



Generation Joshua Civics Education

Campaign School – Lesson 2

TARGETING

Targeting is key to winning a race. With limited resources, a campaign needs to know what areas have the highest potential for picking up votes. Experience teaches that the way to win an election is to concentrate efforts and resources on those areas where there is a chance of winning. Resources of time, talent, and money are usually very limited. Using all these resources in every area of the district will be a complete waste. Determining specific areas to campaign in will help maximize the campaign's effort.

To estimate turnout for the 2004 General Election, estimate the number of registered voters in the district in November of 2004, and the percentage of these that will actually vote on Election Day. The best estimate of the percentage of voters who will turnout in 2004 is the percentage of voters who turned out in 2000 for a similar race.

In other words, find out how many voters were registered in the district and what percent of these voted in your race in November of 2001. If 40,000 voters were registered in the district in 2000 and 20,000 voted in your race, then the turnout percentage was 50%. This is a good estimate of the 2004 turnout percentage. The number of registered voters in the district may swell by as much as 10% between now and November. It is important to calculate growth projections into the voter registration figures for Election Day.

CREATE A DISTRICT ANALYSIS

Collect and compile all important information about the district and create a district notebook. This will be valuable both in the headquarters and while out on the road, so it is best to make at least three copies of all the information. The notebook should be updated periodically and should include at least these 10 sections:

1. **District Overview:** Have a map of the entire district (including towns, cities, precinct boundaries, etc). Also, have demographic breakdowns of the population as well as past election results for the district.
2. **Elected Officials:** Contact information for all the Republican elected officials who represent the interests of the district (from President down to precinct offices).
3. **County Information:** Have maps (with precinct boundaries), demographics and past election results for each county in the district.
4. **Precinct Information:** Have maps of each precinct. Also, have past election results and demographics for each precinct.
5. **City/Municipal Information:** For each city within the district, have a street map (with precinct boundaries), demographics, and past election results.
6. **Political Parties:** Contact information for all State Republican Executive Committee members, Republican County Chairmen, county party headquarters, auxiliary organizations, precinct chairs, and other key partisans.
7. **Civic, Business and Professional Groups:** Mailing addresses and contact information for all organizations in the district (Rotary Club, Lions, Jaycees, Chamber of Commerce, etc.).

8. **Churches, Synagogues and Religious Organizations:** Contact information for religious organizations and places of worship, the cleric's name, number of members, and meeting hours.
9. **Media Outlets:** Contact information for all television and radio stations and newspapers that cover the district.
10. **VIP List:** A list of names and contact information for key citizens who do not fit into the above categories.

Keep the information current. The information contained in the district notebook will be especially important for targeting, precinct walking and making contact with the media.

CREATE A RESEARCH SHELF

During the campaign, it may be necessary to reference books and guides to find information on a variety of topics.

Items to include on the research shelf include:

- Dictionary
- Grammatical/style guidebook
- Copy of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution
- Copy of the State Constitution, Election Code, and Campaign Finance Laws notebook

DETERMINING VOTE GOALS FOR A WINNING MAJORITY

Divide the number of votes you expect will be cast in the race by two. This is what is required to win the election. Many campaigns are told to work for gaining 50%+1 of the votes in order to win an election. As seen in Florida during the 2000 election, close races will probably have a recount. Recounts can be time consuming and expensive, therefore, it is better to plan for gaining a higher number of votes than the bare minimum.

For some districts, 55% is a realistic goal and shooting for less will hurt the campaign. However, for most races, 51% is an honest projection. Do not be tempted to project 55% or 60% of the final vote unless there is good reasoning behind those projections. An unattainable goal can hurt the morale of the campaign.

After determining the total winning vote goal, the next step is to set up precinct vote goals. Someone that is good at math should do this.

First, calculate the projected votes cast in the race for each precinct. Start with the 2000 turnout in each precinct and make a good estimate of how much the population growth in the area will increase the 2004 turnout. Unlike the total vote goal, do not plan to receive 51% of the votes in each precinct. Precincts vary drastically. Some will vote for a Republican 70% of the time, while others only 10% of the time. It is essential to study the history of other Republican candidates' results in the precincts.

Determine the number of people in each precinct needed to win the election. Research past election results for each precinct to see how other Republican candidates have done.

WHAT PRECINCTS ARE WINNABLE

The best way to predict what precincts to target is to look at past election results. For example, President Bush or Senator Hutchison in Texas failed to carry a precinct in 2000, it is extremely unlikely that a Republican candidate can win that precinct in 2004. Bush and Hutchison have extremely high name recognition and appeal to undecided voters.

