

# **Just Run!**

**No one else is coming.  
Our future needs you!**

**US Pirate Party Conference – June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

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**Massachusetts Pirate Party**

# What is this?

We want you to know everything we have learned about running for local office so you have the best chance of winning.

Life is a remix, so take what you want from it, discard anything you don't need or don't have time to use & add the new things you learn.

Learn from your efforts and Iterate! Iterate! Iterate!

Put yourself out there. You cannot win if you don't run.

# Overview

- Why and what can you do in office?
- What is your goal?
- What office to choose?
- Preparing yourself
- Getting started
- Logistics, logistics, logistics
- The campaign
- Useful resources

# Why?

- Makes laws
- Sets the budget
- Oversight of bureaucracy
- Oversight of police and courts
- Oversight of schools

# What to do in office

- Shift budget and laws to serve people's needs not those of corporations / rich
- Shift police resources/focus from criminalizing people to helping people
- Make government data/documents public
- Save money and foster free software by requiring its use

# What is Your Goal?

- To win
- To identify supporters & volunteers for future efforts
- To educate voters about issues that matter to you
- It is best if you do all three, but better to do some of them than none at all

# What Are You Facing?

- Over half of the candidates for contested elections lose
- The better connected & financed candidate often wins
- As a result, many offices have only one person running for them

# But so what!

Even if you don't win or don't have the time to campaign to win, running is still worth it to:

- Identify voters for future efforts
- Identify pirates supporters
- Identify future candidates
- Grow as a person



# What Office to Choose?

- Town & city
- State House & Senate
- County
- US House of Representatives
- Governor's Council
- US Senate & Mass. constitutional offices

# Town Elections

Check the election schedule & rules for your town. Offices can be:

- Selectboard/Town Council
- Town Moderator, Treasurer, etc.
- School Committee
- Elected Town Meeting Member

# City Elections

Check the election schedule & rules for your town. Offices are:

- Mayor
- City Council
- School Committee

# State House & Senate

- State legislature made up of House & Senate
- Elections usually held in November
- Check for State Elections Office for schedule & rules

# County Elections

- County Commissioners
- District Attorney
- County Treasurer
- Sheriff & Clerk of Courts
- Check your county for details

# US House Elections

- Single member districts
- Election in November of even years
- Check your state's election schedule & rules, especially for number of signatures & who can sign

Other Offices

Good luck!

# Preparing Yourself

Be honest with yourself: Are you ready?

- No - Try another approach
- Yes - Lets get started



# Be Honest With Yourself

- Do you really want the job?
- Are you prepared for the pressures of campaigning?
- Does your partner support your run?
- Are you prepared for the impact on your work & family life?
- Are you known in your community?

# Not ready? Try Another Approach

- Try a less demanding office or a lower goal
- Join (or start) local party chapter
- Volunteer or get appointed to a local board or commission
- Start an issue campaign or join local campaign

# Ready!

## Lay the Ground Work

- Attend & speak up at public hearings
- Get involved in local organizations
- Volunteer for local boards & commissions
- Support other candidates
- Write letters to the editor

# Getting Started

- Find people to help
- Roles that need filling
- Know your district & constituencies
- Understand your opponent
- Find your issues & core message

# Find People to Help

- For most offices, you cannot run alone
- Identify people who will help you:
  - Party members
  - Friends & neighbors
  - Family

# Many Hats

- Treasurer (cannot be the candidate)
- Campaign Manager
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Field Operation Manager
- Website / Social Media Organizer(s)
- Data Manager

# Not all on your head!

- May not be able to find someone for each role, but make sure you distribute the work
- Some of your campaign organizers may wear more than one hat
- Cannot do without a Treasurer
- Having a campaign manager helps

# Know Your District

- Who & where are the voters?
  - Get voter lists from city/town (has address, DOB, gender, party info.)
  - Get demographics (US Census data)
  - Find out if voters are owner / renters
- What are local issues of concern?



# Your Constituencies

- Identify your constituencies, i.e. the voters most likely to support you
- From the district data you have, see if you can identify who they are individually
- If you have to limit your efforts, knowing who is most likely to support you will help you focus your efforts

# Who is your opponent?

- Understand what your opponent's positions are by looking at their website or newspapers. Look at their voting history if you can
- Look at past election results to understand how many votes you need to win \*
- Get list of voters and their voting history as well as census data to understand the demographics of your district \*

\* Data available from town/city/county/state

# Find Your Issues

- Identify the key issues to focus on:
  - Two or three max for local campaigns
  - More for state campaigns (but still a small number)
- The issues you choose must resonate with the voters who you want to support you
- No half measures! Being moderate cedes the field to your opponent

# Develop a Core Message

- Once you know your key issues, you then need to develop a core message
- It should be short & simple ...
- ... but should tie in with your key issues
- ... and it has to motivate your supporters!

