

Section 8 - POLITICAL ACTION

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POLITICAL ACTION

Why?

There are three kinds of people in the world--those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened! NSS members are determined not to watch our hopes for space development become a footnote of history, while the world wonders what happened. As you have seen throughout this Handbook, there are lots of things that we CAN make happen. While we are much more than a political organization, political projects are an important part of our activities. They complement the largely education nature of most of our projects.

If your talents and interests are in the area of political projects, or if you are convinced of their absolute importance, this Section outlines existing projects and techniques. Everyone can help. There is a need for constituents to write, call, visit, educate and monitor their Congressmen and for members who want to help organize and work for projects like the Phone Tree. Later in this Section there is also information about Spacepac, an independent political action committee that is able to support individual candidates in ways which NSS, as a nonprofit organization, can not.

Not Just in the USA!

The information in this Section is not just for NSS members in the U.S. Decide how some of these techniques can be used in your country. Adopt those methods that will work with your political system, adapt others to your needs, then write your own guide.

You may want to lobby for the establishment of a national space agency and/or the development of a national space policy, to increase cooperative ventures with other countries, or focus attention on past and present national space programs in order to encourage planning for future projects that can be built on this existing foundation.

As we all know, our future in space goes far beyond the needs and interests of one country, beyond the programs of the present space-faring nations. NSS offers a unique opportunity for grassroots activists from all over the world to work together for a hopeful future for all humanity. Let's get going!

Bootstrapping the Phone Tree by Gary Oleson

[Ed. Note: This article was originally published in the *L5 News* in November, 1981.]

Just about six months ago, I met an old friend who is a lifelong space enthusiast. He told me, "It'll be decades before we do anything big in space; we don't have the technology and the voters won't go for it." He had heard of O'Neill's ideas, but was too discouraged to check them out. He had seen ads for space groups, but paid little attention to them.

Latent space supporters like my friend CAN be reached, CAN be educated and CAN be mobilized. The phone tree provides an important way to identify these people and get them involved.

Last March I volunteered to organize the National Space Society members in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC, into the Space Information Phone Tree. When that was done, we had volunteers left over, so we began recruiting from the general public. In four months, starting from a base of 140 active NSS Phone Tree members and not working very hard at it, we recruited 400 new Phone Tree members. Here's how you can do it in your area.

organize a cadre of volunteers

Start by calling the NSS members who have already volunteered to make calls. The list of past and current members from NSS Headquarters identifies these volunteers. Once you have a few bona fide volunteers, you need to make initial courtesy calls to all the past and present NSS members who can be located. You should outline a script for making these initial calls: 1. Introduce yourself and explain the Phone Tree (past members may not have heard of it). 2. Ask people to take some constructive action. If an action alert has been called, use it. In any case it is always important to encourage letters to the President. Always give the President's zip code (20500); it gives people something to write down as a reminder to themselves. 3. Ask people to volunteer to make about ten calls during future alerts. Keep a record of who volunteers to make calls, who will write letters, and who doesn't want to be bothered.

After the initial calls have been completed, you will be calling all the active Phone Tree members again whenever there is an action alert or, perhaps, a local space event. Every time you call a Phone Tree member, you should have news to tell and constructive action to suggest. In order to keep up with the latest news, I find that it helps to read a good science weekly such as *Aviation and Space Technology*, *Space Calendar* or *Science News* [and now *Space News*.]

You will need to use the current telephone directories and information to track down new addresses and telephone numbers, especially for past members. Some will have moved out of your area. Others will refuse to participate in the Phone Tree. After you have made a full effort to contact the NSS membership, about half will be active Phone Tree members. This should free volunteers for the next job.

recruit new members

There is one important guideline for recruiting new Phone Tree members: experiment! If you have an idea, try it. If it doesn't work, change it or try something else.

Since most of our volunteers had limited time available, we looked first for low-effort ways to recruit. We tried ads in computer bulletin boards, and got no response. We tried handing out flyers at astronomy lectures, and got small response. We tried signing up people as they walked out of astronomy lectures, and hit the jackpot. Sign-up rates varied from 50% to 80%. Eureka!

We have come to believe that the critical element in recruiting people to support the space movement is face-to-face contact, however brief. Space activism is so unfamiliar to most people that printed ads do not get past their mental filters. Actually meeting an articulate space activist tends to break down that credibility barrier. I once had two couples from Oregon walk out of the National Air and Space Museum and right past me as I began my pitch. They walked half way across the street, reconsidered, and walked back to hear the rest. They signed up and took literature back to Oregon!