If they could not pick up a precinct, the chances are low that another Republican can win in the area.

Another factor to look at is how gubernatorial and other statewide Republicans did in the area in the last election cycle. If they carried the precinct with an overwhelming majority, chances are good that any good Republican candidate can do the same.

Precincts that vote overwhelmingly for Republicans are a good source for building a voter base and picking up contributions, but campaign resources should focus on other areas where there is the possibility of picking up larger numbers of undecided and ticket-splitting voters.

Ticket splitters, also called swing voters, split their ticket (ballot) among candidates for different parties. These are the people most likely to be genuinely undecided. The only votes to pick up are those of ticket splitters. All campaigns should be aimed at these voters. They are the only people who are really deciding whom to support. For this reason, it is extremely useful to determine what precincts have the largest number of swing voters.

CALCULATING SWING VOTING PERCENTAGES

For the 2004 presidential election, here is a simple formula to find the percentage of voters in each precinct who are ticket splitters. Take as an example a statewide race.

$$\text{Swing vote percentage} = (\text{2002 Candidate One \%}) - (\text{2002 Candidate Two \%})$$

Calculate the percentage of votes cast for Candidate One in each precinct. Next, calculate the percentage of votes cast for Candidate Two. Subtract the Candidate One percentage from the Candidate Two percentage. The result is the percentage of voters in each precinct who are ticket splatters (swing voters).

The theory behind this is that for the most part, Candidate One was the top statewide vote getter in 2002, a "peak" Republican vote. Candidate Two was the most competitive of the

statewide races and is used as a base Republican vote in 2002. The difference between these percentages shows the percentage of all voters who are ticket splitters. Those who voted for Candidate One, but not Candidate Two, are by definition ticket splitters.

Calculate the percentage of ticket splitters in each precinct. Rank all of the precincts according to their swing vote percentage. The precincts with the highest percentage of swing voters should be contacted closest to the election.

DEVELOPING NAME ID

Other than party affiliation, name recognition is the most important factor in determining how people decide between candidates on a ballot. For this reason, it is essential to develop high name recognition during a campaign. A voter will not retain any information about a candidate until they recognize the candidate's name. Only after they learn a name, can voters start to "file" away information on the candidates.

Without name recognition, it is impossible to "win" any votes. By the law of averages, the more people who have heard of a person, the more positive their name and image will become. In the world of politics, someone who has heard a name five or six times will feel more familiar with the name and therefore, more receptive to their campaign issues.

Party affiliation accounts for 80% of the voters' decisions during an election. The other 20% of voters are undecided and will make a decision in the polling place. Most of these, perhaps 15% of all voters, will cast their vote based on whose name they know or with whom they are most familiar.

Generally, political pollsters tabulate both a "hard" and "soft" name ID when measuring candidates.

Soft Name ID: When a respondent recognizes a name among a group of names, though they may not know anything about the name.

Hard Name ID: When a respondent can actually name an officeholder, "Who is your County Commissioner."

Unless stated otherwise, the term name recognition shall refer to "soft" name identification. This is the term usually used when you read or hear media accounts of name ID percentages.

Obviously, hard name ID is better than soft name ID, but during a campaign, time and resources are limited. Hard name ID totals usually peak at about 30%. Soft name ID should reach about 80% on Election Day. Remember, voters only need to recognize a name when they go to vote. Striving for hard name recognition is futile. Most Congressmen have hard name IDs under 50%, even after years of high visibility. If a Congressman tops out at 50%, candidates further down the ballot will have less success. Therefore, the goal is to have as many people recognize your name as possible.

WHAT LEVEL OF NAME ID IS OBTAINABLE

Those candidates in highly visible races can expect soft name ID to reach the 60's or the 70's. A name ID of 50 means that at the time of the election, 50% of all registered voters recognized the candidate's name. In quieter races, like races for Justice of the Peace, name IDs are generally in the 30's or 40's. In some urban judicial races, name ID may be in the 10's or 20's. Generally, urban areas have candidates with lower name recognition than rural areas.

The goal during a campaign is to get high name recognition that transfers to votes on Election Day.

A Republican candidate should have the votes of the Republicans in the area. The opponent should have the Democrat votes. This leaves roughly 20% who will determine the outcome of the race (most of which will make their decision based on name ID). If they know one of the two names on the ballot for a given office, they will vote for the name they know.

Voters do not have time to weigh the pros and cons of each candidate. Even exceptionally conscientious people, who made lists the night before, invariably forget their choices. Voters have to make 80 choices in a matter of a few minutes. Recognizing a name on the ballot helps a voter get through the ballot faster.

