

Utah Canvassing Project

Purpose

Canvassing is a grassroots campaign's single most effective political tool for both (1) converting undecideds into supporters and (2) transforming supporters into voters. And, of course, turning supporters out to vote is absolutely crucial to a candidate's electoral success—after all, it doesn't matter how many supporters a candidate may obtain unless these supporters both remember and bother to vote during elections.

Materials

- ✓ clipboards and pens/pencils
- ✓ sets of canvassing forms for each precinct that list homes of likely voters
- ✓ campaign literature and, possibly, personalized messages to neighbors
- ✓ campaign materials such as DVDs, bumper stickers, and yard signs
- ✓ official Utah voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications
- ✓ reminder cards bearing both Meetup group info and voting dates info

Canvassing leaders may purchase sets of public data in electronic form, specifically about county residents who voted in past primary elections, from their respective county clerk's office. These sets of data should include each voter's full name, mailing address, registered political affiliation, and precinct. Data from only a single recent year may be purchased so as to minimize costs; data from multiple recent years may be purchased so as to maximize effectiveness by analyzing this data in order to identify "supervoters"—residents who vote fairly regularly over time—to target. Once finalized, this list of likely voters to canvass may be sorted and divvied up by precinct and then transferred by hand onto sets of individual canvassing forms.

Utah's Meetup groups have Files sections from which canvassing forms may be downloaded and/or printed and copied, along with a variety of campaign literature and official Utah forms. Some canvassers may wish to compose and then mass-produce a personalized message to give to their neighbors. Some Utahns, such as John Bauman of Pleasant Grove, have been producing free DVDs and CD-ROMs that canvassers may distribute. Canvassers may purchase Ron Paul bumper stickers via the Internet, either from Ron Paul's official campaign website or from other sites like CafePress. Ron Paul's campaign staff has sent both palmcards and yard signs to key people throughout Utah that may be distributed to supporters. Dave Garber of Provo has been producing Meetup business cards for Utah County via VistaPrint.

Procedure

This project should ideally be completed by November's end at the very latest, since December tends to be terribly hectic for everyone, January tends to be frigid and snowy, and February will be far too late.

Canvassers should usually plan to operate not alone but in pairs, since this tends to ease possible feelings of intimidation and/or boredom. Plus, when people schedule a definite time to canvass with another person, they are generally less likely to postpone doing so.

Canvassing teams should usually start with their own respective precincts and then expand their efforts to neighboring precincts. Before canvassing a given precinct, canvassers should complete their canvassing forms for that precinct as fully as possible, listing addresses and full names and last-known registered partisan affiliations for each person that they will visit, preferably in some

sort of geographical order. First-time canvassers may also want to spend some time preparing themselves mentally by canvassing in their imaginations before canvassing in reality.

Canvassers should dress respectably and try to be polite and friendly and respectful at all times, since some people may judge Ron Paul according to their perceptions of his supporters.

Canvassers who receive no response at a given home on their form should plan to keep returning to that home until they do. Likewise, canvassers who are asked to return at another time should plan to do so. Their forms' Comments columns may be useful for noting callback info.

Canvassers should, with each person, begin by introducing themselves, possibly state that they are going door-to-door in support of Ron Paul's Presidential campaign, perhaps engage in some "small talk" as appropriate, and work to build a relationship of trust. They should also ask each person questions such as (1) which candidate they plan to support in 2008's primary elections, (2) if they know about Ron Paul (perhaps while holding out a piece of campaign literature for them to take), and/or (3) if they would consider voting for Ron Paul, all in order to accomplish their first goal. This goal is to determine which of these three categories each person best fits: (A) an "opponent" who has already decided to vote for someone other than Ron Paul and is not presently open to persuasion; (B) an "undecided" who might be persuaded to vote for Ron Paul; or (C) a "supporter" who may be turned out to vote. Once canvassers have determined which sort of person they're speaking with, they can proceed accordingly, as described below.

Opponents are generally best left in peace. Canvassers should thank opponents politely for their time, cross out these opponents' rows on their canvassing forms, and then continue to some other home where they can probably spend their time more effectively.

Undecideds are generally most common. Canvassers should immediately begin to use firm but gentle persuasion to try to convert these undecideds into supporters. Canvassers may wish to ask these undecideds what issues are important to them, note these issues on their canvassing forms as Comments about these undecideds, and then either give these undecideds relevant campaign literature or else arrange to return with it some other time. Canvassers should plan to follow up at least somewhat regularly with these undecideds until they eventually become either opponents or (hopefully) supporters, in which case canvassers should deal with them as described elsewhere on this page.

Supporters are what canvassing is intended to either find or create. Canvassers should complete each of these six steps with supporters: (1) offer them bumper stickers and/or perhaps some other campaign material; (2) ask them if they'd like yard signs and then note what size to bring them (specifically, none if they don't want signs, small for most yards, medium for yards alongside major roads, and large for yards at major intersections); (3) if they are not presently registered as Republicans in Utah, then ask them to re-register as Republicans, give them voter registration forms to complete, and then collect these forms; (4) ask them to apply to vote via absentee ballot (so that they can vote early, leave a paper trail, and focus on campaigning rather than voting on February 5th), give them absentee ballot applications to complete, and then collect these forms; (5) give them cards (or something else tangible) that both invite them to join their local Meetup group and remind them of important dates to vote in 2008 (namely, February 5th and March 25th and November 4th); (6) ask them if you may contact them via telephone to remind them to vote, obtain their telephone numbers, and then record these numbers.

Canvassers should, on a regular basis, (1) report their progress to canvassing leaders, (2) follow up with undecideds, (3) arrange to get yard signs to those supporters who want them, (4) submit any voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications collected from supporters to their county clerk's office, and (5) provide supporters' names and contact information to canvassing leaders so that they may create a calling list to mobilize supporters to vote in elections.