

31st Street Swing Left Toolkit:
Guide to Canvassing
A Resource for Grassroots Group Leaders



Table of Contents
31st Street Swing Left Toolkit
Guide to Canvassing
August 2019

Introduction	
1. Canvassing in a Nutshell	p. 5
2. Training Canvassers	p. 8
3. Why Organize Your Own Canvasses	p. 11
4. The Canvass Organizer and Canvass Leaders Roles	p. 12
5. For the Canvass Organizer: Reaching Out to the Campaign	p. 14
6. For the Canvass Organizer: Creating a Master Calendar and Recruiting Canvass Leaders	p. 15
7. For the Canvass Organizer: Maintaining a Canvasser Database	p. 16
8. For the Canvass Organizer: Publicizing the Canvass Calendar	p. 17
9. For the Canvass Organizer: Sign-Ups and Confirmations	p. 17
10. For the Canvass Organizer: Reminder Email for Canvassers	p. 19
11. For Canvass Organizer: Day-Before Email to Canvass Leader	p. 20
12. For the Canvass Organizer: Reports from Canvassers	p. 20
13. For the Canvass Organizer: If You Want to Handle Sign-ups Too	p. 21
14. For the Canvass Leader: What Leading A Canvass Entails	p. 22
Winning Elections in 2019 and 2020 – and Beyond	p. 24
Appendices (Numbering corresponds to text section for which appendix is relevant)	
1a. Legal Authority to Canvass	p. 25
2a. Training Videos for Inexperienced and/or Experienced Canvassers	p. 26
2b. Training Aligned with 31 st St.'s <i>Persuasion Canvassing</i> Video	p. 27
2c. Training Canvassers on Using MiniVAN	p.38
6a. Sample Canvassing Calendar	p. 39
8a. Sample Weekly Canvass Update Email	p. 40
9a. Sample Confirmation Email	p. 41
9b. Sample Carpool Arrangement Email	p. 43
10a. Sample Reminder Email to Canvassers	p. 43
11a. Sample Day-Before Email to Canvass Leader	p. 44
14a. Canvass Leader Checklist for Canvass Launch	p. 45



INTRODUCTION

YIKES! CANVASSING!

Why a Guide to Canvassing?

Democratic candidates can win only if Democratic voters turn out to vote. And yet, while Democratic voter turnout determines the success of Democratic candidates, proportionally fewer Democratic-leaning voters turn out to vote compared to Republican-leaning voters. How can we change that? One way is through person-to-person contact, the campaign tool that has proven to be the most effective way to motivate voters to go to the polls. Face-to-face canvassing by volunteers (also known as “door knocking” and “block walking”) is one of the most powerful and least costly forms of person-to-person contact available to campaigns. Research has proven that it is much more effective than contact through phone calls (and probably texts as well).

31st St. Swing Left (hereafter “31st St.”) members wrote this Guide because we want to encourage more activists to give canvassing a try. We make it available to the leadership of any Democratic grassroots group. Those leaders are welcome to pass it along to other groups or members providing its origins are attributed to 31st St. Please contact us through our website (www.31stStreet.org) if you have any questions.

The information provided here is based on 31st St.’s substantial experience in canvassing. During the 2018 fall election alone our volunteers knocked on 30,000 doors in Virginia and Pennsylvania, supporting campaigns for three candidates deemed critical to enlarging the Democratic majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. 31st St. canvasses averaged 40 volunteers per weekend, organized in two to four different canvasses, in districts one to four hours’ drive away from our volunteers’ homes.

We hope that this Guide will help turn more grassroots activists into enthusiastic and effective canvassers. The Guide provides ideas and suggestions to your group's leadership as well as to the members of your group who volunteer to organize or lead canvasses. It offers ways that you can tailor your canvassing to fit your group's style and resources.



Conor Lamb (PA-17) talking with 31st St. volunteer

We don't have everything figured out by a long shot. If you've got canvassing strategies of your own, please share them with us so we can improve our own approach and also improve the Guide.

The Guide has three overarching messages:

1) Canvassing isn't scary -- it's just a conversation!

Campaigns use canvassing primarily to connect with people who are likely to be receptive to the candidate's platform and character. They generally plan for canvassers to call on people whose voting patterns from solidly Democratic regular voters to Democratic-leaning irregular voters. They rarely ask canvassers to persuade people whose voting patterns suggest that they're unlikely to vote for a candidate. Even if canvassers occasionally find themselves talking with a person who's firmly opposed to the candidate, the canvassers need only say "sorry to bother you" and move on.

Conversations with potential voters vary a bit, depending on the stage of the campaign:

- Months before Election Day, canvassers simply help introduce the candidate to the community and gather valuable information about voters' intentions.

- Throughout the campaign season, canvassers answer questions from Democratic-leaning voters who are on the fence.
- Closer to Election Day, canvassers encourage solid supporters to make a plan to vote

2) A little training helps to have more engaging conversations with potential voters.

There are various techniques that can lead to more productive canvassing conversations. Those techniques are described below and can also be found in our video *Persuasion Canvassing*, which is posted on the 31st St. website.

3) Canvassing helps energize your group's members.

Interacting in person with voters is both energizing and inspiring. You may feel camaraderie with some voters who share the same concerns you have. If you meet other voters who believe nothing makes a difference, you can describe what your candidate will do to accomplish change. Or you may meet others who don't have time to focus on the election and appreciate the information you have. And the partnering, carpooling, and shared meals that canvassing can entail enhance camaraderie and help build confidence.

What's in this Guide and how to make the most of it

We've put together some background information about canvassing and offer some great tools (see the Appendices) for managing canvassing efforts so you don't need to start from scratch, you can simply tailor what we provide to your needs and resources. If you're a Swing Left group, you'll find that the Guide is aligned with the canvass organizing tools available on Swing Left's online Action Network.

Sections 1 and 2 of the Guide are designed to help everyone on your group's leadership team, whether just a few people or a large committee, to:

- Understand canvassing terms and techniques
- Learn how to offer the type of training that will make your canvassing productive for the campaign, your group as a whole, and for individual members

In Sections 3 and 4, we suggest why you should:

- Canvass as a group (rather than relying on individuals to independently sign up with campaigns and then canvass on their own)
- Create the roles of Canvass Organizer and Canvass Leader

Sections of the Guide (Sections 5-13) provide the Canvass Organizer with the nuts-and-bolts of organizing canvasses and the last section (Section 14) provides the Canvass Leader with ideas about how to offer on-the-spot support and guidance to canvassers.

1. CANVASSING MECHANICS IN A NUTSHELL

Canvassing has its own vocabulary that you'll want to know in advance.

Canvassing terms:

Walk Sheet: A sheet, organized by street address, identifying individuals by name, address, gender, age, and party affiliation/strength of affiliation, e.g., "SD" or "strong Democrat." The canvasser walks or drives to the addresses on the sheet.

MiniVAN: A free phone app from which the canvasser can access a walk sheet and "script" (described below). MiniVAN provides more information on the potential voters with whom the canvasser will talk. It also incorporates very helpful mapping features that allow canvassers to easily locate themselves relative to the targeted houses.

Script: The questions the canvasser will pose to the potential voter. Scripts are changed by campaigns over the course of the election season. They can be printed on paper or loaded into MiniVAN. If loaded into MiniVAN, several other options are possible: 1) programming can allow the full script to be viewed or to show each question only after the preceding question is answered, and/or 2) scripts can vary depending on the information gathered about the potential voter's level of

In his Jan. 10, 2017 farewell address, Barack Obama gave marching directions for the future...

If something needs fixing, then lace up your shoes and do some organizing.

If you're tired of arguing with strangers on the Internet, try talking with one of them in real life.

support for the candidate.

GOTV: Get Out the Vote. The canvassing days on which volunteers aim to mobilize the candidate's strong supporters to vote.

Turf: The portion of a neighborhood assigned to a canvasser for a two- to three-hour canvassing shift, generally about 40 homes. Campaigns "cut turfs" in preparation for a canvass and need to be know in advance how many canvassers to expect because this process takes quite a few hours.

Launch: On-the-spot activities to brief canvassers and provide them with canvassing materials just before they set out for their turfs.

Why canvass? Canvasses have different purposes at different phases of a campaign and the walk sheet and script are designed according to the purpose. Early in the campaign, the walk sheet helps the campaign identify the strength of the listed individual's support for the Democratic candidate and the likelihood that the person will vote. The canvasses at the end of the campaign are often called "Get Out the Vote" (GOTV) canvasses because they're intended to mobilize people whom earlier canvasses identified as supportive of the candidate.

Every piece of information collected for the campaign is useful, including when someone indicates strong support for an opposing candidate or when the canvasser finds that the individual listed on the walk sheet has moved. Because only a minority of people on a walk sheet are at home for any given canvass, it usually takes many passes through a neighborhood to ensure the campaign makes contact with potential voters at least once. Only with lots of volunteers canvassing over many weekends is it possible to reach all or most of the potential voters in a neighborhood.

