**2016 Fundraising Plan**

**Green Party of the United States**

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# SUMMARY OF PRESENT FUNDRAISING POSITION

Imagine, if you will, that you recently lost your job, and you have no savings. You have some income from unemployment benefits and a part-time job, but it’s quite a bit less than what you earned on your job. You know that soon, as rent and other bills come due, you’re going to have to start robbing Peter to pay Paul. Before long, you will have to either get your income higher, or radically cut your expenses, or some combination of the two. You may even have to declare bankruptcy. This is where GPUS sits today.

What has changed in fundraising since 2011 (our last financial crisis, when we had to borrow from members to make payroll)? Two short answers:

* Our income from fundraising has steadily dropped for years. Since 2012, two large bequests and a few unexpected large gifts ($35K from one family in 2014 - 2015) have masked the extent of the problem. Direct mail has been particularly impacted.
* In 2014, we averaged $15,700 income from each mailing, though each mailing brought in less than the last. For the first three mailings of 2015, we’ve averaged $7,121 for a total of just $21,363.
* By comparison, in 2015 we have raised $21,772 from 55 e-blasts (far more than we sent last year), some of which were targeted for CCC, BAC and ANM. E-blasts, of course, have no hard costs, though they take quite of bit of staff and volunteer time.
* We have steadily lost donors and stand at our lowest ebb in recent memory, with only about 3,000 people who have donated in the past two years. This year, we lost donors at accelerating speed. It looks like there were a lot of people who gave into 2012 who haven’t given since.



We do have some new donors, but not enough, and not giving enough, to begin to make up the shortfall. In 2015 to date, we brought in approximately 450 new donors. Their median donation is just $25 – normal for brand-new donors to most organizations – and the total they gave to date is $38,000. Only two donations were over $1,000, and one was $10,000. So realistically, the amount one could expect to raise from 450 donors would be closer to $30,000. That’s only 15% of our total budget target of $200,000.

Why is this happening? Well, the donors are not going to tell us why they left. In our strategic plan survey, people told us that “ineffectiveness” and “infighting” were the main reasons they had left or were contemplating leaving the party. No question that internal factors have cost us lots of support.

Certainly there are external factors, like Bernie Sanders, at work. Our general selling point of being the only truly progressive political party remains the same. But in our view, you need at least two things to get donors to give:

* A good reason to give now (a deadline for some specific program or cause)
* A belief that giving to this organization will have concrete results, or make a real difference

The Green Party finds it difficult to impossible to deliver on these items. We have few programs at GPUS, and difficulty setting deadlines for them. And we don’t effectively track results.

We need thousands of new donors to make this party work. But as an organization, attracting new people seems to be our lowest priority, from locals up to national. We do little to no organizing or marketing. Not only that, we do many things to drive people away. At GPUS, we have no one to gather success stories or track growth, or to organize the potential volunteers who come our way. Perhaps most damaging, we have little unity around any purpose or plan at all, much less one that would attract and retain lots of new people. The best communications and fundraising people in the world can’t solve these fundamental problems.

We do have opportunities to grow our base and save our party. But we have to do it now, or it will be too late. Financial crisis may well lead us to consider whether it’s even possible for GPUS to continue into the future, or if it’s time to fold our tent.

# DEC 2015-MAR 2016 PROJECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have another direct mail letter about to hit mailboxes, but if recent history is any guide, it’s likely to barely break even. We won’t be scheduled to send another until March.

We need to do two things in the short term: make phone calls to existing donors – this is sure to up our low response rate to mailings and e blasts – and lapsed sustainers, and cut expenses. We might also try calling the many people on our e-mail list (22,000) who are not donors.

We plan to make a special appeal for NC delegates and alternates.

* We have 242 Delegates and Alternate Delegates Tagged in NB
* 154 (63%) of those have donated sometime in the past.
* 108 (47%) of those have donated within the past 2 years (could be only ANM/merch)
* 45 are Sustainers
* 88 (36%) haven't donated ever

We should also make a push to sell merchandise.

NEW DONORS

We expect we can bring in thousands of new contacts by asking people to participate in the CCC’s Issue Strategy Survey over the next few months.

We have an opportunity to connect with a large group of Bernie supporters who were planning to write him in if he loses the nomination, but who may be persuadable to publicly pledge to vote Green.

And we could, and should, choose to swap our list with a few like-minded organizations.

As the year goes on, we should reach new people through our Presidential campaign, though we’ll also be competing with them for funds.

We need to find new major donors, but that is a labor intensive and difficult task.

But even a best-case scenario isn’t likely to bring a lot of cash in from these new people in the short term. We need to slash expenses, get on payment plans with creditors, and keep a close eye on developments. We need to think about what the minimum level of operation is to maintain our status for the Presidential election.

# FUNDRAISING OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS – 2015

Our fundraising team, Lea Pierce and Starlene Rankin, started their jobs around April 15, 2015. There was no fundraising staff since Dec 2014. When they arrived, our revenue stood at just 50% of goal.

