

Effective Canvassing

Canvassing

To canvass is “to solicit political support or to determine opinions or sentiments. To seek votes, a personal solicitation of votes or survey the public opinion” (Webster’s Dictionary). As a Precinct Committeeperson, you know your constituents best. You are the precinct “opinion maker.” This means your neighbors and elected officials come to rely on you for information, advice, and help in solving public problems.

Your canvass will prove invaluable in your role as an elected or appointed PC. You will learn about the economic make-up of your precinct, what issues are important, what messages people are receiving from our candidates, and how the voters feel about the Party.

The Importance of Canvassing

Why is canvassing important?

- Door-to-Door and telephone canvassing are valuable means of outreach, education, and fundraising for advocacy and non-profit organizations. Incorporating a canvass and effective database management support allows an organization to build a real grassroots membership and funding base.
- Canvassing is a valuable method for mobilizing members and creating visibility for legislative and issue campaigns. Mature canvass networks have refined strategies and techniques in petitioning, targeting, voter registration, letter writing, and other grassroots campaigns.

The best way to accomplish this task is get to know your neighbors and their needs. Canvassing does this. A canvass is walking door-to-door or calling and getting to know the people in your precinct. Walking lists are available primarily through your LD Van Chair and, along with your precinct map, are an important tool in canvassing. Make sure you follow through on all requests for help. If you don’t know the answers to questions, say, “I don’t know, but I will find out and get back to you.”

Recruiting Volunteers

While you are canvassing, you will meet people who want to participate in the Democratic Party. Keep them in mind for the following jobs and opportunities:

- Precinct Committeeperson
- Volunteers: Precinct / Headquarters / Voter Registration
- Donors
- Election Day poll worker positions (see Maricopa County Records election site for information)

- Election Day party official such as a watcher, get-out-the-vote team, team captain Keep track of the volunteers and make sure to forward that and other information you receive during your canvasses to your LD team lead or LD Chair. Ideally, as you find others in your precinct who desire to assist Democrats, you can make them members of your precinct team.

Providing Service

“Service” is the key word to remember in neighborhood canvassing. The voters in your precinct will come to rely on you and the Democratic Party for answers to their questions and solutions to their problems.

1. Meet everyone. Start and build a relationship.
2. Let them know “they are not alone,” that there are Democrats and others in the area who agree with them.
3. Find out what issues are most important to them and share Democratic principles and values with them.
4. Make sure everyone in the house is registered to vote at their residence address.
5. Get-Out-The-Vote prior to elections.
6. Recruit volunteers.
7. Educate on issues.
8. Educate on candidates.
9. NEVER try to convince someone you are right and they are wrong. We’ll never gain support trying to convince people they are wrong.
10. Let them know you’re a Democratic resource for them, and there are Democratic activities they can take part in and candidates they can vote for who share their values.

Tips and Tools

Be prepared when you canvass, with:

- Precinct map
- Walking list (these are available as paper lists or through the MiniVan app on your smart phone)
- Pencils and pens
- Informational literature (Party or candidate)
- Federal voter registration forms; alternatively, use your smartphone and help those individuals with a valid Arizona driver’s license to register online at servicearizona.com
- Absentee ballot applications to vote by mail or, if confined to their home and need assistance, transportation to polls
- Boundaries for elections
- Democratic button, T-shirt, name badge, or other for identification
- Something to carry your materials in

Tips for when you canvass:

- Work in pairs when possible for safety, support, and fun
- Determine optimal time of day to visit
- Be prepared with a script: what will you say?

Canvassing Techniques: Walking

Face-to-face contact is the most effective way to meet people, exchange information, and make an impression for the Democratic Party and candidates. Your walking list contains house-by-house information in terms of registered voters and party affiliation. This will tell you who the identified Democrats in your precinct are - and which houses may not have any registered voters. Discuss the issues that are important to THEM. You can get an idea of what those issues are by looking for the following to give you more insight:

- Bumper stickers, yard signs, or window decals: What issues are brought up? Do they indicate issue preferences? Do they indicate particular values?
- Religious items: Do they have any religious items in view? What can you tell by the nature of their religious display?
- Family: What type of family do they have? For example, if they have small children, childcare, education, and the future of our economy may be important to them. If they are an older couple, health care issues may be important, etc.
- Job: What does the person do for a living? For example, if they are a teacher, what might that indicate about their values and daily concerns? What about a tradesman or laborer?
- Compliment them: Find something to compliment them on when you introduce yourself. For example, if their lawn is beautiful, compliment them on it.

Canvassing Techniques: Calling/Texting

If you cannot walk or prefer to call or text people, you will be provided with a call list that includes phone number and a script to use. Calling is also a great way to break the ice, mobilize Democrats, and get the Democratic message out. A phone script can help to ensure you convey all important information during a call:

“Hello, is (name) home? Hi, my name is (your name) and I’m the Democratic Precinct Committeeperson for the (your precinct name) precinct. I live in/near your neighborhood.

(Option 1) I am calling to let you know there are lots of Democrats in our area, and that our county / district Democratic Party is holding a meeting on (date) at (location and time) . I will be there and I want to encourage you to attend also.

(Option 2) Local Democrats are meeting to organize for future campaigns. I was hoping you could tell me about some issues important to you and that need to be addressed.

Thanks for your time. Let me give you my phone number, in case I can answer any questions you may have in the future. It’s (phone number) . I hope to talk with you again soon. Goodbye.”

Canvassing Techniques: House Parties

Invite Democrats in your precinct to your home or the home of another local Democrat to meet other like-minded neighbors. At your house party, have your fellow Democrats meet candidates and learn about issues. House parties do not have to be elaborate - punch and cookies are fine - and they help build your Democratic community. For questions about hosting house parties, contact your LD leadership.

Reading the Voters

Things to think about while you are out walking. Take a quick look around. What do you see and what might it tell you about the person whose home you are visiting? What might each of the cues listed below tell you about the voters who live there?

Household items:

- Toys in sight
- Pets
- Religious symbols
- US flag
- Union insignia
- Well-tended flower garden
- Expensive car
- Football, basketball, or soccer ball

License Plates:

- Environmental
- Child Abuse Prevention
- Veteran
- Disabled
- Out-of-state
- Collegiate

Bumper stickers:

- Hate is not a family value
- Rainbow flag
- NRA
- Buy American
- Support our Troops
- Semper Fi
- Licensed Contractors Build Confidence
- Sierra Club
- Union Yes
- Police or Fire Department