

**CAMPAIGN**



**BOOT**

**CAMP**

**BASIC TRAINING FOR  
FUTURE LEADERS**

**A 7-Step Guide to Launching Successful  
Campaigns for Candidates and Causes**

**CHRISTINE PELOSI**

An Excerpt From

***Campaign Boot Camp:  
Basic Training for Future Leaders***

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## ONE



# Identify Your Call to Service

There are two kinds of people who enter public life: those who want to *do* something and those who want to *be* something. — *Political proverb*

Our democracy requires a binding commitment between people, a commitment that begins with the earliest actions in family, school, worship, and community. It is a commitment that develops over time and experience, based on a call to service—the vision, ideas, and values that motivate each public servant.

Each of us has a personal call to service that motivates and inspires our actions in family, community, and public life. Whether your public service involves helping a nonprofit agency achieve its mission, voting or volunteering in an election, mastering the skills of running for public office, studying political science and civics, or networking with your peers in a community improvement project, everything you do to engage in democracy begins with your call to service. Your call to service is your vision for the future, your ideas and values, and your commitment to achieving the vision by working in community with others. Whether your household is grounded in social responsibility or politics or workers' rights or civil rights or military service, your call begins at home with a family ethic, manifests itself in community

work, and provides a touchstone for all you do, inspiring you on the good days and strengthening you on the bad days.

America's Founders articulated a national call to service in the Preamble to the United States Constitution.

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The Founders' call to service echoes through the years as a challenge for each generation of Americans to achieve the vision. Indeed, the first official act for every public officer in America is an oath to protect and defend the Constitution. Your call to service tells you who you are, why you serve the public, and how you will fulfill your vision and that of our Founders as set forth in our Constitution. Your actions derive from that call to service.

In assessing your own participation in our democracy, the first essential question is, what is your personal call to service?

### **ARTICULATE YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

If you had the power to change the world, what would the future be like? A safer America? A freer people? A stronger community? A better-educated workforce? A healthier society? A fairer economy? A national culture of service? First and foremost, you must identify the touchstone of your service: a vision so compelling to you that you would give of your time, energy, resources, and reputation to achieve the vision and to ask others to give of themselves to do the same. Consider the actions you have taken in your community—with nonprofits,

local organizations, and/or political campaigns. What kind of future are you trying to build for future generations?

### **COMMUNICATE THE IDEAS THAT WILL ACHIEVE YOUR VISION**

Our Constitution was a bold stroke—a fusion of ideas, imagination, and intellect that shaped our Founders' vision of the future.

What are the ideas you propose to achieve your vision of the future? How a safer America builds allies and protects us from adversaries? How free people balance security with freedom of speech, worship, and assembly? How a stronger community treats police officers, victims, and criminals? How a better-educated workforce receives lifelong learning opportunities? Who pays for medical treatments in a healthier society? How a fairer economy pays its workers and prepares them to compete in the global economy? Whether building a national culture of service means a draft or incentivized service with subsidized college or graduate education or health care?

"Ideas have consequences," says columnist George F. Will, "large and lasting consequences."<sup>1</sup> What are the consequences of your idea? Anticipate the ideological, logistical, and budgetary consequences of your idea, such as the policy lines you would draw, how you would get your idea accomplished, and how you would pay for it and with whose money.

Assume that your vision is a safer America and your idea is to provide for the common defense through a strong military that will protect us from all enemies. Who is required or recruited or allowed to serve? How do you maintain force readiness and care for troops, military families, and veterans?

How much of the federal budget do you spend in relation to all the other needs of the country? Do you raise taxes, and, if so, whose?

Most important are the practical consequences: when and how do you propose to deploy the strong military to go to war and to protect us here at home?

### **WHAT ARE THE CORE VALUES THAT SHAPE YOUR VISION AND IDEAS?**

Just as integral to your vision of the future and your big ideas are the core values, such as equality, responsibility, and justice, that inspire you to achieve the vision. If your vision is of a safer America, and if your idea is to provide for the common defense through a strong military, your values will shape your treatment of the military servicemen and servicewomen. Equality shapes whom you call to serve: a draft or voluntary force; people from certain segments of society, or all people, regardless of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation. Responsibility shapes how you prepare them for missions against the real and immediate threats against our country and when you deploy them in harm's way at home or overseas. Justice guides whether you keep promises to military families and properly provide for veterans upon their return home.

