



SECTION TEN

CAMPAIGN INVOLVEMENT

Many elected officials identify people who act as advisors throughout their political careers. Such advisors are usually individuals in whom the legislators have developed trust and confidence. No one can expect to assume an advisory position with an elected official or candidate simply by being an expert in the field. Relationships often take years to develop, and many advisors have gained their roles because of long-term involvement in the elected official's political career.

The process of election to office often begins years before the official announcement to seek the office. Many political figures begin their involvement locally by serving on school boards, county commissions, and city councils. Some candidates come from the business community. Most successful candidates have developed broad-based community support.

The purpose of a campaign, contrary to popular belief, is not just to raise money. It is to build support for the candidate and the candidate's views.

The Physician as Advisor

Early involvement in a candidate's political career is the best way to gain the candidate's trust and confidence and can later lead to an invitation to serve as a high-level advisor. As

such, it is important for you to identify candidates you can support philosophically and financially. Candidate involvement with the community frequently will begin in such groups as the Kiwanis or Rotary, or in a church or synagogue. Involvement in these types of organizations will often be the candidate's first step in a political campaign. Your active involvement in such groups can give you the opportunity to meet potential candidates and learn their views, philosophies, and goals.

Political Party Involvement

Physicians who have strong views regarding political party alliance may choose to become involved in one of their local or state political parties. Through the party system, emergency physicians can position themselves to identify strong potential candidates and begin to work with them at the start of their political careers.

The Election Campaign

The election campaign is an intense activity that frequently bonds the individuals involved. Although most states have rules limiting campaign involvement by organizations

or groups, there are rarely any restrictions on individual participation.

Much of the focus of the campaign will be in the following areas.

Fundraising. No candidate can be elected to an office unless there are adequate funds to get his or her message out to the people. Funds are necessary for posters, flyers, media time, and professional campaign strategists.

Interaction with constituents. All the funds in the world will not produce voters. People tend to vote for candidates they have met, and so it is very important for the candidate to meet as many potential voters as possible. Emergency physician involvement in this area can be very useful given physician stature in the community. Arranging speaking engagements and hosting parties or receptions at which the candidate can speak is an extremely effective way to assist the candidate in gaining exposure.

Assistance with position statements. Many first-time candidates (and also some incumbents) have not developed cogent and cohesive position statements on health issues. Emergency physicians can play a significant role in educating the candidate on current issues and shaping the candidate's position and message. It is important that emergency physicians try to present all views in order to allow the candidate to have a complete understanding of the issues. Keeping abreast of current events and developing knowledge of the political players, their agendas, and the realities of the political process in your community and state can make an emergency physician a valued advisor to both new and seasoned candidates.

Endorsements. People frequently rely on the judgement of people they respect for advice in election campaigns. Emergency physicians may demonstrate their support for a candidate in a variety of ways, including having their names listed in campaign literature, placing one of the candidate's signs in their yards, or writing letters to their colleagues and friends indicating why they are supporting the candidate. Emergency physicians can use their contacts to secure other valuable endorsements by individuals and groups.

Election day. The critical last day of the campaign provides an excellent opportunity to

demonstrate support for a particular candidate. Visibility is extremely important, and many candidates spend the day on a busy street corner with their supporters, holding placards with the hope of influencing voters on their way to the polls. A physician who stands on a corner with a candidate will be considered a friend indeed.

The Next Campaign

An elected official's next campaign begins the day the candidate is elected. It is important to reach those who did not vote for the candidate but also to maintain support from those who did. Once elected, there are numerous fundraisers and community meetings to attend. Underlying all this activity is the critical need to raise funds for the next election. Because those already in office can more easily obtain contributions, it is little wonder that incumbents have a significant advantage in election campaigns. This process allows for early involvement in a candidate's (now elected official's) pre-election efforts.

The Ultimate Campaign

Experience gained working on a candidate's campaign can prepare the emergency physician for his or her own run for office. Physicians are serving with distinction in state legislatures and in Congress. Emergency physicians must bring their unique expertise on a broad range of issues to the political arena if the best interests of our patients and our profession are to be served.