## 2015 PROJECTED REVENUE

The team over-performed in revenue in their early months, but the accelerating decline in revenue has hurt us. We now project closing the year at 71% of goal, or about $145,000.[[1]](#footnote-1) It could be less.

## REVENUE TO DATE

As of October 31, 2015, we are at 72% of goal, or $123,000.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Our members and supporters are hearing from us far more often. In the past we struggled to send one e-blast per month, and now, we are sending two fundraising blasts and one non-fundraising blast per month, with occasional special blasts adding to that total.

FIRST FRIDAY E-BLASTS – FOCUS ON SUSTAINING DONORS

 Through August 2015:

* 66% More Sustainers (145 New Sustainers) – Avg 29 Per Month
* $7,029 in New Dollars
* Sustainer income averages $4,436/month, up from $3,908

PHONE BANKING

* Ten new volunteers have been trained, training systems and materials have been developed
* Five volunteers are currently making phone calls

EXPERIMENTS

We experimented with a number of different things that have worked in other organizations to try to improve our performance. We have a lower than average open rate on e-blasts and lower than average return on direct mail, though both vary, of course. We feel that we have really improved the writing on both direct mail and e-blasts.

We had always used bulk mail, but we used first-class mailing on our most recent mailing; we didn’t see an increased return. We mailed to prospects from our database and included a special insert targeted to first time donors; that mailing performed very poorly. Our last email promised to devote funds specifically to candidates and ballot access; that also did not improve returns.

FACEBOOK

* We want to convert our many Facebook friends into donors
* We ran a Facebook ad promising them a special bumper sticker in exchange for contact info
* In our initial test, more than 50% of those who clicked on the ad signed up
* The program is too expensive for us to expand at this time, but we have hopes that expanding it in the future can really expand our list

# 2016 FUNDRAISING PLAN

At this point, it is very difficult to predict what is going to happen. I predict it will be one of two things:

* We will not turn the decline around and will have to vastly shrink or close down the organization
* We will get our act together to reach many new people and turn things around

I believe that by the end of first quarter, and certainly by the mid point of the year, we’ll know what the answer is.

This budget assumes that we will stay at approximately the same level of fundraising that we have now. It is not worst-case, which would be a continued decline, nor does it assume growth, because there is no basis right now to assume that we will grow.

Our previous revenue goal was $200,000.

**2016 GOAL: $138,000**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Donation** | **Annual Goal** | **Monthly Goal** | **Three Month Avg Actual** |
| Sustainers | $78,000 | $6,500 | $6,564 |
| One-Time Donors[[2]](#footnote-2) | $36,000 | $3,000 | $3,005 |
| Major Donors ($500+) | $24,000  | $2,000 | $2,000\* |

$138K averages out to $11,500 per month, which means some months will be less – especially in first quarter.

\*12-month avg. No major donations in past 3 months.

# HOW WE’LL REACH OR EXCEED THIS GOAL

The Fundraising team, along with the Steering Committee and other party leaders and staff, must work together on the ABC’s:

* Raise **Awareness**: Raise general awareness of the Green Party, especially among target groups including disaffected active Democrats and Republicans, and people who are less engaged or not at all engaged with typical electoral politics, including youth, poor people, and immigrants.
* Build our **Base**: We must greatly increase the size of our mailing lists, which have been shrinking steadily, especially our active donor list of only about 3,000 people.
* These two items involve both organizing (working directly with individuals) and marketing (advertising and public relations/earned media).
* Make Our **Case**: Most importantly, the party must develop an overall strategy and message that helps convince people we are worth supporting. Document success stories and growth around the country, consider and test different messaging strategies to measure what resonates the most with our audience and delivers the best results. .
	+ We need to increase our response rates and average donations. We believe that stronger messaging, as well as different technical approaches to fundraising appeals, can help us do that. We have 22,000 people on our email list and less than 3,000 of them are donors. Our open rates, click through rates and response rates to direct mail are all lower than average. Our average donation is only $21.

# HOW PARTY LEADERS AND STAFF CAN CONTRIBUTE

## Improve and Streamline Financial Reporting and Systems

We must be able to lay our hands on real and up-to-date financial information about both revenue and expenses. Currently, we can’t. Staff spends an inordinate amount of time on these matters. We need to fairly and efficiently assign and distribute work among the Treasurer, a bookkeeper or accountant when/if we get one, the office manager, and the fundraising team.

## Financial Leadership

We are proud to announce that 100% of the Steering Committee are now Sustaining donors – possibly for the first time. The SC must actively encourage the National Committee and state leaders to also become Sustainers. We need all members to help us reach out to people of means that they have relationships with, to help convert them into major donors. The SC should also consider a give-or-get policy; help make thank you calls and emails to donors; and help change our fiscal policy so that we can swap lists with like-minded organizations and grow our list without spending money. We’ve already been asked to do this.

## Improve Internal Communications

Currently we don’t even have a list of our state party leaders or our elected officials. The SC must lead in developing basic communication systems so that we can have contacts to help us generate exciting success stories and activities that need funding, and track successes and growth for the party across the nation. If we had a real picture of what is happening around the country, we’d have a better basis for developing a political growth strategy.

