Community Connection Action

The Playbook:
Action for The Grassroots

A Project of COVA Coalition

COVA COALITION

An affiliate of Network NOVA, COVA Coaltion is active in Coastal Virginia.

We are a membership organization, but we also bring together other grassroots groups to form our coalition.

It was founded in 2023 to give progressive women in Coastal Virginia an outlet to support progressive issues and candidates.

Our three priority areas are reproductive freedom, sensible gun reform and protecting public education.

The Big Idea

When we bring groups together, we have three main goals:
1) **Create intentional Community** - by committing to being in community together. We know that the strongest organizing communities meet weekly. Our committees and subgroups must meet regularly to sustain the bigger movement. We will build power among its members and member groups. The long game means strengthening the grassroots infrastructure.

2) **Consolidate the power of the grassroots** - by pooling the assets we bring, aligning over the mutual goal of building power, transcending the transactional and creating a shared rolodex of power.

3) Curate best practices - by workshopping collective solutions. We will share tactics, but also how to be more influential. We will direct our conversations to "How to build your own political capital"

The Playbook was developed by the leaders of COVA Coalition and refined by a group of women from eight grassroots organizations in Coastal Virginia. Is The Playbook for groups or members? YES!

Step 1: Name It ... It's a Regime

Starting today- we refer to it as the Trump Regime. Our media has always called authoritarian leaders in other countries "regimes."

Step 2: Be Brave

By witnessing, we confront social anxiety and the fear of speaking out.

We must be willing to take actions that meet the movement's priorities rather than what is convenient.

Step 3: Influence Outside of Our Silos

Stop posting.

Stop debating people on TikTok.

Master low-tech and no tech communications campaigns.

Examples of Low Tech Communications Include: billboards, stickers, postcards, yard signs, post-its, t-shirts, banner drops, barn signs leaflet every door and... pumpkins!

Step 4: Commit to Communication that is...

Practice!

Here's an exercise to do with your members. Consider a simple attack or attack ad (she cares about they/them; he cares about you) and write an ad that goes on the attack. Don't make it a pro Dems ad or a defense against their attack.

It's harder than you think!

Consistent and Unified

- Builds trust as reliable sources of truth
- Provides curated resources for others

Effective

- Is on a sixth grade reading level
- Illuminates tactics of fear and blaming
- Uses active voice, not passive (nothing IS DONE; someone DOES IT)
- Calls them up short (surprises them)
- Uses psychological politics
- Tells relatable personal stories
- Shares positive messages
- Has a strong visual
- Takes advantage of nonpartisan messaging to attract moderates
- Uses neutral messaging to imply objectivity
- Doesn't quote the misinformation (that gives it legs)

Strategic

- Is on brand (as we have defined it for our communities)
- Appeals to moderates but doesn't compromise our values
- Defies Trumpers' depictions of us
- Attacks!--- Is not defensive or reactionary
- Calls them out... or calls them in!
- Abandons politeness

How to build coalitions with organizers from communities outside of our own (an example for our groups is African-American organizers)

- ***Create database of contacts***
- ***Honor their leadership and take their lead***
- ***Offer to help, not take over***
- ***Be careful not to appear as trying to steal or recruit members***

Step 5: Practice Relational Organizing

- Talk to your friends
- Equate “speaking out” to confronting racist jokes
- Normalize talking about our political values with each other
- Get off social media and make it personal
- Each voter needs seven touches (per marketing research), so keep at it!
- Host social parties to attract new people
- Make it personal; members and recruits become para-social friends

Step 6: Be Hyperlocal

We can be effective hyper locally. We ask each coalition organization or circle to adopt a precinct where they can be effective:

- Know your precincts.
- Approach it like you’re running for mayor! Attend civic leagues, PTAs, and community events.
- Get their data from previous elections and study it.
- Create lists of who lives in which precincts and recruit them.
- Ask your membership if they have friends in that precinct if it’s not yours.
- Identify 3-4 priority precincts in each House of Delegates district or city council district-- it works UP!
- Work together so your organization can cover all or priority precincts.
- Staff them for election day.

People often ask if we're stealing volunteers from campaigns. Of course we work to support candidates, but WE DECIDE our priorities because we know our communities best.

We do not work for a candidate or party; our legal structure disallows acting on their behalf.

Grassroots organizing doesn't follow the campaign calendar.

Step 7: Be Everywhere (or appear to be)

- Use reverse canvassing or clipboarding at local events-- if the Bible people are there, you should be too!
- Know your First Amendment rights and assembly rules in your municipality.
- Troll GOPs at public events; learn their calendars!
- Use persistent contact campaigns.
- Deploy volunteers at all activity levels to call, text, tag in posts, show up, etc.

Step 8: Money- Keep It Local

- Tell anyone who offers to help that money is also a great way to help.
- Those folks who sign up and don't show up- turn them into donors!
- Can't afford a credit card processor? Partner with another group who can
- Use local money locally by funding low tech communications

Step 9: Coalitions Stick Together

- Divide and conquer
- Honor each group's identity and tailor requests/assignments to their strengths
- Each group takes the lead on different candidates so that grassroots are well represented in campaigns
- Take turns hosting each other
- Develop unified messaging
- Create unified graphics, t-shirts
- Set up coalition signal chat, shared files, email thread
- Create shared calendar
- Support each other without creating more work for each other
- Play the long game by strong grassroots infrastructure
- Host leadership development and training

Ideas to Engage Youth:

- ***Give them accessible tools and follow through***
- ***Partner with Ally groups***
- ***Host High School voter registration***
- ***Support/facilitate new voter clubs at high schools***
- ***Follow up with tour to save democracy and other national groups who may have contacts or sign ups from your area***
- ***Create campaign to communicate to Driver's Ed teachers (many are private)***
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Step 10: There is no Step 10

Think outside the box. We're Kevin from home alone. We're scared, we feel lonely, but we can find everyday tools and use them to fight the bad guys. Oh, and everyone is rooting for us to win!

