



A FUTURE WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Progressive Majority Candidacy Self-Assessment

“The future will not belong to those who are cynical or those who stand on the sidelines. The future will belong to those who have passion and are willing to work hard to make our country better.”

—The Honorable Paul Wellstone

As you prepare to undertake a campaign, you should begin by conducting a complete self-assessment and carefully consider the following factors:

Why do you want to run?

Is there a local issue that has spurred you to action? Are you concerned about the direction of the country? Understanding your own motivations will help you decide if pursuing a political career is right for you and will also help define your candidacy and your message as your campaign gets underway.

What experience do you bring to the table?

Is it 10 years running a small business that qualifies you to lead, or your experience raising a family and making ends meet? What experience do you have that will translate to a career in public service? Are you seeking the office—be it school board, city council or the state legislature—that is both the most appropriate political opportunity and the most relevant to your abilities and ideological concerns? Being able to articulate your qualifications is the first step in developing a clear and compelling message and making your candidacy relevant to voters.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Do you love raising money, but fear campaigning door to door? Do you have a commitment to social justice, but lack a full understanding of the issues? Do you have a compelling message, but dread speaking in public? Examine and assess the positives and negatives of your candidacy and make decisions early that will help capitalize on your strengths and compensate for, or help you overcome, your weaknesses.

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Are you prepared?

A thoughtful evaluation of your personal circumstances should help you determine if the decision—and the timing—are right for you. Consider the following:

- Does your family support your decision to run?
- Are you willing to ask friends and family for help and money?
- Are you able to take time off from work?
- Are you on solid financial footing?
- Are you in good physical health?
- Do you have a realistic understanding of what it will take to win and are you willing to make the necessary commitment?

Do Your Research!

Once you've made the decision to run, you should begin by conducting a thorough review of your own background. The importance of revisiting all aspects of your school, employment, business, financial, personal and public life cannot be overstated. You and your closest advisors must have a grasp of the facts in order to capitalize on your strengths and experience and/or to be prepared should information concerning your history become an issue during the campaign. Questions you should ask include, but are not limited to, the following:

School

- Did you drop out of high school or college, or have you defaulted on any student loans?
- In what campus organizations were you involved?
- Did you publish any papers, blogs, emails, websites or deliver any speeches expressing bold or controversial opinions?
- Did you hold any leadership positions of note, or organize for positive change on campus?

Business/Employment

- Have you ever been fired, or do you have disgruntled business associates who could raise issues?
- Are there business deals you have been involved with that may raise questions?
- As an employer, did you pay all applicable employment taxes?
- As a business owner, did you operate a business free from discrimination, harassment and questionable business practices?
- As a business owner, did you provide exceptional opportunities for your employees, such as tuition assistance or child care?
- What are your greatest professional achievements and how can that experience translate to your role as a public servant?

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Financial

- Are you in default on any loans?
- Have you always paid your income taxes in full and on time?
- Do you have a good credit rating?
- Have you made all applicable child support and alimony payments?
- In what ways have you demonstrated solid financial judgment?
- To what civic, community or political organizations have you made financial contributions?

Personal

- Have you, your partner or your children ever been arrested?
- Have you gone to court over matters that are now a matter of public record?
- Are there personal, family or marital issues that could become fodder for the campaign?
- Have you done volunteer work in your community?
- What are your greatest personal attributes?

Public

- Have you made public statements that can be used for or against you?
- Are there newspaper articles about you or members of your family?
- Have you taken public stands on issues that may be considered bold or controversial?
- Have you voted consistently in recent elections?
- Do you have a voting record as an elected official, and if so, does it contain red flags or inconsistencies?
- To which organizations have you had official or unofficial ties and which will invest resources to ensure your election or defeat?
- What public figures do you know or have relationships with?

REMEMBER: Don't just focus on the negative, but don't ignore it either. While a textured personal history doesn't necessarily mean you shouldn't seek public office, it does mean you need to be fully prepared should issues about your background come to light. Often the best defense is a good offense—a strategy that is not possible if you and your advisors are not aware of the facts.

Begin Laying the Groundwork Today

- Outside of your family, who are the people you trust to give you sound political guidance?
- Who can help you raise money?

Form a committee of those individuals from whom you can seek trusted and sound advice, guidance and support and meet with them regularly as you begin your campaign.

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Begin Building Lists

Did you know that a high quality lists will be the backbone of your political campaign? You can't raise money, disseminate your message or turn out your vote without them—so start by gathering and compiling lists early.

Begin with your holiday card list and add everyone in your address book and in your life's history. Current and former bosses, employees, teachers, students, family, friends, friends of family, neighbors, co-workers and acquaintances should all be asked to contribute to or volunteer for your campaign.

Once you hire staff, list building should be a top priority!

Take Advantage of Candidate Training Opportunities

Take advantage of the campaign training offered to you by Progressive Majority, your state party and other political organizations in your state and nationally. Visit our website, www.progressivemajority.org, to attain a list of our trainings and our partner's political training opportunities.

Learn the basics early, as time will become scarce as your campaign heats up.

Plan, Plan, Plan

Now it's time for the important step of all: Writing your campaign plan. Your plan serves as your road map; you cannot win without one—and if it isn't in writing, it doesn't exist.

Attend a Progressive Majority training to learn more about the detailed elements of a plan. We can help set you on your way to devising your own winning strategy.