

Fighting For Liberty 24/7

Missouri
Libertarian
Party

Glenn Nielsen
State Chair



Working on Issues - Benefits

- Build relationships with the media
- Build relationships with like minded individuals and organizations
- Learn by doing, many skills learned will help with candidate campaigns
- Show voters that libertarians are working hard on issues they care about
- Recruit new party members and activists

Picking An Issue

- Local news
- Local government agendas and meeting minutes
- Libertarian principles are clear
- No organized opposition
- Hot issue
- Natural constituency
- Work one issue at a time

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."



Wendell Phillips, (1811-1884), abolitionist, orator and columnist for *The Liberator*, in a speech before the Massachusetts Antislavery Society in 1852.

Columbia Daily Tribune

11/21/04 - Anti-smoking group fires up campaign

“Columbia has no organized opposition to tighter smoking restrictions, but some opponents of smoking bans say they limit individual freedoms.”

2/9/05 - Smoking ban gets scrutiny

“No one at the meeting spoke against a smoking ban, and no opposition to the proposed ban has organized.”

Issues That Work

- Smoking bans
- Red Light Cameras
- Eminent Domain
- Local tax increases
- Burdensome regulations
- Regulations benefiting special interests
- Other issues?

Forming An Issue Group

- Umbrella group for all issues
- Need a core group of 3-6 people willing to work
- Separate from LP - easier to build coalitions
- Minimize paperwork
- All you need is a name, website, mailing address and phone number
- Low budget
 - No bank account, solicit funds as needed from members
- Spin off campaign committees as needed

Boone Liberty Coalition

The mission of the Boone Liberty Coalition is to be an advocate for personal liberty, economic freedom and property rights in Boone County Missouri. We will reach out to individuals, organizations and businesses to form coalitions for specific issues.

We believe that limited government, personal property rights and free choice are the best vehicles to promote diversity, economic well-being, personal responsibility and peace.

Tools and Methods

- Website
- Private E-Mail list
- Develop your talking points
- Press Releases
- Position Papers
- Mailings

Tools and Methods (cont.)

- Learn the playing field
- Opposition research
- Freedom of Information (FOI) and Sunshine Law Document Requests
- Identify and Influence Decision Makers

Opposition Research

- Who leads the opposition?
- What organizations are they affiliated with?
- What are their talking points?
- What documents and research do they use to support their position?
- Google is your friend
- Can help identify who to make FOI document requests to and tightly target your request

Sunshine Can Be Fun!

From: Missouri DHSS tobacco-use prevention program coordinator

To: Boone County Health Dept

heard a lot of rot on Tony Messenger's talk show last night on his way home from work. He will be getting his notes down in writing for you later. Much of his ranting is identical to what Ron Leone promoted during the Jefferson City debates and I feel Leone is in the background feeding this to Messenger.

References

Boone Liberty Coalition:
<http://booneliberty.org>

Missouri Citizens for Property Rights:
<http://mo-cpr.org>

Missouri Libertarian Party:
<http://lpmo.org>



As Libertarians, victories by our candidates happen all too rarely.

Our volunteers, activists and candidates get discouraged from loss after loss at the ballot box. They get burnt out on election campaigns and drop out.

Working on local and statewide issues is a way to work for freedom and liberty 24/7. It is an opportunity to win. To savor the sweet taste of victory. It can energize your volunteers and activists

Even if, in the end, you lose an issue; there are many benefits from having fought the battle.

Working on Issues - Benefits

- Build relationships with the media
- Build relationships with like minded individuals and organizations
- Learn by doing, many skills learned will help with candidate campaigns
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Springfield, MO libertarians led a successful petition drive to force an audit of city finances. Shortly after the petition succeeded the city reported over a million dollars missing from the Municipal Court. Doug Burlison, the lead petitioner subsequently won election to the city council.

Working on the Columbia smoking ban opened doors for Boone County Libertarians. A libertarian now participates along with a Democrat and Republican on a regularly scheduled political round table on local talk radio. Libertarians have been asked to participate in debates on local issues and speak to local groups.

Working with Missouri Citizens for Property Rights on a statewide petition to amend the Missouri Constitution to prevent eminent domain abuse resulted in an opportunity to meet Truman State University students working on that issue. They now have a strong campus libertarian group and a county libertarian committee is being formed.

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Skimming agendas and meeting minutes for your local city council, county commission and government boards and committees can give you an early warning there may be an issue before it hits the local media.

The earlier you learn about an issue the more time you have to organize opposition.

The more controversial the issue, or one you can make a hot issue, especially without any previous opposition, the more likely you will get good media coverage.

It helps if there is a natural constituency you can appeal to such as small business owners, property owners or anti-tax groups.

Be very selective on what issue you work on, then give 100%.

Don't spread yourself too thin.

You want to be known as an organization that works very hard on select issues, not one that complains about every little thing.

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What issues can you work on in your community?

Forming An Issue Group

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Creating a long lived umbrella group helps with name recognition. Each subsequent issue you decide to undertake will become easier after having established a track record of success.

The only paperwork the BLC filed was a fictitious name with the Secretary of State costing less than ten dollars and our website internet domain registration.

For issues on the ballot you will need to spin off a campaign committee if you want to solicit contributions and spend money on advertising, yard signs, etc.

Most states prohibit public funds and resources from being used to influence voters on ballot issues. Keep a close eye on school districts and other agencies of government to ensure they play fair. File a complaint if they violate the rules. In Missouri complaints would be filed with the Missouri Ethics Commission.

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The Boone Liberty Coalition had very few meetings. We all had other obligations such as work or family which made meeting in person difficult. We conducted most of our work on a private e-mail list.

The BLC developed four talking points in our fight against a smoking ban. Our position paper had a one page executive summary with an additional page for each talking point.

Tools and Methods (cont.)

- Learn the playing field
- Opposition research
- Freedom of Information (FOI) and Sunshine Law Document Requests
- Identify and Influence Decision Makers

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Attend city council, county commission and other boards and group meetings to learn who the players are, what types of arguments influence them and how business is conducted.

Build a relationship with the decision makers well before any final hearing or vote. Make sure they know you are available to answer any questions your opponents might raise. Insist on equal time in person.

Different people are influenced in different ways. For some, emotional appeals work. For others it might be principles of good government. Some like to dig into the data and facts. Try to get a read on each individual to determine what methods might work best.

In Columbia we pushed for and were able to get the Mayor to allocate to the Boone Liberty Coalition a half hour to present our case against the smoking ban at the final public hearing.

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Requests for documents under sunshine laws need to be very specific, ask for electronic copies of documents where possible. Most sunshine laws allow government to charge you for each page. If your request is too broad in scope they could do a document dump costing you thousands of dollars.

In Columbia we heard some radio ads pushing for the smoking ban purported to be for a local grassroots organization but the phone number was for the county health department. We made a request for documents to the county health department and found out that the Missouri State Department of Health and Senior Services placed the advertising. We then sent DHSS a document request for all the invoices and advertising copy. They spent over ten thousand dollars!

References

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