



THE COFFEE PARTY USA
WAKE UP AND STAND UP

Danley 01/11

Coffee Vote 2010 Local Organizer Toolkit



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Why Coffee Vote?

“The Coffee Party Movement gives voice to Americans who want to see cooperation in government. We recognize that the federal government is not the enemy of the people, but the expression of our collective will, and that we must participate in the democratic process in order to address the challenges that we face as Americans. *As voters and grassroots volunteers, we will support leaders who work toward positive solutions, and hold accountable those who obstruct them.*” –Coffee Party USA Mission (emphasis added)

The Coffee Vote program fulfills the Coffee Party USA mission by giving voice to Americans to support and hold accountable our elected leaders. We create and distribute local Coffee Vote Election Guides. We actively work to support the candidates (and ballot measures) that best reflect our values through the method that elected leaders understand best: the ballot box.

Coffee Party USA is a non-partisan organization and we treat elections as an employment process to hire and fire public servants. We evaluate candidates and ballot measures on a case-by-case basis and we choose candidates based on their qualifications for the job, where they stand on the issues, and on relevant demonstrations of character.

We understand that no candidate or ballot measure is perfect. In a system corrupted by big money, often we are put in the unhappy position of having to choose among the lesser of evils. We believe the path to real long term change lies in multiple strategies: Recruiting better candidates; Changing the system to remove the corrupting influence of big money; Organizing year-round to inform the public, create a vibrant democratic culture, and pressure candidates to do the right thing; Supporting the best candidate in every race, because the lesser of two evils is still a bit better than the greater of two evils; Expanding participation in the democratic process to make sure every American citizen has the information, the ability and a reason to vote.

Every strategy has its season. During the Spring and Summer legislative sessions of 2010, the Coffee Party focused mainly on advocacy and systems change. Going into the 2010 mid-term elections, we will focus mainly on elections and voter empowerment. In 2011, we expect to focus more on advocacy and systems change again.

Pursuing these strategies in concert is the way to get: better leaders, a better system, better public policy, and a more informed and engaged public. We can't promise it's going to work. But we guarantee it will work better than not doing these things. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to see results. Real transformation happens over decades, not just in one election cycle.

Overview Checklist

Everyone's 12 Week Plan will look different. Here are key components to build around when mapping out your next 12 weeks:

- Holding meet-ups
- Recruiting friends and volunteers
- Registering voters (optional)
- Creating a local Coffee Vote Election Guide (optional)
- Getting Out The Vote

Which of these activities do you want to participate in?

Brainstorm: Your Team

Create Your Fantasy Election Team

No man or woman is an island. And you can't do this work all by yourself! Think about your hood or town. Go through your phone and Facebook. Who do you want on your roster? What does each bring to the table? Get excited.

Name

Skills/Assets/Networks/Time

Keep brainstorming -you know a lot more people than you think!

Getting Started

Begin with passive organizing. Start writing status updates on Facebook and see who replies. Strike up conversations when you're out or talking to friends.

Call 3-5 people on the list above and start conversations with them. Are they thinking of doing anything for the election? This is what you're thinking of doing. Do they know anyone else who might want to do something? These are low-stakes conversations. Ask "If I were to pull something together over coffee, would you be interested?"

75%-90% of people will say 'no' for all sorts of reasons. Ignore the 75%-90%. All you need is one interested person, and you're ready to call a local gathering.

Set up an event on www.coffeepartyusa.org, preferably for the weekend of August 28-29. The event is over a meal, coffee or drinks. Eating and drinking together is the most important part of organizing!

Spread the word and watch people you least expected come out of the wood work. Some people you expected will also flake. That's par for the course.

Read over this guide. Jump on a national conference call. Check out www.TheBallot.org voter guide tool. Let us know you're doing this -we're thrilled. We'll support you through the process.

Remember, none of this is rocket science. Making a local election guide. Talking to people. Possibly taking a road trip. You can do this in your sleep.

Have one little meeting -even if it's 2-3 people- and you're off and running. Two people can make a voter guide that gets attention in a mid-sized city. Even one person can! Your job is to start the ball rolling -the team will come.

Coffee Vote Worksheet

1. State Deadlines:

The voter registration deadline is _____.

Early voting in my state begins _____ and ends _____.

Now you have the deadlines. Fill them in on your calendar worksheet below!

2. Local Events:

What local festivals or other public events where you can set up shop talking to members of your community about the election. You might have to do some Googling.

Event

Date

Making an Election Guide

An Election Guide is usually a quick 1-2 page review of what is on your local ballot –candidates and ballot issues, from US Senate down to county clerk.

