



# Democracy, Not a Spectator Sport

By Michael F. Conlan

There are fulfilling and fun ways to get involved in the political process besides voting on Nov. 4. Directly supporting a candidate's campaign can pay real dividends, especially after a successful contest. Personal bonds and relationships forged with the candidate and the campaign staff over the course of an election season can last a lifetime.

You may not be able to get an elected official to switch sides on gun control, no matter how dedicated a campaigner you were. But politics, like life and business, is about relationships. Most people prefer to work with, help, or at least listen to people they know and trust. Fortunately for community pharmacy, its issues are not as divisive as gun control.

For grassroots activists, there is no better way to build political relationships and get community pharmacy's concerns heard than by volunteering for a campaign. Here are some opportunities:

**Contact the Campaign** — Before you work or vote for a candidate, find out his or her stand on issues important to you. Ask for brochures and position papers.

**Contribute to the Candidate** — With the ever-rising cost of running for office, money is an important component of campaigning. If you are supporting a candidate for federal office, you may only contribute with a personal check. That may apply in state and local races, too.

**Volunteer** — Although money is important, volunteers are invaluable. Stuffing envelopes, answering the phone, and other duties of a campaign office usually are done by volunteers. Make sure you use the sign-in sheet each time you come to the campaign office. The candidate and staff won't forget your time and effort.

**Walk a Precinct** — Volunteer to go door-to-door in your precinct for the candidate. Better yet, bring the candidate.

The campaign should provide you with a voter registration list and materials to hand out.

**Make Telephone Calls** — Campaigns need volunteers to make phone calls to identify voters who support the candidate. Many will allow you to make the calls from your home. They'll provide you with a phone list and text on what to say.

**Post Signs** — Many campaigns put up signs for the candidate to reinforce name identification. This activity usually only takes a few hours. Put one up in your yard or business, too.

**Send Postcards** — This is an easy way to remind friends and neighbors that you support the candidate. Ask if they would like to volunteer.

**Host an Event** — Give people the opportunity to meet your candidate at your home or business. At home, make it an early evening event—coffee and cake. This gives the candidate the opportunity to meet people on an informal basis with time left to attend another event.

**Work on Election Day** — Election day is the most important day for any campaign. The campaign needs to get identified supporters to the polls. You can volunteer to drive people who can't get there on their own. In addition, many poll watchers are needed to make sure that there are no irregularities at the voting booths. **ap**

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