### **TEST YOUR VISION, IDEAS, AND VALUES TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE THEY MAKE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES**

So far we've been dealing with the imagination; your vision becomes real when you make choices in civic and political life that make a difference in people's lives.

On a personal level, you might achieve your vision for a safer America; your idea of a strong military; and your values of equality, responsibility, and justice by enlisting in the military or by supporting the families of people who enlist. On a community level, you might achieve the vision by supporting initiatives to provide workforce training and small-business loans to veterans returning home.

On a political level, you might volunteer to work for a candidate who shares your vision. How can you tell if a candidate shares your vision? Let's say, for example, that you were evaluating candidates for president, and several promise a vision of America with the idea of a strong military and the values of equality, responsibility, and justice. So far, so good, but who will achieve the vision in the manner you intend? Until a crisis brings it home, it's just a theory.

Consider this "NORAD test": Assume that, as happened on September 11, 2001,<sup>2</sup> it would take about seven minutes from the time that NORAD (the North American Aerospace Defense Command) gets word that the country is under attack to the time that fighter jets can be scrambled in response. If NORAD identifies a threat—a hijacked airplane or a missile over a U.S. population area—should the president order the jets to fire? At whom? With how many American lives at risk on the plane or on the ground?

Picture yourself or a loved one on the plane, in the targeted population area, or watching safe from immediate harm as the crisis unfolds. What do you want your president to do? What vision, ideas, and values do you want to see in the president who would have only those brief and critical seven minutes to make life-or-death decisions?

Although few other tests will be as dramatic, you need to articulate your vision for the future, your ideas and their





## CALL TO SERVICE

# NANCY PELOSI

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“Our diversity is our strength,” says House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Pelosi grew up in multiethnic Baltimore, where her call to service came as a young girl. Her family home was always open to constituents of her father, the late Mayor Thomas D’Alessandro Jr., and she attributes her call to service to her parents, who “raised us to be proud of our Italian Catholic heritage, patriotic in our love of country, and respectful of other people’s pride in their heritage.”

“When people ask me why I serve, I always answer in the same way: our children, our children, our children—the air they breathe, the water they drink, the food they eat, their health and education, a world at peace in which to live, the job security of their parents and the retirement security of their grandparents. I see my own service as an extension of my role as a mother of five and a grandmother of six.” Before being elected as Speaker of the House of Representatives, she said: “When they hand me that gavel I will be receiving the gavel not just for the House Democrats but for all of America’s children, because we have to answer to them, to make the future better for them.”

*Source:* Nancy Pelosi, interview, July 14, 2007.



consequences, and the values that shape your call to service to see the difference they will make in people's lives.

### BE PART OF SOMETHING LARGER THAN YOURSELF

To experience the challenges and rewards of public service, and to find out what kind of engagement best suits your talents, work with people who share your vision, ideas, and values. Volunteer with a student organization, a community project, a nonprofit, or an election campaign. The way you act to achieve your vision is a signal to you and to others that you are engaged to *do* something: to make a difference in your community and make the future better.

"Know thy power," says House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "Recognize your responsibility to encourage other people who are on their own paths to public service. It is amazing how much you can accomplish if you are willing to share credit."<sup>3</sup> You must do something for people before you ask them to do something for you. Think of it this way: if you had a friend who showed up only when she needed something or called only to ask you for money, you would probably not stay friends for long. The same is true in public life. Don't be a taker. If someone gives you the opportunity to serve, pay it forward by helping someone else get involved or by donating money or resources to improve an organization.

**Volunteer.** "Every job I ever got I volunteered first," says Lezlee Westine, the CEO of TechNet, a bipartisan network of technology companies designed to promote innovation and competitiveness. "You cannot underestimate the huge value of volunteering for your first job. Volunteering is a great op-

portunity to show your passion for a cause and catapults you faster to a leadership role in an organization.”<sup>4</sup>

Performing the basic tasks of campaigning—sorting mail, stuffing envelopes, answering phones—gives you hands-on experience. Your willingness to do the grunt work tests your commitment to a cause and demonstrates to you and to others that you are engaged to *do* something, not just to *be* something.

