

Grassroots:101

The Fundamentals of political success

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO GRASSROOTS POLITICS

Grassroots Training Series

Level 1 : Beginners

DrewMcKissick.com
Campaigns, Opinions & Activism

Welcome to the “Grassroots Training Series”

This is a three part series that seeks to demystify the political system and give a basic understanding of some of the more fundamental techniques that can help you achieve political success.

[The Intermediate Guide](#) provides “how to” guidance for more intermediate levels of political activity relating to:

- 1) *Political Parties*
- 2) *The Legislative Process*
- 3) *Basic Lobbying*
- 4) *Effective Confrontation*
- 5) *Election Voter Guides*
- 6) *Newsletters*
- 7) *Dealing with the Media*

[The Advanced Guide](#) covers more advanced activity relating to:

- 1) *Advanced Lobbying*
- 2) *Campaigns and elections*
- 3) *Communications*
- 4) *Parliamentary procedure*
- 5) *Volunteer management*

You can always find links to these and other helpful political resources at DrewMcKissick.com. You can also connect with me on Twitter at: [@DrewMcKissick](https://twitter.com/DrewMcKissick).

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INTRODUCTION

“In a democracy, he who does not take an active interest and participate in public affairs is worthless”. – Pericles

Are you “worthless”? How important are you to the success of the things that you believe?

Today our society needs conservatives to be willing to get involved and play an active role in our democracy like never before. To matter to the things that they believe. The good news is that you don't have to be a politician in order to make a difference. You just have to be willing to participate and then let your voice be heard.

Conservative grassroots activism can change policy and influence decisions from the local school boards all the way to Washington, DC – but it depends on how diligent you are. If we are going to be successful, we have to commit to doing what Ronald Reagan called "the hard work of freedom". And that work includes community, social and political action. *And effective activism begins with knowledge.*

The purpose of the Grassroots Training Series is not to be exhaustive, (that's another book!), but rather to cover the highlights and break down the complexities of the political system and help the novice activist understand how to become more effective. To better equip you to make a difference at all levels of government.

The two things that truly determine how effective individuals can be are their knowledge of the system and their willingness to participate. This series addresses the first one. The second is up to you.

The Beginner's Guide to Grassroots Politics

The purpose of this edition is to provide a “how to” for the most basic levels of political involvement relating to:

- 1) *Grassroots Opportunities*
- 2) *Church Organization*
- 3) *Precinct Organization*
- 4) *Online Organization*
- 5) *Being an Effective Volunteer*

Enjoy!



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SECTION 1: GRASSROOTS OPPORTUNITIES

“I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.” – Charles De Gaulle

The purpose of this manual is to provide political “beginners” with an understanding of the basics of local political organization. What it is, what its key components are and how you can get involved.

What is “grassroots” organization? Simply put, “grassroots” means local. A grassroots organization is one that is rooted in the local community and is made up of people who usually know one another, (such as relatives, friends, and neighbors). What makes it “grassroots” is that it grows and is organized from the bottom up, not from the top down. A grassroots organization can grow in any community.

Why grassroots?

...key reasons for a local focus

Ask almost anyone what they think of politics and the usual response is: “It’s a dirty business. I don’t want anything to do with it.” Yes, politics can be a dirty business, but it’s only as dirty as the people that are involved in it. It gets dirty when far too many good people don’t roll up their sleeves and spend the time and effort necessary to clean it up. Whether you’re washing your car, changing a diaper, or doing the dishes, you’re doing a job that must be done to keep things from getting too far gone. It’s maintenance. And it’s the same way with politics. Working a little bit at a time, maintaining a democratic political system is easy, but when we ignore it for long periods of time the dirty work of politics piles up. Then, when we can’t stand to look at the mess any longer, it takes a massive effort to clean it up.

Voting, educating yourself and others about the legislative and political process, and getting personally involved in the affairs of your city, state, and nation is maintenance. And the best way to go about that “maintenance” is with good grassroots organization, for several reasons:

IT GETS BETTER RESULTS

Given that so few people participate in the political process, those who do have a disproportionate influence on the country as a whole. Liberals have taken advantage of this fact for years. Politicians tend to pay attention to those who participate – especially those who are organized and can have an impact on future political campaigns. There’s an old saying, “politicians may be stupid, but they can count”.

IT LEADS TO MORE INFORMED VOTERS

Better organization keeps individuals informed on important issues and can better involve them in the political process. Given that people have so much competing for their time and attention in today’s world, an effective grassroots organization is better able to cut through the clutter and reach individuals with actionable political information. An effective grassroots organization provides an efficient and reliable vehicle to disseminate critical information to voters. And the more politically informed that people become, the more likely they are to go to the polls on Election Day.

IT BUILDS MORE POLITICAL EXPERIENCE

By getting conservatives involved in the political process a grassroots organization can serve as a training ground for higher levels of political involvement. Just as major league baseball has its minor leagues and farm teams, local political organizations tend to be the proving grounds where those who rise up

the ladder first got involved, gained experience and were noticed by those at higher levels. For conservatives to continue to grow in influence and effectiveness, it is important that new people are continually educated, activated and brought into the system.

Having an Impact

...learning and doing the basics

What you are about to learn represents the basics of the conservative grassroots game-plan that can help build successful local organizations from the ground up. It can help you to successfully identify, educate and activate conservatives to organize and impact our society at all levels.

