



**Christian Coalition
of America**

PRECINCT CAPTAIN'S HANDBOOK

Why Build A Precinct Organization?

The precinct is the most basic unit of the American political structure. Precincts are the building blocks that make up wards, towns, counties, state legislative districts, congressional districts, states and ultimately, the nation.

Each of us vote at a polling place within our own precinct. In urban and suburban areas, precincts usually consist of the local neighborhood you live in. In rural areas, they can be geographically much larger. There are approximately 180,000 precincts in America with, on average, approximately 500 to 1,000 registered voters per precinct.

Historically, legislative influence has gravitated to those who controlled the precincts. This was best demonstrated by the old urban political machines and the infamous “ward bosses” who controlled the politics and patronage of their communities.

Eating the Elephant

There is an old expression that goes, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” This explains the importance of precinct organization.

The role of political parties in precinct politics has diminished significantly, but the power of precinct politics has not. Today’s elected officials recognize this and build their own precinct organizations, which remain loyal to them and help disseminate information on pending issues and legislation.

Why A Christian Coalition Precinct Organization?

One of the goals of Christian Coalition is to build a grassroots precinct organization that is issues oriented. Unlike other precinct organizations (party or candidate driven), it is non-partisan, making it very distinctive.

The objective is as simple as it is profound: Build a permanent grassroots organization that can serve as a vehicle for whatever issue or project the leadership and members deem necessary. Issues and personalities may change but having a permanent organization is vital to providing pro-family citizens with a permanent voice in American politics.

From the Pews to the Precincts

In the early years of the pro-family movement, the rallying cry was “organize the churches”. Activists correctly recognized that the churches were the nexus points for millions of Americans who shared a conservative, pro-family philosophy.

But repeated efforts to organize the churches have resulted in mixed success. That is because organizing churches is not the most effective way to influence public policy. America’s democratic system is built upon the precinct, not upon the church. Therefore, one of Christian Coalition’s stated aims is to help Christians move “from the pews to the precincts”.

How Will this Work?

Imagine that your local county council or school board is considering an ordinance that would be detrimental to the family, such as an increase in taxes, or a policy of banning voluntary student-initiated prayer in schools. The traditional course of action for pro-family groups would be to send out a mailing to its list and activate phone trees within churches, alerting people to the proposed ordinance and urging them to take some specific action.

This is effective – to a point. But it’s a lot like trying to hit a target at one hundred yards with a shotgun rather than a rifle.

Having a precinct organization makes a targeted, cost-effective and efficient lobbying effort possible. It allows for maximum benefit with minimum effort. Here’s how:

Suppose that there are seven members of your county council. Generally, these officials are elected by district. The first step in the lobbying process is to “find out where the ducks are” – meaning that you should determine where each member stands on the issue in question.

A typical elected body of this type will have one or two people who are either strongly for or against such an issue, with the remainder undecided or uncommitted. Gathering accurate information is essential to determining where to target your efforts.

The focal point of any lobbying effort must be on the undecided officials. Once they have been identified, you activate your precinct organization. If precinct captains have done their jobs, they will have a list of registered voters in their precinct who are philosophically pro-family.

At this point, the task is simple: Every precinct captain in precincts within the districts of the undecided elected officials should contact the pro-family voters in their precinct regarding the issue at hand and provide them with instructions on who to call and voice their position. Within days, it is possible to generate hundreds of phone calls to undecided public officials from registered voters within their own districts. This is grassroots politics at its best.

Using a Rifle Instead of a Shotgun...

Why is this more effective than the more traditional way of activating the churches? **First, it activates registered voters.** There are still many churchgoers who are not registered to vote.

The most powerful communication to an elected official begins with “My name is Joe Smith and I’m a registered voter in your district”.

Second, it is targeted. Why spend valuable time and resources lobbying elected officials who have already made up their mind on the issue?

Third, it reaches out to voters who share pro-family positions on issues. Polls show that 3/4ths of Americans support educational choice, while less than half attend church regularly. Confining our organizing to churches means that we miss large numbers of citizens who share our values.

What Are the Responsibilities of a Precinct Captain?

