

CAMPAIGN OUTREACH ON DISABILITY ISSUES. ©

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- I. ISSUE ONE: ELEVATING DISABILITY ISSUES WITHIN CAMPAIGN MESSAGE.
 - A. Traditional First Tier Issues.
 - i) Economy
 - a) Jobs
 - b) Fiscal Policy
 - 1) Tax Policy
 - 2) Spending Levels
 - 3) Budget Deficits
 - ii) Defense
 - a) Military Strength and Preparedness
 - b) Active Conflicts
 - iii) Social Issues
 - a) Health care and Medicare
 - b) Social Security
 - c) Education (usually funding, school choice)
 - B. Fluctuating Second Tier Issues
 - i) Environment – often industry guidelines, some farm and forest management, automobile control/mass transit
 - a) Drinking water
 - b) Air quality
 - c) Safe disposal of waste and environmental contaminants
 - ii) Civil Rights
 - a) Gender (workplace and Choice)
 - b) Minorities (workplace and immigration)
 - c) Disability Rights (workplace rights, building access and spending on supports, services and enforcement)
 - d) Mechanisms for Safeguards (Civil Rights Act of 1968, ADA, IDEA, Section 504, other protections)
 - iii) Immigration – implications for
 - a) Economy
 - b) National security
 - c) Relations with Central and South America
 - iv) Education issues that do not get up to the first tier.
 - a) Pre-school and Post-secondary school education.
 - b) Student loans
 - c) Vocational education and rehabilitation
 - v) Judicial appointments.

- C. Traditional Third Tier Issues
- i) Disability rights as a collective issue set
 - ii) Veterans issues, including benefits
 - iii) Farm Policy
 - iv) State and federal infrastructure (roads, bridges, airports)
 - v) Medical research (Stem cells, NIH funding, etc.)
 - vi) Police and emergency support

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION TO CHANGE THE LOWER LEVEL STATUS OF DISABILITY ISSUES WITHIN CAMPAIGN MESSAGE:

- 1) MOVE PIECES OF DISABILITY RIGHTS ISSUES UP TO THE SECOND LEVEL BY VIRTUE OF THE RELEVANCE OF DISCRETE DISABILITY POLICY COMPONENTS:
 - A) ADA as part of economic policy.
 - B) IDEA as part of education policy
 - C) SSDI as important for Social Security policy – 1 out of 8 SSI recipients actually gets SSDI
 - D) Environmental causation of disease and disability.
- 2) MOVE THE ENTIRE ISSUE SET UP TO THE FIRST OR SECOND ISSUE TIER BY ATTACHING IT TO HEALTH CARE POLICY, CHILDREN'S ISSUES OR EMPHASIZING THE 54+ MILLION MEMBER SIZE OF THE COMMUNITY, THE FACT THAT IT WILL ONLY INCREASE FOR VARIOUS REASONS – ACCIDENT SURVIVAL, ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS, OTHERS.
- 3) MOVE THE ENTIRE ISSUE SET UP TO THE FIRST TIER BY PERMITTING THE CANDIDATE TO USE IT AS AN INSIGHT INTO HER OR HIS OPPONENT – IF THE OPPOSITION DOES NOT CARE ABOUT VETERANS, SENIORS OR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, DO YOU WANT THAT PERSON IN OFFICE?

IF YOU DO NOT ACCEPT THAT CHALLENGE, YOU LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EDUCATE THE CANDIDATE, THE MEDIA AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC REGARDING DISABILITIES DURING THE ELECTION CYCLE – THINK ABOUT REACHING AUDIENCES BROADER THAN JUST THE PERSON WITH THE DISABILITY – REACH THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, EMPLOYERS, TEACHERS, AND ALL PEOPLE WHO ARE IMPACTED BY POLICY SETS THAT ARE POTENTIALLY RELATED TO DISABILITY ISSUES.