How are canvasses organized? General election canvasses generally start immediately after the primary. Most campaigns schedule canvassing on Saturdays and Sundays, often holding two to three canvasses each day at different times and/or locations. They may also schedule weekday evening canvasses, especially closer to Election Day. On the day of the canvass, volunteers go to the campaign offices or designated meeting spots. The campaign staff brief them and give them either a clipboard and paper walk sheet or instructions on how to download the walk sheet in the MiniVAN app. Campaigns also may provide volunteers with a card

or flyer to leave with the potential voters with whom they talk and/or at houses where no one is home. Canvassers are advised about where they should leave the cards or flyer, because it's illegal to put campaign materials in mailboxes. After they finish a canvassing shift (or two), canvassers return materials to the campaign office and head home.

If the district is relatively distant from the canvasser's home, it's productive to plan to canvass for two or even three shifts each day, depending on the weather, terrain and canvassers' stamina.

Is it OK to canvass for a candidate for whom you can't vote? It's perfectly appropriate to canvass for a candidate even if you aren't able to vote for that individual immediately after the primary. Most campaigns schedule canvassing on Saturdays and Sundays, often holding two to three canvasses each day at different times and/or locations. They may also schedule weekday evening canvasses, especially closer to Election Day. On the day of the canvass, volunteers go to the campaign offices or designated meeting spots. The campaign staff brief them and give them either a clipboard and paper walk sheet or instructions on how to download the walk sheet in the MiniVAN app. Campaigns also may provide volunteers with a card or flyer to leave with the potential voters with whom they talk and/or at houses where no one is home. Canvassers are advised about where they should leave the cards or flyer, because it's illegal to put campaign materials in mailboxes. After they finish a canvassing shift (or two), canvassers return materials to the campaign office and head home.



use you live in another district. As a canvasser, you're informing and motivating potential voters so that they will be empowered to exercise their voice. That's for their benefit, not yours.

In fact, while there's no reason to tell a potential voter where you live, if something in a conversation (or your car's license plate) reveals that you've traveled a great distance to knock on doors, potential voters most often take it as a sign that the candidate must have some great qualities to have earned that level of support.

See Appendix 1a for information on **legal authority to canvass**.

2. TRAINING CANVASSERS

Training gives canvassers confidence and makes them more effective canvassers. It will also help lessen any concerns people may have about walking in an unfamiliar neighborhood to knock on the doors of strangers and talk about political issues. Whether you simply encourage your members to sign up to canvass independently or organize to canvass as a group (more on this in Section 3, below), be sure to make training part of the plan.

How you can relieve concerns about canvassing

Here are key points to share with your members: *The most important part of canvassing is easy -- smile, make eye contact, and speak from the heart.* The campaign will provide you with a script and information on the issues to help you engage voters. However, while you should aim to obtain for the campaign answers to as many of the questions in the script as possible, we suggest you use the script primarily as a guide. Think of canvassing as a conversation with a neighbor, and feel free to explain to voters in your own words what inspired you to canvass. For example, if you've personally benefited from the expansion of coverage under the Affordable Care Act and your candidate supports even greater health care coverage, you can add that to your conversation.



- **Conversations will be positive.** In the vast majority of cases, you'll be trying to motivate Democrats to make their voices heard by voting. Even if you run into Republicans, you'll find the vast majority will simply say they're not interested in talking. There will be very few people who want to argue with you; if you encounter any, you can simply thank them for their

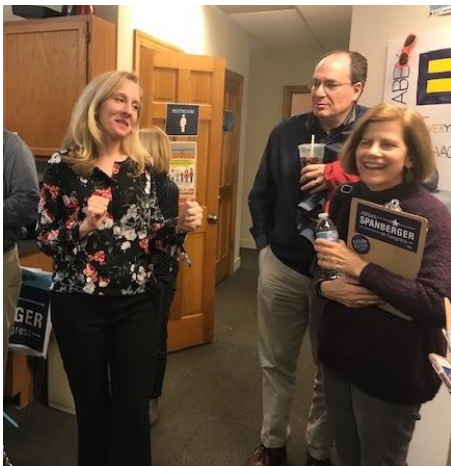
time and move on. The campaign definitely doesn't want you to waste your valuable canvass time with a voter whose mind won't be changed.

- **You don't have to be a policy expert.** Very rarely will someone ask you a question that stumps you. If they do, that's okay. You can simply say that you don't know the answer and that the campaign will get back to them; you can add a note to the walk sheet or in MiniVAN indicating that someone from the campaign should circle back to answer the question.
- **Most people find canvassing to be a gratifying activity because it's purposeful.** Yes, it can be tiring. There are also times when the weather makes it less pleasant or when a lot of people aren't home. But if you canvass with the goal of having just a handful of affirming conversations about voting and know that hundreds of other volunteers are doing the same, you'll feel gratified to be contributing to the chance of victory for a Democratic candidate.

How you can motivate people to canvass

You want to communicate to volunteers that person-to-person contact is the best way to motivate infrequent Democratic voters to go to the polls and canvassing is the most effective form of person-to-person contact. But even when people know that canvassing is effective, they might still be reluctant to spend their valuable weekend time canvassing. Here are some ways to increase canvassers' willingness to keep at it, weekend after weekend:

- **Connect the canvasser with the candidate and the district.** Having potential canvassers meet the candidate in person or through a video conference call is very motivating. Creating a poster-size map that shows the location of the district and displaying it at a meeting can also be very helpful.



Abigail Spanberger (VA-7) chatting with two 31st St. canvassers

- **Utilize an efficient and effective canvassing process.** As described in more detail in Sections 5-13, if you have the role of Canvass Organizer, you can help ensure that canvassers get the information they need (such as launch sites, launch times, carpool arrangements, etc.) as far in advance as possible.
- **Support canvassers and increase community:** Your group can provide appropriate training, leadership, and support that affirm for canvassers the value of their contribution and help them enjoy

the camaraderie of a shared mission.

It's especially important to set aside time to debrief people new to canvassing if they are discouraged because they talked with only a few of potential voters on the walk sheet, didn't find many people receptive, or any other reason. It will help to assure them that virtually all canvasses yield some important information for campaigns and having even a few solid conversations is an achievement.

- **Weave canvassing into other group initiatives:** For example, non-canvassers in your group can sponsor canvassers in the group for “a dime a door” knocked and contribute the money to the candidate’s campaign.
- **If you can, canvass where it counts most:** Don’t pick the race in which to canvass solely on the basis of proximity; consider distance, but also try to consider how pivotal the race is and how much impact your canvassing can have. By traveling a bit further, you may sacrifice convenience, but you’ll make up for that in increased motivation.

To find the most important races for 2020, consult the Swing Left website and read about its 11-state “Super State” strategy. Even if races in these 11 states are too distant for a one-day canvass, perhaps your group could do at least one two-day weekend canvass. (Most 31st St. canvassers who have tried weekend canvassing trips consider them a wonderful way to combine canvassing and socializing with like-minded friends.)

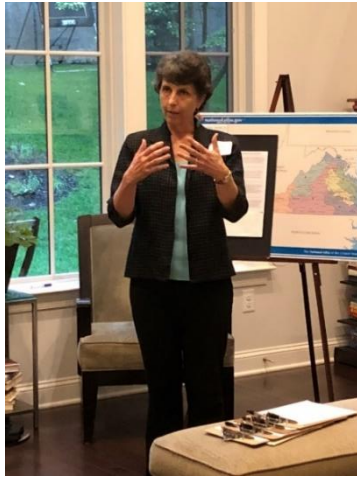
How you can train those new to canvassing

31st St. provides training directly to new canvassers, both in advance of canvasses and at the canvass launch. This training is supplemented by campaign field staff at the launch site who will brief volunteers on the campaign’s message and the concerns canvassers can expect to hear from potential voters.

These are useful training resources:

- Two videos on canvassing: **Mobilize America’s Canvassing Training** and **31st St.’s Persuasion Canvassing**. The two videos are described in more depth in Appendix 2a. (The *Persuasion Canvassing* video can be accompanied by **training aligned to the video**. See Appendix 2b.)

- A video on **MiniVAN**, the canvassing phone app into which the campaign staff will have loaded all the data necessary to know which houses to visit and with whom to talk. See Appendix 2c for a link.



Those new to canvassing will also appreciate an *experienced canvassing partner* who is happy to provide as much or as little assistance as the new canvasser wishes.

