

## How will I fit in?

It's a myth that there are legions of people doing political work. In a congressional district of approximately a million people there are a few hundred reliable volunteers in for the long term in either of the two major parties.. Another 500 or so show up during campaigns and a few more join in during the last weeks before Election Day.

And, as it is in every volunteer organization, a very few people do the great bulk of the work.

Of course, as election day gets closer and closer, more and more volunteers will be asked to do voter contact. Voter contact is how we win elections and it simply must be done. Let's face facts though, not everyone is cut out for phone calling and door knocking. So where will you fit?

Well, what kind of person are you?

### **Your skill set**

On the theory that you'll be happiest doing what you do best, make a list of your skills. If you are an accountant, be a treasurer. Salespeople make great voter contact people. Writers can create press releases or flyers. Office workers can do any number of needed tasks around a campaign office. Some volunteers just cook nutritious chow for hungry volunteers and staffers who often live for months on potato chips and soda pop! Know what your skill set is and communicate it to leaders and staffers.

### **Your commitment**

You need to make a decision as to how much time you are willing and able to offer. Think carefully about it and consider pushing yourself a little out of your comfort zone. Be up front about your decision with others. If you are honest and you meet your commitments then, no matter how little you can spare, no one will fault you and the time you give *will* be appreciated. Of course, you might find, as you make friends and gain experience, that you'd like to do more.

### **Be proactive and creative.**

Since other volunteers also have jobs and family, they may not have a great deal of time to contact you or think about what *you* could be doing. If you gave someone your name and said you'd help out and have not been called, don't be steamed -call them and ask what you can do. If you have a brilliant idea and wonder why your organization is not doing it, it is likely because either no one thought of it (unlikely) or no one volunteered to take it on (almost certain!). This is when you say "I'd like to (fill in the blank)." Chances are that local leaders will be 1) overjoyed, 2) thankful and 3) relieved!

## There's a lot to do. Who will you be?

### Affiliate

I've chosen this word to describe someone who wants to help, but cannot commit a great deal of time or ongoing participation. An affiliate might take on a specific task from time to time. Often affiliates are neglected by parties and campaigns because, frankly, it is a lot of work to keep track of who will do what -especially when the volunteer coordinator (if there is one at all) is a volunteer themselves! Stay in contact and be proactive about asking how you can help. Affiliates might:

- stuff envelopes
- cook for hungry campaign staffers (almost always college students)
- pass on fliers or e-mails from issue opponents or opposition candidates to issue organizations or campaigns
- sign petitions -online or otherwise
- show up at a rally
- write a letter to a legislator or a newspaper
- design a flyer
- record or videotape an event

### Field Worker

These volunteers make political action a regular ongoing commitment.

- someone who will join a campaign or party organization as an ongoing volunteer
- door knock and phone call
- organize or help at events
- plant lawn signs

### Stay at Home/ Shut In

Affiliates and field workers who find it difficult to get to campaign offices or meetings can take on tasks that can be done from home.

- moderate an online discussion group
- maintain a web site or social media page or do graphic design or writing
- act as treasurer for a party organization or campaign
- Input data (and there's a lot!)

## Leader

Leaders are always needed, but are hard to find. This is usually because leadership requires a larger commitment.

- be an officer in a local party unit
- organize fundraisers and other events
- strategize long and short term
- lead a team

## If you are gregarious and outgoing

Chances are you stay on top of the issues and *love* to talk. You may be in a profession like sales that relies on persuasion. **You are most needed in voter contact**, especially during the persuasion phase. Door knocking puts you in touch with voters face to face where you can use your skills to help a voter over to our side. If you have strong phone skills you'll want to let the campaign volunteer coordinator know.

You'd also make a great leader, fundraiser or campaign staffer. Just sayin'.