

What Am I Doing here?

Why did you volunteer?

Did you seek out this opportunity or were you asked? Were you drawn in by a friend or relative? Why did you step up?

You may feel in your soul the seismic shift in our political landscape from “all for one and one for all” to “every man for himself” Government of, by and for the people is now somehow the enemy.

My guess is no matter how you came to become involved, you couldn't simply sit by and watch our country dismantled by extreme conservatives. And you may feel in your bones that nothing will change if good people don't help change it. For whatever reason, you've decided you *must* be involved.

But you are only human and you have questions and fears and questions about becoming involved. Will I be expected to do things I am uncomfortable with? Do I *really* have to door knock and phone call? How much time will be expected of me? What will my friends think of me? Who *are* these other people!? Everyone seems to know so much; will I ever fit in? Am I smart enough?

You aren't the first to feel these things. The people you are meeting are just like you. At one time they felt as uncertain and anxious as you may now. Luckily, activists in progressive organizations are just people (most of 'em anyway) with all their talents and faults. If you've volunteered for a political party and imagine it as a monolithic, impregnable organization directed by power brokers in a smoky room, the reality is a bit more boring. In many state parties and in many progressive organizations, only *seven or eight people* are employees. *Everyone else is a volunteer!*

Relax. Don't worry.

They're really very nice people and, if you stick around awhile, you may find they are the friends you'll admire most.

You are special just for having volunteered at all.

What a rare bird you are! Consider this: most congressional districts (from which your US House Representative is elected) hold about a million people. Counting *both* major parties, the number of party volunteers involved year in and year out in most states number in the low hundreds. That means only *a few hundredths of one percent* of citizens care enough about the future of their country to become involved in affecting elections.

You are now one of only a very few who will change the course of American history. No contribution you make will be too small. And, like the few others who care enough to actually do something, you *will* find your place. You will contribute your unique skills. Ask questions, find a friend, be part of the community.

The benefits are many. You'll meet all sorts of like minded people and make good friends. You'll be surprised at how close you are to the movers and shakers. Depending on what you decide to do and how far you want to take things, you may end up a mover and shaker yourself!

Be Proactive:

A little story.

A few years ago Carl, a volunteer, asked me -quite indignantly- why the party did not have a veterans group for a candidate who happened to be an Iraq war vet. His tone implied it was either rank incompetence or willful oversight. My response? "Carl, this isn't happening because no one is doing it. You sound like you really care; why don't you do it? I'll help you any way I can." And he did, creating a very successful effort to bring vets into the campaign. The group still exists today (albeit as a Drinking Liberally group -*but they do* still volunteer for vet candidates!)

Because hardly anyone is paid and are free to come and go as they please, getting things done can be like herding cats. Any volunteer organization depends a great deal on individual initiative and commitment. To be sure, a motivated individual can be involved at any level in a relatively short amount of time.

Of course, a lot of the work that needs doing may be, at times, tedious but it's necessary work and most volunteers do find ways to use their unique talents. In fact for many people, their volunteer work is the most rewarding work they'll ever do.

The world is changed by those who show up *and you've shown up!* Welcome aboard!