A note about MiniVAN scripts

As we wrote in the introduction, canvassers aim to have friendly conversations with the potential voter. Some scripts that campaigns prepare and load into MiniVAN are too complicated and don't allow for a

flowing conversation. Instead of following these scripts word for word, we advise canvassers to get a general sense of the questions to be asked beforehand, possibly jotting them down on a sheet of paper. Then, after the conversation and when they've moved away from the house, they can enter the answers.

In these situations, it's very useful to have two canvassers knock on doors together; if one misses asking an important question in the script, the other can chime in at an opportune moment. They can also put their heads together when they enter the data to ensure that they've captured all of the information communicated in the conversation.

3. WHY ORGANIZE YOUR OWN CANVASSES

There are two ways that members of your group can participate in canvassing, each utilizing the online volunteer sign-up systems now found on candidate's websites:

a) Independent sign-ups. You could choose to motivate your members to canvass, provide training, and then encourage them to sign up directly with the candidate's website for a canvassing shift that fits their schedule.



b) Coordinated sign-ups: You could motivate your members to canvass, provide training, and then ensure that members will be able to meet up for the *same* canvassing shifts by designating a series of dates and shifts at which you will plan to canvass together.

When canvasses are organized by groups, each canvasser will be able to find support and companionship at a launch site. Canvassing together will also be one of the bonds that helps members become enthusiastic about participating in other forms of activism in which your group is involved.

4. WHY CREATE “CANVASS ORGANIZER” AND “CANVASS LEADER” ROLES

If you take a coordinated approach to sign-ups, the stage is set to provide even more support to your members through a Canvass Organizer who makes arrangements in advance of the canvass and an on-the-spot Canvass Leader. While it may seem as if the roles can be combined for any given canvass, the two roles require very different skills; moreover, once one person has mastered the processes to organize canvasses, organization of all canvasses will go more smoothly if that person simply repeats them and then hands off the responsibility for canvass leadership to another person.

What does a Canvass Organizer do?

This is a job for someone with good administrative skills who has some weekday time (probably no more than two to four hours per week) to:

- Recruit Canvass Leaders and develop a **canvassing calendar** (see Appendix 6a)
- Publicize canvassing events in a **weekly canvassing update email** (see Appendix 8a)
- The Canvass Organizer can use the information and resources contained in this guide (or a combination of these materials and those found in the Swing Left online Action Network) to:
 - Confirm (see Appendix 9a for a **Confirmation Email**) and remind (see Appendix 10a for a **Reminder Email**) canvassers about their canvassing plans
 - Coordinate carpooling (see Appendix 9c for a **Carpool Arrangement Email**), and
 - Inform the Canvass Leaders about the canvassers they will meet up with at the launch (see Appendix 11a for a **Day-Before Reminder Email to Leader**)
 - Gather reports from canvassers on doors knocked and conversations held (this can be done with a screenshot of MiniVAN “list details”

information).

The Canvass Organizer need not participate in the canvass.

What does a Canvass Leader do?

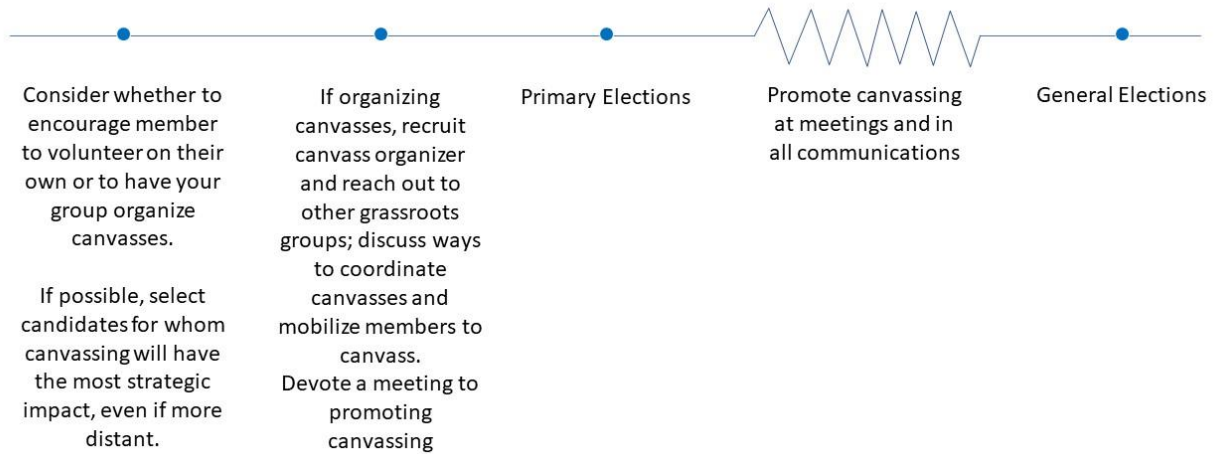
This is a job for someone who is calm, cool and an experienced canvasser. The Canvass Leader will need to have time available some Saturdays or Sundays to participate in one or more of your group's canvasses and:

- Show a comfort level with canvassing
- Put new canvassers at ease
- Gather the group's canvassers at the launch site and take care of pre- canvass tasks (see Appendix 14a for a **Canvass Leader Checklist for Canvass Launch**).

While the personal, "high-touch" approach provided by a Canvass Organizer and Canvass Leader requires a fair amount of planning and work, there are advantages, both for the campaign and for your group, when you use this approach:

- By acting as the funnel for canvassers' questions and coordinating their activities, you will be making the job of organizing canvasses easier for the campaign staff and its volunteers.
- By taking advantage of every opportunity to make canvassing a shared, purposeful activity that creates an *esprit de corps* in your group, you will buoy members' spirits through the ups and downs of the election season.

General Timeline
Leadership Team Tasks Described in
Canvassing Guide



5. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: REACHING OUT TO THE CAMPAIGN

Welcome to the Canvass Organizer role!

As Canvass Organizer, you will play a vital role in mobilizing your group's members as well as their friends and relatives to join canvasses that will build your group's cohesion, renew members' spirits, and help Democratic candidates win elections.

The following sections set forth suggestions and resources for Canvass Organizers. You can pick and choose among them based on how your group has decided to approach canvassing. You may want to use these suggestions in combination with Swing Left's online Action Network.

How do I reach out to the campaign?

Especially if your group is going to canvass multiple times for a candidate, you will want to reach out to the campaign to discuss your plans. Not only will this ensure that your efforts are as productive for the campaign as possible, it will also help you to create the connections with the candidate that motivate canvassers: Having established a relationship with the campaign, you can ask about ways that the canvassers might meet the candidate, either at a canvass, by video-calling, or through a short video welcoming them as part of the campaign.

Once your group has identified the candidate(s) it wants to support (see the *31st St. Swing Left Guide to Fundraising* for more information on evaluating candidates), use one of these tools to find the candidate's campaign office

- Email team@swingleft.org and ask for assistance
- Google the candidate and campaign headquarters
- Go to the candidate's web site
- Call the state or district Democratic office for the contact information

When I reach the Campaign Office, for whom do I ask?

Ask to speak to the Field Director, who is responsible for making sure the campaign's message gets out through direct voter contact. Field Directors organize canvasses. They will welcome your call, but understandably will want to know what they can plan on in terms of your group's contributions to canvassing efforts. You will want to get a sense of the campaign's needs and consider how much your group can help meet those needs.

What should I be prepared to tell the Field Director?

Describe your group and your canvassing interests, including approximately how many people are in your group, their canvassing experience, and how many days they can canvass over the campaign season.

What should I ask the Field Director?

- Find out when and where the campaign most needs you.
- Discuss the areas where you will be sent to canvass.
- Ask whether neighborhoods are easily walkable. If some areas include houses that are far apart, such as in rural areas, suggest that local canvassers go to those neighborhoods because they'll be much more familiar with often poorly marked rural roads.
- Ask for the name, email and mobile phone number of the field staffer at each campaign office with whom Canvass Leaders should be in touch if they encounter any problems.
- If you're going to be doing an overnight canvass and want help securing housing with local volunteers, ask who on the field staff to contact to make the request.

6. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: CREATING A MASTER CALENDAR AND RECRUITING CANVASS LEADERS

You, your canvassers, the candidate, and the campaign are in it for the long term. So you should schedule for the long term *to make sure that your members have weeks of advance notice of canvasses and can put canvassing dates into their calendars.* As soon as a candidate is selected in the primary, schedule canvasses starting from the date when the campaign will start canvassing all the way through to the last weekend before the election. It's especially important to schedule and provide lots of advance notice of any two-day weekend canvasses.



A plug for scheduling at least one two-day weekend canvass: 31st St. has found that weekend canvasses are fantastic team-builders and have strengthened our group cohesion immensely – boosting our energy for more canvassing and also for our fundraising. Your group may find the same. Given that many campaigns will be happy to arrange for overnight housing with local volunteer hosts, weekend canvasses need not be expensive.

