

The logo of the Massachusetts Pirate Party is a circular emblem. It features a central white silhouette of the state of Massachusetts, with a black outline of the state's shape. This is set against a grey background that includes a stylized pirate ship's sail and a vertical mast. The entire emblem is enclosed within a thick, grey circular border.

Choosing the Right Campaign to Run

October 14th 2023

Massachusetts Pirate Party

info@masspirates.org

<https://masspirates.org>

Before We Start

Life is a remix, so take what you want from it, discard anything you don't need or do not have time to use and add the new things you learn.

Learn from your efforts and Iterate! Iterate!
Iterate!

Put yourself out there. You cannot win if you don't run.

Don't be Sisyphus

Running for office is difficult.

60%+ of the Massachusetts legislature runs unopposed in the general election and even local elections are not always competitive.

While the Democrats and Republicans are made up of political operatives, we aren't. We have multiple goals.

Don't be Sisyphus

1. To educate voters about issues that matter to you
2. To identify supporters and volunteers for future efforts
3. To win is the icing on the cake

Don't be Sisyphus

It is excellent if you do all three, but good if you at least educate voters and best if you can also identify supporters.

If you don't run, you cannot accomplish any of these goals.

What Offices?

- Federal Elections in Even Years
- State and County Elections in Even Years
- Town Elections Every Year
- City Elections in Odd Years

US House Elections

- District based: 9
- All held by Democrats with large \$\$\$
- Getting on the ballot:
 - Signatures from at least 2000 valid voters
 - Papers available - Feb '24
 - Papers due - July '24

State House & Senate

- Massachusetts General Court is made up:
 - House: 160 members
 - Senate: 40 members
- Elections held in November of even years
- Both overwhelmingly Democratic

State House & Senate (cont.)

- Getting on the ballot:
 - Signatures from at least:
 - 150 valid voters (House)
 - 300 valid voters (Senate)
 - Papers available - Feb '24
 - Papers due - Apr '24

County Elections

- County Commissioner
- District Attorney
- County Treasurer
- Registrar of Probate
- Registrar of Deeds
- Sheriff & Clerk of Courts

Town Elections

Town elections are held in first half of every year. Check your town. Offices include:

- Selectboard
- Town Moderator, Treasurer, etc.
- School Committee

City Elections

City elections are held in November on odd years. Offices are:

- Mayor
- City Council / Board of Aldermen at-large
- City Council / Board of Aldermen wards
- School Committee

Be Honest With Yourself

- What time and responsibilities do you have?
- Are you prepared for the pressures of campaigning?
- Does your partner support your run?
- Are you prepared for the impact on your work and family life?

Prepare Yourself

- Understand what your opponent's positions are by looking at their website or newspapers. Look at their voting history if you can
- Look at past election results to understand how many votes you need to win *
- Get list of voters and their voting history as well as census data to understand the demographics of your district *

* Data available from Town Clerk / Elections Division

Not ready? Try Another Approach Instead

- Try a less demanding office or a lower goal
- Join (or start) local party chapter
- Volunteer or get appointed to a local board or commission
- Start an issue campaign or local newsletter

Getting Started

- Find people to help
- Roles that need filling
- Know your district & constituencies
- Find your issues & core message
- Plan logistics

Find People to Help

- You cannot do it yourself!
- Identify people who will help you:
 - Party members
 - Family
 - Friends

Many Hats

- Treasurer (cannot be the candidate)
- Campaign Manager
 - Volunteer Coordinator
 - Field Operation Coordinator
- Website / Social Media Organizer(s)
- Data Manager

Not All On Your Head

- Delegate!
- May not be able to find someone for each role, but make sure you distribute the work
- Cannot do without a Treasurer
- Having a campaign manager help a great deal

Know Your District

- What are local issues of concern?
- Who and where are the voters?
 - Get voter lists from city/town (has name, address, DOB, gender, party)
 - Get demographics (US Census data)
 - Find out if voters are owner / renters

Your Constituencies

- Identify your constituencies, i.e. the voters most likely to support you
- From the district data you have, see if you can identify who they are individually
- If you have to limit your efforts, knowing who is most likely to support you will help

Find Your Issues

- Identify the key issues to focus on. Two or three max
- The issues you choose must resonate with the voters who you want to support you
- No half measures! Being moderate cedes the field to your opponent

Develop a Core Message

- Once you know your key issues, you then need to develop a core message
- It should be short & simple ...
- ... but should tie in with your key issues
- ... and it has to motivate your supporters!

