

“The Well-Rounded Activist”

## **Effective Grassroots Organizing**

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# Choose Goals Wisely, Form a Plan, and **Execute!**

- Conduct a detailed, realistic analysis of the political situation you wish to influence.
- How strong, organized, and effective is public support on this issue? How strong, organized, and effective are opponents?
- Set a realistic goal and form a detailed plan.
- Develop talking points, launch your campaign, and begin organizing support!

Do not forget to develop your talking points. Craft your message!

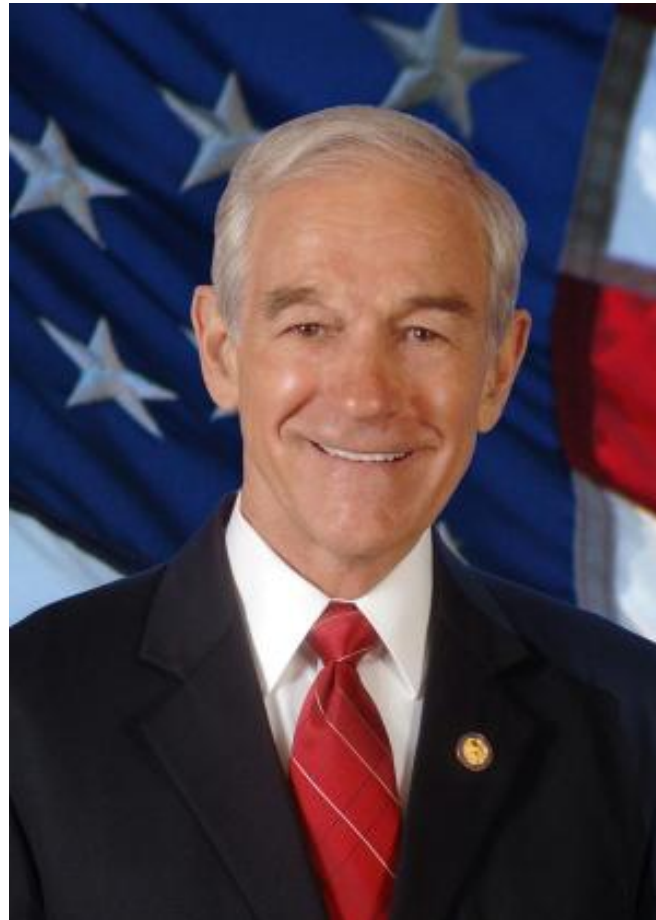
- All “well-rounded activists” learn to use language as effectively as possible. Virtually every task requires effective communication:

Examples: Blogs; emails, letters, and phone calls to various targets; radio and tv interviews; face-to-face lobbying; canvassing.

If you like this guy...



Or even this guy...



You may have some kind of a beef  
with this guy:



## Frank Luntz says:

*“It’s not what you say, it’s what people hear.”*

“You can have the best message in the world, but the person on the receiving end will always understand it through the prism of his or her own emotions, preconceptions, prejudices, and preexisting beliefs.”

***“It’s not what you say, it’s what people hear.”***

- “It’s not enough to be correct or reasonable or even brilliant. The key to successful communication is to take the imaginative leap of stuffing yourself right into your listener’s shoes to know what they are thinking and feeling in the deepest recesses of their mind and heart.”

***“It’s not what you say, it’s what  
people hear.”***

“How that person perceives what you say is even more real, at least in a practical sense, than how you perceive yourself” (Luntz xiii).

Luntz, Frank. *Words That Work: It’s not What you Say, it’s What People Hear*. New York: Hyperion, 2007.

# Some examples from Luntz's career:

## “Estate Tax” vs. “Death Tax”

- A slim majority supports repealing the “Estate Tax.”
- A larger majority would repeal the “Inheritance Tax.”
- More than 70% would repeal the “Death Tax.”  
(Of course, they're all exactly the same thing!)

## Others:

- “Drilling for oil” vs. “Exploring for energy”
- “Fighting crime” vs. “Ensuring public safety”  
(Rudy Giuliani, 1993)
- “Privatizing Social Security” vs. “Personalizing Social Security”

# Live Free or Die!

- Learn everything you can about **your state**. Learn the processes, learn about the key players in the legislature, and learn which individuals and organizations can help or hurt your efforts.
- Does your state have ballot initiatives?
- How open/accessible is your state legislature?

# Case Study: NH “Decrim” 2008

- Previous bills had been called “decriminalization” bills – but were actually total legalization bills. Most people don’t seem to know what “decrim” actually means.
- “All we’re asking is to reduce the penalty for possessing small amounts of marijuana.”
- For NHGOP reps, quote the NH Constitution: “all penalties ought to be proportioned...”
- “Reduce marijuana penalties!”

# Organizing Key Supporters

- Members of law enforcement
- Parents, clergy, community leaders, people who have been busted

Who is the best person to conduct outreach to each target? Make a list of targets and set priorities.

# Case Study: NH Medical Marijuana 2009

- Before we began organizing, we decided a complete rebranding of our organization was necessary. New website, new color scheme...
- Once web site was complete, we raced to get a few patients profiled on the website. This made it much more possible to recruit others.
- “Seriously ill patients are **not** criminals.”

# Patients, NOT Criminals

~~SCHEIDT & POPE~~

NH COMPASSION.org

*Patients, **NOT** Criminals*

**SUPPORT  
HB 648**

**NHCompassion.org**

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## Now that you're ready to organize...

- Brainstorm every possible org or individual who might be able and willing to help, and form a plan for reaching out to each. If you know people who have “ins” with a particular target, call that person first for advice.
- Practice and refine your talking points as your circle of supporters builds. Learn which approaches seem to work best with which targets, and adjust accordingly.

# Organizing medical marijuana patients

- First meeting: Do whatever you can to make the person feel comfortable talking to you. Take detailed notes.
- Provide patients with great information and work to help them become effective advocates. As they become more comfortable talking about the issue, they will need you less and less.

One thing left to do...

***WIN!***