

How to Prep for a Political Campaign When You're a Candidate with a Disability



Managing a political campaign isn't an easy task. Still, more people than ever feel motivated to participate in politics at all levels, from the [borough council](#) to the senate. For a person with disabilities, additional obstacles—both literal and figurative—can make things more difficult. Here's what you need to know as a candidate with a disability.

Creating Your Campaign Team Will Be Crucial

Behind every candidate is a campaign team with the right tools for the job. Creating a diverse team is both advisable for your campaign and easier than ever. The perks of hiring people with different backgrounds and abilities include better performance and relatability to voters.

When starting your search for staff, prioritize campaign needs like speech writing, website creation, and hiring a personal assistant or publicist. You can hire talented and highly

recommended freelancers in [every niche](#) through online staffing agencies, without the need to bring on a full-time salaried staff from the get-go.

Also consider additional experts you might need on your side, such as:

- A driver, especially if your disability impacts your mobility while canvassing
- An interpreter if you are deaf or hard of hearing
- A transcriptionist to take notes during meetings or presentations, so you can review details later
- [Speechwriters](#), particularly if public speaking off the cuff is a challenge for you

You may also need volunteers, interns, and other staff for daily office-type tasks. In that case, turning to your community and even skills training programs for people with disabilities ensures that you remain connected with the voters you're representing.

Of course, deciding whether to hire a full-time [campaign manager](#) is another consideration. Having someone to “steer the ship” may help reduce some anxiety and allow you to focus on other aspects of the campaign.

You'll also need to make sure your staff is working with quality equipment, and that [starts with](#) a reliable and fast internet connection. Keep in mind that it is possible to get powerful internet service even if you live in a rural area; research providers to learn about available options.

Looking to Current Politicians Can Shed Insight

While most politicians join the fray to create change, it can take time. For example, AP News explains Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth, a double amputee veteran, has [influenced changes](#) to many policies during her time in Congress. But it's thanks to the historic Americans with Disabilities Act for making the path a little easier to travel.

You can even find lists of [current elected officials](#) with disabilities for networking with them and [other politicians](#). After all, networking is crucial for your campaign's success. Plus, learning from other candidates and officials with disabilities could influence your policymaking and other efforts in big ways.

PR Will Matter—A Lot

Public relations is a tool many politicians use to present their best side to the public. For a candidate with disabilities, this type of support can be invaluable. An effective campaign will highlight your values and capabilities instead of only showcasing your disability.

Your public relations strategy should also include networking with other candidates and elected officials. Asking lots of questions and even interviewing the outgoing official can help shape your [strategy](#), and you can even put [tools and templates](#) to work as you shape your plans.

Strategic public relations can also enhance your fundraising efforts. While you don't need to be rich to run for office, you will need to raise money for supplies, payroll, and more. You can start [raising money](#) for your campaign by getting friends and family on board. Then, you can hold in-person events and create an online portal for donations.

Think Beyond Your Disability to Inclusion for All

Like candidates without a disability, your platform is based on your personal experiences. But maintaining too narrow a focus on what constitutes a disability could hurt your chances with voters of all stripes.

Aim for [inclusion](#) for everyone, including people with chronic diseases or mental illness, in order to reach and serve the most voters possible. After all, the CDC confirms that one in four American adults lives with a [disability](#), meaning you could represent a significant portion of the population.

Your mere presence on the ballot serves as equal representation for many people who feel overlooked. So, addressing every aspect of inclusion in your campaign is a crucial step. With the right mindset and strategy, you can encourage change from the ground up in your community, city, state, and beyond.

Image via [Pexels](#)