Generally speaking, there are three keys to grassroots political success:

1. *Identify and organize your supporters*
2. *Inform them*
3. *Mobilize them*

Without *identified* people that are willing to help, you have no organization. Without *information*, people will not know how to proceed, let alone when, where or why. And without *mobilization* towards a given objective, an organization lacks a reason to exist and will quickly fade away. These three simple steps constitute the fundamentals of grassroots politics at every level. Embrace them and you'll be on the path to achieving your goals.



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WHERE TO FOCUS?

Your first order of business is to identify a small core group of people who share your views and a vision for what you want to do. Sort of like a “steering committee”. When small groups come together and direct their energies in pursuit of a common goal, leverage and synergies are achieved. They begin to feed from one another and keep each other enthused. Discuss the different areas each of you would like to focus on and what you believe is important. Develop a consensus and then decide who will do what. Then pool your resources.

Whether you're organizing for a candidate, a group or just an issue you care about, there are three basic venues for conservative grassroots organization. And each area has different benefits as well as challenges.

Organizing in churches allows you to work with people you're probably more familiar with, and are likely to have more in common with. It also has the benefit of involving people across multiple neighborhoods (or precincts), which can “sow seeds” of activism in more than one area.

Organizing by precinct is more geographically focused and, because of that, can have a more direct and greater potential impact on that specific area.

Online organization can exist on its own or as a compliment to church and/or precinct organization, (ex. online “groups” via [Yahoo](#), [Google](#), [Ning](#) or [Facebook](#); or online petitions and campaigns at [AktNow](#) – or a combination).

In order to determine where you should focus your time and efforts, ask yourself the following questions:

- What specifically do I want to impact or accomplish? Is it more educational and/or issue related, or is it more political?

- Where do I know the most people who think like I do, and who are willing to help? (Hunt where the ducks are!)

But whichever type of organization you plan to focus on, remember that it all comes down to people. Politics is people. You get enough people together with a common purpose, and you've got grassroots organization. And grassroots organization leads to political impact...which leads to legislative and policy success.

Grassroots Activities Menu

...things that make a difference

This section contains a list of relatively easy to do grassroots activities that have been proven successful in giving citizens a greater voice in their government. They are purposely easy to implement and, when coupled with similar activities in surrounding churches and/or precincts, they can greatly strengthen the political impact of conservatives in your community.

Each of the sections in this manual will contain an "action planner" at the end, which you can use to make note of the activities listed below that you would like to implement as part of your plan. Using time tested grassroots principles and techniques you can have an impact on the things you care about by working just a few hours a month.

Build a conservative contact database. Create a database of identified, registered conservative voters in the church (or precinct) with as complete contact information as possible, (names, precincts, churches, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses). An Excel spreadsheet will work fine. Use this list for distributing key information on all your projects. A good database is critical to

making other projects easier and more effective in the future. Make use of your church directories if possible.

Hold a voter registration drive. As shocking as it might seem to some, almost half of potential voters aren't even registered to vote, and that tends to hold true for conservatives as well. The purpose of a voter registration drive is to make sure that every identified conservative in a church or precinct is registered and able to exercise their right to vote. Get registration forms from your county registration office and set up a registration table in your church, and encourage others to do the same in other churches. You can even cross-reference the names in church directories with the county voter registration list to find out who needs to be registered. Again, given low average registration and election turnout percentages, this one effort alone can have a tremendous impact. If you're not registered, you can't vote. And if you don't vote, you don't count.

Attend the next meeting of your local Republican Party. Going to political party meetings and getting involved will help you keep up to date with important political information, but it can also provide you with good opportunities for political activism on issues you care about. Get others involved as well! The more conservatives that get involved in the grassroots of the party, the better off the conservative agenda will be.

Set up a citizenship bulletin board or table. To be effective in our political system, people need information, so make sure that they get it. A bulletin board or table can easily be set up at a church so you can post or distribute timely information about issues or upcoming events, (such as local council/school board meetings, elections, etc.).

Conduct a petition drive. Petitions are a great way to demonstrate a strong, unified voice on a given issue, as well as to show politicians the breadth of support it

enjoys. If politicians understand one thing, it's numbers. They know that numbers equal power – and petitions demonstrate numbers. They're also a great way to build a database of supporters that you can go back to for further action on related projects in the future. You can find an issue that your community is concerned about, circulate a petition, and make a difference by forwarding it to the proper elected officials, (especially when working in coordination with other local grassroots leaders). You can conduct petition drives "off-line" in printed form and/or "online", (with sites such as [AktNow](#)).

Lobby your elected officials. Generally, some form of lobbying is the most popular type of grassroots effort that most local groups engage in. In fact, many groups are formed specifically because of a local issue and the desire to be heard by elected officials. Once you've identified an issue you intend to pursue, you can mobilize your group to flood elected officials with emails, post cards, personal letters, faxes, phone calls and personal visits, (again, websites such as [AktNow](#) can help you coordinate such activities online). Remember, the number one goal of most elected officials is to get re-elected. An organized group of registered voters with a particular point of view will have considerable influence with most any elected officials.

