

# CAMPAIGN COMPUTER RECORDS TIP SHEET

## -- STAY ORGANIZED

With several races going at once and candidates' files constantly undergoing updates, it's easy for confusion to reign. Keep detailed notes in a file that you and others can understand.

## -- PLAN AHEAD

Election day has a way of sneaking up on you, especially during an ambitious project. Make sure you plan well in advance.

## -- ACCURACY, ACCURACY, ACCURACY

Never assume that the John J. Smith of Everytown listed in one file is the same person as the John J. Smith of Everytown on a second list. Always get additional verification.

## -- LEARN A PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE

What took me three weeks on a primitive word processor in 1989 can be done in an afternoon using FoxPro's programming language (or a similar product). It's well worth the effort to learn if you plan any complicated matches against a campaign file.

## -- CRUISE THE DATA

If you have the time, put your nose into the data and browse it up and down. You'll always find things.

## -- THINK LIKE A FUND RAISER

If you were mayor (or governor, etc.), to whom would you turn to raise money? That's probably where the candidate got it.

## -- NO-BID CONTRACTORS

You'll almost never lose by checking an incumbent's donor list against no-bid contractors.

## -- CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Many contractors depend heavily on government work. They and their families are often willing donors.

## -- TAP THE EXPERTS IN THE NEWSROOM

The beat reporters who cover city hall and the state capitol always pick things out of a fund-raising list that you'll miss. Enlist their help.

## -- WHAT DID THE DONOR GET IN RETURN?

Find out the circumstances under which the donor won his or her state contract. Were there other bidders who were upset? Did the contract come days after the fund-raiser? These details often make the best stories.