## Improve Messaging

 Party leaders, staff, and especially committees must work together to help develop the case for the party both in a *general* sense (who we are; why we exist; what is our mission) and in a *specific* sense (what are we achieving? What are our plans to grow and build on success?). We need analogues to how animal rescue groups make their case: (Total results) 4,000 cats spayed and neutered this year. (Future plans to meet the mission) Plans to help four new communities and their animal shelters grow spay and neuter programs and lower the number of animals killed in shelter. (Individual stories) Cats like Isis, who was found shivering and alone on a doorstep on a 20 degree night, have been saved.

# DONATION CHANNELS AND HOW WE PLAN TO USE THEM

We aim to have 1 to 3 programs per channel, some running all the time, some at targeted times.

A key to growing our fundraising programs is finding more volunteers skilled in project management, fundraising, phone banking and event planning. Our staff members are half-time and most of their time is already spoken for. They are managed by a volunteer.

Direct Marketing

* + This channel drives Sustainers and one time donations.
	+ **Direct Mail**: Continue to do 4 direct mailings per year (Mar, Jun, Sep, Dec). Experiment with new direct mail formats to find which ones are cheaper and more effective for us, for example: using postcards, which are cheaper to produce and have higher read rates than letters, especially with younger people.
	+ **E-blasts**. Do two fundraising e-blasts per month, one on First Friday focused on new sustainers, and one other Possibly help improve the third monthly newsletter e-blast.
	+ **Social Media.** We need to develop more social media programs and themes to help us attract new people and get our current universe more involved.

## Events

* + Events drive one time donations including from new donors.
	+ **Party at the PNC.** The only way to really make more money from these events is to bring in more people. The Fundraising team plans to work with the host committee in Houston to have a really fun party – or two – that would attract many members and their friends. We plan to start on this before the end of 2015.
	+ **“Red, White and Green” Fourth of July parties** around the country. Celebrating “patriots of a different color,” “declaring our independence.” We aim to work with state parties and split the take 50/50, with a total goal of $2K per party, $1K for GPUS. We believe perhaps a dozen state parties could pull this off for a total of $12K to GPUS. Smaller parties might be able to raise a lesser amount. We will also encourage any Green to sign up to host a party through Nationbuilder. We will promote the parties through our website and e blasts and provide some thematic and how-to support.

## Telemarketing

* + We have created some training materials and just begun making phone calls with a few volunteers recruited late in 2015. We plan to recruit and train at least 25 solid volunteers for 2016 (which will require many more contacts with potential volunteers who don’t show up or pan out). We plan to make calls at least two weeks a month, more if we can swing it. With 25 volunteers each working two hours a month, we can make 50 hours of calls or 1,000 calls per month. More volunteers (and volunteer management) = more calls!
	+ Our small lists, poor response rate and low average donation make it impossible for us to use a telemarketing company affordably.

* + To make telemarketing work, we need to develop stronger messaging around reasons to give now. People generally want to give to programs. Raising money for general operations is the most difficult for any organization.
	+ Matching funds would be extremely helpful. We could utilize premiums and/or drawings for gifts, which help a donor rationalize their gift to themselves. We also plan to ask Greens to write their own “Why I’m Green,” “Why I Give” and “How The Green Party Makes A Difference” messages such as we have on the website, which we can market with and use to develop phone scripts.
	+ We need to identify a volunteer that can manage the phonebanking program. Our staff can do the training, but they do not have the time to manage volunteers on an ongoing or daily basis, especially as the phone banking staff grows.

## Personal Outreach

* + We need to do this to “ladder up” existing donors (get them to give more).
	+ This is also the key to developing major donors.
	+ We need our members to help make introductions to people of means that they know, to help us turn them into donors. We could have a co-operative program with state parties.
	+ We also need research into good potential major donor prospects, perhaps based on issue involvement or existing political donation history, though “cold calling” major donors is generally a lot less effective.

## Other Ideas To Build Our List

* Swap lists with other groups. SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center) has already requested our list. We could buy lists, but of course swapping is cheaper.
* Acquire list of registered Greens around the country. At least several states now gather e-mails as well as street addresses. We could get this list run against other available lists to learn more about them (do they like golf? Cats? Rock and roll? Etc). With this knowledge, we could target them more effectively, say by advertising in Golf magazine, doing a swap with Golf magazine, or having a golf-oriented event or celebrity endorsement to tell them about. We could also pay to append phone numbers.
* Use more petitions. Though to date our Open Debates petition has only gathered about 600 signatures, about two-thirds of them are people new to us. This requires staff time and someone or some group to make decisions about what issues to do and how to frame them, in a timely manner.
* We need to be more aggressive and intentional about exchanging donor lists with candidates and state parties. This is another program that requires better communication systems and volunteer help.
1. This goal excludes merchandise and Annual National Meeting (ANM) revenue, which are not part of the fundraising effort though they do produce revenue. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Combines under $100 and $100-$500 one-time donations/donors. The 2015 combined target was $103,000, of which we are falling far short. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)