CAMPAIGN TIMELINE STATE LEGISLATIVE RACE
MAY 2012 PRIMARY, NOVEMBER 2012 GENERAL ELECTION

PRE JANUARY 2011

Candidate Soul Search: This is a very introspective process where the candidate seriously contemplates her/his rationale for running. The candidate must ask, “Why do I want to run?” and be honest about the answer.

Family Soul Search: The decision to run affects no only the candidate, but also the candidate’s family and close relationships. An open and honest discussion needs to take place with people close to the candidate so that she/he will have the support needed from the people that matter most.

Kitchen Cabinet: Assemble trusted individuals that can be honest with the candidate and provide an objective analysis about whether the candidate should run. They must have good understanding of the community and/or political dynamics. They should gather for a full day retreat to go over the pros and cons of the candidate running and their personal strengths and weaknesses. (6-12 people)

Candidate Soul Search Again: Once the candidate has gone through this process, new information or perspectives may surface. Candidates must take time to revisit their thoughts, search their feelings and make sure that their head and their heart are in sync. Candidates must be confident in their decision especially since it impacts so many people around them who will sacrifice much as the campaign develops.

JANUARY – MARCH 2011

Community Outreach: Hopefully the candidate already has a history of community involvement and outreach. Now is the time to set up visits with various constituencies to try to get a sense of the values, issues, ideas and hopes that exist in the community. These are meetings with real people – leaders of community organizations, faith communities, civic groups, schools, clubs, etc. Remember, you’re not an official candidate yet.

Power Meetings: It is important to meet with the movers and shakers in the community, not to get their blessing, but to get their perspective. It is helpful to know what they are thinking and how they feel about the prospect of the candidate running.

Fundraising Committee: Find your fundraising potential and start to form a strategy. Remember, as EMILY’s List says, “Early Money Is Like Yeast,” it makes the dough rise. Get some commitments for early money.

Create a Campaign Plan. See relevant materials on elements of a campaign plan.
MARCH – MAY 2011

Now it’s time to make the campaign official

1. **Formalize Campaign Staff** – Whether it’s volunteer or not, get the primary components of the staff together. See relevant materials on campaign roles and responsibilities.

2. **Begin to Formalize Voter Contact Structure** – Although it will evolve as the campaign progresses, a precinct or electoral organization must be formed.

3. **Find Office Space** - Depending on the race, this can be the candidate’s home or in a modest space, but it is preferable to have a separate location.

4. **Money in the Bank** – Get initial financial contributions from candidate and fundraising committee. Make sure to set up bank account.

5. **Make Modest Purchases** – Find out what the campaign really needs to get up and running, especially with regard to technology and data.

6. **Volunteer Recruitment and Training** – Your campaign must be diverse and reflect the community you want to represent. Start at your base and move outward, engaging, energizing and mobilizing others.

7. **Press Conference** – Don’t be afraid to announce your candidacy to the media. Don’t allow other campaigns to dictate how this campaign is run. Begin to build relationships with reporters.

8. **Community Outreach** – This is constant throughout the campaign. The conversation is now shifting because there is candidate and a message of the campaign.

9. **Know the Legal Rules and File** – Don’t forget to submit to file for candidacy with the appropriate election authority and know the legal rules surrounding your campaign and election (including fundraising and spending) by heart!

JUNE – SEPTEMBER 2011

Please keep in mind that some of the information listed below as well as the timeline will fluctuate depending on the size of the win number and they type of campaign it is.

1. **Voter ID** – Begin to identify supporters, opponents and those who are undecided. This is a great time for the candidate themselves to be out on the doors and on the phones getting to know their future constituents and collecting information and intelligence on what folks care about in the community.

2. **Solidify Base** – The base must be secured early with the candidate meeting with and canvassing in base precincts. DO NOT TAKE YOUR BASE FOR GRANTED!

3. **Coalition Building** – The campaign is not in a vacuum. Build relationships with groups and organizations that share the vision of the campaign.
4. **Voter Registration** – If appropriate for your campaign, and guided by a targeting plan, set up voter registration and follow up in key precincts and among disenfranchised, disconnected, and under-represented communities.

5. **Media and Communication** – Create a dialogue and build relationships with the media.

6. **Fundraising** – Candidate needs to be fundraising on the phone and at events. Call time and surrogate solicitations will dominate this time period, along with base building and community outreach.

7. **GOTV** – Although the primary election is months away, the campaign should write out a GOTV plan.

**OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2011**

1. **Volunteer Recruitment and Training.** Continue to replenish the volunteer list by constantly seeking them in the field. Firm “Yes” voters make great volunteers.

2. **Field Persuasion** – Now that the campaign has solidified its base, concentrate on the “Undecided” voters. Remember, how much time you spend on “Base” and “Undecided” voters depends on your win number and how the campaign has analyzed the electoral landscape. The candidate must participate in this and it’s a great opportunity to meet people face to face before the crush of an election year.

3. **Media and Communications** – Continue dialogue with media. Look for earned media opportunities, and practice with the candidate – role playing and pivoting.

4. **Fundraising** – One or two well-timed events could bring in large amounts of money. Before the end of the year filing deadline. Candidate call time intensifies, as does the need for more money.

5. **Update Records** – Good data management is paramount! Make good, updated information available to the field operation.

6. **Base Work** – Don’t forget to keep the base involved and informed and grow and nurture campaign leaders and advisors from this work.

7. **Events** – Schedule events that support your message and help build relationships and support. You don’t have to go everywhere, but do respond to all requests.

**DECEMBER 2011**

Because of the holidays, campaigning will tone down to some extent. This is a good time to take stock and look at all the key elements of the campaign to see what needs to be adjusted going into the new year. Check in again with your family, friends, and kitchen cabinet before the election year arrives.