Distribute legislative scorecards. A legislative scorecard is a listing of key votes cast by elected officials indicating how each voted on bills that are important to specific groups. These can be for any federal, state and/or local elected officials that have a voting record. Contact your local or state leadership (if any), or other conservative organizations and order enough for your church. If you're working as a precinct captain, order enough for precinct volunteers to be able to effectively distribute them in their churches, as well as to identified conservative voters in your precinct. The more people know about how elected officials actually vote, the better they can hold them to account. And it puts officials on notice that they're being

“watched”. (See [Level Two](#) in this series for information on compiling your own scorecards)

Distribute non-partisan voter guides. These are guides that demonstrate to voters where candidates stand on issues that are important to conservatives. They are usually based on a public official's voting records and/or candidate questionnaires and will represent positions in easy to understand terms on each issue, (such as Candidate Smith “Supports” or “Opposes” taxpayer funded abortions). Voter guides help cut through the clutter of campaign advertising that may or may not discuss the issues that are most important to conservatives, and “bottom-line” the candidate's positions. Voter guides should be distributed approximately two weeks prior to primaries and general elections. If you're working as a precinct captain, you should acquire enough to enable precinct volunteers to distribute in their churches. You should also consider mailing them to identified conservatives in your precinct. (See [Level Two](#) in this series for information on compiling your own voter guides)

Make Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) phone calls. GOTV calls are essential to turning out a large conservative voting-bloc in any election. You can create a telephone bank with other church members (or precinct volunteers if working as a precinct captain) to make calls from lists of identified conservative voters just prior to and on Election Day. This is where the work of identifying and registering conservatives pays off. Work with your local or state grassroots leadership (if any) to determine how you can best organize making these important calls.

This is only a partial list of the things you can do. The more involved you become, the more ideas and opportunities you'll have. But the bottom line is to do

something. Remember, if you don't do anything, nothing happens, (or at least nothing you would want to happen).

The following sections will give some of the fundamentals to the three basic types of grassroots organization and how you can go forward. Be sure to come back to the Grassroots Activities Menu and determine which items you'll focus on, then make note of them in the "action planner" section for the type of organization you want to focus on.

Shameless self-promotion alert...

You can get involved in my own online conservative web community at [Conservative Outpost](#).

Members can create and host their own **user journals** (blogs) within the site, add **comments**, be a part of [forum discussions](#), submit **news items**, create [user groups](#) (public or private), as well as create and participate in [online campaigns](#).

The Outpost is continually evolving and making more tools available to conservatives to impact the things they care about.

 <p>OUTPOST</p> <p>Action Fax</p>	<p>Fax your members of Congress anytime on any subject!</p> <p>You can even use it to send a blast fax to ALL Senators or House members, state delegations or entire Republican or Democrat caucuses</p> <p>Click here!</p>
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SECTION 2: PRECINCT ORGANIZATION

“Don’t agonize. Organize”. – Florence Kennedy

Why Organize in Precincts?

...all politics is local

It’s a truism in politics to say that “all politics is local”, but truisms are truisms because they’re usually true. In this case it’s right on the money. And the precinct is the most “local” organizational unit in American politics.

Put simply, a “precinct” is essentially your neighborhood. It’s a geographic area with specific boundaries, (usually defined by your state), that surrounds the place where you go to vote. The name of your precinct is listed on your voter registration card.

There are more than 203,000 precincts in the United States, each with an average of about 1,000 registered voters. Politically, they represent the building blocks that comprise all other political districts in America, (whether local council, state legislature or congress). And precincts are where the voters are – which means that’s where the power is in our political system.

Political influence goes to those who are the most organized at the precinct (or neighborhood) level. Grassroots organization emphasizes the important role that precincts play and the idea that all politics is local by focusing on individuals who are willing to identify and organize others in their own neighborhoods.

HOW TO ORGANIZE FOR SUCCESS?

In the 1840s, a little known congressman from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln listed what he said were the four essential rules for winning an election.

1. *Obtain a complete list of voters*
2. *Determine how they will vote*
3. *Contact the favorable voters*
4. *Get your voters to the polls*

No matter how much modern technology may change “how” things are done, the fundamentals still apply. And they don't just apply to campaigns, they also apply to successful political organization in general. You start with those who are registered to vote, identify those who agree with you, provide them with the information they need, and get them to take action when it's necessary.

Successful grassroots organizations adopt and apply these rules in effectively mobilizing thousands of conservatives at the local level. And precinct captains play a vital role in making it happen.

WHAT IS A PRECINCT CAPTAIN?

A precinct captain is someone who serves as a point of contact between the people in their local neighborhood and outside conservative political groups and activities. They should be key distributors of critical and timely information about elections, candidates, and other issues. Nonpartisan voter guides, legislative alerts, legislative scorecards, leadership training information, and other seasonal literature are just a few examples of what precinct captains can create and/or distribute.

Moreover, precinct captains are agents of political and lobbying action for their own communities. By getting non-partisan voter guides to their pro-life neighbors, making get-out-the-vote phone calls on or before an election day, as well as distributing petitions and other information, the precinct captain can mobilize a large bloc of people to influence political and legislative activities.

It is also important to understand that many of the activities of a precinct captain are seasonal. Depending on what elections are approaching or what's happening in Congress, your state legislature or local council, your focus and activity levels will vary.

THE PRIMARY GOALS OF A PRECINCT CAPTAIN ARE:

- 1. *Identify ten pro-family activists.*** In order to put the meat on the bones of any organization, you need people. Which means you should try to identify others who are willing to help. Try to identify at least ten. This is the primary job of a precinct captain. These will be the people who are the most interested in what you are doing. The goal is to be able to quickly line up volunteers when a major project comes up and help is needed. Keep in mind that different people enjoy doing different things. Make note of what they're willing to do and use them accordingly. There will be many different things to do and plenty of work to go around.
- 2. *Identify as many other pro-family voters in the precinct as possible.*** A good goal is to find enough pro-family voters to equal 10% of the total number of registered voters in the precinct. This would normally be done in conjunction with your organization's leadership (if any) as part of a "voter identification" project.
- 3. *Inform and mobilize the precinct volunteers*** on special projects as needed. This could include distributing voter education materials on candidates or ballot issues, making sure identified conservative voters actually vote on Election Day, or lobbying your local school board, council or legislature. In addition, it's important to help identified conservatives to get involved in a local political party – preferably the Republican Party.
- 4. *Stay informed*** on the organization's current projects and activities.

