

# **Holding a Constituency Meeting**

## **Why are constituency group meetings important?**

Meetings for the members of the constituency group provide a time for members to converse with each other and the candidate on the issues they would like to focus on and how to take action of those issues. Meetings also offer a time for constituency groups to specify their particular expectations and goals of supporting a candidate. For example, a constituency organization may expect to receive media attention in exchange for their resources and endorsement of a candidate. Meetings with the candidate and constituency group allows a time to discuss how the constituency organization will get their name mentioned in media hits.

## **How to plan a productive meeting:**

Productive meetings have a clear plan and purpose. Meetings generally have three main purposes:

1. To formulate an action plan to accomplish a particular task
2. To resolve issues, which require the presence of every one attending
3. To Update attendees on progress of others, when needed

Before a meeting begins, prep! Decide who must attend the meeting by asking yourself what you perceive each person's delegated task at the end of the meeting. If you think someone won't have a task they may not need to be at the meeting. Rather, send a follow up email with the details of any decisions made. Keep in mind that meetings with over 20 people are less productive and discussion oriented. When planning, think about any visuals or materials you may want throughout the meeting. Visuals often help to clarify topics and keep people's attention.

Plan your agenda beforehand as well. To the side of each item on the agenda list the amount of time you would like to spend on the item during the meeting. This will allow you to track the time so you don't end up having an unproductive or prolonged discussion. Ask for input from the attendees as you create the agenda to make sure you cover all the necessary items. Send the finished agenda out to all attendees before the meeting so they can come prepared to discuss and decide.

## **How to run a productive meeting:**

Start on time! If you have attendees who are likely to arrive late, ask them to come early to help you set up the room before the meeting starts. Assign roles for people throughout the meeting.

- Facilitator: runs the meeting but doesn't speak the entire time, manages debates, and calls for a vote
- Note Taker: takes the minutes, keeps track of delegated tasks, and sends out minutes to everyone after the meeting ends
- Timekeeper: makes sure each agenda items stays on time; this person should interrupt the meeting if the group gets off track or takes too long on an item
- Attendees: should discuss items, give input, and vote on different measures

Choose a decision method appropriate for the size of the meeting. For small homogeneous groups a consensus may work, whereas in larger groups, a majority vote probably works best.

When ending the meeting, review the plan of action so attendees feel the meeting was productive. If tasks are delegated to attendees make sure they all have a timeline for completion. Finally, establish a clear follow up procedure- when, how, and to whom.