



EveryLibrary

Building Voter Support for Libraries

EveryLibrary is the first national Political Action Committee dedicated to building capacity at a local level to secure and extend library funding at the ballot box. EveryLibrary is organized as 501c4 Social Welfare Organization and registered in the State of Illinois as a non-profit corporation with a mission to provide campaign consultancy, technical assistance, and direct funding support to locally organized pro-library ballot committees and PACs. As a 501c4, we do not campaign for or support any candidate for office at any level of government. We do work on occasion to promote state-level legislation when it directly affects libraries' ability to act as a taxing district.

Tactical Situation and Environmental Scan

In the United States, 40% of public libraries serve communities of fewer than 10,000 people. Fully 60% of public libraries service areas have 50,000 or fewer patrons. These public libraries are governed by Boards of Trustees who are either elected or appointed. In situations where trustees are appointed, the library is often a department of the municipal authority (e.g. city, town, county). For libraries whose trustees are elected officials, these libraries are independent of any municipal authority and are autonomous taxing authorities. Both types of libraries – departmental and district – have ballot measures like bonds, levies, parcel taxes, and millages before the voters from time to time. Often, the measure in question is put before the voters during primaries, state or municipal off-cycle elections, or on special elections as opposed to a Presidential or Congressional general election. In low turnout elections, voter outreach and voter awareness dramatically affects the potential success of each measure.

In the November 2012 election cycle, EveryLibrary identified over \$268 million dollars in appropriations that were on local ballots. No other existing national, state or local agency or organization – beyond a local ballot committee or PAC – is legally authorized to conduct a Vote Yes campaign. As a 501c4, EveryLibrary is specifically and explicitly able to act in support of those committees as they campaign for initiatives, measures, and propositions before the public.

By way of an example: a public library serving a community of 10,000 people is fielding a \$15 dollar million bond measure to build a new library next November. If we look at the “national average” numbers for a Congressional election cycle, there will likely be about 7,000 people of voting age in that jurisdiction. Voter registration runs as high as 60% for biennial elections; however, turnout will be as low as 42% in a general election. If the bond measure loses by 4 percent, a not unheard of margin, it will have lost by 141 votes. If the question is on an off-cycle ballot where turn out is in the 22 percent

range, it loses by just 74 votes. As noted earlier, with 40% of libraries serving towns of under 10,000 people, voter turnout and a pro-library message are critical and relevant. EveryLibrary exists to help local communities motivate and turn out small numbers of voters to secure funding for libraries.

EveryLibrary's Impact

The citizen ballot committee is a cornerstone of our democracy. For library measures and initiatives, a ballot committee works concurrently to the library's own informational campaign but independently and without coordination. Each ballot committee must secure its own funding to conduct voter education and GOTV work. Each ballot committee is as talented and experienced in planning and running effective campaigns as its members are. If they identify a need for training they must locate their own source. Common campaign projects like messaging, voter data segmentation, canvassing and phone banking, and opposition research may or may not be available to them. The effectiveness of local ballot committees and PACs varies widely across the country and region-by-region.

As we noted earlier, hundreds of millions of dollars are at stake for libraries on these local elections. EveryLibrary provides seed or sustaining monies to these committees to hire additional talent, produce campaign materials, and conduct the campaign. We also provide campaign consultancy and training to their volunteers either directly or through our growing network of experienced political consultants. This library campaign-specific capacity building does not otherwise exist without EveryLibrary.

Filling the Advocacy Gap and Reaching Voters

EveryLibrary was founded to address a gap in the existing public outreach and advocacy for libraries. Currently, several organizations including the American Library Association, the Urban Libraries Council, OCLC, and the Gates Foundation spend considerable resources on legislative and regulatory advocacy as well as outreach to the public about the importance of libraries. They perform this outreach under a 501c3 charitable organization designation. As 501c3s, they are regulated in their expenditures from exceeding specific caps on legislative advocacy as well as prohibited from engaging in direct electioneering and voter advocacy. At a state level, the existing infrastructure of library associations are likewise organized as 501c3 groups. The few that are organized under the 501c6 rubric are not chartered or governed in a way that allows for political speech, however. At a local level, library Friends Groups and Foundations are also organized as 501c3 charities. Their intent is not to provide funding for campaigns but for programs, services and collections. Likewise, neither the public libraries themselves nor state library agencies can engage in direct voter action. As public entities, neither can conduct a Vote Yes campaign using public money nor allow employees to campaign on public time.

EveryLibrary Three-Year Action Plan

EveryLibrary is building the resources we need to provide the following services to the locally organizes library ballot committees and legislative advocacy at the state level to support and extend library districting authority:

Year 1 - 2013 Cycle

Goal A

Support four to five local library ballot campaigns with a combination of financial resources, campaign consultancy, and technical assistance. We believe this is a proof of concept year and are seeking to work with several types of ballot measures including a levy or millage renewal, a special appropriation, a construction bond, a new districting authority or appropriation, and a rerun of a previously failed campaign.

Progress Reaching this Goal -

Backed a \$1.6mil special levy for the Spokane (WA) Public Library through the “Say Yes for Spokane Libraries” committee by providing \$4,000 in funding for phone banking and direct mail along with consultancy on messaging and script. Won with 66% of the vote on February 7th, 2013.

Backed a \$28mil construction bond for Shorewood-Troy (IL) Public Library through the “Citizens for a New Shorewood-Troy Library” committee with campaign consultancy on message development and opposition research along with direct in-person training on canvassing and GOTV work. This measure lost on an April 9th, 2013 consolidated ballot.

