

Running for Public Office



Center for Health, Environment & Justice
P.O. Box 6806, Falls Church, VA 22040-6806

Running for Public Office

Sharon Franklin
Barbara Sullivan

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P.O. Box 6806 Falls Church, VA 22040-6806 703-237-2249 chej@chej.org www.chej.org



Center for Health, Environment & Justice

P.O. Box 6806 • Falls Church, VA 22040 • Phone: 703.237.2249 • Fax: 703.237.8389 • www.chej.org

Mentoring a Movement

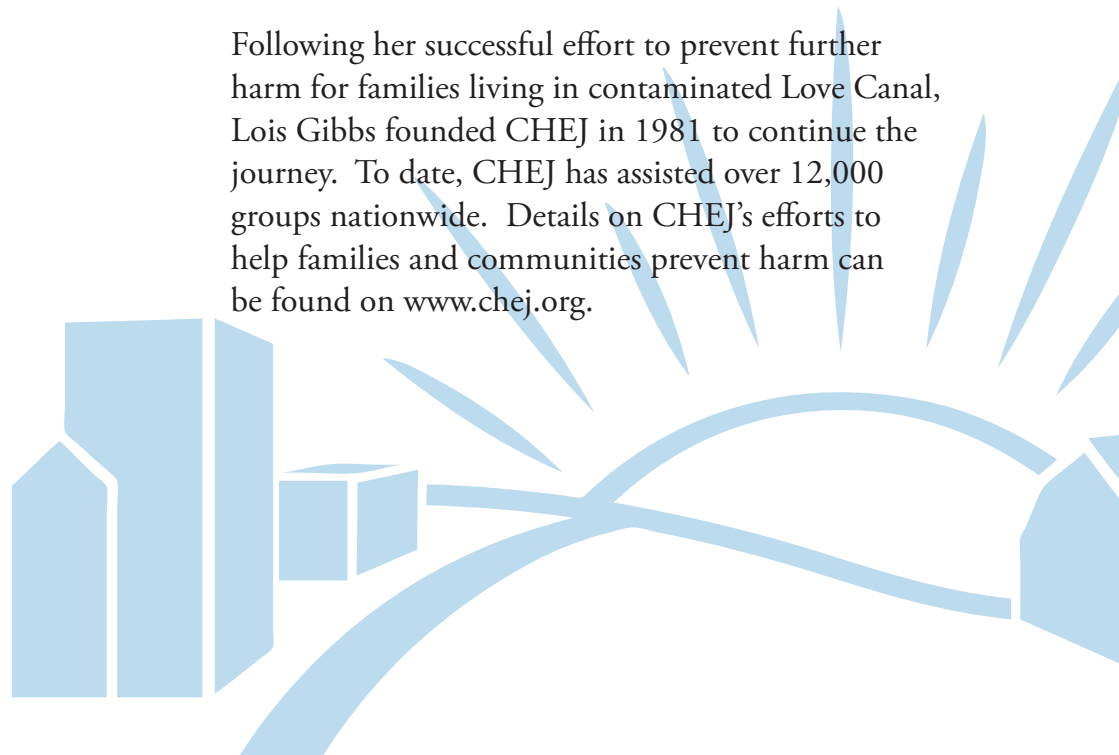
Empowering People

Preventing Harm

About the Center for Health, Environment & Justice

CHEJ mentors the movement to build healthier communities by empowering people to prevent the harm caused by chemical and toxic threats. We accomplish our work by connecting local community groups to national initiatives and corporate campaigns. CHEJ works with communities to empower groups by providing the tools, strategic vision, and encouragement they need to advocate for human health and the prevention of harm.

Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for families living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ in 1981 to continue the journey. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 12,000 groups nationwide. Details on CHEJ's efforts to help families and communities prevent harm can be found on www.chej.org.





