

how to:

Help a pro-family candidate

It's important to protest bad laws, but ultimately, biblical values will only prevail if we put people in office who are willing to uphold them. So one of the most powerful ways Christians can protect this nation is to help candidates who live by godly principles.

1 Screen the candidate

Determine ...

► *Who shares your values* by personally interviewing the candidates. "I like to do that in front of my family," suggests Tim Echols, a father of seven and founder of TeenPact, a political-leadership school for Christian youth.

"Invite the candidate to your living room; let your children help prepare questions."

► *Who needs the most help.* Federal candidates often have paid political consultants, but most state candidates can't afford salaried staff—and Christian contenders in particular "don't have the backing of special interests, so volunteers are very important to them," says Tony Perkins, a former Louisiana legislator who now leads the Family Research Council.

2 Start with friends

"If you can identify just 20 friends who say, 'Yes, I commit to vote for so-and-so,' you will have done a tremendous job," says Richard Ford, president of Heritage Alliance, a political-action committee in Dallas. Most candidates would spend an average of \$600 to get

that many voters through mass mailings, he adds.

Morton Blackwell—a former Reagan staffer and president of the Leadership Institute in Virginia, which conducts nationwide political-activism seminars—suggests maximizing your own sphere of influence by:

► *Hosting a house party for fellow churchgoers to meet the candidate.* Just sending the invitations alone is productive, he says, because "even if people can't come, they know that a fellow [parishioner] is supporting this particular candidate, and that tends to influence them."

► *Introducing the candidate to your employees and co-workers.* While federal (and some state) laws prohibit corporate donations to campaigns, "there's no problem with a candidate ... going in a building and getting permission to talk to people."

► *Inviting the candidate to speak to your civic groups and professional associations.* That helps the candidate meet potential donors.

3 Involve your family

Getting the whole family involved in a campaign is a great way to train children to become "the next generation of activists," Echols says. In addition to knocking on doors in their own neighborhoods, families can ...

► *Serve as an advance team,* arriving early at the candidate's speaking engagements to help man campaign booths and collect contact information from the crowd. "Afterward, when everybody's

left, your kids get a chance to interact with the candidate," Echols says.

► *Attend community events.* At fall festivals or football games, families can greet incoming cars and pass out bumper stickers. Studies show that "if you put a bumper sticker on a car three months before the election, that's worth about \$500 of paid advertising," Blackwell says.

4 Use your gifts

Whether a CEO or stay-at-home mom, everybody has something to contribute to a campaign, says Colorado state legislator Dave Schultheis. He suggests providing:

► *Prayer.* "I had a team of people that would come in to pray for me and e-mail encouragements. ... Then some of those same people would volunteer."

► *Expertise*—especially professional skills that help increase the candidate's name recognition, such as creating Web pages, designing brochures or writing ad copy.

► *Leadership.* People with management experience can coordinate phone-bank and precinct-walking teams. That's important because "a candidate should be out talking to people and expressing his views, but you can't do that if you're in the office trying to coordinate everything."

5 Use the media

Promote your candidate by *writing letters to the editor or calling radio talk shows.* ●

TeenPact
www.teenpact.com
1-888-343-1776

The Leadership Institute
www.leadershipinstitute.org
1-800-827-5323

ACTIVIST TIP

Make it relevant. When promoting your candidate in the media, remember "to think about what current issues apply to the broader community" and then link those issues to your candidate's campaign platform, Perkins advises.