Tools You Can Use

1. **A list of all registered voters in the precinct.** You can get this from your local election (or voter registration) board.
2. **Blank voter registration forms.** (For all those new people you'll register)
3. **A map of the precinct.** You should be able to get this from your local planning commission or voter registration office, (or they will know where). Try to get one with street lines and names overlaid on it.
4. **A political events calendar.** Keep track of dates of party primaries, general elections, special elections, school board, local council and local political party meetings
5. **Copies of church directories.** Having membership lists from conservative churches will allow you to cross-reference them with voter registration lists.



Getting Started

...fail to plan, plan to fail

Getting started as a precinct captain is quite simple and does not take a lot of time, but action is critical. We all know the hardest part of “doing” anything is getting started. Having a plan makes it possible.

Review the items in the “Activities Menu” section again, then use the “Action Planner” below to fill in the items that you think will have the greatest impact on your goals, and that you’re most likely to have the resources to accomplish, (“who” can do “what”, “when”, “where” and “how”?). It will help you sketch out a specific plan of action for you and your precinct based on activities that have a track-record of success. Keep upcoming events on the political calendar in mind when making these decisions, (such as pending elections, important issues to lobby with local elected bodies, Republican Party organizational meetings, etc.).

ACTION PLANNER

This section will help you map out a plan that is appropriate for your neighborhood. Use it to spell out exactly what sort of impact you want to have and what activities you’ll focus on to make it happen. Completing this step is essential to your success and longevity as a precinct captain.

Consider these items in coordination with other likeminded people in your precinct, as well as any grassroots organization you may be associating with.

STEP ONE: List the major changes you would like to help make happen in your area. Why do you want to get involved? Your answers could be political or legislative in nature. Be focused and specific.

1. _____

2. _____

STEP TWO: Choose three items from the Activities Menu that will enable you to bring about the changes you listed above. Then list the action steps you'll need to take to complete each activity.

1st Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

2nd Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

3rd Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

Precinct Organization Review

- **Contact your leadership.** Let them know about your plans to organize in your precinct.
- **Attend a meeting.** If you're associated with a group (or considering one), attend their meetings. Let them know about your plans and try to coordinate your efforts.
- **Play to your strengths.** Choose activities that make the most of the resources you have.
- **Multiply your efforts.** Involve and coordinate with others.
- **Get informed.** Find out if there are any resources or information your group (if any) or others can make available to you on the issues you care about.

SECTION 3: CHURCH ORGANIZATION

“Those who would treat politics and morality apart will never understand the one or the other.” – John Morley

Why Organize in Churches?

...hunt where the ducks are

If you want to shoot ducks, you hunt where the ducks are. It's the same with politics. If you want more conservative political success, you need more conservative voters. And for that you need to go to the churches. The church is one of the most important elements in building a successful conservative grassroots organization simply because it's the place where the greatest numbers of conservatives congregate on a regular basis.

Sadly, people in most churches are little better than others when it comes to the basics of citizenship, such as registering and actually voting on Election Day. On average, only about half are actually registered, and about half of those that are will cast a ballot in most elections. Not a recipe for political success. Given that the average race is usually won or lost by about five percent, the possibilities are obvious.

Just imagine the impact if every church in your community had a contact person who worked to inform their fellow members and get them involved in the local political system. What kind of difference do you think that would make?

There are hundreds of thousands of churches all across the country that bring their members together every Sunday, and they can have a tremendous impact when they are informed and motivated. For example, on Election Day in

1994 (the famous “Republican Revolution”) one out of every three voters casting a ballot was a self-identified born-again Christian that attended church four or more times a month.

More organization in churches means more conservative success. The goal however is not to make churches into an annex of a political party, but rather to educate and encourage conservatives in those churches who share your values to become better citizens and advocates for their values in the public arena. And the key to church organization is a church contact person.

WHAT IS A CHURCH CONTACT?

A church contact is someone who serves as a point of contact between their church and outside conservative political groups and activity. They can help distribute critical and timely information, such as non-partisan voter guides, legislative alerts, legislative scorecards, leadership training, as well as other seasonal political information. By initiating voter registration drives, petition drives, and offering time-sensitive information, church contacts can help mobilize a large bloc of conservatives to influence the political and legislative process.

THE PRIMARY GOALS OF A CHURCH CONTACT ARE:

- 1) **Identify fellow conservatives in your church.** Review a list of the members of your church (via a church directory) and identify those that you know to be conservatives. Use this information to create a database of identified conservatives for your church.
- 2) **Register individuals in your church to vote.** As mentioned earlier, most churches are little better than the general public when it comes to levels of voter registration. This makes voter registration a critical function of the church contact, since it's impossible to be effective in the political system without being registered

to vote. Cross-reference the list of identified conservatives in your church with the county voter registration list to determine who needs to be registered.

- 3) **Keep fellow church members informed.** The more informed conservatives are the more effective they can be. Church contacts should work to provide information about lobbying opportunities, political candidates, ballot issues, petitions, opportunities to get involved in a local political party, as well as how they may be able to participate in other activities you may be planning. Keep a calendar of important political dates for your area, such as party primaries, general elections, county council or school board meetings, political party meetings, or meetings of other conservative political organizations.

