



# Building Our Power



TEXAS  
FREEDOM  
NETWORK  
EDUCATION  
♦ FUND ♦

**Wellstone**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Kathy Miller, TFNEF President  
Nick Savelli, TFNEF, Project Manager  
Emily Caponetti, Wellstone Action, Writer

## To whom are joining the fight:

As you know, Texas has seen a strong shift toward an out-of-touch, radical-right political agenda. This agenda has included attacks on religious freedom, reproductive rights, LGBTQ equality, public education and many other issues that directly impact our communities.

The Texas Freedom Network Education Fund has a vision for what a progressive Texas can look like, but that vision can't become a reality without committed activists like you working tirelessly to turn this vision into the real Texas. Young people make up almost a quarter of the Texas electorate. If this progressive base is mobilized, we can win.

This manual was created to provide you with the tools needed to stop these attacks and promote policies that benefit all Texans. I began my career in advocacy as a student activist and organizer and I firmly believe that you have the power to build a grassroots movement of young leaders that can change Texas politics for a long time to come.

With all my best wishes,



**Kathy Miller**  
President, Texas Freedom Network

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHO WE ARE

Since 1995 the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund has educated, organized and mobilized more than 85,000 Texans to fight back against the radical right in our home state. A collaboration of concerned community members, faith leaders, people of color, and youth, we are activists on a mission to advance a mainstream agenda of religious freedom and individual liberties. We identify and empower emerging grassroots leaders like you to raise awareness about extremist attacks on our rights and promote effective and inclusive laws that counter the far right's agenda. This guide will provide you with the honed knowledge and tested skills to join our efforts and enlist others in protecting Texas from the radical right. We are proud to work alongside you on behalf of the issues that are critical to our futures and our freedoms.

## WHAT WE DO

The Texas Freedom Network Education Fund focuses on training and research, working hand in hand with young leaders to provide them with the skills and resources needed to educate, engage and organize local activists. We do this by offering trainings, financial support, on-the-ground assistance, coaching and mentoring. This grassroots approach allows Texans to be empowered with the knowledge and tools to fight back against the radical right's agenda and positively affect change in their communities and throughout our state.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

*The Texas Freedom Network's mission stands on three pillars:*

**PROTECTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM** We recognize that the right to practice your faith free from government interference is a critical freedom in our diverse society. The Texas Freedom Network Education Fund works to uphold the First Amendment to our country's Constitution by protecting religious freedom and barring government from limiting its free exercise or promoting any particular religion over others. Mandating school-sponsored prayer, introducing sectarian Bible courses in public schools, providing government funding for faith-based services and publicly funding vouchers for religious schools all undermine the separation of church and state. We shine a spotlight on the radical right's attempts to weaken religious freedom and instead mobilize Texans to protect our First Amendment rights.

In a series of original research reports since 2005, for example, TFNEF has exposed error-plagued and biased curriculum materials used to promote sectarian views in public school Bible courses. Our lobbying efforts and the work of grassroots activists helped ensure the Texas Legislature enacted the state's first-ever safeguards designed to prevent such courses from turning public school classrooms into Sunday school classrooms.

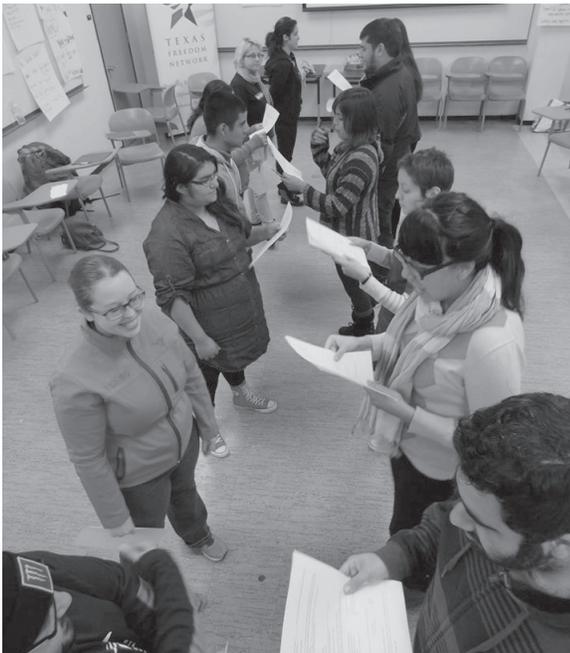
**DEFENDING INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES** Discrimination and violence against individuals and their families and efforts to impose one person's religious and moral beliefs on others threaten liberty for all. TFNEF protects individual liberties by educating Texans about the importance of access to safe abortion care, affordable birth control, responsible sex education, efforts to stop bullying of LGBTQ and other students, effective hate crimes legislation and other measures that defend the dignity and equality of LGBTQ families.

In fact, TFNEF has joined with coalition partners and activists in San Antonio and Houston to help pass local ordinances prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identify as well as race, sex, religion and disability. And in 2013 we helped restore some of the deep funding cuts state lawmakers made to family planning programs for low-income women two years earlier.

**STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SCHOOLS** Public education is the foundation for a free and democratic society. Yet this pillar of American life is under assault by right-wing efforts to divert government funding from public to private schools through vouchers and other privatization schemes. The radical right also wants to censor what students learn about sex education in health classes, evolution and climate change in their science classrooms, and slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, the struggle for women's equality and church-state separation in social studies classes. Extremists on the right have mocked and even dismissed recommendations from teachers, scholars and other experts about what students should be learning in public schools. We expose their radical agenda at the Texas State Board of Education and promote policies that will

prepare students to succeed in college and the jobs of the 21st century.

Indeed, one of TFNEF's biggest victories has been in defense of teaching evolution in high school biology textbooks in 2013. We organized thousands of grassroots activists to sign petitions, speak out at public hearings and rally at the State Board of Education. The pressure of this intensive grassroots action and the accompanying media firestorm helped ensure the science education of a generation of Texas students won't be undermined by creationist junk science in textbooks. In addition, TFNEF has exposed the shocking misinformation, sexism and homophobia that are common in abstinence-only programs that dominate public school



sex education classes in Texas — a state with one of the highest teen birth rates in the nation.

## WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST

The far right's efforts to discriminate, misinform and marginalize Texans have amplified in intensity and severity over the past several decades. Moreover, the leaders and pressure groups behind this movement are well-funded.

In the 1980s religious extremists launched their first efforts to commandeer and transform the Republican Party into a vehicle for their radical agenda nationwide. By the mid-1990s they had gained effective control of the Republican Party of Texas. The platform of the Texas GOP has offered ample proof of this takeover. Over the years the platform has called the separation of church and state “a myth” and declared the United States a Christian nation. It has portrayed same-sex couples as criminals and rejects responsible sex education, insisting instead on abstinence-only programs that are littered with medically inaccurate, sexist and homophobic misinformation often funded at taxpayers' expense.

The State Board of Education — which sets curriculum standards and adopts textbooks for public schools — was one of the first parts of Texas government the far right targeted for control. But that movement, joined in recent years by Tea Party extremists, has also pushed its radical agenda at the state Capitol on issues such as undermining public schools, using government to promote the religious beliefs of some over all others, opposing equality for LGBTQ Texans and attacking women's reproductive health — even openly declaring “war on birth control.”

Public policy in Texas has clearly been hijacked by the radical right. Ready to change that? So are we. Let's get to work.

## WE NEED YOU TO FIGHT BACK: TEXAS RISING

You're not alone in feeling misrepresented by our state's elected officials:

- A 2010 poll found that 68% of likely voters in Texas think separation of church and state is a key principle of the United States Constitution. (TFNEF poll of likely voters in Texas, May 2010)
- A 2013 poll found that 84% of registered voters in Texas support teaching young people about condoms and other forms of contraception along with the benefits of abstinence. The same poll found that 68% say women having access to family planning and birth control is important. (TFNEF poll, February 2013)
- 72% of Texans say they want teachers and academic



scholars, NOT an elected state school board, to determine curriculum standards and textbook requirements for Texas public schools. (TFNEF poll of likely voters in Texas, May 2010)

- Other polling has also shown strong opposition in Texas to private school vouchers, which drain money from public schools to subsidize tuition at private and religious schools.

So for most Texans, our issues — protecting religious freedom, defending individual liberties and strengthening public schools — are common sense.

There's a key word in the phrase "likely voters," by the way — "likely." While it's encouraging that polling shows our values are mainstream and shared by many Texans, the people who show up to vote are the ones who have the strongest influence on public policy decisions. And here's where our state struggles: Texas ranks dead last in the country for civic engagement. When it comes to registering to vote, educating friends about issues, and actually casting ballots, Texas is the least civically engaged state in the country. All of a sudden, the fact that Texas laws often don't reflect the values of Texans begins to make sense.

**But there's a solution. And you're part of it.**

While it's true that Texas is the least civically engaged state in our country, our state's population is among the youngest. In fact, young people make up nearly a quarter of all eligible voters in Texas. And, while they are young Texans, they still share critical Texas values.

Opportunity is knocking. With your help, TFNEF can turn back the tide and engage young people, registering and turning them out to vote. Together, we can create a Texas with public policies that offer all members of our community the respect we deserve and the protections we need.

Texas Rising is a TFNEF campaign to uplift the voices of the rising electorate, ages 18-29, to help in this transformation of our state. By engaging in progressive issue advocacy and civic engagement, young people can mobilize a new generation of informed and motivated voters eager to participate in the democratic process by making their voices heard and holding their representatives accountable. Collectively, we can achieve change.

This guide is a resource that will empower you as a force multiplier and an agent of change. From voter education and getting out the vote to grassroots organizing and lobbying elected officials, TFNEF will help you along this road to victory.

**Texas *is* rising. Stand with us.**

# BUILDING YOUR POWER: ORGANIZING 101

To fight back against the radical right we have to recognize, utilize and integrate three critical components: community organizing, electoral politics and public policy. This is how we build our power. Wellstone Action, an organization committed to working with groups nationwide to achieve progressive change, calls this approach the Wellstone Triangle:

All three of these components are necessary for building power in our communities. What's more, they are connected because each section impacts the others. Since this approach is so critical to achieving change, this guide addresses all three components in depth. To get you started, let's review each area to establish what they mean and their impact.



## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Organizing means building and growing meaningful relationships with people in our communities based on shared values and common concerns. By developing these local relationships, you build a constituency that is organized and able to demand change by electing new leaders and holding them accountable.

## ELECTORAL POLITICS

Politics is about determining who makes decisions and holding them responsible for their actions or, at times, their inaction. Electoral politics is a key way to compete for power in a democracy. But often people involved in politics focus so much on winning elections they work only with communities and individuals if it gets them closer to victory. This attitude results in elected officials and political parties without a base of community organizations to ground them with local support. It also creates emerging leaders who may abandon established leaders and parties because they have been ignored or taken for granted. In other words: it's everyone for themselves. Electoral politics by nature is short-term and not sustainable for long-term community growth

without effective community organizing and progressive public policies.

## PROGRESSIVE PUBLIC POLICY

Policy is our vision. It is a clear agenda for a better world. Policy is why communities organize around issues they care about and candidates run for public office: they all want power to achieve their vision.

Ultimately, it's all connected: public policy without community organizing and electoral politics is a set of ideas, isolated from any ability to be enacted. Community organizing absent policy is directionless, and organizing without electoral politics cedes one of the most important arenas of power to other leaders. Electoral politics without a clear agenda for the future quickly becomes a cynical competition that's focused only on winning, and politics without community organizing lacks accountability and focus.

At the epicenter of these three components is leadership. That's you. By educating, organizing and mobilizing other young people in Texas, you are becoming a leader in your community. And TFNEF has all the tools, tips and tricks to guide you along the way.

# THE ORGANIZER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

STRATEGIC  
PLANNING  
STRATEGIC  
PLANNING  
STRATEGIC  
PLANNING

1 SETTING  
YOUR GOAL

2 POWER  
MAPPING

3 DEVELOPING  
YOUR STRATEGY

4 CHOOSING  
YOUR TACTICS

The radical right's attacks on Texans' religious freedoms, individual liberties and public schools certainly provide more than enough fodder for outrage. Unfortunately, righteous indignation alone has never achieved a progressive victory. Rather, disciplined strategies supported by diverse tactics are necessary for raising awareness, rallying others and creating change. Whether organizing your campus, working on an election, or creating a policy agenda, having these tools in your proverbial arsenal will position you — and the communities you represent — for sustainable success.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Although the importance of planning may seem obvious, it is often overlooked because organizations are caught up in the passion of their cause and certain of their convictions. However, having a written plan is essential because it provides focus and context so we know what we're doing and why we're doing it. Planning allows us to use our resources efficiently and also establishes benchmarks that hold us accountable and enable us to strategically redirect midstream if we encounter bumps in the road. Ultimately, planning democratizes knowledge — meaning that everyone involved in the effort knows the players, the strategy and the timeline, and we are drawing on the team's collective knowledge and expertise.

And while we at TFNEF strive not to hit anyone over the head with a particular point, this one is worth reiterating — a plan is not a plan unless it is written down.

In addition to being written down (and saved to USB drives, and cloud-like systems like Dropbox or Google Docs, and perhaps tattooed on particularly committed individuals' arms) a strategic plan determines who will do what with whom by when and for how much. This play on the 5 W's "who, what, when, where, and why" we all learned in grade school translates into determining who will be responsible for managing and executing the most effective activities and actions to demonstrate and leverage our power to key decision makers and outreach targets in a timely fashion and within budget. That's a mouthful, right? Luckily for you, our friends at Wellstone Action have broken down strategic planning into four steps: Vision, Assessment, Strategy, and Tactics.