**Register to vote.** Literally dozens of elected officials who work for you at all levels of government are up for reelection every two, four, or six years. In addition, ballot measures at the local and possibly state levels are subject to voter approval. Be sure that you are registered to vote and that if you have moved, your registration is up to date. Being registered to vote is important for everyone, and it is critical for those considering a run for public office. Register other people to vote as well: encourage family and friends; register new citizens at their swearing-in ceremonies; participate in voter registration drives at fairs, festivals, and other community events.

**If you see a workshop, take it.** You will need to excel in the four metrics of public service: management, message, money, and mobilization. Try your hand at each one in order to develop your skills. There are many ways to learn the skills of democracy; for example, many local nonprofit organizations and political parties sponsor trainings for potential volunteers. Challenge yourself and develop your advocacy skills. Write letters to your local paper. Post a diary on your community blog. E-mail your elected officials. Prepare presentations and informational videos. Give progress reports to people you recruit to work with you, and develop your advocacy skills. Develop a network to continue the work you care

about, and make a commitment to mentor people the way people mentored you.

**Match your skills to a position.** Certain skills sets are associated with particular types of public service positions: financial expertise for a nonprofit treasurer; advocacy skills for a legislator; executive experience for a potential mayor or board president. Volunteer in a nonprofit agency, work on a political campaign, or watch the city council or Congress in person or on public television to find a match between your skills and the work that interests you.

## STRENGTHEN YOUR FRIENDSHIPS AND ALLIANCES IN NETWORKS

As you articulate your vision, ideas, and values; as you begin the service that puts them into action; and as you emerge as a trustworthy policy advocate, you will develop friendships and alliances.

**Technology networks.** TechNet's Lezlee Westine advises people to create technology networks through the Internet to organize local groups and individuals for fund-raising, communication with the public on a grassroots level without using traditional media, and targeting favorable voters for get-out-the-vote efforts.<sup>5</sup>

I saw many of these networks firsthand on the campaign trail in 2006. The top-down nature of institutions is being reinvigorated by the bottom-up rough and tumble of online social and political networking. This new blend of asymmetrical politics thrives on bringing old-school politics and new media together. In communities around the county, I visited with people who had lost confidence in the large institutions—such as government (because of Katrina, Iraq, and



## CALL TO SERVICE

# LEZLEE WESTINE

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Building opportunity through innovation and competitiveness inspires the service of Lezlee Westine, the chief executive officer of TechNet, a nonprofit bipartisan organization representing over a million employees in the fields of information technology, biotechnology, e-commerce, and finance. An expert in harnessing technology to improve people's everyday lives, Westine encourages aspiring public servants to do the same: "Build technology networks to bring people together, coalition networks to accomplish a policy goal, and human networks to advance and mentor other people."

Westine's call to service led her to Washington, D.C., where she worked from 2001 to 2005 in the George W. Bush White House as deputy assistant to the president and as director of the Office of Public Liaison. Working as the Bush administration's top liaison to the more than twenty thousand constituent and interest groups that interface with the White House each year, Westine built coalition networks for a variety of goals, including initiatives to support the 2001 economic package, to draw needed attention to the plight of Afghan women in the wake of September 11, and to increase funding for education programs. Now, through TechNet, Westine regularly engages a technology network of two hundred member companies in the political process. "Above all else, build connections and relationships—they are the glue that holds together any network."

*Source:* Lezlee Westine, interview, June 12, 2007.



corruption), corporations (due to Enron and other instances when executives bilked employees and investors), and churches (after the pedophilia scandals). Yet these people felt intense pride in their own community institutions and service traditions. Not only were they voting out a culture of corruption, they were ushering in a culture of service: walking precincts for candidates and walking 10k's for AIDS or breast cancer research; meeting to clean up politics and to clean up beaches, parks, and neighborhoods.

**Coalition networks.** Westine's service in the White House involved working with a series of coalition networks, which she describes as a "temporary alliance of groups to achieve a common goal." These coalition networks can include journalists, nongovernmental organizations, corporate executives, and political leaders—"groups of people with followings beyond themselves" organized around a specific policy objective.

