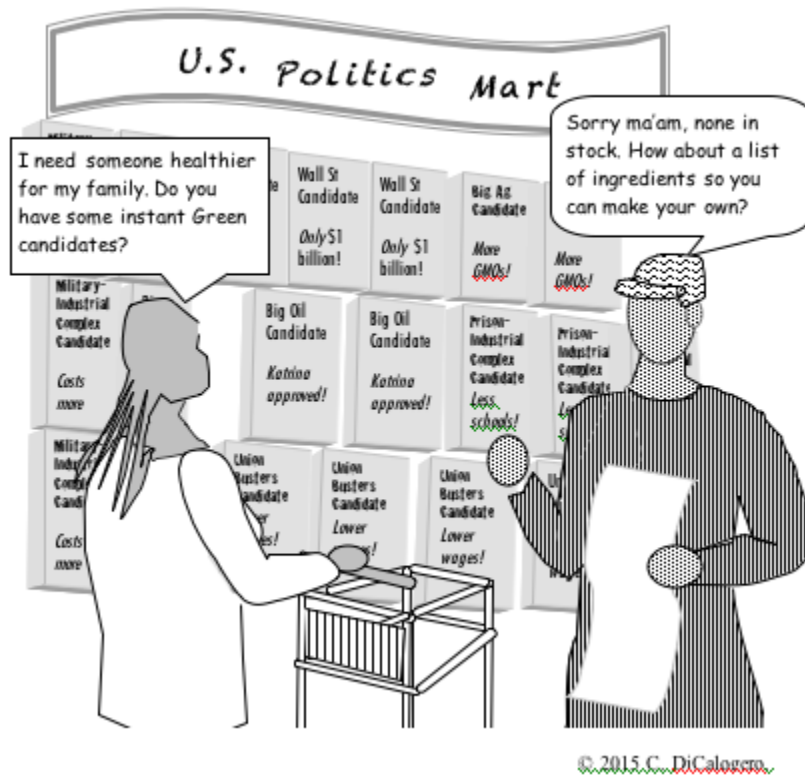


Green-Rainbow Party Candidate Recruitment Manual

First version by GPUS Coordinated Campaign Committee (2004)¹

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on behalf of the GRP Candidate Development and Legal Committee (2015)



¹ Green Party of the United States. *Green Party Candidate Recruiting Manual, 1st Edition 2004*. Manual presented at the Green National Convention, Milwaukee, WI, June 2004. <http://www.gp.org/committees/campaign/manual/recruiting.pdf>

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Introduction: Ready, Set, Run!

Welcome to this short guide, intended for local party chapters embarking on the vital work of recruiting candidates for office, from those at local levels up through City Council, Mayor, State Representative and State Senate positions. In it you will find information on the why and how of searching for, selecting, and running candidates. Whether this is your chapter’s first time wading into the electoral arena, you want to build on previous efforts, or you just want a quick reference tool, we hope this nuts-and-bolts booklet will help you move forward with confidence.

Why the GRP Should Run Candidates and Carefully Recruit Them

The GRP is a political party and therefore should engage in electoral activity to build the party and promote our ideals. Running candidates for office is not only our right but our responsibility to the thousands of voters who are registered GRP.

Of course, the better qualified the candidate for any office, the more likely we are to be taken seriously by the general public. There is room for debate on the subject about when and how GRP candidates should run. Nationwide, the Libertarians regularly run for as many seats as possible, so that voters have the opportunity to register their support for libertarianism as often as possible. Greens, on the other hand, tend to run candidates much less often and concentrate efforts in a few key seats—rather than fill the ballot up with names of people who are not actually campaigning to win or make a good showing.

Winning elections and building a large base of supporters through strong campaigns helps the party to start gaining political power directly. Equally important, running serious and even competitive candidates is crucial to winning over many voters who support GRP goals yet question the party's ability to be politically effective. How we run, where we run, and who we run will define how the GRP develops and grows in the future. Developing good candidates from within our locals, or finding good candidates who want to run under the GRP banner—those who represent our values well and run strong campaigns--is critical to increasing our success in the electoral arena.

Below are key factors to consider when recruiting candidates.

What Are Your Goals for Running Candidates?

- Winning local office?
- Building an electoral base for a win in a future election?
- Building party membership and presence?
- Gaining ballot access?
- Challenging an incumbent?
- Raising important issues, getting into the political debate, shifting political discourse and priorities?

What Is the Political Climate in Your Area?

