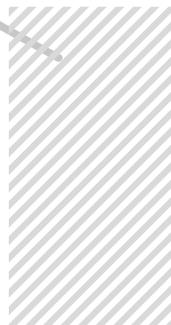


**BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA**



**How to be  
Politically Active**



Politics is how we work together. and only when we work together we can make the systems work for us. This workbook will help you work together.

## Section 1- Your Power



THE POWER YOU SEEK IS WITHIN YOU RIGHT NOW. BUT ONLY THOSE WHO SPEAK WILL BE HEARD. THIS WORKBOOK WILL HELP YOU FIND YOUR VOICE.

## Section 2- Civics for Change

IT IS IMPORTANT WHEN BEING POLITICALLY ACTIVE TO UNDERSTAND HOW GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS WORK IN ORDER TO EFFECT CHANGE.



**LISTENING AND TALKING WITH PEOPLE YOU KNOW IS YOUR SUPERPOWER.**



**YOUR MAGIC IS KEEPING TRACK OF WHO YOU'VE TALK WITH AND THEIR LEVEL OF SUPPORT. THEN EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THOSE ON YOUR LIST BY SHARING YOUR DATA WITH THE PARTY OR A CAMPAIGN.**



**BUILDING BRIDGES  
FOR  
AMERICA**



# Unlock Your Political Power



Picture your phone ringing.

The call is from a candidate reaching out knowing you can deliver votes. Once elected, you call them with an issue in your neighborhood, They see your number and they answer your call.

Picture a loved one in your life who lost faith and did not think politics matters.

Then you talked to them about politics in a way that made them listen. Their eyes lit up with understanding. Now they are volunteering with you on a campaign.

That is your political power. You build that power with your personal story and connections.



# Section 1 Goals

## IDENTIFY YOUR VALUES

Learn how to speak to others by connecting to shared values.

## DEVELOPING YOUR STORY

Speaking from personal experience to show that politics matters to you.

## ACTIVELY LISTENING

Pick up new habits to create space that allows for understanding.

## TALKING WITH YOUR NETWORK

Follow the step-by-step process to identify and build a plan to intentionally talk with people you know.



# Sharing Your Story

The best way to convey a progressive message is through personal connections. Using the common language of personal stories will effectively communicate your political feelings to people who are apathetic or who disagree with you. Feel empowered to speak from your heart and encourage others to do the same through active listening. This is the challenge of empathetic people to hold together the fabric of our families, neighborhoods, and the nation.

We share values, we share empathy for people we know, and we all understand personal stories. Our brains form morality, logic, and interpretation of facts differently. You cannot use these differences to make a connection. Focusing on differences will only drive you farther apart. To connect about why you care about an issue, speak to what is most important to you by sharing how politics walks into your home, your family, your wallet, or your body. Share how the issue affects you personally or affects the life of someone you love.



**DO NOT USE:  
FACTS  
LOGIC  
MORALITY**

**USE:  
YOUR VALUES  
YOUR STORY**

**BUILDING BRIDGES  
FOR  
AMERICA**



# Speaking Your Values and Feelings

Start by sharing how you feel. And state your core values that make you feel that way. People will listen when you first make this personal connection to an issue or policy.

## **ISSUE**

Climate crisis

## **POLICY**

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

## **VALUES**

Security

Justice

Compassion

## **Feelings**

Afraid

Frustrated

Hopeful

I feel so frustrated that my car hit standing water on the highway. It is terrifying, The storms are getting worse and the roads are getting worse. For me it is security, our roads should be safe. That is why I am relieved we got the funding to make our roads safer.

DO NOT  
START WITH:  
ISSUES  
POLICY

START WITH:  
YOUR VALUES  
YOUR FEELINGS

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## What are your core values?

What is important to you? Deep down in your core?  
That core that drives you is your values.

First, let's distinguish values from issues and policy. Policies enable us to bring those motivating values to life through actions and systems. For example, economic growth for all is an issue, raising the minimum wage is a policy, but what draws you to that issue are your commitments to values, such as justice, equality, freedom, compassion, or resilience.

Dig down and identify and name those values that drive you.

