Running, Winning, and How Your Union Can Help!

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COMPETENCY: ADVOCACY

• Level 1 (Foundational), Level 2 (Mobilizing and Power Building), Level 3 (Agenda Driving)

• Themes:
  – Participates in basic campaign actions
  – Equips members to become more effective advocates by getting them involved in the political process
  – Taking a leadership role by running for office
In this session you will learn:

• What’s at stake: Why NEA members should consider running for office
• How to understand and communicate about your own motivations for seeking public office
• How to evaluate opportunities—running for the right office at the right time
• How to “get political” if you are not ready to run but you are ready to make a difference
• How to ask your union for help
What’s at stake?

• What are the biggest concerns you have right now about your own life, family, and/or future?

• What do you think are the biggest concerns of the people with whom you work?

• What are the biggest concerns of the people in the community in which you live.
How do elected and appointed officials impact these concerns for better or worse?
Who makes decisions for you about...

- Age you can retire and collect Social Security
- Your medical coverage in retirement
- The amount of funding your school gets
- Your pension – if, when, and how much
- Health benefits
- IF or WHAT you can bargain
- Evaluation – who does it, how often, consequences
- Tenure – how you can get it / lose it
- Amount of property taxes you pay

**HOW DO THESE PEOPLE GET THEIR JOBS?**
Why members must “get in the game”

• IF... you want to exert some control over the issues that are important to you, your family, your profession, and your community...

• THEN... you need to be concerned about
  - WHO holds these offices, and
  - WHAT information they have BEFORE they make these decisions.
When we organize to influence **WHO** holds these offices we call it **CAMPAIGNING**.

When we organize to influence **WHAT** decisions office holders make, we call it **LOBBYING**.

But at the end of the day... it’s all about **ORGANIZING**!!!
It is not work that we do alone.

To be effective we must ORGANIZE others to help us.
What does an effective organizer need to do to bring people together for effective action?
Organizers use stories...

• To build relationships

• To make a connection and inspire people to act

• To communicate their values through the language of the heart-- our emotions
Preparing your stump speech (Part I)

- What issues are motivating you to run for office?

- What are the underlying values behind your positions on these issues (ex. I support ____ because I believe in ____)

“I support tuition aid grants because I believe in equality of opportunity”
Preparing your stump speech (Part II)

• Explain why you are running for office by telling a story about yourself that demonstrates your values

• Describe an experience that shows where these values come from

• Connect your story to the reason you are running
Evaluating opportunities to run

Find out...

• Number of voters in the district and their party registration
• Number of votes needed to win
• Amount of money candidates typically have to spend to win this race
Evaluating opportunities to run (cont.)

• Is the race partisan or non-partisan
• Date by which you must file your petition to run
• Are you running for an open seat or against an incumbent?
• Who is likely to be your opponent?
You must also consider...

- How does your party affiliation, background or experience impact your ability to win?

- Given your experiences and relationships in the district—who can you count on to support your candidacy?
I am ready to run! How can my union help?

• Does your state or local association have a political action fund? If so, what do you need to do to qualify for assistance?

• What are the rules for getting access to lists of NEA members who live in the district in which you are running?
I am ready to run! How can my union help?

• Does the local education association in the district in which you are running endorse candidates? If so, what is the process?

• What leadership opportunities does your association offer that might make you a stronger candidate in the future? (trainings on public speaking, organizing through one-on-one conversations, how to run for office, etc.)
What if...

I am not ready to run
but....

I am ready to make a difference?
Some ideas for “getting political”

• Attend your local Democratic or Republican Club meeting.
• Volunteer your time on a campaign for a candidate you believe in
• Attend public meetings of your school board, council, etc. to learn the issues and the processes for decision making
• Go to your town hall and express interest in serving on a local committee or board (library, recreation, shade tree, etc.)
More ideas for “getting political”

• Ask your local president or state association staff about how you can participate in political and legislative action in your local or state education association

• Pay attention to election and legislative news from your association—take action
Let’s talk with NEA member candidates from NJ!

• Sean M. Spiller—Councilman; Montclair, NJ

• Sandi Lazzara—Freeholder; Passaic County, NJ

• Brenda Brathwaite—Candidate for Freeholder; Atlantic County, NJ
Please complete the evaluation for this breakout session!
Session outcomes...
The content from this session can be used to help you:
• Prepare to run for office
• Help someone you believe in to run for office
• “Get political”
• To help your colleagues “get political”
• To organize around the issues that matter— at work and in your community