Grassroots groups need to create our own structures; but they do need structure.

- Commit to being professional and prepared as leaders of your group.
- Treat your volunteers like the valuable assets they are.

Grassroots organizing is 365!

How is COVA Coalition Doing it?

Community Circles

We actively recruit women to start small groups in their neghborhoods. We created guidelines to give them structure and we meet to support them as leaders. We offer them access to our resources like our website and newsletter.

Calls to Action

We curate calls to action so our members don't need to. It's confusing out there. We send them out in WEEKLY emails.

Coalition Building

We reach out to any and all groups that are active in Coastal Virginia.

As an affiliate of Network NOVA, Indivisible and Red, Wine and Blue, we connect our members and other grassroots leaders to state and national groups and campaigns.

Committees

No one can do it all. Each member of our leadership team is mentoring a committee.

Truthbombs/Content Creators
Research the latest news and factoids to create Truth Bombs. They upload them to a shared file accessible by Communications and Leadership Teams.

Communications
Members rotate weekly to manage socials; they design graphics as well as postcards and billboards for our campaigns.

Membership
They convert sign ups to show ups by following up on social followers, signups and now shows. We need to call our people by name and know the skills they can give us. This committee helps process our membership data.

Voter Education and Registration
COVA Coalition hosts regular campaigns at farmers markets and community events. This spring we're focused on the youth voters.

Leadership
We meet weekly to for a whip around (reporting out) and hold each other accountable. We meet at other times for strategy and support.

What is a Truth Bomb?

A Truth Bomb is a simple factual statement that members can spread quickly via socials and low tech campaigns like bridge brigades, post-it notes, yard signs, stickers and billboards.

Hit them with something that makes them think!

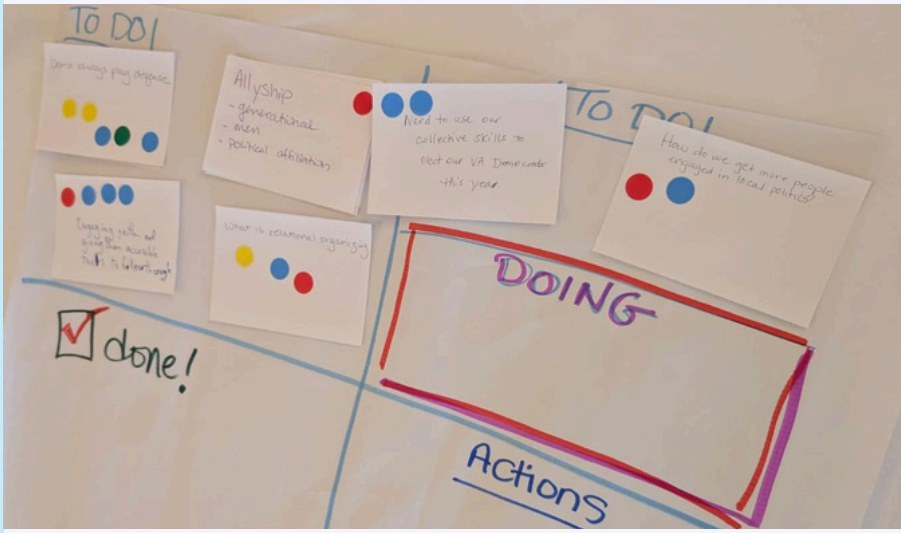
In 2024, COVA Coalition launched its Roadmap to Victory. We took our strategy and broke it down into ***three two-month campaigns---***
March-June: *Voter Education Postcarding to voters new to CD2; Targeted Voter Registration*
July-August: *Member Recruitment and Community Building*
September-October: *Candidate Support Activities and October Weekend of Action*

For 2025, we're introducing The Playbook; our timeline is---
Feb-April: *Truth Bomb Campaigns, Build Community Circles, Strengthen Committees. Target one District in VB and three precincts in Norfolk for TB Postcarding; Candidate meetngreets*
April-June: *Targeted Voter Reg and Ed, Voter Reg at High Schools, Member Recruiting, GOTV Primaries, TBs for general GOTV in Suffolk*
July-Aug: *Reach out to candidates; Assign POCs for each group, prepare print materials for fall*
Sep-October: *October Weekend of Action (with statewide coalition), Candidate supporting activities*
November: *TRIFECTA achieved!*

The Topics We Didn't Cover

Here are some topics to discuss with your leadership:

- How do we bridge the gap between Community organizing and political organizing
- Low Risk/Low Engagement v. High Risk/High Involvement Matrix
- The yearly election cycle in Virginia
- Electoral Organizing v. grassroots organizing
- Motivating people to go to local board and Council meetings
- How to develop a marketing team on fundraising
- Is there any hope to engage Republican Neighbors / peers? if so what does that look like
- How to motivate people to call Representatives
- What is deep canvassing



For More Information:

www.covacoalition.org