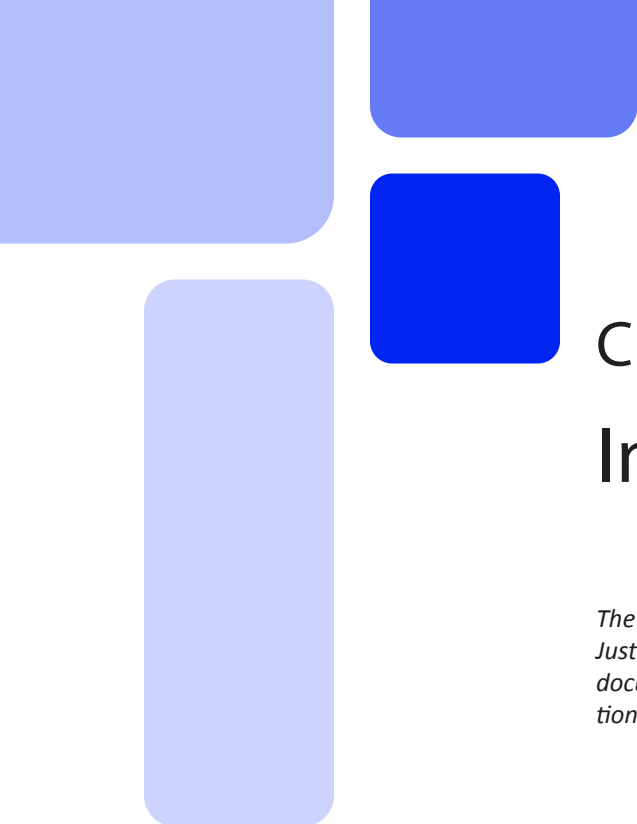
Introduction



The Nuts and Bolts



Learning & Sharing Our Experiences



Chapter 1

Introduction

The following document is provided by the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ) in order to educate our members and other interested parties. This document should not be interpreted as a political endorsement, and/or intervention in a political campaign on behalf of or in opposition of any candidate.

Over the past 30 years CHEJ has worked with many communities who have organized and won their fights. During this time, we have received many inquiries about how to run for office (i.e. school board member, county commissioner, city council member, sewer district commissioner or district representative). This publication is intended to communicate some of the preliminary steps that are needed to inform those who are considering seeking elective office in their communities.

Before you make a commitment to run for public office, think through some importance personal issues. Know yourself, your family, your abilities, capabilities, and limits. Establish what you can and cannot put into a campaign. Write these down and post them in a visible place. For example, how much personal money can you put in? How much time (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.) and what other resources are you willing to commit? Decide what you personally want to get out of the experience, win or lose.

Answer the question that you will be asked more often than any other: “Why are you running for this office?” Your answer needs to be not more than two sentences.

Where Do You Start?

If you do not already have it in place, you will need to develop a local group of individuals that are dedicated to implementing your platform and electing you to office. The number of active people you can count on to get involved will be a good guide to base a decision on as to whether or not to seek elective office. (i.e., 200-300 active members would be a good gauge, as to your source of support for a local campaign such as a school board, city council; 1,000 active members would be needed for a district positions such as a State Representative or Assemblyperson position.) Another good gauge would be the number of signatures needed that would have to be secured for the position you are seeking.

Building Your Base

It’s important to obtain help from others to build your constituent base. Remember, there’s no substitute for face-to-face contact. You can call people on the phone; mail flyers; send emails; distribute leaflets, but to build relationships that will get people who will help put you in office, you must meet and talk with people, one by one.

Successful organizing happens when a group of people finds visible ways to use the truth to wake up the conscience of a larger group. In an era when politics is defined by scandals and sound bites, organizing can remind the American people that political life is supposed to be about self-government, justice and the common good. The process of talking with and listening to people one-on-one, of re-checking with people in the community about how they feel and what they will do is vital to your political survival. New people will bring new ideas and new energy. But you won't find this renewed strength until you invite people to participate fully in the campaign, and in the decisions affecting their future.

It's important to be in touch with what is happening in your community and to respect and include your friends and neighbors in your campaign. Show them how it is in their interest to get involved in your campaign. People act out of self interest. You want them to see how their needs and desires fit in with what you are doing.

Use your judgment to gauge what a person can give - "everyone can do something." Commitment should be expressed as action. "I believe" should flow directly into "I will do." Explore ways that the people you talk to can become actively involved. Ask for other contacts. Ask them to come door-knocking with you, or to make two to five contacts themselves - make sure that they know you'll be back in touch to see how things went.

