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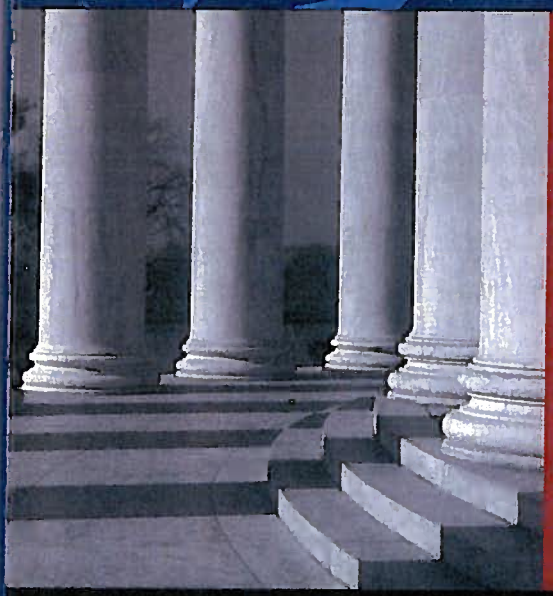

Origins of the Political Career

Ronald Keith Gaddie

Foreword by David L. Boren

CAMPAIGNING AMERICAN STYLE

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The Life and Times of Joe from Minocqua

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> I know the price of success: Dedication, hard work, and the unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen.
>
> —Frank Lloyd Wright

NOT EVERYONE WHO RUNS for the legislature wins their first effort. Shane Hunt made his first run, and despite his best efforts he failed to prevail over an incumbent legislator. For those with the desire to serve, it may take repeated efforts to gain election, and this phenomenon has given rise to one of the great old wives' tales of legislative politics: "Run once to get known, and twice to win." For individuals with the insatiable desire to serve, the lessons of losing are instructive and acted on. Shane Hunt has not returned to politics, but he is also not the only candidate whom I visited with who lost in their first effort. Joe Handrick, Republican from Minocqua, Wisconsin, traveled the longest road to the legislature of anyone in this book, spending more time pursuing the legislature than in the legislature. As a twenty-year-old sophomore at the University of Wisconsin (UW), he was recruited to challenge the incumbent in his hometown district. It would be another eight years before he finally made it to the Wisconsin General Assembly.

Joe Handrick's case is interesting for a variety of reasons. He became a conservative Republican because of a strong socialization during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Jimmy Carter's Democratic Party wrecked on the shores of a bad economy and foreign policy failures, and Ronald Reagan articulated a very different vision for America that resonated with young Handrick. His initial campaign against an incumbent assembly member was surprising in its strength, and it taught the young politician lessons that were incorporated into his subsequent electoral efforts. As a legislator, he was an active member of the majority party, but he soured on legislative life when he realized the institutional limits on his ability to affect public policy as an independent force. His personal context also changed, as he married, had two children, and confronted the challenges of full-time representation of a district 250 miles from the capitol. Joe's story is of several changing contexts within the career, of changes in the competitive context in the district, of

changes in the institutional context of his incumbency, and, most important, of changes in the personal context that mitigated against continuing in the assembly.

Political Context: Wisconsin

The Badger State is known for its powerful liberal political tradition, especially in Madison and Milwaukee. It is also a state with a powerful Republican heritage dating back to the 1850s, though that heritage can be viewed as part of a strident liberal political tradition that finds its roots in the abolition movement. The state legislature has a tradition of access for young politicians. UW students have run for districts not just in liberal Madison but also in hometown districts around the state. In 1993, the Democratic speaker of the assembly, Wally Kunicki, was just thirty-four. Tommy Thompson (a four-term governor) was elected to the state assembly almost immediately out of law school in 1966. Thompson served twenty years in the assembly, all the while consolidating his position in the GOP caucus, first as assistant floor leader, then as floor leader before being elected governor four times.

In Wisconsin, advancement to higher office is predicated by prior office holding. Of the nineteen major officeholders in Wisconsin in the 1990s, ten were first elected to public office before age thirty, and fifteen were in public office before age thirty-five. The path to power runs through the assembly. Thirteen of nineteen major officeholders came through the assembly, and all of the assemblypersons who made the jump to major office were in the assembly in their twenties or early thirties. Assembly members with progressive ambitions do not necessarily act immediately on their ambitions, but they do not stand still. Every U.S. House member who came out of the legislature spent ten years or less in the state House. Three moved from the assembly to the state senate, and two had prior local office experience before going to the legislature. The average tenure in the legislature before seeking higher office was just over nine years.

