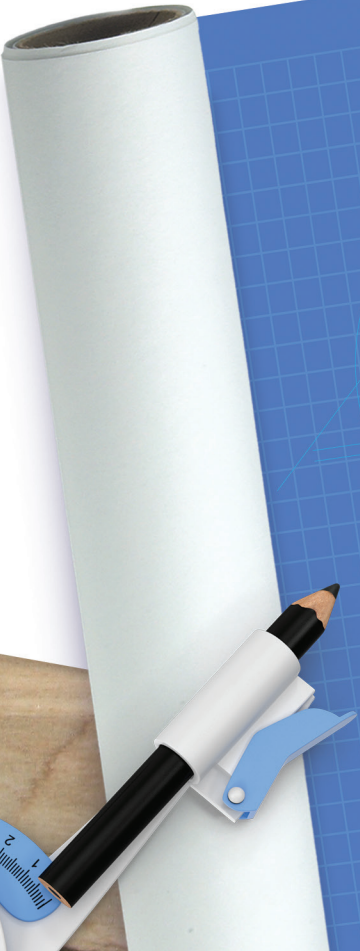


HOW TO  
ANNOUNCE  
**YOUR CANDIDACY**



***Whether your running for  
City Council, State Senate,  
or the U.S. House, launching  
your candidacy with the right  
announcement can provide  
you with the early momentum,  
press and public interest to  
propel your campaign forward.***

## WHERE TO START

There are a few questions you should ask before you announce your candidacy:

### 1. WHO ARE YOU (AND WHY ARE YOU RUNNING)?

Whether you've held elected office or you're a first time candidate, it's important to remember most voters don't know you. This is your chance to introduce yourself to the electorate and tell them about your background, your family and what makes you tick. It's also your first chance to tell them exactly why you've decided to put your name forward as a candidate. You need to take some time to write down your bio, what ties you to the community, your accomplishments, awards, civic clubs you're a member of and pretty much anything and everything you think voters should know. After doing this, write down the Top 5 reasons you've decided to run and the Top 5 things you want to accomplish in the office you're seeking. It's not necessary to share this, but we'll come back to this in a few steps.

### 2. WHO DO YOU THINK ARE YOUR SUPPORTERS?

Take the time now to go through your rolodex and create a spreadsheet or a document of everyone you know and you think would be inclined to support you. You've probably already talked to some of these folks about whether or

not you should run, but now think outside your close circle to neighbors, people you've coached or volunteered with, those you attend church with, a friend of a friend and your co-workers. You should also include any elected officials you know and who perhaps have already offered their support. Put down their names, addresses, phone numbers and emails. This list will come in very handy for getting people to attend your announcement.

### 3. SELECT A VENUE.

Remember you're not running for president or governor so you're not going to fill a stadium, a large convention hall or even the local high school gymnasium. Think back to step one because it's your roadmap. You've already written down who you are and what ties you to the community. From that you can begin to see what places can help provide an appealing visual. You've also outlined the Top 5 reasons why you're running and the Top 5 things you want to accomplish in the office you're seeking. Coupled with your bio, these, too, can direct where you should announce.

Large open spaces – whether indoor or outdoor – are not your friend. Think small because you want somewhere you can have 25, 50, 100 or 150 attendees and it looks packed! Maybe it's a local small business, the neighborhood diner you frequent, the community center at the retirement complex where you've volunteered or the city rec center where your kids spend time. You get the idea. Just remember smaller equals better, and the venue should help visually reinforce the story of who you are and why you're running.





Try to secure your desired venue approximately 2-4 weeks before the date you want to announce. If your first choice isn't available, move on to the next choice! You always have options!

#### **4. INVITE ATTENDEES.**

Remember the exhaustive list of people you know? It's the basis for your invitations. If you've got a 'kitchen cabinet,' pull them together or your closest friends and family to divide up the list by people they know. Personal outreach from a good friend or well-respected colleague is key. Then the group goes about extending a personal email or a phone call inviting them (and their family) to attend the big announcement. As the candidate, you should also reach out to any key community leaders and elected officials you know with a personal invitation. It is really important RSVPs are collected to keep track of the attendees. You should start extending invitations 1-2 weeks prior to your announcement.