Look for unlikely allies to join your coalition networks. Grassroots maven Dotty LeMieux, whose Green Dog Campaigns firm advises Northern California candidates and initiative campaigns, described a coalition to require that any new construction at the Marin County Civic Center be subject to a public vote. "A preservationist group attracted the interest of prison reformers (because a new jail was being contemplated at the site), anti-tax advocates (who feared being made to foot the bill for some lavish building projects), and neighbors (who wanted to keep things quiet)," she recalls. LeMieux and her unlikely allies sought endorsements from conservationist groups like the Sierra Club and social justice networks whose members joined their ranks as volunteer precinct workers, phone-bankers, and donors.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, adds LeMieux, when plans were unveiled for a biotech medical research facility on one of the most visible hillsides in Marin County, a coalition was formed by many of these same groups. With the addition of animal rights activists (who opposed animal testing) and local service providers (who objected because community foundation funding for the facility would cut into their own resource pool), a referendum opposing the facility project passed easily. Conversely, an effort to stop a new golf course on the site of a historic blue oak forest failed because the developers were able to offer discount greens fees to local golfers, a community that outnumbered the environmentalists who led the opposition.

***Human networks.*** The most effective way to build a culture of service is to develop a network of people who share your call to service. For example, your call to service may be the economic empowerment of women. A women's business network will help achieve the vision because it will do the following: host fund-raisers for women candidates or candidates who champion issues important to women; lobby government by showcasing the impact of woman-owned businesses in terms of numbers of workers and revenues; influence media coverage of the most powerful woman business owners; support women for political positions; and encourage successful women to mentor younger women. "From handshaking to supporting your peers to supporting a candidate, human networks will advance your goals and have untold benefits," advises Lezlee Westine.

Start building your human networks with the people whose leadership you admire. Work with a local nonprofit or political leader on a public service effort to learn the ropes, develop relationships, and take a shared risk.

***Be part of a team.*** Networking requires you to work with and for other people. Politics and policy are about teamwork. Some people like to study, worship, and work alone; if you do, perhaps a behind-the-scenes role is appropriate for you. Assuming you enjoy the camaraderie and cooperation of a team effort, you will be spending most of your time asking other people to volunteer their time, write a check, bring their network in common cause with yours, and/or hire your candidate to work for them. If you decide to become a candidate or commissioner or nonprofit trustee, you will have a constituency to which you will have to answer, each of them with their own vote as to whether you can get the job, how you are doing in the job, and whether you should keep the job.

Finally, campaigns are environments where the stakes are high and the pressure is intense. Networking means listening, and the feedback you hear will not always be favorable. You will have to hear criticism about work that springs from your intensely personal core vision, ideas, and values—and not take it personally. Developing a thick skin is an integral part of your networking and public service experience.

### **PERFORM AN ACT OF COURAGE TO ACHIEVE YOUR VISION**

The big test of your commitment to service will come when you have to risk your reputation and perform an act of courage to achieve your vision.

***Meet people you don't know and ask them for help.*** Would you call someone you don't know to ask them to hire someone? Would you call up someone you don't know and ask



them to hire you? Would you go to the home of someone you don't know, knock on the door, and ask them to hire you or a friend? Think of your last job interview. Now imagine giving it every day walking door-to-door in your neighborhood. Think of your last performance evaluation. Now imagine it posted on the Internet, with an opportunity for anyone to post their comments. That is a flavor of the exposure you have as a public leader. Your comfort level in talking to someone you don't know and receiving their feedback will reveal what sort of role you want to take, either behind the scenes, out front for a cause, or as a candidate yourself. The more dedicated you are to your cause, the easier it is to put yourself in the public eye and recruit support for your mission.

***Challenge a sacred cow.*** Do you serve on the board of a non-profit where the overhead seems excessive compared to the services performed? The sacred cow may be perks for the directors or money spent according to the whims of powerful donors rather than according to a mission statement. Do you live in a community where the government gives more benefits to corporations than it does to small businesses? The sacred cow may be a taxpayer benefit given to a powerful entity rather than to working people. Whatever your scope of service, identifying and tackling a sacred cow will require taking risks and leading on difficult issues.

