



The League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area
Running for Local Office 201

Monday, January 8, 2018

6:00-8:00pm

Bexar County Elections Department
1103 S. Frio St., San Antonio



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The *Texas Ethics Commission*

First, know that the **Texas Ethics Commission (TEC)** exists to ensure fair and ethical elections and provides **targeted guidelines for all campaign expenditures**. All campaign dollars received and spent must be **reported** to the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC) per their set schedule throughout the campaign.

Reports must be submitted according to the **schedule** provided. Late reports result in fines. Even when your campaign ends you must submit a Final Report. Office holders/winners may still have reporting requirements following the Final Report.

TEC regulations cover more than just intake and outgo of funds. They also cover such things as who can donate and how much, cash donation limits (\$100), ad disclaimers, and sign placement.

Candidates are responsible for knowing and following *TEC guidelines and requirements*.

Calendar Your Campaign

1. Note **TEC reporting dates** on your calendar and set due dates for your treasurer so that you can preview the report before it is submitted.
2. Work backward from the first day of early voting to ensure your planned **campaign strategy** is implemented in a timely manner. Consider: your fundraising goals; publicity dates for events you have planned; and GOTV (get out the vote) efforts. *Note* if you want free publicity from news and political organizations, they may have lead time deadlines you'll need to meet.

Budget Considerations

Voter Engagement

At least **70%** of your budget should go directly to **voter engagement**, including such things as:

- Direct mail
- Digital advertising and email
- Media use (TV & radio)
- In-the-field contacts

Actual costs will vary depending on your campaign plan and eligible voter numbers. For example, how much a **direct mailing** costs depends on:

- What resources you use (professional design, colors, production quality)
- Mail type (letter, post card, flyer)
- Size of your mailing list

TV Ads – For a small local race, a TV ad can cost \$200-\$1,500 and may not be necessary. If you do plan to buy a TV ad, consider:

- The closer you get to Election Day, the more a spot will cost.
- Know your voters and plan ad buys for the times they'll be watching, even if it costs more.
- Keep the spot short, simple, focused on your message. Use compelling graphics.
- A professional spot says two things: you're a professional and you have money; a less polished spot says: you don't have much money and you may be inexperienced. Both can lead to unexpected impressions.

Digital Ads – As with TV, paid-for digital advertising (averaging \$.30/click) may not be advisable in a small local race. If you do plan to use it, consider:

- Free social media may also be effective (website, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- The closer you get to Election Day, the more an ad or purchasing a "bump" may cost.
- Know your voters and plan ads for the sites they'll be checking.
- Plan the ad to use descriptive key words to facilitate voter search results.
- As with TV, a polished ad may communicate: you're a professional and you have money; a less obviously professional ad may communicate: you don't have much money and you are not a pro. Both have merits.

Yard signs, billboards, etc. – Four studies by Columbia University found that yard signs increased votes by just under 2%, as reported by Politico. <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/campaign-lawn-signs-little-effect-217166>. However, in some races, even 1% means the difference between winning and losing. If you choose to use these methods of promotion, keep these things in mind:

- The image you choose is critical.
- Colors and graphics have symbolic effects.
- Check the Texas Ethics Commission for required disclaimers and restrictions on sign locations.
- Sign placement is important:
 - Be sure you have permission
 - Know that people will note the surroundings
 - Check back periodically to ensure your message has not been changed

Field Operations – These usually include block-walking and phone banking. Recent studies compiled by Yale University <https://isps.yale.edu/node/16698> are inconclusive regarding the effectiveness of phone banking. Face-to-face contacts, however, show a consistent positive effect in mobilizing voters. For a local election, paid block walkers and call banks may not be necessary; volunteers may be sufficient. Training, however, is important, and that may incur some costs.

Staffing

Treasurer – As noted in *Running for Local Office -101*, you must register a Treasurer with the TEC (Texas Ethic Commission) before you can collect or spend any money on your campaign. Your treasurer should be someone who cares about details and will be diligent in completing the several reports required by the TEC. A treasurer who can help you raise money is a bonus. This need not be a paid position and, because reports are filed electronically, you may not have any associated costs.

Keep in mind at all times that the *Candidate*, not the Treasurer, *is ultimately responsible for the accuracy and timeliness of the reports.*

Campaign Manager – If your race is small or not contested, you may not need to hire a campaign manager. Should you decide to hire or recruit a campaign manager, keep in mind that your manager will need to organize and control the campaign, including:

- Enforcing discipline on you, your staff and your volunteers
- Ensuring the campaign calendar milestones and reporting requirements are met
- Evaluating and managing any consultants
- Engaging with event venues, reporters, etc., requiring tact and a firm grasp of your message and priorities

For a small or local election, your campaign manager may be a part-time position; however, as election day draws near, full-time work may be necessary.