## THE PROGRESSIVE'S EXISTENTIAL CRISIS: AKA — IDENTIFYING OUR VISION

Establishing our vision means determining our goal. Our goal is what we want to achieve through our strategic plan. More often than not, the problems we face are intertwined and complicated. Without a process to identify root causes and achievable solutions, it's all too easy to bite off more than we can chew and find ourselves overwhelmed, out-resourced and in over our heads. This is how we lose. To avoid this, we need to follow a process that zeroes in on the specific problem and points to a goal that is strategic, measurable, powerful and achievable.

To assess the problem we need to write a “problem statement.” This statement defines the problem in a way that clarifies its causes. For example, a problem statement could be: “State Board of Education members have abused their authority to approve curriculum standards and textbooks so that they can use public schools to promote extremist political agendas, not facts and sound scholarship in Texas classrooms.”

After the problem statement has been determined, it's time to brainstorm potential solutions. When brainstorming, it's important to be inclusive of everyone's ideas while remaining focused on your problem statement. We admit it's a fine line to walk, but Wellstone Action and Midwest Academy have created a Goal Criteria tool to help evaluate possible solutions and ultimately identify the goal that best addresses the problem statement.

To use this tool, list all the potential solutions you have brainstormed in the first column. Then apply that solution to the other columns to see if the proposed solution not only addresses the problem statement, but also is aligned with the goals and values of your group.

When evaluating if a possible solution improves people's lives, consider whether this course of action will actually help anyone in concrete ways. Weighing if a possible solution is specific and measurable is helpful

POSSIBLE SOLUTION					
Improves people's lives					
Specific & measurable					
Winnable (on what timeline)					
Alters power relationships					
Builds our organization (allies, \$)					
Excites us					

in ensuring the solution is actually achievable. Asking if the possible solution is winnable forces us to think about whether the “powers that be” would allow this solution to see the light of day. Considering whether the possible solution alters power relationships so people with less power gain access to more power is particularly relevant to achieving social change. Asking if a possible solution builds your organization's strength through allies, membership, or funding is critical to determining if a solution increases your group's long-term power. Finally, gauging if a possible solution excites your group is indicative of whether you'll be able to generate, sustain and grow your organization's interest and commitment to the campaign.

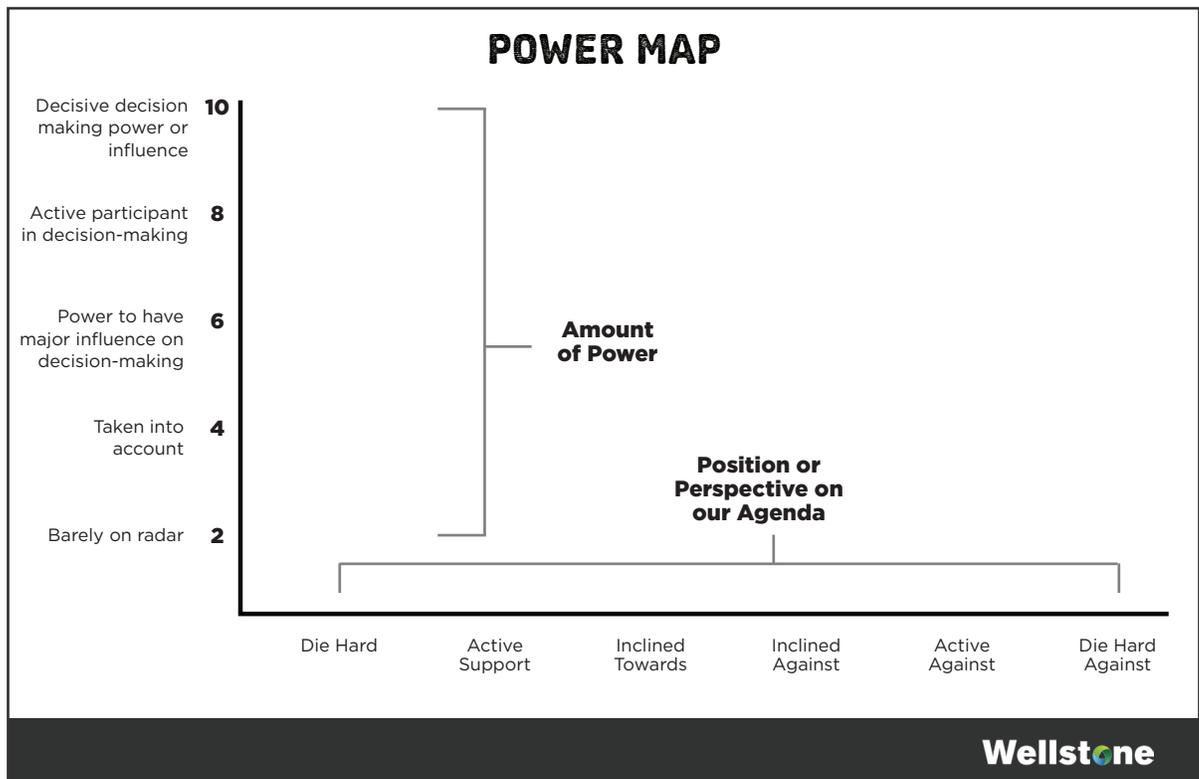
The Goal Criteria listed here isn't definitive. In fact, it's important for your group to include additional criteria that speak directly to your values, circumstances and needs. However, the criteria recommended here establish a strong foundation on which you can weigh possible solutions. After plugging in the possible solutions and checking off which solutions match what criteria, you'll be able to identify the specific solution that best addresses your tailored problem statement. In other words: congratulations are in order. You now have your goal.

### ASSESSMENT: GETTING THE LAY OF THE LAND

Now that you've identified your problem statement and goal, it's time to assess the environment you're operating within. While there are a number of tools that can be used to determine who holds power and how to get it, “power mapping” is particularly powerful (pun intended). “Power mapping” is a visual representation of where power relationships currently stand around the issues your group cares about. It also illustrates how we can rearrange power dynamics to win.

#### A power map contains key players:

- *Decision makers:* the people who actually make the decisions needed to resolve the problem. These are the people with the power to give your group what it wants. Depending upon your problem statement and goal, this group may include the leadership and governing board at your university, city council members, local voters, or members of Congress. Decision makers are primary targets in our power map because of their ability to directly enact change to solve the problem you've identified.
- *Organized allies:* organized groups who support your agenda. Organized allies are considered secondary targets in our power map because they influence decision makers.
- *Organized opposition groups:* organized groups who oppose your agenda. Similar to organized allies, organized opposition are also secondary targets because of their ability to exert influence on decision makers rather than make the decisions themselves.



While secondary targets are traditionally organizations looking to advance their agenda, individuals with close connections to decision makers can also be secondary targets on our power map. For example, the partner or spouse of a decision maker, a trusted childhood friend, or even members of a decision maker’s religious congregation can be secondary targets because of their ability to influence the decision maker.

Once we’ve identified who should populate our power map — the decision makers, organized allies, organized opposition, and individuals of influence who are secondary targets — we need to examine the power map.

As you can see, the vertical axis is a scale of 0-10, which directly corresponds to a person’s decision-making power. There are few, if any, “10s” — people with absolute power who can make your group’s vision a reality with a snap of their almighty fingers. Equally so, there are few, if any, “0s” — people with no sway whatsoever.

More likely, you’ll find yourself placing people who are able to make decisions and/or exert strong influence along the “8” or “9” portion of this gamut. For example, a person who is placed at “8” is someone who is sitting in the room as an active participant when the decision is being made. While most decision makers are at this level, few organized groups operate here. Rather, groups can be placed at the “5” or “7” level if they are able to meet with a decision maker and generate press coverage about an issue. These groups have power because their opinions will be taken into consideration by decision makers due to their demonstrated ability to effectively

organize their members. Less effective organizations should be placed at a “2” or “3” level.

The horizontal axis measures relative support for our goal. Our core constituencies and die-hard supporters occupy the far left of this axis. These groups and individuals not only support our cause on paper, they are also actively engaged in working with us and commit resources like time, human capital and funding to our cause. These individuals may be the founding members of your cause. (Like you — yes, you are included in the power map!)

Organizations and individuals who fall into the “Active Support” portion of this axis include those who give us their verbal or written endorsement. They may write a letter to the editor or testify on your cause’s behalf. However, the distinguishing factor between “Active Supporters” and “Die Hards” is that Active Supporters don’t commit significant resources to help us achieve our goal, whereas Die Hards adopt an “all hands on deck” mentality.

Groups should be placed in the “Inclined Towards” area if they are likely allies who share an ideological predisposition for support, have worked with you in the past, or are major stakeholders who will be impacted positively by your agenda.

The middle area of this axis is for groups and individuals whose stance is neutral or unknown.

Organizations that are most likely opposed to our goal based on their beliefs and/or practices should be placed

in the “Inclined Against” portion of the axis. Groups who have publicly dismissed our cause and voiced their opposition to our goal should be classified as “Active Against.” Finally, groups that are not only adamantly against our goal but are also allocating resources to defeat us should be deemed as “Die Hard Against.” While it may seem counterintuitive to include decision makers and groups who are against our cause in our power map, it’s actually critical to incorporate them as you assess your environment. Knowing and, more importantly, understanding your opposition and their connections allows you to anticipate their potential attempts to discredit your cause and empowers you to proactively inoculate yourself from attacks.

Now it’s time to put the targets we’ve identified on our power map. The placement of decision makers, allies, opponents and key influential individuals is a critical activity and often involves a lot of discussion. At times you will see some disagreement among team members. This is okay and, in fact, it is expected. Remember: one of the main purposes of planning is to democratize knowledge so everyone involved knows the players and strategies. We want to draw on your team’s collective knowledge and expertise. The key to successful power mapping is to be self-aware when determining your own power and honest when evaluating other’s relative power – including the good, the bad and the downright ugly.

After your power map is complete, take a step back. Literally – step away from the map. Take a moment to absorb the full picture you and your team have created. Voilà – you have identified your key targets and know where they stand on the solution you’ve identified to solve your problem statement. This means you’re ready to move on to the third step of planning: developing your strategy.

### **STRATEGY: CREATING YOUR PATH TO VICTORY**

Now that you know who your targets are and their respective stances on your goal, you must determine how you’re going to earn enough support for your vision to become a reality.

There are three main ways to realign a power map to position yourself for victory. You can move your primary targets – the decision makers – to the left in greater support of your cause. Similarly, you can move your allies up and to the left – essentially making your coalition partners more powerful and enhancing their commitment to your cause. Finally, you can identify relationships between primary targets and allied groups and leverage those connections on behalf of your cause to shore up support from decision makers who are on the fence.

Use your power map as a tool when developing these strategies and bridging connections. Go nuts: draw arrows on your map or tie string from organizations to decision makers or between decision makers and back to organizations – whatever helps you understand their relationships and what will motivate them to support your goal.

Once you know what you need to do to secure the support of decision makers, write your strategy down. Forgive us for belaboring the point, but remember: if it’s not written down, it doesn’t exist. Your strategy doesn’t need to be a novel – Ulysses this is not. All a strategy statement needs to do is establish who will execute what actions to demonstrate power to key decision makers and targets by when. It’s the “5 W’s” from elementary school, remember? Turns out paying attention in third grade pays off in dividends when advocating for progressive change in your community. Who knew? Just in case you were absent from class that day (we won’t judge), here’s a sample strategy statement:

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#### **Texas Freedom Network Education Fund Strategy Statement for ABC Cause**

Legislators X and Y are key to winning.  
Legislator A is our bill’s champion.

Legislator A will use her relationships to persuade Legislator X to co-sign the bill and secure Legislator Y’s vote in favor of the bill.

Group 1 will ask their close ally, Legislator X, to support the bill.

Group 2 will use their close ties with Group 3 to secure support from Legislator Y.

Group 1, 2, and 3 will participate in general mobilization activities to create visibility and energy for our bill.

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But what general mobilization activities will the groups be participating in, you ask? Funny you mention it, because that leads us to the fourth and final step of strategic planning: tactics.

### **TACTICS: PUTTING YOUR STRATEGY IN MOTION**

Tactics are the activities you will use to execute your strategy. These are actions that educate and build your base around an issue, apply pressure to a decision maker or, ideally, both! (Who doesn’t like a good two-fer?) Ultimately, we use tactics to persuade decision makers to support our agenda.

Some of the most common tactics involve earned media, like letter writing campaigns and op-eds to local papers from a trusted community member. While we don’t actually pay for earned media like we would fork over dollars for a television ad or a radio spot, we certainly have to work for it. After all, the average person has to hear a message five to seven times over a short amount of time in order for it to sink in. Luckily for you, we here at TFNEF happen to have some tricks up our sleeves to make sure your message cuts through the noise, resonates with your audience and compels people to take action.

## MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

When's the last time a book made you laugh out loud? Or a movie made you ugly cry in public? (happens to the best of us). Chances are you empathized with compelling characters, related to a struggle integral to the plot, or were shocked by a twist you didn't see coming. Bottom line: you were moved.

That's what good messaging is: storytelling. But when we're talking about messaging around a campaign or an issue, we're upping the ante. We're not just vying for an Oscar or shooting to dominate The New York Times Bestsellers list. We're asking people to take action.

Given all the time constraints people already grapple with between school, work and family, moving people to take action can be a tough sell. Heck, even getting their attention can be a challenge. However, if your message is concise, clear and compelling, you will be able to draw people in and allow them to care, just like your favorite authors and directors.