We have found it much more efficient to hitch a ride on events being held in our area, rather than hold events of our own. We do most of our recruiting on the public sidewalks as people leave space or astronomy lectures, planetarium shows, science museums, anywhere that attracts people interested in space. We use clipboards to get names, addresses and telephone numbers. Each recruiter develops a favorite approach, but each includes the same basic elements: --Ask people to make a minor commitment. "Do you favor a more vigorous American space program?" If the answer is no, let them go. --Offer a service. "We are forming an information service to keep people informed on events in Washington that affect the space program, so that people can make their wishes known at critical times." --Establish a context. "Most Congressmen don't think about space until just before a vote, and that's the only time they are ready to listen." --Sign them up. "If you'll give us your address and phone number, we'll be happy to keep you informed." One way to encourage people to give complete and legible addresses is to print your own names and address on the first line as an example.

Both audacity and good sense are important in recruiting. At one of our first outings, when we were still using flyers, a museum guard asked us if we had permission. We could have protested that the

sidewalk was public, but I went in to talk to his chief. His chief asked us to stop handing out flyers, and I agreed. Meanwhile, my associates handed our last few flyers to people arriving for an astronomy lecture. We watched the lecture, then recruited 60 members as they left!

The above is just one of the many ways to recruit. The Maryland Space Alliance for Space Colonization (MASC, an NSS chapter) has had great success recruiting people attending science fiction conventions. They sell posters, buttons, books and memberships. They also speak at libraries, clubs and other public gatherings. Other ideas for recruiting include putting up posters at high-tech companies (with their permission, of course), especially if they have aerospace business. If you have an idea, try it!

bootstrap

To make the Phone Tree grow, courtesy calls must be made to the new, non-NSS members as soon as possible after they sign up. You will need to get the sign-up lists typed and assigned to volunteers. Since the new people have not had the benefit of NSS membership, you will also need a script expanded from your basic script for initial calls to NSS members. You should remind people that they signed up for information on space activities. In addition to explaining the phone tree, you should describe the National Space Society, *Ad Astra*, and the existence of other space organizations. As in Alice's Restaurant, what we have here is a mass movement! Be prepared to suggest reading material, such as books by Gerard O'Neill or G. Harry Stine. Encourage questions. If you don't have the answers, promise to find out.

Another promise you should make is that literature on the National Space Society will be mailed to them. To make good on this promise, you will need to get a copy of your list to NSS Headquarters. Beware: if you do not send the zip codes, it will take NSS months longer to process the addresses. In order to use bulk mail, someone would have to look up any missing zip codes.

Before long, you will start getting non-NSS volunteers (Phone Tree members who volunteer to call others) and a real education problem. Non-NSS volunteers need to be given enough information that they can make calls to other non NSS recruits without sounding confused. You can use information from this Handbook and *Ad Astra* to put together an information package for them that should include: --An NSS brochure --A list of people to call and a script --A bibliography --A general article on possibilities in space, the space station, etc.

When the number of new volunteers gets large enough, it is time to go and sign up the next batch of recruits. That's bootstrapping!

How the Phone Tree is Set Up and Should Work

organization:

1. The Phone Tree Chairperson is notified by contacts in Washington of activities taking place.
2. The Chairperson authorizes the National Phone Tree Coordinator to activate the "Tree".
3. The National Coordinator notifies the Regional Coordinators.
4. The Regional Coordinators notify their State Coordinators (one per state). The State Alternate Coordinator is notified if a State Coordinator cannot be reached. Both have a complete list for the state.
5. Each State Coordinator or Alternate State Coordinator notifies his/her Area (City) Coordinators (one per Area). Each will have only that area list.
6. The Area Coordinators notify their Sub-Area Coordinators. Each will be assigned and provided names by their Area Coordinator.

Note: Within two (2) weeks after a "Tree" activation, the updates to the lists should be passed back "up" the Tree. Updated lists will be sent out after updates are received.

State Coordinator duties:

- A. May create or change Areas in State.
- B. Will be responsible for the whole State.
- C. Will notify the Alternate State Coordinator (or vice versa), the Area Coordinators, and people in "Other Areas" of the "Tree" activation.
- D. Find new or replacement State and Alternate Coordinators when necessary.
- E. Find new Area Coordinators or replacements when necessary.
- F. Will notify Regional Coordinator of:
 1. New or replacement State and Area Coordinators.
 2. New or changed areas and who's in areas,
 3. New names to be added to list.
 4. Changes of address, phone number and "P" code of people in State. (These codes designate which members will accept a prepaid call, a collect call, will make local calls, calls within the state or do not want to be called.

Area Coordinator duties:

- A. If area has a sufficient number of names, may divide into Sub-Areas. Each Sub-Area should have a minimum of about ten people on it. If an area has enough names, the State Coordinator may divide it into two Areas, North/South or East/West.
- B. Is responsible for the whole area.
- C. Will notify Sub-Area Coordinators or people in Area of the "Tree" activation.
- D. Find new Area Coordinator or replacement.
- E. Find new Sub-Area Coordinators when necessary.
- F. Will notify State Coordinator of:
 1. New or replacement Area Coordinator.
 2. New names to be added to list.
 3. Changes of address, phone number and "P" code of people in Area.

