

ILGP Campaign Quickstart Guide

Purpose & Scope

This document was prepared by the Illinois Green Party for the benefit of individuals running for office as Green Party candidates, or for Green Party members running for non-partisan offices.

The steps detailed in this document are **basic first steps** for getting a campaign started. This is not intended as a comprehensive guide to running a campaign; only to establishing the practical basics that any campaign is going to need as it runs its course.

Everything in this guide can be completed within a few days—and should be, as soon as possible, once the decision to run for office has been made.

This guide is not intended as legal advice, and candidates should always consult with a lawyer if they have questions regarding election law.

Step 1: Establish a Campaign Committee

As soon as the decision to run for office has been made, gather the friends and supporters that will be taking a leadership role in your campaign. These will be the campaign committee—the leadership team that organizes the entire electoral effort.

Host an initial meeting of everyone interested in sitting on your campaign committee and assign some starting roles. At a bare minimum, you should try to have a dedicated Campaign Chair (the lead organizer/executive of the campaign) and a Campaign Treasurer who will maintain the campaign's financial information.

Record the membership and assignments/titles of your campaign committee at the initial meeting. The roles, titles, and assignments can change or expand as the campaign progresses, but you'll need a one-page write-up of the initial campaign committee structure as documentation when you go to open a bank account.

Your goal coming out of your first campaign committee meeting should be to have that one-page outline of the campaign structure, and to make sure that everyone listed on it knows their job title, responsibilities, and expectations.

You, the candidate, can be listed as an officer, and in smaller campaigns this frequently happens. However, it's usually *better* for the candidate to focus on campaigning, and appoint volunteers or paid staff for administrative roles.

Step 2: Establish a Web Presence

This doesn't have to be terribly sophisticated at first, but get your campaign online as early as possible.

An online presence will help serve as documentation proving that your campaign exists as an organization when you apply for a bank account (see Step 3), and it allows you to put some basic information in the hands of people who search for your campaign on Google or other search engines.

2a. Set up a Webpage

Create, at bare minimum, a simple website that provides your name and the name of the office you're seeking, along with contact information, a brief bio, and a listing of your position on key issues. Choose a short, simple URL for your website that describes or refers to your campaign: "BobForCongress.com," etc.

This can be done for ILGP-endorsed candidates on the ILGP domain, using the NationBuilder tool, or you can purchase your own domain and build the site from scratch. If you buy your own domain, make sure it comes with multiple inboxes as part of the hosting package, otherwise you will also have to pay for a business email service (see 2b).

If this is a task you absolutely can't master on your own, seek out a tech-savvy volunteer to help with it, or contact volunteer@ilgp.org to ask help from the state party's IT volunteers. Having a website with your name, face, and basic info on it is not an optional step. Every campaign needs that basic web presence.

2b. Set Up a Campaign Email Account

You can't run a campaign from a free email account like the ones provided by Gmail, Yahoo, etc. In addition to looking unprofessional, they're no good for the kinds of bulk email that campaigns need to send out—spam filters will reject the email blasts, and your supporters won't see what you're sending.

If your domain didn't come with email inboxes tied to the domain, you'll need to pay for a professional email account from a provider like Google's G Suite or Microsoft Office 365. Ideally, you'll want several different mailboxes on your campaign's domain, so that you can use different addresses for different roles. It's very helpful to have one public-facing inbox (i.e., info@bobforcongress.org), and then several job-specific emails like media@bobforcongress.org, volunteer@bobforcongress.org, etc.

2c. Set Up a Facebook Page and Group

Whether you're a fan of Facebook or not, people use it—and if you don't set up a Page and a Group for your campaign, someone else will, once your campaign starts gaining momentum.

Pages and Groups are two different things, and you'll want one of each:

- **A Facebook Page** for an organization is basically like your personal Facebook page, but with the organization's name at the top and on all the posts. It has a Timeline for posted content, and it allows you to create Events for your campaign. Only you and anyone you approve as an Administrator or Editor of the Page will be able to post content on the Page.
- **A Facebook Group** is a space where anyone (public group) or anyone who has been approved as a group member (private group) can post content. These will allow supporters to discuss and post content. That can be good for building interest and activity, but requires more hands-on moderation to make sure the discussion isn't turning into overwhelming negativity or off-topic trolling.

Facebook provides step-by-step walkthroughs for [creating a Page](#) and [creating a Group](#). Go ahead and get one of each set up under your campaign name. If you want, you can add "Discussion Group" to the end of the Group name, to differentiate it from the Page.

2d. Set Up a Twitter Account

If you don't already have one, [start a Twitter account](#). The account name should either be your real name (i.e., @BobSmith), or your name and something campaign-related (i.e., @BobForCongress).

If you have a pre-existing personal Twitter account, it's usually best to delete it or set it to private for the duration of your campaign, and to only tweet in your "official," campaign voice.

Twitter isn't necessarily a tool you have to use, but it's good to have an account all set up and in place at the start of the campaign. That will allow you to quickly verify the real account if anyone else starts up a fake or parody account.

Step 3: Open a Bank Account

Never delay on this step! The sooner your campaign can start raising funds, the better, even if it's slow at the start—and you can't start until you have a bank account.

To open a bank account, you will typically need:

- An Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service
- At least one person (preferably two), with photo ID, who go to your chosen bank in person to open the account
- Documentation establishing the campaign's existence as an organization. Different banks will have different requirements, but typically if you have a Campaign Committee form as described in Step 1 and a website (or at bare minimum a Facebook page), those will suffice.

The EIN can be obtained through the [IRS online tool](#). The legal structure/identity is "Political Organization," which is available under the "Additional Types" menu in the Identity section of the application. Either the campaign Chairman or Treasurer should be the designated Responsible Party.

Once you have an EIN, all parties who wish to be account holders should go to your chosen bank together and request a non-profit checking account for a political campaign committee. You will need personal identification (usually two legal forms, such as driver's license and passport), the EIN for the campaign committee, and documentation proving that the campaign committee exists. The founding document you created in Step 1 can be used for this step.

Once the bank account is created, you can hook it up to online payment processors like PayPal so that your campaign webpage can begin taking donations. Track every single donation you can, even small-dollar donations. Don't just rely on your bank statements—maintain your own spreadsheet that documents donor names and contact information. As the campaign goes on, you'll need to be able to quickly track total donations from each individual, to make sure no one exceeds contribution limits.

There will be many, many steps after these in developing and running an effective campaign for office—but without the campaign committee, the campaign website, and the campaign bank account, it will be very hard to move forward, so take care of those as soon as possible!

For more information, email secretary@ilgp.org.