Let's start by addressing length. We've already discussed the complexity of many of the issues we care about. Issues are often intertwined, and frankly, it would be easy to talk about their intersections all day. However, it wouldn't be effective. Campaigns that use a 10-point plan written in size 8 Times New Roman font as their "message," fail. The extensive length is intimidating and an immediate turn off to readers. That kind of messaging is too long to be accessible.

On the other hand, a snappy slogan does not make a message. While a good slogan is helpful for grabbing people's attention, it doesn't establish inclusivity or illustrate what's at stake.

So we're seemingly at a crossroads. If your message is too long, people won't read it. If it's too short, people won't care. Fear not, fellow TFNEF-ers: this is why we established a problem statement and identified a solution during the strategic planning process. This will allow you to identify the proverbial "sweet spot" — a message that is substantive but accessible.

Now that we understand how long a message needs to be, we're tasked with developing an effective message.

Although this can seem daunting, there are three steps to creating an effective message, and we're going to walk you through each part of the process so you are an official Message Creator Aficionado. Disclaimer: you're right, that's not actually a real thing. Our point is that if you follow these three steps you'll have folks grabbing their hankies and signing your petition in no time. Let's get to work.

### STEP 1: CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Most of us have heard the adage "know your audience." You may have even found it helpful, perhaps when preparing a class presentation for a particular professor, gearing up for babysitting all your toddler-age nieces and nephews, or queuing up a playlist for a summer barbecue.

This phrase is equally applicable when developing your campaign message. What's more, your campaign will have several audiences, since different people will respond to different stories. What does this all mean? Your campaign will have several iterations of one core message to each of your different audiences.

To see how this tactic can play out on the ground, let's look at how some recent anti-choice bills were messaged to different audiences in Texas.

Some audiences received the message: "Abortion should be available and accessible on demand for all Texans." This message was targeted to an audience that was firmly pro-choice. It was a rallying cry that moved the pro-choice base to take action.

Other audiences heard this message: "Women need access to health care, including abortion. Abortion should be safe, legal, and rare." This message was directed to an undecided or moderately pro-choice audience. It spoke to their values by framing abortion as an unfortunate but sometimes necessary medical procedure.

The core message was consistent throughout: vote against this measure that would restrict women's access to abortion. However, each version of this message built upon that foundation and tailored the dialogue to resonate with particular audiences and their values.



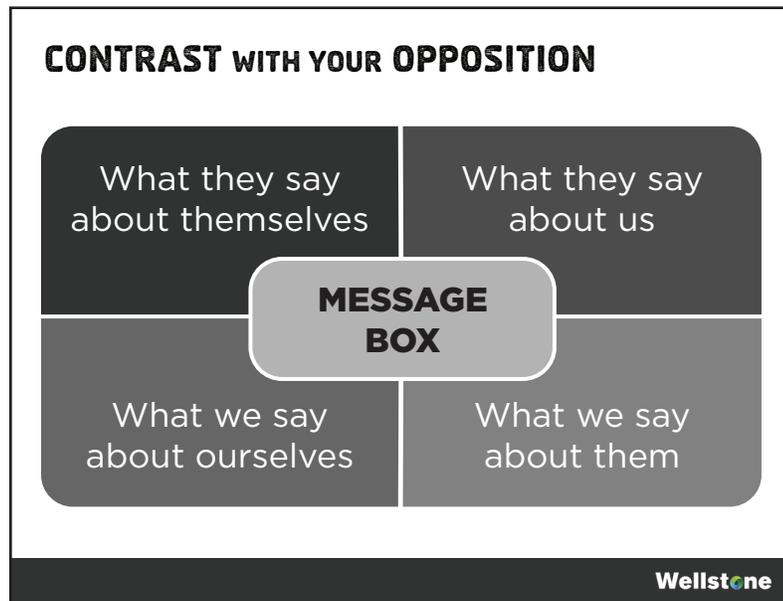
## STEP 2: CONTRASTING WITH YOUR OPPOSITION

Behold: this is one of the most powerful tools you can utilize when developing an effective message.

Known as a Message Box, this tool allows you to anticipate the way public messaging is likely to unfold around your issue. This empowers you to predict messaging your opposition is likely to use against you and preemptively counter that negative messaging by getting out in front of it. It also enables you to draw a sharper contrast between your solution and the opposition.

The upper left-hand corner of the Message Box is comprised of what the opposition says about their cause. This is their positive message. The upper right-hand corner is what the opposition says about your cause. This is their negative message. This is what the opposition will use to try to defeat you.

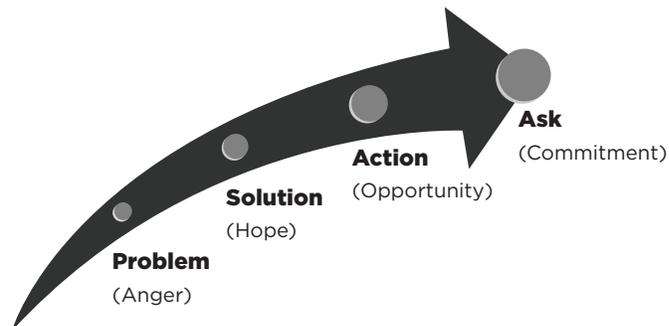
Similarly, the lower left-hand corner of the Message Box contains what you say about your cause. This is your core positive message that establishes what you are seeking to achieve. The lower right-hand corner lays out what you say about the opposition. While this by no means needs to be a negative “smear campaign,” this is your opportunity to tell people why your solution is necessary by drawing a clear contrast between “you” and “the opposition.”



Step 2: Message box

## COMPEL TO ACTION

The structure of a mobilizing message:



Wellstone

Step 3: PSA Graphic

## STEP 3: COMPELLING YOUR AUDIENCES TO TAKE ACTION

By now you’ve identified your audiences and have used the Message Box to create effective messages that resonate with your targets while anticipating and countering opposition attacks. But you’re not finished quite yet. You still need to put this message into full effect so it motivates people to take action. Wellstone Action has fine-tuned a process that accomplishes precisely that — the PSA tool. This tool

is particularly helpful when writing “scripts” for conversations you may have with people while tabling on campus, block-walking, or phone-banking. The PSA tool will help you craft a message that hits on the problem you’re addressing, the solution to that problem, the action that you’re taking and the ask to get involved in your campaign.

Like in all aspects of life, the most meaningful conversations occur when you’re able to meet someone where they are. We don’t mean

this in the literal sense (although if you’re tabling or block-walking you will in fact be meeting people where they literally are). Rather, we’re referring to initiating a conversation by asking someone about the issues that concern them. In other words: what keeps them up at night?

Asking this question allows the person you’re speaking with to identify a problem that matters to them. They’ll most likely express anger or frustration when sharing their concerns with you. This is an opportu-

nity for you to pivot from their agitation and give them hope by providing a broader solution to their problems through taking collective action. You're offering them an opportunity to act — to address and correct the problems they're facing — so you need to ensure this opportunity is fueled by a sense of urgency and credibility.

On the surface, this tactic may seem naïve, or even foolhardy. Think of all the times you've been minding your own business, commuting from place to place, and are suddenly ambushed by an earnest clipboard-clad volunteer spewing information at you at about 100 words a minute. Chances are you've politely declined and continued on your merry way.

We don't blame you. In fact, that's exactly why we advise you to initiate this conversation by meeting people where they are and asking about their individual concerns. Once you understand their frustrations and are able to offer a broader solution, people will recognize that it is in their own self-interest to take action. And self-interest is an incredibly powerful incentive. When you present an action people can take immediately — like signing a pledge card to vote in November, for example — chances are people will leap at the opportunity because they know doing so benefits them and the people they care about.

Let's put this approach to the test by using an example. Imagine you're tabling on campus outside the cafeteria around lunch time. It's a beautiful sunny day, there's a slight breeze, and you're asking fellow students to sign pledge cards to vote in November. You approach a passing student and ask her if she's worried about how issues are being handled on campus or in the larger community. She shares her concerns about the rising cost of higher education. She's barely able to afford college while working two part-time jobs and maintaining a full course load. She has three younger siblings and knows her parents can't afford college for them at this rate.

You've now established a connection with her and have identified a problem she's concerned about — the first component of the PSA approach.

Now it's your job to pivot to the broader solution — the second element of the PSA process. While every person you speak with will have a different concern, your solution will consistently offer them hope and illustrate there is a meaningful action they can take to address their problem.

You respond to this student — let's say her name is Mayte — by sharing that you, too, are troubled by the escalating cost of college tuition, and that we need and deserve elected officials who are committed to making higher education affordable for everyone. The only way to ensure that public officials who care about college affordability are elected is by voting for them. You can then give her an opportunity to take action — the third component of the PSA approach — by asking her to sign a pledge card to vote in November.

Since you've taken the time to understand Mayte's specific concerns and offered her an immediate action to help rectify her problem, she will be very inclined to seize this opportunity and sign a card pledging to vote in November. With her signed pledge card in hand, you now have her contact information and will be able to reach out to her with opportunities to learn more about candidates' and their stances on college affordability. Most importantly, you'll be able to help her register to vote and encourage her to vote in the upcoming elections.

You've successfully made the transition from developing and communicating your message to putting your message to work by organizing your campus. But before we make the leap into community organizing, let's examine the other ways you can make messaging work for you. That's right, folks: it's time to talk about the potential — and avoidable pitfalls — of social media.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a game changer, plain and simple. Facebook and Twitter allow you to share information in real time and collect data from individuals to build your base. Whether you're creating a Facebook event for an upcoming rally, live-tweeting quotes from speakers at that rally, or posting pictures of your group's awesome rally signage on Facebook (wow – you really got behind that rally!).

There's no denying social media's ability to keep your core members informed and engaged while reaching a larger audience as a means of building your base. What's more, it's free. But as the old saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility. Remember: the Internet never forgets! Once something is posted on a social media site it lives on the Internet forever thanks to screenshots and caches, no matter how quickly you delete it.

Just like you need to be focused when creating your message, you need to be equally disciplined when conveying your message through social media. Here are some DOs and DON'Ts to guide your posts, likes, comments, tweets, re-tweets and everything in between.



YES YES YES YES YES YES!

**DO** create a Facebook page for your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter.

Facebook provides administrators of your page with metrics and tracking tools through Facebook Insights to help you evaluate your page's performance in terms of traffic, shares and likes. All Texas Freedom Network student groups use a similar format for the name of their page. Here's an example: Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter at UT Austin

**DO** exercise restraint in determining who is an administrator for your Facebook page.

Administrators are able to create pages for events and post content on your group's page. Like we said, once something has been posted online it lives on the Internet forever. Forever and ever. Having a well-intentioned member place an offensive post on your group's page is a liability that damages your group's credibility and can alienate your membership or other groups. Only a few people should be administrators for your chapter's

Facebook page. Ideally, administrators will be you and your chapter's officers (you'll learn more about who these glorious folks are once we tackle the Community Organizing section of this guide). The same rules apply to Twitter. While it can be helpful to share your handle with multiple people to keep your Twitter feed relevant and chock-full of perspectives, share your Twitter password with only chapter members who have demonstrated they understand they are representing the entirety of the student chapter, and TFNEF, when they tweet from the chapter's handle.

**DO** keep your pages and feeds active and relevant.

While both Facebook and Twitter are free, maintaining the sites require time. We've all had the unfortunate experience of visiting a Facebook page only to discover it hasn't been updated in months and there's zero activity from followers. Underwhelming, no? Help your followers (and their friends, who are your prospective followers) stay in the loop by posting relevant information on a regular

basis. How regular, you ask? Daily is best, although every other day or even once a week is still enough for your chapter to stay relevant. Any less and your chapter risks looking uninvolved and uninformed – the exact opposite image you want to project. If your chapter doesn't have an event or campaign to promote, you can still generate content by sharing posts or events from the main Texas Freedom Network Facebook page or other like-minded organizations, posting news articles that address an issue your chapter cares about, or reminding followers about upcoming events.

**DO** share content from other organizations and give proper credit when doing so.

Though it's always best to promote the work of TFNEF first, don't be shy about sharing the work of other, like-minded organizations. As the old saying goes: sharing is caring. Occasionally sharing a post or two from another organization's page can be beneficial to your own work. Not only are you showing your followers that you play nice with others, but often times those other

organizations will reciprocate and share your content, introducing you to another audience and, ideally, boosting your own follower count. Be careful, though. As with anything on social media, exercise caution about what you share and who you share it from. Be mindful that sharing another organization's post could be perceived as an implicit endorsement of what that organization stands for and believes in, and that may not always be the case.