NAME ID AND IMAGE

If voters know both candidates' names, only then will they make a real decision on which they like best. If they still know nothing about a candidate, they will make their choice based on "image." An image is an impression they have about the candidates. They will form an image no matter how little they know about you.

Among the 20% of the voters who vote primarily because of name ID, image is important. That image will be almost entirely shaped by the sound of the candidate's name, how the name was displayed on campaign materials, the type of print used for the name, the colors and design associated with it, and any re-occurring political slogans.

HOW TO DEVELOP NAME ID

The best way to develop name ID is to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on television. Unfortunately, only a handful of races can afford to spend money on a television campaign. For other candidates, printed signs and brochures, free media, direct mail, radio, and personal campaigning will be the things to do to increase name recognition.

Here is a list that ranks the best ways of elevating name ID, as well as a rough estimate of the cost associated with each:

1. **Large 4' x 8' signs.** Put these up immediately. To buy 50, one-sided, two color signs will cost roughly \$1,500 (\$20 per sign plus stakes). Place these signs in the most traveled areas. This is essential in districts with over 20,000 voters.

2. **Personal contact with a brochure.** \$1,200 will get you 10,000 copies of a good brochure. Give one to everyone you meet. The personal contact greatly magnifies the value of the brochure.
3. **Yard Signs, 18" x 24".** (Use late in the campaign.) \$2,000 will buy 1,000 of these with stakes and nails. Unlike 4' x 8's, yard signs show community support for the campaign. Neighbors who see yard signs in their area will begin to think favorably about the candidate. The people who display yard signs will become strong supporters. Regardless of the length of visit with the person, they will imply you are a close friend and a great person. Precinct walking is the best method of developing yard sign placements. Unlike the 4'x 8' signs that can go up early, yard signs are best put up just 3-4 weeks before the election. It is best to show great momentum just before the election. Moreover, there is more impact when all the yard signs go up at once.
4. **Free media.** \$200. Nothing is free. This is where hoopla has its value. Car caravans, shopping center bumper sticker blitzes, rallies in parks and torchlight parades are noticed and talked about. The more media coverage at these events, the better.

Unlike signs, voters see a free media message only once, but that message reaches thousands of people. It conveys an image of a leader and newsmaker. Several good media messages can increase name ID dramatically, especially when combined with a good sign and walking program. All these things work together to create a dynamic image.

5. **Bumper Stickers.** The cost is roughly \$500 for 1,000. The candidate or volunteer should place them on the car. Never hand them out because people will throw them away. Brochures, signs, and radio should come first. Only if there is money left, should you get them. Try to get people to display bumper stickers on their rear window, not on their fender. That is generally where people look.

MAKING 4' X 8' SIGNS

Before doing anything with signs, research laws in the district about campaign signs. Call the county and/or city attorneys for relevant ordinances. Get their informal advice. A friendly attorney may volunteer to help review difficult ordinances. Some cities have stringent regulations about size, location, and length of display.

Choose a "sign chairman" to be in charge of all signs or just 4' x 8's. Some volunteers love putting up signs. It helps to have experienced workers on this project. Every county in your state has someone who loves helping put up signs. They usually have big muscles and pickup trucks. Contact other Republican officeholders or the local party to find out who enjoys putting up signs.

Follow these pointers to make the signs as effective as possible:

1. **Make sure your name dominates the sign.** Do not use your picture. Do not bury your name under a long slogan. Your name is the main message of the sign. Do include the office you are running for in smaller letters.
2. **Use the same color and logo being used on all other campaign materials.** For financial purposes, try having your name and logo design in one color. A second color will increase your printing costs between 25-30%.

3. **Shop around for printers who can print larger 4' X 8' signs.** Signs need to look professional. Signs painted by inexperienced volunteers call look sloppy and give the candidate a bad image. Make sure the signs are up to the standards of similar political signs in the district and especially those of your opponent.
4. **Make sure the proper disclaimer is listed on the signs as well as on any printed advertising in your campaign.** It has to be readable, but can be very small. State law requires that the disclaimer say it is political advertising. This can be abbreviated "pol. adv." The disclaimer must also have the name of the agent who paid for the advertising. This usually will be either the name of the campaign treasurer or the 101 name of the campaign committee. The disclaimer must include the address of the person or committee that paid for the advertising. A safe disclaimer is: Pol. Adv. Paid for by the Republican Party of Texas. 900 Congress Avenue Ste 300. Austin, TX 78701.
5. **Determine how many signs can be used and what fits into the campaign budget.** Cost per sign will decline with quantity. Buying ten signs can cost roughly \$40.00 per sign, while buying one hundred will cost about \$20.00 per sign.