Taking on sacred cows is especially important for women leaders. California political strategist Mary Hughes, whose "dream work" is helping women achieve power, says bipartisan public polling reveals that women face harsher scrutiny than men do with respect to their fiscal and national security credentials. To overcome this disadvantage, Hughes advises women to seek out opportunities to network in those circles by joining trade associations or policy forums that address

those issues and to take on sacred cows in business practices and budgets.<sup>7</sup>

**Take a political risk.** You will face criticism and skepticism from people who think your ideas are unrealistic or politically impossible. That is to be expected. Working for a candidate running for office is always a risk. Although there are several people on the same ballot, only one person is going to win. If past experience shows that over 95 percent of incumbents are reelected, a challenger cannot expect to win and would be advised not to try. But dozens of Republicans beat the odds when running for Congress in 1994, as did dozens of Democrats running for Congress in 2006. Each made a personal decision to campaign for their vision, ideas, and values and risked losing to advance a service mission.

Demonstrating the courage of your convictions sometimes means you make the fight, even if you are not likely to win. The Fighting Dems numbered over fifty, with fewer than a dozen in statistically competitive districts. All the candidates and their supporters knew this from the start: they were running to show their vision for a strong America; their idea for a new direction for the war in Iraq; their values of duty, honor, and country. They risked their personal reputations, their finances, and their relationships with those in the military who would not oppose the commander in chief. Many of the candidates lost, but all of the campaigns succeeded in creating a drumbeat across America for a new direction in Iraq and for better care for troops and veterans.

## GET YOUR POLICY ACT TOGETHER

All leaders must inspire trust. Before facing the public, you must know what you are talking about.

**Research the duties and responsibilities of the position you seek.** If you seek a leadership role in a nonprofit, labor union, business association, political campaign, or elective office, consider the prerequisites. Does the position require any particular credentials? Do you need a certified public accountant license or a law degree? Do you need ongoing professional education? If so, take care of business. If you are considering working for a government agency or elected official, look into the responsibilities to constituents, casework, and staffing requirements.

**Master the public policy challenges.** As you develop an understanding of the ideological, logistical, budgetary, and practical consequences of your own ideas, be sure to study “policy triggers”—the events or actions that affect laws. If you are gathering signatures for a ballot initiative, read the proposal first and be sure to understand what the law is now and how your measure will change it. Did you know that many states link some of their tax rates to federal tax rates? Check to see if your state does that before proposing a change in tax policy. One candidate did not check, and proposed a federal tax cut that—if passed—would have unbalanced his state budget by cutting the state rate and leaving the state budget in deficit. The governor was understandably displeased when called for comment. Another trigger to watch out for is the sunset date of any legislation: you don’t want to get caught proposing a budget or law based on a provision that has expired.

**Be knowledgeable and candid about the consequences of your proposals.** Your word is your bond in politics. People have to trust you as an advocate. As a practical matter, your arguments are stronger if you can identify and counter the strongest arguments against them. As a personal matter, your integrity is underlined by your candor about the mer-

its of your position versus the opposition. The late Jack Valenti—a decorated World War II combat pilot, Harvard MBA, White House speechwriter for President Lyndon B. Johnson, and longtime president of the Motion Picture Association of America—cautioned a bipartisan Capitol Hill audience: “Trust is everything.” Valenti urged us to be honest about our ideas and candid about our opponents because, he said, “the people you are trying to influence will find out the merits of the other side eventually and will respect you all the more for being up front with them.”<sup>8</sup>

***Balance your purist and pragmatic tendencies.*** Do you see yourself as a purist or a pragmatist? How much of each? It might depend on the cause. Finding your balance with candor and clarity is essential to your success as people look to you for leadership. A purist can limit alliances or even discussions to like-minded people, but a pragmatist will have to reach across the spectrum of views to talk with everyone. Father Robert Drinan, a Catholic priest who served in Congress, was known as the consummate “pragmatic idealist” because he retained his core values yet moved beyond his own ideological circle to find new allies to advance his causes.

It helps to view policy through what Nancy Pelosi calls the “kaleidoscope” of politics. For example, when it comes to the environment, some of the same evangelicals and secular humanists who oppose each other with respect to the separation of church and state agree on the need to combat global warming, while some environmentalists and hunters who hold opposing views on gun control share a conservationist agenda to preserve natural resources. You never know where you might find common cause with people.

