



FUNDRAISING & BUDGETING: SUSTAINING A WINNING CAMPAIGN

*“Money is the mother’s milk of politics.”
Former California State Assemblyman Jesse Unruh*

As with your entire campaign, you must begin your fundraising efforts by creating a plan and timeline, setting goals, choosing your tools and tactics and identifying your targeted audience. You must then commit yourself daily to the task at hand: making the ask. This chapter will walk you through this process in detail and help you develop the fundraising plan and strategy that are right for you.

I. THE FUNDRAISING PLAN

Your fundraising plan should be a clear and concise part of your larger plan that establishes how much money you need to raise and identifies how, when and from whom you will raise it. It should include the following elements:

- **Goals.** Given your campaign plan and budget, how much money must you raise to fund your entire campaign? Identify your overall fundraising goal – or the amount of money you will need to fund your entire budget – and set individual goals for each of your fundraising tools. Use these goals as a guideline for your plan as well as the measure of your success.
- **Targets.** Who are your targeted donors? How many are there? What lists do you already have and what lists will you acquire from the state party, other elected officials, or like-minded organizations? Identify and outline the universes you will approach for both high and low-dollar contributions.
- **Tools.** By what means will you meet your fundraising goals? Primary tools include candidate meetings and calls, events, house parties, direct mail and telemarketing. Tools vary in cost, response rate, labor intensiveness and collection time; be sure you’re choosing only the tools that work best for you. A review of these tools and the pros and cons of each follows.
- **Timeline.** On what schedule will your fundraising tools be implemented? When will you need to begin paying rent and salaries? When will you print your first persuasion mail piece? When must you file financial disclosure reports? Include these items on your overall timeline, since your fundraising goals need to be top of mind for everyone involved in the campaign.
- **Organization.** Who will staff your fundraising effort? Who will write the direct mail, maintain your donor database, produce your call sheets and send thank

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you notes? How will you utilize volunteers to raise money? Who will serve on your fundraising committee and what will be expected of them? Delineate the fundraising responsibilities within your campaign so expectations and lines of accountability are clear.

- **Systems.** What systems will you put in place to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks? Your plan should outline the internal process for managing, tracking, depositing and acknowledging contributions, so that activities such as reporting donations, thanking campaign supporters and sending re-solicitations are routinely executed.
- **Campaign Finance Laws.** What are the rules governing contributions in your race? Understanding the law is critical, since mistakes will cause legal problems for you, your staff and your donors. Familiarize yourself with the law and follow it to the letter when soliciting and reporting funds.

II. IDENTIFYING AND TARGETING DONORS

It's time to start fundraising, but where to begin? Raising money is the least favorite task of many political candidates – but it doesn't have to be. By starting with a clear set of goals, effectively targeting potential givers and systematically soliciting their help, you will be well on your way to fundraising success.

The best way to begin targeting donors is to identify those groups and individuals within your *circles of benefit*. A concept developed by Dee Ertukel at EMILY's List, the circles of benefit bulls eye identifies the four categories of individuals and organizations most likely to give to your campaign and illustrates graphically the relative amount of time and resources each sphere of potential donor will require to cultivate and secure.

The concept begins and ends with on simple principle: that all donors give to political candidates out of their own self-interest.

In order to gain a donor's support, you must identify why your campaign is relevant to them and use that information to make an effective pitch.

The *circles of benefit* include the following:

- **Personal.** This group is your "inner circle," or those individuals who are likely to give because they want to support you *personally*. This should be the first group you approach with calls and letters to jump-start your campaign, as they will be the most invested in your success. Think big when designing this list; it should include everyone who has been a part of your life in the past and present, including but not limited to:

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- Family and friends
 - Friends of family and friends
 - Holiday card list / personal rolodex
 - Neighbors
 - Current and former bosses, employees and co-workers
 - Business rolodex
 - Current and former teachers and classmates
 - Members of your church
 - Fellow volunteers and club members
 - Individuals and establishments with whom you do business
- **Power.** These are the businesses and organizations who give big in order to ensure that their legislative interests are met. Power givers tend to favor incumbents and they are generally most interested in statewide and federal rather than local and state legislative races. Nonetheless, the list includes:
 - Labor Unions
 - Law and Lobbying Firms
 - Major Corporations
 - **Ideological.** These are the individuals who give because they share your values on an issue or set of issues; this group includes:
 - Party donors and activists
 - Progressive elected officials
 - Local and regional organizations and PACs fighting for economic justice, civil rights, reproductive rights, environmental protection, access to affordable health care and quality education
 - Members / board members of above organizations
 - **Anti-Opponent.** These people will support you simply because they have a compelling interest in defeating the incumbent or your opponent. While this list will have some overlap with your ideological supporters; it will also include the following:
 - Those negatively affected by legislation supported by your opponent
 - Candidates your opponent has defeated in past races
 - Elected officials your opponent has taken on publicly

Once you have identified the individuals that fall into the categories listed above, you will need to build a donor database in which to capture their information so you can contact and track them with ease. This means you must begin compiling lists and identifying those groups and individuals that will mail to their own list for you. You should also ensure that your staff is capturing and entering the name and contact information of *every individual* who comes into contact with your campaign, and ask all of the groups listed above for assistance in identifying potential donors.

Your next step is to identify what level contribution each individual should be solicited for. For state and local campaigns, we use the following guideline to identify low, mid-

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level and high-level donors; in the next section we will explore which tools are best used on these specific groups:

DONOR LEVEL: TOTAL GIFT

Low: \$10-\$99
Mid: \$100-\$249
High: \$250+

III. USING THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The most effective fundraising strategy is one that uses a range of tactics to reach potential donors at varied giving levels. Some fundraising tools may not be right for your campaign because they are too labor intensive, do not yield a strong enough return, or do not make wise use of staff time. Following are general guidelines regarding the most common fundraising tools.

TOOL: RETURN / DONOR LEVEL

Candidate Meetings: 50-75% / High
Candidate Calls: 30-50% / High-Mid
House Parties: 20-40% / Low-Mid
Events: 20-30% / Low-High
Direct Mail: 1-10% / Low-Mid
Telemarketing: 1-5% / Low-Mid
Internet: 1-5% / Low

Candidate Meetings

Of all the fundraising tools at your disposal, candidate meetings will yield the highest and most reliable rate of response – 50-75% on average. Because they are time-intensive, however, meetings should be used with discretion. You or staff should *only* request and schedule meetings with individuals who can give the maximum contribution and/or raise significant dollars, or with organizations that are considering an endorsement and financial support of your campaign.

Donors give out of self-interest. Prior to each meeting, you should be fully briefed on the donor, her giving history, and her specific interests vis-à-vis your campaign. If she is an avid environmentalist and preserving green space is a part of your platform, be prepared to highlight that in the meeting and give specifics about your plan to do so if elected.

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Bring materials such as your brochure and other campaign literature and be prepared to identify specific ways this donor's gift will help your campaign.

Asking for money in person can be intimidating, but it gets easier with time and practice. Staff should accompany you to these meetings, and you should role play the ask with your staff or trusted family to hone your skills.

Candidate Calls

By far the most effective way to raise money, candidate calls yield an average 30-50% response rate from donors. While face-to-face meetings yield a higher response rate, candidate calls are much more efficient because of the volume of donors that can be reached in a short period of time.

In one hour – the average time allotted for one in-person meeting -- you can make an average of 20-30 calls and reach 8-10 donors. Because candidate calls are so effective, you should set aside no less than 3 hours per day for call time. Your staff should prepare a "call sheet" for each donor that includes information such as her occupation, giving history, issue interests and spouse and children's names; the sheet should also include the specific ask. Ideally, your fundraiser should staff you during call time and take notes on each call that will be used later to update your donor database and conduct necessary follow-up.

While candidate call time is both an effective and efficient way to raise money, two ingredients are necessary: Good lists and strong solicitation skills. Your call lists should include only those mid-to-high level donors with the capacity to give or raise money; you should also handle thank you calls to high donors: Be sincere, personalized and specific.



