

# How to Organize and Run a New Virginia Green Party Local

# Table of Contents

- 1) Affiliation
- 2) Developing Bylaws
- 3) Financial Management
- 4) Spreading the Word
- 5) Messaging
- 6) Running A Campaign
- 7) FAQs
- 8) GPVA Resources
- 9) Other Resources

## Affiliation

The first step in forming a new local, is to ensure that there is not already one in your area. The bylaws do not prohibit someone from forming a new local out of an existing one, however it is often best for new members to join the closest already-established one. Many areas of Virginia do not have any local associated with them at all. If this is the case, it is a good idea to form a new one!

It doesn't take much to form a new GPVA local. Pursuant to our bylaws, a new local can become affiliated with the state party once it has three members, has begun to meet regularly, has pledged to uphold the Ten Key Values, has adopted bylaws, and elected a treasurer and local representative to the state party. Locals must consist of a defined geographic area (e.g. New River Valley or Shenandoah), with a commercial or population center (e.g. Blacksburg or Charlottesville). Once you've established the borders of your local, set up a P.O. Box (or select someone's home address) within them in order to receive mail and create an institutional account (see below). At least 31 days before the next state party meeting, the chair should contact one of the two state co-chairs and inform them of their intention to affiliate. They will then have to send a representative to the next state party meeting, who can attest that the local has met the requirements above. If necessary, they can access the meeting online. At that time, GPVA voting members will decide whether or not to allow the local to affiliate. Usually, this is reached by consensus. If consensus is not reached, a local can be still be affiliated by a  $\frac{3}{5}$  vote of voting members.

Once affiliated, locals are expected to continue to hold meetings and uphold the Ten Key values. They should try to recruit new members and to attain elected office. They should also work with other locals when necessary, including attending state party meetings. In order to vote at state party meetings, locals must once a year send to the co-chairs a report detailing their progress and most recent business meeting attended by at least three members.

Locals get certain benefits from affiliation. First, their chair or representative gets a vote on the Interim Committee and in major party decisions, as defined in the bylaws.

Second, locals gain access to the resources, money, and time of the GPVA and its members. Members of other locals are often willing to help a new local form and run candidates. Finally, they can easily coordinate activities, including campaigns, at the statewide level.

## Developing Bylaws

In order to affiliate, each local has to develop its own set of Bylaws. As these bylaws are meant to guide the local as it grows, they should always be developed with future growth in mind. There is no definitive template for new bylaws, as they will have to be modified for your local's specific circumstances, however, they should include:

- 1) All officer positions (including those necessary for affiliation), the duration of their office, term limits (if any), how they are elected (usually Ranked-Choice Voting), their duties, and how they can be discharged.
- 2) Some commitment to the Ten Key Values and a process for disciplining or removing members who violate them or the bylaws.
- 3) A list of the geographic boundaries of the local (e.g. the counties it encompasses)
- 4) A method for modifying bylaws
- 5) Requirements for membership, such as dues (if any).

## Financial Management

Believe it or not, you will one day have money to manage! People interested in your local will donate money to help keep it running smoothly. So how should you best manage your money? The first step is to open an institutional account for your local with a local credit union (One could use an international bank like Wells Fargo, but given their tendency to fund projects like the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Green Party emphasis on community economics, local credit unions are probably your best bet). Once you've selected a bank, you'll need to create an Employer Identification Number (EIN). No, don't worry, you (probably) won't be hiring anyone! The number is merely a convenient way to open the account and tie it to your local rather than your specific social security number.

Student organizations should reference the information here

[https://osl.fas.harvard.edu/files/osl/files/obtaining\\_an\\_ein.pdf](https://osl.fas.harvard.edu/files/osl/files/obtaining_an_ein.pdf) It's from Harvard, but it is general enough that it should apply to your situation. Double-Check with your university, though, in case they have more stringent policies.

## Spreading the Word

Once you've affiliated with GPVA and established your bank account, you are ready to bring attention to your new local. You'll first need to set up social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter - student organizations may have college-specific social media they can use) and identify local newspapers that have take letters-to-the-editor (LTE). Next, you'll need to make a press release announcing the creation of your local, what it stands for, where you meet, and some upcoming events (social events are usually the best way to bring new people in; business meetings are boring!). Publish your release to your social media accounts and published as many LTEs in local papers as you can.

The GPVA and GPUS both have a list of Greens already in your area (called "At-Large Greens") who you should probably contact individually. Contact the Co-Chairs or Press Secretary to receive the list so that you can start adding new members immediately.

## Messaging

Messaging can make or break a campaign. Here I will walk through what makes a successful messaging strategy from beginning to end with an example that I used as Press Secretary.

**Identify your Goal** - The absolutely most important thing in ALL strategic thinking, including messaging, is to identify what you are trying to do. Your goal should be specific, measurable, attainable, and have a timeline of steps to take along the way. This is usually referred to as a SMART goal. Here is an example of a bad goal made SMARTer:

Bad Goal: I want people to like the Green Party of Virginia (Don't we all?)

