

New Leaders Project

AMERICAN MAJORITY

RUNNING FOR OFFICE: SHOULD YOU?



There are a lot of different things to take into consideration when you are thinking about running for public office. The idea of campaigning and then governing can be overwhelming if you only consider the broad picture, but if you break it down to the specifics of what is involved, you may find that it really is attainable. The length of a campaign is determined by key factors such as filing dates, primary requirements and dates, your opponents, etc.

Can you run for office?

Some common concerns people have when thinking about running for office include the impact on family life and job schedules, public scrutiny, overall time commitment, lack of campaign training, or fear that they are not prepared for doing the job of an elected official.

List your greatest concerns with running for office:

Basic Campaign Time-frame

Small town:	3-6 months
Larger town:	6-9 months
School Board:	6-9 months
County:	9-12 months
State:	12-18 months

- If there is a primary for your election, you may need to add several months to your timeline, especially if you are running against an incumbent. Conversely, if you are running for an open seat you may have a shorter timeframe.

If possible, talk with someone who has run for public office about the adjustments they made in order to fit a campaign into their life. Someone who has been there can give you a realistic picture of what will be required of you, and they may be able to help you develop creative solutions to any real problems that may present themselves.



Probably the most common concern people have is the time commitment- it's important to remember that running for office and doing the job of an elected official **is public service** – if you have to give up coaching softball, teaching Sunday School or volunteering at the animal shelter for a time, you are still giving back to your community but in a different way.

Another important element that will help you determine whether you are ready to run for office is your initial list of supporters. Sit down with a list of friends and family, and see if you can come up with 50-100 people whom you would feel comfortable asking for financial support (and have a reasonable expectation of receiving it) right off the bat. If you don't already have an established network of people who would support you, you may need to spend more time connecting with people in the community before you put your name on the ballot.

As you are considering your current networks, list any prominent community leaders you have a relationship with that you would like to endorse your campaign, as well as others you may not know yet but would like to meet with.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Why would you be a good candidate?

The first and perhaps most important question you will face once you have decided to run for office will be, "Why are you running?" Your answer lays the foundation for your campaign message, communicates your commitment and reveals whether you have what it takes to lead effectively. Following the simple process in this worksheet will help you develop a polished answer that will show not only why you are running, but why you are a good candidate.

First, outline a short personal history. Include a few points about your up-bringing, a few about your professional experience, and an anecdote or two from your life that helped shape your values and goals. Allow your personality to show, and let people see you as a person, not a politician.

1. Personal history

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

2. Education/professional history

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

3. Current situation:

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

Additional points, stories: _____

Now think specifically about some goals you want to achieve in the office you are running for and list them below. What does your general vision for public service look like? What is your local government doing or not doing that you want to change? Be creative, but realistic.

List a handful of the top issues you perceive in your community. Then talk to various people you know and ask them what they see as the top local issues effecting their lives, and compare your lists. Create a final list of top issues that you want to highlight, and then learn everything you can about them.

My list:

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

Their list:

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

Final list and points:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now, look back over your outline and lists and see what common themes you find. Thinking about these questions and organizing your thoughts should help you draw a connection between your story, your goals, and how they relate to the issues in your community. This will be the heart of your message and platform. (You may have to go through this a time or two and refine your answers before a common thread becomes clear.)

Common Themes:

Now that you have the basics of your answer, you need to get to know your audience in order to frame your answer in a way that resonates with them.

List some important facts about your district:

Population: _____

Setting (urban, rural, suburbs, etc): _____

Average age: _____

Ethnic make-up: _____

Geographical features: _____

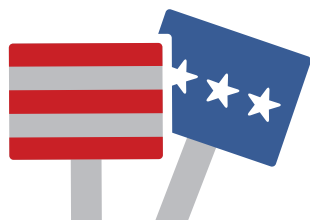
Current state of the economy: _____

High or low development: _____

Political party affiliation: _____

Largest employers/career fields: _____

Other: _____



Working through these exercises should give you a good idea of whether running for office is a commitment you can and want to make. If you and your support system are all in, you need to begin putting together your campaign plan, working to get your name on the ballot, and refining your message. For campaign training and resources to help you take the next step, visit **AmericanMajority.org** and **NewLeadersProject.org**.

American Majority is the nation's premier political grassroots training organization, providing customized innovative training that empowers conservatives across the country to become new leaders.

The New Leaders Project is our mission to equip conservatives to identify principled new leaders and train them to win elections. We believe implementing responsible fiscal leadership and limited government principles must begin at the state and local levels.