Politics is cyclical. Based on which elections are approaching, or what's happening in Congress, your state legislature or local government, the type of activities a church contact should focus on will vary.

Getting Started

...fail to plan, plan to fail

As with just about anything else in life, having a plan is essential to your success. In this case, a plan helps you tailor activities that are a good fit for your church and the political climate in your area.

Review the items in the “Activities Menu” section again, then use the “Action Planner” below to fill in the items that you think will have the greatest impact on your goals, and that you're most likely to have the resources to accomplish, (“who” can do “what”, “when”, “where” and “how”?). It will help you sketch out a specific plan of action for you and your church based on activities that have a proven track-record. Keep upcoming events on the political calendar in mind when making these

decisions, (such as pending elections, important issues to lobby with local governments, Republican Party organizational meetings, etc.).

ACTION PLANNER

This section will help you map out a plan that is appropriate for your church.

Use it to spell out exactly what sort of impact you want to have and what activities you'll focus on to make it happen. Completing this step is essential to your success and longevity as a church contact.

Consider these items in coordination with other likeminded people in your precinct, as well as any grassroots organization you may be associating with.

STEP ONE: List the major changes you would like to help make happen in your area. Why do you want to get involved? Your answers could be political or legislative in nature. Be focused and specific.

1. _____

2. _____

STEP TWO: Choose three items from the Activities Menu that will enable you to bring about the changes you listed above. Then list the action steps you'll need to take to complete each activity.

1st Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____
2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

2nd Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

3rd Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

WHAT A CHURCH CAN AND CAN'T DO:

There is a great deal of confusion (especially on the part of pastors) about what type of political activities a church may engage in given their non-profit tax status. Some believe that all political activity is out of bounds and would put that status at risk. Wrong. Unfortunately, this results in a lack of political information on the part of many church members. And a lack of information leads to a lack of effectiveness. Church based groups do have some limitations when it comes to political advocacy however. In order to be more effective, (and avoid any problems), it is important to know what type of activities can and cannot be conducted in or by a church.

A Church Can:

- Conduct non-partisan voter registration drives
- Conduct non-partisan voter identification drives to identify conservative voters
- Conduct “get-out-the-vote” drives, encouraging conservatives to vote
- Distribute non-partisan voter education information
- Allow political candidates to address the congregation
- Host candidate forums where all candidates are invited and allowed to speak
- Educate church members on legislative matters
- Lobby elected officials on behalf of specific legislation
- Make expenditures on behalf of state referendums
- Rent church member contact lists to favored candidates at fair market value
- Pastors may endorse candidates as individuals, but not on behalf of a church

A Church Cannot:

- Directly endorse candidates in the name of the church
- Contribute money to a campaign, or make “in kind” contributions, (such as resources or services), to a candidate or party
- Contribute to political action committees (PACs)
- Distribute materials that endorse a particular candidate or political party
- Pay for partisan political events with church funds
- Allow candidates to solicit funds from the congregation (from the pulpit)
- Create a church political committee that would do any of the above

The bottom line is to avoid any partisan preferences in any activity done on behalf of the church itself. However, what people do on their own time is their own business. Once they've become registered to vote, or received information that educates them on how various candidates stand on important faith and family related issues, it probably won't take them long to figure out who to support.



Church Organization Review

- **Talk to your Pastor.** *As with anything else in your church, you should speak with your pastor and get his input (and permission) before you get started.*
- **Contact your leadership.** *Let them know about your plans to organize in your church.*
- **Attend a meeting.** *If you're associated with a group (or considering one), attend their meetings. Let them know about your plans and try to coordinate your efforts.*
- **Play to your strengths.** *Choose activities that make the most of the resources you have.*
- **Multiply your efforts.** *Involve and coordinate with others.*
- **Get informed.** *Find out if there are any resources or information your group (if any) or others can make available to you on the issues you care about.*



Click here to get your bumper stickers!

SECTION 4: ONLINE ORGANIZATION

“Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it’s not all mixed up.” – A.A. Milne

Why Organize Online?

...the ultimate precinct

Given that politics is all about people, it’s a natural fit for the Internet and online social networks. In many ways the Internet is the ultimate “precinct” in America’s politics, in that *everyone* “lives” there. The overwhelming majority of registered voters have online access, and huge (and increasing) percentages of them regularly access political information online – which puts them only one step away from taking action if they have the opportunity.

The fact that so many people are using the Internet for political information and activity means that you should see it as a natural extension of your activities. And while the Internet is becoming an increasingly effective tool, it’s also becoming easier to use, which puts everyone on a more even playing field. In many ways, the Internet is the great equalizer of politics. “No money” can compete effectively with “big money”, given enough grassroots support.

IT HELPS YOU DO THE BASICS

All three of the fundamental elements of politics, (communications, organization and fundraising), have been impacted by the Internet. And as the technology changes, it will have increasing political applications – which means you need to master and apply the technology in order to be as effective as possible.

It can aid your communications efforts by making it easier for you to provide important information to your supporters, and making it just as easy for them to share it with others. This also better enables you to inform bloggers and members of the “mainstream media” that may want to cover your efforts. The more of YOUR information that's posted online, the more you fill a factual vacuum that would potentially be filled by your opposition.

It can aid your organization efforts by allowing your supporters the opportunity to engage with your campaign without having to come to a headquarters or go to a meeting. It allows them to participate on their own terms – and makes it easier for them to “spread the word” to others they know, since it's Internet based.