Backed a \$250,000 district authority / levy for the Ronan (MT) City Library through the “Community Members for a New Ronan Library District” committee with \$1,000 in direct support, campaign consultancy, and training to emancipate the library as an independent district and secure stable property tax funding for operations and collections. This measure passed 854 to 453 on a May 7th, 2013 ballot.

Three additional campaigns will be supported in calendar 2013.

Goal B

Support one to two state legislative initiatives that address the authority of local libraries to act as independent taxing districts. We believe that issues that impact local control and the decision for library boards of trustees to plan and manage library growth effectively include provisions for self-determination through a plebiscite.

Progress Reaching this Goal –

We are backing SCA7, a state constitutional amendment in California that would change the threshold of required for approval for library ballot measures from 66% to 55%. We believe this 11% change will radically alter the rate at which library measures pass in California and improve the funding picture for local libraries already so negatively impacted by state cuts. The next action date for this Bill is a May 8th hearing.

Confidentially consulting with a library association to develop model legislation that would establish districting authority for libraries for the first time in that state. They are targeting to introduce the Bill in the spring 2014 session.

Goal C

Fundraise nationally from small donor librarians and library supporters to operationalize EveryLibrary's corporate filings, public facing infrastructure, and fund two of our four inaugural campaigns. Fundraise from the library vendor (corporate) community to provide ongoing support for our mission. Engage a fundraising partner with experience in political campaigns and donors to develop sustaining revenue to extend and fully realize our strategic vision.

Progress Reaching this Goal –

From September 5 to November 7, 2012 EveryLibrary raised \$20,155 from 298 private donors via our Rally.org contribution page. Contributors ranged from \$10 to \$500 donors and were from 34 states.

Engaged with Hilltop Public Solutions as our fundraising partner focused on individual donors, unions, and other PACs.

Negotiated named partnerships with several library industry vendors for in-kind and cash donations.

Year 2 - 2014 Cycle

Goal A

Secure funding in advance of the Congressional primary and general election cycles to support up to 50 campaigns by both district and departmental libraries.

Tactics to Support this Goal –

Establish a national fundraising committee to direct fundraising efforts through mail, telephone, and social media outreach for small donor contribution by the public along, with personal appeals to individual and corporate funders for sustaining donations. Expand fundraising outreach partnership with Hilltop Public Solutions to cultivate individual, corporate, union and PAC funders.

Goal B

Provide campaign trainings to local ballot committees within 9 months of Election Day, and planning and consulting services to local ballot committees within 36 months of Election Day. To do this at scale, we will host these training and planning events via regional or statewide events concurrent with state library association conventions, and through webinars.

Tactics to Support this Goal –

Develop donor and sponsorship plan for these events

Engage an experienced instructional designer to create training curriculum appropriate to each audience.

Engage partnerships or fee for services arrangements with locally know political consultancies to provide training and strategic services.

Goal C

Develop opportunities for EveryLibrary to be in coalition with library, literacy, civil society, and technology organizations to provide greater visibility to our work and leverage to our fundraising and outreach

Tactics to Support this Goal –

Identify appropriate and relevant conferences, symposia, and events at which to speak and present while hosting branded presence for EveryLibrary, and convene discussions with thought-leaders and political actors in an EveryLibrary branded setting.

Year 3 - 2015 Cycle

Goal

Continue to provide our core services in support of local ballot committees including funding resources, training and consultancy, and planning at scale while anticipating the 2016 election cycle in our fundraising and leadership-outreach.

EveryLibrary Executive Team

John Chrastka , Executive Director

EveryLibrary's founder and Executive Director is John Chrastka, a long time library trustee, supporter, and advocate. Mr. Chrastka is a partner in AssociaDirect, a Chicago-based consultancy focused on supporting associations in membership recruitment, conference, and governance activities. He is also president of the Board of Trustees for the Berwyn (IL) Public Library (2006 – present) and is a former president of the Reaching Across Illinois Libraries System (RAILS) multi-type library system. Prior to his work at AssociaDirect, he was Director for Membership Development at the American Library Association (ALA), the world's oldest and largest organization for librarians, library workers, supporters, and advocates. He is a current trustee member of ALA as well as in the Illinois Library Association where he chairs the Fundraising Committee.

Erica Findley – Board Member

Erica Findley is a passionate library supporter and is influential in the broader library advocacy ecosystem. Ms. Findley is the Digital Resources and Metadata Librarian at Pacific University (OR) and is a 2008 MLS graduate from Emporia State University. She is an active member of the American Library Association where she was chosen as a 2012 Emerging Leader. She currently serves as a member guide in the Emerging Leaders program, vice-chair of the Instructional Technologies Interest Group for LITA, and is an intern on the ALCTS board. Ms. Findley is a co-convenor of the ALA Think Tank, moderates Oregon4EveryLibrary, and regularly hosts “pop-up libraries” when traveling by train or plane.

Patrick Sweeney – Board Member

Patrick Sweeney is a tireless and innovative advocate for libraries. A 2005 graduate of the San Jose School of Library and Information Sciences, Mr. Sweeney works for the San Mateo County (CA) Library and manages the East Palo Alto and Portola Valley Public Libraries. He is active in the American Library Association where he is an at-large member of their governing Council. As a California Library Association member, Mr. Sweeney has most recently served on their Conference Committee. His library blog is well respected, and he is a sought-after speaker and presenter. His most recent project, the Story Sailboat, works to provide library services and materials, by boat, to advocate for libraries and literacy in the San Francisco Bay area.