

Introduction

This handbook is designed to help Libertarian candidates navigate the practical realities of running for office. It provides planning tools, checklists, worksheets, and guidance to help you organize your campaign, understand key requirements, and use your time, money, and energy effectively. This handbook is based not only on theory, but on real-world experience in campaigning, public engagement, and candidate support.

Running for office at any level is time-consuming. It places real demands on you, your family, your friends, and your supporters. If you choose to run, commit to seeing it through to the end.

A campaign is an opportunity not only to seek office, but also to apply Libertarian principles to real-world concerns. It gives you the chance to introduce those ideas to voters, open doors to future conversations, and build lasting local relationships. Whether you are running to win, to promote Libertarian principles, or to achieve ballot access, you should be clear from the beginning about what you want your campaign to accomplish.

Different races require different approaches. A high-level partisan race is not the same as a local non-partisan race. Focus on your issues. Find your style. Identify the date that marks your finish line, whether that is Election Day, a filing deadline, or a petition deadline, and build your timeline by working backward from it.

Politics is often a matter of basic human interaction and human judgment. Many candidates and activists are not naturally comfortable speaking with the public, and that is normal. Listening first is essential. People want to feel heard before they are willing to hear you, and strong public engagement begins with asking good questions, paying attention, and understanding what matters most to them before trying to persuade them. Voters often make quick judgments about whether you seem respectful, calm, sincere, informed, and worth listening to. You are not just presenting ideas. You are building trust.

Appearance matters as well. You do not need to be artificial or overly polished, but you should present yourself in a way that shows respect for the office, the setting, and the people you are speaking to. The way you dress, carry yourself, and show up in public shapes first impressions before you say a word. Be presentable, approachable, and aware that delivery often determines whether you are dismissed or taken seriously.

This handbook is a guide, not a substitute for action. Reach out to the Candidate Support Committee for advice. Connect with your state affiliate. Find Libertarians who have run before and ask questions. Many are willing to help when they have relevant experience, but every campaign is ultimately a self-starting endeavor. Building a strong core group of people around you will make a meaningful difference.

Define what winning means for you and your campaign, then work toward it with discipline and purpose.

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1.0 Getting Started and Race Research

Before you begin active campaigning, take time to understand the race you are entering and the requirements that come with it. The first steps of a campaign should focus on ballot access, timelines, party resources, and support networks.

1.1 Initial Steps

1.2 Contact Your State Affiliate and Local Libertarian Organizations

Your state Libertarian Party affiliate and any local Libertarian organizations in your area can be valuable early partners. Record their information below:

Organization	Contact	Phone/Email	Notes

1.3 Contact the National Candidate Support Committee

The Candidate Support Committee (CSC) of the Libertarian National Committee is your primary point of contact for national resources. The CSC provides mentorship, access to toolkits, guidance on ballot access, and campaign support.

Email: CandidateSupportCommittee@lp.org

Action Item: Contact the CSC early. Introduce yourself, describe your race, and ask about available resources. If this is your first campaign, request a copy of the Candidate Quick Start Guide.

1.4 Secure Ballot Access

You are not officially a candidate until you are on the ballot. Filing rules differ by level of office:

Level of Office	Typical Requirements	Candidate Notes
Local	Simple filings or modest petition signature totals	
County	Larger petition requirements	
State	Thousands of valid signatures and strict filing deadlines	
Federal	Complex filings and full FEC oversight	

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1.5 How to Find Past Election Results

Reviewing past election results helps you calculate your WIN NUMBER and understand voter turnout.

Fill in the table below with past election data:

Year	Office	Turnout	Notes

1.6 Quick Start Checklist

Done	Task	Candidate Notes
☐	Contact your state affiliate and local Libertarian organizations	
☐	Contact the CSC	
☐	Confirm ballot access requirements and deadlines	
☐	File initial paperwork or begin petitioning	
☐	Recruit a Treasurer and review campaign finance rules	
☐	Research past election results	
☐	Select a race that matches your resources and goals	

2.0 Campaign Setup, Registration, Banking, and Compliance Foundation

Compliance keeps your campaign credible and legal. It can also be one of the hardest areas of a campaign to navigate. Discuss responsibilities with your Treasurer, open a dedicated campaign bank account when required, and follow reporting rules carefully. Do not hesitate to contact the appropriate local, state, or federal authority with questions based on the race you are running. Confirm requirements with your clerk, state election office, campaign finance agency, Secretary of State, or the FEC, as applicable.