And it can aid with fundraising simply by providing a central place that you can direct supporters to for making contributions. Once you've got a fundraising page, you can link to it in email, on printed material, on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), etc. It can also make fundraising viral, as it makes it easy for your supporters to share a fundraising link with others, along with a message encouraging them to make a donation.

WHAT TO DO?

You can approach online activity in one of two ways: either as an addition to what you want to do with your “offline” church or precinct-based organization, or as your only method of organization. Good online efforts can help enhance and increase the productivity of your “offline” efforts (in a church or a precinct), such as recruiting volunteers, sharing information, coordinating action and raising funds. Whichever route your organizational efforts take, you should seek to use the Internet as an integral part of your communications, organization and fundraising efforts.

Tips for Organizing Online

...some basic rules of the road

When it comes to organizing and campaigning on the Internet, there are some fundamental tips you should keep in mind.

BE VISIBLE

Voters expect to be able to find you (and information about you or your cause) online. Increasingly, some sort of web presence is a minimum threshold for credibility of any serious organization. If they can't find you, they can't interact with you.

Generally speaking, a website gives you an Internet headquarters, or "hub", to operate from. It's a place to park critical information about your group or cause, to promote action items that your supporters can act on, and make it easy for your supporters to join your cause, reference your information and pass it on to others. You can create an online site/blog easily with services such as [Wordpress](#) or [Blogger](#). Short of that, you can easily create your own online "group" (for free) with services like [Ning](#), [Google](#) and [Yahoo](#). These can be public, private or moderated however you see fit.

KEEP IT FRESH

How often do you come across sites that look abandoned, or have out-dated information? And how often will you go back if that's the case? Keep that in mind when maintaining your online presence. Think like the type of person you want to attract. What information are they looking for? What are they likely to act on if you make it easy for them?

In addition to the "fixed" information you might add to a site (such as fact sheets and information about your group or issue), you can keep sites fresh by adding a blog, (even letting several supporters help keep it updated), or adding newsfeeds on related

topics with RSS feeds, etc. The better and more useful the content, the more people will visit, and the more often they'll forward the site and/or its content on to others. Which means your site can become an email list building machine.

GET SOCIAL

If a website is your Internet “hub”, then think of social media as the spokes. And it can take your Internet presence to a whole new level. Given that social media is an “opt-in” type of medium and also tends to be much more personal in nature, it can give you or your cause much more credibility when people share your links and information with others. In other words it's like the Internet version of “word of mouth” advertising. According to Pew Research, around 20% of all Internet users that were surveyed indicated that they either received or shared political information via a social network in the run-up to the 2008 election. These are real people that live in the “real” world where you may be looking to identify volunteers for a precinct and/or church based organization.

Social media enhances your ability to aggregate small expressions of support from a large number of people into a greater whole, (in fundraising for example) – which means that it provides leverage. If people are a primary resource in politics, then the “other” people that they know are potential resources as well. Social media makes it easier to leverage your chief resource.

BE OUTGOING

Don't just create a web presence and wait for the world to come knocking at your door. Do some promotion. In the business world, you wouldn't spend time creating a product for sale and then keep quiet about it. You would advertise. The same principle applies here. You make use of the tools you have (and those you can get) to let people know you're there and why they should be interested.

The Internet offers a constantly expanding menu of ways to reach out. The most familiar is email and, given that virtually everyone who's online has an email address, it's the most fundamental. The newer avenues are the social networks mentioned earlier. Set up profiles for your site on those services and link them back to your site. Send an email to your list letting them know that you're up on those networks, ("Hey, we've got a Facebook page up – pass it on!"). By regularly posting messages on those services with links back to pages or blog entries in your site, you "push" your content to a larger audience than would otherwise be exposed to your message.

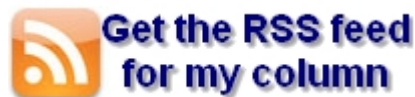
SOME BASIC ONLINE CAMPAIGN TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES:

In addition to the items in the Activities Menu, here are some items (or a spin on those items) that are unique to the Internet.

- **Create an online campaign:** Some online services let you use their sites to host campaigns where you can set up petitions, online faxes to members of Congress, private online groups for your supporters, etc. These services are usually free, (or at least cheaper than creating your own website!). (Check out [AktNow](#) as an example)
- **Online polls and surveys:** Conduct opinion polls of members or supporters. These can also be useful when trying to identify prospective supporters, (ex. set up an online survey that asks questions that will help you identify likely prospects and capture their email addresses – then email links to the survey to your supporters, encourage email forwarding, post it on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), etc.).
- **Build your database:** Once you've got a spot online, you can have a central place where people can sign up for a newsletter so you can communicate with them on a regular basis. (You can do it yourself with your own email programs, or online solutions such as [Constant Contact](#), [TalkList](#), or [ListServe](#)).

- **Post Information:** Create a central place where supporters can come and get important information about your cause that they can use to help recruit others and/or communicate to elected officials in lobbying efforts, (such as talking points, flyers, voter guides, scripts for telephone calls, etc.). You can also offer your information in a PDF format that supporters can download and print on desktop printers.
- **Provide links:** Offer a list of important and useful links that supporters can use, (such as to key contact information for elected officials, local newspaper “letters-to-the-editor” information, talk-radio call-in numbers, voter registration links, etc.). Also post links to your Facebook and Twitter sites, (if you have any).
- **Online scheduling:** You can use online calendar services to maintain a schedule of important dates and events that you can easily update and keep people informed, (free services such as Google Calendar even allow people to sign up for email alerts from the calendar).

