

Run for Elected Office— and Win

Jana M. Kemp

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Through 4-H program participation, I was introduced to the importance of community and civic service. While standing in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. as a teenager, I was inspired to run for elected office.

Seven generations of my family have been involved in U.S. public service, from fighting in the Revolutionary War to holding elected office. My family members modeled public and community service while I was growing up, and have continued to be supporters, fans, consolors, and best of all—my family!

My immediate family is to be credited for their creativity, grace, and patience during my 2010 Independent race for Governor of Idaho. I am grateful for their continued love and support.

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About the Author

Jana M. Kemp represented District 16B (Garden City and parts of Northwest Boise) in the Idaho House of Representatives, 2004–06, where she served on the Transportation, Education, Local Government, Commerce, Human Resources, and Responsible Budgeting committees. During the 2010 election cycle, she ran as an independent for governor of Idaho, placing third in the five-candidate field.

Jana is a small business owner. She founded Meeting & Management Essentials in 1993 in Minnesota and, in 1994, moved the company to Idaho, where she received the following honors: 2010 Trailblazer, National Association of Women Business Owners of Boise and Southern Idaho; 2006 Women of the Year, *Idaho Business Review*; 2001 Accomplished Under 40, *Idaho Business Journal*; 1999 Integrity Counts Small Business Award, Better Business Bureau; and 1996 Entrepreneur of the Year, Alpha Kappa Psi. Her clients include Fortune 100 companies, non-profits, trade associations, and government agencies. Jana is the author of five books on management and community service, which have been translated into numerous languages: *No!—How One Simple Word Can Transform Your Life*, *Prepared Not Paranoid*, *Moving Meetings*, *Moving Out of the Box*, and *Building Community in Buildings*. She was a business columnist for the *Idaho Press Tribune* and *Idaho Business Review*, and hosted a business-radio talk show for four years.

Jana has served as an officer and volunteer in many service organizations, including Learning Lab, the Idaho State Bar Association Public Information Committee, the Idaho State Association of Parliamentarians, the American Society of Training and Development, Easter Seals, Goodwill, and Senior Solutions. Jana is also a graduate of the Citizen Law Academy, the Citizen Police Academy, and the Idaho POST Police Academy. She lives in Idaho with her husband and step-daughter.

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Most of all, I want to thank the teams of people who supported me in 2004 and 2006, and the amazing 2010 Vote Kemp Team that formed around the cause of seeing an independent and capable candidate become governor of Idaho. I am grateful that the team stayed true to the cause of shedding light on the darkness at work in state politics, so that voters can see what is at work in state politics. May the light keep shining on all elected officials and candidates for office! Americans need to know for whom they are casting their votes.

Introduction

“Why did you decide to run for office?” This is the question I get asked most often when speaking to groups about public service. The next question is, “Are you going to run again?”

My aha! moment of inspiration to run for elected government office came to me in 1982, when I was a teenager on a 4-H trip to Washington, D.C. Standing in the U.S. Capitol rotunda, looking at the history on the walls, soaking in its solemn majesty, and admiring the monumental architecture, I was struck by a sense of the sacred mission of serving as one the people’s chosen representatives. The charged atmosphere spoke to many of us Minnesotan 4-Hers on that trip: one of us went on to run for U.S. Senate; another became speaker of the house in her state and ran for governor in 2010. I went on to serve as a state legislator in the Idaho House of Representatives (2004-2006), and then run in 2006 for a second term, which the voters opted not to give me. This loss created space for my 2010 independent run for governor of Idaho.

My predisposition to public service was formed from infancy by my parents, who met when my father was serving in the U.S. Army and my mother was working for the Kentucky Extension Service. Both my parents instilled in me the conviction that our American republic can survive and flourish only if good, just, honest, capable, ordinary citizens heed the patriotic call to present themselves for public service, as my ancestors did in the Revolutionary War.