2.1 Committee Naming, Registration, Banking, EIN, and Donation Platforms

Before raising or spending campaign funds, confirm what filings, registrations, and banking steps are required for your race. Campaign finance rules differ depending on the office you are seeking and the jurisdiction you are running in. Federal, state, and local candidates may face different requirements for committee formation, registration, reporting, banking, and fundraising platforms.

Many campaigns are required to establish a candidate committee or other campaign entity before accepting contributions or making expenditures. In some jurisdictions, the candidate committee must be formally registered before opening a bank account or beginning campaign activity. Confirm when a committee must be created, what it must be called, and which filing authority has jurisdiction.

Choosing a committee name is an important early step. Make sure the name is clear, easy to remember, and relevant to the office you are seeking. In some races, a simple format such as [Candidate Name] Committee or Committee to Elect [Candidate Name] may be appropriate. In other races, a format such as [Candidate Name] for Governor or [Candidate Name] for Mayor may be more appropriate. Review registered committees in your state or locality for naming ideas, and make sure the final name is used consistently across your filings, bank records, and donation platforms.

Campaigns may also need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for banking, tax, or registration purposes. Confirm whether an EIN is required, what committee or political designation should be used, and what information must be in place before registration or banking can be completed. Depending on the race, your campaign may also receive a federal, state, or local committee identification number that should be recorded and used consistently on filings and related accounts.

Before opening a campaign bank account, confirm whether the account must be opened in the name of the committee, the candidate, or another authorized campaign entity under applicable law. Record the bank name, account information, and any required depository details for disclosure and reporting purposes. Confirm whether separate rules apply to deposits, expenditures, petty cash, electronic payment platforms, transfers, and required signatories.

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Candidates may also want to open an account on a donation website or fundraising platform. Before doing so, make sure the platform is able to accept political donations and is appropriate for the type of race you are running. In many cases, the committee name, EIN, bank information, and related compliance details must be in place before the account can be set up and used properly to receive donations. Confirm that the platform's settings, disclosures, reporting features, and transfer procedures are consistent with the rules that apply to your campaign.

Because requirements vary, verify applicable federal, state, and local laws before opening accounts, filing forms, accepting donations, or making expenditures. When in doubt, ask questions early rather than trying to correct mistakes later.

2.2 Banking and Registration Record

Item	Information to Record	Notes
Candidate Name		
Office Sought		
Jurisdiction		
Committee Name		
Treasurer Name		
Filing Authority		
Date Committee Created		
Date Committee Registered		
EIN		
Committee ID		
Bank Name		
Bank Branch or Address		
Account Name		
Account Opened Date		

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Donation Platform Login/URL		
Reporting Schedule		
Deposit Requirements Confirmed		
Expenditure Rules Confirmed		
Electronic Payment Rules Confirmed		

2.3 Campaign Setup Checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Confirm whether a campaign committee is required	
☐	Confirm when the committee must be created or registered	
☐	Choose a committee name that is clear, memorable, and appropriate for the office sought	
☐	Review registered committees in your state or locality for naming ideas	
☐	Identify the correct filing authority	
☐	Determine whether an EIN is required	
☐	Confirm the correct campaign or political designation for registration purposes	
☐	Obtain the correct campaign identification numbers	
☐	Confirm how the bank account must be titled	
☐	Open the campaign bank account, if required	
☐	Record bank and depository information	
☐	Confirm whether a donation platform can accept political contributions	

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☐	Enter committee, EIN, and bank information before activating donations	
☐	Confirm deposit and expenditure rules	
☐	Verify reporting deadlines and disclosure requirements	

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2.4 Treasurer Duties and Agreements

