

# IDENTIFYING LEADERS

Every year there are thousands of local elections across the country, and too often an incumbent runs unchallenged, with most of the community barely realizing that there even was an election. Chances are, you already know someone in your own community that has the values you want to see in your elected officials and would make a great leader, but they've never given serious thought to running for office. Having someone else approach them about the idea might be just the boost of confidence they need to take the plunge. This is why we've created the New Leaders Project- to help you identify and encourage new leaders who will pursue limited government principles on Town Councils and School Boards all over the country.

Here are some things for you to think about:

1. What are the issues that are impacting your community and the upcoming elections? Was there a recent tax increase or some kind of scandal that people are upset about? Is there a controversial piece of legislation that is going to be coming up for a vote, or a problem in the community that really needs to be addressed?
2. Are there specific elected officials that have not been fiscally responsible and will be vulnerable? Are there any open seats, especially in conservative leaning districts?
3. What qualities do you want to see in your elected leaders? Just because someone is a really nice person and agrees with you on that property tax issue doesn't mean that s/he would necessarily be a good candidate for County Commissioner. Some of the qualities to look for in a good candidate are:
  - \*Proven leadership ability
  - \*They communicate well
  - \*Principled, yet willing and able to work with others
  - \*Active in the community, with established networks

Once you have a firm grasp on **what** to look for, your focus should shift towards **where** to look. Unfortunately, campaigns have become a way of life for some of our leaders. While a great candidate shouldn't necessarily be overlooked just because they held office before, or ran an unsuccessful campaign several years ago, watch out for someone who is a career politician, running again and again and again. It's time to get some new faces in there too!

★ **Look** at the leadership of your local organizations- those who have proven their commitment to specific causes by devoting their time and energy to community events or have lead or organized projects and groups of people usually have great potential.

★ **Talk** to those who are leading other like-minded community groups. Even if they are not considering running for office, you can compare notes and see if they have any leads. Groups that have common, though slightly different goals (Pro-life, Anti-tax, Pro-Second Amendment, etc.) will be that much more effective if they can work together.

★ **Small business owners** are usually people with a vested interest in your community, probably have a built-in network, and bring a new perspective and proven successes to the table.

When you are thinking about changing the political landscape around you, look to the future. Many communities have staggered elections, so it might take a few years to shift the makeup of your district. Think it through, map it out and get started now. It always helps to set goals and plan ahead.

Don't forget to vet your potential candidate yourself. Much of their history is at their opponent's fingertips via the internet- do a Google search and make sure you learn as much possible about this person before you ask them to run for office. You don't want to be caught completely by surprise when a blogger finds a skeleton in your chosen candidate's closet.

When you have found someone that you would like to see in office, be ready to support them all the way, however you can. They are going to need training, so introduce them to the New Leaders Project and American Majority, where they can get effective campaign training in-person, and free online resources, cutting out the need for expensive consultants. Be there to encourage them, volunteer and donate. And ask your friends to do the same!

Don't get discouraged if it takes multiple attempts. Remember that all of the hard work you are doing **now** will yield results for years to come. The majority of our state and local leaders got their start in local politics. By having an effective plan in place, you can have a direct impact on the future leaders of your community, your state and our country.