Contact CHEJ. Our staff can help you with the finer points of organizing as well as provide you with more resources.

How Do I Organize My Campaign?

FUNDING is very important to a political campaign. The more active individuals that you have with the ability to contribute and get involved with your campaign, the more funds you will be able to raise.

- First **Establish a Budget** prior to filing all the necessary papers and fees required to conduct a campaign. If possible, recruit a Campaign Manager, who can recruit and manage all facets of your campaign. If not, you will be responsible for not only writing the candidate statement but finding out the printing cost for candidate statements, maps, campaign materials (i.e. signs, flyers, business cards, and media television and radio time and social media advertising fees) and much more.

- It is important to **Obtain as much Volunteer Assistance** as you can get. Your focus should be on the message of the campaign and meeting as many people as you can via one-on-one talking to local grassroots community groups, individuals and voters, and overseeing the entire campaign strategy. This means before any information is distributed under your name you need to give final approval of signs, banners, ads, electronic media (i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) and above all, the overall message.

- **Legal Aspects** of political funding and fundraising vary by state. Find out what the law says and stick to the law. The best way to get in the paper is to become a candidate and then follow the law or regulations that govern political funding. Some of these laws are simply filing requirements - Do Not miss deadlines for submitting information. Remember that ignorance of the law is not an excuse for breaking the law. For local elections especially, requirements may be quite simple.

STAFFING: The Campaign Manager usually coordinates the staffing efforts. **However, if you do not have one, it will be left up to you.** For a local election, the more active volunteers you have the better. You have to keep in mind, that the main reason for Volunteer Drop-Out is too much stress is placed on the faithful few, when you have too few volunteers. This can be a major obstacle to conducting an effective campaign.

Example of Campaign Expenses:


Campaign A for the local county commission raised \$900. Of this total, \$575 covered the cost of the candidate's statement and filing fees and \$150 covered the cost of the map of the district. This left very little money to cover the cost of banners, post cards, and flyers, or electronic marketing fees. Campaign A's opponent raised \$5,000 and got his printing costs covered by local community supporters who had connections with printing establishments. This meant he had signs all over town and had money left over for radio, TV and social media ads and materials for volunteers to walk door to door to distribute.

The probability of a successful campaign improves greatly when more people decide to assist your campaign efforts. However, you and/or the campaign manager need to make the best use of your volunteers. As a rule, volunteers like to do things they like to do. If you have a volunteer with public relations skills, they can be engaged to develop your outreach program; artistic volunteers can design campaign signs, web sites, social media ads; volunteers with a lot of energy and/or time can help with outreach activities such as a grassroots door-to-door program; and someone who loves to cook can provide food for the volunteers. So, first, find out what your volunteers like to do.

TIME is always important – Remember, in most jurisdictions starting the campaign depends on the size of the area covered by the elective office. The larger the area, the sooner the campaign should begin. The sooner the signs can be put in people's yards; the sooner the candidate's name will be in front of the local public. Six to eight months in advance of a county commission, school board, city council, water board and governing board election would give you an advantage over your opponents.

CAMPAIGNING: Every conversation is a chance to get a vote, get the word out or raise money; some conversations are all three. Be honest with yourself and with everyone you encounter, without being "difficult." If you have a clear position on an issue, state it clearly. If not, be honest and let the person know that you are working on your position and ask for ideas.

Contact CHEJ. Our staff can help you with the finer points of organizing as well as provide you with more resources on recruitment of volunteers.



Chapter 2

The Nuts and Bolts

How do I become a candidate?

First, check with your county, city or state's Public Disclosure Law, to find out how a person becomes a candidate, and whether you are eligible to run for office: There are different requirements for public disclosure information depending on the office, and every jurisdiction is different. Examples of qualifications are:

- Candidates must be a registered voter
- Candidates must live in the district in which they are seeking office
- Candidates must be a United States citizen or a naturalized citizen, and
- Candidates must file within certain timelines and pay the required fee(s)

If your jurisdiction contains over 1,000 registered voters as of the last General Election, you must file with the Public Disclosure Commission within two weeks of becoming a candidate.

How do I get my name on the ballot?