If you can, schedule canvasses for the GOTV days: the weekend before Election day, the day before Election day and Election Day itself. (Note that if members will be out-of-town on Election Day due to canvassing, they should plan to vote early or



Places 31st St canvassed in fall 2018

absentee.) If you plan to canvass for several different candidates, set your priorities as a group, leaving some flexibility in your schedule in the event that it becomes clear that another candidate unexpectedly needs additional support.

Identify several experienced canvassers in your group who are interested in serving as Canvass Leaders for at least one canvass. Ascertain leaders' availability in advance of all anticipated canvasses, even those for

which the location of the canvass had not been determined. You'll want to obtain contact information for all Leaders, as well as a photo that can be attached to emails if you anticipate welcoming people to your canvass who might not recognize the Leader. (See Appendix 6a for a sample **canvassing calendar.**)

You'll also want to tell prospective leaders what the job entails. See Section 14 and Appendix 14a for more information.

7. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: MAINTAINING A CANVASSER DATABASE

The Organizer should cast a broad net in creating a simple name/email address database, including everyone who has canvassed, might canvass, or may not plan to canvass themselves but who may be inspired to learn about the success of recent canvassing events through regular emails you'll be sending out.

Also, check with other grassroots groups in your area to see if they're interested in partnering on canvassing efforts and want to add their leaders' or members' emails to the database.

8. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: PUBLICIZING THE CANVASS CALENDAR

Your members lead busy lives, and their weekends can fill up quickly with events and obligations that can compete with canvassing. Once you have developed the calendar and database, send a **weekly canvassing update email** (see Appendix 8a) on Sunday afternoons to celebrate recent canvasses and repeatedly publicize all the canvassing dates so that your team of canvassers can reserve canvassing days and weekends. Prospective canvassers may receive the email one week and find themselves too busy to commit to a canvass, only to find that they do have an opening for a canvass when the next week's email arrives.



What's involved in developing a calendar for canvassing?

You're now ready to design a calendar that clearly presents the canvass candidate(s), dates, locations, and links or contacts for sign-ups. *Make sure you distinguish between one-day and two-day canvasses.*

Members signing up for a canvass do so by both signing up online with the campaign AND sending an email to the Canvass Organizer. (If you're using Swing Left's online Action Network to organize your canvass, the member would sign up with the campaign AND sign up on the Action Network site.) Create a reasonable sign-up deadline in advance of each canvass.

9. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: SIGN-UPS AND CONFIRMATIONS

The key to keeping those who have signed up to canvass committed to showing up is to respond to their sign-up as quickly as possible and to provide answers to as many of their questions (Where? When? What do I need to bring?) as possible. 31st St.'s Canvass Organizer sends a personal confirmation email (with what is largely a cut-and-paste message) to all of those who have signed up. A machine response (for example, the confirmation from the Action Network) probably isn't quite as appealing to volunteers as a personal email confirming the sign-up, but can suffice. (See the **confirmation email** in Appendix 9a.)

Key points to include in confirmation emails:

- Launch date and time
- Launch location or address, if known
- Link to a canvass questionnaire (see below for information on this)
- What to wear and bring (e.g., comfortable shoes, water)
- Additional email information that will follow (e.g., carpool arrangements)

Key points to include in overnight-canvass emails, in addition to the above:

- Accommodations information
- Dinner information
- Additional email information that will follow (e.g., overnight accommodations with local volunteers)

All emails sent to canvassers should be copied to the Canvass Leader.

Unless you're using the Action Network for sign-ups -- in which case additional information useful to tasks such as forming carpools and providing training is collected along with the basics -- it's advantageous to gather additional information from the person who signed up. Email exchanges aren't very effective, because

those signing up rarely provide all of the information requested no matter how emphatically they are asked. The back-and-forth can quickly get out of hand once the number of canvassers grows beyond a handful.

Therefore, in order to collect useful information from those who have signed up to canvass, consider setting up a canvasser questionnaire in a [Google Form](#). The Canvass Organizer can then include a link to the survey in the **confirmation email** sent to everyone who signs up. The Google Form's advantage is that survey responses are automatically organized in a spreadsheet.

These are the questions for canvassers that could be included in the online survey:

1. First name
2. Last name
3. Cell number
4. Would you like to be paired with a canvassing partner? (yes/no)
5. Have you used MiniVAN? (yes/no)
6. Transportation (multiple choice)
 - a. I need a ride
 - b. I'm happy to drive and can take one or more riders
 - c. Count me out of carpooling. I'll meet you at the launch site
 - d. I'm flexible. I can drive or ride
7. If you need a ride or if you can offer rides, in what neighborhood do you live?
8. Departure and return (weekend trips only, yes/no)
 - a. Depart Friday
 - b. Depart Saturday
 - c. Return Sunday
 - d. Return Monday
9. If you can offer one or more rides, how many riders can you take?
10. Housing (weekend trips only, multiple choice)
 - a. I would like to be housed with a volunteer
 - b. I prefer to book a room. Please send me a hotel recommendation
11. Questions? Comments?

If anyone emails to say that a friend has also signed up, suggest that the friend respond to the survey as well.

With responses to this questionnaire in hand, you will be able to begin to arrange for carpools (see Appendix 9b for a sample **Carpool Arrangement Email**) and – if this is a two-day canvass -- discuss volunteer housing with the person the campaign

field director has indicated can help arrange it. (Note: Make sure that information on any pet allergies is known when housing is arranged.)

10. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: REMINDER EMAIL TO CANVASSERS

Canvassers will receive text messages from the campaign reminding them of the canvass. We highly recommend that the Canvass Organizer supplement these texts with a reminder email sent two days before the canvass and reinforce the same information sent earlier in the confirmation email. As mentioned earlier, taking the time to ensure that canvassers experience outreach about the upcoming canvass, either from the Canvass Organizer or from Action Network, will help ensure that they show up to canvass and do so feeling well-prepared.

Key details to include in/attach to the reminder email:

- Launch site
- Launch time
- Canvass Leader (name for each day if an overnight)
- Dinner information (if an overnight)
- What to bring
- Links to the two training videos on canvassing and the training video on MiniVAN
- Orientation materials about the candidate and candidate talking points (attached to email)
- A MiniVAN screenshot of the data you might ask canvassers to report to you (See Section 12.)

11. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: DAY-BEFORE EMAIL TO CANVASS LEADER

The Canvass Leader has previously committed to lead the canvass and has received all of the information in the confirmation email. The day before the canvass, it's time for the Canvass Organizer to get the Canvass Leader completely prepared for the canvass by sending an email with the following information:

- Launch time

- Launch address
- Number of canvassers
- List of canvassers with their mobile phone numbers and email addresses
- Names of canvassers who have not used MiniVAN
- Names of canvassers who have no experience canvassing
- Campaign contact with mobile number and email address

See a sample email to the Leader in Appendix 11a. You can attach a **Canvass Leader Checklist for Canvass Launch**, a sample of which is found in Appendix 14a.

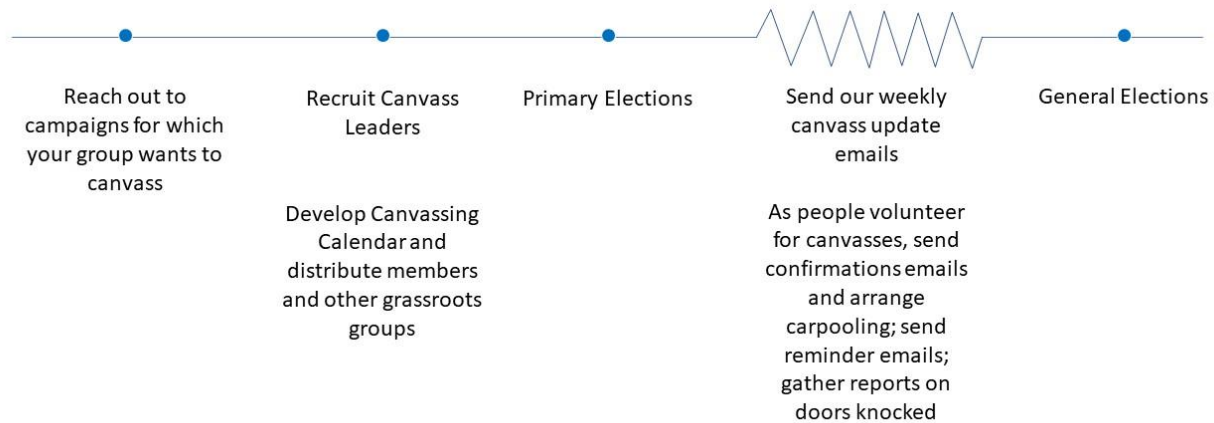
12. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: REPORTS FROM CANVASSERS

Information about your canvass can be important to your group because positive feedback about your accomplishments is a source of pride. You can email canvassers post-canvass to collect very basic information (such as the number of turfs each canvasser completed from which you can estimate the number of doors knocked (using the average of 40 doors per turf) or more detailed information.