**DO** reach out to and build relationships with social media managers from other organizations.

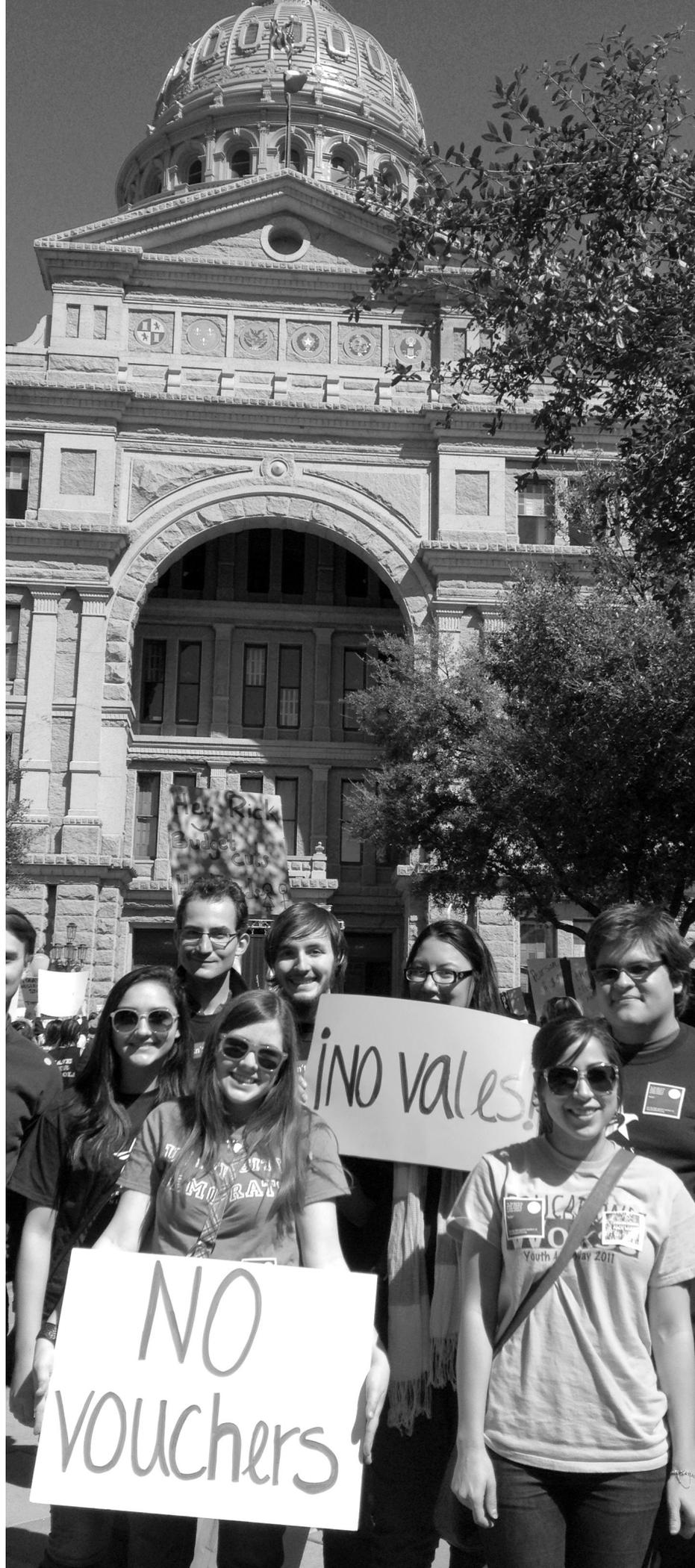
You scratch their back, they might scratch yours. Got some awesome content that you think the whole world needs to see? By all means tell your friends and partners and other organizations to help spread the word. You'll probably owe them a favor, though, so keep that in mind.

**DO** think twice before posting or tweeting on behalf of your chapter.

Take a second to make sure the information you're about to share with your followers is appropriate, accurate and respectful. That's not to say you shouldn't express an opinion if you're concerned about an issue. Quite the opposite – both Facebook and Twitter can be powerful tools in raising awareness. But an obscenity-laden misspelled post looks unprofessional and consequently makes your concerns easier to dismiss.

**DO** create a Facebook event for major events.

We're not talking about internal group events like every officer meeting. But if you're screening a movie, hosting a panel, or celebrating a renowned activist's birthday, go ahead and create an event to advertise your shindig, get an accurate headcount, and allow your fans to invite their friends.



# NO NO NO NO NO!

**DON'T** assume that just because you have a Facebook page for your student chapter your personal profile is off limits.

As a leader of a Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter, you and your officers will be the public face of the organization. What you post “privately” on your own profile is actually public to either all your friends or the world in general, depending upon your personal privacy settings. You and your officers will be associated with your student chapter, whether you’re acting in an official capacity by leading a meeting or minding your own business as just another student studying at the library. “Privately” post and tweet accordingly.

**DON'T** use Facebook or Twitter as a venue to hash out miscommunications between your student chapter members or leaders of other student groups — even if their values don’t align with your group’s.

While it may be tempting to trash the radical right’s Facebook page, passive-aggressive or snarky comments won’t win any battles. In fact, they can belittle your own cause while further galvanizing their members’ opposition to you.

**DON'T** assume Facebook and Twitter are the end-all-be-all of “digital organizing” (that’s organizing jargon for using the interwebs as a way to engage your membership).

Email can also serve as a powerful tool when organizing online, especially if you keep emails concise, with a clear purpose addressed within the first paragraph or two of the email. In fact, having an up-to-date list of email addresses you’ve collected from tabling and events is vital to the strength of your chapter because it allows you to layer your messaging. Remember how different audiences should hear different iterations of a core message because people react differently to stories? Similarly, some people are more likely to respond to an email invitation rather than a Facebook message. So if you want people to come out in droves, make a Facebook event, write a post (or two, or three) on your chapter’s Facebook page, tweet about it, and send an email (or two, or three) to your chapter listserv. The more ways you can access your membership, the better.

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Finally, you have one other avenue you can use to communicate your carefully crafted message: the news media (aka: reporters and journalists). Just like social media, there are best practices when interacting with the media as a leader of your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter to make sure you accurately represent the group’s values and mission.

The media you’ll most likely be interacting with on behalf of your student chapter is your campus newspaper. Having your event featured in your student newspaper elevates your chapter’s visibility and increases credibility: two critical components to exciting your current base and recruiting new members. In other words: it’s a win-win.

You can invite a reporter to your event using a media advisory, which is a one-page document that provides general information about your event to journalists so they can decide if your event is worth covering. (Harsh but true — there are always too many stories and too few reporters, so earning coverage requires hard work.) Although a media advisory is only one page in length, it should contain a significant amount of compelling information to entice coverage. What’s more, if you submit a media advisory early enough, your event may get advance coverage, which is great publicity that can boost attendance. Another win-win!

For all those reasons, crafting a strong media advisory is no small feat. If you need help writing a media advisory, give the folks at TFNEF a call. They’ll happily work with you to develop an angle or “pitch” that no reporter will be able to turn down.



# COMMUNITY ORGANIZING: LEADING A TEXAS FREEDOM NETWORK STUDENT CHAPTER ON YOUR CAMPUS

Now it's time to turn what you've learned about organizing and strategic planning into action through leading a Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter on your local college or university campus. Although this opportunity may seem intimidating at first, all Texas Freedom Network student chapters share a structure and guidelines to help leaders like you organize on campus. This section will provide a detailed explanation of what you need to get your chapter up and running and best practices to help your chapter thrive. Let's get started.

## REGISTERING YOUR CHAPTER

Most colleges have a department that manages registered student organizations and provides support to those groups. When starting your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter, it's essential to understand and follow the parameters set by your student activities office, especially requirements that impact recognition of your chapter as an official student organization on campus.

Being recognized as an official student organization has significant perks: you'll be able to reserve space on campus, collaborate with other student organizations, sponsor events and participate in campus-wide opportunities for recruitment. Your chapter might even be eligible to receive funding. Failing to follow the requirements of the student activities office may result in your chapter losing its official student organization status and the benefits that come with that status. So it's important that you understand what's required and expected of your chapter.

## SELECTING A FACULTY ADVISER

Most colleges require registered student organizations to be sponsored by a faculty member who agrees to serve as the liaison between the student group and the college and offer assistance when helpful. Even if your campus doesn't have this requirement, a committed faculty adviser is a strong asset to any student organization. A supportive professor is able to guide you in the right direction, help navigate campus policies and assist in your outreach to other students.

When brainstorming about potential faculty advisers, consider asking a professor who teaches government, political science, civil rights, or another topic that is

related to the TFNEF's mission. It's ideal to select a professor you have worked well with before, either as a student, through independent study, in volunteer work, or with another student group.

Make sure to keep your adviser in the loop. Setting up monthly check-in meetings allows you to keep your adviser informed and enables him or her to stay involved — a win-win for your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter.

## LEADERSHIP MATTERS

The strength of your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter depends on its officers. In the immediate sense, officers help plan and manage events to bolster recruitment and raise awareness about your chapter's work. They keep your chapter relevant and active and share the responsibility of the group's success. In the long-term, officer positions create sustainability for your chapter. They offer a leadership ladder for people to climb and gradually gain responsibilities, confidence and familiarity with your chapter so they can lead the organization after current leadership (aka: you) moves on.

No pressure, right?

Knowing there's so much at stake when recruiting strong officers, TFNEF has a well-defined system of officer positions. Each officer requires different skill sets and plays unique roles that complement those of other officers and create a sum that is larger than its parts. To help recruit candidates and clearly manage expectations, here are job descriptions for each officer position in your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter:



## **PRESIDENT/ CO-PRESIDENTS**

- Serves as the representative of the organization on campus
- Provides leadership, general direction and vision
- Organizes and facilitates officer tasks
- Creates meeting agendas
- Facilitates meetings with co-president or vice president
- Leads event planning and outreach efforts
- Serves as host for events
- Acts as official spokesperson with campus and community news sources
- Responsible for developing leadership within the group

For the first year, you may choose to have co-presidents to share responsibilities. After the first year, a president-vice president structure works best.

## **VICE PRESIDENT**

- Assists president in planning activities and direction
- Helps to ensure officers are completing tasks
- Facilitates meetings with president
- Fills in for president when absent or necessary

## **OUTREACH COORDINATOR**

- Focuses on outreach and recruitment for the student chapter
- Responsible for coordinating tabling at least once a week on campus
- Responsible for representing the student chapter to other student organizations at meetings and events
- Executes petition, voter registration and voter pledge gathering events
- Responsible for coordinating data entry
- Responsible for maintaining a membership list and adding members to Facebook page or relevant database

Student chapters in the past have chosen to have two outreach coordinators to work together. We have found that this has served as a good model.

## **EVENT COORDINATOR**

- Focuses on event logistics, delegating tasks and promotion
- Responsible for working with the university on event planning (room reservations, permits, waivers, funding, etc.)
- Responsible for recruiting, coordinating and directing volunteers at student chapter events

## **MEDIA MANAGERS**

- Manages all of the student chapter's social media platforms, including documenting group activities, creating event pages and driving traffic to the page through regular posting of relevant content
- Works with the media to cover and promote student chapter events and campaigns
- Responsible for photographing student chapter meetings and events
- Responsible for working with local news sources to secure interviews for president

Student chapters in the past have chosen to have two media managers to work together. This also has served as a good model.

In addition to these officer-specific responsibilities, there are a few general expectations of all Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter officers. Officers should:

- provide a progress report to the president and the larger group at every officer meeting,
- attend and volunteer at chapter events,
- attend all officer meetings and all general meetings, and
- assist with outreach and recruitment for the Student Chapter

Before we move on to the nitty-gritty of electing officers, here are a few more thoughts on the importance of sustainability. Texas Freedom Network Student Chapters, like all student organizations, can become nonfunctional if all its officers and members are seniors. Since it's common to start a chapter with friends who are around the same age, this is an understandable predicament. However, what this means is no one will be left to carry



the chapter after the original leadership graduates. A successful Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter takes sustainability seriously. Fear not, we won't underscore sustainability without providing you with pointers on how to achieve it:

- Your officers should never all be seniors — period.
- Age diversity is important. Your co-presidents or president and vice president should be from different graduating classes.
- You and your officers will have to actively work to find first-year, second-year and third-year undergraduate students to constantly provide an influx of new, younger members. When you're first starting out, this process may be hard. However, as your chapter grows in size and builds its reputation semester by semester, it will get easier.
- New and/or younger members should eventually become officers. Having clear job descriptions and active officers modeling the chapter's structure will help tremendously in this leadership transition.
- Prospective officers should shadow and assist current leaders.



## OFFICER ELECTIONS

Once you've advertised the officer positions, your chapter must hold elections. We couldn't be registering people to vote and not hold elections within our own chapters, right?

In all seriousness, officer elections provide legitimacy to your officer structure because they allow group members to feel collective ownership over the direction of the chapter through selecting its leaders. Officer elections also promote a chapter culture of transparency and fairness by ensuring officers aren't just selected by the president.

For all these reasons officer elections are a big deal and should occur on a regular basis. And since officer elections are so significant to the well-being and success of chapters, TFNEF has created election rules to regulate officer elections across Texas and ensure their consistency and parity.

Here we go. Hold on to your hats:

- Officer elections are held on the last general meeting of each fall and spring semester, with nominations held one meeting before then.
- Any members with good standing may nominate themselves or other members that are present at the meeting or absent with a legitimate excuse.
- Another member that is present must second a nomination.
- Nominations will begin with president, and officer positions will be open for nominations in the order they are listed in this guide: president/co-president, vice president, outreach coordinator, event coordinator, media manager(s).
- The president or vice president should record the names of all candidates and the positions for which they are running.
- Following the nominations meeting, candidates may campaign for office and may do so until the voting begins during the election at the following general meeting.
- The election is administered by the current vice president. The vice president should read the name and description of each office.
- The names of the candidates should be read aloud, and the candidates should be allowed to give a speech in alphabetical order according to their last names.
- Each candidate for president should have up to five minutes to speak and up to three minutes to answer questions from members.
- Candidates for all other officer positions should each have three minutes to speak and two minutes to answer questions from members.
- Voting should take place on secret ballots after the speeches from the candidates for all officer positions.

- The votes will be counted by people who are not running for that position and verified by the current vice president.
- The election results should be announced immediately before moving on to the next agenda item. At the end of the election meeting, which is also the last meeting of the semester, the new officers should be photographed together and announced on Facebook and email.
- The ballots should be kept for at least a week and should be available to anyone who wishes to see them.

