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Huntsman Seminar  
Unit Plan  
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**Unit: The Power of One—Running for Office and the Kraig Powell Campaign**

Last year, I had the privilege of working on the Kraig Powell campaign. Kraig was successful at bringing the house seat back to Wasatch County from Duchesne County. Kraig beat David Labrum of Roosevelt in the Republican Party primary by a narrow margin of 2,052 votes for Mr. Powell to 1,927 votes for Mr. Labrum. Kraig Powell then went on to defeat Neil Anderton, his democratic opponent also from Wasatch County. His story is noteworthy for an education unit from which there are many lessons.

**Lesson One: Establishing a personal political platform**

**A. What are the issues?**

Each student will understand that in order to win a position of representation within our political system, they first must establish an understanding of and a position regarding current political issues. This comes from a study of the issues as reported by the media. Students must become familiar with various media outlets and learn to ascertain the reliability of various sources of information.

**Activity:** Show and study examples of issues presented to the students through media sources like: newspaper, television, radio, internet, cell phone.

**B. Establish an opinion related to the issues and be prepared to support it.**

Once many of the issues facing our nation, state, community, and school have been identified, each student should practice thinking about and forming an opinion concerning some of the main issues. One of Representative Powell's main issues is campaign ethics reform. He believes there should be limitations on how much money and gifts candidates can receive from lobbyists and special interest groups. In fact, he did not accept donations from either during his campaign.

**Activity:** Students will be able to self-evaluate their opinions and positions by taking the D-Scale survey.

**C. Affiliating with a political party.**

Although many of the political races are non-partisan, students will begin to understand the nature of party politics and our two party system of government. Each student will understand that party affiliation does not necessarily mean that the candidate agrees with the entire party platform.

Activity: Read the Republican Party platform and the Democratic Party platform. Compare and contrast each party's position with respect to the main issues. Invite guest speakers representing the two parties to outline and explain each party's position.

## Lesson Two: Developing a campaign strategy

Representative Powell's advantage in beating Republican challengers like David Labrum and Robert Wren lied within a campaign strategy that had been developed for some time. The strategy rested upon an understanding that over the last ten years, Wasatch County had surpassed the part of Duchesne County within the voting district in population. If Powell could only get to a popular vote in the primary he would have a chance to win the election. He began by organizing delegates prepared to vote for him at the Republican State Convention. Many of the voters he convinced to run as delegates in their precinct caucuses were educators.

### A. What is a caucus?

Each student will understand that candidates must file their candidacy in March in order to begin their campaign and to prepare for the next step that is their party caucus. Kraig Powell gained a huge advantage over his opponents by organizing for the caucuses before his opponents really ever considered campaigning. By convention, Kraig already had enough delegates committed to vote for him at the State Republican Convention that would ensure him a place in the primary election.

Activity: Invite a precinct chair within the community to speak to the students about the caucus and what happens during caucus meetings. Discuss how delegates are elected and why individuals may consider running for delegate. Individuals may consider running for delegate if they are interested in attending their county or state conventions and if they are interested in researching party candidates and voting at the convention.

### B. How is a primary election different from other elections?

Primary elections typically have significantly lower voter turnout. In Utah, they used to be held in September but are now held in June. Now that Kraig Powell was through convention, his focus was on the primary election. Powell knew this might be his toughest challenge. Again, relying on educators and other volunteers from throughout Heber valley, Kraig began extending his message beyond the delegates to other voters within the community. The strategy was to focus on Wasatch County relying on the population advantage within the voting district in Wasatch County vs. Duchesne County (22,000 to 17,000). In order to beat David Labrum of Duchesne County, Powell had to convince Wasatch County voters to turn out in high numbers to vote in June. Moreover, he had to educate voters why they had to be registered Republicans in order to place their vote for him in the closed Republican primary.

Activity: Debate the advantages and disadvantages of an open primary election like the Utah Democratic primary election versus a closed primary election like the Utah Republican primary election. Have students fill out voter registration forms.

### C. Preparing for November

The problem with Utah politics is with a dominant party, many elections are won either at the caucuses or in the primaries. Unfortunately, neither of these has a very high voter turnout. Representative Powell knew that in order to get to a primary election, he had to get at least 21 of the delegates to vote for him. Once he got to the primary, he knew he had to get a high voter turn-out in Wasatch County. He did this by personally contacting his constituents. He and his staff of volunteers made personal contact with precinct voters. The election came down to the wire and volunteers spent the day at the Powell home calling voters on their precinct list encouraging them to get out and vote in the primary election and to vote for Kraig Powell.

Activity: Discuss the value of personal communication as compared and in addition to passing out flyers or putting up yard signs. How can a candidate use personally getting to know the constituents as an equalizer in overcoming opponents with more money? Are there other inexpensive ways a candidate might use to communicate his message?

### Lesson Three: Campaign Financing

Campaigns for the Utah House of Representatives typically cost around \$50,000. Representative Powell spent \$33,000. \$14,000 came from private donations. \$3,000 came from the local Republican Party. Another \$2,000 came from the House Republican Campaign Committee. The final \$14,000 was an out of pocket expense for the Powell family.

#### A. How do you raise sufficient funds to run a winning campaign?

Especially with the last Presidential election where Obama raised a record 1.5 billion dollars, many Americans feel public office is out of reach because of the costs required to get elected. Even Representative Powell eventually had to contribute to his own campaign. Each student must understand the financial commitment to running for office. This proposition can be expensive but even Mr. Powell conceded that he spent a lot of money compared to his competitors. Perhaps, the electronic media could be used to effectively contact constituents thus saving money spent on the printed media.

Activity: Come up with electronic ideas that could be used in campaigning that would reduce the cost of getting elected. Draft electronic messages to constituents asking them to contribute to your campaign.

## B. Lobby and special interest groups

Many groups or organizations hire lobbyists to educate legislators regarding issues that especially affect these groups or organizations. Lobbyists have found it particularly effective to contribute to legislators campaigns in hopes that legislators will return the favor by voting in favor of the group's or organization's interest.

**Activity:** Identify groups, businesses, or organizations that might pay someone to lobby for them on capitol hill. What are some ways for lobbyists to be effective? Why are lobbyists an essential part of our political system? How can lobbyists hurt our political system?

## C. Ethics reform

Kraig Powell ran on the platform of campaign finance reform. He committed not to accept money from lobbyists or special interest groups to fund his campaign. He has since drafted a bill that would limit the amount of money lobbyists or special interest groups may give to candidates.

**Activity:** What are some ways campaign costs can be lowered so candidates do not have to rely on contributions from lobbyists or special interest groups? Read the bill that Representative Powell sponsored concerning financial ethics reform. Invite Representative Powell as a guest speaker to review and discuss his road to becoming a Utah State Legislator.