's viability. When little else is going on in a race, money raised is one of the few objective ways for observers to assess and compare candidates. Setting concrete fundraising goals for each public filing deadline is key. You must start fundraising early to raise enough money to communicate with voters and run a competitive race.

Before beginning to raise money, make sure you understand the relevant campaign finance laws regarding the allowable size and sources of contributions and public disclosure requirements. State and local laws vary widely. Usually, the secretary of state's office or the state board of elections can provide information about campaign finance laws.

Once you have determined that you are committed to raising the money necessary to win, [Chapter Five](#), "Raising the Money," can help get you started.

ASSESSING YOURSELF AS A CANDIDATE

To be a successful candidate, you must first make sure not only your résumé but your personal life will stand up to the scrutiny of your

opponent and the voters in your district. You must assume that your opponent will closely review any public documents — from court records to your financial disclosure statements. To ensure that there are no surprises during the campaign, candidates must conduct self-research (the process of uncovering all public information, documents, and articles about you) to prepare in case any of this information becomes an issue in the campaign. If you are to become a candidate, you must be prepared to answer questions about matters that may have little to do with your ability to serve in elected office.

For more on assessing yourself as a candidate, see [Chapter Three](#), "Is This the Right Race for You?"

FINDING THE PATH TO VICTORY

How do you get from here to victory on election day? You must consider the political climate in your area, the track record for Democrats in the district, who your likely opponents are, and where your votes will come from. Your knowledge of the district, and that of your advisors, should help you determine whether you are the best candidate for this district, and whether this is the right race for you.

[Chapter Three](#), "Is This the Right Race for You?" will help you explore this question in more detail.

BECOMING A CANDIDATE

Long before you declare your candidacy, there are activities that can help you pave the way. Are you involved in your community? If so, will your civic activities expose you to voters? How can you get to know not only voters, but opinion leaders in your community? Take opportunities to write op-eds and letters to the editor in local newspapers on behalf of organizations that you already work with, or as a concerned citizen. Begin collecting business cards and making notes as you meet people who could be helpful in a campaign. Think about where you need to garner votes to win and attend public meetings in those areas.

While detailed field and press plans can help you better target your visibility and message later in the campaign, you should start integrating yourself into existing activities now.

For more on press and message, turn to [Chapter Six](#), "Developing Your Message."



CHAPTER THREE

Is This the Right Race for You?

To determine whether this is the right race for you, ask yourself a number of questions — about yourself; about the district; about the opponents; and about the timing of the election.

REVIEWING YOUR RECORD — PERSONAL AND PUBLIC

While not every race invites inquiries into your personal and professional life, it is smart to assume that this will occur, no matter what office you are seeking. Even if you have been a candidate before, there may be issues raised about you that have gone unnoticed previously. One of the most challenging aspects of running for office is knowing that your personal and professional life may be open to public scrutiny. To an increasing degree, the personal is political. Once you have decided to run, have someone knowledgeable about research conduct an independent assessment of information about you and your family that is publicly available.

YOUR PERSONAL LIFE

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Are your tax records in order? Are there any issues related to income taxes that could be damaging if made public?
2. Are there any records — either yours or those connected to your close family — that could raise questions if they were to become public? These may include records pertaining to school, military service, employment history, business history, investments, drug and alcohol use, sexual relations, criminal or civil charges, physical and mental health, or membership in organizations.
3. Have you voted every election day — including special elections, primaries, and general elections?
4. Examine your record as an employer — are there former employees who might raise issues? Have you paid all applicable employment-related taxes?
5. Have there been newspaper articles or media reports about you or your family that could raise questions later in the campaign?

Answer these questions honestly and assess whether you can do so in a manner that will address voters' concerns. In addition to looking at public records, examine other areas of your personal life. Discuss the race with your family. If necessary, make decisions about how you and your family will manage child care during the campaign. Decide whether you can or need to hold a full-time job while being a candidate.

You must also be prepared physically to be a candidate. Make sure you are ready for long days, often filled with physical activity. Get in shape for the sometimes grueling, but often exhilarating, days and months ahead.

YOUR PUBLIC LIFE

Look at all organizational affiliations and appointed positions — from your involvement in your tenants' association to your presidency of the civic club — to determine how they might reflect on you as a candidate.

1. If you are a voting member of an organization, such as the school board or your homeowners' association, examine your voting record. Are there votes or public statements that may raise concerns? Look particularly at inconsistencies — has your vote on the same issue changed over time?
2. How is your attendance record? If you are a member of the school board but have only attended a handful of meetings, this could raise questions later in the campaign.
3. Have you made any public statements that could raise questions?

Again, determine whether you can address any problems that may be raised. For example, if you are a school board member who missed a number of meetings, this might be easily addressed if there was a good reason. You will need to be ready to articulate this reason if it becomes an issue in your campaign.