Phew. Your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter has officers. Congratulations! Now on to the next question: what are we going to do with them? We have a few things in mind.

## OFFICER MEETINGS

An officer meeting is when officers come together to plan the events and direction of the organization without the general membership present. It's an opportunity for the chapter president to provide updates and for officers to share the progress of their work. Officer meetings are also when administrative tasks should be discussed and managed. An agenda should always be prepared for officer meetings out of respect for everyone's time and to ensure meetings are productive. If held weekly, officers can meet directly before the chapter's general meeting. Officer meetings should occur at least twice a month.

## OFFICER SOCIALS

Getting together with your teammates just to hang out socially after we've gone on about the importance of structure? Let us explain this one.

Because you're working as a team, it's important for officers to get to know one another outside of your chapter. This will help officers develop the bonds that serve as a foundation for good collaboration and troubleshooting. Try doing this once per month or at least a few times per semester — no agenda required.

## HOSTING YOUR CHAPTER'S FIRST MEETING FOR GENERAL MEMBERS

Here's where the nerves may kick in: hosting your first Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter meeting. It's the same fear that has haunted nearly all of us since our first birthday party: what if no one shows up?

Fortunately, a good dose of planning and preparation can go a long way in quelling any anxiety for your chapter's inaugural meeting. What's more, by investing the time into making your first meeting a success, you will leave a lasting impression on those who attend, encouraging them to continue their involvement and building



what's bound to be your chapter's stellar reputation as a student group that gets things done. And speaking of getting things done, your officers should be pitching in with these efforts. It's all hands on deck!

One final thought before we dive into the details of making your meeting a success: hosting events can be a powerful tactic to support your strategy. Although we're about to drill down into the minutiae of event planning through the specific lens of campus organizing, the same points we hit upon here — layered advertisement, securing a thoughtful venue, outreach to like-minded organizations, anticipating your attendees needs, having a clear agenda and working in concert with your teammates — are all applicable to any event you'll ever plan within the Wellstone Triangle of community organizing, public policy and electoral politics. Whether organizing a forum to raise awareness about a pressing policy issue in your community or planning a neighborhood block-walk to register voters, follow this guide and your event will be a success — we guarantee it. Now that we've addressed the universal applicability of strong event planning, let's plow forward by using your first chapter meeting on campus as an example to show you how it's done.

## FILLING THE ROOM

People can't attend a meeting if they don't know it's happening. Here are ways to spread the word and get noticed:

- Pass out fliers the week before, the week of and the day of the meeting.
- Use a simple, professional design for your flyers — less is more.
- Your flyers should be a quarter-page size to cut down on printing costs. These are the ones you will hand out in classrooms, on campus, in the cafeterias, etc. It's like the old saying goes: "Wherever you go, there you flyer!" Create larger whole-page and half-page flyers to hang around campus in student areas, bathrooms, hallways, classroom doors, staircases, dormitories and wherever else the student activities office allows it.
- Ask your professors to let you make an announcement before class about the chapter and your upcoming meeting. Place a flyer on the overhead or hand them out to your fellow students.

- Talk with the leadership of other student organizations and see if they will let you make an announcement about your chapter and upcoming meeting at their next convening.
- Invite all of your friends on Facebook to attend the first meeting and encourage your friends to do the same. You can @mention people to bring attention to the inaugural meeting. Create an official Facebook event page (because if it's on Facebook, it's a thing).

### GETTING THE ROOM

Although this may seem like a mundane task, selecting the right room is important because it speaks volumes about how seriously you take the chapter, its members and the work. The room should be comfortable, professional and accessible to make a good first impression. Other helpful hints:

- Select and reserve your room early. Depending upon your student activities office, rooms available for student organizations may be limited and consequently may get reserved early. While you're at it, try to reserve the same space for the remainder of the semester for your general meetings.
- Rooms should have technology like a computer, projector, screen and DVD player available for the use of student groups. Make sure you're able to access the technology — whether that means signing out the keys or jotting down a password — and test it out beforehand!

### FEEDING THE ROOM

“Will there be food?” You'll hear that question often when inviting people to a chapter meeting. Knowing this, plan ahead so you can answer with a resounding “Yes!” Here are tips for feeding the frenzy:

- TFNEF will cover the cost of food for your events — either purchase the food on your own and have TFNEF reimburse you, or ask TFNEF to order food for your meeting. *NOTE: Please provide at least 24-hours notice to TFNEF staff for food orders.*
- The amount of food provided to attendees each meeting will vary depending upon the type of event you're hosting. For example, having pizza or an equivalent meal is appropriate for the first meeting and special occasions, like officer elections. For other meetings, light refreshments, like bottled water and cookies, nuts, or candy is perfectly fine.
- Always try to provide food that accommodates dietary restrictions or preferences that members may have, including vegetarian and vegan options.
- Save all receipts! You must have a receipt to be reimbursed.

### ORGANIZING THE ROOM

We've all been to those meetings — you know: meetings in which the officers seem to have no control of the room. In these unfortunate instances, the disorganization usually is because the leaders didn't create an agenda beforehand. When running a meeting, an agenda is your roadmap to a meaningful, timely gathering. Agendas help move your meeting forward and provide a sense of direction and purpose, which in turn helps your attendees understand that you respect their time and attention. An agenda for a first Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter meeting includes these discussion items:

1. Welcome
2. Introductions, including officers and their respective roles in the chapter
3. An overview of the chapter's goals, values and mission
4. A brief summary of the challenges facing Texans who value religious freedom, individual liberties and strong public schools
5. New business, including upcoming campaigns and events that attendees should save the dates for, such as future chapter meetings, as well as how they can get more involved



6. Community announcements, including information sharing from other student groups who allowed you to publicize your meeting to their memberships
7. Adjournment

In the weeks leading up to your first chapter meeting, gather with your officers to create your agenda. Include details, such as assigning officers to lead different portions of the agenda and creating brief PowerPoint presentations to supplement the agenda as appropriate. Not only will creating an agenda demonstrate the chapter's commitment to the cause and its members, but it will also build internal confidence amongst your officers as a team. You got this. Now, thanks to your agenda, you got this on paper.

### WOWING THE ROOM

The big day has finally arrived. You and your officers have posted flyers across the campus from floor to ceiling, pitched your first chapter meeting in all your classes and handed out flyers to every student in the Jamba Juice line, which is just about every student on campus. You've reached out to other student organizations to let their members know they're welcome at your first meeting, and all your Facebook friends (and their friends, and their friends, and their friends' moms) know about your meeting's event page. The room has been registered for weeks now, the projector works, you've memorized the room's wi-fi password as well as the meeting's agenda, and the pizza delivery person is on the way, complete with gluten-free and vegan pies.

So what's next?

Because you and your officers have advertised your first chapter meeting and diligently recruited students, something amazing happens: people begin to show up. And just like thorough recruitment got people in the door, how you run the first chapter meeting will determine whether students plug into the action and return for next week's meeting. Here's how to make sure they take an active role in your work and keep coming back for more:

- Greet people as they come in. Shake their hands, look them in the eyes and thank them for coming.
- Ask them to take a moment to sign in. Have officers standing with sign-in sheets on clipboards or a table. Sign-in sheets should have space for attendee's first and last names, cell phone numbers, email addresses, mailing addresses, year of birth and, depending upon how your chapter decides to leverage social media, Twitter handles. While attendees are signing in, officers are making their nametags and handing them agendas. Officers are also responsible for holding on to the sign-in sheets, as those sheets are the chapter's Holy Grail and will be used to build your chapter's member database after the meeting.
- Direct attendees to the food, and point out vegetarian and vegan options.

- If possible, play background music while people are arriving — it breaks the proverbial ice that often accompanies any inaugural meeting when people are first getting to know each other. Playing background music after the meeting has adjourned may also be helpful. It lets attendees know the official meeting is over and they're welcome to relax a little and hang out. Just like it's important for officers to have time to get to know one another without talking business, it's good for your chapter's members to socialize informally as well.

Once people are signed in, have grabbed a bite to eat and had a minute or two to settle, you're ready to begin the meeting. Your agenda is your roadmap, your officers have your back and you have the audience's ear. Speak and be heard — even if your voice shakes.

### KEEPING THE ROOM

After your first meeting adjourns, you've achieved a major accomplishment: starting a Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter on your campus. Getting people into a room is no small feat. However, neither is keeping their attention, attendance, or allegiance. Remember: your job is to acclimate new and/or younger members to the chapter so they can gradually tackle responsibilities, gain confidence, and eventually take on an officer role. That process begins at the first meeting. With that in mind, following are tactics to retain, engage and empower your members.

## ONE-ON-ONES

For folks not familiar with this term, a "one-on-one" is an intentional conversation with the goal of building a relationship with another person by understanding her/his interests and values. This will allow you to identify common ground for collective action and understand their "story" — what issues matter to them and what motivates them. One-on-ones are a powerful tool for recruiting and retaining members of your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter. They are also helpful when empowering members to assume leadership roles.

In an ideal world you would have these in-depth conversations with every member of your Student Chapter. However, since there are only 24 hours in a day (darn the time-space continuum!) that approach isn't practical. Instead, you and your officers should selectively target individuals for one-on-ones. When recruiting prospects for one-on-ones, keep an eye out for people who are impacted by the issues your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter is working to address and leaders of existing like-minded student organizations. When using one-on-ones for retention and leadership development purposes, target existing members of your Student Chapter who have consistently demonstrated their commitment to our cause and their capacity to add value.



Once you've identified targets for one-on-ones, let the person know you believe you care about similar issues and/or appreciate their interest in the chapter and would like to get to know them better. Schedule 30 or so minutes to meet for coffee, lunch, or even a much-needed study break in a student lounge. During the one-on-one, your job is to ask questions that allow the person to open up to you. A good rule of thumb to achieve this is the "75/25 ratio." This means that you should be actively listening 75 percent of the time, and speaking up to share similar or related experiences that will draw connections between the two of you.

Just like every person is different, every one-on-one meeting will be different — which is a key reason this activity is both fun and essential! Depending upon the person's interest and availability, you may find a clear "ask" to end the meeting. For example, if the person you're meeting with expresses a clear desire to get involved immediately, you could ask him or her to sign up for an upcoming tabling slot and recruit two friends to participate. Alternatively, if the person is interested in the chapter's work but not quite sure where their specific interests lie, an appropriate ask would be inviting them to the next general membership meeting so they can learn more about the group and meet other members.

## PLAN MULTIPLE MEETINGS FOR ACCOMPLISHING A TASK OR GOAL

Making your meetings matter includes planning ahead. You can increase the effectiveness of your meetings by using ongoing themes or campaigns. For instance, you may choose to work on breaking down the stigma around abortion for two months. This could include four meetings: one to introduce the topic, context and messaging; one to prepare for a large tabling session (including making flyers, banners and petitions as well as securing tabling space and volunteers for tabling shifts); one to prepare for a larger event such as a movie screening and panel discussion; and finally, the fourth event as the actual movie screening that is available to everyone on campus. Members will recognize that these meetings build up to a final large event and give purpose to each of your meetings. The positive effect of this approach is threefold: first, it creates momentum in your membership; second, it builds event-planning skills in your membership; and third, it is an opportunity to recruit new members to your chapter through the public movie screening.

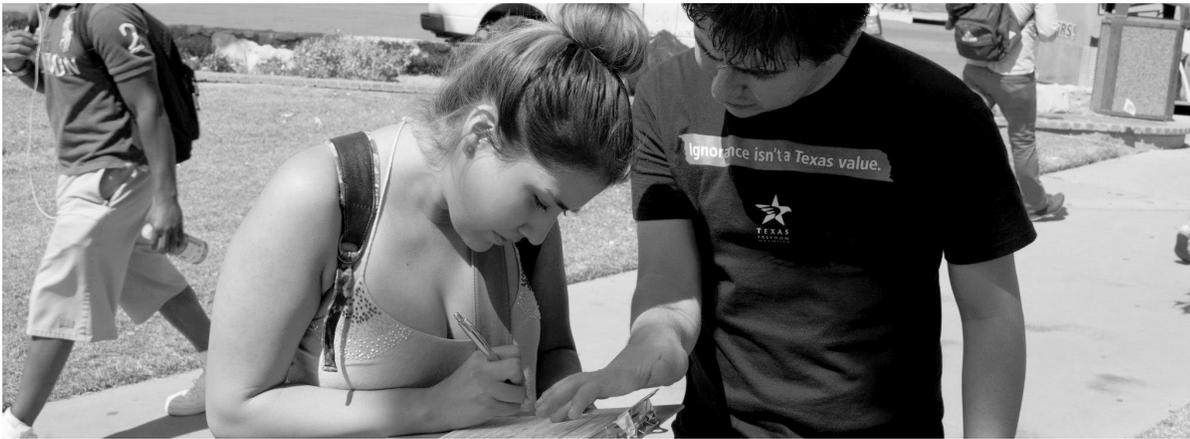
### PREPARE MATERIALS FOR CAMPAIGNS

Regular chapter meetings are a great place to prepare for upcoming events or campaigns. You can spend part of your meeting creating flyers or banners or posting flyers around campus in various buildings, classrooms and halls. You could also use this time to make posters or T-shirts. These sorts of hands-on activities will be fun for your members, especially if they know they are going to use the materials to campaign for an issue or event. When they see their participation adding to the larger picture, they'll become more excited about your chapter.

## KUDOS!

Everyone appreciates being thanked for hard work and effort. Selecting a Member of the Week is a great way to showcase the work of an individual member and to reward people for staying dedicated to the chapter.

