



ILLINOIS GREEN PARTY

P.O. Box 471278 Chicago, IL 60647 312-924-1803 info@ilgp.org www.ilgp.org

ILGP FACT SHEET 2007-007

IDEAS FOR STRUGGLING LOCALS

Updated February 15, 2008

Most ILGP locals have found themselves floundering to some extent at some point in time. When this happens, they tend not to have a strong grasp as to what their small active group is supposed to do organizationally at the local level. Sometimes they wind up being little more than a local arm of whatever the state party is doing; sometimes they wind up doing their own narrow thing and it has little to do with politics per se. Almost always they are looking for much more guidance from the state party.

These are nine suggestions for struggling locals:

- First, hold the fort. Keep having meetings at the same time and same place every month, even if attendance is expected to be awful. One of the worst things that can happen is to skip a month only to have that be the month someone was interested, because they often won't come back.
- Second, when things are at the lowest ebb, focus on getting just one other regular. Don't necessarily cast a wide net; focus on the small handful of people from which you might be able to get that one person you most need. Even our best locals have dipped to having 3-4 people at meetings for a few months at a time, so if you can focus on getting that small, solid base, then you've got something that can sustain.
- Third, if you are having a hard time establishing/sustaining any regular attendance at meetings, move the meeting location from a library or comparable facility to a restaurant or comparable facility. Then it's less like a "meeting" to prospective newcomers and more like a "gathering" and therefore potentially less intimidating. But if you do this, make sure to keep it at that location for a while. It also helps if you can pick a location that is known for attracting a diverse crowd, though sometimes that's hard to come by.
- Fourth, if you don't have one set up, set up a local news listserv and make sure all local members are on it and add other people that you can think of as well. Send out regular notices about meeting, but do not advertise the low turnout. Convey that everything is operating normally and it will help provide the confidence to make that so.
- Fifth, accept that it might be a slow process, and that you just might not get a very good return on your time investment if you work really hard up front. Put in three hours every week instead of 15 hours one week and none the next couple of weeks. Be the regularity that you want to convey, that will in turn attract others.

- Sixth, look for opportunities and act upon them even if you think you don't "hold the right cards" to do so. Wade into local issues; the local media doesn't need to know if it's practically or even literally a one-person operation.
- Seventh, find a campaign to run, or become the candidate yourself, even if it's for a relatively small local office. Give the local that tangible *political* thing to work on so that people at least know that this is something that is going on. Ask the people in the local who aren't active to at least support the campaign with time or money - you might be surprised at the better response you'll get for having an isolated county board campaign than you do for trying to put together a coherent county party.
- Eighth, if your local and a neighboring local are both in the same situation and you think it unlikely that circumstances will change much, consider the possibility of merging locals. The merger wouldn't need to be permanent. If it's possible to have one local with a small critical mass of activists spanning a large geographic area instead of two locals which lack that critical mass, that might be a better alternative.
- Ninth, seek out Greens elsewhere for advice. Don't put yourself in a situation where you feel like you're in at all by yourself. Chances are your problems have been experienced in several other places, and there will be people who can give you encouragement and advice at the state party level. Don't hesitate to contact them.

Regularity, patience, perseverance: these are the key things. If you don't have a lot of personal time to put in for a while, then pace it out, and focus on just having that regular monthly meeting and making sure that notices go out. Eventually, it will pay dividends.