

Getting to Know Your Elected Leaders – Part 3

By Alan Smith

This is the third in a series of articles about getting to know your elected leaders. In the last article we discussed ways in which to identify potential candidates who are “library friendly”.

Now, let’s focus on helping your candidate to win! The assistance you provide may pay “dividends” for years to come. The ways in which you might help are almost unlimited and depend upon your personal time, resources and abilities. These activities can include:

- Work in the campaign office answering telephones or assisting with other clerical functions.
- Lend or otherwise help procure the myriad of equipment any well run campaign office requires. Do you have a spare fax and copy machine?
- Walk precincts to leave campaign literature for likely voters (maps and addresses are usually provided). Be prepared with a few key talking points that explain your reasons for supporting the candidate for those who are at home. Keep your remarks on the “high road” and positive. You may be instructed to skip residences where there is evidence of support for the opposition; .e.g., lawn signs. Caution—wear comfortable shoes. Further, persistent precinct perambulations have been known to cause weight loss as attested to by one successful candidate who counts on losing 25 pounds per election.
- Put up a lawn sign (assuming home owner association rules allow) or put a sign in a front window of your home, etc.
- Wear the candidate’s button.
- Hand out campaign brochures in public locations such as shopping centers, bus stops, etc., subject to local restrictions.
- Assist with phone banks by calling voters.
- Drive voters to the polls.
- Invest in the campaign, subject to local spending limits. One nearby city has a per person/candidate limitation of \$139.

Now that your candidate is elected, how will this pay “dividends”? Well, all candidates I’ve supported now know who I am and all have thanked me in person, by letter, etc. Invitations often follow to various functions: open houses, seasonal events, breakfast meetings, with well-known speakers, etc. Attending may allow you to meet other leaders. What an opportunity to talk about the importance of libraries.

And, best of all, you have a leader in office who shares your love for libraries. Also, because you supported their election, they may well help you when there is a library measure to support. Need an endorsement? Campaign contribution? It is much easier to request these from a leader you have supported.

Lastly, for this article, support need not be limited just to those who directly represent you. Today’s city council member from a nearby city may tomorrow be your Board of Supervisor representative, Assembly member or State Senator.

See you sooner than you think on the campaign trail.

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