- How many voters are registered GRP in your area?
- Have GRP candidates won in your area?
- How do progressives and/or GRP candidates fare in your area?
- Is the GRP currently recognized as a political party² in Massachusetts?
- What is the voter perception of the GRP in your area?
- What are pressing local issues or larger political concerns through which GRP candidates can make an impact?

It is critical to understand the characteristics of the electorate in the area in which you seek to run candidates before you start the campaign. You will need to know what kinds of issues and personalities voters favor--and ones they don't. It is also good to know what the chances are for winning, running a competitive race, or building a base for the future and gaining valuable campaign experience. It will be easier to recruit a candidate when there is a demonstrated possibility of being elected or making a good showing.

² If the GRP is recognized as a political party, it will appear on voter registration forms and participates in primaries. Otherwise, GRP is considered a political designation.

Targeting Races

If you are running to win, the best place to start is local. Go to your local city or town clerk website (or office) and find out what local seats are up for election. Most of these offices are non-partisan (which means candidates run without a stated party affiliation). Many are “below the radar,” and do not get the visibility of higher offices. Nonetheless, these are the seats that offer the GRP the best chance to win elections and put its values into action via legislative changes. They may also be stepping stones to higher office down the line.

In some areas, city council races are fairly low-key affairs. In other places, they can be more competitive and intense than certain state representative races. Commissions, boards, and other local bodies are excellent places to get in on the ground level of governance (even if these positions are appointed rather than elected). Examples, which vary greatly in both name and substantive work, include:

- Select Board
- Finance Committee
- Housing Commission
- Board of Public Health
- School Board or Committee
- Representative Town Meeting
- Community College Board
- Planning Commission
- Water or Sewer Board
- Conservation Commission
- Town Forest Committee
- Library Board of Trustees
- Fire Conservation District
- Transit Board
- Board of Appeals

For local office, there are occasionally times when the local governing bodies have more seats than candidates. Winning these seats simply means knowing where they are and then filing on time to get a name on the ballot.

Another option for running competitive GRP races is to find higher level seats involving little or no opposition. For larger, partisan races, try to identify potential races where the incumbent runs unopposed. In many state legislative districts, there is seldom a question of which of the two major parties will win a seat. For instance, there are areas in Massachusetts where Republicans feel they have no chance of running a competitive race, and so they will often not put forth candidates there. Likewise, Democrats don't routinely challenge many of the Republicans in the State House. This provides us an opportunity to initiate two-way races that give voters a real choice.

Criteria for Developing and Identifying Qualified Candidates

Selection criteria based on relevant experience

Is the candidate qualified and able to hold office if elected? This is an important question to ask all candidates, especially in party-building races where it may be assumed the GRP candidate will not win. School Board candidates, for instance, with some education background working in education and/or whose children attend public schools are more credible than those without,

Selection criteria based on campaigning abilities

1. Does the candidate already know the basics of campaigning? This of course can be learned if the person has a lot of other good qualities. In most cases candidates should also:
 - a. Be able to put together a campaign team, which includes a campaign manager, volunteer coordinator, web master, etc.
 - b. Have good fundraising skills, be willing to ask people for money, and be ready to start raising money as soon as proper campaign structures are in place and necessary filings completed.³
 - c. Have their own resources and/or connections to organizations beyond the GRP.
2. A strong GRP candidate in a competitive race will need to devote substantial time and energy each week (such as 20 hours or more a week) during the preparatory phase of the campaign. Here are some things one should expect to do:
 - a. Conduct research on critical issues and on likely opponents. Prepare position statements accordingly.
 - b. Make statements at relevant political functions throughout the district (e.g., meetings of progressive groups, rallies, protests, strikes, etc.).
 - c. Communicate often with the press about the issues (find allies, issue press releases, etc.).
3. The strongest GRP candidates may need to devote 40 or more hours to the campaign during its final phase (the last 4 – 6 months).
4. A compelling GRP candidate should receive the endorsement of the local district chapter and the State Committee.

Selection criteria based on political abilities

1. Ideally, a GRP candidate should be recruited to run for office by local GRP members rather than self-selected, as this demonstrates the candidate's potential to gain the active support of the party.

³ Small local races for open positions may not require fundraising or much time and organizing, especially if the candidate's name is known and positively regarded by voters in the district. Also note that state employees, including public school educators, are not allowed to solicit funds for any campaigns.