If you want them to provide more detailed information, MiniVAN has a “list details” page that helps canvassers keep track of data. Because MiniVAN erases the results of the first turf when a canvasser begins a second canvasser needs to jot down the data for each turf or take a screenshot of the data before downloading another walk sheet. (Note that if two canvassers split a walk sheet but approach doors separately, each of their phones keeps these data separate as well.)

If canvassers sign up with campaigns independently rather than going with a group, they can also be asked to report the same data to the Canvass Organizer.

General Timeline
Canvass Organizer Tasks Described in
guide



13. FOR THE CANVASS ORGANIZER: IF YOU WANT TO HANDLE SIGN-UPS

Rather than having our members sign up with campaigns, 31st St. works in partnership with other sister grassroots groups in our area to offer our own canvass sign-up platform. The extra work entailed by using this system is worth it because it allows all of the grassroots groups in our area to post canvasses on the same webpage and all of the groups' members to sign up for whichever canvass they want, whether or not organized by their group. Using this approach entails two additional tasks for the Canvass Organizer: managing the sign-ups, and ensuring that campaign field staff are prepared for the canvassing group when it arrives.

Sign-ups: When a volunteer signs up on the webpage, the system automatically sends a short, generic email to the volunteer, alerts the Organizer by an email that a sign-up has occurred, and automatically fills out a spreadsheet with sign-up data. From the point of sign-up, the Organizer proceeds to do the steps previously discussed in Sections 5-13.

Keeping in touch with the campaign field staff: The Canvass Organizer has already given Field Directors information about what days to expect a 31st St. canvass group, but this has to be confirmed; the Organizer also needs to provide the tentative number of canvassers anticipated several days in advance of the canvass

and their names, emails and mobile numbers if possible, and update that information the day before if there's been a surge of late sign-ups.

If you can organize canvasses in coordination with several other grassroots groups in your area, you may find that adding in this extra level of organization is well worth it to mobilize more canvassers for local campaigns. Below: logos of the grassroots organizations with which 31st St. coordinates canvassing in the DC area.



14. FOR THE CANVASS LEADER: WHAT LEADING A CANVASS ENTAILS

As a leader of a canvass, you'll be at the launch to ensure that all of the group's members have as positive an experience as possible. Circumstances at canvass launches can vary considerably based on the experience level of the campaign staff, the launch location (sometimes in an established office, but sometimes in a local café or a park), the number of other canvassers, and so on.

Sometimes canvassers will arrive with partners; other times, they will ask to be paired with one. Often those who carpooled together will want to stay together to drive to their turfs; other times, they will opt for efficiency over companionship and want to split up to drive to turfs in several different cars, including those that arrived with a driver but no riders. All of these situations are ones in which a Canvass Leader can help make the necessary arrangements.

Because every canvass is different, Canvass Leaders often have to think on their feet on how to offer options for community-building that fit the circumstances. Providing them a checklist of suggested tasks will help them. These are possible topics as you can see in the Canvass **Leader Checklist for Canvass Launch** found in Appendix 14a:

- How to build on the campaign's briefing
- Reinforcing the message of *Persuasion Canvassing*

- Taking a group photo for social media postings
- Thinking about how to build community
- Reminding canvassers of how to report door knocking data
- How to reduce sources of frustration for inexperienced and experienced canvassers

One piece of advice on spending money on activities associated with canvassing: Unless you want to bone up on campaign finance regulations, we recommend you stick to the many activities that can build community among canvassers (such as canvassers purchasing their own pizza dinners during or after a canvass), *not* activities in which you collect and spend money to promote the candidate (such as holding a pizza party to which canvassers are invited). The reason is that the former is simply canvassers spending money for their own needs whereas the latter event is categorized as “express advocacy” on behalf of the candidate, and as such expenditure thresholds above which paperwork must be filed with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) become relevant.



Over the years, as 31st St. has organized hundreds of canvasses, it has never had any difficulties staying clear of “express advocacy” paperwork requirements; simply by having canvassers spend on their own needs for meals (and accommodations), your group need not have any difficulties either.

WINNING ELECTIONS IN 2019 AND 2020 – AND BEYOND

When canvassers knock on the last door on their walk sheets, they feel great knowing that the conversations in which they’ve engaged that day are important to securing an election victory. 31st St. wants you to have confidence in the impact an army of fellow canvassers can have when knocking on doors weekend after weekend.

We hope that this Guide helps you and your members join the army of canvassers that propels Democrats to election victories up and down Virginia ballots in 2019 and every state’s ballots in 2020.

APPENDICES

1a. Legal Authority to Canvass

Is going door-to-door to talk to voters legal?

YES. The Supreme Court has repeatedly reaffirmed the right of individuals to go door-to-door for political activity. *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York v. Village of Stratton* (2002), 536 U.S. 150; *Martin v. City of Struthers* (1943), 319 U.S. 141; *Thomas V. Collins* (1945), 323 U.S. 516, 540-41; *Hynes v. Mayor and Council of Oradell* (1976), 425 U.S. 610; *Murdock v. Pennsylvania* (1943), 319 U.S. 105; *Jamison v. Texas* (1943), 318 U.S. 413; *Cantwell v. Connecticut* (1940), 310 U.S. 296; *Schneider v. State (Town of Irvington)* (1939), 308 U.S. 147; *Lovell v. City of Griffin* (1938), 303 U.S. 444.

These Supreme Court rulings supersedes any state or local rule and any Home Owners' Association (HOA) rule, whether or not the HOA is gated.

As a canvasser you have the right:

- To be on public property
- To encourage voters to learn more about the issues
- To offer literature about a candidate

As a canvasser you have the responsibility:

- To walk on public walkways, not through private lawns
- To leave literature on and around doors – but never in mailboxes
- To be patient and courteous at all times

What to do when you see “no soliciting” and “no trespassing” signs?

	On a house	At the entrance to an ungated community	At the entrance to a gated community
No trespassing sign	Mark the voters “inaccessible.”	You are not trespassing; continue to canvass. If any resident asks you to leave the community, politely indicate that because mail is delivered inside the community, the community’s roads and sidewalks are public.	If mailboxes are OUTSIDE the gate, roads inside are private. Mark voters “inaccessible” and ask the campaign to remove the community from the canvassing universe. If mailboxes are INSIDE the gate, roads inside are public, and you should ask permission to enter – but it is likely that permission will be denied. Again, mark voters “inaccessible” and

			ask the campaign to remove the community from the canvassing universe.
No soliciting sign	You are not soliciting, so campaigns generally ask you to ignore this sign. However, be aware that most people put up a “no soliciting” sign to convey that they do not want strangers coming to their door; if they answer, you may receive a chilly or negative reception.	You are not soliciting; continue to canvass. If any resident asks you to leave the community, politely indicate that canvassing is not soliciting and that any resident can choose not to talk with you.	See above.

2a. Training Videos for Canvassers

No video can substitute for the one-on-one help an experienced canvasser can provide a new canvasser, but watching a video in advance of canvassing can demystify the canvassing process. You might direct members who are new to canvassing to an 8-minute Mobilize America Canvass Training video on the mechanics of canvassing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQoJMZAfRII>

Canvassing is a low-yield activity because only a minority of potential voters are home at any given time. Even when voters open the door, the conversations can be cut short by family needs, such as a barking dog or a child who needs to be ferried to an event.

There are some helpful techniques that will enable the canvasser to make the most of every encounter with a potential voter. 31st St.’s 22-minute video about them, called *Persuasion Canvassing*, can be found at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r47xVs02Czo&feature=youtu.be>

2b. Training Aligned with 31st Street's *Persuasion Canvassing* Video

Purpose: Many options are available to train canvassers on the mechanics of canvassing. However, this training is designed to fill the void perceived by 31st Street Swing Left canvassers in helping canvassers learn how to engage a range of different types of voters in productive conversations that are more likely to make voters supportive of our candidates and to get sympathetic voters to commit to vote. The training complements a 31st St. training video on [Persuasion Canvassing](#). It provides canvassers with “building blocks” of conversation that they can select among, depending on the type of voter with whom they’re talking. 31st St. canvassers find that understanding the kind of voter you are talking with and using the appropriate “building blocks” of conversation works better at setting the stage for voters to talk than attempting to follow scripts provided by campaigns. The conversations that follow from using the building blocks also allow canvassers to obtain the voter identification data important to campaigns and around which scripts are often awkwardly designed.

What you will need to conduct the training: The training is designed for activists who have already learned the basic mechanics of canvassing. Three trainers work together to deliver the training. You should allow at least one hour for training, but 1 ½ hours is probably optimal. The only materials required are this facilitator’s guide for the three trainers, and copies for each participant of the “building blocks of conversation” and the participant worksheet that follow.