The number of signs depends on the population of the district and how spread out it is. To be cost efficient, try to print at least (20) 4' x 8' signs. Have at least one 4' x 8' sign for every 1,000 registered voters. If it is a rural district that is spread out, it might be best to use more signs.

Have enough signs so that most voters will see and learn your name.

6. **Get bids from several printers.** Prices will vary enormously, depending on the number of colors and material the signs are made of. If business is slow, it may be possible to get a good deal. Make sure that they do quality work. Find out what artwork they will need.

Find out how long it will take the printer to complete the project. Do they have sufficient paper on hand? Sometimes it may take weeks for a reorder. Make a specific delivery date a requirement for final payment. Printers are notoriously late. Set the final deadline a week before it is actually needed.

7. **Decide how the signs will be supported.** If the signs are printed on paper, it may be best to nail them to 4' X 8' sheets of plywood and nail them to wooden posts. If they are chlorophyll (plastic) signs, it may be best to affix them to metal fence posts. Regardless of the material and method of securing the sign, it is essential that it be sturdy enough to withstand weather and remain in good condition until Election Day.

Every person who puts up signs has a different method for securing them, and every area has different soil and humidity characteristics. Try to recruit a sign chairman who knows what works best in the area.

8. **Determine good sign locations.** Place them on major roads where district voters will see them. Never put 4' x 8' signs on minor residential streets. Once good locations are chosen, try to get permission of the property owners.

County party leaders will know property owners in good locations who are easy to approach. The same people usually allow signs for their party's candidates year after year.

9. **Make sure the sign is visible to most passing traffic.** On very crowded intersections, try using two 4' X 8's to form a "v" pattern or just place them back-to-back. Keep them well back from the street or sidewalk.

10. **Use any method of erecting signs that will work.** Signs can be attached to fences and buildings (get owner's permission). When this is possible, it will save money and volunteer time, increase visibility and reduce vandalism. For rural areas, signs placed on barns will be very visible and credible.

MAKING AND PLACING YARD SIGNS

The same advice for 4' x 8' signs can apply to yard signs:

- Know the local and state laws.
- Find an experienced yard sign chairman.
- Make sure the candidate's name dominates the sign. Use big block letters that are visible, not masterpiece that no one can read.
- Try to use a consistent campaign logo. One color will save you money. Mention the name of the office being sought.
- Have the proper disclaimer in small but readable letters and numbers.

Here are some other helpful tips for printing and placing yard signs:

1. **Get bids from printers.** The best yard signs are 10 or 14 ply (thickness of paper), weather resistant, are 14" x 22" in size, fold over (to allow for a front and back to the sign), and are scored with center hole punched.

Fold-over signs will cost about \$2 each. The unit cost may decrease by half if purchasing more than 500.

2. **Determine the type and cost of stakes.** Yard sign stakes are usually 1" x 2" thick. Their length is usually 36" but can be anywhere from 30" to 48" Depending on the soil type, stakes may need to be anywhere from 6 to 12 inches to anchor the yard signs firmly.

Make sure the stakes have sharp points. They will be much easier to get into the ground. Costs will vary greatly. \$.20 to \$.40 cents is probably the normal range of stake prices.

3. **Determine how many yard signs to use.** This should be based on the amount allocated by the campaign plan, their importance in the district and the ability to get good locations for the signs.

If planning a thorough walking campaign, try to place yard signs at 5-15% of the homes of all registered voters in the district. One thousand yard signs is a good minimum for most races that have 20,000 or more voters.

Remember to save at least two yard signs for each polling place on Election Day. Yard signs can be used in places other than yards, such as on walls or in busy thoroughfares.

4. **Constructing signs is best done in one evening with a strong work crew.** Make sure someone knows what they are doing. There are many ways to put yard signs together. Make sure they will stay neatly on the stakes and not fall off or warp when it rains.

Never rely on staples alone to secure the signs to stakes. Generally, three nails should be used to attach each fold-over sign to a stake. One nail goes to the middle of one side. The other two nails go toward the ends of the other side. It is best if these nails go through 1" roofing tins placed on the surface of the sign. These tins prevent the signs from wiggling loose on the nails. The signs can be further secured to the stake by using staples after the nails are added.

5. **Have a location for storing yard signs.** They will occupy far more volume than the stakes and signs did before being attached. One thousand constructed signs can fill a large room.

6. **Decide how to time the release of the yard signs.** Most campaigns put them up when they get permission. If a campaign is well organized, put them up overnight three weeks before the election. The shock effect may have greater impact than the slow growth of your signs, many of which will become unnoticed fixtures in the landscape.