Each jurisdiction is different. In many, but not all jurisdictions, to officially file to run for an office, you must complete a Declaration of Candidacy form and file with the Secretary of State. With redistricting and gerrymandering of districts, it is important to remember that for all offices, be it federal, and/or statewide legislative offices, the candidate must know where their voting constituents reside. In 2013, examples of gerrymandering a district can be seen in the North Carolina 12th, Florida 2nd, Pennsylvania 12th and Arizona 2nd districts.

When does candidate filing take place?

Find out in writing exactly when the filing period starts and ends (i.e. Filing Period starts June 15, 2013 9:00 a.m. EDT and ends July 31, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. EDT). You also want to know how properly executed filings will be accepted (i.e. Certified/Return Receipt U.S. mail, express courier, electronic, fax, e-mail, or in person); and whether applications received will be processed upon receipt or not until the last day of filing (this

is important if the last filing date falls on a non-business or holiday). After you have submitted your filing documents, it is a good idea to make sure that you have written documentation that your filing was received and properly dated, as to the date and time of receipt.

Must I indicate a party membership?

Your local Election Commission Office should have this information. In some jurisdictions, several specific elected positions are designated as “partisan offices”. If the office for which you wish to run is designated a “partisan” office you must declare a political party to be eligible to be a candidate. If you are a member of a recognized major political party, you may only need to indicate the party membership on the Declaration of Candidacy Form. However, if you are a member of minor political party you may have to follow the party nominating process prescribed in your state’s law.

If you are running under the auspices of a political party that has an office and organization, then that party should provide assistance and, in the case of nominations, etc. is required by law to submit forms, establish the means of nomination, set some requirements, etc. Once you are a candidate in a party, ask them for training, guidelines and whatever else you think you need.

What if no one files for a partisan office which is subject to election?

There should be a provision in your jurisdiction’s Election Commission guidelines regarding this issue. If there is not, try to obtain clarification and/or ruling in writing before the filing deadline from the Election Commission.

What happens if it is mandatory that I file in person, and cannot come in to file and do not want to mail the Declaration of Candidacy, what can I do?

Well in advance of the filing deadline, request a waiver in writing from the Election Commission or a waiver to have your Declaration of Candidacy filed by someone else at a minimum of 72 hours before the closing time of the filing. If you do not bring the declaration in yourself, **be sure that you have provided the person filing the Declaration for you with a copy of the Waiver Letter**, your signature notarized and the filing fee, if any. Should the waiver be granted remember that if a friend or associate is given the document and then forgets to file it before the end of the filing period, you are not a candidate.

Please note: In several local jurisdictions, if no one from a major political party has filed for a partisan office after the last day allowed for candidates to withdraw, and if the vacancy is for a state or county office to be voted on solely by the voters of one county, the county central committee of the major political party may select and certify a candidate to fill the vacancy. If the vacancy is for any other office, the state’s central committee of the major political party may select and certify a candidate to fill the vacancy.

What if I want to be a candidate but cannot afford to pay a filing fee?

Several state laws provide that if a candidate declares an inability to pay the filing fee, the candidate may file a Supplemental Nominating Petition. The petition must contain one valid signature for each dollar of the filing fee. If the signatures are valid, the petition will take the place of the filing fee. It is wise to submit more than the required number of signatures, in case some signatures prove invalid. Check the Election Laws in your state to see if this is a possibility.

What is an acceptable “valid signature” for your State’s Supplemental Nominating Petition?

Find out exactly in writing from the Election Commission what is considered a valid signature (i.e. Is it one that belongs to a registered voter in the jurisdiction in which you want to file as a candidate for election, or is it a registered voter in the state.) This is an important distinction. In some cases, potential candidates were disqualified for failing to provide a valid signature.

When do I turn in the signature petition?

For your jurisdiction, **find out the exact time and place where your petition needs to be submitted**. The Supplemental Nominating Petition pages must be presented when you file your Declaration of Candidacy during the filing period. You should note that in several jurisdictions, the Supplemental Nominating Petition form might have a different filing schedule.

Also, until signatures can be verified, the declaration may be accepted provisionally pending verification and sufficiency of the filing petition. Depending on the jurisdictions rules, your name may or may not be included on the list of candidates filed.

