

Winning Edge #16 – Cheerful Persistence

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



Imagine you were a Republican elected to Congress in 1978.

Jimmy Carter is president, inflation is high, gasoline is expensive, the economy is stagnant, and there's a general feeling of malaise. You get to Washington and what do you see? You see a caucus full of people who have great intentions but are beaten down. They've been in the minority too long. Most have never known what it's like to be in a majority.

How do you change that culture? How do you get people to believe they can win? How do you keep trying after each election? Here's what happened in the next election. In 1980, you don't get a majority. 1982, same story. 1984, you win some seats, but still, no majority. The pattern continues, election after election. You strive for a majority and fall short each time.

This was the reality Newt Gingrich faced. Despite the repeated setbacks, Gingrich and his allies chose a path that would eventually redefine the Republican Party in Congress: cheerful persistence. As Gingrich later wrote in his book, "March to the Majority":

"To do anything significant, you must persist. In America, if you continue cheerfully, you will attract much more support and help than if you are angry or grumpy... this idea of cheerful persistence went far beyond simple effectiveness. It was a survival skill. For every successful thing we did, there were probably four or five efforts that went nowhere. If we had let those small failures build up in our minds, we would have ended up paralyzed by hopelessness. So we worked every day cheerfully to accomplish what we could and move on or adjust from what we couldn't do."

Fast forward to today. The political landscape continues to shift, often unpredictably. Elections don't always go our way, but the lesson remains—to succeed, we need to cheerfully persist, shake off the losses, and focus on what we can control. We can get better, exceed our fundraising goals, and field the best candidates in every race.

Remember, the defining moments of the next election haven't happened yet. The last two decades have shown us that we must be ready to face unexpected challenges. But our strength lies in our ability to adapt, to fight, and to cheerfully persist. This is our Winning Edge.