

KNOW YOUR “WHY”

Version 1.0

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KNOW YOUR “WHY”

When you decide to run for office one of the questions you will hear most often is, “Why?”. It’s critical that you know, and can articulate, why you are running. Going beyond “I’m passionate” and “I want to help my community” is important to convey your values and to engage others to join your campaign.

Developing Your “Why”

Your “why” is the foundation of your campaign and is fundamental to who you are as a person and candidate. It gives you an opportunity to show – not tell – voters why you are the best person for the job. Remember, voters will remember how you made them feel, not a resume or platform list.

Once you know your “why”, you can use it to ground the whole campaign. Your “why” is at the center of the campaign’s:

- Overall message
- Stump speech
- Fundraising asks
- Website development
- Communications plan

Understanding why you are running for office and what you care about will help you connect with voters throughout your campaign. Without knowing your “why” your campaign could feel disjointed. To help keep your campaign grounded in your “why” write it down and revisit it throughout the planning process and while you are campaigning. Bring your head and heart - fact and feeling - together to communicate your passion and purpose for service.

Questions to consider when articulating your “why”:

- Who do I care about?
- Who is my community?
- What is important to me?
- What do I stand for?
- When am I most happy?
- Where did I grow up and how did that place affect me?
- What life experiences have informed my stances on issues?
- What major events impacted my values and beliefs?
- What are the unique intersections of my identity?
- What experiences do I bring to the table?
- What is it I want to change?
- Why does it matter?

Remember: You are a multidimensional person, and you bring all of you to a campaign. Use your “why” to showcase the intersections of who you are and show voters what you value. Connect your “why” with your unique qualifications, life experiences and talents, to make the case to voters, donors and the media.

Running For or Against

There is a difference between running against something and running for something. Take some time to reflect and write about each of these perspectives.

Against	For
Fueled by anger	Feeds our self altruism
Great for campaign sprints	Necessary for campaign marathon

Connecting with our “why” can be emotional. Use that emotion to spur yourself to action and connect with others in your community for action. It can also help you stay grounded when the campaign gets tough. Revisit your why often to keep that spark alive.