Once your campaign is off the ground, you will want to similarly assess your opponents' public record so that you can be fully prepared to wage an aggressive campaign.

IS THIS THE RIGHT DISTRICT FOR YOU?

There are a number of objective criteria you can examine to help you analyze whether this is the right district for you.

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1. Are your views generally consistent with those of the voters?

2. Is this an open seat or will you be challenging an incumbent? While still difficult, open seats are generally much easier to win. If you are challenging an incumbent, is he or she vulnerable? Why?

3. Who are the likely opponents for the primary and the general elections?

4. Do you have a natural base of voters, such as other parents in your children's school or neighbors in the subdivision where you run the homeowners' association?

5. What percentage of the vote have Democratic candidates in your area received in recent elections? How many local elected officials serving now are Democrats?

POLLING

Many state and local campaigns do not conduct polls. Still, local media outlets or other institutions may poll on issues important to your community and on other political races, information that may help you better understand the local electorate — even if the poll is not about you and your race.

Sometimes, these polls include information which does not become part of the news story but may nonetheless be helpful to you. Check the web site of the entity conducting the poll to see if they have the full text of the survey available. While the poll may not be a scientific analysis of your race, it can give you some guidance on what issues voters care about — and how different candidates are faring. Apply that information to your own candidacy.

6. Where are the high voter turnout areas in the district? Are you known there, or do you have potential to be known there?

7. When is the election? Is it held along with others in a presidential year, or is it held with a handful of local offices on an odd day of the year? How does this affect voter turnout? (Information about past voting behavior may generally be found at your board of elections or secretary of state's office.)

8. What are the demographics of the district? Do you have particular ties to any demographic groups?

9. What is the political environment in the state and in the community? Do current events and political trends benefit you as a candidate?

10. Where will you get the votes to win the election?

CHAPTER FOUR

Developing a Campaign Plan

Once you have decided to run for office, you will need to develop a campaign plan, which will be your road map to victory. But even before you become a candidate, you should begin thinking about the basic elements of your plan. When you are ready to run, the plan should be written and shared with your close advisors, who may also help you develop and implement the plan.

A good campaign plan takes each component of a campaign and pulls it together into a comprehensive playbook for you and your team to follow. It is never too early to start thinking about your campaign plan — but, remember, it is not truly a plan until it is put into writing.

You can begin planning long before that time comes, however. Collect business cards from everyone you meet at every event you attend and write on the back of each where and when you met them. Hold on to invitations that list host committees. Save your children's school directories. Jot down every thought you have about running for office. Save newspaper articles about issues that interest you. Keep an easily accessible box to store contacts, notes, and articles that will be helpful once you become a candidate.

Your campaign plan should include the following areas, ensuring that each component works together:

- **BUDGET AND FUNDRAISING** — How much do you think you need to spend? How will you raise it?
- **MESSAGE** — How will you present yourself as a candidate and create contrast with your opponent? How will you communicate this message, and when?
- **CAMPAIGN TEAM** — Will you have a paid staff or will you rely on volunteers? Which positions do you need to fill first? What will their duties be? How large a team do you need?
- **RESEARCH** — What public information exists about you and your opponent? What is your plan for collecting, analyzing, and using this information?

- **VOTER CONTACT** — How many votes do you need to win, and which votes are they? How will you reach these voters?

One reason to have a campaign plan is to ensure that each component works with the others. For example, your field plan may call for distributing 10,000 pieces of literature, but if the cost of the literature is not in your budget, you will have a shortfall and need to raise more money or cut another component of the budget.

Once you have decided that you are running, the tasks associated with a campaign can seem overwhelming. Having a campaign plan can provide perspective and help you to make sure that you are following a strategic path to victory.



“Every time I needed to make a strategic decision in my race, I went back to my campaign plan — it put everything in perspective and guided my campaign’s priorities.”

DEBORAH MARKOWITZ, Secretary of State, Vermont

CHAPTER FIVE

Raising the Money

Many first-time candidates are amazed at how much time they must spend raising money. Fundraising is one of the most challenging and important parts of a campaign. As frustrating as this can be, remember that even the most experienced candidate with the best message cannot win unless she has the money to communicate effectively.

The early money that you raise is extremely important. It will be used to measure your viability as the race begins to take shape. If your early fundraising is strong, you may scare off potential opponents. In addition to enhancing your credibility as a candidate, the first dollars that you raise will buy the necessities that cannot be donated to you.

You are your campaign’s best fundraiser and you must be an active participant in raising the money. Others can help you, but you must become comfortable and confident asking potential contributors to invest in your campaign.

HOW MUCH WILL YOU NEED?