A successful Internet presence, (web site, blog, email and social media), better enables you to be found by potential supporters, to communicate and get them organized. All of these elements should be incorporated into any online organizational strategy. If you're not online, or you don't give people an opportunity to “sign up” online, then you're missing out on a tremendous opportunity. Remember, it's not just about who YOU know, or who may stumble across your information, but it's about your supporters – and who THEY know. Given that politics is all about people, it's a natural fit for the Internet and online social networks.



Getting Started

...fail to plan, plan to fail

Getting started online is simple, but you do have to get started. As with the other types of organization, review the items in the “Activities Menu” section and then use the “Action Planner” below to list the items that you think will have the greatest impact on your goals, and that you’re most likely to have the resources to accomplish, (“who” can do “what”, “when”, “where” and “how”?).

Also, keep in mind how you plan to use the Internet, (whether as an addition to organizing a church or a precinct, or are you organizing exclusively online). As before, keep upcoming events on the political calendar in mind when making these decisions, (such as pending elections, important issues to lobby with local elected bodies, Republican Party organizational meetings, etc.).

ACTION PLANNER

Use this section to spell out exactly what sort of impact you want to have and what activities you’ll focus on to make it happen.

STEP ONE: List the major changes you would like to help make happen in your area. Why do you want to get involved? Your answers could be political or legislative in nature. Be focused and specific.

1. _____

2. _____

STEP TWO: Choose three items from the Activities Menu that will enable you to bring about the changes you listed above. Then list the action steps you'll need to take to complete each activity.

1st Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

2nd Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

3rd Activity: _____

Action Steps:

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Target Due Date: _____

Online Organization Review

- **Create a “home-base”.** Use either a complete website, a blog (such as with [Wordpress](#) or [Blogger](#)), or a free online group or campaign, (with [AktNow](#), [Google](#), [Yahoo](#) or [Ning](#)).
- **Leverage the Internet.** Choose online activities that will compliment and enhance your offline activities.
- **Get Social.** Create social network profiles, (ex. [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)), and link them to your home-base. Let your supporters know you're there.
- **Promote your content.** Use email and social networking to push your content to others and expand your network
- **Multiply your efforts.** Involve and coordinate with others.

SECTION 5: BEING AN EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER

“The only difference between a mob and a trained army is organization.” – Calvin Coolidge

Over two thousand years ago a Roman general wanted to prove to his soldiers that perseverance in combat was more important than strength. He had two horses brought before his men, one a healthy stallion and the other an old nag. He then ordered one of his strongest men to pull off the weak horse's tail. When the soldier failed, the general ordered one of the weakest men in his command to pull the tail off of the stronger horse, but to do it one hair at a time. Soon the horse's tail was gone. Success in politics often requires the same patience and perseverance.

In order to truly have an impact on our culture and our political system, the conservative movement needs volunteers that are diligent and have the patience to stay involved and finish the job. Whether it be a church contact who registers only one fellow church member, or a precinct captain who identifies only one like-minded voter, each contribution augments the overall effort to give conservatives a greater voice in their government. The key isn't that a few do a lot, but rather that many do at least a little. People like you that are willing to do the little things to collectively accomplish the great things. Remember, many hands make light work.

TIPS FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

When you first volunteer for just about anything, your excitement and enthusiasm are usually pretty high. Your not “burnt out” yet. The following are a few suggestions on how to channel your energy in ways that are likely to keep you involved and help you get as much satisfaction from your efforts as possible. And keep you from burning out!

- ***Make reasonable commitments.*** It is much better for you and any cause that you volunteer for to start with a realistic schedule. Think about how you can achieve a happy medium between the time you're able to contribute and the needs of the cause you're involved with. That way, everyone knows what to expect. Just remember that in the end, it's your dependability that's most important.
- ***Get to know everyone involved.*** In politics, personal relationships are the glue that holds things together, and knowing other likeminded activists will help you be more effective in the future. Attend regular meetings and events as often as possible. The best way to understand a group or cause is through the people who have committed themselves to it. And knowing other likeminded activists will help you be more effective in the future.
- ***Set personal goals.*** Just like any other endeavor, it's a good idea to set specific objectives that you want to accomplish through your involvement. How involved do you want to become? Just a volunteer or become a leader? What skills do you want to learn? Who do you want to get to know? What do you want to know more about? Know what you want and why you're involved before you get started.
- ***Go the extra mile.*** People who are willing to give an extra effort and "fill in the gaps" when necessary are essential to making any new effort a success, not to mention sustaining it.
- ***Keep a good attitude.*** Working in politics isn't all fun and games, (in case you were wondering). Sometimes it requires hours of menial work, such as delivering literature all over creation, or calling voters you don't know. A good attitude can boost morale, but a bad one can kill team spirit. Always be positive, because people want to work with problem-solvers, not problem-starters.

- **Recruit others.** Any group or cause can never have too many volunteers. Share the vision with your friends, family, and others. Invite them to meetings. Send them updates. The more manpower, the better your group or cause will do. And the more conservatives that get involved in our political system, the better off the conservative movement will be as a whole.