Preliminaries: Introduction of trainers; distribution of sheet on “building blocks of conversations” (with an option to briefly explain some of the key ones) and the participant worksheet (and pencils, if necessary). It is also useful to get some brief feedback on how experienced the participants are in canvassing and what they hope to get out of the training. Facilitators can stress that there is no single best approach to canvassing. Canvassers need to adapt to their own styles and what works for them. And the trainers don’t claim to have all the answers. Rather, participants can bring their own helpful experiences into the discussion.

General organization of training: In each of four role plays, one of the trainers serves as the narrator to describe the type of voter being portrayed. The other two trainers play the voter and the canvasser. These roles can be switched for each role

play.

After a few conversational exchanges or segments of each role plays read/acted by the canvasser and the voter in each role play, the narrator pauses the role play and ask participants to select from their list of “building blocks for conversation” which building blocks they heard. At least for the first few role plays, conversational exchanges should be replayed to enable participants to discern all the building blocks in the conversation.

After the replay, there’s general discussion of what participants heard in the exchanges. And that discussion will typically broaden out into related questions and discussion. The key for facilitation is to keep that discussion productive and fluid, but on track.

The canvasser and voter move onto to a second set of exchanges; there are similar pauses in the role play, and a replay. Participants note and discuss the building blocks they heard.

Ditto for a third and final set of exchanges.

At the end, time permitting, there can be an opportunity for even more wide-ranging discussion.

The final debrief can include asking participants to write down one or more ideas they have heard and plan to use in an upcoming canvass.

(ONE COPY FOR EACH PARTICIPANT)

**31st Street BUILDING BLOCKS” FOR CANVASSER CONVERSATIONS -- designed for
VA 2019 elections**

GENERAL building blocks

1. **Introduction** with key words: volunteer, neighborhood, talking with voters like you to see what thinking
2. Asking for **elaboration**
3. **Actively listening** and responding

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL CLIMATE building blocks

4. Mentioning that candidate is a **Democrat** – or not mentioning this
5. Asking what voter thinks about what's happening in **Washington**
6. Asking whether voter likes the direction in which **country** is going
7. Validation of voter comment if voter complains explicitly about **Trump**
8. Asking if voter knows about **election** coming up in November
9. Asking about whether voter has heard of **candidate**

ISSUE building blocks

10. What **issues** are on voter's mind
11. Candidate's **positions** on issue(s)
12. **Story** of how canvasser was personally affected by issue (such as health care)

CHARACTER building blocks

13. Candidate's **bio**, with emphasis on issues related to community ties and commitment, integrity
14. Any **personal contact** canvasser has had with candidate

MOTIVATIONAL building blocks

15. Asking voter whether she/he **votes fairly regularly**
16. Reinforcing **identity** of voter as a voter
17. Reinforcing idea of **solidarity** – “when we vote we win”
18. Discussing **importance of 2019 election** – only state with potential to flip statehouse
19. Discussing **importance of voting in 2019** – a low-turn out election in which one vote can determine victory or loss

Building blocks for the “ASK” of voters

20. Explicit ask for **commitment** to vote
21. Voter **contact information**
22. Explicit ask on **talking up voting** for candidate with friends, relatives, co-workers (in person and/or in social media)
23. Explicit ask for **campaign support** – volunteering, holding coffee, yard sign, following candidate on social media
24. **Handshake** or other concrete sign of shared commitment

(ONE COPY FOR EACH PARTICIPANT)

PARTICIPANT WORKSHEET

**31st Street TRAINING ON BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BETTER CONVERSATIONS WITH
VOTERS**

Conversation #1: Voter is

The building blocks of conversation I heard the canvasser use before the 1st pause
in the role play:

The building blocks I heard before the 2nd pause in the role play:

The building blocks I heard in the last section of the role play:

Conversation #2: Voter is

The building blocks of conversation I heard the canvasser use before the 1st pause
in the role play:

The building blocks I heard before the 2nd pause in the role play:

The building blocks I heard in the last section of the role play:

Conversation #3: Voter is

The building blocks of conversation I heard the canvasser use before the 1st pause in the role play:

The building blocks I heard before the 2nd pause in the role play:

The building blocks I heard in the last section of the role play:

Conversation #4: Voter is

The building blocks of conversation I heard the canvasser use before the 1st pause in the role play:

The building blocks I heard before the 2nd pause in the role play:

The building blocks I heard in the last section of the role play:

ROLE PLAY #1

Narrator: The voter, Eleanor Thompson, is labeled as “lean Democrat.” This probably means she’s a Democrat, but votes sporadically, probably mostly in presidential elections.

Canvasser: Hi Eleanor! My name is Julie and I’m a volunteer for Wendy Gooditis, a Democrat representing you in the House of Delegates (shows lit with photo facing voter) who hopes to get your vote on Nov. 5th. I’m out in the neighborhood talking with voters like you to see what they’re thinking.

What runs through your mind as you think about what’s happening in Washington?

Voter: Oh...I don’t know...there’s just so much noise and stupid stuff. I hardly watch the news anymore.

Canvasser: Tell me more...Is there anything that especially bothers you?

Voter: That Trump...I hate his tweets!

Canvasser: Those tweets drive me crazy too.

Do you know why the upcoming election in VA is the only one in the whole country that can send Trump a message?

Voter: No...How?

Canvasser: Because it's the only election in which we can vote together to change Republican control to Democratic control – Democrats need just two more seats in the house of delegates and state senate. They will be able to pass legislation that really protects people's health care – that's probably something we all worry about. Trump will be so made if that happens -- he might send out a few tweets that you actually want to read!

NARRATOR SIGNALS A REPEAT OF THE EXCHANGE

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS?: *Introduction with key words (1); candidate is a Dem (4); asks about thoughts on Washington (5); asks for elaboration (2); validation of comment about Trump (2x) (7); importance of election (18); candidate's positions on issues (11).*

Canvasser: So what about you -- Do you vote pretty regularly?

Voter: Well – maybe not every time, but I try to vote when I can.

Canvasser: Did you know by how many votes a House of Delegates candidate lost her election by two years ago?

Voter: I think I heard about that...didn't something get picked out of a hat?

Canvasser: Yes! Isn't that amazing! The election was actually a tie that one vote would have changed, so the winner was selected by drawing a name out of a hat! That tells you how important everyone's vote can be in state elections like this one. We don't want Wendy's election to be that close, but a voter like you could make the difference for her victory.

NARRATOR SIGNALS A REPEAT OF THE EXCHANGE

NARRATOR LEADS A DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Voter's voting regularity (15); importance of voting (19); reinforcing identity as voter (16)*

Canvasser: Can we count on your vote for Wendy Gooditis on November 5th?

Voter: Yes..I will vote.

Canvasser: I'm sure there are people who look to you for what they should do, so can you reach out to tell them about this important election and how they should vote too? Is there anyone you can think of who might need a little nudge?

Voter: My sister for sure...she just is so absent-minded.

Canvasser: Wonderful! We have a deal! (Handshake) You'll vote in November and

you'll talk with your sister about voting too. Have a wonderful weekend! It's been wonderful talking with you!

NARRATOR SIGNALS A REPEAT OF THE EXCHANGE

NARRATOR LEADS A DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Explicit ask for commitment to vote (20); ask about talking up candidate (22); concrete sign of commitment (24).*

NARRATOR ASKS FOR FINAL TAKEAWAYS

ROLE PLAY #2

Narrator: The voter, Margaret Smith, is labeled as "strong Democrat." This means she's a Democrat who votes in most elections.

Canvasser: Hello Ms. Smith, my name is John Jones. I'm a volunteer reaching out in the neighborhood today to voters like you to talk about our election in November. We have a great Democratic candidate for House of Delegates, Wendy Gooditis (shows lit). Have you been following the election?

Voter: Well, honestly only a little bit. But we're a Democratic household here and we always vote.

Canvasser: That's terrific Ms. Smith. Can you tell me particular issues that are important to you now?

Voter: I guess I would say guns. I feel so badly about those people that were killed in Virginia Beach.

Canvasser: I do too, Ms. Smith. Such a tragedy for those poor people. You know Wendy has been a strong supporter of sensible gun safety. But her opponent, Randy Minchew, follows the hard right gun lobby opposition to gun safety.

NARRATOR SIGNALS A REPLAY OF EXCHANGE

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Introduction with key words (1); mention that candidate is a Dem (4); reinforcing identity as voter (16); issues on voter's mind (10); connect issues to candidate (11).*

Canvasser: Are there other things on your mind?

Voter: Well actually, the disfunction in Washington really bothers me. I'm really concerned about the way our President is acting.

Canvasser: Can you tell me more Ms. Smith?

Voter: Sure. In addition to the shabby way he treats people, I'm worried about our democracy. Trump is undermining our institutions, like the press and Congress.