# Test Your Core Message / Issues

- Test it first with a friendly audience then with other audiences
- Refine your message
- Can find a way to bring all questions back to your core message? Bonus!

**Logistics.**

**Logistics?**

**Logistics!**

# Know your dates

Know your important dates:

- Election day
- Early voting start and end dates
- Nomination signatures due dates
- Date nomination forms are available
- Campaign finance filing due dates

# Plan Logistics

Work backwards from after election day:

- Thank you notes attached to all yard signs, thank you post put up on website/social media, thank you letters sent to supporters
- Schedule and train volunteers for each polling place
- Election night party scheduled and supporters notified before election day



# Plan Logistics

Work backwards from after election day:

- Schedule volunteers for stand outs before election day
- Get out the vote effort starts by early voting start date
- Flyers and signs distributed before early voting starts
- Flyers and signs purchased well before early voting starts

# Plan Logistics

Work backwards from after election day:

- Door-to-Door effort completed before early voting
- Fundraising completed by or before Door-to-Door effort starts
- Kick off party scheduled before Door-to-Door or even signature gathering
- Signatures gathered and turned in

# Plan Logistics

Work backwards from after election day:

- Web site / social media up
- Database setup with voter data
- Campaign organizers on board
- Open bank account
- File paperwork

# Plan Logistics

- Volunteers - How many & when?
- Write a focused budget & fundraising plan with an eye to what do we buy with the first \$500, the next \$1000, etc.
- Find someone to design fliers & signs
- Find someone to take professional pictures of the candidate for fliers / media.

# Specific Logistics

- Volunteers - How many & when?
- Write a focused budget & fundraising plan with an eye to what do we buy with the first \$500, the next \$1000, etc.
- Find someone to design fliers & signs
- Find someone to take professional pictures of the candidate for fliers / media.

# The Campaign

- Initial Activities
- Volunteers, Fundraising & Follow Up
- Get on the Ballot
- Materials, Internet, Media & Publicity
- Meet Voters, Go Door-to-Door & GOTV
- Election Day & The Days After

# Initial Activities

- Open social media accounts
- Identify initial contributors
- Obtain & file committee-to-elect papers
- Get checks from initial contributors
- Open bank account & make first deposit
- Open web site

# Volunteers

- It is important to have someone organizing volunteers
- Providing lunch/dinner for volunteers is a good way to thank them for group efforts such as mailing parties & Door-to-Door outings
- Be sure to thank volunteers with a written note - keep note cards for your thank yous



# Database

- You need a database!
- Get voter lists from city/town. This info. has name, address, DOB, gender, party and most importantly, in which elections they voted
- Find out if voters are owner / renters from assessors database
- Get demographics (US Census data)

# Fundraising

- Make a list of potential contributors from family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.
- Write a phone fundraising script that talks about your issues
- Call your contributors list
- Mail reminder letter with return envelope
- Mail thank you letter to all contributors

# Follow Up

- Ask contributors whether they would:
  - endorse you in writing
  - volunteer
  - hold a house party for you
- Follow up on all offers of assistance
- Send thank you letters promptly

# Get on the Ballot

- Make sure you know all of the requirements & dates to get on the ballot
- Pick up nomination papers
- Gather signatures
- File nomination papers
- Mail thank letter to anyone who helped gather signatures

# Getting Signatures

- Concentrate on signature gathering. Aim to get the most signatures in the least time
- Know which voters you need based on the office you seek:
  - City/Town – Usually any voter
  - Partisan offices – Often independents & party members

# Getting Signatures

- Not every signature will be valid. Plan to get **at least** 50% more than you need
- File nomination papers with town/city/county for signature verification as they are done. Don't wait to the last minute!
- Get receipts when you drop them off! You may need them to pick up the signed papers

# Getting Signatures

- Find places where YOUR voters are likely:
  - Your neighborhood
  - Busy city/town squares
  - Dump/recycling center
  - Festivals & places people aren't in a rush

# Getting Signatures

- Have a clipboard for the nomination papers and extra pens
- Have voter registration forms with you so you can register anyone who isn't a voter or moved and hasn't reregistered
- On rainy days, cover the clipboard/papers in a plastic bag. Ball-point pens won't work in the rain. Use felt-tip pens instead
- Always be polite, but don't chat too long!