**My core values:**

EMPATHY  
SERVICE  
COMMUNITY  
FREEDOM  
PROSPERITY  
FAIRNESS  
TRUST  
SECURITY  
DEMOCRACY



## Recall a time that you felt one of your values

Describe moments in your life that drew you to care about a specific value. For example, identifying compassion as a core value because your neighbor helped your family when you were a child. Describe how, when, and where you saw and learned compassion. Then name how you act on it today.

**An experience that made me care:**



## Share how that value is reflected in a campaign or cause.

Example: "The historic investments the Biden Administration has made in creating sustainable jobs here in America is great news for my kids as they start their careers in manufacturing. I am so proud to support real progress and change that will give my kids a chance at the success my parent's generation enjoyed."

**How a campaign or policy helps me:**



## Why is it important to you that we act and get involved now?

e.g. We can't go back to falling behind on climate and jobs. We have chance to meet climate and economic goals with a vote to elect Democrats in 2024.

**My motivation to act now:**



**Step**

**5**

**Now bring it all your answers together into one 30 second story.**

**My Story:**



# IDENTIFYING YOUR NETWORK

**The people you encounter in your everyday life are your network. Do not overthink it, include everyone on your list.**



MAKING A LIST

IDENTIFYING YOUR  
NETWORK

NETWORK TRACKER



# Making Your List

USE THE PROMPTS BELOW TO HELP YOU  
START TO LIST YOUR NETWORK

THREE PEOPLE YOU  
KNOW WILL VOTE

Three empty rounded rectangular boxes for listing names.

THREE PEOPLE YOU  
KNOW WILL NOT VOTE  
OR ARE NOT REGISTERED

Three empty rounded rectangular boxes for listing names.

THREE PEOPLE  
EASIEST TO TALK TO

Three empty rounded rectangular boxes for listing names.

THREE PEOPLE YOU  
HAVE NEVER SPOKEN  
TO ABOUT POLITICS

Three empty rounded rectangular boxes for listing names.

THE PERSON YOU WISH WOULD SUPPORT YOUR ISSUE

A single wide, empty rectangular box for listing a name.



# Starting the Conversation

## **Last person you spoke to:**

Imagine you intentionally made plans to speak with them, and committed to telling them your story in conversation.

Now you are having the conversation. You hold yourself to your commitment and you are ready to tell them your story.



# Light openers



Talking politics does not mean political talk. It means sharing how you feel and understanding others. Start the conversation with either a light or timely question.

I signed up for this organizing class because I feel I need to do more than vote in 2026. How about you? How are you feeling about this election?

I was relieved that the library board rejected the book ban. What do you think about that?

Pick a question that feels right to you.

**Your opening question:**



# THE CONVERSATION



Stay open and listen. You may have to fight your instinct to push back or defend. No matter what they say, be curious and respond with “Tell me more about that.”

Then share your story. Speak about your values and your experience.

Continue to listen and stay open. Make a note of their response. Again, do not react and get defensive, listen and share.

Now change the subject. Talk about something you have in common.

Lastly, make a commitment with yourself to reach out to them again.



# THE BEST WAY TO CONNECT AND BE HEARD IS FIRST TO ACTIVELY LISTEN.

AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZER'S GREATEST SKILL IS TO LISTEN. TO BE HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD FIRST YOU NEED TO OPEN THE DOOR OF UNDERSTANDING. PRACTICE THESE BASIC HABITS AND SKILLS TO SHOW YOU ARE LISTENING AND WATCH AS THE CONVERSATIONS YOU HAVE GROW DEEPER.

## AVOID DISTRACTION

Set your intention to listening.  
No daydreaming or multi-tasking.  
Remove things that might keep you from paying attention.

## REFLECT, PARAPHRASE OR CLARIFY

Repeat back what you have heard  
“It sounds to me like you are saying...”

## PAY ATTENTION

Do not use this time to prepare for a rebuttal. Ignore the divides and listen for the connections.

## DO NOT INTERRUPT

Allow the other person to finish what they are saying.

## USE DOOR OPENERS

Keep them engaged and talking  
“Tell me more”  
“That’s interesting”

## DO NOT ARGUE

“I can tell you are very upset/frustrated”  
“I know that it has been hard for you to change gears”



**REFLECT  
AMBIVALENCE**

“So, on the one hand you want \_\_\_ and on the other you don’t think you can \_\_\_\_\_”

**LOOK FOR  
COMMON  
GROUND**

“Where do you think we could find common ground?”  
“We agree on this, what else do we agree on?”