Your group can start drafting it right now.

Step 1: Begin with a straw poll. Go around and write down in 5-10 minutes people's notes on any of the candidates or ballot issues your group knows of and what you think of them. Make sure to use lots of big words like: 'idiot,' and 'scumbag.' Just kidding. The point is to get your juices flowing and get on paper anything you already know (or think you know) about who's running.

Step 2: Find out what is actually on the ballot by looking on your city or county website. Paste that list into your document. (in most towns and counties, this should take 15 minutes). Some cities and states have late primaries, or bad data systems, so it could take a bit longer.

Step 3: Start Googling and filling in blanks. Spend 1-2 hours. In two hours, you can have an extremely rough draft of your election guide. Then you just have to refine it and double check to make sure it's accurate. Once your election guide is made and posted online, your goal is to spread it like crazy via Facebook, email, and local websites. If you can scrape a few hundred dollars together, you can probably print 5,000 - 10,000 copies. Your goal is to get them out everywhere.

Here are some big decisions for you to make:

Formal vs. Informal Guides

Local groups will have the choice to create formal vs. informal election guides. The big difference between formal and informal election guides is time commitment: 3-15 hours for an informal guide vs. 30-100+ hours for a formal.

Informal guides are basically a few lines of summary, vital facts and analysis, plus an endorsement if you decide to endorse. They are recommended for groups that don't have a huge amount of time to spend. They can also include basic voting information, like: election deadlines, how to find your polling place, what if any ID you need to bring, and election hotlines. Look this up online for your state. The Coffee Party will also provide some basic national information. Check out www.TheBallot.org.

If you have a LOT of time and capacity to both create, print and distribute the guide, the argument for doing a formal guide is that in some ways it will be better and potentially more credible, especially for the educated swing voter

and it will deepen your relationship with elected officials. To create a more formal guide, you might send candidate questionnaires or even interview candidates. The case against this is that many times questionnaires are over-rated. Bad candidates usually won't fill them out, and you're wasting your own time and the time of good candidates by making them fill out questions they have already answered publically or which it may not be strategic for them to answer. Interacting with candidates is good, especially if you can make a difference in helping elect them and/or if you're planning to work with them to move an agenda once elected.

Either way, ideally your group forms an elections guide working group that divides up the research and takes formal votes on endorsements (if applicable).

To Endorse or not to Endorse?

It is up to local Coffee Party groups whether or not to endorse candidates and ballot measures. The case for not endorsing is that it could be seen as divisive or associate the Coffee Party with the candidates or parties they endorse –and therefore paint the Coffee Party as something other than non-partisan. Some voters –especially more educated voters who have more time to devote-- may prefer election guides that do not endorse candidates and instead leave the voter to draw his or her own conclusions. The case for endorsing is that most voters, especially unlikely voters are busy and impatient. They have no idea who most of the candidates or ballot issues are. They need a reason to vote. They need informed advice. And they need it fast. Endorsing is necessary to build an organized voter bloc, which is what helps to actually swing elections, and make elected officials take you seriously -before, during and after election day. Both approaches are valid. We ask endorsing groups to make endorsements only on a 2/3 super majority. Some groups will endorse in some races and not in others. Some groups may agree to disagree, split their Coffee Vote working groups in two, and produce two different election guides.

What if we Disagree?

There are a lot of valid perspectives in this world. Even in well-intentioned groups of like minded people, pluralism can often be a recipe for power struggle or paralysis. In general, we would rather see groups split up amicably, go separate ways and be productive doing their own thing than waste a lot of time fighting and driving each other crazy. To some extent who joins one group vs. another group is arbitrary anyway, so go ahead and perform mitosis. Live and let live.

Chart Guide vs. Narrative Guide

More formal guides will often present candidates against an issue chart. You can even feature a chart that includes other groups' endorsements. Keep in mind, a chart approach, while attractive, is likely to make your guide longer and is also likely to include extraneous information, while not always telling

the most important information on each candidate. The advantage of a text approach is that you can say exactly what you want to say, and if you decide to endorse, you only have to name the candidate you're endorsing (not the opponents) which makes your guide shorter and easier to read.

Online Posting and Distribution

You will upload your guide via an online voter guide tool that is an upgraded version of the tool currently housed at www.theballot.org. We are hoping to embed a special version of this tool on www.coffeepartyusa.com but because of time constraints, we may need to just use the regular version this year. Either way, we are building the capacity to mark each approved coffee party voter guide with the Coffee Party icon. A Facebook share module is being developed as well as a smart phone-friendly version so that voters can literally use their phone to vote paperlessly. Then the key is spreading it online like crazy 3-7 days before the start of early voting in your state, and then again 2-3 days before election day, and finally once more on election day morning.