Officers are responsible for choosing a Member of the Week during their weekly or bi-weekly officer meetings. Qualifications for nomination can include consistent attendance and participation, going above and beyond with volunteering, recruiting new members, or showing initiative by launching



a new campaign or taking the reins in co-managing an event with the events coordinator. Once selected, the Member of the Week should be included in the agenda and/or PowerPoint for the upcoming week's meeting and be publically recognized by leadership for his or her efforts during the meeting.

A lil' love goes a long way, and by acknowledging a member's outstanding contributions, the chapter will be positively reinforcing leadership development and motivating other members to maximize their participation within the chapter.

### **PUTTING OUT FIRES**

Pretend for a moment you are in your kitchen making breakfast when suddenly a small fire breaks out on your stovetop. Do you walk away from the fire? No, of course not! Instead, you think quickly and try to smother the fire with a lid or baking soda or, if you have to, reach for the fire extinguisher. But what if you had walked away? A seemingly small problem, like a grease fire on your stove, might have quickly escalated into a much bigger fire that ruins your entire home instead of just your breakfast.

Fires happen. While organizing on campus, you'll likely encounter many small "fires." The best way to avoid these "fires" is through good planning. Applying the organizing methods found in this guide is a great way to minimize potential challenges, but the truth is that

sometimes things won't work out as planned. Perhaps you've heard of Murphy's Law: "Whatever can go wrong will go wrong." While that's a pretty depressing way to view the world, as organizers, this is how we should think when planning an event.

The most important thing to remember if you find yourself in a tough situation is Do NOT Panic! Be solution-oriented, not problem-focused. Don't let a bump in the road knock you off course. Stick to your plan and work around the problem.

Imagine, for example, your chapter has organized a film screening and discussion on reproductive rights. You followed all the steps outlined in this guide for organizing a good event, you've invited great speakers, you have sign-in sheets and all relevant material, and you have effectively promoted the event and expect a large turnout. You show up to your reserved venue an hour early to set up, only to find another student organization setting up for its own event. Clearly, someone made a mistake. Maybe the member in your organization who reserved the venue asked for the wrong time. Or perhaps the department responsible for room reservations on your campus double-booked.

In this moment, it really doesn't matter who made the mistake or how exactly you found yourself in this situation. You don't have time to dwell on the problem. Instead, look for a quick and effective so-

lution. You might look for another available venue nearby and host your event there instead. You could post a sign on the door to let attendees know about the sudden change, or have a member wait at the planned venue to direct folks to the new site. At worst, you might have to reschedule your event, which, though not ideal, is not the end of the world. Just be sure to contact expected attendees to apologize for the change and give them information for the rescheduled event.

A good practice to help avoid unexpected challenges is to go over "what ifs" while planning. That is, spend some time considering what might go wrong, then create a solution for that possibility so you are prepared if you indeed are faced with that obstacle. It is also helpful to spend some time after each event to debrief with your officers and talk about what went well and what didn't. You can speak about the challenges you encountered and the strategies you applied to overcome them. Be careful how you approach this. Don't allow members to point fingers at each other and argue over who made the mistake. This thoughtful reflection will allow your group to learn from past experiences to avoid future pitfalls.

# PUBLIC POLICY ORGANIZING: HOW YOUR STUDENT CHAPTER CAN HELP MAKE 'THE SAUSAGE'

You may have heard people compare getting a bill passed through any legislative body as “how the sausage gets made.” Truthfully speaking, the comparison isn’t entirely wrong. The process is long, muddled and often messy.

But if we’re able to remove the cynical lens that so often accompanies lawmaking, the deliberative nature of creating laws does have merit. The legislative process is purposefully thorough so the proposed idea and its impact can be evaluated from all perspectives — including yours. Although it’s understandable to conjure up images of backroom deals and cigar smoke when thinking about public policy, it’s much more effective to be part of the process so your voice can be heard.

Still not sold on the idea that you can influence public policy because you’re not a rich lobbyist? Remember the Wellstone Triangle has three components. By leading a Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter on your campus, you have organized your community — one of the three sides to the triangle. You now have a group of community members united by a shared concern and committed to taking action to fix a problem. Leveraging your chapter’s power as constitu-

ents to influence legislation is how community organizing feeds into public policy. Most importantly, it’s how you fix the problems you’re concerned about.

In order to be most impactful you have to understand the process and the players. So take a deep breath and get ready: you’re about to make some sausage.

## THEY WORK FOR YOU: THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE

The Texas Legislature has two chambers: the Texas State House of Representatives and the Texas State Senate. There are 150 members of the Texas State House of Representatives, with each member serving a two-year term in elected office before going back out on the campaign trail to get re-elected.

The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer and is elected to the position by a majority of her or his fellow House members. The Speaker appoints chairpersons of committees, assigns all representatives to their committees and refers every proposed bill to committees. (More on committees in a minute.) Clearly, the Speaker has a lot of power.

The Texas State Senate is significantly smaller than the State House

of Representatives. There are 31 Senators, each serving a four-year term. Roughly half of all Senate seats are up for election every two years.

The presiding officer of the Senate is the Lieutenant Governor, who is elected to a four-year term by a state-wide popular vote during the gubernatorial elections. Like the Speaker of the House, the Lieutenant Governor appoints all committee chairs, assigns senators to their respective committees and refers all bills to committees. Although the Lieutenant Governor has a lot of power, she or he votes only when there is a tie vote among the senators.

As you might guess, the majority party (the political party that holds the most seats in a chamber) determines which issues are legislative priorities. Unfortunately, lately both the Texas Senate and House of Representatives have become increasingly aligned with the radical right.

This fact makes your job more difficult, but not impossible. Just because the folks in control have made an issue a legislative priority doesn’t guarantee it will become law. For example, right-wing legislators have often made passing private school voucher schemes a priority. But TFNEF and our coalition partners have successfully defeated voucher schemes every legislative session through savvy lobbying and mobilizing activists and other Texas voters against them.

Now that you know the players, let’s move on to process.

## SCHOOL HOUSE ROCK 2.0: HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

The legislative process is notorious for being convoluted — that’s why they call it “making sausage”! It can be a little intimidating. In fact, it often discourages people from taking action.

But here’s the truth no one ever told you (until now): every single bill has to go through the same procedural



motions to become a law, and there are pit stops during this process where constituents and community groups are able to advocate for or against a bill. That's where you come in. Let's see how you get there.

Any member of the Texas House of Representatives or the Texas Senate may propose, or "file," a bill. A senator would file her or his bill in the Texas Senate, while a representative would file her or his bill in the Texas House. The lawmaker who files the bill is the bill's "sponsor." After the bill is filed, it then goes through "first reading." The first reading is when the bill is "introduced" to all the members of that chamber so they are aware of the bill.

After the bill is introduced to the entire chamber, it is then referred to a committee. Committees are responsible for evaluating bills and are organized around specific subject areas. For example, bills dealing with anything related to college affordability will be referred to the Committee on Higher Education. Bills addressing issues facing farmers will be referred to the Committee of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

After the bill has received its committee assignment, it must then be placed on the committee agenda by the chairperson, or leader, of the first committee it is assigned. After the bill has been placed on the agenda, the committee will "hear" the bill. These hearings are part of public record and open to the public. During the hearing, the bill's sponsor will present the bill to committee members and advocate on its behalf. In addition to the bill sponsor, any organization or community member can advocate for or against the bill. (Starting to get interesting now, right?) After advocates or opponents have shared their opinions about the bill, committee members vote on whether the bill should move forward in the legislative process. If the bill has enough votes to pass, it is "favorably reported" by the committee.

In reality, most bills "die" in committee. This means committee members never vote on the bill or a majority of members vote against moving the bill forward. If a bill is favorably reported — approved — by a committee, it then moves to the floor of the full House or Senate, where all members debate the bill and eventually vote on whether it should move forward in the legislative process.

If the House or Senate votes to pass the bill, it then moves to the other chamber. Once in the other chamber, the process has to happen all over again:

the bill must be assigned to a committee, the committee chair must place the bill on an agenda, the committee must "hear" the bill and the committee must approve the bill to send it to the full chamber to consider.

### **Still with us? Good.**

As you might imagine, House or Senate members might want to change aspects of a bill. These changes are called "amendments." If the House and Senate pass bills that are different from each other, then a conference committee made up of members of both chambers must work out a compromise bill.

Once a bill, including all amendments, has been approved by a majority vote in each chamber, the bill is then sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign the bill into law, allow it to become law without his or her signature, or veto (reject) it. The Legislature may override the Governor's vote by passing the rejected bill by at least a two-thirds vote in each chamber. As if that's not enough, here's one final bit of legislative trivia for you: if the Governor does not sign or veto the bill within 10 days of receiving it, the bill automatically becomes law.

### **And that is how it's done.**

Although this process is a bit protracted (to put it mildly), it's entirely navigable because it follows a precise order. This means that advocates like you can track legislation, share your thoughts with elected officials and take action. As you just learned, there are opportunities for you to weigh in during the legislative process. Specifically, you can meet with elected officials before committee hearings to educate them about the legislation in question. You can also testify during a hearing to share your views with the entire committee.

However, since several bills are often being considered at once, legislators and their staff don't have a lot of time on their hands. What's more, even though legislation can

move slowly, it can also quickly accelerate if the leadership has prioritized it. This means you'll have a limited opportunity to make your point.

No pressure, right? Just stroll on in to an elected official's office and tell her or him how it is. You'll be back at home in time for lunch. Not likely.

Fear not — we won't press how important something is and then leave you in the lurch. Wellstone Action has developed best practices you can follow to have the most meaningful interactions with elected officials when advocating on behalf of or against an issue or cause. We (and the majority of other progressive organizations) refer to this as grassroots lobbying.



## NAILING THE MEETING: GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

There are five key pieces to planning and executing a successful grassroots lobbying visit: knowing your audience, identifying your goal, developing an agenda, identifying roles and practice (it does make perfect, after all). Let's drill down on each component.

Just like it's vital to know your audience when developing a message, it's equally important to do your proverbial homework on the elected officials with whom you'll be meeting. By learning about their past voting histories, what committees they serve on, public comments they have made about your issue, and relationships they have with individuals or groups related to your issue, you'll be able to tailor your conversations so they are most appropriate and effective for each elected official.

You can find information about committee assignments and priority issues on the legislators' websites, as well as their biographies. While a biography might not seem very helpful at first glance, it often mentions a legislator's connections to the community, like civic and governing boards she or he sits on, alma maters, and history of volunteer service. This can be helpful information that provides insights to legislators' values and local relationships. Other useful information — a legislator's voting record in the House or Senate — is public and available on the Texas Legislature's website at [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us). And of course, a good ol' fashioned Google news search never hurt anybody, as long as the sources are credible (aka: a local paper or the New York Times, not Wikipedia).

After you have a clear understanding of the elected official's background and her or his stance on your issue, you need to identify your goal for the meeting. In other words, what do you want to take away from your meeting? A commitment from the legislator to support your bill? A pledge to co-sponsor the bill? An agreement to sit this vote out? Your goal will be based on where the legislator stands on your issue, so goals for each meeting may be different.

For example, if the elected official you're meeting with is already a supporter of your bill, your goal is to turn that official into a champion of your bill. What do we mean by a "champion"? Fair question.

A champion of a bill can become a bill co-sponsor, recruit other elected officials to support the bill, host a press conference in support of the bill, or speak on your bill's behalf during a committee hearing or on the floor of the House or Senate. Work with the elected official to determine what level of elevated support is most strategic so she or he can truly champion the bill.

If elected officials are undecided on your issue, your job is to unearth their reluctance or concerns about the bill and then provide them with the information and reassurance they need to become supporters. Here, your goal is to persuade the undecided elected official to become a supporter of the bill.

It may seem pointless to meet with elected officials if you know they oppose your issue. Why even bother if we already know they're against us? It's important to meet with legislators who are against your issue because you want to neutralize them. Your goal in this scenario is to make them sideline sitters, meaning that while they won't support us, they won't become a "champion" for the other side and actively work against us. The most effective way to neutralize elected officials is to demonstrate enough support for your bill within their districts so actively opposing it will be politically costly for them. And, even if you are unsuccessful at neutralizing a legislator, we never want to hear a member of the Texas House or Senate say they didn't hear a word from the opposing side on any issue. Every meeting matters.

After identifying your goals for each meeting, it's time to develop an agenda. Remember, you have a limited amount of time to share a significant amount of information. Developing an agenda will make sure you maximize this opportunity while staying on track and hitting on key points so you're able to achieve your goal.

A strong agenda for a grassroots lobby visit is broken down into five sections: introductions, a meeting overview, personal stories, the "ask," and a strategic response.

At the beginning of the meeting, introduce everyone at the table and make sure to identify any constituents so the elected official understands voters are present who can either re-elect or unseat the legislator. It's a powerful incentive — trust us. You also want to take a moment to introduce the group you're representing and establish its organizational power. For example, you could say you're from the Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter at your college and that the chapter has 100 members and is conducting monthly voter registration drives on campus.

You quickly want to transition into the meeting overview. State the problem you're there to address, the solution and the concrete action you're looking for the legislator to commit to. If this sounds familiar, it's because it should: it's the PSA method — problem, solution and action — we use to compel people to take action. Everything's starting to come full circle, right?

After you've established why you're there, share your personal story with the elected official. Let her or him know why this issue matters to you — what it means to you. Although it may sound sentimental, legislators hear from policy wonks regurgitating spreadsheets and statistics all day. This is your opportunity to put a human face on what can otherwise be a detached academic debate. Seize it.