**EXPRESS  
YOUR  
ATTENTION**

Words and phrases like “Oh”, “I see”, “uh huh” and “hmm” show that you are listening.

**CREATE  
DISSONANCE**

“Tell me (describe to me) what your feeling are on \_\_\_\_\_”  
“Can you tell me what is keeping you from supporting \_\_\_?”

**SHOW  
EMPATHY  
FOR THEIR  
FEELINGS**

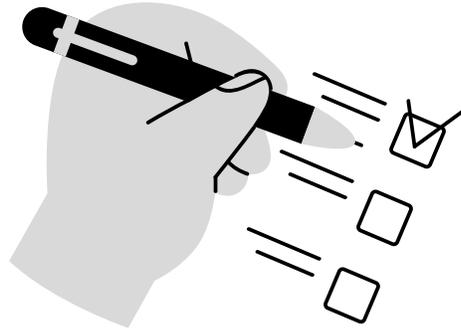
“I am hearing you say that you are frustrated because \_\_\_\_\_”

**WRAP UP**

“Thank you for talking with me.”  
“I appreciate your opinion and understand your concerns.”



# KEEP TRACK



After the conversation, make a note of the person's level of support. Are they all in? Are they still not sure how they feel? Do they support the opposition? All this data is very valuable.

Campaigns spend a lot of time and money to talk with voters and determine their level of support. Your list of people and their level of support is very valuable to a campaign.

Use your power by offering the campaign your list. For smaller campaigns it may be as simple as sharing a paper list of names of supporters. For bigger campaigns, they may have tracking tools like Reach or Rally for you to enter your list.

Your conversations and that list is the greatest way you can help a campaign. And it will empower you and the people on your list noticed and listened to by candidates, the party, and elected officials.





# Section 2 Goals

## OVERVIEW OF THE BASICS

We will focus on the structure of government and who are the policy makers. We will then work on your primary resource "A Governmental Cheat Sheet".

## IDENTIFY SPECIFIC ISSUES

You will identify 1-2-3 issues, campaigns, and causes, that motivate your organization to action.

## HOW TO EFFECT CHANGE/ACTION

You will select and plan whom you should contact and what you should say.



# THE GOVERNMENT



## Separate & Equal Branches

**Legislative**  
Makes  
the laws

**Congress=**  
**House & Senate**

**Executive &  
Administrative**  
Interprets and  
carrys out the laws

**President &  
Agencies**

**Judicial**  
Resolves disputes  
about the meaning  
and administration  
of laws

**Courts**





## IDENTIFY

Identify the person, elected or appointed body, or agency who is responsible for the law affecting your members.

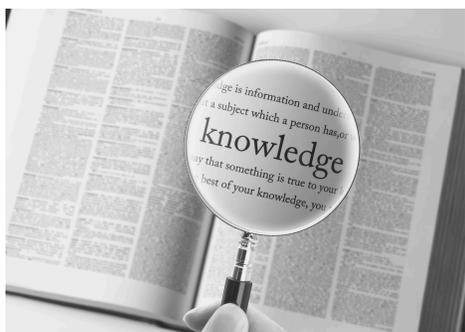
## ADMINISTRATION

After the law is passed, focus on executive and administration agencies that administer the law(s).

## JURISDICTION

Legislative, executive and judicial actions are effective within specific jurisdiction. People in those jurisdictions will be the most responsive to your message/request.





## TAKEAWAYS

Before you begin your advocacy around an issue, make sure you have the correct information.

- Is the issue addressed by legislation or the administration of a law or policy by the executive or administrative agencies that implement it?
- Who are the agencies or people with jurisdiction over that issue?
- How do your members figure out who is THEIR representative?

Before you support or oppose a candidate.

- What office are they running for?
- What branch is the office in? Legislative, executive, or judicial?
- What is the jurisdiction (area) covered?

## Sidebar: Jurisdiction



# Your Jurisdiction

## Step

1

Preparing your cheat sheet.

This sheet will help you identify the specifics about your area (jurisdiction) and will vary depending on the issue(s) you are addressing. Get started by filling in what you know and fill in the blanks later.

State .....

County .....

City, Town, Village or  
Unincorporated area .....

School District .....

Special Service  
District  
(i.e. sewer) .....



# Your Policymakers

## Step

2

You can search online and find this information.

