

## **Running for Office With a Disability: What to Know**

If you are a disabled person, you have a unique perspective about everything. And you are in a prime position to see how the world could be more welcoming for everyone. If you are ready to encourage changes that strive for a more inclusive environment, running for a local public office is a good place to start. Vets To Vets United presents a brief rundown of how to get started and who you need on your side throughout the process.

### **Representation in politics**

According to News Wise, roughly 10% of registered, full-time politicians at the state, federal, and local levels have a disability. This is about 5% fewer comparatively than the overall disabled population of the United States. And while some demographics are well represented, the need for politicians with physical and mental disabilities remains high.

Having people in public office is one of the best ways to see real change. And whether you want to advocate for mental health or simply wish to see more wheelchair-friendly public spaces in your own hometown, putting your name on the roster is an excellent way to make a difference.

### **Getting started**

Your first task is to decide what role you want to run for and then find out any necessary information from your city government. For things like school board or alderman, this may not be necessary, and your county commissioner's or local election office may be able to give you some more information on how to proceed. Once you decide what you're running for, it's time to assemble your team.

Your political campaign team is made up of many different people. One is a campaign manager, which Masterclass explains is the point person for virtually all tasks associated with the campaign. They report directly to you and may have your authority to approve everything from your budget to how you want your public image represented. You'll also want someone to advise you in the nuances of politics and to help with fundraising. And you'll also want a public relations services professional to manage your reputation online.

Next up, assemble your technical team. In the digital age, it's necessary to be accessible online. Start by looking for a web developer. You can easily contract with a great web developer who can help you create and maintain your online presence. Additionally, a social media specialist/marketer can help you stay engaged with voters. Having a strong web presence, including an informational website and open platforms on social media, keeps you visible, and lets everyone see your message.

You may also want to find a graphic designer to help you create flyers when it's time to take your campaign from online to the streets. If you don't have the budget to pay for these artistic skills, Adobe offers some great information on creating a brochure, which explains how to

include your message along with eye-catching imagery. Together with the other people on your campaign team, you can use brochures, business cards, and other tangible branding items to enhance your voter outreach.

Before you commit to running for office, you should know that it's not a glamorous lifestyle. All of your secrets will likely be unveiled, and your family can expect very little if any privacy. Remember to also show up with your values and integrity; even the smallest infraction, such as a speeding ticket, will be a hot topic in your hometown. Being under a microscope means you will need to weigh the pros and cons and talk it through with your family before you pursue public office.

Ultimately, earning yourself a position in public office is an excellent way to shed light on things that are important to you and your community. But you can't do it alone, and you need to give it some serious thought before you get started. It's not difficult, but it is a commitment. However, it's one that can change the course of history, and make the world a better place for people with disabilities.

***Vets To Vets United is committed to uniting veterans and dogs to improve the life of a veteran and save the life of a needy animal. Learn more about our volunteering opportunities.***