State and local campaign budgets vary widely. Develop a preliminary budget to get a sense of what your race will cost. To calculate this, look at the cost of similar races in your area. State and local disclosure laws vary, but this information can usually be found at the board of elections or secretary of state’s office.

Campaign costs are affected by several factors, from the number of voters in your district, to the cost of the most efficient media to communicate to voters.

The bulk of your campaign dollars will likely go toward communicating with voters through mail, telephone, radio, or, in some cases, television. These vehicles allow you to reach large numbers of voters with your message. You must, however, make sure you are reaching the right voters.

Choose media based on how you can reach the right voters most efficiently. In a race with a small electorate, such as a city council district in a small town, mail is probably more efficient than television, which would cost a great deal to reach a lot of voters who are not in your district. Costs of radio and television vary by region based on a variety of factors.



You will also need to spend some money on field activities — even if you have 50 volunteer canvassers working for free, they will need materials to give to voters and snacks and drinks to keep them motivated.

Your campaign plan will drive the size of your budget. Your fundraising goals should match or exceed the budget that you set.

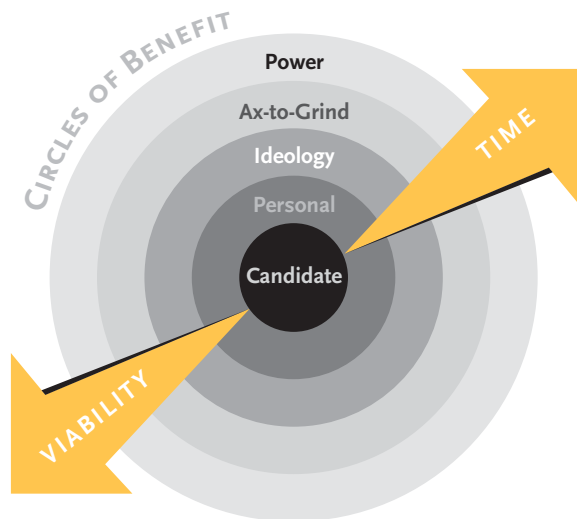
FINDING DONORS

Many people believe fundraising is another word for begging. This notion is perhaps the single greatest obstacle to success, and leads candidates to avoid the most critical and essential activity in a campaign: asking for money.

A donor's contribution is not an act of kindness, nor is it a personal favor. People donate to campaigns because they want to. Their contribution serves their needs. Donors contribute when the candidate has identified their needs and demonstrated how they will benefit if the candidate is elected. This section will help you to identify donors and their motivation for giving to your campaign.

Circles of Benefit

The following diagram portrays how donors benefit when they contribute. It is intended to help you organize donors, understand a donor's motivation to give, set priorities, and show how donors benefit when they contribute. Knowing this enables you to select the appropriate message to use with potential donors.



Personal Circle

Why: Donors in the Personal Circle give because they have a close relationship with the candidate. Loyalty moves Personal Circle donors to look past differences in ideology and party affiliation, and sustains their support regardless of a candidate's standing in the polls.

Who: Personal Circle donors are family members, friends, and close professional colleagues of the candidate.

When: Start with this circle of donors to raise the first operating costs of the campaign. Early support from this circle demonstrates viability to other donors, the media, community leaders, and opinion-makers.

Where Do I Find Them?: Look through your address book and your holiday card list. Scan your appointment book for the last year for ideas. Don't overlook your family — aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws.

Ideological Circle

Why: Ideological Circle donors share the candidate's advocacy of a particular cause. This circle may include donors who belong to the candidate's religious, cultural, ethnic, or gender group.

Who: Ideological Circle donors include pro-choice advocates, environmentalists, civil rights activists, women, and others.

When: Ideological Circle donors take political risks and participate early to ensure the candidates they support have the strongest possible voice.

Where Do I Find Them?: Look at the membership lists of ideological organizations you belong to. Think of the issues you care about and the groups that reflect your views. Call individuals associated with those groups.

Ax-to-Grind Circle

Why: Ax-to-Grind Circle donors give because the opponent's victory would adversely affect their interests, or has already done so. They have a tremendous incentive to weaken your opponent by strengthening your candidacy.

Who: Anyone who strongly dislikes or fears your opponent.

When: These donors, like those in the Personal and Ideological Circles, can provide early support.

Where Do I Find Them?: Look at your opponent's background and figure out who he may have alienated over the years. What has your opponent done? Is he a developer who has angered local environmentalists? Call them.

Power Circle

Why: Donors in the Power Circle give to protect and advance their economic interests.

Who: They include business interests, labor unions, political action committees, and professional associations. Incumbents receive the majority of Power Circle support. While open seat candidates are frequently beneficiaries, challengers are unlikely to receive their support until the candidate's competitiveness is firmly established.

