

The Democracy Center - Citizen Action Series

Excerpts from *The Democracy Owners Manual*
(To preview or purchase the book visit www.democracyctr.org)

Five Rules of Initiative Politics

Fewer than half of the measures that even make it to the ballot win and most initiatives never make it to the ballot at all. Here are some basic political rules:

Winning Elections is About Moving "Swing Voters"

Winning an initiative is not about reaching the voters already for you or against you, but by focusing on are the undecideds, the "swing vote".

Initiative Campaigns are About Harvesting Public Opinion, Not Changing It

Initiative campaigns are actually a lousy time to educate the public, especially while you are being outspent ten to one or more. If an initiative doesn't start out with support (as measured by serious polling) in the range of at least sixty five to seventy percent, it has very little chance of maintaining fifty one percent by election day.

Initiatives are Defeated by Their Weakest Provision

A basic strategy in almost all campaigns opposing an initiative is to target the measure's most controversial provision and attack it relentlessly. For "no" campaigns the task is to find that one weak spot and fix voters attention on it. For "yes" campaigns the task is to try to find that weak spot and weed it out during the drafting process.

When Voters are Confused, They Tend to Vote No

Often, the most effective strategy for the "no" side of an initiative campaign is simply to raise voters' doubts. When voters are uncertain or confused by a measure they typically vote no.

First Make It Controversial, Then Define the Sides to Your Advantage

First, make the initiative controversial so that the public pays attention, then define the two sides so that you are the good guys and the other side is evil incarnate.

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