***“Bush is right.”*** A former Indiana congressman and member of the 9/11 Commission, Tim Roemer counsels aspiring pub-



## CALL TO SERVICE

# FATHER ROBERT F. DRINAN

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The ongoing responsibility to public service is embodied in the advice from the late congressman Father Robert F. Drinan to a group of his Georgetown University Law students: “As I look out at all of you with your new and expensive law school educations, I would urge you to go forth into society not as mere legal tradesmen, but as moral architects. Design, create, and build a better and more equitable society, and use your skills to help those who are otherwise not being served.” Drinan agitated for justice for most of his eighty-six years. He was elected to Congress, where he served as chair of the Criminal Justice Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee and later opted to remain in the priesthood when the pope asked him to choose between his office and his ordination. Drinan’s passion for justice included service in the law school classroom and the nonprofit boardroom, earning his peers’ respect, with twenty-two honorary degrees as well as the 2004 American Bar Association Medal and the 2006 Congressional Distinguished Service Award, those institutions’ highest honors. His final homily, delivered at the beginning of the 110th Congress in January 2007, was a powerful call to service seeking justice for the children of the world, particularly the children affected by Katrina and Darfur.

*Source:* Father Robert F. Drinan, remarks at mass honoring Speaker-elect Nancy Pelosi (Trinity University, Washington, D.C., January 3, 2007), [http://www.trinitydc.edu/news\\_events/2007/012907\\_fr\\_drinan.php](http://www.trinitydc.edu/news_events/2007/012907_fr_drinan.php).



lic servants to find at least one issue on which to promote bipartisan solutions. In Roemer's current work, that issue is implementation of the unanimous, bipartisan 9/11 Commission reforms. No matter how much you disagree with people on the other side of the philosophical spectrum, counsels Roemer, there must be at least *one* issue on which you can work with the opposition to forge a constructive solution.<sup>9</sup>

For many progressives, "Bush is right" when it comes to the need to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa or genocide in Darfur. For many conservatives, "Nancy Pelosi is right" when it comes to veterans' rights, and "Harry Reid is right" when it comes to stem cell research. Your willingness to communicate the issues of a shared vision will demonstrate your maturity as a political thinker and as a public servant. If you are engaged in electoral politics, your success relies on a bipartisan vision for America on at least one issue; if you are in the nonprofit world, your tax-favored status depends on it.

In the words of former Congresswoman Lindy Boggs of Louisiana, "never fight each fight as if it were your last," because today's adversaries may well become tomorrow's allies. Your cause is bigger than your ego: no need to fight a scorched-earth battle only to wake up the next day needing grassroots support from former opponents for your venture.

### WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THIS MAKE?

After answering the call-to-service questions—"what is the vision?" "what are the ideas and their consequences?" "what values shape the policy?"—you come to the age-old question: "so what?"

What difference does this make? Every cycle, campaigners say, "This is the most important election in our lifetime." To

them, perhaps. But to the voters? You have to let people know what difference you or your candidate would make in office. You have to explain why this race matters.

Explaining the difference a race makes is also important with ballot measures. Sometimes a public policy initiative comes on the ballot over and over again. In states like California, where the ballot initiative process allows just about anything to go before voters, it is assumed that legislative fights will carry over into the ballot box. A growth initiative goes from the voters to the county supervisors and back again. A reproductive choice question goes from ballot to ballot to ballot. A health care measure is passed by legislators, vetoed by the governor, and placed on the state ballot. And so forth.

This process grows tiresome for many voters, who feel as though they are doing the work they pay public officials to do. Your responsibility in presenting a ballot initiative is to explain to people why they should care.

One woman crystallized this sentiment to me during the 2005 campaign that successfully defeated a series of anti-worker ballot measures in California. I was phone-banking, and a woman I called told me how she had taken hours to read her voter handbook. She vented: "I send people to Sacramento to do this kind of work. Besides, it takes a PhD to figure these things out—I *have* a PhD, so I *can* figure it out, but *why should I have to?*" Why, indeed. I thanked her for her "no" vote, and told her story during the rest of my phone-banking to urge more "no" votes.

But when the shoe is on the other foot and you seek a "yes" vote on an initiative, the burden will be on you to lay out the urgency of the situation, the policy implications of the initiative, and the practical consequences of doing nothing.

Before supporting a candidate or ballot measure, be sure you know why this race matters: why this person has to be

elected right now or why this measure has to be approved by the voters; what exactly the candidate or initiative will accomplish for people; and how this measure achieves the vision, ideas, and values that call you to service.