TOP QUALITIES OF GREAT VOLUNTEERS

There are four qualities that are the marks of truly great volunteers. Of course, few possess them all, but they're a standard everyone should reach for. They are:

- **A commitment to principles.** The level of commitment from the people involved in any effort is usually the greatest contributing factor to success or failure.
- **A willingness to sacrifice.** Great volunteerism is based on sacrifice. But good volunteers don't think of it as sacrifice, but rather as an investment in the things that they care about.
- **A sense of humility.** A good volunteer is one who is able to set aside their ego in deference to the cause that they're involved with. Pride and volunteering don't go well together.
- **A positive attitude.** Attitudes are infectious, (both good and bad). Good volunteers maintain a positive attitude that encourages others to press on regardless of circumstances.



Volunteering Review

- **Know why you're involved.** *If you don't, you need to figure it out – or do something else.*
- **Be committed.** *If you're not committed to the cause, you need to do something else.*
- **Be positive.** *You'll be more productive for the things you care about.*
- **Be patient and persistent.** *Avoid frustration and you'll be more effective.*
- **Recruit others.** *Many hands = light work. And it strengthens the conservative movement.*

	<p>Fax your members of Congress anytime on any subject!</p> <p>You can even use it to send a blast fax to ALL Senators or House members, state delegations or entire Republican or Democrat caucuses</p> <p><i>Click here!</i></p>
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SECTION 6: THE GRASSROOTS DIFFERENCE

“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote.” – George Nathan

The battle for America's cultural and political soul can't and won't be won overnight. In the American political system, nothing moves fast. The country didn't get in its current shape overnight. It took decades. All that time, liberals organized and worked to move the country further to the left, and if we're to be successful moving it back to the right, we must be just as diligent.

Grassroots organization makes it all possible. And the more local organizations conservatives have all around the country, the greater the impact we can have on the nation as a whole.

Organizing at the grassroots can bring about change because it's so simple. There's nothing inherently difficult about identifying other conservatives, registering voters, circulating petitions, or passing out voter guides, but when put together these activities can have a tremendous impact on politics and our society.

In neighborhoods and churches all across the country, conservative activists can make a difference when they're organized and follow proven techniques that work; when they identify, educate and activate others who share their values. That's the recipe for political success.

Grassroots Checklists

...one step at a time

Don't be intimidated. The political process is full of people who knew far less than you do when they first got involved. No matter what political party, candidate,

campaign or organization you look at, those that succeed do so because they focused on the basics.

Remember, the basics of successful grassroots organization are as simple as one, two three:

1. **Identify** supporters
2. **Inform** them
3. **Mobilize** them

YOUR IDENTIFICATION TO DO LIST:

- Find people who think like you do
- Form a “core group”
- Determine what they're willing to do
- Identify ten volunteers (form a volunteer committee for your church or precinct)

YOUR INFORMATION TO DO LIST:

- Establish a database
- Set up a regular meeting schedule
- Send action alerts and other communications as needed
- Consider distributing voter guides and scorecards prior to elections

YOUR MOBILIZATION TO DO LIST:

- Check the political calendar for pending events or elections
- Choose projects that fit your resources and can advance your goals
- Share the plan with your supporters and get them involved

Go back and review the items in the “Activities Menu” and use the “Action Planners” to create your own organization plan and “to do” lists. Focus on your goals until you can check each of them off your list. When you can, you’ll have a local grassroots organization capable of having a real impact on the things that you care about!

Did you find this e-book useful? If so, pass it on to someone else! Send them an email and tell them to visit [Grassroots101](#) so they can get a copy of this and/or other resources to become more effectively involved in our political system.

[Post a message on Twitter!](#) - [Post a message on Facebook!](#)

Consider “graduating” up to [The Intermediate Guide](#) in this series, which covers more advanced levels of involvement relating to:

- *Political Parties*
- *The Legislative Process*
- *Basic Lobbying*
- *Effective Confrontation*
- *Election Voter Guides*
- *Newsletters*
- *Dealing with the Media*

Also, be sure to join the email list at [DrewMcKissick.com](#) to receive news about updates and new resources! Connect with me on Twitter [@DrewMcKissick](#).



APPENDIX

Conservative Organizations & Resources

If you're already involved with a group, that's great. If not, consider linking up with a nationally based group that already has some resources that you can draw from.

American Conservative Union

703-836-8602

www.conservative.org**American Enterprise Institute**

202-862-5800

www.aei.org**American Family Association**

662-844-5036

www.afa.net**American Legislative Exchange**

202-466-3800

www.alec.org**Americans for Tax Reform**

202-785-0266

www.atr.org**Concerned Women for America**

202-488-7000

www.cwfa.org**Christian Coalition of America**

202-479-6900

www.cc.org**Conservative Outpost**www.ConservativeOutpost.com**Eagle Forum**

618-462-5415

www.eagleforum.org**Family Research Council**

202-393-2100

www.frc.org**Free Congress Foundation**

202-546-3000

www.freecongress.org**Freedom Works**

888-564-6273

www.freedomworks.org**Friedman Foundation**www.friedmanfoundation.org**The Heritage Foundation**

202-546-4400

www.heritage.org**The Leadership Institute**

703-247-2000

www.leadershipinstitute.org**Media Research Center**

703-683-9733

www.mediaresearch.org

National Center for Public Policy
202-543-4110
www.nationalcenter.org

Rutherford Institute
804-978-3888
www.rutherford.org

National Right to Life Committee
202-626-8800
www.nrlc.org

Republican National Committee
202-863-8630
www.gop.com

National Right to Work Committee
800-325-7892
www.right-to-work.org

Tradition Values Coalition
202-547-8570
www.traditionalvalues.org

Online activism: click the banners to get involved in the following [Conservative Outpost](#) hosted campaigns!