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SAMPLE CALL SHEET

Date: _____
Staffed By: _____

Donor Name: _____

Ask: _____

Phone (H): _____ Phone (W): _____

Phone (C): _____ Fax: _____

Address: _____

Giving History: _____

Employer/Title: _____

Spouse: _____

Children: _____

Notes: _____

Commitment: _____

Follow-Up Needed: _____



House Parties

While they have a lower rate of return than one-on-one meetings and candidate calls, house parties can be a valuable tool for campaigns because they provide the opportunity for direct and personal voter contact, they provide a means for your supporters without huge bank accounts or big money contacts to get involved in a meaningful way, and they can be executed with minimal effort on the part of your staff.

An effective house party program enlists your key supporters to host small, personalized events in their homes. The host or hostess is responsible for all event preparation, including providing space, food and beverage; identifying invitees (usually their friends, family members, colleagues and neighbors); producing and sending invitations; tracking RSVP's; making follow-up calls; and most of all, raising money. The candidate simply attends the event, meets and talks with guests, makes brief remarks and issues a request and a thank you for contributions.

Karen, Brad, and Kayla Cordially Invite You to an
Ice Cream Social with Ann Moore
Tucson's Next City Councilwoman
Saturday, April 6, 4:00 – 5:30 pm
The Feldman's
145 Porter Street

Single Scoop Supporter: \$25
Double Scoop Supporter: \$50
Hot Fudge Sundae Supporter: \$75
Banana Split Supporter: \$100

Families welcome!
RSVP by April 4 to 555-1212 or kfeld@email.com

House parties typically last 90 minutes to two hours, draw 10-30 people, secure donations that range from \$10-\$250 and yield a response rate of 20-40%. They can also be a fruitful way to share your message, recruit volunteers and ultimately win votes.

One note: Hosting and providing food and beverage for a house party does constitute an in-kind contribution, so check the rules in your state before enlisting potential hosts.

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Events

Without a doubt, fundraising events are the most labor intensive and time consuming way for your campaign to raise money.

While they can generate coverage by local media, excitement among your supporters and even momentum for your campaign, events will consume the time of your fundraising staff, cost you 10-20% of what you raise and yield a response rate of only 15-25%.

Events can be designed for all donor levels. Generally speaking, the higher the level of donor being solicited, the more exclusive the event should be. While a large evening reception at a union hall with sodas, snacks and a cash bar is appropriate for donors giving \$25-50, a private breakfast and issue discussion in a law firm conference room may be more appropriate for the corporate crowd bringing \$1,000 checks to the table.

Each event needs a revenue projection, timeline and budget for proper execution. In terms revenue, you should project event income based on the following formula:

$$\text{Total Invited Donors} \times .15 \text{ Response Rate} \times \text{Ticket Price} = \text{Projected Revenue}$$

For an event to which you're inviting 300 people, you should expect 15% -- or 45 people -- to attend. If the ticket price is \$50, you can anticipate total revenue of \$2,250.

Costs will equal approximately 20% of revenue, which means that you'll spend \$450 on the event for a profit of \$1,800. Before planning an event, you should decide whether the anticipated revenue is worth approximately six weeks of staff time.

You will need to design an event budget that accounts for all projected expenses. Line items may include but are not limited to space rental; catering; tables, chairs and linens; staging, podium and microphone; invitations; postage; decorations; banners and podium signs; and nametags. You should determine your anticipated revenue as outlined above and keep total costs under 20% -- and preferably closer to 10% -- of projected returns.

Your timeline should begin approximately 6-8 weeks out with finalization and announcement of the event date and location and recruitment of a host committee; it will continue until after the event, when thank you notes are sent and calls to attendees who did not write checks are logged.



TIP SHEET: EVENT PLANNING

Ask a statewide elected official or local celebrity to headline the event, which will demonstrate his/her public support for your campaign and provide an additional fundraising draw.

Recruit a host committee responsible for selling or purchasing 5-10 tickets each, and plan on them meeting 40% of their goal.

Ask local progressive organizations to sponsor the event and to mail your invitations to their membership lists or provide lists for you to mail to.

Keep costs down by designing the invitation in-house and asking for in-kind contributions of food, wine, decorations, printing and event space.

Support local labor by securing union-friendly event space and hiring a union printer to design your invitations.

Mail invitations 4-6 weeks out and include a response envelope.

Secure a team of volunteers to work all aspects of the event.

Have staff take pictures that can be used on your website and in campaign literature.