To give an idea of how much an experienced, professional manager might cost, *The Campaign Workshop* suggests \$2,000-\$4,000 per month for a state legislative race. Finally, sources recommend your campaign manager *not* be a relative or friend; it is important that your relationship with your CM be professional.

Others – Should you decide to use block walkers, phone bankers, data keepers, envelope stuffers, etc., you may want to name a Volunteer/Staff Coordinator to recruit, train, schedule, and pay or encourage your helpers, especially if you do not have a Campaign Manager. Your most likely sources will be political science majors, other college students and retirees who will appreciate being paid or, lieu of money, volunteer credit and/or recognition! An hourly wage (minimum wage is the least you should pay for publicity purposes) or payment per household on the list (one example cites \$1/address for block walkers) is usual. However, an opponent can insinuate that *hired* block walkers (or phone bankers) indicates that your campaign lacks committed volunteers. Whether paid or volunteering, anyone who represents you should go through training.

Plan Your Ask!

Fundraising is your job. Asking for money is not easy for most of us. We might feel more comfortable asking for a charity or a “good cause”, but asking for ourselves is awkward. It’s time to re-think your reasons for asking for financial help for your campaign. You being in office *is* a good cause!

Revisit your reason for running. If you haven’t already articulated this, now is the time to reason it out and put it on paper. This is the time to clarify: why you want the office; what you would bring to the office; how you differ from your opponent; and your *brand*.

There are some *good* reasons for running: you want to improve your community; you are advocating for a worthy cause; you have a vision for the future of the office. There are also some reasons that should *not* be your primary motivators: you know you can win; your opponent is awful; you were asked to. Be sure you can be consistently clear on your primary motivation for running.

Tips for articulating your reason for running:

- Be sure that you are fully committed to your reason for running, even passionate about it.
- State that reason in one sentence. Be prepared with two or three bullet point examples.
- Test your articulated reason on various people and refine it to ensure it is easily understood and embraced.
- Know how it contrasts with your opponent.

Tips for developing your brand:

- Connect your reason for running with your imagery.
- If you have a campaign slogan, make sure it relates to your reason for running.
- Know that branding is often refined by the public’s perceptions; with consistent messaging, your brand may develop as you want it to.

Plan your calls. Develop a call database of family, friends, acquaintances, members of organizations, donors to others’ campaigns, etc. Include potential donors’ full names, phone numbers, emails, home addresses, and affiliations. Add cells for best days and times to call and donation goals for each (these may vary with the donor’s financial situations). Add cells for dates and times called, amount of ask, pledges, follow-up calls, and monies received. Then:

1. Make time every day for fundraising.
2. Do it with a staffer – it’s more fun, they can take notes for you, they can help keep you on schedule.
3. Articulate your reason for running briefly, then listen for their responses.
4. Ask a reasonable amount. Ask for more from those you know can afford it.
5. Include WAW in the ask: **W**hy you need their money; the **A**mount you need; and **W**hen you need it in order to have the greatest impact.
6. Follow up with a written *Thank You*.
7. Make follow-up calls as needed.

Remember: You are a worthy investment! Believe it. Communicate it.

Best Practices for a Local Campaign - 201

Research Yourself

Google yourself. Do it because:

- The press and your opponent (if you have one) will!
- Our memories are faulty and selective.
- Even minor things can become a big deal if you're not prepared to discuss them.

Correct the Record!

- Check your Facebook, Linked-in, and other sites. If not up-to-date, correct them.
- Look for photos of you and delete unflattering or distracting ones, if you can.
- Be prepared to respond to those who got this info (or that photo) before you corrected/deleted them.

Your online presence is growing.

- Keep in mind that you are now a public figure. What you say, where you go, and who you're with may be recorded and publicized.
- Add to your website, Facebook page, etc. frequently to keep it up-to-date, focused on your message and interesting.

Coordination and Consistency are Crucial

- Ensure that your materials, communications, signs, logo, slogan (if you want one), and messaging are aligned.
- Use your reason/s for running to frame your decisions and statements.
- Plan and rehearse your "elevator speech" (less than one minute) to ensure that you can meet people, make a strong, focused impression, and move on.

Be Thoughtful About Attending Events

Attending events others have scheduled may appear to be a cost-effective way of getting face time with potential voters. However, not all events are equally useful to your campaign. Consider cost, value, *and* image when you plan to attend.