When: Power Circle donors should not be counted on to provide early support to non-incumbents. Power Circle donors tend to give once a candidate has demonstrated viability. The difficulty facing challengers or candidates for open seats is that the Power Circle, which is the largest source of money in politics, is generally unavailable until the final quarter of the campaign.

Where Do I Find Them?: The Power Circle includes groups and individuals who are opinion leaders and who generally want to make sure they support a winning candidate. Almost every area has a core of Power Circle donors.

GETTING STARTED

Once you have decided to run, raising money will be one of your first activities. Your earliest donors will include family, friends, co-workers, and those with whom you have served in community organizations. If you have run for office before, your past donors will be included in this group. After identifying potential donors (see previous section), place donors in the appropriate circle, which will help guide your fundraising message. Then, start calling them.

Your donor base will continue to grow as the campaign progresses. Do not wait to begin making fundraising calls until your list is complete, or until the letterhead for thank-you notes has arrived from the

printer. Remember that your first calls will be to your family and your friends.

Cultivating prospective donors is an ongoing process. Further into the campaign, expand your list by identifying contacts close to you in business, labor, law, finance, and other sectors of the economy who can educate you about the issues and identify key players, especially those with whom you are not currently familiar.

Also ask donors for the names of additional prospects for you to call. Ask your friends and family to suggest other potential donors. Better yet, see if they would be willing to commit to raising money from their contacts for your campaign.

SOLICITATION TOOLS

CALL TIME — You will spend a great deal of time on the phone raising money throughout your campaign. It may seem daunting at first, but remember that almost every candidate who won the last election cycle started where you are starting and got on the phone to raise money. Here are some basic guidelines to follow when making fundraising solicitation calls:

- Think about your message to that donor before you make the call. Remember that you are calling that donor because you believe they have a reason to want to contribute to you. Urgency is another important part of your message — if you are trying to raise funds to pay for a literature piece that you want to send to the printer or to appear well-funded before a public filing deadline, tell the donor.
- Ask for a specific amount. If they reply that they cannot contribute \$500, ask for \$400, and continue until you have found a specific contribution amount that is comfortable to the donor. Most prospects who say they will send “something” in fact send nothing at all. It is important that you and the donor both understand what to expect.
- Develop a system to organize your calls. In the early days of the campaign, if you do not have someone to assist you, the simplest system is a binder with call sheets that list the name of the donor, contact information, any previous contributions, and how much you intend to ask for. Divide the binder into three sections: To Call, Pledged, and Received. Move the sheets around accordingly. Once you have an organized volunteer to help you, he or she can design and maintain a computerized system.

- Follow up on your calls. Send a handwritten fax and mail a note thanking them, reminding them of the amount they have pledged, and telling them how to make out the check and where to send it. Personalize these notes whenever possible. If you have not received a check within two weeks of sending the follow-up material, call again. Be sure to send your donors a thank-you note promptly after receiving their contribution.

EVENTS — Fundraising events are a time-consuming and costly way to solicit contributions.

For events to be successful, the invitees must be targeted and the event should be designed for a specific constituency — for example, attorneys. Keep costs low — remember that the event is not a party; it is a fundraiser.

DIRECT MAIL — The two types of fundraising mail are prospecting mail and resolicitation mail. Prospecting mail is sent to those who have not given to you before, but whom you believe may. Prospecting mail is generally directed to smaller donors, not to \$1,000 prospects. In addition, prospecting mail can be extremely expensive. Make sure your lists are well targeted. They should only include people who have demonstrated that they have made contributions in the past, ideally to other political campaigns or organizations. If the list is large, you may want to send to a small sample and track the results to determine whether it is worthwhile to spend the money to mail to the entire list.

Resolicitation mail is sent to donors who have given previously, asking for another contribution. Resolicitation can be extremely effective; those who have given once are the most likely to give again.

Remember, however, that sending direct mail is not a substitute for a call from you.

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES — To determine whether a PAC is a good prospect, think about issues that you have worked on in the past that may be important to that PAC, and analyze their giving patterns. In many state and local races, PAC activity is extremely limited. In a general election, you must prove your viability, as well as your commitment to the issues important to the PAC, to warrant a contribution. Raising PAC money in a primary can be very difficult.

With very few exceptions, it is unlikely that your early funds will come from the PAC community.

STAYING ORGANIZED

You will need help to stay organized and focused in your fundraising. You may choose to find a volunteer or a paid staffperson to help you. That individual should be well organized and have the ability to be firm with you — encouraging you to stay on the phone until you have reached the day's fundraising goal, even though you really want to do something else.

The information included in this chapter is meant merely to help you get started on fundraising. For a more detailed discussion, you may wish to refer to *Making the Dough Rise*, another EMILY's List publication.



"I realized that, even though I felt I was the most qualified candidate in the race, I needed to raise money so I could get my message out to voters."