The earliest example in my life that I can remember of taking up the fight for justice dates to elementary school in Indiana in 1976. I earned my way onto the boys’ basketball team, taking all kinds of heat from boys and girls in the process. By the end of junior high school, our family had helped my father campaign for a school board position in Minnesota, and I had run twice for student body council offices. During the school assembly speeches in one of my races, a boy campaigning for the same office said, “And she plans to paint the bathrooms pink”—which was an outright lie. Another year my painstakingly homemade campaign signs were torn off the walls. A wise friend who had stayed after school to help put up these signs counseled me, “Don’t

let them win. Just keep putting the signs back up.” In 2004, 2006, and 2010, I repeated this advice to my campaign team members who were upset about disappearing signs: “Just put the signs right back up.”

During junior high and high school, I participated in 4-H programs and club meetings. I served in the elected positions of treasurer, secretary, reporter, vice president, president, and county officer positions. In high school, I ran for president of the Honor Society. I talked to every person in the society whom I knew and asked them to vote for me. The day of the election, the vice principal called me into her office. “We’ve counted the ballots and counted them again,” she said. “We’ve never seen this happen before. You’ve lost the race by just two votes.” Of course, I was deeply frustrated, and spoke to people asking whether they’d remembered to vote. I found out that three people who knew me well, and whom I had asked for their votes, hadn’t voted. Lesson learned: ask, ask, and ask again, and remind people to vote for you as they may not otherwise remember to even cast a ballot.

Over the years of early adulthood, I ran for and held my college’s student body academic head position, neighborhood association offices, trade association positions, precinct committeeman, and elected office in volunteer organizations. Each of these service terms provided opportunities to learn about group process, decision making, and the need for social interactions along with business task accomplishments that most human beings need in order to stay involved in an organization.

These positions and school-days campaign experiences taught me the rudiments of parliamentary procedure, business organization, and served as the foundations for the business that I founded in 1993, Meeting & Management Essentials. In my early thirties, to expand my knowledge of parliamentary process, I became a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians.

Being involved in the community is what helps you to build your understanding of the area you wish to serve. Being involved in a variety of organizations and positions also helps you to build name recognition—which you’ll most definitely need if you want to win the race you enter.

For example:

From 1996 to July 2009, I wrote regular business columns for the *Idaho Business Review* (distributed statewide) and for the *Idaho Press Tribune* (distributed in the county adjacent to the one in which I live). These columns helped me gain insight into our state’s business community and gain name recognition around the state.

From 1998 to 2002, I originated and hosted a live business talk radio program on Idaho’s only 50,000 watt station (which means it covers about one

third of our state). To this day, people will say, “Didn’t you used to be on the radio?” During these same years, I provided periodic business tips on the highest-rated morning news show in our market.

In 1999, I participated in the Citizen Police Academy to learn about the workings of the local police department. This experience gave me insight into the law enforcement community in a way that just living in the community doesn’t. I also met people who became supporters in the state races I would go on to run. In 2000, I participated in the Citizen Law Academy to learn about the state’s judicial and legal system. This experience provided insight into the judicial branch of government and became the basis for my citizen service on the Idaho State Bar Association’s Public Information Committee. In 2002, I graduated from a ten-week course at the Idaho Police Academy, prerequisite to becoming a sworn police officer. This experience raised my level of awareness about my personal safety, the safety of every community member, and the threats of drug addiction in today’s society. Police academy experience led to contracts for my business and became the basis for my book, *Prepared Not Paranoid*.

In March 2004, someone said to me, “Jana, did you know there is an open House seat in your district? Why don’t you run?” It was the beginning of the two-week filing period, so I didn’t have much time to make a decision. I did my research and jumped into a tough Republican primary race. I’ll share more of the story in the pages ahead.

If you already know you are running for office or are interested in holding public office, this book will help you. If your heart is in public service for a good greater than yourself, this book is absolutely for you.

At the end of any given race, sometimes you will have won and gained the elected position. Sometimes you will not gain the position you sought, and yet the run will still qualify as a win because you and your team were able to demonstrate integrity, honesty, and intelligence, and to raise the standards of public discourse and public expectations.

Stay tuned as to whether I’ll run again. In the meantime:

Run for Elected Office—and Win!

Jana Kemp
Boise, Idaho
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