

Resort: Liquor By The Drink

Business Challenge/Environment

Our client planned a 1,000-acre mixed-use development with conference center and restaurants in a tourist city. To attract convention attendees and high-rent tenants, a “liquor by the drink” question had to be placed on the ballot and approved. Multiple previous attempts had failed. Opponents galvanized when the mayor attempted to secretly get legislation passed without a public vote. Opponents included a city councilman, leadership of the Baptist church and a world-renowned country music celebrity who owned several tourism-related businesses.

Outcome

The referendum passed by a 106-vote margin, out of 5,232 votes cast.

Our Approach

Our challenge was two-fold: First, get valid petition signatures of 10% of voters who voted in the last gubernatorial election in order to place “liquor by the drink” on the November ballot, then secure enough votes in the November election.

Phase One — Petition Gathering

- Drafted a legal petition that met all legal requirements.
- Focused on key local business supporters, such as restaurants and tourism, and on key political supporters including the mayor. These supporters assisted in the petition gathering, making it a “local” effort.
- Executed a targeted door-to-door canvass of registered voters, focusing on established neighborhoods with high concentration of registered voters.
- Tailored our message to secure signatures from both supporters and opponents.

Phase Two — General Election Campaign

- Conducted polling to test messages and identify demographics most likely to be supporters.
- Formed a Single Measure Committee and named a treasurer and local committee members.
- Drafted direct mail targeted to key demographics and potential supporters.
- Prepared a major voter identification and Election Day turnout program.

CASE STUDY