

Chapter 10 Ongoing Activities

Success for the Democratic Party is winning elections. We must elect people who can make a positive difference in our communities and our nation and pass laws to protect our rights, create a more secure nation, and provide fair opportunity for everyone.

The key to this success is giving individuals a reason to join us at a grassroots level to turn out voters. Achieving this goal requires year-round coordination. It cannot be accomplished in only the 60 days before an election. Our year-round effort must involve our core constituencies first and then reach out to new constituencies and voters who share our fundamental commitment to our communities.

Create relationships

In Texas with its huge districts, even the best candidate cannot spend five minutes with each voter or shake everyone's hand. This is one reason that candidates are often seen as out of touch with the individual. We should work to provide opportunities for our candidates to meet people. Then it is our job to represent our candidates and shake the hands of the people in our communities.

Encourage activity and keep activists involved

Never wait until September of an election year and the traditional Labor Day campaign kick-off to start organizing. Volunteers should be kept active and interested throughout the year. This will raise awareness for the few months of the election cycle so that our organization is ready to go when the primaries are over.

Get and stay organized

We need to make a concerted effort to gather and distribute information. An effective flow of information provides a means to motivate precinct chairs and recruit new chairs.

Activity Suggestions

Activists and organizers should remain active throughout every year. Appendix D has suggestions for organizing activities. The following activities are very helpful to the Party and our candidates.

Parades and Community Events

- Send information about parades, festivals, neighborhood meetings, etc., to candidates and party affiliates, including local Democratic clubs
- Encourage people to host community-based activities (BBQs, coffees, parties, etc.)
- Send representatives to as many events as possible
- Show that we are active by participation
- Create a personal relationship between individual voters and the Democratic Party

Democratic Party Meetings and Functions

Activists, elected officials, and candidates will want to do the following things:

- Attend meetings of local Democratic clubs and organizations
- Find out their plans, especially for the fall election
- Create personal relationships
- Seek active support and volunteers
- Encourage personal growth by urging group members to participate in different functions

Labor Meetings/Functions

Labor has always been an important factor in the Democratic Party. These are among the ways Labor can help.

- Provide lists of all Central Labor Council meeting dates, times, and locations
- Have representatives attend as many events as possible
- Help create personal relationships between Labor and the candidates and workers
- Provide information about activities and encourage participation
- Provide information about candidates to members of Central Labor Council

Meet-and-Greets with NEW People

Reach out to new people all year with some of the following activities:

- Organize fish fries, BBQs, fiestas, etc.
- Invite Democrats in the area
- Mingle, talk to people one-on-one
- Make events fun—some of these events might also work as fundraisers

Help Build a Party Database

The following will help you build a party database that is difficult but important:

- Learn how to generate the files, lists, and labels you need
- Locate a “go-to” person for database questions and problems

Send Fundraising and Get-Involved Mailing

Use these mailing groups:

- Include identified supporters
- Reach the many people who would be willing to help, but may not have been reached by our previous fundraising and volunteer recruitment efforts

Create a Supporters List

Lists of voters and potential voters are extremely important, and the following techniques can help maximize their use:

- Group identified supporters by useful criteria (e.g., Hispanic, African American, female, lawyer, etc.) into as many groups as appropriate for each voter.
- Send update or issue-watch e-mails tailored for group interests, e.g., news of a Planned Parenthood endorsement to all women supporters. Updates keep our people abreast of what is happening and reach a more targeted audience than press releases. Supporters can also easily share this information with friends, colleagues, and family, helping us to reach a wider audience with a more personal touch.
- Assume that all mailed and e-mailed information will fall into Republican hands. Don't send anything you wouldn't mind seeing on the front page of your newspaper.

Create an Issues Section on the Website

The following will help you create a better website:

- Work with a talented volunteer or professional to create or update your website if you don't have one for your county party or yours was designed more than two years ago
- Include a reference to your website on printed literature about your County Party
- Post new information at least twice a week
- Create a section where people can choose which issues matter to them and submit their e-mail addresses. Include local or area issues as possible choices.
- E-mail the people who have chosen a certain issue whenever the party does something related to the issue. The e-mail addresses can also be used for general information about events and campaign activities.
- Check the website and respond regularly

Sign-Up Program

- Challenge supporters to sign up ten people to be on the e-mail update list
- Mail a bumper sticker to everyone who signs up
- Reward our supporters who meet the challenge (even if it's only a thank-you e-mail)

E-Newsletter

- Update supporters monthly or weekly about events, happenings on the campaign trail, news they might have missed
- Include issues section, especially if you don't have time or people to do targeted e-mails to different groups

Block Meetings

- A block meeting at your home is one of the most direct ways to recruit and organize Democratic voters in your precinct
- Block meetings are an excellent venue for introducing local elected officials and candidates to neighbors. Persuade the official or candidate to make a short presentation.

Democratic Clubs and Organizations

There are hundreds of Democratic clubs and organizations across Texas, each with its own focus. The memberships of these clubs and organizations should be encouraged to be active in party building activities throughout the year. For a listing, go to www.txdemocrats.org.