



## The Challenges of Serving As An Organization's Chair

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### Congratulations on Accepting This Challenge!

Sometimes, the job of Chair can be challenging. The Chair needs organizational and administrative skills, diplomacy, sales ability, people skills - while understanding what the principles of limited government and free enterprise are all about. The Chair needs patience, self-control, and an ego capable of dealing with criticism and (occasional abuse) without resentment.

Beyond this, the Chair needs to have good judgment and be an effective listener. It takes creativity to deal with limited resources and a shortage of effective volunteers. The Chair should get as much help as possible from other leaders, your rank-and-file membership, and grass roots volunteers. This combination of traits is rare, **but they can be developed. If you choose to develop these skills, you will be a great asset to the limited government movement.**

One can get frustrated. Inevitably, the Chair discovers the job has far more responsibility than authority. The Chair's real "power" comes from the personal respect he/she receives from the local members he/she works with. This respect must be earned. *But when it works, it is incredibly rewarding.*

Though most of your members support the principles of free enterprise and limited government, individual members come to organizations with different priorities and agendas. Sometimes this can result in conflict. One key role of the Chair is to resolve conflict and find ways to get people to work together effectively. In some cases, this means mediating disputes. In other cases, it means finding ways to work to find reasonable solutions that satisfy everyone. *In all cases, it means making sure people focus on the issues and not on personality clashes when they arise.*

### TAKE YOUR TIME AND INVOLVE LOTS OF PEOPLE

Proposals should be well thought out prior to presentation and implementation. This means talking ideas over with as many people as possible and listening to what they have to say. It means being flexible enough to change the plan when good suggestions are made.

The Chair should encourage participation and seek the input of others before decisions are made regarding local volunteer work (people work harder for proposals they helped to develop). The Chair needs to understand the "business" of running the organization. This includes organizing events, working with your assistants, dealing

with volunteers, occasionally serving as a local contact for the media, and running meetings. These "details" can undermine the success of an organization if they are not handled correctly. If all of this sounds intimidating, don't worry. You are not alone.

### TIPS ON BEING A GOOD ORGANIZATION CHAIR

- Like most people, grass roots volunteers want to be treated with **respect**.
- Rank and file members usually want to know **why** something must be done.
- Members resist "taking orders" and respond better to being **asked** to do something.
- Members are very independent and may require being **sold** on the worth of the activity.
- Members need to feel that their efforts are **appreciated**, and their ideas **valued**.
- Members respond better to **praise** and **recognition** than to criticism and "guilt trips."
- Since there is no patronage and little money, **success will come only from the energy and creativity of your grass roots volunteers.** The Chair's role is to find ways to make it easier for people to be effective. Find ways to make activism fun and rewarding.

The job of Chair is not for "prima donnas." *The effective Chair does not seek recognition, but instead seeks to recognize the accomplishments of others.* The Chair will accept blame for failures, even those of others - Loyalty starts from the top. But the good news is that the loyalty and respect you engender will help you make it through difficult times.

No one is perfect, so it makes sense to work with many different kinds of people. The Chair needs to know his/her strengths and weaknesses, and recruit people with complementary skills as needed.

Finally, the Chair needs a sense of humor. Without it, the job can drive him/her crazy when a lot is going on. Few people are *ideally* suited to being Chair, but most people can be effective if they understand what needs to be done and what being Chair means.