7. **Location.** There are three main sources for yard sign locations:

- The best places are the locations found during precinct walking.
- Another major source will be voters calling the campaign and asking for signs. In a hot race, many people will want a sign in their yard. There may be dozens or hundreds of requests for signs. People like yard signs.
- The third source will be the names given by Republican Party leaders and workers. Most of them have lists or know the names of Republican activists who display signs in election after election. In strong Republican areas, this list will be long.
- Always give priority to finding yard sign locations on major thoroughfares.

8. **Distribution.** Yard signs are easy to get into the ground. A good sledgehammer is useful. With a sharp point, the stakes will go right in. A regular hammer will work but is much slower unless the soil is very soft.

The sign should be clearly visible from the street. Place it close to the sidewalk or curb. (Be aware of local ordinances) It should be perpendicular to the street so both sides face people going each way on the street.

Have several volunteers help you. Even with great street map directions, it is hard to put up more than 20 signs an hour.

Precinct walking will produce sign lists that are in order and close together. Lists of active Republicans can usually be worked by Party regulars in their own precincts.

Phone-in requests for signs are difficult to deliver because they will be scattered throughout the area. A good secretary can divide these phone-in requests into efficient delivery routes.

9. **Be prepared for many signs to be torn down.** Do not waste time retaliating. Only replace the ones on major arteries. People will know which neighbor had signs.
10. **Consider placing extra signs on major thoroughfares a day or two before the election.** It will increase name ID. Also, put signs in yards, one at each end. It will look like their neighbor also has a sign.
11. **Regardless of what happens on Election Day, afterwards collect all the signs, stakes, and lumber.** The community will appreciate it, but more importantly, the materials can be used in the future.

PRECINCT WALKING

By far the most productive form of campaign activity is precinct walking. **Most winning candidates will say the key to victory is knocking on the doors of registered voters night after night after night.**

When running in a district that is heavily Democratic, a candidate's only chance for victory is by making personal contact with the voters. Walking the district is an absolute must.

Walking is a lot of work. The thought of going door-to-door terrifies most candidates, but after awhile it becomes enjoyable work. Make walking a habit, an almost daily part of the campaign. With discipline, it chances of winning in November will greatly improve. After Carole Keeton Strayhorn was elected Mayor in Austin, Texas, she kept on walking in order to serve her constituents better. Strayhorn has made constituent relations a top priority in each of her campaigns. In 2002, she received 55% of the vote in Travis County (one of the few Republican statewide candidates to gain more than 50% of the county's votes).

Precinct walking is pure campaigning. It combines physical exercise with social mingling. The majority of voters will be honored when a candidate visits their home. Most of the people will tell their friends for weeks about the community leader who came by their house.

WHAT PRECINCT WALKING IS

Precinct walking refers to a program of walking door-to-door in residential areas in the district.

Ideally, it is best to stop only at the homes of likely voters. Your state Republican party can probably provide, at a minimal fee, walk lists, mailing lists, and phone lists for any area of the state. These lists can be custom designed to only include registered voters, people who vote in Presidential elections or people who vote in the Republican Primary. In a large district, it may be best to stop at the homes of registered voters who have a history of voting in important elections. There is no point in talking with unregistered citizens or registered voters who rarely vote.

Obtain a list of registered voter walk lists from the state Republican Party. These lists are invaluable because:

1. **They list the names of the voters.** Calling someone by his or her name makes a visit much more personal.
2. **They can provide useful information, like voting history and the names of other voters in the household.** With this information, it is possible to fit the message to match the audience.
3. **It makes the recording of all sorts of information about their responses much easier.** Do they plan on voting? Do they want a yard sign? Can they volunteer? It is even possible to record their feelings on critical issues, Voters are impressed by people who take notes during visits. It shows that the candidate has a genuine concern for their opinions.
4. **Lists with important voter information can help provide mailing labels for use in a direct mail program.** After walking an area, letters can be personalized and sent to supporters, undecided voters, or to people that were not home.

PRECINCT WALKING FITS INTO A CAMPAIGN

Precinct walking should be the main campaign activity during the evenings (5:30 to dark) and all day on weekends. In general, precinct walking should become more important as Election Day approaches.

Walking becomes more important in proportion to how small the district's voting population is. If a campaign is for a small district, in a district with fewer than 10,000 registered voters, walking becomes more important than fundraising.

In districts with fewer than 10,000 registered voters, putting up 4' x 8' signs and walking, coordinated with direct mail before and after the walk, should be a major campaign activity. In these races, it is generally a good idea to visit a voter's house at least once or twice during the campaign.