Once the legislator has heard a few stories, make the "hard ask." It's referred to as a "hard ask" because it's quick and unapologetic. "Senator, will you support this bill?" You want to ask a question that demands a "yes" or "no" response rather than an open-ended question. That's because elected officials are often far too happy to dance around a question rather than take a firm position.

Listen carefully to the answer so you may be strategic in your response. If your legislator says no, respectfully ask why. Parsing out her or his specific concerns can help you counteract them during future meetings. Diplomatically push back. For example, if the legislator is not willing to support the bill, what would she be willing to do? Perhaps she would agree to sit out instead of speaking against the bill in public or during debate? Similarly, if the legislator wants to support your bill, think strategically about how you can leverage that support. Would he be willing to co-sponsor the bill, or issue a statement of support? The purpose of being strategic in your response is making sure you don't leave any potential opportunities on the table.

Once you've mapped out what you're going to say by developing an agenda, you want to determine who is going to be responsible for owning the different components of the meeting. Identifying and assigning roles is critical because it allows your conversation to be coordinated and concise while simultaneously playing to your group's strengths. There are five roles, but these can be combined depending upon the size of your group.

The meeting leader is responsible for initiating introductions, sharing the meeting overview and ensuring the meeting stays on track. This person should be prepared to pivot back to the issue at hand if the elected official tries to change the topic.

The storyteller role can be shared by 2-3 people who are willing to explain how this issue has personally affected them. If multiple people are going to share stories, assign each person a place in order to make the transitions between storytellers seamless.

The pitcher makes the hard ask and is prepared to respond strategically depending upon the legislator's answer.

The recorder takes comprehensive notes during the meeting.

Finally, supporting actors are people who accompany you to the meeting but don't speak other than introductions. Supporting actors demonstrate strength in numbers.

If this feels like a lot of work, that's because it can be — initially. That's why practicing with other members of your chapter is so important. Grab a timer and a chapter member who's not attending the lobby visit to act out the part of the legislator, quickly debrief her or him on the legislator's background, set the timer for 15 minutes and role play.

It may seem silly at first, but you'll be amazed at how quickly 15 minutes flies by. Not only does practicing give you a sense of how much time should be allocated to each part of the meeting, it also allows the storytellers a chance to practice sharing how this issue impacts them personally. Plus, it'll give you a sense of how your team interacts with one another and will allow you to hone that dynamic.

When done correctly, grassroots lobbying can be an incredibly effective tool to advocate for or against an issue important to your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter. What's more, meeting with individual legislators will prepare you for the other aspect of grassroots lobbying: testifying during a committee hearing.

## **YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH! TESTIFYING AT COMMITTEE HEARINGS**

Okay, we admit the title for this section is a little extreme. While committee hearings can become intense and may be intimidating, they're the perfect opportu-



nity to express your thoughts publicly about a bill to a very targeted audience: the elected officials who will be voting on it shortly after your testimony.

**Again, no pressure.**

Don't worry, we got you. Here's what you need to know about testifying at a committee hearing.

You'll want to arrive anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour ahead of the hearing to secure a good seat and sign up to speak. Make sure you have enough time to find parking and locate the room — sometimes state capitols and other government buildings where hearings occur seem like mazes.

Because there are always too many bills filed and too little time, committee hearings begin when scheduled, and testimony from the public (that's you) is often limited to 2-3 minutes per person. After the bill sponsor presents the legislation to the committee and answers any questions posed by committee members, the committee chair will begin calling names for people to provide testimony. When your name is called, stand up, take a breath and walk to the front of the room. Committee members will be seated across from you and there will be a podium or lectern for speakers addressing them.

Because you're a leader of a successful Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter, you know the key to success in any situation is proper planning and preparation. So of course you've written down your testimony and practiced it a few times in front of other chapter members and maybe a roommate or two. (Writing your testimony is also important because you are allowed to share copies with all members of the committee, even those that aren't there to hear you deliver your message personally.) And because you've read, lived and breathed this

handy guide, you know how to develop and share an impactful message that states the problem, the solution and the action you're persuading committee members to take (there's that good old PSA again).

All that is left to do is speak. When providing your testimony, body language and tone are important. You're testifying because you care about an issue — let your passion show in an appropriate manner that conveys your convictions without seeming angry or judgmental. Contrary to popular belief, lawmakers are people too, and they will appreciate your impassioned yet respectful tone, or at the very least take note of it. Although you're expected to refer back to your written testimony, maintain as much eye contact as possible with all the committee members. Stand straight and proud — you're sharing your opinions with the people who can directly change or even create laws. This is kind of a big deal.

Depending on time constraints, only one representative from each organization may be allowed to testify during a hearing. Or perhaps other chapter members aren't comfortable with public speaking quite yet. Whatever the case may be, there's one other thing your chapter can do at a committee hearing: fill the room. Having a strong turn out from your organization during the committee hearing demonstrates your group is organized and active — two traits that prove your credibility and help committee members take your points more seriously. Although signs are typically not allowed in committee hearings, chapter members can show their solidarity by wearing TFNEF shirts (yet another perk of being a formally recognized student group!) and sitting together like the proud team you are.

## WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD: THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Now that we've explained the importance of organized groups engaging in grassroots lobbying to advance a legislative agenda that addresses our community's concerns and needs, it's only fair that we give you a few examples of this work in action. And to be honest, we here at TFNEF have earned some bragging rights.

Since public education is the foundation for a free and democratic society, TFNEF takes strengthening our public schools pretty seriously. That's why we're so concerned by the reckless actions of the Texas State Board of Education. Let us explain.

The State Board of Education (known as the SBOE) is a 15-member body, with members serving four-year terms. Roughly half of the members are up for election every two years. The governor appoints one of those 15 members to serve as board chair. The chair is limited to two, two-year terms and his or her appointment must be confirmed by the Texas Senate.

SBOE members represent enormous districts — far larger than state House or Senate districts. Just to give you an idea, SBOE District 15 encompasses 77 counties. Yep, you heard us right — 77. District 1 covers 40 counties and stretches from El Paso all the way to the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. That's a handful of individuals — 15 people — with each representing a large population. Altogether, these 15 members manage a public education system that includes more than 1,000 school districts with about 5 million students.

What compounds the problematic nature of this set up is that very few Texans know about the SBOE or that they elect its members (a knowledge gap TFNEF is working hard to close — with your help).

But perhaps what's most troubling is what the SBOE is responsible for. The SBOE is charged with approving and adopting curriculum standards and textbooks for public schools across the state. That means the SBOE guides the education of every public school student in Texas. To put it a bit differently, the SBOE determines what every public school student must learn in every subject from kindergarten through high school graduation!

That's a lot of power. And boy, has the SBOE abused it.

For example, the board has rejected including critical information about condoms and other forms of contraception and disease prevention in health education textbooks. That means health textbooks used in most Texas classrooms today take a failed abstinence-only-until-marriage approach when discussing sexuality and health. And that's in a state with one of the highest teen birth rates in the nation.

It gets worse. Right-wing SBOE members have also rewritten state curriculum standards in an effort to promote their own personal and political opinions in social studies and science classrooms. The state's social studies standards, for example, suggest separation of church and state isn't a key constitutional principle, play down the role of slavery in causing the Civil War, distort the real history of the struggle for civil rights and women's equality and promote right-wing heroes. The curriculum standards for science include requirements that creationists on the SBOE hope will force teachers to tell students that evolution isn't established mainstream science.

Fortunately, TFNEF and our coalition partners have limited the damage caused by SBOE members. For example, we have exposed the lies, myths and misinformation taught in abstinence-only sex education programs throughout Texas. In addition, our Stand Up for Science campaign has ensured that science textbooks in Texas classrooms today don't water down and distort

the overwhelming evidence supporting evolution. More broadly, we have publicized the efforts of SBOE members to hijack the education of millions of Texas kids and use our state's public schools to promote a radical political agenda. As a result, growing public frustration and anger has brought some important changes to the SBOE and loosened the grip that far-right extremists have had on it.





# ELECTORAL ORGANIZING: HOW YOUR STUDENT CHAPTER CAN ELECT LEADERS

By now you know how to organize your campus like a champ and have mastered the art of advocacy. That means you've officially learned two sections of the Wellstone Triangle: community organizing and public policy. But we still have one more piece to cover to ensure you have the power to implement the solutions your community needs: electoral politics.

Unless we're able to elect people to public office who understand and support our ideals, we're leaving power on the table. Chances are that abandoned power will be snatched up by a candidate who doesn't share our vision for the future. So once you've organized your community and identified issues that should be a priority, it's time to help a candidate who is aligned with your chapter's platform get elected. TFNEF can provide information on how to engage in electoral organizing. This information applies to anyone interested in electoral politics. However, because young people are particularly underrepresented in the voting populace, our focus is on registering and turning out young voters. And the Texas Freedom Network is here to help you do just that.

Let's start at the beginning, shall we? People can't vote unless they're registered. Which brings us to:

## VOTER REGISTRATION

As it might pain you to remember, Texas ranks dead last in civic engagement. This point is illustrated in full effect when we look at voter registration figures from recent past elections. Brace yourself: less than 60 percent of voting-eligible Texans, ages 18-29, were registered to vote. But you're here to change that.

By registering people to vote, you're empowering them to perform their civic duty and have a say in who makes the decisions that affect them directly. After you've registered potential voters, you're also able to reach out to them to make sure they're aware of opportunities to get involved and stay informed about the issues TFNEF champions. You can invite them to your student chapter meetings when appropriate and build your group's base of support. What's more, you'll be able to remind them to vote once early voting, absentee voting, vote by mail, or election day rolls around.

Texas requires that voters be registered at least 30 days before election day, so time's a-wastin'. Let's get you registering other young people stat.

## BECOMING A DEPUTY VOTER REGISTRAR

Here's the deal: because voting is a civil right, Texas requires that anyone who is registering people to vote becomes a deputy voter registrar. As long as you're 18 years old, haven't failed to return a completed voter application to the Voter Registrar (we'll get to what this means in a second), and have never been convicted of a felony, you're eligible to serve as a deputy voter registrar in Texas. Although the title is a mouthful, the process is pretty painless.

First, you must identify the counties in which you want to be able to register people to vote. This is important because you must be a deputy voter registrar in each county you want to register potential voters. You can narrow the list of possible counties down by focusing on the top 2 or 3 that are closest to your college campus, or ones in which a lot of your fellow students live.

Once you know what counties you're targeting, call each county's voter registrar. This office is usually part of the county's office of tax assessor and collector (exciting stuff, we know). You'll be able to arrange a time to come to the office and receive the training you need to become deputized. You're making the lives of the voter registrar staff easier by registering people to vote — so they'll be happy to see you. In fact, if you have a considerable number of people who want to get deputized — let's say your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter — the county office can sometimes make arrangements to come to you. Once you've completed the training, the voter reg-

istrar will issue you a certificate of appointment along with voter registration applications.

As a deputy voter registrar, you're able to distribute and accept completed registration applications from residents of a county (as long as you've been deputized in that county). You will also be able to accept applications for requesting a change of information, like a change in name, residence address, or mailing address.

After someone has completed an application form, you will fill out a receipt and give it to the applicant. In some counties you'll want to hang on to the duplicate receipt because it has to be delivered to the county's voter registrar along with the application. This is a real sticking point: you must turn in any collected voter registration applications to the respective county office in person no later than 5 p.m. five days after the application is completed. While this may seem like bureaucratic red tape, it's actually very significant because the person is only eligible to vote 30 days after the application is turned in to the voter registrar.

In other words: the sooner you return completed applications, the sooner people will be able to vote. Can you imagine completing a registration application, showing up on election day excited to cast your ballot and be heard, only to be sent away because your application wasn't turned in on time by the deputy voter registrar? It wouldn't exactly instill your faith in democracy, would it? That's why you must return all applications to the county office within five days after their completion. Not to get too technical here or belabor the point, but it's also important to know that failure to deliver applications within five days is a criminal offense.

We realize that being asked to volunteer as a deputy voter registrar and then being threatened with legal action doesn't necessarily create an incentive. But remember, you and your chapter members will receive a detailed training from the voter registrar of every county you decide to register people in. If you ever find yourself in a situation you're unsure of, you can always call us at TFNEF. We've got your back. If we're not official enough for you, the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State can be reached at 1.800.252.VOTE (8683) or by visiting [www.sos.state.tx.us](http://www.sos.state.tx.us). Registering young people to vote in Texas is the single most important and strategic thing we can do to fight back against the radical right's attacks on our public schools, individual liberties and religious freedom. Your service as a deputy voter registrar is invaluable.

What's more, once you and your fellow student chapter members have been deputized, the next step is a cake walk: planning registration drives on campus. You know the drill: secure tabling locations from your student activities office, or get creative and see if you can have permission from a professor to register the students in his or her class, or ask a Resident Assistant if you can register the students in their dorm. Whatever

the tactics might be, once you have a plan, begin to recruit deputized members for volunteer shifts. Alert all your followers and followers on Facebook and Twitter where they can go to register to vote on campus. Write up a script using the PSA model. Throw on your TFNEF T-shirts and grab some clipboards, registration applications, your receipt book, and whatever other materials you may need to promote your student chapter.

## VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Once you've registered voters, you've empowered them to cast their ballots during elections. That's the first step in helping Texas shed its prestigious ranking as the least civically engaged state in the country. But there's still work to be done.

Once you've registered voters, it's important to interact with them so they're aware of who and what are on the ballot and so that the idea of voting stays relevant to them. This is commonly referred to as voter engagement in the biz. There are two ways you can engage voters through your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter — pledge to vote cards and voter guides.

