



Progressive Majority Initial Opposition and Issue Research

Just as you should conduct a thorough examination of your own personal and professional background and the local political landscape, you or your staff should begin the process of extensively researching your opponent(s). Your research need not be entirely complete in the first stage of your campaign, but getting a grasp on his or her weaknesses, bad votes and controversial statements and issue positions early will help you shape your message and devise your strategy moving forward.

You should also have a clear understanding of what issues are likely to be raised in the campaign, identify quality resources and independent organizations that can help you and begin to develop succinct issue positions.

You should begin to develop a research book that lays out, in “Q and A” format, the pertinent issues in the race and your succinct answers. Questions to ask yourself as you begin are as follows:

- What are the issues over which you will have actual jurisdiction if elected?
- What, if any, is your particular expertise in dealing with these matters and what are your positions and proposed solutions?
- What other state or local issues are likely to come up in the race? Are there controversial issues facing the current city council or state legislature on which you will be expected to comment or take an official position?
- On what national issues can you expect to have an impact and what are your positions and talking points on those issues?
- Are there talking points or issue briefs available from local or national organizations and/or is there polling data available from the state party or your legislative caucus that can help shape your message?
- What are your opponent’s positions on the key issues?
- Where are your most significant contrasts with your opponent?
- How can you frame the issues in a way that maximizes your strengths while highlighting your opponent’s weaknesses?