To Print or Not to Print?

Printing is great (on recycled paper). It also costs money. For groups that can scrape together a few hundred dollars, we highly recommend it. Shop around for a low-cost (preferably family-owned or union) printing service. There are dirt cheap places that can do 5,000 flyers for a few hundred bucks. There is a definite advantage to keeping them small and conventionally-sized for printing. Generally one motivated person can move 5,000 election guides pretty easily in a week. Think campuses, festivals, events, coffee shops. But hand them out. If you leave stacks, leave SMALL stacks. Often you can ask cool stores if you can leave them at the checkout counter. A small motivated team in a week can often move 15,000 - 25,000 guides.

A Final Word on Election guides

People LOVE home-made local election guides. Keep 'em short, punchy and visually appealing if possible. Try to match up the order with the actual ballot so it's easier to use. It is likely the one piece of literature a voter will receive that they'll actually appreciate. Emphasize its home-made-ness. And you'll keep 'em coming back for more.

Non-Partisan Criteria

Background and Qualifications

What are the requirements of this position and is the candidate qualified for this job? Be careful here. Does being a lawyer make you a better lawmaker? Does running a company make you a better manager? Not necessarily!

Whatever its ideology, government must be run competently in order to be a force of good. Whatever their ideology, lawmakers must be thoughtful and intelligent in order to make good decisions.

Demonstrations of Character

Of course, this is completely subjective. Look for character and good judgment –or its opposite-- where you can find it.

Issues and Values

As Americans, we are united as one country, one people, with a shared destiny. Here are some core values we hold dear and which we will use to evaluate candidates and ballot measures. This is intended as a living document, open to discussion and revision, not a rigid or exhaustive list:

- Facts and Honesty
- Freedom (with Responsibility)
- Family and Community
- Fairness and Equality
- Ethical leadership
- Opportunity and Financial Security
- Sustainability and Stewardship
- Participatory Democracy
- Hard work, Creativity, and Good Judgment
- Diversity, Pluralism and Excellence
- Peace, Civility and Cooperation
- Security, Safety and Health
- Transparency and Accountability
- Positive Solutions

Local groups should use these or similar criteria to evaluate and compare candidates and ballot measures at all levels. Please notice, these values and criteria are not partisan.

Rules & Local Process

Some Basic Rules:

- Clear conflicts of interest, especially financial or familial are strictly prohibited because they undermine the integrity of an election guide.
- All potential conflicts of interest must be declared publically and the conflicted party should recuse themselves from voting as appropriate.
- Candidate endorsements should be made by a two-thirds super-majority of Local Voting Members.
- What constitutes a Local Voting Members should be determined by an objective criteria decided at the local level before the voting process takes place.

- **Typical criteria might be: Must have attended 1-3 previous meetings and pledge to volunteer at least 5-10 hours in the upcoming election.**
- **If a group is not able to reach agreement on a given candidate or ballot measure, the group should write-up a balanced pro-and-con opinion reflecting the views within the group.**
- **Local groups in a given state are asked to reach out to other Coffee Party groups in the same state before submitting a guide. Ideally groups should reach out to each other on the front end so that the research process can be shared. Local groups within a given state are expected to make a reasonable effort to find common ground on state-wide candidates and ballot measures. Same goes for multiple groups within a county. If this is not possible, local groups should inform the national review committee and submit separate guides.**

Review Process

The following is the national process and structure for reviewing submitted election guides:

- **A national committee of three members should be created to review submitted guides and reply in a timely manner. Five other members should be available in case of an appeal. Committee members should be readily available to respond quickly to emails up through election day. They should also be fair-minded, ready to ask tough questions, but also give local groups operating in good faith the benefit of a doubt. Committee members are acting on behalf of the Coffee Party membership and should generally reflect the wider views of the Coffee Party membership as a whole.**
- **Local election guides should be posted via the Coffee Vote candidate guide tool (under construction) and will be reviewed by a committee of three reviewers (who are approved by the President). Submissions will either be posted or rejected within 24 hours.**
- **If a local guide is rejected by the committee, the reason must be given, and the committee may work with the local group to make changes. If a local group wishes to appeal the decision, and makes a reasonable case, the matter will go to a review committee consisting of five members who are nominated from the local leadership.**
- **If there is at any point an un-resolvable disagreement on any matter of process or substance, and if the matter remains unresolved after multiple attempts are made, the matter must ultimately be resolved by the Coffee Party President in a timely manner so the work can go on.**