Canvasser: I couldn't agree with you more Ms. Smith. The main reason I'm out here

today is because I'm so worried the way he undermines our democracy. But you know, that's why this election is so important. We have a really good chance to win the Virginia legislature this year with candidates like Wendy and if we do, it will send a strong message of positive change across the country. So it sounds like you will be with us for sure in November?

Voter: Definitely.

NARRATOR SIGNAL A REPLAY OF EXCHANGE

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Actively listening and responding (3); asking for elaboration (2); validation of comment about Trump (7); importance of election (18); explicit ask for commitment to vote (20).*

Canvasser: Great. Actually, we are looking for volunteers to help with the campaign in a number of ways. Do you think you could help?

Voter: Well, I'm really busy right now, but later on in the year I might be able to.

Canvasser: Terrific, then it would be good to get your email address so the campaign can contact you later. Also, they can give you updates on the progress of the campaign.

Voter: Sounds good (provides email address)

Canvasser: This election is so important and every vote is going to count. Are there other people you know that you can reach out to join us, and you can make sure to vote.

Voter: Well I do have some friends at work I can talk too. And my daughter will be away in college in November, I'll need to make sure she has an absentee ballot.

Canvasser: Super Ms. Smith. I guess the last thing is a whether you would be willing for me to place a yard sign in your yard. You have a great location where a lot of drivers would see one.

Voter: Sure, you can put up a sign.

Canvasser: All this is so great Ms. Smith. We all really need to come together this time. When we vote, we win. Thank you so much! So we have a deal? (extends hand).

Voter: (Smiles and shakes hand.) You bet. Thanks for coming out today.

NARRATOR SIGNALS A REPLAY OF EXCHANGE

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Explicit ask for campaign support (2x) (23); ask for voter contact information (21); ask for talking up voting (22); reinforcement of identify as voter (16); reinforcing idea of solidarity (17); concrete sign of commitment (24).*

NARRATOR ASKS FOR FINAL TAKEAWAYS

ROLE PLAY #3

Narrator: The voter, Candice Smith, is labelled as an Independent. It's not clear from her voter ID whether she is a frequent voter or not. Conversation reveals that she considers herself a frequent voter.

Canvasser: Hello Ms. Smith, my name is John Jones. I'm a volunteer reaching out in the neighborhood today to voters like you to talk about our election in November. We have an outstanding candidate for House of Delegates, Wendy Gooditis (show lit). Have you been following the election?

Voter: Sure, to some extent. I always vote, but I don't vote for just one party. I try to judge each election.

Canvasser: Very fine, Ms. Smith. First, I want to say Wendy is a really excellent, hardworking representative serving us. As you can see from the literature, she has strong roots in the district, works hard, engages actively in community affairs and taken on a number of key issues for us.

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Introduction with key words (1; not mentioning candidate is a Dem (4); is the voter following the election (8); candidate bio (13).*

Canvasser: Can you tell me what issues are important to you?

Voter: Yes, healthcare and pre-existing conditions. My cousin has diabetes and who knows, I might develop something like that.

Canvasser: Wendy is especially committed to quality, affordable healthcare. Actually, she had a brother who died with a health condition, that could have benefitted from better health care. Not only that, but speaking for myself I really need my Medicare. Not long ago I had to have a shoulder operation. Without Medicare and my other insurance, I'd have a frozen shoulder now. But the Republicans are fighting in court right now against coverage for pre-existing conditions.

Voter: Gee, I didn't realize the Republicans are challenging pre-existing condition coverage. I really support access to affordable healthcare.

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Ask about issue on voter's mind (10); connect issue to candidate (11); personal story (12).*

(Note: Often it makes sense to discuss a number of issues with independents, but we are only including 1 for the sake of time.)

Canvasser: So it seems we agree on a number of things Ms. Smith, do you think you will be with us to support Wendy in November?

Voter: Well you are definitely making some good sense. I would say I am leaning that way, but I want to think **about it some more.**

Canvasser: Very good, but this election is so important. And voting is so important for our democracy. Please promise we that you will vote.

Voter: Definitely.

Canvasser: So we have a deal? (Extends hand.)

Voter: (Smiles and shakes hand). You bet. Thanks for the discussion.

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Explicit ask for commitment to vote (2x) (20); importance of election (18); concrete sign of commitment (24).*

NARRATOR ASKS FOR FINAL TAKEAWAY

ROLE PLAY #4

Narrator: The voter, Rashida Jones, may have a variety of voter IDs (lean D, I or no data), but she reveals herself to be a “character voter” in her first response. She does not determine for whom she will vote based on parties or (unlike the independent voter) on issues; rather, she votes on the basis of her sense of the candidate.

Canvasser: Hello, Ms. Jones, my name is Amy. I’m a volunteer reaching out to voters in your neighborhood today, to talk about the November election. We have a great Democratic candidate running for the House of Delegates, Joe Q Public (shows lit). Have you been following the election?

Voter: I haven’t really tuned in yet. I don’t really vote on a strict party line. It’s really more about the person for me. But I do vote in almost every election.

Canvasser: That’s fantastic that you vote. Especially in these off-year elections, voting is so important. Candidates can win or lost by just a handful of votes.

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Introduction with key words (1); reinforcement of identify as voter (16); importance of voting (19).*

Canvasser: Well, let me tell you a bit about Joe. He a small businessman and active in the community. He is known as a skilled collaborator and problem solver who gets things done. He’s a veteran and served 2 tours in Iraq. He has kids who have gone through the local public school system and he’s been involved in the PTA and he’s a coach for his kids sports teams. I’ve met him a couple of times and he is a

great guy – I think you would really like him

Voter: Oh! He sounds like someone I could vote for. He seems like a good person. I was active in my PTA for a while myself. I'll take a more careful look, but what you've told me is helpful.

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Candidate bio (13); personal contact with candidate (14).*

Canvasser: Great! Again, it is really important that you vote. Every vote counts. Could I get your email address so that the campaign can contact you? You can get updates on the campaign's progress as you make your decision. And since you seem to enjoy knowing a lot about the candidate himself, maybe you could find out about a local event and meet him in person! He's always so happy to meet potential constituents.

Voter: Sure. I'll give that to you (provides email address).

Canvasser: I think you will decide that Joe is a super guy and really does represent your interests. Would you be willing to reach out to friends and family and encourage them to vote for him as well? Again, every vote is so critical.

Voter: I always encourage people to vote, and I'll do that in this election as always. Thanks for coming by.

Canvasser: Thank you! It's been great talking to you! (Shakes hand.)

NARRATOR LEADS DISCUSSION OF EXCHANGE...DID PARTICIPANTS NOTE THESE BUILDING BLOCKS IN THE CANVASSER'S COMMENTS? *Importance of voting (19); voter contact information (21), candidate's bio (13); explicit ask on talking up voting (22); concrete sign of commitment (24).*

NARRATOR ASKS FOR FINAL TAKEAWAYS

2c. Training Canvassers on Using MiniVAN

Because every campaign uses different scripts for canvasser conversations and data collection, there is no generally available video that can serve to train a canvasser new to MiniVAN. However, a combination of an introductory video (such as the 7-minute video whose link is found below) and partnering with a canvasser experienced with MiniVAN use will help your members become

comfortable using MiniVAN in relatively short order.

MiniVAN training video (from the Stacey Abrams campaign):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pa7SEnFCntA>

NOTES: If two people are doing a walk sheet together but approaching doors separately, they each can record data in their respective phones while still being able to track each other's progress because the data is synced between the devices.

Also, when canvassers first download MiniVAN to their phones, they create an ActionID comprising a username (an email address) and a password. *Remind canvassers to know their ActionID password when they come to a canvass!* If they don't, they will need to change their password on the spot, a process that requires nimble fingers.

6a. Sample Canvassing Calendar

Date	Leader	Email	Cell Phone	Photo?	District/Location
Sept. 8					VA-7/ Fredericksburg
Sept. 15					PA-10/ Harrisburg, York or Carlisle
Oct. 13					VA-7/ Fredericksburg

Oct. 20-21					VA-2/ Virginia Beach
Oct. 27					VA-7/ Fredericksburg
Oct. 28					VA-5/ Warrenton
Nov. 3					TBD
Nov. 4					TBD
Nov. 3-4					TBD
Nov. 3-4					VA-7 Fredericksburg
Nov. 5					TBD
Nov. 6					TBD
Nov. 3-6					PA-10/Harrisburg

8a. Sample Weekly Canvass Update Email

Dear members and friends,

With an August hiatus behind us, this is the fourth in a series of weekly emails to keep you posted on upcoming canvassing for Democratic House candidates.

[If you can report on a recent canvass -- number of doors knocked, number of canvassers, etc. -- include that news here!]