HOW PRECINCT WALKING INCREASES A CANDIDATE'S VOTES

The smaller the district, the more votes will be won by personal contact in proportion to other campaign activities. In smaller races, people get to know the candidate, so they do not have to rely on name ID to help them make up their minds. In smaller communities, it can be easier to have voters cross party lines to vote for a specific candidate. Therefore, walking becomes an even more important aspect of running a successful campaign.

Precinct walking has a large indirect vote gain because:

1. Many opinion leaders will stay undecided for a long time. They, and many large potential contributors, want to make sure a candidate is running a successful campaign before making up their minds. ***Walking proves determination to these opinion leaders.***

All candidates love giving speeches to groups and most love being in the spotlight. All candidates say they are serious, but walking proves the seriousness of the candidate. ***Actions speak louder than words.***

Opinion leaders become “opinion leaders” because they form accurate opinions that can influence other people. They will study the actions of a candidate more than their words. Word of mouth is extremely powerful in campaigns. A campaign with little financial support can be successful if the candidate walks night after night. Opinion leaders will start noticing the efforts and begin supporting the campaign.

2. **Walking, especially if coordinated with direct mail before and after each walk, will have a dramatic effect on increasing name ID.**

Just leaving a brochure at unoccupied residences will increase name ID more than a piece of direct mail. (Always sign these brochures, "Sorry I missed you.") They will know that someone has made a personal visit to see them. Walking also helps to find locations for yard sign placement. These will help to win votes by increasing name ID in specific and targeted neighborhoods.

3. **Walking gives voters a positive image of the candidate.** In one sense, everyone is an opinion leader for his or her family and friends. In another sense, even the most powerful opinion leaders live somewhere. If a candidate reaches people at their homes, in addition to business visits, they will be much more impressed.

Precinct walking has an importance that goes far beyond its personal contact component. **Precinct walking builds name ID, it provides a dynamic, positive image and, perhaps most importantly, it shows the community's opinion leaders how credible and hard working the candidate is.**

PRECINCT WALKING BUILDS ORGANIZATION

Every activity in a campaign is related to every other activity. Well-coordinated activities can produce a combined effect that will win more votes than if the activities were completed separately.

A good campaign implements a direct mail program and a walking program. Combining the two can increase the effectiveness of the campaign strategy. By distributing direct mail to a neighborhood a couple of days before walking it, the result is far greater than if each activity was completed separately.

The best activity to combine with precinct walking is direct mail. Send a letter, as personalized as possible, to voters in areas where targeted for walking. Ideally, a week before

you walk, they will get a letter saying you would like to visit with them and want their views on issues relating to the office.

The letter can say something about the candidate, but it must stress a desire to get their opinion. Suggest some issues. “How do you feel about DUIs, gun control, drugs, dogs running loose in your neighborhood, etc.?” It should look as personalized as possible, not like campaign literature that will be thrown away or mistaken as junk mail. Any campaign literature can be given during the personal visit.

It is also a good idea to send letters after the visit as well. Favorables should get a favorable letter, and the not-at-homes should get a letter saying, “I’m sorry I missed you, etc.” Include honest opinions picked up in their neighborhoods, even some quotes. The more personalized the contact, the more likely the voter is to remember a candidate and identify them as someone who cares about their opinions and problems. For districts with fewer than 10,000 voters, walking and well coordinated direct mail are especially important.

The direct mail makes people more familiar with the candidate’s name. If a mail piece says the candidate will be in the area, the voter will be more likely to read the letter in order to be informed during the visit. Most importantly, the dual experience of receiving a letter, and then a personal visit, will be far more likely to win votes than if they received the direct mail and visit at very different times. Of course, it is essential that if a candidate sends a letter saying that he or she will be in the neighborhood, they must show up.

Precinct walking is the best builder of precinct organization any candidate has available to them. By getting out and meeting people in their homes, things will have a way of happening that will astound anyone. It is essential to get out and meet the voters in the community. By doing this, it is easier to meet potential volunteers, supporters, and possibly even contributors. Consider the following numbers:

It is possible to hit the doors of over 60 homes with over 120 registered voters in a three-hour period. (Do not spend ten minutes talking to one individual!) There will generally be someone home at 40 of those homes (or roughly 60 voters). On average, about 20 of these 60 voters will be supporters. Most will probably be undecided. Ten of them will be willing to put up yard signs. Five will want to talk at length and express a willingness to help with the campaign. The candidate or volunteer should ask these individuals if they will work five hours for the campaign between now and Election Day. Usually they will agree because five hours does not sound like much. If they agree, the campaign should send them a letter thanking them for agreeing to help and telling them that someone from the campaign will contact them to schedule their time to work. These individuals should be placed on all campaign mailing lists and notified of any upcoming campaign events.