Done	Duty	Notes
☐	Open and manage the campaign bank account	
☐	Record all contributions and expenses	
☐	File required reports on time	
☐	Maintain receipts and documentation	
☐	Confirm contribution limits and sources allowed	

2.5 Donation Handling Rules

Done	Requirement	Notes
☐	Cash donations limited by law, deposit promptly	
☐	Checks/cards preferred for audit trail	
☐	Confirm if CashApp/Venmo are allowed in your state	
☐	Record donor name and address	
☐	Record occupation and employer when required	
☐	Track date and amount for each donation	
☐	Monitor contribution limits per donor	

2.6 Compliance Contacts

Office	Website or Contact	Notes
Local Clerk		
County Election Office		
Secretary of State		
FEC (Federal)	www.fec.gov	

3.0 Campaign Planning and Goal Setting

Every campaign begins with a plan. Even small races require organization, clear goals, and disciplined execution. The three cornerstones of your plan are:

1. WIN NUMBER - how many votes you need to win.
2. FUNDRAISING GOAL - how much money you must raise.
3. CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE - who will manage the work.

Fill in your campaign goals below:

Category	Target	Notes
Vote Goal		
Fundraising Goal		
Campaign Manager		

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4.0 Budgeting and Resource Planning

Your budget is the financial roadmap of your race. Focus spending on activities that directly reach voters. Track every dollar for compliance and decision making.

4.1 Typical Expense Ranges

Category	Local	County	State	Federal
Filing Fee	\$0-100	\$50-200	\$100-1,000	\$1,000+
Flyers/ Literature	\$600	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
Yard Signs	\$750	\$3,000	\$10,000	\$25,000
Direct Mail	\$250	\$5,000	\$25,000	\$150,000
Digital Ads	\$0	\$1,000	\$5,000	\$50,000

4.2 Budget Worksheet

Category	Amount	Notes
Filing Fee		
Palm Cards and Flyers		
Yard Signs		
Direct Mail		
Digital Ads		
Community Events		
Other		
Total		

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5.0 Fundraising Plan

Fundraising pays for the tools to reach voters. It is about inviting people who share your values to invest in your candidacy and message.

5.1 Fundraising Checklist

Done	Task	Candidate Notes
☐	Set a fundraising goal	
☐	Build donor list (friends, family, community)	
☐	Schedule weekly fundraising calls	
☐	Plan fundraising events	
☐	Track donations and pledges	

5.2 Fundraising Goals by Office Level

Level	Typical Range	Candidate Goal
Local	\$500 - \$10,000	
County	\$10,000 - \$50,000	
State	\$20,000 - \$500,000	
Federal	\$500,000+	

5.3 Donor Tracking Sheet

Name	Address	Occupation	Employer	Date	Amount

5.4 Weekly Fundraising Tracking

Week	Calls Made	Pledges	Donations Collected	Notes
Week 1				
Week 2				
Week 3				
Week 4				
Week 5				

6.0 Communications and Message Development

Your communications strategy is how you tell your story and connect with voters. Keep it clear, local, and relatable.

6.1 Building Your Campaign Message

Question	Your Answer
Who are you?	
What office are you running for?	
Why should voters support you?	
One-Sentence Campaign Message	

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6.2 Issues & Talking Points

Issue	Campaign Position	Local Relevance	Notes

6.3 Local Media Contact List

Outlet	Contact	Email	Phone	Notes

6.4 Communications Checklist

Done	Task	Candidate Notes
☐	Draft a one-sentence message	
☐	Build local media contact list	
☐	Reach out to local businesses	
☐	Create a campaign Facebook page	
☐	Prepare message guide	
☐	Identify top 2-3 local issues	
☐	Attend citizen comment periods at meetings	

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7.0 Digital Strategy

Digital outreach lets you connect with voters at low cost. Choose a small set of platforms you can manage consistently. Keep your online presence aligned with your public persona and local priorities.