Sub-area Coordinator duties:

- A. Will notify people assigned of "Tree" activation.
- B. Find replacement Sub-Area Coordinator when necessary.
- C. Will notify Area Coordinator of:
 1. Replacement Sub-Area Coordinator.
 2. New names to be added to list.
 3. Changes of Address, phone number and "P" code of people responsible for.

cleaning up an area list:

1. For people who are listed as living in your area, look them up in your area phone book.
2. For people in other areas or not found in your area phone book, call information to locate them.
3. If still not found, write "Unknown To Operator" on the list. Then send a letter or card to them, mentioning that we have tried to contact them and that they will stay on our list until they say to take on that we would like their current address and phone number, if they wish to remain in the "Tree".
4. If the letter is returned by the post office, change "Unknown To Operator" to "Moved-No Forward Address".
5. When a person has been found, contact them and indicate on the list the appropriate "P" code(s).

6. People with "Unknown To Operator" and "Moved-No Forward Address" or have the do-not-call code will remain on the list to have as a reference and to avoid duplication in the future. Upon "Tree" activation, bypass these people.

Sending Messages

telephone calls

Dial the Washington Information Switchboard (202-224-3121) and ask to be connected with the legislator you want to speak to.

telegrams

Western Union has a 24 hour, toll-free number (check your local directory for your area) which you can call. They bill you through your phone bill. Check for current rates and what is included in the word count. You can send:

Personal Opinion Message--a printed copy of will be delivered during the next business day. The rate at this writing for sending a message to your Federal Officials is \$4.45 for 1-20 words. If you include a salutation like "Dear____", that is included in the word count, but not their address or your name. It is \$2.00 for each additional 1-20 words, but a single sentence is usually enough.

Mailagram--a printed copy will be delivered the next business day. The current rate for the first 1-50 words is \$8.75.

Telegrams--are the most expensive, but are delivered within a few hours. To have a printed copy sent you are charged a full rate during the day for 1 -10 words and a lesser amount for each additional word. The night rate is less for each of these. There is an additional charge for messenger delivery. Your message can also be delivered over the phone, and a copy will be sent to you for a higher rate.

Fax and e-mail - Fax and e-mail can also be used effectively instead of or in addition to the traditional methods of communicating. Fax numbers and e-mail addresses are generally available from your legislators offices. Directories are also published. NSS headquarters can also be a resource in finding sources for numbers and addresses.

letters

For just the cost of a first class stamp, you can produce a profound impression on our government leaders. Please do not underestimate the power of your letter. Someone will count it and record what position you take on what issue. A rule of thumb in Washington is that a single letter is representative of 100 to 1000 other fellow citizen's views, whereas phone calls have less impact.

Always:

- Identify yourself as a constituent, if you are writing to one of your representatives. (By the way, register to vote if you have not!)
- When you write to a member of Congress who is NOT your representative, inform him or her that you have sent a copy to your own representative.
- Clearly state what you want your representative to do and your reasons why. Try to write about a single issue per letter, or you can't be sure how your letter will be counted.
- Be brief. A paragraph is fine, no more than one page.
- Use your own words. Preprinted forms, postcards and petitions have far less impact.
- Keep track of the Congresscritter's record, so that you add thanks when warranted, or, if not warranted, at least let him know that you take an interest in his record on space issues.

- Be timely. Write about programs, bills and issues that they can act upon soon. Phone tree alerts can help you with this.
- Call things by their proper names. Use bill numbers and official titles whenever possible.
- Label background material as such, and put it on separate sheets. Don't crowd the main body of the letter with unnecessary facts and figures. Be positive, not negative.
- Write more than once (every month or so is alright). A steady flow of letters in favor of space projects will get across the message that space has a constituency.
- Encourage and help others to write.

Don't:

- Threaten. Courtesy will accomplish more.
- Misrepresent yourself or the facts.
- Expect a personal answer. A form reply is more likely. However, if the reply doesn't answer your question or turns you down, write again. Your elected officials work for you. Even if they don't do what you want, they owe you a relevant response.

Who to write:

- Your Congressman (Honorable ____, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515)
- Your two Senators (Senator ____, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510)
- Their staff member in charge of science and technology issues also can be educated about the issues. You can write or call the Congressman's office to get the name.
- The President (The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC 20500)
- Chairmen and members of Committees and Subcommittees who are considering relevant bills; although this will be most effective if you are their constituent.
- Your Governor, especially if likely to run for President, Senator, etc.
- Others, such as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget or the White House Science Advisor, may be useful people to contact at times.

visits

You can visit your Congressman's office in Washington or in your home district when he visits. You can go alone or with a group. Call or write ahead for an appointment if you want to talk to him or her directly. Don't expect more than a few minutes. Dress conservatively, be polite and get right to the point. Listen carefully to his replies and comments, so you can follow-up on any important points later.