Direct Mail

There are two types of direct mail solicitation – *prospecting*, or sending mail to a list that has never contributed to you before, and *resolicitation*, which is used to generate income from previous donors.

On average, prospecting yields a return of only 1-2%; production and mailing costs often reach 100% of your revenue. Without the use of reliable lists, such as those provided by the state party and like-minded organizations, this tool can be cost prohibitive to small campaigns.

The value of prospecting is not in raising money outright for your campaign, but in identifying new donors who can be resolicited for additional contributions at a later date. Prospects who become donors should be solicited at least three times throughout the course of the campaign; resolicitation mail generally yields a return of 5-10% and will cost approximately 10-20% of your revenue.

While there are numerous tried-and-true tricks for making your prospecting mail appealing enough to engage a first-time donor, resolicitation mail should be more personal, and it should always open with a thank you for past support. From a cash flow perspective, you should plan both prospecting and resolicitation mail to take a full six weeks to reach their full yield.

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TIP SHEET: PROSPECTING MAIL

Ask for a specific contribution early on and repeat several times throughout.

Keep paragraphs short and use conversational language.

Use underlining, italics and bold type to underscore key points.

Reiterate your message and appeal to the interests and emotions of your prospects.

Be specific with your ask and when describing how funds will be used.

Use a compelling P.S. under your signature; studies show it is the most frequently read part of the letter.

Personalize letters by crossing out the typed salutation and handwriting the first name to donors you know; writing a very short personal note at the close; and hand-signing letters.

Attract readers by printing an urgent message on the outer envelope.

Include a 'credentializer' such as a news clip or list of endorsements to lend credibility, and a **response envelope and donor card** to make responding as easy for the donor as possible.

Telemarketing

Telemarketing – or the use of a professional firm or volunteers to solicit low-level donors on your behalf – may be fast becoming a dirty word in American households, but it still brings results for political candidates nationwide. The national “Do Not Call List” that became effective in the fall of 2003 excludes non-profit organizations and political candidates from compliance, so this is a tool you should make use of.

Telemarketing firms work from lists and scripts you provide to secure small donations for the campaign. Ideally, your lists should include known donors to like-minded organizations, other elected officials and/or the state party; your script should reflect your message and should be reviewed and updated frequently to keep pace with the current events of the campaign.

While generally more effective than prospecting mail, yielding anywhere from a 1-10% return and costing approximately 35-50% of your projected telemarketing revenue, telemarketing may also require an up-front financial investment that is cost-prohibitive for your campaign. Telemarketing with the use of a professional firm is generally a more appropriate tool for statewide or federal races than those at the local and state legislative level; if you do choose to go this route, your staff should monitor results closely to ensure that revenue is meeting expectations and costs aren't getting out of control.

A more cost-effective but labor intensive way for a local or legislative campaign to raise money over the phone is to utilize volunteers to make calls. This tool is referred to as *phone banking*. While it is both common and advisable for campaigns to use volunteers

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to follow-up on event invitations and direct mail solicitations, the use of volunteers to make prospect calls will take more preparation and management, primarily because of the time it takes to train, monitor, systematize and ensure the accuracy of their calls. If you do go this route, find a competent and well organized volunteer or member of your staff to be in charge of the process on a consistent basis.

Like prospecting mail, telemarketing enables you to get donors into your universe so they can be solicited again and again throughout the course of the campaign. Ensure that you have a plan in place to thank and resolicit these donors once they contribute.

Internet

As a candidate for public office, you need a website that allows voters the opportunity to learn about you and get involved with your campaign. Ideally, your website should also provide the opportunity for supporters to contribute securely online. While online fundraising is a useful option for supporters, it is not a tool that should be relied upon as primary means of fundraising, as it has limited capacity for generating revenue in state and local campaigns.

If you do decide to provide a contribution option online, your web designer can create the functionality to accept contributions, send instant thank-you notes via email and deliver credit card and donor information to an online spreadsheet that can be imported into the campaign's donor database. Hiring a web designer and purchasing the software to make this possible can be costly; find a volunteer willing to provide the service, or do your research to ensure this tool will be a cost-effective use of your limited resources.

Another online option is raising money via email. The information you are collecting from every person who comes into contact with the campaign should include email addresses; keeping in touch with them via email is a wonderful way to keep them connected as well as to solicit volunteers, generate turnout raise money.

