



TDP Candidate Guide: Part 1 – Making the Decision to Run

- Determine the rationale for your candidacy.
 - a. Why are you running?
 - b. What do you plan to do if you are elected?
 - c. Do you have the time to devote to a campaign?
 - d. Can you win?

- Flesh out your resume
 - a. Complete any relevant educational programs
 - b. Join professional and charitable associations
 - c. Get involved in volunteer organizations (PTA, Lion’s Club, Democratic Party, etc), preferably in a leadership role
 - d. Run for local office
 - i. If you win, this will give you experience as an office holder
 - ii. If you lose, you still will have learned valuable campaign lessons and increased your name recognition in the community

- Consult your family.
 - a. Is your spouse on board? If not, your campaign may be a non-starter.
 - b. Do you have young children? If so, can you be away from them for long periods of time?
 - c. Can they handle the stress of a campaign?
 - d. Are there any skeletons in your closet? How will your family respond to those revelations?

- Get your financial affairs in order.
 - a. Are your taxes paid and all your business affairs in order?
 - b. How is your personal financial situation? Can you afford to lose? Can you afford to win?
 - c. Do you have business partners whom you need to consult?
 - d. Will your employer allow you to take time off to campaign?

- Check all applicable election laws
 - a. Federal candidates – www.fec.gov
 - b. Non-Federal candidates – <http://www.ethics.state.tx.us/index.html>
 - c. Texas Secretary of State - <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/>
 - d. Research the laws very carefully to make sure you meet all necessary qualifications for office and can properly file all necessary paperwork. Having to pay fines or deal with lawsuits is a bad way to start off a campaign.
 - e. Pay particular attention to any necessary paperwork that must be filed before raising money.
 - f. See “Candidate Paperwork 101” for additional information

- Get to know the district
 - a. Procure a map
 - i. District Viewer (<http://gis1.tlc.state.tx.us/>) – Congress, State Legislature, SBOE
 - ii. County Clerk (<http://www.county.org/>) – County offices

- iii. City Secretary (<http://www.wowworks.com/wowcity/tx.htm> or <http://www.50states.com/city/texas.htm>) – municipal offices
 - iv. Texas Courts Online (<http://www.courts.state.tx.us/>) – Judicial offices
 - b. Research the demographics and voting patterns
 - i. The same entity that has maps should also have some basics statistics (The TDP may also have this information and more, depending on the district):
 1. Population
 2. Voting Age Population
 3. Registered Voters (Active and Suspense)
 4. Ethnic breakdown
 5. Results of past elections
 - ii. Determine Your Vote Goals
 1. Expected Vote x 52% = Win number
 2. Can you get to the win number? If you don't believe you can, you probably should not run.
- Learn the issues
 - a. You don't have to be an expert, but you do at least need to know what are the major concerns of the voters in the district
 - b. Spend some time doing research and collecting information before talking to voters
- Create a list of key contacts
 - a. Two types
 - i. Political – Party leaders, Elected Officials, leaders of allied organizations, etc.
 - ii. Fundraising – Major donors and fundraisers
 - b. Contact them before you announce. If they are not on board, your campaign might not get very far.
 - c. The TDP can provide you with lists of many of these key contacts in your district to get you started. In fact, much of this information can be found on the TDP website at www.txdemocrats.org.
- Get Training
 - a. Read training materials and publications by campaign professionals (see the TDP website for links to training materials and helpful publications)
 - b. Attend training workshops (see the TDP website for links to organizations that conduct trainings and listings of training workshops that have been scheduled)
 - c. Communications training is particularly important for candidates. You will be expected to be comfortable speaking to large groups and on-camera. Consider attending a media training or taking a public speaking course if you need to polish this skill.