Better Goal: I want to increase our Twitter followers by 100/month. This goal is specific, measurable, and attainable. To provide a clear timeline, I would have to break down a bit further, perhaps by saying "I need to add an average of 3-4 followers per day, which means I need to tweet 2-3/day and follow 6-8 people/day (as usually about

one half follow back).” You will correctly note that this is a bit underwhelming compared to the “Bad Goal” but think of it instead as one step in that broader mission. You need to create actionable steps like this in order to achieve less vague goals.

**Identifying an Audience** - The trick to any successful messaging campaign is to be as specific as possible about who you are targeting. If you are appealing to college environmentalists, you will not use the same language or platforms as if you are appealing to a local business.

Since our goal is to increase our Twitter followers by 100/month, we need to target groups on Twitter that may be interested in the Greens. This includes: Environmentalists and Environmental Groups, Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, Progressives, Berniecrats, Green Party Supporters, Green Party Locals and State Parties, Green Party Members and Leadership, Currently Elected Officials in Virginia, and News Outlets and Reporters.

## Running a Campaign

For resources on how to run your campaign, please read our candidate handbook ([https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lx2dgPMTdfB09zGZBk2mVaCqkEavu\\_fRf5WMkjBCzJ8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lx2dgPMTdfB09zGZBk2mVaCqkEavu_fRf5WMkjBCzJ8/edit?usp=sharing)).

## FAQs

### **How can my local attract new members?**

This is perhaps the most important, yet difficult, aspect of forming and maintaining a successful local. No single formula will work, however, every local has pitched in the following suggestions:

- Engage students on college campuses
- Find popular local events which feature large crowds (parades, farmers markets, etc.) and set up a booth
- Be open. The Green Party draws its support from a wide variety of places, including some you might not expect. While all our members should support the Ten Key Values, don't presume that former Democrats (or Republicans for that matter) are

not “pure” enough to be in the party. Keeping an open-mind ensures that everyone feels welcome. This is not just the right thing to do; the Green Party is far too small to turn away potential recruits.

- Run candidates and campaigns. These are the quickest and best ways to increase party visibility and to give people a way to participate in the party. Since many new locals will be too small to run candidates right out of the gate, it may be best to pressure current elected officials and candidates instead.

- Engage with local media. This can include Letters to the Editor, making headlines, entering debates, doing interviews, etc.

- Find the issues which matter to your potential constituents that align with the Ten Key Values (ACP/MVP, decline in agriculture/manufacturing, renewable energy, poverty, etc.) and make the case to them that the Green Party offers real solutions. Network with single-issue groups that reflect our values by attending their meetings.

### **My local is always strapped for cash! Where can we get money?**

Because our organization does not take money from corporations or Super PACs, we will always have a monetary disadvantage compared to the other three major parties. However, there are some steps you can take to ensure your organization has the cash it needs to be effective.

- Utilize funding opportunities provided through college campuses
- Institute dues. There is a lot of debate nationally about this issue. Dues would allow the Green Party to have a constant source of income, but it would also alienate many people who are too poor to afford even a small donation. Your local can require dues as a condition for membership, however, be sure to consider the costs of doing so. For example, one might require dues for some members, but not for members that that local decides are unable to pay them.

## GPVA Resources

<http://vagreenparty.org/> - Our current website, although we are transitioning to a new one. You can find all relevant by-laws, meeting minutes and agendas, and statements here.

<https://twitter.com/vagreenparty> - Our Twitter page. Please retweet as much as possible and give us a follow. Especially if you have Green in your description, we will follow you back. Twitter is our primary means of communicating policy positions at this time as we are currently developing relationships with local media outlets.

<https://www.facebook.com/GreenPartyOfVirginia/> - Our main Facebook page. Posts on this page are primarily by the Press Secretary and designed to create a positive, external image of the party. This page should not be used to debate policy positions or engage in spats.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/vagreens/> - THIS is the page to argue about nonsense and bring out attention to news items. It is moderated by the Press Secretary, but so long as the conversation is respectful and Green-focused, you can discuss anything you like.

<http://www.vagreenparty.com/system/files/bookdocs/GPVASocialMediaPolicy2017.pdf> - This is the full Social Media Policy of the GPVA. Please read it before posting. Any additional inquires should be sent to the Press Secretary at [GPVApress@gmail.com](mailto:GPVApress@gmail.com).

## Other Resources

<http://www.opensecrets.org/> - Run by the Center for Responsive Politics. Details lobbyist contributions to officials in Washington, D.C.

<http://www.vpap.org/> - Basically OpenSecrets specifically for Virginia. We highly recommend signing up for the daily newsletter, which sends political news and op-eds all over the state into your inbox each morning.

<http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode> - The Code of Virginia. In order to change the law, you have to know the law!

<https://www.virginia-organizing.org/> - A political pressure group that fights for a number of progressive issues. They also host training sessions to help activists learn to be effective advocates for their cause(s).

<https://www.onevirginia2021.org/> - Group fighting to fix partisan gerrymandering in the upcoming 2021 redistricting. They have a documentary called "Gerryrigged," which lays out the problem very effectively.