Email designed exclusively to raise money should not be overused, but can be an effective tool when used at appropriate times. Sending an email the day of the financial filing deadline to raise a specific dollar amount by midnight, for example, is a good use of instant communication because it creates a sense of urgency and is tied to a specific ask. All of your emails to supporters should provide a link to contribute online if you have the functionality on your website.



IV. MAKING THE ASK

You've set your goals, targeted your donors and identified the tools you'll use to raise money. Now comes the fun part: Asking for money.

The first thing you need is the right attitude. A common mistake of political candidates is the belief that fundraising amounts to asking for a handout. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fundraising provides friends and family an opportunity to support you, gives progressives a tangible way to promote the issues they believe in, and allows everyone an opportunity to participate in the politics of their community in a meaningful way. Approach asking for money with this in mind and you'll convey confidence, rather than appearing apologetic or hesitant.

When approaching any donor with a personal ask, follow these important guidelines:

- **Do your research.** Know the basics about the individual you're approaching, such as his/her giving history, issue interests and profession, as well as the name of his/her spouse or partner.
- **Make a personal connection.** Establish a friendly rapport that will facilitate not only your initial ask, but the basis of a continued relationship. If you have a friend in common, your children attend the same school, or you've both been publicly supportive of the local YWCA, make the connection. This will put you at ease, make the chat more conversational and help gain the donor's trust.
- **Make an ideological connection.** This donor is a member of a local union and has fought vocally for collective bargaining – and you're a tireless advocate of worker's rights committed to doing the same once elected. Highlight this shared value and make it clear why electing you – and defeating your opponent – will make a difference on this issue.
- **Communicate viability.** People like to back the winning horse, or at least one that has a shot at the roses. Give a snapshot of how and why you can win this race. Share your fundraising success, key endorsements and statistics that show your district is winnable.
- **Make the donor relevant.** By explaining what their support will mean to your campaign, such as putting a radio spot on the air or funding a mailing you are making support tangible for your prospective donor.
- **Make a specific ask and shhh!** Always have a specific contribution goal in mind before making contact. Ask for a specific dollar amount and then be quiet. Don't try to fill the silence or lower your asking price to fill the void.

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- **Have options available.** If you request \$500 and the donor balks, provide other options. You can ask them to become a *sustainer*, or give \$100 a month for the next 5 months. You can provide additional incentives for the full gift by offering free tickets to your next event. You can ask the donor to *raise* the \$500. Or you can simply lower the ask.
- **Say thank you and follow up!** Express your appreciation, & ensure that appropriate follow up (donation collection, mailing of a thank you note and updates to your database) are conducted. You'll be re-soliciting them before you know it!

V. ESTABLISHING SYSTEMS

Systematizing your fundraising operation is important to ensure a smooth-running operation in which nothing falls through the cracks. Fundraising systems should be simple, complete, well-organized and outlined on paper in a clear fashion. Following are the activities for which your campaign should establish a system:

- Candidate Call Time
- Events
- Receiving, Depositing, Recording and Acknowledging Checks

SYSTEM FOR CONTRIBUTION PROCESSING

Staff: Fundraiser ♦ Frequency: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

- ♦ Compile all checks and donor cards received
- ♦ Fax or email donor card to donors if one was not included
- ♦ Set checks *without* donor cards aside for next round of processing
- ♦ Make 2 sets of copies of each check and donor card
- ♦ File first set in book marked "Checks Received by Date"
- ♦ Using second set, update donor database with date, amount, and solicitation
- ♦ Merge database names showing today's date, thank-you note & envelope templates
- ♦ Print thank-you notes and envelopes on campaign stationery
- ♦ Check all letters for mistakes
- ♦ Give completed thank you letters to candidate for signature
- ♦ Make copies of signed thank you letters
- ♦ Attach copied letters to second set of check and donor card copies
- ♦ File 2nd set with thank you notes, in book marked "Checks Received by Individual"

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XV. BUDGET

How much will it cost to win your race? How will that money be spent? Your campaign and fundraising plans are not complete until your budget is done.