Cost – Your time is limited and, therefore, expensive. Your best bet is to attend an event that allows you to speak briefly to the entire audience and glad hand a few key potential donors/supporters. Attending an event where people come and go throughout the evening, such as a school fair, may not get you much in the way of donations or votes and will take a lot of your time.

Value – Try to find out how many folks will attend the event and whether they are part of your potential constituency before committing to it. Larger events with your own voters are high-value targets. Events with likely voters are valuable. Events that are likely to get your photo in the local paper are valuable. Events that resonate with the reason you are running are valuable.

Image – Try to attend events that align with your office, your message and/or your branding. At those events, be relaxed and enjoy meeting folks. But, be aware of the visuals. In this digital age, photos of you appearing to drink at what looks like a frat party, may cause you heartburn with older voters; hugging a teenager (not your own) may cause some concern with parents; rolling your eyes while attending any event will be commented on...

Plan Your Publicity

- **Bumper stickers, T-shirts, campaign buttons and yard signs** are fun, and many people want them. However, they do not effectively communicate your message to a wide audience. If your budget is limited, you may want to limit how much you allocate to them.
- **TV and radio** are expensive and should be used with care. If your race involves a small population, they may not be cost-effective.
- **Billboards and bus ads** reach drivers in the area and certain bus riders, but will likely have little lasting impact.
- A **website** can be free and useful, but should be professional looking and current. Direct traffic to your website only if it's up-to-date.
- Your response to the **League of Women Voters** questions for the **Voters Guide** will reach determined voters and it's free. Stick to the questions asked and the set limits. Be sure to have it proofread by several people as it will be published exactly as you submit it, errors and all.
- If you are articulate, think well "on your feet" and have an opponent, it might be worthwhile to participate in a **debate**. Various political organizations may be interested in organizing one if you were to offer your participation. These cost you nothing but preparation time (and you should prepare!), and may attract free media attention.

Email with Purpose

- Find likely voters' emails. Ask party HQ for **likely voters** if your campaign is partisan. Collect sign-in sheets from events. Ask political organizations or those with an interest in your office whether they will forward your emails to their memberships.
- Be thoughtful about your **subject** line. All caps and several exclamation points may move your message to spam folders. A vague subject may be overlooked.
- Have a specific **purpose** and a clear, **brief message**. Research shows that most people spend an average of 8 seconds per email.
- Give the reader something to do; a next step. Include a **link** to your website, a donation page, or to the next event registration.
- **Preview** your message on both a **computer** and a **cell** phone. Make sure it looks good on both.
- Research indicates you'll get the **best results** on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 10am, 2pm, or 8pm

Useful Websites

For 15 examples of effective emails check out:

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/email-marketing-examples-list>

While several resources were used compiling these "Best Practices", one site was particularly well organized and offers free resources and ebooks on various campaign subjects: **TheCampaignWorkshop.com**

Finding a Mentor

Experience in running a campaign is not a guarantee of success, but there are so many things to account for that it will help. If you have the money to hire an experienced campaign manager (or are lucky enough to have one volunteer), that person will be able to alert you to many of the potential pitfalls. However, someone who has actually run for a similar office will have unique insights. And, if you don't have an experienced campaign manager, you need to talk to someone who has been there and done that! Finding a mentor is not as hard as it might seem. Many current and previous office holders had help themselves and would willingly help you if asked. Here are a few ways you might find a mentor:

- Ask someone in a **similar office** to mentor you.
- If it's a partisan election, check with the **party chair**.
- Review past **LWV Voters Guides** to find retired or current office holders to connect with.
- Ask **someone you know** and trust who has experience running a campaign, even if it's not for the office you're interested in.
- Check with LWV-SAA.

What's Next?

As the campaign nears the end, new concerns will arise. You may be asked to participate on panels or in debates, you may find yourself giving speeches beyond the usual name, position you're running for and why. You may have a number of inexperienced volunteers (or some whose experiences and predilections do not match yours) needing training. You may find yourself endorsed by organizations you've never heard of, or that your opponent has six endorsements and you have none. You may need guidance regarding your activities during early voting or on election day. You may have thought of a need we haven't considered! We want to meet your anticipated needs. So tell us whether you want a third workshop and, if so, what you'd like us to address. Some possible topics are:

- More on Publicity
- Public Speaking, Debating, etc.
- Staff and Volunteer Training
- Endorsements
- Early Voting and/or Election Day
- What to do with debts or excess funds
- Other...?

Comment Card

Please tell us:

1. What was most useful, helpful or interesting in today's workshop?
2. What would have made this workshop better?
3. Should we plan a third workshop? If yes, what should we include?