Pledge cards are exactly what they sound like (Don't you love it when that happens?): a postcard that a voter signs pledging to vote in the upcoming election. You'll mail these cards back to voters prior to the election to remind them of their promise to vote. Unlike voter registration forms, pledge cards aren't "official" government documents. Rather, pledge cards are used both to capture information from voters so you can turn them out to vote and to serve as a personal reminder to voters that they promised to show up to the polls on election day. It's a classic two-fer.

Contact information like a voter's cell phone number, email address, and residential address is the equivalent of gold when engaging voters. So make sure to record the information provided on the pledge card into your data spreadsheet. This ensures that even if the pledge cards

get lost in the shuffle, you're still able to contact those voters to turn them out on election day.

While pledge cards aren't official government documents, research has shown that people are more likely to follow through with a promise if they've committed to it on paper. This makes sense when you think about it: everybody wants to be able to keep their word, right? What's more, studies have also shown that voters are much more likely to vote if their signed pledge card is returned to them a few days before election day. There's nothing like seeing your own John Hancock on the dotted line to compel you to keep a promise. TFNEF will work with you to mail the pledge cards that you've collected back to the voters who signed them.

Voter guides are the other key tool for voter engagement, and they, too are exactly what they sound like: a guide created by an organization to help voters, well, vote. The Texas Freedom Network Education Fund publishes a voter guide and usually posts it online. Depending upon the organization, voter guides might include information about primary elections, or they might only focus on general elections. Similarly, some voter guides focus strictly on local races, whereas others zero in on federal elections.

If a voter guide is developed and distributed by a non-profit organization, it will contain nonpartisan information about offices on the ballot during a particular election year, as well as summaries of ballot initiatives or propositions. Some voter guides may also provide details about all the candidates and where they stand on issues in a neutral, nonpartisan manner. The purpose of voter guides produced and circulated by nonprofit organizations is to inform voters about what offices and issues they will be able to vote on during any given election, not who to vote for or how to vote.

On the other hand, voter guides created by political, or partisan, organizations often are focused on a specific issue and list the group's endorsed candidates. These voter guides are usually shared with an organization's membership and are intended to tell people who to vote



for because of a candidate's stance on a relevant issue. The Texas Freedom Network, for example, has produced guides for its own members that endorse candidates in elections for the State Board of Education.

Whether nonpartisan or overtly political, voter guides are a handy tool for understanding who is running for what office during an election. As yet another perk of being a formally recognized student organization, TFNEF will be sure to send information on non-partisan voter guides your way to share with fellow chapter members and students you've registered to vote and/or from whom you have collected a signed pledge card.

## GOTV (GET OUT THE VOTE)

You're deputized in three different counties and have registered every student on campus accordingly. They've all signed a pledge card and have received a voter guide, which they promptly read front to back. But for our movement to showcase our power, one more thing has to happen: the people we have engaged have to vote.

Since ensuring our friends turn out in large numbers to vote is so critical to our movement's success, significant time and energy has been dedicated to figuring out how we can maximize our get out the vote (GOTV) efforts. As always, we at TFNEF are here to share these tried and true approaches with you.

Although this may seem obvious, the first step to running a strong GOTV operation is knowing when people are able to vote in your state. Back in olden times election day was just one day. The advent of early voting and absentee ballots now means voting may begin days or even weeks before the "traditional" election day. Giving people more time and options to vote is a good thing — it allows more people to participate in our democracy. From an organizing perspective, it means you need to know how and when people can vote so you're able to reach out to them in a timely and effective manner.

Once you've determined when you should reach out to the voters you've registered and engaged, you need to figure out how you'll contact them. For years, GOTV operations were guided by the notion that people weren't voting because they had forgotten about the election. As a result, our GOTV message focused on reminding people to vote. Makes sense, right? If people are forgetting to vote, they just need a reminder.

Turns out we were wrong. People don't forget to vote, nor do they forget an election is happening. Rather, people don't vote because organizers haven't spent the time learning about the problems that keep people up at night. No one has shown them that electing candidates who care about their issues is a credible solution to their concerns. That's right — no one has engaged them in a PSA conversation.

What's more, many people are intimidated by the process of voting or don't believe their "one vote" can make a real difference. Hopelessness, intimidation, apathy: these are the real barriers that prevent people from voting — not simple forgetfulness.

As a student leader, it's up to you and your chapter officers and members to contact every person in your database in a meaningful and effective way to ensure they get out and vote. And it's up to us at TFNEF to give you the tools to do just that.

Call it what you want: block walking, door knocking, canvassing. No matter how you spin it, experts at The Analyst Institute found that having face-to-face conversations with voters at their doors is the single most effective way to ensure they vote. Block-walking is even more effective if you're able to assign similar canvassers to the people you're reaching out to. For example, students are more likely to vote if they are contacted by another student, just



like senior citizens who are met at their doors by other senior citizens will show up at the polls in higher rates.

Calling through your database, or phone-banking, to have a conversation about voting is another effective way to turn out people you've registered to vote.

As you might have guessed, the reason why block-walking and phone-banking are so effective at persuading voters to go the polls is because they are personal approaches. Unlike a flyer thumbtacked to a bulletin board or a text message, block-walking and phone-banking allow voters to have an interactive exchange with someone who is like them and who they believe shares their concerns and cares about their future.

Although organizing a block walk or phone bank so your chapter can connect with all of the people in your database and encourage them to vote may seem daunting, a little preparation goes a long way (just like when planning any other event for your chapter).

Whether you're running a block walk or a phone bank, you'll need to find a place to "launch," or start, the event -- a kind of home base. In the case of a block walk, this is where all your chapter members will meet



right before they start knocking on doors. They'll pick up their walk lists, review and practice the script with a partner and be on their merry way. This is also where canvassers will return after they've knocked on all their assigned doors to document their results. If you're organizing a phone bank, this is a room where everyone can pull out their cell phones and start dialing after they've reviewed the script and have received their phone lists. At the end of the phone bank, this is also where members can plug their results into the chapter's database (more on walk and phone lists, the importance of timely data entry, and scripts in a minute, we promise).

After you've located rooms to launch from, develop a schedule and start advertising volunteer shifts to your chapter members so they can pitch in and sign up. Both block-walking and phone-banking shifts are typically two or three hours long with another 30 minutes tacked on for training and debriefing. When determining what dates and times are best for door-knocking or calling, think about your audience. Does that sound familiar? Anticipating your audience's needs is just as relevant for GOTV as it is when developing a message or prepping for a meeting with an elected official. In this instance, reaching out on a Friday night during a homecoming game is probably going to leave you with a lot of unanswered doors and voicemails. Early afternoon on a weekend or even after 5:00 p.m. on a weekday may be a different story entirely.

Once you've recruited enough members to fill all your volunteer slots, it's time to pull together your walk and phone lists. TFNEF staff will likely handle this part for you, but while we're at it, we'll show you how it's done. When organizing lists for block walks, group people by their residential address so volunteers can visit the maximum amount of doors in the least amount of time. Efficiency is critical to GOTV since we're up against a ticking clock — election day (or the end of early voting) will come sooner than you think. Wherever/Whenever possible, group people by neighborhood or even floor-by-floor within a dorm or apartment complex.

While the formatting of both walk and phone lists can vary based on how your chapter's data is organized, the lists must have the following information so you're not sending your members into the proverbial dark: full name, phone number (for a phone-bank), and address (for a block-walk).

You'll also want to leave room for the members who are volunteering to note how the phone call or door-knock went for each person on their list. For example, was the volunteer able to speak with the potential voter? Or did the volunteer have to leave a message?

This is the information members will put into your chapter's database at the end of each shift. Inevitably you'll encounter a volunteer who is less than thrilled to be entering data. It's a fair point. We get it. However, making sure your database is up-to-date with everyone's current status prevents people who have already voted from receiving another knock or call, which is annoying for them and a waste of resources for you. Most importantly, an accurate database ensures people aren't skipped over and don't vote because they never received an encouraging phone call or door knock in the home stretch. Daily data entry matters. Period.

Now you know what to do before and after a block-walk or phone bank. But if GOTV isn't about reminding the people we've worked so hard to register to get out and vote, what do you say when folks actually pick up their phones or answer their doors? We're glad you asked.

Here's an example of a traditional (and ineffective) non-partisan GOTV script. When reading, indulge us and imagine this message being relayed to you at two-hundred words a minute to experience the full effect:

*"Hi Sue,*

*This is Javier, a volunteer from the Texas Rising campaign.*

*We're calling folks tonight to remind you that tomorrow is election day. Are you planning to vote?*

*Great! You vote at Hobart Elementary School and the polls are open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. We're expecting low turnout tomorrow so every vote counts.*

*Thanks again for taking the time to vote, and have a great evening!"*

End scene. That was painful, no? If people respond best to personal approaches, this rushed and robotic script just rendered phone banking pretty ineffective.

But thanks to The Analyst Institute, we now know bet-

ter. In fact, they've identified five tips to creating effective, inspiring and, yes, personalized GOTV scripts. Of course, we're sharing these tips with you. (Sharing is caring, after all.)

Perhaps the best-kept secret to writing an effective GOTV script is recognizing that people innately yearn to be part of something bigger than themselves. At heart, we are herd animals and want to be part of the crowd. For years, scripts emphasized low turnout and then did an about-face by asking voters to show up. In other words, it's like someone telling you they're really nervous about a party they're throwing because no one has RSVP'd and then asking you to come. Being the only person at the party isn't exactly a strong motivator to attend, is it? So instead of downplaying turnout at the polls, let people know that voting makes them part of a larger movement — oh, and everyone is going to be there.

You also want to incorporate accountability into a GOTV script. Remember how pledge cards are effective tools for engaging voters because people want to keep their word? Reminding voters of their personal commitment to vote during a GOTV conversation increases turnout at the polls. You can't get more effective than that.

This next tip is driven by the concept of aspirational testing, or the idea that people actually like to be their best selves. If we create a voter identity that empowers people to feel like strong citizens by voting, they are more inclined to vote.

You may have heard the expression "all politics are local." Just like students are more inclined to vote if another student asks them as opposed to a person 20 or 30 years their senior, including local ties when writing GOTV scripts inserts a level of familiarity into the conversation that voters can relate to and will respond to.

Research shows voters who have a plan to vote are more likely to do it. Knowing this, GOTV scripts are an opportunity for you to engage voters in visualizing how they will get to the polls by asking questions like, "when are you planning to vote?" or, "what time of the day do you traditionally vote?" or, "how will you get to your polling place?" While you don't want to bombard someone by listing all these questions at once, strategically asking one or two questions will allow the voter to visualize that day and help her or him make a plan to vote.

Let's look at an effective GOTV script that incorporates all the findings of The Analyst Institute. As you're reading, try and highlight how each tip is used.

*"Hi Sue, this is Javier.*

*I'm a volunteer in the Whittier neighborhood calling from the Texas Rising campaign.*

*Thank you for registering to vote.*

*Since you are the kind of person who votes and cares about the community, we want to let you*

*know that this election is a great opportunity to highlight young voters and their concerns.*

*Can we count on your vote on November 4?*

*Great! We are calling people in Whittier and it looks like a lot of people will be voting this year. It's an exciting election, and your vote can really make the difference.*

*Your polling place is Hobart Elementary on Fairfax. On election day, polls are open from 7am to 7pm. Do you know when you might go to vote? In the morning, afternoon, or evening? (Pause for response)*

*So do you think you'll head to the polling place from your home, work, or somewhere else? Do you know how you'll get there? Great!*

*Again, thank you for being a good citizen who votes, and for your promise to vote this year."*

You probably feel differently after reading this version than when you read the traditional ineffective GOTV script. You probably feel better. Let's examine why.

Right off the bat, this script grounds the volunteer, Javier, to the voter, Sue, by establishing a shared local connection — the Whittier neighborhood.

By thanking Sue for registering to vote and then linking voting to how much she cares about her community, Javier is building a positive aspirational identity that makes it clear voting is a good thing to do.

Javier then asks Sue, "Can we count on your vote on November 4?" This language establishes a personal commitment Sue is making to herself and the campaign, incorporating accountability into the conversation.

Javier then reminds Sue that she is part of a larger movement, or part of the "herd," because there will be high turnout in Whittier this election year. By saying her vote could make the difference in this race, Javier reinforces Sue's positive aspirational identity as a voter with the power to impact change.

Javier helps Sue visualize a plan to vote by asking her strategic questions about the logistics of getting to the polls.

When Javier ends the call by thanking Sue for being a good citizen who votes and thanks her again for her promise to vote this year, he simultaneously reiterates her positive aspirational identity as a voter and her commitment to the campaign, locking in the accountability factor.

And that's why you may have felt a little warm and fuzzy after reading this version of the script.

Ultimately, effective GOTV comes down to having repeated personal conversations with the people you've registered to vote. These conversations should be motivating and provide them with the information they need to perform their civic duty and vote.

**We've officially come full circle.**

From organizing your local Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter to advocating on behalf of the issues facing your community to helping ensure that young voters have more power than they have in the past, you have successfully navigated community organizing, public policy and electoral politics.

**You know how to do this work.**

**Now let's remember why we're doing it.**

We face an enormous challenge. Texas is the least civically engaged state in the country. But we also have an unprecedented opportunity: young people like you make up nearly a quarter of the state's eligible voters.

In order for us to create a Texas we can all be proud of, a state that passes laws that match our values, young people must register to vote and show our power at the polls.

**Texas is rising, and we're glad to have you with us.**



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