Please Note: Valid Signatures: Be aware, if there are not a sufficient number of valid signatures, the filing will not be accepted and your name will be removed from the list of candidates and will not be placed on the ballot

If you are submitting a Declaration of Candidacy using the Supplemental Nominating Petition, it is a good idea to submit your filing and petition pages early in the filing period. This would circumvent the event of lacking enough valid signatures, and give you the opportunity to gather more signatures, if the filing period has not ended.

What if I was not able to get enough valid signatures? Can I use cash to make up the difference?

Find out from your state’s Election Commission, whether the filing fee must be either all money or all signatures. **Several state laws make no provision for a combination of both.**

What happens if I decide to run for a position different from the one for which I filed?

Every jurisdiction is different. In most cases, you should immediately go in person to the office where the initial filing was made, on/ or before the closing of the filing period, and complete a “Withdrawal of Candidacy” form for the position for which you no longer wish to run; and immediately file another Declaration of Candidacy form for the position for which you

want to run. You will have to pay an additional filing fee, because in most jurisdictions the filing fee may not be transferred to another position, nor is it refundable.

What if I decide that I don't want to run for office after I file?

There is usually a deadline in which candidates may withdraw their candidacy by filing a "Withdrawal of Candidacy" form with the filing office. However, the filing fee is usually not refundable. If you decide to withdraw after the deadline, it may be too late to have your name removed from the ballot administratively. If you are too late to make an official withdrawal, you should inform your opponents and do a press release to inform the media that you are no longer seeking the office.

What are the public disclosure requirements?

- Always check to see what the public disclosure requirements are for your jurisdiction. They will vary according to the size of the jurisdiction in which you are a candidate and the amount of money which you plan to spend. In most cases, for jurisdictions with fewer than 1,000 registered voters as of the previous year's general election, there is no Public Disclosure Commission filing requirement.
- Be aware that election rules change without notice. Currently for jurisdictions with more than 1,000 and less than 5,000 registered voters, only the Personal Financial Affairs Statement (PDC Form F-1) will be necessary. For jurisdictions of more than 5,000 registered voters, campaign reporting is necessary. The number and frequency of reports will be minimal unless you plan to spend over \$3,500. The criterion is based on the number of registered voters in your jurisdiction.

Where do I get the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) forms? What if I need help in filling out the forms?

Public Disclosure Commission forms may be obtained from the PDC in your state capitol or from the Election Commission in your jurisdiction. These forms are free, and there is no charge to file the completed documents. If you need help filling out the PDC forms, we suggest that you call your state PDC office. In some states, the filing of public disclosure information may be done electronically.

Will there be a voters' pamphlet published for the elections?

Remember each jurisdiction is different. In most states, the Secretary of State publishes a Voters' Pamphlet for each General Election and this should include the candidates for Federal, State and Judicial offices. Instructions for participation in the General Election Voters' Pamphlet should be obtained from the Office of the Secretary of State or at the time of filing. The Secretary of State for your jurisdiction determines rules, deadlines, and fees. In some states, the Election Commission carries out all the functions described under the Secretary of State.

Will I be included in the local voters' pamphlet?

Most jurisdictions publish a local Voters' Pamphlet. This pamphlet should include all registered candidates for office. If a pamphlet is published for your jurisdiction, the instructions for participation may be obtained from the Election Commission with the appropriate deadline and submission information.

What must I do to get my photo and statement in the voters' pamphlet?

Information concerning participation in the voters' pamphlet will be available at the time of filing. You should be given information about photo specification and the accepted format and length of the candidate's statement. You should follow these specifications to the letter and observe the announced deadline.

What kinds of information or services can the Election Section provide for candidates?

Most jurisdictions' Election Commission can provide the following helpful information, or direct you to the proper city or county office where you can find the information. There is usually a fee for this information:

- Maps of cities and towns
- Maps of legislative districts
- Composite maps with congressional, legislative, or council districts
- Maps of special purpose districts (which are often custom ordered)
- Lists of registered voters by districts or precincts
- Lists of absentee voters for the jurisdictions
- Results of past elections
- Copies of Public Disclosure Commission filings
- Potential Voter (voters who are eligible to vote but have not registered) information is not available.