Test Your Core Message / Issues

- Test it first with a friendly audience then with other audience
- Refine your message
- If you can find a way to bring all questions back to your core message,
Bonus!

Plan Logistics

Know your important dates:

- Election day
- Early voting start and end dates
- Nomination signatures due dates
- Date nomination forms are available
- Campaign finance filing due dates

Plan Logistics

Work backwards from election day:

- Thank you notes attached to all yard signs, thank you post put up on website/social media, thank you letters sent to supporters
- Schedule and train volunteers for each polling place
- Election night party scheduled and supporters notified before election day
- Schedule volunteers for stand outs before election day

Plan Logistics

Work backwards from election day:

- Get out the vote effort starts by early voting start date
- Flyers and signs distributed before early voting starts
- Flyers and signs purchased well before early voting starts
- Door-to-Door effort completed before early voting

Plan Logistics

Work backwards from election day:

- Fundraising completed by or before Door-to-Door effort starts
- Kick off party scheduled before Door-to-Door or even signature gathering
- Signatures gathered and turned in
- Web site / social media up
- Database setup with voter data
- Campaign staff on board

Plan Logistics

- Volunteers - How many will you need and when?
- Write a focused budget and fundraising plan with an eye to what do we buy with the first \$500, the next \$1000, etc.
- Find someone to take professional pictures of the candidate for fliers / media
- Find someone to design fliers & signs

The Campaign

- Initial Activities
- Database, Fundraising, Volunteers and Follow Up
- Materials, Internet, Media & Publicity
- Get on the Ballot
- Meet Voters, Go Door-to-Door & GOTV
- Election Day & The Days After

Initial Activities

- Identify initial contributors
- Open social media accts. since they are free
- Obtain and file committee-to-elect papers
- Setup a database!
- Open bank account and make first deposit
- Open web site at a provider that supports Let's Encrypt or by an ssl certificate. Support https encryption!

Database

- You need a database!
- Get voter lists from city/town. This info. has name, address, DOB, gender, party and most importantly, in which elections they voted
- Find out if voters are owner / renters from assessors database
- Get demographics (US Census data)

Fundraising

- Make a list of potential contributors from family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.
- Write a phone fundraising script that talks about your issues
- Call your contributors list
- Mail reminder letter with return envelope
- Mail thank you letter to all contributors

Campaign Finance

- Know the laws and regulations. But don't worry, they are straight forward or OCPF is there to help
- Make sure your treasurer knows them
- Know your filing deadlines!
- File ahead of time! Failure to file on time carries a fine of \$25 for each day late
- Got questions? Go to www.ocpf.us, call (800) 462-OCPF or email ocpf@cpf.state.ma.us

Follow Up

- Ask contributors whether they would:
 - endorse you in writing
 - volunteer
 - hold a house party for you
- Follow up on all offers of assistance
- Send thank you letters promptly

Volunteers

- It is important to have someone organizing volunteers
- Providing lunch/dinner for volunteers is a good way to thank them for group efforts such as mailing parties & Door-to-Door outings
- Be sure to thank volunteers with a written note - keep note cards for your thank yous

Materials

- You will need to develop materials to give out or post: fliers, mailers, yard signs, etc.
- Have a common logo - if only your name.
- If you are strapped for cash, try 1/3 of a page fliers, double sided
- Be sure to have door hanging flyers when going Door-to-Door
- If you have the money, try mailable fliers

Internet

- Setup Web Site and Social Media
- Tie blog posts to your social networks
- Over communicate! Better your opponent knows what you are doing than your supporters don't
- Once you have a bunch of posts, start following people & media from your district
- Resend others relevant tweets, but concentrate on your campaign

Internet (cont.)

- Find creative ways to share your message:
 - Post pictures of you, volunteers and supporters on the campaign trail
 - If you can make fun videos, do
- Use a service to email supporters, but don't spam people
- Keep in contact with volunteers, but phone calls are always better

Media

- Identify local media & reporters
- Setup meetings
- Meet with media to talk about your issues
- Make sure you follow reporters on twitter, hopefully they will follow your campaign
- Keep in contact with reporters, invite them to your events & Door-to-Door outings
- If city election, do issue press releases to the relevant reporters.

