

vote for open space: how to build public support



Building **public support** for an open-space ballot referendum is essential, and grass-roots **volunteers are crucial** to build that support. They share information about why this initiative is important to their community, help voters understand how it will affect them personally, and encourage their neighbors to **vote yes**.



1. Create a Political Action Committee (PAC).

■ Recruit volunteers and assign leadership roles.

Having a Chairperson and Treasurer is [required](#) by state law. Other roles may include communications, press contact, outreach, social media, fund raising, vote counting, and polling place volunteers.

■ Register your PAC with your county Board of Elections.

[This is required](#) for any group that receives or spends more than \$250 to influence the outcome of a referendum. Once you are registered, plan to open a bank account, identify a method to accept donations, ask supporters for donations, and document your expenditures and contributions to submit to your county Board of Elections.

■ Determine a regular meeting schedule (virtual or in-person).

2. Determine the message.

■ Create a campaign title and logo.

Examples: Vote Yes for Open Space, Save our Farms –
Vote Yes, Saving Land Saves Money

■ Write a succinct project overview.

Include details on what additional taxes would be put in place by the ballot referendum, including average cost per household. Identify the key benefits to the local community. This could include:

- Clean water and air
- Reduced flooding
- Public recreation
- Scenic views
- Avoid more traffic
- Avoid additional taxes (developed land often costs communities more to fund services, roads, sewer, schools, etc.)
- Protection of historical, cultural, or agricultural landscapes

■ Create an FAQ/Talking Points document so everyone on the PAC can “stick to the script.”

■ Design and create campaign collateral.

This may include t-shirts, yard signs, postcards, letters, posters, printed fliers, and sample ballots.





3. Get the message out.

■ Create a website.

Feature photographs, key talking points, and referendum details. Include information on how to contact members of the PAC, how to get involved, and how to contribute financially. Remember to list your website address on all collateral.

■ Email marketing

Identify a email marketing platform like Mail Chimp or Constant Contact. Collect voter email addresses and send regular emails to share information and encourage support of the ballot referendum.

■ Direct mail marketing

Write letter(s) in support of the ballot referendum. Collect voter addresses, print letters, and send them to voters.

■ Set up a Facebook page.

Use the referendum campaign name (e.g. “Vote Yes for Open Space”) as the name of the Facebook page. Assign a volunteer to serve as the Facebook page administrator and ask them to schedule regular posts/memes, and boost posts to your target audience (i.e. geography/zip codes) if budget allows. Join community Facebook groups and share posts on those groups to encourage viewers to follow your page. It’s important to monitor social media comments, responding to questions using Talking Points to stay on message.

■ Seek local press coverage.

Write and submit op-eds to local papers. The volunteer assigned as communications or press contact should field all reporter questions using talking points to stay on message.

■ Hold “Vote Yes” event(s).

Invite speakers who support the initiative and invite local press to cover the event.

4. Talk to your neighbors.

Connecting face-to-face can be the most impactful way to campaign. Consider tabling at public events (farmers markets, community days, etc.), hosting PAC-led public meetings, organizing door-to-door literature drops, and meeting with community members one-on-one or in small groups. Attend township public meetings to express your support and be present at polling locations on election day to share literature and answer questions. Plan for three volunteers to work in shifts at each polling place so you can show support the whole time the polls are open.

Who can and cannot participate in a PAC?

- Elected officials may take a public stance and promote a ballot measure, but they may not use non-elected staff or other government resources to do so.
- Local governments may not officially support or oppose a ballot measure.
- Non-elected government employees may not support or oppose a ballot measure in their official capacity but may do so on their personal time.