II. THINK “INTEGRATION”; INTEGRATE DISABILITY POLICY INTO OTHER ISSUE SETS.

- A) Integrate disability issues into constituency events and campaign message with email messages and prepared text.
- B) Appeal to your candidate and campaign by creating message that does double duty:
 - i) An SSDI message that integrates with Social Security policy
 - ii) A health insurance message that explains why nonprofits insurers are important for persons with pre-existing conditions
 - iii) An education message that can help educators balance integration needs with workable disciplinary standards, in the context of large classrooms and student bodies that include more children with mobility or hearing limits, ADD, or varying positions on the autism spectrum.
 - iv) An environmental message that integrates disability rights into safe drinking water and air quality.

---MECHANISMS---

II. VOTER PARTICIPATION.

- A) Registration and full use of the Motor Voter Act – Services and Benefits offices and agencies must provide an opportunity to register to vote.
- B) Voter turnout.
 - i) Encourage polling place accessibility and Help America Vote Act (HAVA) compliance by state election commissioners and secretaries of state.
 - ii) Encourage voter education regarding:
 - a) early voting
 - b) vigilance about absentee ballot rights

III. MESSAGE COMMUNICATION.

A. Events.

- i) Partisan, single campaign events.
 - a) Select a venue that is on public access lines and **CLOSE TO WHERE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE – SUCH AS RIGHT NEXT TO AN INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER.** Be aware that venues will be limited for a partisan event because of:
 - 1) 501(c) (3) nonprofit status
 - 2) organizations reliant upon donors for main funding
 - ii) Debates against the other campaign.
 - 1) Choose a venue that is easily accessible, but be aware that 501(c) (3)s CAN sponsor these, because they are bi-partisan.

2) Do much of the work – suggest the format (make it simple, opening statements, one question, each speaker gets 1-2 minutes to respond, after an hour, closing); suggest a qualified, capable moderator with experience doing this (pick from media or academic circles, debate coaches are a good idea); and draft up the media advisory for the non-profit to use.

3) Have at least one statistic for every argument, and anticipate their responses with your preparation, use your time in answering subsequent questions, to also go back and clean up and reply to earlier, incorrect statements by your opponent.

4) Be polite, civil and professional.

iii) Media – HAVE A MEDIA ADVISORY EVERY TIME – AND THIS APPLIES TO SPEAKING EVENTS ALSO. It is short, and says what, when, where, who, how long – followup with phone calls to the nonprofit, and if necessary, to the media outlet members.

B. Written Message.

i) Bullet Point Platform for the Universe of Disability Issues – one stop shop for that message for the community to find everything.

ii) Post-able single-issue sub-messages where you expand on issues, or issue sets for the community – spinal cord injury concerns, the communities of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or the Blind and Vision-Impaired, as examples.

IV. TECHNOLOGY.

A. Access to a computer.

i) Make sure you are using a recent email program, whether Outlook or GroupWise.

ii) Build a listserv and with every email, ask that the recipient forward it.

iii) Do not blast email with attachments or graphics – it should be text only.

a) Screen readers need to access the text.

b) Spam filters may block the emails with attachments.

v) Instead, build a message that has live links that take the recipient back to the website – AND HAVE A MESSAGE THAT REQUESTS THAT THE RECIPIENT USE THE FORWARD BUTTON, NOT THE REPLY BUTTON, TO FORWARD THE MESSAGE, SINCE IT MAY DISABLE THE LINKS BY THEIR DOING SO.

OVERALL THEMES FOR SUCCESS.

- 1) Promote your party's message as a whole, and disability issues in particular.
- 2) Focus on process management, not outcomes. You cannot control the outcome of the election, but you can get the message out effectively, and thereby improve the standing and well-being of the community, and the willingness of future candidates to integrate disability message.
- 3) Take care of yourself – you must get 6 hours of sleep a night if at all possible – take a multivitamin. Eat. Talk to your family once in a while.
- 4) Lastly, know that the disability community and the Democratic Party is a family – you have to view us that way. It is the only way that you will connect to the campaign management and to the voters – **YOU ARE ON THE SAME SIDE.** And knowing and working that way is the only way to get message out and build trust and maximize the chances to win.

Good luck.

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