KATE BROWN, State Senator, Oregon

CHAPTER SIX

Building Your Message

For voters to understand why you would best represent them, they need to understand your character, your beliefs, and your plans for the future on issues that affect them. They need to understand how you differ from your opponent. Since voters are unlikely to read your biography and all of your position papers, either you or your opponent will define you as a candidate. It is far better for you to define yourself. If you do not do this effectively, your opponent will. To pre-empt this, you need a clear, concise message.

A message is a thematic statement that defines you as a candidate in contrast to your opponent. Do not hesitate to incorporate elements that are not “political” into your message if it makes sense strategically. For example, your message might include elements about you that are not related to your experience as a community leader but focus instead on your being a parent with children in local public schools.

You can define yourself for voters by building a strong message early and sticking to it through thick and thin. Your message should resonate in stump speeches, your pitch to prospective donors, conversations with reporters, and chance encounters at the grocery store. Your opponent will attempt to knock you off your message, but your chances of winning are greatly enhanced if you stick with it relentlessly.

Certainly, you will tweak, refine, and modify your message periodically — but coming up with it in the first place is extremely important early in your race.

WHAT IS A MESSAGE

A message is not a list of issues that you will work on after you are elected. Nor is it a speech about policy. It is not a slogan. It is not a position paper.

A message is an amalgam of who you are, the experiences that qualify you to hold public office, and the issues that you feel are the highest priority for you and your future constituents. Your message should set you apart from your opponent. Your message must be unified, and you must be comfortable and confident delivering it. And your message should be short and simple.

Consider the following:

“In Michigan I’ll lead, I’ll protect our families and educate our kids, I’ll hold corporations accountable, and run a government that’s lean but not mean.”

As a candidate, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm’s campaign message reflected the fact that she would be a strong leader who would govern with compassion. Her message is simple, and its delivery colorful and visual. It leaves voters with a sense of who she is, what she believes, and how she will govern. She also subtly contrasts her style of governance with that of her opponent, without mentioning his name.

This message captures elements that were important to one candidate in one campaign — your message will likely be very different. In a local race, for example, you may want to highlight your close ties to the community.

In short, here are the elements of any message, regardless of what you intend to communicate:

Clear: A solid message must be clearly written in easily understood words.

Concise: A message should be no more than a few sentences — if that.

Contrast: A message that does not contrast is incomplete. Every time your campaign talks about itself, it is also talking about the opposition. By saying who you are and what you believe, you are defining the differences between you and your opponent.

Memorable: A message must be easy to remember, and must become part of the body of your campaign. Everyone who works on your campaign must know it well and say it often.

Persuasive: A message must be convincing and should engage your targeted voters.

Top image of Gov. Jennifer Granholm (Mich.) ©Leslie Kossoff/LK Photos.

WHAT SHOULD YOUR MESSAGE INCLUDE?

Of course, your message will be unique to you and true to your candidacy. Your message must also be strategic.

Following are some questions to ask yourself and your team as you begin building your message:

- What issues are most important to the voters in this district?
- More specifically, what issues are the most important to those voters whose support I will need to win — those whose support I do not already have?
- What issues do I care about most and will want to champion once I am elected?
- On what issues am I a credible messenger?
- What issues have been debated in previous races in this district?
- Why would I be the best representative for this district?
- Why am I the candidate who is best qualified to understand the concerns of voters?
- What am I already known for that I may wish to build upon?
- How am I different from my opponent?
- What obstacles in my record or experience will I need to overcome? Should I proactively address them in my message?

Once you have answered these questions, construct a message box that includes the following:

What you say about yourself	What you say about your opponent
What your opponent says about himself	What your opponent says about you

Credit: Developed by the late Democratic activist, Paul Tully.

Review your answers to the above questions in light of the elements in your message box, and begin to build your message by picking those elements that stand out. Look for issues where there is a stark contrast between you and your opponent. Develop a draft message and say it out loud. Keep working at it until you feel it is complete and you are confident delivering it. Then, make sure everyone on your team knows the message and uses it when talking about you and your campaign.

Again, remember that your message will be refined once other dynamics of the race begin to unfold. Whatever your message, it is important to return to it again and again when communicating with voters directly (as in speeches) or indirectly (as through reporters).

GETTING YOUR MESSAGE OUT THROUGH THE MEDIA

Once you have developed your message, use it. Develop a press manual which includes contact information for all print, radio, television, and online publication reporters and editors who may be interested in learning about your campaign. Utilize the media to define your candidacy.