Be sure that you get a quote for any fees associated with acquiring any of the information listed above.

Most jurisdictions provide certain information or services free. These include voter registration

forms, absentee ballot request forms and ongoing absentee request forms.

The Public Disclosure Commission provides:

- PDC forms, instruction booklets and brochures;
- Access to PDC forms filed by candidates, committees, SUPERPACs or PACs; and
- Access to information regarding past elections.

The Public Disclosure Commission would not have information on groups that are not required by law to disclose their contributors.

Important to Note About This Publication:

- These are general guidelines are not inclusive or exclusive.
- Each jurisdiction is different, therefore regularly check your jurisdiction's election office for vacancies, deadlines, procedures, and regulations.
- Each jurisdictions', information and instructions are subject to change by legislative amendments or agency rules, so always make sure you have the most recent publication, and rules.
- This document should not be interpreted as a political endorsement, and/or intervention in a political campaign on behalf of or in opposition of any candidate.



Chapter 3

Learning & Sharing Our Experiences

Learning & Sharing Our Experiences

Our experience has shown us that the most effective way to win environmental justice is from the bottom up through community organizing and empowerment.

We learned that:

- People coming together to build their own power keeps communities viable and gains the right to define what “viable” means.
- When citizens come together and take an organized, unified stand, they hold industry and government accountable and they begin their journey towards a healthy, environmentally sustainable future.
- The quality of everyday life in our community is better because “we the people” took a stand and built a strong community organization.
- “It doesn’t just happen” and “We do have a choice” and not to “Just make the best of it”.
- Where there was once apathy and despair, we now have a sense of our own power.
- By building our own power-base and taking action, we can change the normal “business as usual” scenario.
- Through our community organizing process, we became connected to our neighbors and our community.
- It is important to maintain a core group of volunteers, who will maintain their contacts with the jurisdiction’s Registrar or Voters’ Office, so that we can continually be updated with data about upcoming elections and the requirements for seeking elective office.
- By participating in an organizational success, whether it’s small or large, we all had a sense of hope and each of us found a role to play.
- We can bring about concrete improvements to our “backyard”.

If It Is To Be – It Is Up To Me

It is up to us to protect our children, our communities and our backyards. Our efforts to run for office — “win or lose” — make everyone more aware that others are getting involved and “we the people” can make changes to the system. Everyone should realize that by running for elective office, whether its for the Mayor, City Council, Township Supervisor, Trustee, School Board, City Clerk, Treasurer, County Commissioner or State Senator or Representative, this is democracy at its most vital. CHEJ’s mission is to give people the tools they need to bring it about, and CHEJ carries out its mission by providing people with educational and technical information as well as training to organize and fight for their rights.

Remember Your Campaign Never Ends

If you choose to run for office, this experience will teach you a great deal. Whether you win or lose, your community and its constituents must feel that you care about them and that you are not just a “one issue” candidate. It is important to maintain a core group of volunteers and to stay connected to your contacts and with your county’s Registrar of Voters’ Office so that you can be continually updated with data about upcoming elections and the requirements for seeking election to elected offices.

Running for office will change your life, often in unexpected ways, so be ready to follow a new pathway in life.

How-to Resources on Running a Campaign:

- *How To Win Your 1st Election*, by Susan Guber.
- *101 Campaign Tips for Women Candidates and Their Staff*, by Jewel Lansing.
- *Winning Local and State Elections*, by Ann Beaudry.
- *Politicking : How to Get Elected, Take Action, and Make an Impact in Your Community*, by Bill Rauch.
- *How to Run for Local Office: A Complete, Step-By-Step Guide that Will Take You Through the Entire Process of Running and Winning a Local Election*, by Robert J. Thomas, Doug Gowen.
- *How to Run for Public Office and Win: A Step by Step Guide*, by William P. McCue.

“CHEJ is the strongest environmental organization today – the one that is making the greatest impact on changing the way our society does business.”

Ralph Nader

“CHEJ has been a pioneer nationally in alerting parents to the environmental hazards that can affect the health of their children.”

New York, New York

“Again, thank you for all that you do for us out here. I would have given up a long time ago if I had not connected with CHEJ!”

Claremont, New Hampshire



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