Publicity

- If you have enough support, hold a kick-off event
 - Invite all of your supporters and media
 - Make sure it is well attended
- Ask supporters to put up yard signs
- Hold stand-outs/visibilities in last month

Get on the Ballot

- Make sure you know all of the requirements & dates to get on the ballot
- Pick up nomination papers
- Gather signatures
- File nomination papers
- Mail thank letter to anyone who helped gather signatures

Getting Signatures

- Town offices require the least number of signatures. City offices more, but still easy
- Any voter in your district can sign your nomination papers
- Not every signature will be valid. Plan to get at least 50% more than you need
- Concentrate on signature gathering. Aim get the most signatures in the least time
- File nomination papers with town/city as they are done. Don't wait to the last minute. Get receipts!

Getting Signatures (cont.)

- Ask voters to sign and print their name so their name can be read clearly
- Never leave your nomination papers unattended
- Never put any stray marks on nom. papers.
Ex: no check marks
- If someone puts a stray mark on one, put it aside and don't use it for any more voters

Getting Signatures (cont.)

- Find places where YOUR voters are likely:
 - Your neighborhood. Door-to-Door is best
 - Busy city/town squares
 - Dump/recycling center
 - Festivals & places people aren't in a rush
- Always be polite, but don't chat too long!

Voter ID is Vital

- Elections are all about turnout
- Between 5% and 30% of voters will turn out
- You have to identify your supporters so you get them out to vote for you (GOTV)

Meet voters!

- Have a supporter who is a parent of a child at that school introduce you during morning drop off or afternoon pickup
- Attend block parties and city/town festivals
- Have meet & greet events at senior centers and for members of local groups

Meet voters! (cont.)

- Keep track of who you meet & their concerns. You need a database that has all the voters in your district
- Follow up with the voters you meet either by dropping off a flier with a thank you note or by mailing a flier & a thank you
- Have supporters write letters to friends telling them why they are voting for you

Go Door-to-Door

- Purpose of Door-to-Door effort is to:
 - meet voters & tell them about you
 - identify which voters will support you
- From the voter list, you should develop a walk list. Divide streets into even and odd sides to make record keeping easier

Go Door-to-Door (cont.)

- Mark a voters level of support with 1 as will vote for you and 5 as will not vote for you
- If a voter isn't supportive, move on quickly but politely. Find someone who is
- When someone isn't home, be sure to leave a flier hanging on their door handle

Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

- All your efforts must lead to the GOTV effort
- Through the Door-to-Door effort you have hopefully identified a lot of voters who will support you
- Now you have to make sure they will be at the polls on election day

GOTV Early Voting

- Before early voting starts, drop off notices to all supporters telling them where to vote
- Call all supporters:
 - Remind them that you need their vote.
Thank them if they voted for you
 - Tell them where to vote & when it is open

GOTV Election Day

- If you can identify who didn't vote during early voting
- Before election day drop off notices to all supporters telling them where to they vote and when
- Call all supporters
 - Remind them that you need their vote
 - Tell them where their polling place is & when it is open
 - Ask if they need a ride to the polls

Election Day Tasks

- Have a poll watcher at every polling place recording which of your supporters voted
- Have volunteers to call supporters to remind them to vote, preferably from the checklist listed above
- Have volunteers hold signs outside polling places. Know the state/city/town rules. Generally need to be 100' away from polling place entrance

Election Day Tasks (cont.)

- Have volunteers:
 - bring coffee, hot chocolate and snacks to volunteers at polling places
 - pick up supporter checklists from poll watchers
 - drive supporters to the polls

Once the Polls Close

- Have poll watchers get the preliminary vote count from their polling place, this can take an hour
- Alternatively, contact town/city officials ahead of time to see how you can get the election results that night
- Thank volunteers and supporters with an election night party. If a big election, live stream it

The Days After

- Update website & social media accounts with thank you and election results
- Distribute “Thank You” stickers to all yard signs and mail remaining thank you cards
- Write a thank you voters letter to send as a letter to the editor of local media
- Fundraise to clear away any campaign debt

Useful References

- Swarmwise - Rick Falkvinge - <https://falkvinge.net/2013/02/14/swarmwise-the-tactical-manual-to-changing-the-world-chapter-one/>
- How to Win Your 1st Election - Susan Guber
- The Campaign Manager - Catherine Shaw
- How to Run for Local Office - Robert J. Thomas
- Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout - [Donald P. Green](#) & [Alan S. Gerber](#)
- How Facebook helped elect the mayor in Rapid City, South Dakota - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/17/facebook-mayoral-election-south-dakota>