

Winning Edge #39 – Your Post-Election Game Plan

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



The yard signs are down, the votes are counted, and whether you won or lost, you're probably feeling a mix of relief, pride, and maybe a bit of "now what?" No matter the outcome of your election, these next few weeks are important.

If You Didn't Win This Time

Here's where to start if you came up short. Use this experience to turn your loss into a launching pad to your next opportunity.

- 1. Keep the Network** – Don't let the new connections you built during your campaign fade. Reach out personally to supporters, donors, and key contacts. If you're considering another run down the road, you'll want these relationships strong. Send handwritten thank-you notes to key supporters—this simple move will set you apart and keep doors open.
- 2. Give Yourself Time** – Take a breather and process the results. You've done something most people only talk about doing. While others complain about politics from the sidelines, you stepped into the arena. Along the way, you've become stronger. You improved and built skills in speaking, fundraising, and talking with voters and the media. Give yourself a moment to appreciate what you learned and how far you've come.
- 3. Conduct a Post-mortem** – Document what went right and what didn't while it's fresh. As tough as this might be, an objective look at your campaign is critical. Write it all down—what worked, what flopped, and what you'd change. You'd be surprised how fast the details fade, and if you decide to run again, this post-mortem will be priceless.
- 4. Take the Long View** – Remember, this is just one chapter in your story. Think about how you can use this as a launchpad to the next adventure. Many successful politicians—Lincoln, Reagan, Churchill—all lost races but used it to fuel their future wins. Consider this your training ground.

If You Won: The Real Work Begins

For those who won, these five priorities should be front and center:

1. **Thank Your Supporters** – Write thank you notes to all your key supporters, your donors, and your spouse—everyone who helped make the win possible.
2. **Protect Your Time** – Suddenly, you’ll find yourself with a lot of new “friends.” Be wary of how you spend your time. Most of those reaching out don’t have bad intentions, but they do have agendas and will try to make *their* priority *your* priority. Not every request needs a “yes.”
3. **Find a Mentor** – Find someone in your caucus or an experienced former official to guide you through the complexities of your position. Politics may be a team sport, but it’s played by individuals. Having a trusted advisor helps you anticipate common problems and make alliances that matter.
4. **Have an Agenda** – Pick two priorities for your first session: one campaign promise you can deliver on, and one bipartisan issue that’s important to your district. A focused approach builds credibility with both voters and colleagues and shows you’re here to get things done.
5. **Become an Expert** – Find an issue you’re genuinely interested in, and become the go-to person on it. With 10-20 hours of focused study, you’ll have more expertise than most. You just have to do the work, read up on the issue, and ask a lot of questions. Ideally, choose something relevant to your district so you’ll build influence and value with your constituents.

Bottom Line

The day after the election isn’t the end—it’s the beginning of your next chapter. Whether you’re eyeing another campaign or diving into office, your actions in the coming weeks set the stage

for your future. Stay focused, stay engaged, and keep building on the foundation you've laid through your months of hard work.