U.S. Senator (1)

name, party, contact info.

U.S. Senator (2)

name, party, contact info.

U.S. Representative

name, party, district, contact info.

Governor

name, party, contact info.

State Senator

name, party, district, contact info.

State Representative

name, party, district, contact info.

Mayor

contact information

County  
Commissioners

contact information

City/Town Council

contact information

School Board  
Member

contact information

## Issue Identification

Now is the time to identify the issues or campaigns that are motivating you to take action. This list will change, but it is a good exercise to plan your advocacy.

### Write down two important issues in each category

Issues that affect you/your members in an immediate and practical way (examples: "The roads in my area are all broken and are causing damage to my car." "I want my son to get his COVID shot, but it is not available.")

1.

2.

Issues that affects the community in which your organization operates (examples: "I think school vouchers harm public schools" "I am concerned about homelessness in my area." "I am concerned about voting rights in federal elections.")

1.

2.

### Are there organizations working on these issues?

**What are some terms to use consistently and positively to describe your issue? Avoid repeating opponents' wording.**



This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

We encourage you to use your own words, make it personal and keep the message simple. See the following pages for sample issue

### Who is in charge?

- 
- 

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- 
- 
- 

### My Message?

### Where to "deliver" my message (phone call, letter, postcard, email, in-person, op-ed)

- 
- 
- 

Walking your members through this step-by-step approach will help them confidently reach out about an issue or law.

# Example

## Issue #1 Bad Roads

This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

### Who is in charge? Mayor & City Council

- Mayor John Doe
- My City Council Member

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Good roads help our community grow.
- I need good roads to get to work, school, and access to healthcare.
- Policy makers should address bad roads to help the community.

### My Message?

I live at XXXX, I am one of your constituents,  
The roads in my area, specifically XXXX street are in need of repair,  
I am a hard worker trying to provide for my family. I rely on good roads to get to work so I can support my family. Bad roads have caused damage to my car and traffic makes me late to work. I really need my job and do not have extra money for repairs,  
I ask that you take the steps necessary to get this problem fixed,  
Thank you

### Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/postcard
- Attend a public hearing, if public testimony is permitted
- Write an op-ed (mention the officials by name)



# Example

## Issue #2 School Vouchers

This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

### Who is in charge? Governor & Legislature

- Governor, Mary Smith
- Superintendent of Public Instruction
- My State Representative
- My State Senator

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Consider reviewing information from advocacy groups that support your point of view, start with positive messages.

### My Message?

- I am a longtime resident of XXXX (state). My address is XXXX, I am one of your constituents.
- I value public education because it helps people get ahead, I needed public education to go to college and get a good job. Our society relies on an educated workforce. I have X children and grandchildren and I want to make sure they have a good public education.
- I am concerned that school vouchers make it harder for our public schools to hire good teachers. I ask you to oppose legislation that would increase the use of vouchers. Thank you.

### Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/postcard, and/or write an op-ed (mention the officials by name)
- Attend a public hearing, if public testimony is permitted



# Example

## Issue #3 Voting Rights

### Who is in charge?

#### Federal Voting Rights = Federal Legislation

- My 2 U.S. Senators
- My Congressperson (Representative)

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Look at advocacy groups (i.e., Common Cause, League of Women Voters, Fair Fight, Let Them Vote) for talking points. Look for consistency and positive messages.

### My Message?

- U.S. Senators
  - I am a long term resident in our state. I have voted in every election since I was allowed to. Voting rights are the foundation of our democracy.
  - I believe in fairness and that means that everyone should vote, therefore polls should be open for longer hours and more days so more people can vote without taking off work.
  - I urge you to support the For the People Act to protect voting rights.
- Congressman (Representative) - YOUR representative
  - (if support) Thank you for supporting the For the People Act, I hope you will continue to work for voting rights.
  - (if no support) I am sorry you voted to oppose the For the People Act. I believe in fairness. The Act will protect fair elections. Please reconsider your opposition.

### Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/ postcard, and/or write an op-ed (mention officials by name)
- Attend a town hall, speak if public testimony is permitted



**Remember this**

**THE SECRET OF CHANGE  
IS TO FOCUS ALL YOUR  
ENERGY NOT ON  
FIGHTING THE OLD BUT  
ON BUILDING THE NEW.**

**- DAN MILLMAN**

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