It is usually better (and easier) to visit staffers in the home office first. If you can visit their Washington office, it can actually be of more value to talk to their staff member in charge of science and technology issues. You can talk to your Congressman during his visits to your district, the Washington staffers stay in Washington.

Staffers are responsible for gathering information and working it into policy for their Congressmen. Educating them is therefore a very important accomplishment. Often they will be interested in space issues, but know little about them. They may even sincerely assure you that "space programs have a lot of support in Congress" (If so, why is the budget not growing? Money is the proof of support.) It is important to point out that there is a strong need for elected officials who understand the potential of space development and do something constructive for it.

If you can meet and talk to a staffer, get that person's name. Write to them when you get home and thank them for their time. You can include a copy of an *Ad Astra* article or other information about a relevant issue that you discussed. Write to them occasionally when you have information to share or when you want specific information from them.

You can also attend the local "town meetings" that your representatives may hold in their home districts. Call their local office to find out where and when the meetings will be held. Go with others, but don't identify yourselves as anything other than ordinary constituents; sit separately and show no sign of recognizing each other at the meetings. Try to have different faces at each meeting and ask questions about what the representative is doing for various aspects of the space program. It's easy and it works.

When you find out anything about your Representative or Senator's position, let the National Space Society know. You can send a message back up the phone tree, or directly to our Washington representative, vice-president or Congressional Watch. Constituents can find out more about their representative's position and get stronger commitments than a dozen lobbyists!

Spacepac

As has been shown in the preceding sections, there are many things that NSS members can do to increase political support for space development. However, the National Space Society, as a nonprofit organization, cannot directly contribute money, volunteers and other forms of support to pro-space candidates. It can engage in only a limited amount of lobbying on behalf of such programs as the Space Station. Therefore, NSS leaders created Spacepac as an independent organization to "promote space development through political action".

PACs (Political Action Committees) were designed as a means for citizens to pool their resources in order to meaningfully contribute to political campaigns. Some donations are eligible for tax credit. (Check with your tax advisor for specifics.)

Spacepac is different from many other pacs in that it is independent from any one political party or corporation. It is free to provide support according to one criterion: does a candidate favor an expanded commitment to America's civilian space program? It is only after careful scrutiny that a candidate is selected for support.

There are two ways that you can help. First, you can volunteer your time to establish a local Spacepac in your area or join one of the existing ones. Second, you can make a donation. The 50% tax credit allows you to actually double the amount (and the impact) of your donation.

Space Activist Handbook

You can also order Spacepac's "Space Activist Handbook" for a nominal price plus for postage and handling from: Spacepac, 2801 B Ocean Park Boulevard, Suite S, Santa Monica, CA 90405. It contains a detailed analysis of Congressional voting records, information on how the key subcommittees operate, suggestions on how to write letters and much more. Every serious space activist should have one.

SPACECAUSE - by Mark Hopkins

Spacecause is a network of space activist volunteers.

Emphasis as this was written during late 1997 was being placed on improving the ability to generate letters and phone calls on short notice on multiple occasions during the year.

Highly successful Space Station campaigns in past years placed a premium on a different ability - the ability to generate a very large volume of letters and phone calls aimed at one key vote for a particular year. In some of those campaigns, more than two million people were contacted. The new emphasis is due to a change in the focus of lobbying efforts toward programs like Commercial Space and reusable launch vehicles that need support at multiple points during the legislative year.

To continue to do this, Spacecause needs an on going supply of volunteers. Joining the Spacecause Phone Tree and/or Phone Bank may be a good project for you chapter or you can participate as individuals.

The Phone Tree (reinforced by e-mail) allows hundreds of phone calls to be directed to anyone with as little 48 hours notice and to do this frequently as the political season progresses.

While the Phone Tree is designed to be a finely tuned instrument to be used with finesse at just the right moment, the Phone Bank is a powerful club designed for use when raw power is needed. For instance, long lists of space enthusiasts in key states and congressional districts can be contacted creating an avalanche of response from the constituents of a key politician.

Spacecause is also experimenting with new ways to use e-mail to send legislative alerts as a means of supplementing and strengthening the Phone Tree.

To volunteer or to request more information , contact Spacecause at LOBY4space@AOL.com, call 310-450-2812, or write to: Spacecause, West Coast Office, {Suite G,} Dept. A, 3435 Ocean Park Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405.