Voter Reg GOTV Targets

Voter Registration and GOTV are not covered in this Toolkit. GOTV is coming later. Voter registration laws vary from state to state and can be quite tricky. For example, New Mexico has a law against photocopying voter registration cards. Many states have laws that voter registration cards must be turned in within 1-2 days of being filled out. In some counties, you must be deputized in order to register voters. Many voters if not closely guided and monitored, will fill out voter registration cards incorrectly. *If you do voter registration wrong, you will disenfranchise the people you are intending to register and could be committing a felony.* So please call us before beginning a voter reg drive. We'll help make sure you're Kosher. In terms of targeting we can help you with that too. When in doubt, focus on your own social networks, your own precinct, or the local community college. Almost no one ever targets community colleges so it should be wide open territory to reach new voters.

Week by Week Overview

Beginning August 28, we'll have just 10 weeks until the midterm elections. There's a lot at stake. You can do the entire 10 week plan, or pick from a menu the options that work best for you. The Coffee Vote team is available to support you every step of the way! Billywimsatt@gmail.com 646-346-0248

Phase 1: Organize

And we're off! Weeks 1-3 are your time to develop your local plan, get your team together, spread the word, do the research, and gear up for the home stretch.

Local Coffee Vote Kick-Off Gatherings (August 28-29)

- **PRIORITY:** Create a local strategy session event online at: www.coffeepartyusa.com We'll give you tools and one-on-one support.
- **PLAN:** Download this Coffee Vote toolkit and look it over. Think through your own schedule as an individual. What can you realistically commit?
- **RECRUIT:** Go through your phone and Facebook and invite folks to your first strategy session. Have one-on-one conversations with friends you want to do this with.
- **RESEARCH:**
- **CONNECT:** Call in to a Coffee Vote local organizer conference call.
- **FACEBOOK:** Add "Coffee Vote" Status update and profile picture.
- **GOING TO LOUISVILLE?** Make sure to buy your tickets and reserve your hotel room!
- **MEET-UP:** Organize your first local strategy session pre-meeting with 2-10 people.
- **PLAN:** Use the Coffee Vote Toolkit to customize your local plan as a team.

- **RESEARCH:** Registration and Early Vote Deadlines and target races in your state or nearby. Also, begin to research your own Local Election Guide that you can share with friends and voters in your area. Just like a newspaper –you’ll endorse *your* picks for 2010. Where can you get advice? (Local political junkies, online information)
- **CONNECT:** Link up with ally voter groups in your area. We can help.
- **REGISTRATION: (Optional):** Planning a registration drive? Plan it. Make sure you know the laws in your state first. College move-in is usually in this time. Great way to register students.
- **TEAM:** One-on-one conversations with each member of your team about what they want to do and their schedule and time. Clarify roles and working groups so each person can focus, not waste time. Set-up your team googledoc and google group and don’t abuse them!
- **DOCUMENT:** Tell us what you’re planning –and send photos! www.coffeepartyusa.com
- **MEET-UP:** Organize your next strategy session. Post it online.
- **QUESTIONS?** Email Billy: billywimsatt@gmail.com

Labor Day (September 4-6)

RELAX: Relax, Enjoy, and Rest Up!

GOING TO LOUISVILLE? Make sure to buy your tickets and reserve your hotel room!

Phase 2: Dive In

Dive in! Weeks 5-7 are the key time to create your election guide, get your feet wet as a team and recruit recruit recruit. Starting late? It’s okay. There’s plenty of time to catch up fast.

Create Your Local Candidate Guide (September 7-12)

- **CANDIDATE GUIDE:** Do a first draft of your voter guide this week, even if it’s incomplete. Starting to write will improve your research process.
- **RECRUIT:** Also a great week to recruit new people, break bread, orient volunteers, go over the rest of the plan.
- **REGISTER (optional):** Make sure you know the law in your state before registering voters.

Recruit + Finish Guide (September 13-19)

- **TEAM:** One-on-one conversations with each member of your team to make sure they’re in a good role, and being maximized.
- **TEAM:** Do you need to do a volunteer training or planning session? Now’s a good time to do it.
- **CANDIDATE GUIDE:** Research and Write Candidate Guide.
- **RECRUIT:** Recruit at festivals and public places.
- **QUESTIONS?** Holler at Billy: billywimsatt@gmail.com

Voter Registration Overdrive (September 20-26)

- **CONVENTION WEEK:** National Coffee Vote convention in Louisville September 22-26.
- **CANDIDATE GUIDE:** Your candidate guide process should wrap up ideally in advance of early voting (varies by state) Explore whether you want to print guides, cost, etc.
- **REGISTRATION (optional):** Kick voter registration efforts into high gear. Deadlines in most states are right around the corner. We'll help point you to the places where your registration help is needed most—from quarter campus move-in days to concerts, farmers markets, street fairs.
- **EARLY VOTE (optional):** Plan your Early Vote kick-off rally and media event (some states)

Phase 3: GOTV!