- **PRESS RELEASES** — When you have done something newsworthy, let reporters know. For example, if you are currently an elected official, let reporters know when you have introduced a bill. Comment on issues in the community. Even if your press releases do not get covered, they allow reporters who will be covering the race to begin gathering information about you.
- **PHOTO RELEASES** — A photo of you at an event or news conference with a prewritten caption attached can often be reprinted in weekly community papers that do not have a photo staff and are often looking for additional visual material.
- **NEWS CONFERENCES** — Reserve news conferences for breaking news and for issues that have a visual element. Your campaign kick-off will likely warrant a news conference, as you will probably want to have many of your supporters there with you.
- **RADIO ACTUALITIES** — When you have a comment about an ongoing news issue, offer local radio stations a comment on tape that they can integrate into their coverage.
- **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** — If there is an issue that you want to comment on, or raise, send a letter to the editor to your local

papers. Also, make sure your supporters know how to write letters to the editor if they wish to comment on your candidacy or your work on issues.

- Op-Eds — If there is an issue that you feel strongly about, which is important to voters, write and submit an op-ed to your local newspaper.

Here are some additional suggestions for using the media effectively:

- You might consider developing a strategy to get your message out using the World Wide Web. Having a web site is worthwhile if you are committed to integrating it into the overall strategy of the campaign and updating it consistently.
- Begin developing relationships with reporters and columnists who may cover your race. You can arrange meetings with them, or just call them to introduce yourself and let them know about some of the work you are doing.
- Be sure that you are following the news daily. Look for opportunities to comment on issues that tie into your message. Clip articles of interest and file them for later use.
- Tape your appearances on television and radio and review them with a media-savvy advisor. Are you on message? Are there trouble spots that you need to work on? How are you answering questions that you would prefer not to address?
- As a candidate, you are always on record when talking to the media — even with reporters whom you may have known for years.
- Be cautious in accepting joint appearances on television or radio with your opponent too early. Before you make any joint appearances, you must be completely prepared. It is better to decline than to make a mistake that will be difficult to reverse later in the campaign. Similarly, keep in mind that everything you say in print or on radio or television will likely be reviewed by your opponent.

TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

The following tips are designed to help you appear on television in a way that allows voters to focus on what you are saying — and gain a sense of what you offer as a candidate. Most important, assume that the microphone is always on when doing television interviews.

Substance

- Have an agenda
- Know your own record
- Pivot back to your message
- Be careful with humor
- Don't get caught in a shouting match
- Stop talking when you have said what you want to say — it is not your responsibility to fill time

Style

- Dress conservatively
- Don't over-accessorize
- Use face powder to eliminate shine
- Maintain eye contact
- Keep your hands away from your face while talking
- Sit on the edge of your chair
- Pull down and then sit on your jacket



“Since I had never run for office before, having a strong message that I felt comfortable with really helped voters learn what I stand for.”

ALISHA THOMAS, State Representative, Georgia

CHAPTER SEVEN

Research

Collecting data, as covered in Chapter Three, “Is This the Right Race for You?,” is only the first step in developing a research plan. The data must be read, analyzed, and processed through the lens of a political campaign.

Data should be compiled in a format that is accessible and user-friendly. It is not helpful to have copies of each bill your opponent sponsored sitting in a box in your treasurer’s garage. It is helpful — and essential — to have an understanding of your opponent’s record and to be able to provide documentation of his votes so you can build a proactive message and respond rapidly and effectively should he attack you or make dubious claims about his own record.

Research can be organized in many ways, from indexing news articles by subject, to placing bills in binders and including a short summary with each. But no matter how it is organized, it is critical that research not be just collected but understood and analyzed as well.

Understanding the data you have can help you develop your message. For example, if creating more parks is a big issue in your area and your opponent has voted against funding for parks and recreation, you may wish to integrate this into your message.

Remember that you, too, have a record — even if only as a private citizen. If you were out of town on the day that a citywide election was held on a bond issue for funding parks and you neglected to file an absentee ballot, it is more difficult for you to claim that your opponent has not been an advocate for parks without making yourself vulnerable.

Your research plan should include a detailed listing of the data you need to collect about yourself and your opponent, the source of that data, and the timeline for collection, analysis, and organization.

To summarize, campaign research must be:

AVAILABLE — All relevant data must be collected;

ANALYZED — Data is not useful if it is not understood through the filter of the campaign; and

ACCESSIBLE — Research materials must be easily retrieved when the need arises, particularly for rapid response or to defend yourself against attacks and statements made by your opponent.



“The research I did about myself and my opponent really helped me to draw contrasts and realize both of our vulnerabilities and strengths as candidates.”

SUSAN GARRET, State Senator, Illinois

CHAPTER EIGHT

Putting Together Your Campaign Team

Even the most talented candidate cannot win without building a team to help shape the campaign and guide her to victory. It is important to have volunteers or staff to help you navigate each step of your race. Depending upon the size of your race, your budget, and your pool of potential volunteers, you will need to decide whether your team will be comprised of volunteers or paid staff, or a combination of both. When considering the members of your campaign team, look beyond your usual circle of supporters. While it is important to involve people close to you whom you trust, most campaigns can benefit from fresh ideas and input.