7.1 Platform Planner by Office Level

Office Level	Primary Platforms	Posting Frequency	
Local	Facebook Page	4-5 posts per week	Local groups, Resident pages, Events
County	Facebook, Instagram, simple website	4-5 posts per week	Local groups, Resident pages, Events
State	Website, email list, Twitter/X	6-7 posts per week	Statewide consistency
Federal	Full stack social, YouTube, podcasts	Daily	Professional scheduling

7.2 Campaign Website and Dedicated Email

Element	Requirement	Your Notes
Domain	Short and memorable	
Email	Dedicated address on domain if possible	
Bio	Family, work, service, credibility	
Issues	Top 3-4 local priorities	
Donate & Volunteer	Visible buttons and forms	

7.3 Weekly Content Schedule

Day	Platform	Topic	Asset Needed	Posted	Notes
Mon			Photo / Video / Text	☐	
Tue			Photo / Video / Text	☐	
Wed			Photo / Video / Text	☐	
Thu			Photo / Video / Text	☐	
Fri			Photo / Video / Text	☐	

7.4 Quick Digital Strategy Checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Choose 2-3 platforms to manage	
☐	Build a simple website	
☐	Set up a dedicated campaign email	
☐	Create a Facebook Page for the campaign	
☐	Draft a weekly posting schedule	
☐	Collect emails and phone numbers at events	
☐	Record a 1-minute intro video	

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8.0 Field Plan and Voter Contact

Your field plan is how you reach voters directly. While mailers, ads, and debates matter, nothing replaces the impact of personal contact, knocking on doors, making calls, and meeting people in your community.

8.1 Field Plan Checklist

Done	Task	Candidate Notes
☐	Calculate your vote goal and break it down	
☐	Exceed ballot access requirements	
☐	Obtain voter file from clerk/office/affiliate	
☐	Schedule canvassing, phone banking, events	
☐	Develop a short message guide	
☐	Track weekly outreach goals	

8.2 Weekly Voter Outreach Tracking

Week	Doors Knocked	Calls Made	Events Attended	Notes
Week 1				
Week 2				
Week 3				
Week 4				
Week 5				

8.3 Precinct/Neighborhood Targeting

Precinct	Voter Goal	Actual	Notes
Precinct 1			
Precinct 2			
Precinct 3			

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9.0 Appendices and Resources

9.1 Key Contacts and Links

Resource	Contact/URL	Notes
Candidate Support Committee (CSC)	CandidateSupportCommittee@lp.org	Mentorship and training
FEC	www.fec.gov	Federal compliance
State Election Office	www.usa.gov/election-office	State rules and forms
Local Clerk		Ballot access and filings
State Affiliate		Local organizing and candidate support

9.2 Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

[Candidate Name] Announces Run for [Office]

[City, State] | [Candidate Name], a [short bio], announced today their candidacy for [Office].

"I am running because [insert top 2-3 priorities, such as fixing roads, lowering taxes, or improving schools]."

Contact: [Name], [Phone], [Email]

9.3 Sample Canvassing Script

"Hello, I'm [Your Name], and I'm running for [Office].

I'm talking with voters about the issues that matter most in our community. What concerns are most important to you right now?

I'm focused on [roads, water quality, taxes, schools], and I want to make sure your voice is heard.

Election Day is [date], and I hope I can earn your support."

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9.4 Master Candidate Checklist

Done	Task	Notes
☐	Contact your state affiliate	
☐	Contact the CSC	
☐	Verify ballot access and deadlines	
☐	Recruit Treasurer and open bank account	
☐	Draft one-sentence campaign message	
☐	Identify top 2-3 local issues	
☐	Build campaign calendar	
☐	Create campaign Facebook page and dedicated email	
☐	Print flyers and order signs (source locally where possible)	
☐	Speak at citizen comment periods	
☐	Track donations and expenses weekly	
☐	File reports on time	
☐	Set weekly field and fundraising goals	
☐	Review compliance rules with Treasurer	
☐	Confirm disclaimer language on materials	

Created by Sean Kennedy, Vice Chair of the Candidate Support Committee, drawing from practical experience in campaigning, public engagement, and candidate support, 2026.