Reg Deadline + Early Vote (Sept 27-Oct 3)

- **CANDIDATE GUIDE:** Candidate guide release parties and rallies begin in early vote states!
- **REGISTER (optional):** Last Chance to Register Week. It's the last chance to register this week in many states! Pitch in on National Voter Registration Day, September 28! Organize or attend a voter registration event.
- **EARLY VOTE (optional):** Early Vote begins in Ohio and other states.
- **ROAD TRIP (optional):** Organize or attend a road trip to a nearby swing district.
- **10-2-10 (optional)** 10-2-10 One Nation March on Washington

10-10-10 Day of Action + Early Vote (October 4-10)

- **GOTV / TRICK OR VOTE:** Begin planning in detail for Trick or Vote and your 86 Hour Plan for GOTV if you haven't already.
- **10-10-10 (optional):** Sign up to organize a volunteer recruitment event surrounding [10-10-10](#), the day we join together to tell our leaders: "We're getting to work—what about you?" Less than a month out from the elections, it will be a critical time to send the message that we need real clean energy solutions.
- **FACEBOOK:** Add "I Voted Early" Profile picture.

GOTV Prep (October 11-17)

- **MEET-UP:** Have a Team Meeting to plan and prep for GOTV. Invite new volunteers!
- **TEAM:** One-on-ones with each team member. Go over roles and schedule through Election Day.
- **PLAN:** Take election day off to Get Out The Vote (ideally two days and plan a road trip if you're not in a key district)
- **ROAD TRIP (optional):** Organize or attend a road trip to an important nearby district.

GOTV Prep (October 18-24)

- **CANDIDATE GUIDE:** Throw Candidate Guide release party if you haven't already.
- **GOTV:** Schedule volunteer GOTV shifts.
- **PLAN:** Take election day off to Get Out The Vote.
- **TEAM:** One-on-ones with each team member. Go over roles and schedule through Election Day.
- **ROAD TRIP (optional):** Sign up if you can organize or attend a road trip to a nearby district.
- **FACEBOOK:** Add "Trick Or Vote" Status Update and Profile picture.

Trick or Vote (October 25 – November 2)

- **86 HOUR PLAN:** Starting Saturday at Noon, your life is about the election.
- **ROADTRIP (optional):** If you can take off Saturday - Tuesday to go to a key district.
- **SATURDAY:** Training, and giving assignments and turf to volunteers, especially new ones.
- **SUNDAY:** Trick or Vote Canvass in Costume —sign up to [Trick or Vote](#), canvassing in costume on Halloween (Sunday), take part in final GOTV efforts before the polls close, and throw a victory party to celebrate all that you've accomplished.
- **MONDAY:** Phone, doors with target universe and on campuses. Pass out voter guides everywhere!
- **TUESDAY 6am:** Election Day Coffee at the Polls! Pass out your Candidate Guides at the polls. Phone bank and text your target universe.
- **TUESDAY NIGHT CELEBRATE:** After the polls close, crash a local party as a team!
- **WEDNESDAY:** Stolen election? Recount? Be ready to advocate!
- **DOCUMENT:** Have your whole team send in your photos and post-election debriefs!
- **FACEBOOK:** Add "I Voted" Status Update and Profile picture.

Celebrate, Debrief and Talk 2011 (November 6-7 or 13-14)

- **BONUS:** Get your team together to celebrate, debrief and talk next steps!
- **Wed Nov 3, Thurs Nov 4. Weekend of Nov 6-7. Or whenever is good for your team**
- **November 13-14 Rootscamp events will be happening nationwide. You can attend or self-organize one in your state.**

**Take time off for Relaxation, Rest
and Rejuvenation –You deserve it!**

August

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 Coffee Vote Kick-Off Weekend
29 Coffee Vote Kick-Off Weekend	30	31	Notes:			

September

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 Coffee Party Convention Louisville	25 Coffee Party Convention Louisville
26 Coffee Party Convention Louisville	27	28 National Day of Voter Registration	29	30	Notes:	

October

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 10-2-10 One Nation March on Washington
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 10-10-10 National Day of Climate Action	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 Trick or Vote Canvas in Costume	Notes:					

November

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 Election Day! Coffee At the Polls	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	Notes:			