BUILDING YOUR TEAM

Generally, the first member of your team will be your finance director. In the early days of the campaign, the largest task is beginning your fundraising and developing a fundraising plan that will allow you to meet your budget projections for the campaign. The finance director will develop and begin to execute your fundraising plan. He or she will staff you during call time, follow up on the contribution requests that you have made, organize fundraising events, develop direct-mail fundraising appeals, and develop prospective donors for you to contact. The finance director cannot work alone — you will need to be an active participant in the fundraising in order to be successful.

Research is also an important early activity. While your campaign plan will set a timeline for your research activities during the campaign, you will probably want to begin research even before you become a candidate. A researcher should be one of the earlier team members that you bring into the campaign.

Before too long, you will find that the demands of the campaign necessitate having a campaign manager, who will also likely serve as your scheduler, office manager, field staff, and press secretary in the early months of the campaign. Choosing your manager is a crucial decision. You must be willing and able to trust your manager to develop, with input from the other campaign team members and with your approval, the strategy that will allow you to win. The manager will also have access to all confidential materials and information in the

campaign, and you will need to feel comfortable empowering him or her to help you win.

ELEMENTS OF A CAMPAIGN TEAM

Following is a list of potential positions within a campaign team. Individuals in these positions often serve in multiple roles, but most campaigns have some form of the following team members.

- **CAMPAIGN MANAGER** — The campaign manager is your key, strategic advisor on the campaign. He or she will help you to make decisions and will serve as the manager of the other staff or volunteers. The campaign manager will often serve as your surrogate when you are not able to appear at events. Sometimes, the campaign manager speaks to the media when you are not available, or when it does not make sense strategically for you to be quoted. The campaign manager will work with the team to write the campaign plan and track your budget to make sure you are on target and have enough resources.
- **FINANCE DIRECTOR** — The finance director is responsible for helping you plan how you will raise the money you need, from identifying donors to projecting income. He or she will keep you organized and on-message when you make your fundraising calls, and will follow up on pledges. He or she will also help plan fundraising events and write fundraising direct mail.
- **PRESS SECRETARY** — The press secretary will help you to build your message and find strategic ways to get your message to the voters through news stories, op-eds, letters to the editor, and other forms of earned media. He or she will also sometimes serve as your spokesperson. The press secretary is also sometimes responsible for overseeing the campaign's research. If the press secretary is not responsible for research, make sure you have appointed another knowledgeable person to be responsible for the campaign's research. (See Chapter Seven — Research.) The press secretary will also help you to prepare for debates and other public appearances.
- **FIELD DIRECTOR** — The field director oversees voter contact. He or she will help you make sure you have the votes to win, and that your voters get to the polls on election day. Your field director will help

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organize door-to-door canvassing, volunteer phoning, and get-out-the-vote activities. He or she will also be responsible for recruiting volunteers to your campaign.

- **VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR** — The volunteer coordinator helps the field director recruit volunteers and make sure that they are being used effectively and receiving ample appreciation.
- **SCHEDULER** — The scheduler makes sure that you are going to events and meetings that make strategic sense. While the scheduler will help organize logistics, he or she should also have a clear sense of which voters you are targeting so he or she can proactively build a winning schedule.

If you are doing direct mail, or running a race that warrants television or radio, you may wish to consider hiring a professional consultant. If you are planning to conduct polling, a professional pollster can help ensure that the poll is done in a way that will truly help your campaign.

These needs will vary from campaign to campaign and evolve over time. Whether you use staff or volunteers, all members of your team should have a clear sense of their job responsibilities.

CHAPTER NINE

Voter Contact

How many votes do you need to win — and how will you reach those voters? A voter contact program is the key to ensuring that you get the support of the voters you need and make sure that they vote on election day.

Even before you are a candidate, you can begin reaching out to the voters you will need to win. Look beyond the groups of voters you already know and begin to attend events where you are likely to meet new groups of voters.

CALCULATING A WIN

The first step in preparing a voter contact plan is calculating the number of votes you need to win. In a head-to-head race, this number equals 50 percent plus one.

Begin by selecting three similar elections in your district from the recent past. Consider factors in previous elections that may have driven turnout — such as whether the election included a presidential race, or whether there was a high-profile ballot initiative that year — to select three elections that are reflective of the current climate. By using three recent elections, you can gain a broad overview of past voter behavior.

Add the total number of votes cast in the district in which you are running and divide by three to get the average vote. This is the likely turnout in your election. Divide this number by two to calculate 50 percent, then add one — this will be the number of votes you need to win in a two-person election.