· If you're interested in joining a canvass, follow the directions for sign-ups and you'll receive a confirmation email with further details and a link to a "canvassing questionnaire" that will collect information to help organize the canvass.

Sign up for the Sept. 29-30 canvass for [candidate's name] as soon as you can for a better experience all-around!

SCHEDULED CANVASSES:

Canvassing for [Candidate's Name]

Date: [Canvass Date]

Location: [Canvass Location]

Leader: [Canvass Leader's Name]

[Add link to candidate's online sign-up sheet]

AND

[Add email address of Canvass Organizer]

[ADD THE SAME INFORMATION FOR EACH SCHEDULED CANVASS]

TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED CANVASSES (NOTE: Subsequent emails will provide firmer information.)

Oct. 6	VA-7/ Fredericksburg (<i>with Democrats to Go</i>)
Oct. 7	VA-5/ Warrenton
Oct. 13	VA-7/ Fredericksburg
Oct. 20-21	VA-2/ Virginia Beach
Oct. 27	VA-7/ Fredericksburg
Oct. 28	VA-5/ Warrenton
Nov. 3-6	TBD
Nov. 4	TBD
Nov. 3-4	TBD
Nov. 5	TBD
Nov. 6	TBD
Nov. 3-6	PA-10/Harrisburg

9a. Sample Confirmation Email

Thanks for signing up for a one-day canvass for [candidate's name] on [day of week] in [city/town name]!

To help us organize carpooling, on-the-spot canvass training, etc. please take a few minutes to complete the canvass questionnaire you can find here:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/c08cafd6ccde4fb3bf3973b2e67b177c>

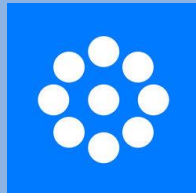
Here's what you need to know about the upcoming canvass:

Your launch site: [street address, city/state/zip]

Launch time: xx am. You can plan to arrive home around xx pm.

Note: Add the launch time of the second day's canvass if the canvass is overnight.

What to bring: Comfortable shoes, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, water, snack, raingear, a CHARGED CELL PHONE. You will also appreciate having a phone charge stick and/or charging cable.



Rather than using a hard-copy walk-sheet, we suggest you use **MiniVAN**, a mobile canvassing application (logo above). (We'll make sure you're trained and supported on its use.) You can download it from the App Store. If you already have downloaded MiniVAN, please make sure you have your **password** on hand the morning of the canvass!

Note: Add the information below on accommodations and dinner if the canvass is an overnight.

Accommodations: You can tell me on the canvass questionnaire if you would like to be housed with a volunteer. If you want to stay at a hotel, we recommend you book a room at this hotel soon:

[hotel name, street address, city/state/zip, phone number, link]

Dinner Saturday night: We'll make arrangements for getting together at a local restaurant for those who would like to join with others.

Additional emails: I'll send you an email about **carpool arrangements** if you indicate the need for a ride in the canvass questionnaire. I'll also send a **reminder email two days before the canvass** that will provide the name and contact information for the canvass leader, information on [candidate's name], including their positions on issues and links to some training videos that will be supplemented by face-to-face training and partnering at the canvass launch.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Remember to complete the questionnaire:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/c08cafd6ccde4fb3bf3973b2e67b177c>

Thanks for helping to build the Blue Wave!

[Canvass Organizer]

Xxx-xxx-xxxx

9b. Sample Carpool Arrangement Email

We are committed to finding a ride for every canvasser who needs one. As soon as the Canvass Organizer knows that a canvasser needs a ride, he or she will match the canvasser with a driver and connect the two via email. The driver and canvasser(s) will make the final arrangements for travel logistics themselves.

Here, Kate (the driver) and Drew and Ken (two riders) are connected by an email from Julie (Canvass Organizer): *Hi Kate, Drew, and Ken,*

Kate is able to drive and Drew and Ken both live in DC and need rides. Kate: I'm thinking that you might be able to take the DC route to I-95 and pick up Drew (Logan Circle) and Ken (Woodley Park) at one red line spot along the way.

Let me know if you have any trouble working this out!

Julie

10a. Sample Reminder Email to Canvassers

Note: This is an email reminder for an overnight trip, and as such, contains some information that wouldn't be necessary for a one-day trip.

Hi [name of city/town] canvassers!

I'm looking forward to this weekend and hope you are, too. It's a great opportunity to knock on a lot of doors, help build the Blue Wave, and enjoy a lovely area with lovely people. The weather looks like it will be pretty decent, but there may be a bit of rain, so be prepared!

Here's what you need to know.

Your launch site: [street name and number/city/state]

Launch times: On Saturday, 10 am for those who drive down on Friday, 1 pm for those who drive down on Saturday. On Sunday, we'll convene at 11 am.

Saturday canvass leader: [name/email address/mobile phone number]

Sunday canvass leader: [name/email address/mobile phone number]

Friday and Saturday dinners: [name of leader] will let you know about a time and place for a dinner Friday.

What to bring: Comfortable shoes, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, water, snack, raingear, CELL PHONE, and phone recharging equipment.



Rather than using a hard-copy walk-sheet, we suggest you use **MiniVAN**, a mobile canvassing application. (We'll make sure you're trained and supported on its use.) You can download it from the App Store. If you already have downloaded MiniVAN, please make sure you have your password on hand the morning of the canvass!

Training: We'll provide training at the launch and pair you with an experienced partner if you wish. In advance (or if you are a passenger in a car driving to the canvass), please access these videos if you haven't already seen them:

For the less experienced canvasser:

On the basics of canvassing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQoJMZAfRII>

MiniVAN training video (from the Stacey Abrams campaign):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pa7SEnFCntA>

For all canvassers: The 22-minute video on "Persuasion Canvassing":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r47xVs02Czo&feature=youtu.be>

Orientation materials: I've attached materials on [candidate] here. I've also attached a MiniVAN screenshot showing the numbers we want you to report to me in response to my post-canvass email.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Thanks for helping to build the Blue Wave!

[Canvass Organizer]

XXX-XXX-XXXX

11a. Sample Day-Before Email to Canvass Leader

Hi, [Canvass Leader],

I copied you on the reminder email I sent to canvassers, so I won't attach to this email the candidate information that I sent. Once again, the launch time is 10 am and the launch address is [street number and name/town/city].

There are [firm number] canvassers in the group, with [tentative number] of potential additions.

Here's the list of canvassers and their cells and emails:

[names, cells, emails]

The following canvassers have NOT used MiniVAN: [names]

The following canvassers have not canvassed and/or will want some extra support: [names].

The campaign contact is: [name]

Her contact info is: [email address and mobile number]

Also attached here is the Canvass Leader Checklist for Canvass Launch.

Thanks for your leadership!

[Canvass Organizer]

XXX-XXX-XXXX

14a. Sample Canvass Leader Checklist for Canvass Launch

The Checklist's tasks are in the preferred order for implementation and assumes that the campaign will offer a briefing that kicks off the canvass launch.

-- Make the most of the campaign's briefing: If the campaign's briefing does not include discussion of the mix of voters targeted and the overall strategy of the campaign, ask the campaign staffer or volunteer to provide some of this context. Also, if someone at the group has canvassed previously in the area, ask her/him to describe the overall experience.

-- Reinforce the message of *Persuasion Canvassing*: Gather the group together in a huddle and supplement the campaign's briefing with the highlights of the *Persuasion Canvassing* video. Focus on these points (listed in priority order) subject to the available time. A good way to engage the group is by asking questions, such as "What's a good way to approach sporadic Democratic voters?"

- Be yourself and be in listening mode.
- Good opening: "My name is Susie Jones, and I am a volunteer canvassing here in the neighborhood for [candidate name] running for [position]. Have you been following the election?"
- A priority is motivating sporadic Democratic voters. It is not always easy to identify them. However, when the opportunity seems right, asking a question like: "How do you feel things are going now in Washington with Mr. Trump and the Congress?" often works really well to draw them out. Then motivate them toward voting by asking what issues are important to them. Get commitment.
- When talking with strong Democrats, ask them to reach out to others, and set a plan to vote.
- When talking with independents and those leaning towards Democrats, ask about their issues and concerns and connect them to the candidate's stance.
- When talking with character voters, stress the candidate's public service and character.

-- Spread the word: Take a group photo that can be posted on social media.

-- Build community: Decide if there will be a mid-day break or end-of-canvass debriefing or check-in (your choice). Regrouping after a canvass is a really helpful opportunity to share stories and build enthusiasm for canvassing, but, if on a weekend trip or in a GOTV period, everyone will be eating dinner together, that can suffice. That said, some people prefer just to do their turf(s) without a break.

-- Make sure canvassers know how to report data: Show how to collect "doors knocked" and "people canvassed" off the List Details screen in MiniVAN and remind canvassers to get those numbers for each turf.