2. A strong GRP candidate will have been a committed activist in the local area. For example, the candidate will have:
 - a. attended city council meetings, commission meetings, and other community forums on a regular basis,
 - b. served as an appointee on one or more commissions and/or have been on the board of a neighborhood organization or other local civic organization, and/or have been involved in local electoral campaigns, and
 - c. engaged with "players" of the local political scene, and become known to people like the mayor, city council members, commissioners, etc.
3. A strong GRP candidate is known and respected by the local media. She or he will:
 - a. write regular letters to the editor, compose op-ed pieces, etc.,
 - b. become known as a thoughtful and articulate commentator on local issues, and
 - c. demonstrate expertise and clarity on key public policies.
4. A good GRP candidate will be able to clearly articulate relevant party positions and strategy.
5. A good GRP candidate will be willing to strongly defend the choice to run outside of the two major parties and support democratic election reforms such as Instant Runoff Voting, public campaign finance, and limits on the influence of money in politics.
6. A strong GRP candidate speaks dynamically in front of an audience. He or she will be able to:
 - a. give a clear and exciting presentation on the issues,
 - b. frame election issues in positive terms (i.e., what the candidate will do if elected, not just how bad the opponents are), and
 - c. have a professional-looking appearance. While this doesn't have to mean wearing a suit, the candidate is expected to be neat and presentable in public.

Where to Look for a Good Candidate

After you prioritize races in which you would like to run GRP candidates and what qualities, knowledge, and background a good candidate should have to run for these seats (criteria above may be used as a checklist), the recruitment committee should try to determine what kind of candidate is best suited for each race.

You may already have some party activists or sympathizers in mind who would make good candidates either within or outside of the party; if so, proceed to sell them on the idea of running. Otherwise, here are some ways to find candidates:

- Get a list of local voters who are registered as GRP. Determine if any are familiar to the party and known to have qualities of a good candidate.

- Ask GRP elected officials and/or GRP leadership whom they recommend.
- Identify key people within activist and social networks to approach.
- Look for former candidates who may be interested in trying again (if they showed potential last time).
- Attend town/state legislature meetings to see who the progressive movers and shakers are.
- Read local newspaper political articles to see which progressives get media coverage.
- Attend events and meetings of like-minded groups.
- Ask sympathetic community leaders whom they would like to see as candidates.
- Go to relevant marches and rallies to find out who the organizers and leaders are.

While it is worthwhile to encourage all GRP members to consider running for office, it also is important to be selective about whom one actively recruits to run. It may be necessary to look beyond the “usual suspects” and party insiders for candidates. It is critical to realize that not everyone will make a good candidate. This may mean that some aspiring candidates should first gain more experience working for a stronger candidate’s campaign and/or enhancing their own candidate qualifications (see criteria above). Local endorsement procedures are an important tool for screening out inappropriate or unprepared candidates.

Recruiting Candidates from Underrepresented Groups

We need people of color, women, and those with fewer resources to become GRP candidates. This not only fosters a more democratic electoral process; it is central to the Rainbow history of our party—a party created by and for people of all colors, with African American leadership. As Massachusetts becomes increasingly diverse, and economic pressures continue to increase, we can build on this legacy by developing relationships with many different constituencies and recruiting leaders from among them. It is also important that the GRP increase membership from among underrepresented groups to prevent tokenizing.

In American politics, we are used to seeing middle class (if not wealthy) white male candidates. The GRP seeks good candidates from *all* social groups, not only the familiar ones. The best way to diversify the slate is to actively recruit diverse candidates.

Women candidates often report that the reason they ran is because they were asked. They may have to be cajoled, pestered and asked again before finally agreeing to be the candidate rather than to be part of the support team.

Finding diverse candidates means, for some of us, going beyond our “comfort zones.” It means working with the community from which you seek participation and getting to know the leadership. Contact elected GRP officials and others who have connections within the communities in which you are recruiting, to see who might be open to becoming a GRP candidate.

Considering Potential Candidates

First, make a list of likely prospects, analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and rank them. Select a final few to approach—one at a time, if for a single race.

Second, interact (if possible face-to-face) with prospective candidates before ever mentioning their running for office. Try to get invited to events that they are attending and introduce yourself. Try to determine their level of integrity, energy, etc.

Before you interview potential candidates, it is important to do your homework. You should be prepared to tell the prospective candidates why you are approaching them, what you can offer them, and what is expected of them for this campaign. Try to discern whether the candidate and party will have a shared vision about the goals of the campaign and the message. Make sure you know enough about the potential candidate's values and background before you stake the GRP's reputation on supporting them.

Approaching Potential Candidates

With a small group of the most active party members, meet face-to-face with the potential candidate to discuss the potential of running for office. If possible, get an elected GRP officeholder to help with the approach. The face-to-face meeting is an important step. It can help you find out what potential candidates are interested in, what time commitments they can make given what a strong campaign requires, and what issues they are confronting in their lives; such factors might affect their ability to run.

