

HOW TO KEEP SUPPORTERS ENGAGED POST-ELECTION: CONVERTING CAMPAIGN ENERGY INTO POLICY VICTORIES

In political campaigns, the period immediately before an election day, known as “GOTV” – short for “get out the vote” – can be the most exhilarating moment of a campaign. For advocates working year-round on policy, however, it can feel challenging to convert campaign buzz into policy momentum. Volunteers can burn out on campaigns, or when the results of an election are mixed, the lack of a clear path to a policy victory can be demotivating.



Unfortunately, once a volunteer becomes inactive, it can be much harder to reactivate them. Many advocates learn this lesson far too late: When a policy goal reaches its final stretches in a legislative cycle, and volunteers are needed to submit testimony or rally at the capital for a key floor vote, organizations that haven't been maintaining their volunteer relationships may find that their volunteers don't respond.

Advocates must get creative and think of ways to engage volunteers year-round – especially at times when volunteers are most likely to drift away, such as during lame-duck periods, holidays, legislative breaks, and in the weeks and months immediately following major elections.

Key Strategies for Keeping Supporters Engaged Long-Term

- **Create a calendar of communications.** To avoid losing momentum – as well as to avoid over-communicating to volunteers and causing email or phone “list fatigue” – it's helpful to create a calendar of your communications and schedule your emails, texts, calls, or even your social media posts – as well as volunteer events – in advance. The goal is to create a steady drumbeat that keeps your policy at the top of your volunteers' minds throughout the year.



TIP: A communications calendar needs to work for your team's capacity and skills. Select a calendar tool that works best for your team in the long run: Any format of calendar can work, whether it is a scheduling software, a paper calendar, or a Word or Google document or spreadsheet.

How To Keep Supporters Engaged Post-Election: Converting Campaign Energy Into Policy Victories

- **Don't overthink it. Choose sustainable practices that work for you.** Plan out roles and responsibilities that work in the long run. Decide who on the team will send messages to supporters and how many messages they could sustainably send per month or week. When selecting the platforms(s) your team will use (email, social media, text, phone trees, etc.), keep in mind that “less is more” – if you aren't quite sure you can maintain new social media accounts, don't create them.



TIP: Consider using Customer Relationship Management, or CRM technology, as a central hub for information about your supporters. Use it to track engagement, automate follow-up communication, and break up audiences for targeted outreach based on your supporters' interests, skills, and availability. Look for open-source or commercial CRMs that support nonprofit policy advocacy, such as Action Network, Mobilize, or Quorum.

- **Plan a variety of actions for volunteers to take.** To appeal to a wider range of volunteers, plan a wider range of communications and activities with which volunteers can engage. Plan your team's communications around actions that volunteers can take, as well as any other legislative updates or fundraising appeals you're already planning. Think creatively about activities that achieve a range of goals like relationship-building and building your base (such as giving folks opportunities to lead or train others), as well as direct advocacy. For example, advocates can host virtual policy update calls, storytelling workshops, informal picnics, or social media engagement activities like asking supporters to share selfies or to share their parenting stories.
- **Consider the emotional impact of your communications.** Just as emotions shift in real conversation, so should communications with volunteers throughout the year. Consider how your communications generate emotions like gratitude, joy, hope, anger, fear, or sadness. Uplifting messages – such as inspiring biographies of longtime volunteers or positive press coverage of your movement – have the power to sustain and deepen bonds. Shocking or negative messages – such as alerts about harmful policies newly introduced by lawmakers – can motivate people to quickly take action. However, negative messages can lose power if volunteers become exhausted or feel disheartened, so use those messages sparingly and honestly.
- **Start planning early!** Early planning can go a long way to keep your volunteers engaged, active, and ready to support your policy goals. By thinking ahead about a calendar of communications and deciding who on the team will do what (and when), advocates can set themselves up for greater success.