Don't be surprised if, once you start inviting people, the press gets antsy and starts calling. Don't worry, that's normal! You shouldn't shy away from telling them you are considering running, have been overwhelmed by an outpouring of support and look forward to gathering with friends, family and local leaders soon to share your decision.

#### **5. WRITE YOUR SPEECH.**

You've done the legwork and put the ball in motion for your big announcement. Now it's time to start thinking about what you're going to say. Yes, your announcement speech is important, but it's also not the end all be all so take a deep breath! Give yourself some time. Put together your speech outline about two weeks prior to the announcement, and have a rough draft of a speech finished ten days prior. Once your rough draft is done, share it with your kitchen cabinet or close friends (or staff if you have a staff). Allow them to make suggestions or edits and be clear you want to have five days to practice. Once you've completed the writing and editing process, gather you spouse and kids or your kitchen cabinet and practice giving your speech for 30 minutes per day. It may feel strange and get tiresome, but it'll pay dividends.

When it comes to content, here are a few suggestions to help you get started. Lead by thanking your family, friends and any key leaders. Then hit the highlights of your bio and experience and your ties to the community. Doing so provides a nice foundation for you to say why you're running and what you'll fight to accomplish. Wrap it up by thanking everyone again, saying how much you look forward to the campaign, and more than anything, you look forward to meeting voters all throughout the area and earning their vote on Election Day.

#### **6. HIRE OR FIND A GOOD PHOTOGRAPHER.**

Photos from your campaign announcement are invaluable. They can become the backbone of your website, direct mail, TV, mobile and digital efforts. Use your contacts to hire a good professional photographer for the event, or if you know one, even better. Either way, don't skip this step!

#### **7. LEAN ON YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

Whether you are having a small announcement with 25 attendees or a larger event with 150 attendees, there's usually too much to do all by yourself. From the beginning, you've leaned on your friends, family and kitchen cabinet (or staff). No need to stop now. Here are a few tasks you can give them:



- Put one person in charge of working with you to develop a postcard or handout that attendees will receive at the announcement. Include a nice picture, brief bio, why you're running, what you'll work to accomplish, website (if you have one), contact information to reach the campaign, and of course, an ask for their vote on Election Day!
- Task someone to lead a sign making party and secure decorations (banners, balloons, streamers, etc.) for the announcement. It doesn't have to be over the top but this is a fun and exciting day for you, and you want attendees to feel that excitement, too.
- Ask a member of your kitchen cabinet to ensure the necessary sound equipment like a microphone and speakers has been secured for the event. If you use a podium, make sure to have and place a nice sign on the front.
- Light snacks and drinks are usually a hit and help create the festive and conversational atmosphere you probably want. Ask one of your key supporters to take charge and get the food and drinks.

## 8. ASK SOMEONE TO INTRODUCE YOU.

It's wise to have someone act as an emcee and introduce you at the announcement. They don't need long remarks, but it should be someone who knows you well and is respected in the community. They can offer their support and speak to your key qualities, both of which are important.

## 9. INVITE THE PRESS.

Make a list of all the newspapers, TV stations, radio stations and bloggers in your area. Three days before the event, you (or your staff) should send personal emails to each of them inviting them to cover the event. Make sure you list the date, location and time in the email along with how they can RSVP. Two days out, send a follow-up email. The day before, you or staff should make personal calls to these reporters to encourage them to attend. Either the night before (if it's a morning announcement) or very early in the morning day of (if it's an afternoon/evening announcement), send one final email to anyone who hasn't said whether or not they are attending.

Remember to spend time after your remarks chatting with the press. You can talk with reporters individually or as a group. It doesn't have to be a formal press conference. Just a quick 'gaggle' to let them ask a few questions and for you to reinforce the key points from your speech.

## 10. ARRIVE EARLY AND GREET ATTENDEES.

It's no secret what's happening so have some fun and chat up the attendees, who will become your campaign's supporters and voters.

Whether you've been a candidate before or not, this is your big day. Enjoy it. Have fun! You've done all the legwork, and you're more than ready to start your campaign.

**ANNOUNCE** your candidacy well and you'll hit the ground running.



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