It is important to discuss the goals for the campaign with the prospective candidate. Be honest about the chance for victory and have solid data (previous election results, demographic information, etc.) to back up your claim that this is a desirable race. Address potential barriers they may put up against running, such as those pertaining to lack of a campaign team or particular skills, which the party may be able to provide.

Talk about issues; confirm that there is a philosophical agreement between chapter and candidate. For each particular type of race (e.g., school board or city council) it will be helpful to draft a platform or identify key issues relevant to this seat. This will help the potential candidate and campaign articulate a clear message that reflects GRP values. Be prepared to offer assistance to help candidates develop in areas where they are not strong. Outline the kinds of assistance that the local chapter and specific members are prepared to offer (see "Supporting Your Candidate's Campaign" below).

Of course, the most valuable thing we can offer are our party resources, which should include the ability to marshal financial and volunteer support for a candidate once the race is on. Do not suggest that you might be able to offer a lot of money or expensive things like TV commercials (unless you actually have the resources to do so).

Endorsement Procedure

Decide on a procedure for endorsing candidates. A formal endorsement process is necessary for any local chapter involved in electoral campaigns. The process is important to make sure you feel comfortable with the candidate and the endorsement. A well-defined procedure clearly states:

- who can participate in these decisions,
- how information on the candidate will be gathered (e.g., use of questionnaires or interviews), and
- how the decision will be made (such as by a particular type of vote or by consensus).

Let the candidates know about the steps of the process, so they know what to do to pursue the endorsement effectively. Ideally, recruited candidates will use the endorsement process to solidify their campaign approach. Bring interested candidates to a chapter meeting for endorsement interviews. Before the interview, be sure to share materials about the GRP and any relevant issue papers that the party has developed. It helps to show that we are serious about our support and that we have done some legwork in advance of the conversation.

Candidate to Party Agreements

Once a candidate is endorsed, set up expectations between the party and the candidate's campaign so both clearly understand what to expect.

Strong candidates should have their own networks of support outside the GRP. We can offer some forms of support. Candidates must provide their own resources too. Be clear about expectations of time commitment and money being raised and spent, among other things.

Also be clear about reciprocation. Do you expect to be consulted about key strategies as the campaign progresses? Will the candidate be promoted publicly as GRP-affiliated or just as a progressive? Will she or he participate in other local, regional and national Green campaigns? Do you expect the candidate to share voter, volunteer, or donor lists with the GRP at the end of the campaign?

Supporting Your Candidate's Campaign

What can the local or state party give endorsed candidates once their campaigns begin? Forms of support could include:

- Voter lists and databases
- Lists for fundraising
- Volunteers for signature gathering to get on the ballot, phone banking, canvassing, and get-out-the-vote efforts
- Outreach assistance: slate mailings, paid advertising, e-mail and social media promotion
- Office space and equipment

- Campaign expertise for strategy, platform development, volunteer recruitment, fundraising, website and software support, and graphic design
- Media contacts
- Web, database, and graphics talent
- Technical help with filing requirements, reporting, and deadlines
- Assistance with financial reports and treasury duties

And of course, locally endorsed candidates may be eligible to apply for assistance from the national Green Party. Encourage them to apply if you think they would be compelling applicants.

It is essential to strongly support promising candidates once they have agreed to run for the GRP. Successful candidacies are the best way to stimulate growth of the party and increase the GRP's ability to attract quality candidates for future races.

Each local chapter is different, as each race is different; here are additional ways your local can support recruited candidates if your resources allow:

1. Candidate training seminars and workshops
2. Special video-coaching/debate preparation sessions
3. Strategic research
4. Voting record research
5. District demographic research
6. Survey research/tracking
7. Help in drafting a campaign plan and monitoring the campaign
8. Advice and support from an already elected party-affiliated official
9. Help in setting up meetings with major donors
10. Pro bono legal services, if needed

Concluding Thoughts

We are excited about increasing the numbers of strong candidates being fielded by the Green-Rainbow Party of Massachusetts. The more compelling candidates who run, and ultimately win, at every level of government, the more we will be able to realize the potential of our Ten Key Values, and create a truly democratic future for our state and country.

This booklet contains the combined thinking and experiences of a number of Green Party members. If you would like to offer feedback on what worked for you and what didn't, or ideas for how to improve this guide, we'd love to hear them! Please email us at candidates@green-rainbow.org