Your budget should be charted out month-by-month, and it should both flow from and inform your overall campaign plan. Like your fundraising plan, it should be a realistic assessment of the resources you can raise. When crafting a budget, adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Seek advice.** Review the financial reports of past candidates and talk with elected officials, local party leadership, consultants, or the Caucus to get advice on your budget. Learn what you should expect to pay for certain items, such as the cost per piece for direct mail, production of a 30-second radio spot, or paying staff.
- **Be realistic.** Don't craft a budget based on money you can't raise. Develop a low, medium and high budget to detail your essential expenditures and to allow for additional media, mailings and programs if funds are available.
- **Reflect the goals of your plan.** Review your plan and be sure to develop a budget that reflects your overall priorities. Create a list of all anticipated expenditures and categorize those expenses before beginning your budget. If your highest planning priority is persuasion mail, be sure it is the largest part of your budget as well.
- **Maximize direct voter contact and media.** No less than 70-75% of your budget should be spent on direct voter contact and paid media. This means keeping all other expenses, most notably overhead, to a minimum.
- **Detail your projected expenses month by month.** While the bulk of your resources will be spent in the final 2-3 months of the campaign, you need to establish discipline and get a handle on cash flow at the outset. Design the budget by projecting what money will be spent – and therefore need to be raised – when.
- **Don't sweat the small stuff.** A serious mistake made by many local and state campaigns is investing in tchotchkes – such as lawn signs, bumpers stickers, buttons, pins and magnets – as a primary outreach tool. Tchotchkes do not deliver votes and no more than 3-5% of your total budget should be spent on these items.



- **Outline projections for both expenses and income.** You should include both projected expenses *and* projected fundraising to ensure positive cash flow when mapping out your budget. Following are the general expense categories you should include:
 - **Voter Contact** – Direct mail; paid phone calls; palm cards, door hangers and campaign literature; paid canvassers; travel costs.
 - **Earned Media** – Events and press conferences; media kits.
 - **Paid Media** – Television, radio, newspaper and Internet advertising; ad production and design; media consultant fee/retainer.
 - **Technology** – Software; web design; Internet and email access fees.
 - **Visibility** – Yard signs; bumper stickers; buttons.
 - **Fundraising** – Fundraising mail; telemarketing costs; space rental, invitations, decorations and food and beverage at events.
 - **Research** – Polling and focus groups; Lexis-Nexis searches.
 - **Staff** – Paid staff salaries; volunteer night costs.
 - **Overhead** – Rent; office equipment; copy and fax costs; utilities.



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SAMPLE EXPENSE BUDGET – STATE HOUSE RACE

Voter Contact						48200
Direct Mail - Production			3000	7000	10000	20000
Direct Mail - Postage			2000	4000	6500	12500
Paid Phone Bank				2500	5000	7500
Paid Canvassers				1500	3000	4500
Door Hangers	250	250	500	750	1000	2750
Travel	100	100	250	250	250	950
Earned Media						1000
Media Kits	100	100	100	100	100	500
Press Events		250		250		500
Paid Media						43425
Radio - Production		0	800	1500	3500	5800
Radio - Buy			1500	10000	20000	31500
Ads - Daily Paper			500	1000	3000	4500
Ads - Specialty Papers			125	250	500	875
Ads - Community Paper				250	500	750
Technology						250
Internet/Email	50	50	50	50	50	250
Web Design/Maintenance	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	0
Research						450
Lexis-Nexis	250	50	50	50	50	450
Fundraising						7000
Direct Mail - Production	250	250	250	500	500	1750
Events	500	500	750	750	750	3250
House Parties	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	0
Postage	200	200	400	600	600	2000
Visibility/Materials						4000
Yard Signs/Banners	1000			1000		2000
Brochures	500			500		1000
Bumper Stickers	500			500		1000
Staff						11150
Manager	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	7500
Fundraiser			1000	1000	1000	3000
Organizers			In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	0
Volunteer Supplies	50	50	50	250	250	650
Overhead						8000
Rent	400	400	400	400	400	2000
Utilities	300	300	400	500	500	2000
Phones/Cell Phones	250	250	250	500	500	1750
Copy/Fax	100	100	250	250	250	950
Computers/Software	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	In-kind	0
Supplies	100	150	250	400	400	1300
Total	9075	10600	16800	34650	48175	123475

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