### CONSIDER THE UNWELCOME SURPRISES

Whenever you are seeking support of others to gain a high-profile position, everything you have said or done can be trumpeted across the *New York Times* or a local blog. In today's Internet era, your life is an open Facebook. Be prepared by being honest and keeping a sense of perspective.

A classic axiom of public life is, "You can go to church to confess your sins, or you can go into politics and have your opponents confess them for you."

Consider your personal, financial, political, or criminal background, ranging from every address, job, and position you have held to any civil or criminal proceedings in which you have been involved. Remember the Rule of One—everyone tells someone. A friend told me that he once asked a prominent official about a sensitive matter. "I trust you," the official responded, "but I'm not sure I can trust the person you're going to tell." It's human nature—neither lips nor records stay sealed.

In most community organizations, you have to complete a background check in order to serve on a nonprofit board of directors. Be sure that your résumé is accurate, your credentials are in order, and you are prepared to explain any past mistakes that may come up. Most of all, be sure you have lived up to the standards you set for others. If you preach family values, live them. If you seek forgiveness for your mistakes, offer it to others in personal and public life. Nothing stings more sharply than hypocrisy.



People competing for the same job—on a board or for a political office—or those who are opposed to your service mission may link your “minor,” “distant,” “remote,” “forgotten,” “childish,” “foolish,” “rash,” “youthful” “young and irresponsible” acts together in order to gain competitive advantage. The more sacred cows you tackle, the more someone who is threatened by change may want to sideline you. So you have to ask the hard questions about yourself.

Consider the answers you would owe to your spouse, your children, your friends, your supporters, the press, and the media when the skeletons tumble out of the closet. What can you do? Take an inventory of your life, and review it with your circle of trusted advisers. Then remember: no one lives a sainted life. Everyone makes mistakes; people generally care less that you made mistakes than they do that you dealt with them properly. The American people are forgiving and compassionate. If you can express a lesson learned and demonstrate that you have earned the trust and support of others—particularly those who may have been aggrieved by your actions—you have the opportunity to place events in perspective and continue with your service.

## **MAKE A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO SERVICE**

Once you identify the vision, ideas, and values that call you to service; volunteer for causes and/or candidates; take risks; establish friendships; engage in social networking; and consider the unwelcome surprises, you are ready to decide what kind of personal service is best for you and your family.

***Start with your family.*** Everyone has to balance the needs of family and work. This balance is impossible in politics unless your family is committed to your goal. You can dedicate

sixteen-hour days to the startup work of a nonprofit, political cause, or election campaign only if your loved ones support your desire to devote your—and their—time, energy, resources, and reputation to public service.

Your time and energy devoted to a cause is time and energy away from Little League, book clubs, grocery shopping, and helping with homework. Build time into your family schedule for volunteering and service along with these other family activities. If you're at community meetings or serving in office, who's watching the kids, picking up the groceries, and preparing the meals?

Your resources include your own funds: you may need to take a leave from your job or curtail your work hours. Can you invest 5 to 10 percent of your disposable income, take out a loan, mortgage your home, give up cable TV, and put thousands of miles on the family car? Jan Brown describes the commitment that she and her husband, Fighting Dem Charlie Brown, made when committing to his campaign for Congress in 2006 this way: "We cancelled our cable TV subscription, drove thousands of miles to each and every community in our rural district, and devoted all our spare time to the campaign so we could call attention to a new direction for the Iraq war, for our son Jeff who is serving, and for all the servicemembers and their families." The Browns even spent their 2006 wedding anniversary campaigning at a Nevada City house meeting. "Once we arrived and were getting out of the car, the campaign manager managed to close the trunk on my right hand," remembers Jan Brown. After bandaging her bleeding hand, Jan went to the party, made the "ask" for donations and volunteers, and tried to avoid shaking hands that night. "An anniversary to remember," she concludes. "Nothing is going to stop us when we are campaigning, nothing, it is too important."<sup>10</sup> This is not the way most of us

would want to spend a romantic anniversary, but the Browns made the choice to honor their service mission. Campaigning is a marathon that takes a personal and financial toll: be sure your family is ready to pay it.

