

MICHELLE L. SMITH RAN FOR U.S. SENATE

November 2022

DEMOCRAT, STATE OF MARYLAND

For more info and/or to volunteer, send an email to info@michellesmithforsenate.org.

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I RAN FOR U.S. SENATE

POLICY

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MEDIA/PRESS



LESSONS LEARNED

Since I had the opportunity to run for the U.S. Senate to represent the State of Maryland as a democrat, I feel that it is my duty to explain the lessons that I learned during this journey so that other women democrats can take heed to this valuable information. Here is what I learned:

- During the entire year of 2020 and when the COVID-19 pandemic was officially declared, I spent time with my graphics and web designer on developing my campaign's website, developing logos and the like. Taking the time to prepare is of the utmost importance.
- After officially announcing my campaign in January 2021, we immediately launched this website and started recruiting volunteers. We advertised on Indeed.com and several interested candidates responded. From there, they were interviewed and the following individuals were chosen:
 - Policy Coordinator
 - Social Media Coordinators (Facebook, TikTok, Instagram)
 - Editors (simple video and sound projects)
 - [Director of Public Relations](#)
 - [Director of Communications and Outreach](#)
 - [Graphics and Web Designer*](#)
 - [Volunteer Coordinator](#)
 - [Treasurer](#)
 - News/Current Events Tracker
 - Street Team (several people to ride around to the premium outlet malls, shopping plazas and regular malls to place flyer cards on vehicle windshields throughout multiple counties within the state)
- Although the recruiting process was ongoing, we were able to start off with a nice team of almost 30 individuals to focus heavily on specific tasks. In May 2021, the Policy Coordinator was promoted to Campaign Manager. This individual was extremely helpful with making suggested updates to this website as well as leading Zoom meetings and other things. By August 2021, the Campaign Manager resigned. That was a huge blow to the campaign team. From this point on, we did not hire another campaign manager.
- We conducted regular weekly or bi-weekly Zoom meetings to keep the volunteers abreast of what was occurring and to offer assignments to anyone that may have been interested. The goal was to be transparent and not waste anyone's time. Shortly after losing the Campaign Manager, the remaining volunteers started to drop off one by one. By November 2021, there were only five volunteers and me handling all of the campaign duties.
- Because I worked part time with audio engineering and production work, I produced my own campaign videos, all of them. I wrote the treatments and scripts. I played a major role in the editing process. Of course, I hired a professional. This is highly recommended and of course, I know better. I wanted my work to be professional, color graded and with high quality to be ready for television and online streaming.

- Although we advertised for a Director of Finance and Fund Raising, we never did acquire this individual. For this position, the individual would have had to be compensated. Fund raising is often difficult and requires a lot of strategy. Also, the campaign did not have the funding to pay this individual. So, the remaining six of us did our best to raise funds and solicit donations online.
- The COVID-19 pandemic played a huge positive role with campaign operations. We were not able to conduct any grassroots campaigning because it was too risky and dangerous. Using the Facebook/IG and Google Ads tool as a political candidate, we customized free and paid ads and posted them regularly/daily. In addition, we set the parameters regarding the targeted audience and chose Maryland as the area to advertise in to capture all users within the state. There were a few instances where the parameters were a little bit off. Somehow, FB and Google algorithms were targeting users that did not reside in Maryland. Oh well, too bad. We did our best to follow the instructions and choose the recommended parameters. Nonetheless, this was a powerful way to get my name out there and get voters to check out this website. Several friends on these social media platforms supported me heavily by sharing the posts and ads.
- I spent many nights up at 2am and 3am preparing letters for mailings throughout all 24 counties in the State of Maryland. This task was extremely tedious and well worth the effort. My message was distributed to voters all over the state. Furthermore, I completed as many voter surveys as I could. I was busy all of the time. In addition to running this campaign in the evenings, nights and on the weekends, I was working my full-time job. Nonetheless, be sure to complete as many voter surveys as possible because these get published either online or in the newspaper. Also, voters want to know more information about their candidates.
- From January 2020 up until July 19, 2022, I raised less than \$2,000 in campaign funds/donations. Yes, I literally paid for everything out of my pocket. You may view the campaign reports on www.fec.gov. I had to pay the graphics and website designer for all of the work that I needed for the campaign. For the four remaining volunteers above in green font, they worked hard for the campaign without any compensation. Once some of the pandemic restrictions were lifted in Maryland, the volunteers went out into the streets and safely passed out the flyer cards and placed them on vehicle windshields.

To conclude, running for a highly politicized public office is not a joke and should not be taken lightly. My campaign had no political backing, no endorsements, no nothing. Yet, I managed to get over 100,000 votes while running against the incumbent. Also, I got more votes than any of the ten republicans that ran for the same seat. There were two areas of my campaign that were seriously lacking: volunteers and campaign funding/donations. If these two areas were much stronger and more robust, my campaign team and I would possibly have had a much better outcome. A huge kudos goes out to all my friends and family members on the social media sites that constantly shared my posts and ads. I could not have been successful with advertising my political run for the U.S. Senate without their assistance. Also, the five volunteers that stayed with me showed me love and loyalty. I learned the importance of loyalty and what it meant to have individuals that believed in me. At the end of the day, nothing was lost on my part. I gained meaningful experience and I am very proud of myself. My family is proud of me too. I wish my father was alive to see what I had accomplished.