**JANUARY – APRIL 2012**

Continue all of the activities from the October and November period.
MAY 2012 - PRIMARY
The focus now changes to GOTV for the primary and mobilizing the committed voters you already have to go to the polls. Early voting and/or vote by mail must be taken into consideration and can be a very key part of the strategy.

MAY 2012, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PRIMARY
Celebrate and Thank – Make sure to thank all of the contributors, volunteers and supporters. Have them share the credit and ownership and the campaign will benefit down the line.

1. **Don’t Miss a Beat** – The day after the primary victory, the candidate should be very visible and shift immediately to a general election message.

2. **Media and Communications** – There are going to be golden press opportunities. Create them if you have too. Use the momentum of the win to take advantage of good press.

3. **Collect ALL data and analyze** – Within the midst of the celebration, do not let the valuable data get lost. It must be collected and analyzed. Where did the campaign do well? Where can it improve? How did the strategy work? How must it change?

4. **Keep up the pressure, but take time to breathe** – The days immediately after a primary victory should be very busy, with all hands on deck. But sometime in the subsequent weeks, take a brief break, recharge, and get ready for the general election push.

5. **Unify Primary Opponents and Party** – If you had a contested primary, work immediately to bring the field together for a unity event or press release of some sort so that it’s clear that your part and your former opponents are fully behind you for the general election. Consider asking former opponents to join your campaign committee and make time to sit down with them for a debrief and to share advice, contacts and even donors!

LATE MAY 2012

1. **Strategy Meeting** – A full day should be taken with the staff and key volunteers to evaluate the campaign and make necessary adjustments. Key elements of the campaign plan must be revisited, including election and voting data, staff and campaign structure, message development, candidate and opposition, targeting plan, base building, field plan, budget, media, scheduling and power analysis.

2. **Re-engage** – There are key parts of the campaign that must be re-engaged such as volunteers, media relationships, coalition partners etc… A structured effort must be made to do this and not assumed it will just happen. Specific plans for getting back up to speed fast.

3. **Purchases** – The tools for the campaign may need to be restocked. Make sure that there is enough office space and campaign supplies.
4. **Field Jumpstart** – In the first few weekends after the primary, consider some canvassing and phone contact in a friendly precincts to get the field program back in gear and your volunteers and staff back in training form!

5. **Funding Jumpstart** – After the primary victory, many of the people that gave will be willing to give again and a victory fundraiser at the end of the month would be a good way to inject some funds quickly.

**JUNE 2012**

1. **Voter ID** – There is a new set of candidates and therefore more reason to know which voters are “For”, “Against” and “Undecided”.

2. **Field Persuasion** – Now that we are in the general election, there is limited time for persuasion, so while IDing voters, you might want to consider an immediate persuasion push for the Undecideds. Organize the usual walk schedule but also organize once a week “blitz’s” with many more people. This has great qualitative and quantitative value. Independent and swing voters must be taken into consideration in the field and targeting plan.

3. **Solidify Base** – There are voters that voted for your opponent during the primary. The campaign must reach out to them to expand the base. Do not take for granted that they will vote for the candidate based on political party. A targeted mailing along with canvassing may work well, along with contact and support from the opponent himself or herself.

4. **Volunteer Recruitment and Training** – The campaign should not just expect the volunteers to come back. A conscious effort must be made to re-connect to the network of volunteers. Make sure there is an updated training system in place with any new information and election rules.

5. **Coalition Building** – Reconvene a meeting to involve the coalition partners once again. You do not want to create the perception that they are no longer needed.

6. **Media and Communications** – Use earned media heavily to distribute the message the campaign during this time. Have volunteers set the tone of the discussion in the newspapers with letters to the editor. Identify community leaders from your base building efforts for opinion editorials and to prepare as surrogates.

7. **Fundraising** – Candidate Call time and surrogate solicitations will dominate this time period along with voter contact. More money will be available.

8. **GOTV** – Continue to connect to all work being done and start drafting the GOTV plan for November.

**JULY – SEPTEMBER 2012**

1. **Field Persuasion** – Now that the campaign has solidified its base, it can concentrate on the “Undecided” voters. Organize the usual walk schedule but also organize once a week “blitz’s” with many
more people. This has great qualitative and quantitative value. Independent and swing voters must be taken into consideration in the field and targeting plan.

2. **Media and Communications** – Have the candidate appear on local media outlets to move the message. If you need to improve name ID, look at paid media options or use earned media to create opportunities. Purchase space for GOTV paid communications ahead of time before the prime areas get taken.

3. **Voter Registration** – Continue to conduct where it makes sense.

4. **Fundraising** – Many more opportunities should present themselves. By this time several of the primary opponent’s donors should have contributed to the campaign.

5. **Update Records** – Good data management is paramount! Make sure that those who need it have good and updated information that they can add too.

6. **Mail** – The campaign may also want to consider sending a couple of pieces to undecided voters during this time to highlight and issue and build positive perception of the candidate before the contrasting pieces hit toward the end. Most mail should be done toward Election Day.

7. **Base Work** – Don’t let them linger. Make sure there is a direct effort to keep engaged.

8. **GOTV** – Continue to make the connection with the work being done and finalize the GOTV plan – in particular know when early voting, vote by mail and other non election day voting opportunities begin and the rules surrounding those opportunities.

**OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2012 – GOTV MODE FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION**

Follow a very similar strategy to that of the primary GOTV schedule with consideration for independent and swing voters. All aspects of the campaign should be at high level – the number of volunteers, the amount of money raised, the amount of time in the field connecting with voters. At this point, base building is over and it is time to focus on mobilizing our voters to reach our win number.