Your reputation is not individual; it includes your partner, spouse, kids, parents, and close friends who will lose some of their privacy. Your family and friends will also have to live with you if you win—and if you lose. All of this must factor into your decision. Explain your call to service, the nature of your mission, and the campaigning you may ask of them. Be clear about their roles in any public efforts. Be ready to take a risk together: you may put your family time, energy, resources, and reputation on the line, work your heart out, and lose. If so, what then? Before you embark on this family commitment, be sure you reach a family decision.

Once you take everything into account and decide to go ahead, you are ready to take the leap onto a public stage.

You may decide to lead a nonprofit service agency. You may choose to accept a public trust position as an appointed official—city commissioner, deputy prosecutor, or county administrator. You may decide to chair a ballot initiative campaign. You may assume leadership in a political campaign. You may decide to run for office yourself.

***“Consider yourself asked.”*** You may be thinking about running for office and feel confident about your commitment to serve but are unsure about whether you can win. This feeling is particularly true for women, according to a 2004 Brown University report that asked, “Why Don’t Women Run for Office?” The researchers found that women are less likely than men to have received the suggestion to run for office from party and elected officials, political activists, or family and friends; yet when women receive external support from

formal and informal political and nonpolitical sources, they are twice as likely to run.<sup>11</sup> Ellen Malcolm, founder of EMILY's List, a national network of 100,000 members who recruit, train, and support Democratic pro-choice women candidates, says the Brown study shows that people who care about public service should encourage others to run. The theory behind EMILY's List—*EMILY* stands for Early Money Is Like Yeast—is that early networking and institutional support helps the campaign “dough” rise. Malcolm says establishing a pipeline for women to run is essential because “progress doesn't happen in a moment, but in battle after battle for our values.”

Malcolm's message to potential candidates: “Consider yourself asked.”<sup>15</sup>



### GET REAL:

#### TAKE THE PUBLIC SERVICE FITNESS TEST

**1. What is your vision for the future that calls you to service?**

If you had the power to change the world, what would the future be like? Consider the actions you have taken in your community—with nonprofits, local organizations, and/or political campaigns. What kind of future are you trying to build for future generations?

**2. What is the bold stroke—your big idea—to achieve your vision?**

What are the consequences of your idea? What are the ideological, logistical, and budgetary consequences of your idea: what policy lines would you draw; how would you accomplish your ideas, and, how would you pay for it and with whose money?

**3. What are the core values that shape your vision and ideas?**

What do you believe? What are the values that shape how you see the world and how you would achieve your vision?

**4. Do you want to do something or to be something?**

What is your volunteer history? Are you involved because you really want to work for people or are you in it for ego, power, money, or fame? Who have you actively encouraged, supported, or mentored in their path to public service?

**5. What act of political courage have you taken to achieve your vision?**

What risk have you taken for causes and candidates? Did you challenge a sacred cow?

**6. Do you have public service credentials?**

What have you done for people? Do people trust you to make a difference for the cause? Do you understand what the position demands, and are you prepared to meet those demands? Can you ask thousands of people you don't know to give you a job or give money to your cause?

**7. Have you made friends and established alliances?**

Whom do you admire in your personal life? Who are your political heroes? What service have you performed with, or in networks related to, the work of your personal or political heroes? Have you built the technology, coalition, and human networks to succeed? Are the networks prepared to support you, your cause, or your candidate with time, energy, and resources?

**8. What difference does this service make?**

Why does this service matter? Why should people care about your cause or candidate?

**9. How do you handle crisis and criticism?**

How do you handle criticism about work that springs from your core vision, ideas, and values? When conditions get chaotic, what is your temperament?

**10. Are you carrying any personal or political baggage?**

Have you supported controversial candidates or political organizations? Is there something in your past that you need to reconcile or explain? How will you deal with this?

**11. Is your family ready for you to serve?**

Do your loved ones support your desire to devote your time, energy, resources, and reputation to public service? If you are taking a lead role in a campaign as a manager or candidate, does your family know that they will not see you very often during the campaign, which may last a year or two? Are they committed to your goal? Will they offer you support and campaign with you?

**12. Are you personally committed to serve?**

Do you want to run for office? Are you ready for a marathon? Can you take a leave from work? If you are running a campaign or offering yourself as a candidate, will you take out a loan or mortgage your home to win if need be? Consider your biggest disappointment. Now magnify it on a public scale. If you put all your time, energy, and effort into a public service campaign, work your heart out and lose, what then?

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By Christine Pelosi

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