# Getting Signatures

- Ask voters to sign & print their name so their name can be read clearly
- Never leave your nomination papers unattended
- Never put any stray marks on the nomination papers
- If someone puts a stray mark on one, put it on the bottom of the stack & don't use it for any more signatures

# Materials

- You will need to develop materials to give out or post: fliers, mailers, yard signs, etc.
- Have a common logo - if only your name.
- If you are strapped for cash, try 1/3 of a page fliers, double sided
- If you have the money, try mailable fliers

# Internet

- Setup Blog, social network accounts
- Tie blog posts to your social networks
- Frequent Personal Posts
- Once you have a bunch of posts, start following people & media from your district

# Internet (cont.)

- Find creative ways to share you & your message:
  - Post pictures of you, volunteers & supporters campaigning
  - If you can make fun videos, do
- Use a service to email supporters, but don't spam people
- Keep in contact with volunteers, but phone calls are always better

# Media

- Identify local media & reporters
- Setup meetings
- Meet with media to talk about your issues
- Make sure you follow reporters on social media, hopefully they will follow your campaign
- Keep in contact with reporters, invite them to your events & Door-to-Door outings

# Publicity

- Use campaign kick off or volunteer support event to get attention:
  - Invite all of your supporters & media
  - Make sure it is well attended
- Ask supporters to put up yard signs
- Hold stand-outs/visibilities in last month

# Meet voters!

Talking with voters is the best way to convince them to vote for you:

- Have a supporter who is a parent of a child at that school introduce you during morning drop off or afternoon pickup
- Attend block parties & city/town festivals
- Have meet & greet events at senior centers & for members of local groups

# Meet voters! (cont.)

- Have a volunteer keep track of who you meet & their concerns
- Follow up with the voters you meet either by dropping off a flier with a thank you note or by mailing a flier & a thank you
- Have supporters write letters to friends telling them why they are voting for you



# Go Door-to-Door

- Going Door-to-door is the best way to meet voters, listen to their concerns & tell them why you are running
- It is the best way to identify which voters will support you
- From the voter list, you should develop a walk list. Divide streets into even & odd sides to make record keeping easier

# Go Door-to-Door

- Mark a voters level of support with 1 as will vote for you & 5 as will not vote for you.
- If a voter isn't supportive, move on quickly but politely. You need to find the most people who will vote for you, not argue with people
- When someone isn't home, be sure to leave a flier hanging on their door handle

# Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

- All your efforts must lead to the GOTV effort
- Through the Door-to-Door effort you have hopefully identified a lot of voters who will support you
- Now you have to make sure they vote!

# GOTV

- Call all supporters to remind them that you need their vote. Tell them where their polling place is & when it is open. Ask if they need a ride to the polls
- As close to the election as you can, drop off notices to all supporters telling them where to vote & when their polling place is open

# Early / Mail Voting

- Know the dates / locations for early / mail voting
- Encourage your supporters to vote by mail or early
- Keep track of which supporters voted, should be available from local govt., so you don't waste time reminding people to vote who have already voted

# Election Day Tasks

- Have a poll watcher at every polling place recording which of your supporters voted
- By the afternoon, have volunteers call supporters who haven't voted yet to remind them to vote
- Have volunteers hold signs outside polling places, but not too close. Know the state/city/town rules!

# Election Day Tasks

Have volunteers:

- drive supporters to the polls
- pick up supporter checklists from poll watchers
- bring beverages & snacks to volunteers at polling places

# Once the Polls Close

- Have poll watchers get the preliminary vote count from their polling place
- Hold election night party to thank volunteers & supporters



# The Days After

- Update website & social media accounts with thank you & election results
- Distribute “Thank You” stickers to all yard signs & mail thank you cards
- Write a “thank you voters” letter to send as a letter to the editor of local media
- Fundraise to clear away any campaign debt

# Useful References

- How to Win Your 1st Election - Susan Guber
- The Campaign Manager - Catherine Shaw
- How to Run for Local Office - Robert J. Thomas
- Swarmwise - Rick Falkvinge -  
<https://falkvinge.net/files/2013/04/Swarmwise-2013-by-Rick-Falkvinge-v1-Final-2013Jul18.pdf>
- Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout - [Donald P. Green](#) & [Alan S. Gerber](#)