FINDING THE VOTERS

Unless the district you are running in is very small, you will not be able to communicate with every voter. Using a voter file, often available from your state Democratic Party or from a vendor, prioritize your voters. Give voters who, based upon previous elections, are the most likely to vote and who you determine are the likeliest to be persuaded to vote for you, the highest priority.

Target voters geographically and demographically. While you may not have a poll, you can probably make some basic assumptions about who can be persuaded to vote for you, based upon where they live



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within the district and demographic factors, such as income, age, ideology, race, profession, education, and gender. For example, if you are a well-known advocate for low- and moderate-income housing, you could assume that residents of public housing that you helped establish would be target voters. The voters who you identify during this process are those who you will want to begin to reach to identify, persuade, and get out to vote.

REACHING THE VOTERS

You can reach voters in a number of ways. You and your volunteers can go door-to-door, or telephone voters, or the campaign can send mailings to voters. Voters will also be reached through the media — whether through earned press coverage or paid television or radio time. Some candidates have used e-mail effectively. If you plan to do this, make sure that you collect voters' and supporters' e-mail addresses as you meet them so you can begin building a strong contact list.

While bumper stickers and billboards may seem to be an attractive way to reach large numbers of voters, they lack the message-driven contact that other means of voter contact provide.

All effective modes of voter contact cost money, time, or people. The methods you use, and when you use them, depend largely on your resources and strategy. Going door-to-door is very effective, but very time consuming. Contacting voters by telephone does not have the same impact as a candidate going door-to-door, but it is more time effective, especially in rural areas. Direct mail is effective in reaching large numbers of voters with little time commitment from the campaign, but it can be very expensive.

Be sure to track your progress. Add each contact you make with a voter — and the result of that contact — to your database. Follow up with each undecided voter with a persuasive communication.

"I began my campaign with a good core of support, but, to win, I needed to push beyond that and get to know groups and people I had never worked with before."

SARAH REYES, Assembly Member, California



CHAPTER TEN

Next Steps

Now that you have read about the elements of a successful campaign, conducted the political analysis, and understand the planning and work that running for office requires, you are equipped to decide whether you will become a candidate.

Once you have decided to run for office, there are a number of steps you can take to get a strong start, build your credibility as a candidate, and potentially clear the field of opposition. Following is a to-do list for the early months of your candidacy.

- **RAISE MONEY.** Early fundraising is the best way to show viability. A strong public campaign finance filing is one of the best ways to clear the field and show that you are a serious candidate. Set a goal for the next filing and meet it.
- **ANNOUNCE YOUR CANDIDACY.** Although a number of factors will influence the decision of when and how to announce your candidacy, appearing as an organized, energetic, and widely supported candidate early in the race can help gain further support.
- **DEVELOP YOUR MEDIA CONTACTS.** It is never too early to build relationships with reporters and columnists who will cover your race. Give them opportunities to get to know you. Most likely they will appreciate having a chance to develop a relationship with you before the heated final months of the campaign. In addition, write letters to the editor and submit op-eds when appropriate so voters can get to know where you stand.
- **DO YOUR POLITICAL WORK.** Call and meet with local elected officials and political leaders to talk about your candidacy. Ask for their advice. Gain their early support. Utilize your current position. Consider the work you are already doing and the work that you could do to raise your profile.
- **BROADEN YOUR BASE.** Look for ways to enhance your candidacy and expand the base of voters who know you. Begin attending meetings with key groups who do not already know you.

- **LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK TO GROUPS.** Choose areas that you may not be well-known — from senior centers to college campuses.
- **STAY ON MESSAGE.** Refine and practice your message, even in the early days of the campaign.
- **BEGIN CONTACTING ORGANIZATIONS.** Look for groups that might support your candidacy. Start with those most likely to help. Early endorsements can pre-empt your opposition.
- **BUILD YOUR TEAM.** Develop a plan for staffing and volunteers.
- **START DEVELOPING A CAMPAIGN PLAN.** Your campaign plan will be the blueprint to guide your race.

EMILY's List provides intensive training on all aspects of campaigning, and provides support for pro-choice Democratic women running for state legislatures and other key local offices. Contact EMILY's List for more information about how we may help you run a successful campaign.

Remember that running for office is challenging — but it is also deeply rewarding. On the days when it is the toughest, think about what motivated you to run in the first place, and the history that you will make as a pro-choice Democratic woman serving as an elected official.

“Becoming a candidate is hard work, but the people I met and the incredible things that happened on the campaign trail made up for the long hours, hoarse voice, and tired feet. Being sworn in as City Commissioner so I could work on behalf of my new constituents, who had entrusted me with this incredible responsibility, was one of the most poignant moments I will ever experience.”



MARY ANNE SERVIAN, City Commissioner, Sarasota, Florida

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