About half of these five will help if the campaign is organized. They may not be able to help much, but help in any form is always useful. Also, do not expect to recruit full-time volunteers. If someone is willing to volunteer full-time, never turn the offer down. Volunteers net during walks may give you a \$10 or \$20 contribution, be willing to hold a precinct dinner at their home, offer to put up yard signs, or offer to distribute literature in their neighborhoods. All of these efforts help improve name recognition and gain the support of voters in the community.

If organized efficiently, it is possible to build an effective grassroots organization through an organized walking program. Occasionally, a campaign will have precinct or

neighborhood leaders already established in the area. If not, precinct walking can help establish a group of local leaders for your campaign. This group can generate more enthusiasm than just one person in the campaign.

No matter how boring the race may seem, some people will be very interested in it. Most people have far more contact with their Justice of the Peace than with their Congressman. What the Justice of the Peace does in office probably has more of a direct impact on the voter's life than does a Congressman.

A good walking program has other benefits to the campaign. Candidates generally will hear some complaints about the way that office has been run. Occasionally, this information can be implemented into the campaign and used to explain why things need to be changed or why an incumbent needs to be removed from office.

WHAT TO DO IN THE FIELD

Precinct walking is incredibly simple. Follow a few simple steps and implementing an effective walk program will be quite easy.

First, purchase a walk list of registered voters in the district. These are usually available from the state Republican Party.

Before going in the field, make sure to bring a clipboard, a map, and campaign literature for distribution. Have walk lists for a sufficient number of contiguous streets to make for an efficient trip. The candidate should wear a nametag that includes the office being sought.

Each day of the walk program should follow this process:

1. Park the car in a quiet area, near the end of the street.
2. Go to the first house on one end of the walk list.
3. Read the names of all registered voters in the house. Examine any available information listed about the household.
4. Knock on the door or ring the doorbell.
5. When someone answers the door, make an introduction and ask for a minute of their time.
6. Always stand three to four feet away from the door. This allows for breathing room during the conversation.
7. Begin the pitch that feels comfortable to the candidate and the situation. The pitch should go something like this: *“Hi, my name is Joe Smith and I am running for Constable. Here is some literature that explains why I will be a good Constable. Do you have any*

suggestions as to how I could serve you better? Can I count on your support on Election Day? Thanks a lot. Always feel free to call me.”

8. Thank the person for their time and go to the next house on the list.

Some neighborhoods will consider outsiders as an intruder. Others will be incredibly friendly. Adapt the walk program to fit each neighborhood.

The basic pitch above will work almost anywhere. Do not be afraid to modify it to fit certain areas. Try to keep the message short and sweet. Do not waste the candidate’s or the voter’s time. In addition, if the voter gives a positive response, ask them if the campaign can put a yard sign 121 their yard.

The biggest mistake a candidate makes is talking too much about himself. Only plan for a sentence or two about the candidate. Beyond that, the voter should do most of the talking. **Good candidates are good listeners. Take notes, you can use them when you send your follow-up letter.**

If the district is small, having less than 5,000 households with registered voters, try an expanded spiel to make the visit more personal. In larger districts, it is more important to visit every possible household with a quick pitch as opposed to using a personalized message.

Volunteer workers can use a more personal approach than candidates can. A candidate’s visit can be quick because the mere presence will help to win votes. Volunteers need to spend more time in order to communicate a sense of the campaign’s presence.

A good technique for an expanded discussion is to ask three or four leading questions about the office being sought:

- *“I’m a candidate for Constable. Can I have 30 seconds of your time to get your views on law enforcement?”*
- *“Would you like us to organize a neighborhood watch program in your area?”*
- *“Do you think more should be done about (whatever affects the neighborhood - DUI, drugs, rape, aliens, burglary, etc.)?”*
- *“In what areas can law enforcement be changed to elevate your neighborhood’s quality of life?”*

Try out different questions. If the questions go over well, it will be apparent. By walking precincts, a candidate will learn about the main concerns of the voters in each neighborhood.

The most sophisticated pitch is one where a candidate asks voters three or four questions on issues where the candidates differ and where most people agree with the candidate’s position. Here are types of questions that might show a clear difference between two candidates:

- *“Would you rather have a JP who has lived in your precinct for ten years, or one who just moved in last summer?”*

- *“Would you rather have a Constable with career experience in law enforcement, or one who was a disc jockey?”*
- *“Do you support mandatory jail terms for drug dealers?”*

The answers to these questions can be marked on the walk lists. Well-organized campaigns will often send a direct mail piece based on the answers voters give during these walks. People are impressed if they feel a candidate is listening to their concerns and responds to their ideas.

