WORKSHOP · TUE, OCT 13 · 2:30-3:30 PM

Cultivating the Next Generation of Climate-Focused Leaders

Rebecca Busic, Regional Director, RECET (Rural Electric Cooperatives Elections Toolkit)

Town councils, co-op boards and other local offices decide on solar, composting, water and wildfire readiness, yet many Mountain West races go uncontested. This workshop walked through what running for local office really takes, from exploring the seat to election night, and how to recruit and support climate-minded candidates.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **There is never a good time, so make the time.** Talk to your employer and family first, and don't do it alone. Asking for and accepting help is the biggest answer to the time problem.
2. **You don't pay for your own race.** Build a budget first, then a fundraising plan. You are asking on behalf of shared values, and many supporters want to be asked.
3. **You don't need to be an expert in everything.** Know the issue that made you run, make it your platform, return to it, and learn the rest as you go. Most voters engage at a surface level.
4. **Face-to-face contact wins local races.** Door knocking is the most effective way to get votes. Winning campaigns are said to listen about 75% of the time; online fights often don't reflect what people say at the door.
5. **Recruiting candidates is its own form of leadership.** Many local races go uncontested, and people often need to be asked three or four times before they run. Recruiting works best by people who live there.

WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN DO

- ☐ **Explore the office before you file.** Attend meetings. Learn when it meets, whether it's paid, term limits, and what climate goals it can move. Talk quietly with a current member.
- ☐ **Build a volunteer team with real skills,** such as social media, design, photography, voter data, compliance and volunteer coordination. Keep the messaging your own.
- ☐ **Check filing rules early.** Confirm eligibility, district, deadline, signature needs, candidate committee, bank account and whether there is a primary.
- ☐ **Set a win number.** Look at turnout in the last two elections for the seat and add about 15%. Then plan how to reach the voters beyond your base.
- ☐ **Line up donors before you announce,** and ask for specific amounts. Start with the contacts in your phone, not a donate button on a website.
- ☐ **Write both speeches about 10 days ahead.** Have acceptance and concession statements ready to post on election night.
- ☐ **If you are municipal staff, check your charter.** Rules on staff running for elected office vary and may mean leaving your position if elected.

BY THE NUMBERS

68%
Share of races RECET-backed candidates have won

250
Campaigns run by the RECET team

~15%
Bump added to past turnout to set a win number

6 weeks
Length of the Local Leaders Project virtual training

WATCH OUT FOR

- ! Donor limits are set by the state or by bylaws depending on the office. Track contributions carefully; state systems (like Colorado's TRACER) and platforms like ActBlue help.
- ! Rural, long-shot and mountain races often get little outside support from groups focused on urban, state or federal races.

RESOURCES

Local Leaders Project
RECET and Mountain Towns 2030 candidate program; first cohort hoped for January

RECET
Rural Electric Cooperatives Elections Toolkit: runs clean energy supporters for co-op boards

Colorado TRACER campaign finance
tracer.sos.colorado.gov

ActBlue
actblue.com

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Summarized from the session recording and presenter slides. Figures are as presented; confirm with presenters before citing.

CONTACTS

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