

Adopt a Candidate: 10 Powerful Steps to Impact the Primaries

Iowa and New Hampshire have happened, and people are mouthing off all over the internet and social media about the primaries and the presidential candidates. But how can an ordinary Christian in America really impact the primaries? This season goes beyond a presidential race. Though that is important, remember we are electing U.S. state representatives, county officials and more.

Do you want to be a doer in this primary, not just a talker?

Do you want to affect a race and attempt to elect righteous leaders? Do you want to hold your representatives accountable for their votes and actions?

Would you like to make an impact on a candidate or elected official's life, or serve their family to make their lives a little easier during a turbulent time?

When I ran for Congress, no one meant more to me during that season than my staff and volunteers.

If you really want to make an impact on the primaries—stop talking and adopt a candidate.

Here is a simple guide to help you do just that.

Step 1: Look Up Your Elected Officials: This means your U.S. Congressman, your state representative or state senator and your county officials. You can't choose a candidate to help if you don't know who your elected officials or candidates are. The first step is simple education. See what precinct you live in and locate the district lines for your state representative

or state senator. It is fascinating to look up the political landscape of where you live.

Step 2: Pick a Candidate: You can do this step a couple of different ways. You can pick an incumbent if you really like their record and what they are doing in office. Just look on your ballot or search online to see if they have an opponent in the primary. If they do, then help them against that challenger.

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Another way to pick a candidate is to see if there is an elected official that you are not happy with. Now is the time, during the primaries, to respectfully push back on them. Not yelling at them on social media (that has no effect and only hurts your witness) but supporting their opponent or recruiting an opponent to run against them.

Lastly, you can pick a candidate running for a smaller position in your county, or a race that you think people aren't paying attention to, and help their campaign, educating your family and friends along the way on the importance of local government.

Step 3: Sign up with the campaign. Once you have picked your candidate to adopt for the primaries, look up their campaign website, sign up for their email alerts, sign up to be a volunteer and then call or email their staff letting them know that you really want to help them as a volunteer. (Sometimes if it is a small campaign, they don't pay enough attention to the volunteer forms, so make your voice heard multiple ways. Remember, campaigns have limited funds and help, which is why they need you.)

Step 4: Give them money. Go to their campaign website and give them a contribution. Support them with as much as you can or

are legally allowed to give. My friend Terri Hasdorff, in her book "Running Into the Fire," points out that only 1% of the American public nationally gives to campaigns. This statistic is a tragedy, especially when we have brothers and sisters in Christ putting themselves out on the front lines of the political battlefield. Good people running for office need support, and if you give a little bit of your treasure, your heart will follow. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 (NIV), "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." This is the truth for our civic engagement also, not just our charitable giving.

Step 5: Knock on doors and talk to people. Put on your walking shoes to talk to voters or use your pen to help write handwritten notes.

If you do step No. 3 correctly, the campaign should reach out and invite you to knock on some doors with them (it is not as scary as it sounds). On behalf of the campaign, you could write some handwritten notes or letters to those who have given money to the candidate, to people they want to invite to a fundraiser or to a neighborhood they want to reach with a special touch.

Go out on a Saturday and use some door-knocking sheets or a simple app, which the campaign will train you to use, and "hit" a few doors. This simple task that campaigns call "canvassing" or "block walking" is not hard. You just ask the person at the door a few simple questions to see if they might be interested in your candidate or leave a door hanger if they aren't home. It is not difficult, and an ordinary person can do it and do it well. You don't have to be a salesperson or know everything about the campaign you represent—you just must have a willing heart and smile a lot. The campaign staff will train you. Take a buddy and go have a fun time being a part of the process.

Step 6: Identify voters through phone calls. If you don't like

to walk or drive around, think about making some phone calls for the campaign to identify voters who will vote for your candidate. Make “Get Out the Vote” calls to help them push identified voters to the polls during early voting, chase down ballots (making sure they mailed them in) or push them to the polls on Election Day. It is easy and quick, and you might make some new friends on the phone.

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Step 7: Gather people. Open your home for a meet-and-greet or fundraiser for the candidate. Gathering people is a lot of work, but it is really rewarding, especially if it blesses someone else or furthers a cause you believe in. There are not enough people who are willing to open their homes and invite their friends to come and make a difference for the nation. Whether you raised \$50,000, \$10,000 or \$2,500, you could make a huge impact on a campaign. Also, you are using the opportunity to stir up others in your life to do something for the nation as well. Be an example to a larger audience.

Step 8: Work the polls. Volunteer to stand at the polls, poll watch for the candidate or be an election judge. Have you ever seen people standing at the polls holding signs and talking to voters? Those volunteers can make a huge difference because many people walk into their polling places and might not know who they are voting for in every race. Unfortunately, most people haven’t researched their ballot. That’s why at Christians Engaged, we try to teach believers how to prepare for every election. Also, the campaign always needs volunteers in places of influence as election judges or poll watchers to make sure the process is followed in the way it is supposed to be. Watching over and guarding the elections is extremely important, and it’s a critical job that any citizen can help with.

Step 9: Pray. Prayer has lasting impact. Pray for the candidate and their family. The power of prayer cannot be

minimized. Your daily intercession and covering of that candidate and their family in prayer can make a huge difference. When we pray, God speaks to us. I have seen Christians throughout my political career and ministry pray for a candidate, then get direction from the Lord for them. I have also seen believers humbly pray for them and their family in critical times and bring great comfort during races. Don't underestimate the power of your faith to impact candidates' lives.

Step 10: Be present in their life. Be there for the candidate on election night and afterwards. Most campaigns will have a party or a small gathering at a restaurant or a home for their key supporters and volunteers while the results are coming in. Find out what the campaign is doing and be there. Being there for that candidate on one of the biggest nights of their lives or being present at a high point for an incumbent means a lot to them. Bringing encouragement and comfort whether they win or lose (winning can be just as traumatic) shows them that people care about them personally amid success or failure.

Also please remember the candidate after the race. If a candidate loses, they often feel as though everyone has forgotten them. After coming off the high of talking to people nonstop during the race, their phone stops ringing, and the emails stop flooding their inbox. Reach out to them. Call them. Pray over them. Don't forget about them if they lose, and don't forget about them if they win. They still need you in their lives, even as their schedule gets busier in success and service.

Make a Lasting Difference in the Primaries

The primaries can be an emotional time for people who care about their nation or communities, but putting our energies into a specific candidate or campaign can make an impactful difference for years to come, not just for that race, but for that specific person and family. It will also show you in

black and white, through your own experience, how one person or one family can make a difference in our nation.

The founders of our nation gave us a priceless gift: the ability to elect our representatives. Let's use our freedom and this gift to elect people to office who have servant hearts and share our biblical values. By simply taking steps to adopt one candidate, we can disciple the nation one heart at a time and one campaign at a time.

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 **Bunni Pounds** is president and founder of *Christians Engaged*—a ministry activating the body of Christ to pray, vote and engage regularly. Formerly a congressional candidate and 16-year political consultant, she is a motivational speaker, author and Bible teacher. Her book—“Jesus and Politics: One Woman’s Walk with God in a Mudslinging Profession”—comes out nationally on Feb. 6. Read all the endorsements and pre-order it now.