The Precinct Captain is a member of the local Christian Coalition county chapter. The Precinct Captain’s responsibilities are:

- 1) Identify ten pro-family activists** in the precinct who will be able, on occasion, to serve as precinct volunteers.
- 2) Identify as many other pro-family voters in the precinct as possible.** A good goal is to find enough pro-family voters to equal 10% of the total number of registered voters.
- 3) Inform and mobilize the precinct volunteers on special projects as needed.** This could include distributing voter guides, making sure identified pro-family voters actually vote on Election Day, or lobbying your local school board, council or legislature.
- 4) Stay informed on Christian Coalition activities and projects.**

How Does the Precinct Captain Get this Done?

There are some basic tools and principles that will enable you to fulfill these responsibilities as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- 1) Get a map of your precinct** from the local Election Board or Planning Commission.
- 2) Get a list of registered voters in your precinct.** This can be obtained from the sources listed above, or from a friendly political candidate or elected official. You should also attempt to get copies of church directories from the conservative churches in your area.
- 3) Find Ten Precinct Volunteers.** These will be the voters that you find who are the most interested or excited about what you are doing. They are the ones to ask to volunteer. It is important that they understand this is not a large time commitment. Occasionally, you are going to contact them and ask them to do something, such as help identify other pro-family voters, or call those that you have identified and inform them about a piece of legislation. The goal is to be able to line up volunteers when that major project or emergency occurs and you need extra help.
- 4) Identify potential pro-family voters** by cross-referencing lists of church members with registered voters.

Identifying Pro-family Voters

There are many different ways to do this and we recommend that you use the method or combination that works best for you. Here are some examples:

Networking Among Friends:

It is likely that you already know several people in your precinct who would be considered “pro-family conservatives”. You can identify them on your voter list and ask them about other people on your list.

A variation on this method combines networking with door-to-door. Begin by networking to identify as many pro-family voters as possible. Once you have exhausted this approach, walk through the neighborhoods of your precinct. Look for tell-tale signs identifying people as conservatives or Christians, such as Christian or conservative bumper stickers on cars or, during an election year, yard signs for pro-family candidates.

Using Church Directories:

Your church directory, as well as the directories of other pro-family churches, is a good source of names. Match them against your voter registration list. Plan on phoning or visiting each church attendee on your voter registration list. Tell them about your project. It shouldn't be difficult to determine if they share pro-family values. They will also be a good source of names of other pro-family voters.

Chances are very good that, using the networking method and church directories, you will be able to identify enough pro-family voters to constitute 10% of the total number of voters in your precinct. This also helps you identify Christian conservatives that are NOT registered to vote – so you can get them registered.

Surveys and Petitions:

Issues that activate voter interest are a good way to find pro-family voters. For example, circulating petitions in churches that call on the city council to oppose the proposed licensure of a pornographic book store produces a two-fold benefit: an organized lobbying campaign and the acquisition of names which can be matched against the voter registration list.

Telephoning or Door-to-Door:

This is the most ambitious method. Using a prepared list of questions, you ask each voter about issues that will give you a clue about their politics, such as how they feel about placing common-sense restrictions on abortion and what issues they feel are the most important. The voter's responses indicate whether or not you identify him or her as a pro-family voter. Be sure to identify both Republican and Democrats. Your goal is to identify friendly voters based on the issues, not party affiliation.

This method allows the greatest opportunity to find voters who share our values but do not attend church regularly. Using this method in conjunction with the other methods is the best way to obtain the largest number of pro-family voters possible.

Finally, remember that as you are using these various methods, you will probably come across names of people who are likely pro-family voters but do not live in your precinct. Make a list of these names and give them to your Christian Coalition County Chairman. This will make it easier to build the organization in neighboring precincts.

You may come up with another method of finding pro-family voters. There is no “best” way. The end result – identifying voters in your precinct who share your values – is what counts.

CONCLUSION:

- ***Our Mission:*** To give Christians a voice in their government by building a permanent, non-partisan, issues oriented, grassroots organization.
- ***Our Goal:*** One Precinct Captain and ten precinct volunteers in each of America’s 180,000 precincts.
- ***Our Strategy:*** Identify, inform and mobilize pro-family voters.

You are the key to the success of this plan!!

You can use our website (www.cc.org) to create and host an online group for your precinct. There you can invite members, post messages, plan projects and communicate with others in your group. Members can receive these messages via email through our system.

[Click here and get started today.](#)

When you have organized your precinct, submit copies of your list to the Chairman of your local County Christian Coalition and/or your state Christian Coalition office. If you do not know who to contact, [click here](#) and contact our office.