CLOSING THE CONVERSATION

Depending on the neighborhood, either ask for their support on Election Day or ask them to at least consider supporting the candidate. Record their reply on the walk list.

Supporters should then be asked to place a yard sign in their yard. If they say yes, ask about other small ways they can help, such as putting up yard signs in the neighborhood or passing out literature. If the situation feels right, do not hesitate to ask for a financial contribution.

Texas Congressman Culberson closes his pitch with an ending he claims is very effective. He simply says, **“Could I ask you for a contribution?”** When they start to tense up, he quickly adds, **“Oh, I didn't mean money! Would you contribute space for a yard sign?”** John says that they are so relieved not to have to give him money they usually say “Yes!” and let him put up a yard sign!

The average visit should last under one minute. Try to keep it as short as possible. The voter has other stuff they could be doing, and the candidate has more houses to visit.

VARIATIONS ON THE WALK PITCH

Every neighborhood is different. Try to adjust the pitch to fit the mood of the residents. Precinct walking teaches more about the community than any other method of campaigning.

Every neighborhood has its special attitude. Some are obvious and reflect visible economic differences, but many of these attitudes are invisible to outsiders. Only by precinct walking can a candidate pick up these subtle differences.

Precinct walking also allows a campaign to learn about the different communities of interest and shape a direct mail and media campaign around the community's interests. The responses given during block walking are the best type of poll available.

HAVING VOLUNTEERS AS CAMPAIGN WALKERS

Walking can be easier and safer if done with a companion. One person can cover one side of the street while the second person covers the other side. However, the candidate is by far the best vote gaffer. Except in large districts, the candidate should be making most of the

personal contacts. **Walk volunteers should never do the work because the candidate does not want to do it.**

With only one companion, have that person walk the other side of the street and point out the candidate. “Hi, I’m campaigning for Joe Smith over there. He’s running for Sheriff. I hope you vote for him.” The idea is that they feel as though they met the candidate.

With several volunteers, try to space them out so only one walks on each side of the street. If some walkers need a companion, allow it, but a lot more voters will be contacted if only one person visits each house. Couples who walk different sides of the same street can stay very close to each other and provide each other with moral support.

When several walkers are spread out among different streets, have them say, “Joe Smith is visiting voters around your neighborhood. He’d love to meet with you, if you would like to talk to him!” Almost 99% will say no, yet they will feel some degree of personal contact with Joe.

When people are not home, leave a brochure with the words, “Sorry I missed you.” handwritten beforehand. Everyone will assume the candidate visited their home.

If every street cannot be visited, walk every main street and some side streets. Skip homes if needed. Word of mouth moves concentrically outward from each home contacted.

COMBINING DINNERS WITH WALKING

Many people will be willing to host coffees for candidates. These will get in the way of the walk program, so schedule them after a walk. A mail piece announcing the walk can also invite people to a coffee. During the walk, the candidate can invite people to attend. Many will probably decline, but they will appreciate the gesture.

If several volunteers are walking, have the host prepare a snack/dinner for them instead of just a coffee. This will build tremendous camaraderie. Get your precinct chairman and best friends to hold these dinners or coffees for the campaign and donate the food and drink.

Meeting at someone’s home before and after a walk will make for a much more relaxed, vote-winning candidate. **When a candidate unwinds in someone’s home before walking, they will be much more at ease and be a part of that neighborhood.**

WHAT PRECINCTS TO WALK

The previous section on targeting provides an excellent guidance on what precincts to target during different stages of the campaign. It will provide for a method of determining which precincts have the highest number of truly undecided voters.

Start with your strongest precincts. Conclude by walking those precincts that have the highest swing votes. **Never walk solid Democratic areas where Governor Bush received fewer**

than 30% of the vote in 2000. It is possible to lose votes by generating excitement that will increase Democrat turnout.

The reason for walking the strongest precincts early is to help cement a strong Republican base. These people will be the most receptive and will have the most impact in helping the campaign. It will help for developing an early reputation for hard work. Plus, many volunteers and funding may come largely from these areas. During a primary fight, this is the area where it is important to make your presence known!

After working the Republican base, move on to less Republican areas that have a high number of truly undecided voters. In the fall, work the precincts that have the very highest number of swing voters. A personal visit will have more impact on these people as the election approaches.

Targeting the proper areas and walking key precincts at the correct time will help ensure success on Election Day. It takes a lot of time and energy to implement a walk program. However, if success on Election Day is the ultimate goal, a walk program is a major key to success.