

The Peace Voter Campaign Model of the Coalition for Peace Action (CFPA)

I'm proud that in 1995 CFPA did the first Peace Voter Campaign in the nation and has been a pioneer ever since in what has now become a national model for effectively influencing elections for Peace and Gun Violence Prevention (GVP).

That first effort was a pilot project to see if such a campaign could have a significant impact. The targeted race was in a NJ State Legislative district in which a young lawyer, Reed Gusciora, was running against a former Deputy Police Chief of Trenton, Joe Constance, who was in favor of assault weapons. Mr. Constance was an NRA poster boy and was quoted as saying that in terms of access to guns, "the more bullets, the better."

We created a Peace Voter Guide comparing the two on that issue and printed 10,000 copies. Under adult supervision CFPA's Youth for Peace affiliate went door to door to distribute them in Trenton, the largest city in the district. CFPA volunteers also called 2,000 members of the Brady Campaign from the district pointing out the sharp contrast between the candidates and urging them to keep that in mind when deciding how to vote.

Even though Mr. Gusciora, the pro-GVP candidate was outspent \$300,000 to \$30,000, he won. It was a David and Goliath type of story. He came to us afterwards and said our efforts were critical to his victory.

In 1996, CFPA targeted our first US Congressional races. Through 2018, we have targeted about 50 close races in NJ, PA, and (in partnership with that state's Peace Action) WI. The resulting Peace Voter Guides were based on Candidate Questionnaires signed by the candidate, as well as public positions taken. We have continued to publish hard copies of the Peace Voter Guides, as well as versions on our web site and in social media. We have emailed the Guides to our listserve, as have sister organizations, increasing the synergistic impact.

Another CFPA innovation has been to publish the Peace Voter Guide as signature ads in newspapers in the targeted districts. We solicit supporters to contribute a suggested amount of \$25 per name, more or less accepted, and have raised as much as \$14,000 per cycle. We run the paid half page ads shortly before Election Day, and they have now appeared in over 5 million copies of newspapers! Over 80% of the candidates shown to be significantly better on Peace and GVP issues have won!

A final CFPA innovation started in late 1999, when CFPA first offered 90-minute Candidate Briefings by CFPA experts and organizational representatives (including of faith groups) to major party candidates in the US Senate race in NJ, where the incumbent was retiring. We did the Briefings for 5 of the 6 major party candidates before the early June 2000 Primary. To date, CFPA has conducted over 100 Briefings, with a significant portion to Republican candidates!

Candidate Briefings give us a chance to start a strong relationship with candidates, many of whom have had no prior experience with the issues we work on. A good example was Jon Corzine, a business executive who had never held public office, and who ultimately won the race. Senator-elect Corzine then accepted our invitation to have another meeting before he took office, at which we went over our legislative priorities. He was very responsive, and subsequently wrote a bill on De-alerting Nuclear Weapons, one of our issues.

This model has been shared with peace groups across the country, and as far as I know, some or all of it has been used in California, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan, and Maine.

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