Wisconsin requires residents to be eighteen in order to serve in the state House of Representatives and senate. Members-elect have forty-five days to take up residency in their district. Party nominations are determined by primary. Wisconsin legislative elections are held in single-member districts. The typical assembly district has about fifty-four thousand residents. Senate districts are created by combining three entire assembly districts, resulting in the nesting of three assembly members and their constituency entirely in senate districts. The assembly has been generally Republican and the senate generally Democratic for the past decade, and in 2002 Republicans won control of both the assembly and senate.

Meet Joe Handrick

Joe Handrick came from the North Woods, a region of lakes and tall trees not far from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Summer cabins have long dotted the chain lakes, and communities grow by a factor of ten in the summer. His hometown, Minocqua, is classic small-town Wisconsin, a place where everyone knows everyone else. Social touch points in these communities include the high school football game and a trip through the market. Groups of men still gather for coffee the same way they have every day for forty years, playing pinochle and swapping tales over coffee. A Friday evening out can still consist of a trip to a tavern for a boilermaker or a fish fry at a local supper club that has not changed since 1958.

As the youngest of five children of a local propane dealer, Joe grew up immersed in the culture of snowmobiling, fishing, and the small-town social swirl that is the North Woods. Gifted neither as an athlete nor as an academic standout, Joe Handrick did one thing especially well: politicking.

"My attraction to elected office began in high school. . . . Although I was smart, I was far from the top tier of students . . . at everything else—music, band, art, athletics, et cetera—I was just average. The one thing I was good at was student council, in terms of both getting elected and being a leader on the council."

The way he made student council was that he had friends everywhere, across groups, and he kept winning because he was everyone's second choice in a system that allowed second choices. These innate political abilities translated into an opportunity that would lead to an intensive socialization to the Reagan revolution and the Republican Party. Joe's student council adviser, Dave Anderson, first interested Joe in Republican politics. As Joe related, "At the end of my freshman year . . . Dave Anderson, my student council adviser, invited me to go to the Republican State Convention with him. Although my upbringing and basic outlook on life were dictating that I become a conservative, I had no party identity at fifteen. I did after the convention; [it] allowed the dots to connect."

Anderson would subsequently run for the local assembly seat, losing to Democrat Jim Holperin by eighteen points. Watching Anderson lose that election made an impression on Joe. "You have to take a stand," he said. "In the debate, Anderson kept saying he would 'have to look into [whatever subject] more' before he could give an opinion. . . . It is better to take a stand and please somebody than to take no stand and please nobody." As Handrick recalled, his mentor's tentative debate style bespoke a fundamental problem with his candidacy: Either Anderson either did not have a clear message, or, if he possessed a clear message, it was not being communicated.

First Run: Assembly, Age Twenty

After the 1984 election, Joe Handrick was absolutely certain what he wanted to do. "Beginning in 1984, every big decision in my life was made with the backdrop of wanting to run for the state assembly." As a college student, he structured his life and his time to build, quietly but deliberately, toward that goal.

"Summer was spent in Minocqua working at a grocery store. Every morning I sat with the coffee klatch at the Parkway restaurant. I stayed active with the local party and regularly expressed my opinion in a letter to the editor. . . . [In 1986,] I approached Don Walker [publisher of the *Lakeland Times*, a local newspaper] about working there for the summer . . . experience at the newspaper would be good. It would provide the opportunity to make contacts with the business community and local civic leaders."

At the end of June 1986, Joe was approached by Dave Anderson about running against Holperin. Joe's father, Glenn Handrick, recalled over coffee at Tula's, "You should have seen it. Here he is eighteen or twenty, and these guys, local Republicans and businessmen, they all come to him trying to get him run. And he sits there and hedges a little, kind of drawing them out like he had never really considered running. He looks at them and says, 'Well, you know, I haven't really thought about it' . . . after they've 'talked him into it' and Joe commits, he whips out a complete campaign plan, and says, 'This is what we're going to do.' Ha!"

An examination of that plan reveals an impressive degree of research and sophistication on the part of a twenty-year-old with no prior training or experience. Handrick had conducted an extensive study of the patterns of electoral support in every precinct in the districts across several elections. He identified precincts where the Democratic incumbent had run ahead of expectations, and then he sought explanations for that surge, such as a friends-and-neighbors effect. Joe developed a budget, an issue strategy, and plans for advertising, door knocking, and dead-dropping to create the exposure and visibility necessary to take on the incumbent and mute his advantages.

Prior planning is common among state legislative candidates, though evidence shows that the emphasis of such planning varies by candidate age cohort. As indicated by the data in Hogan's (1995) survey (see table 4.1), most candidates suggested that they engaged in precampaign activities such as the construction of voter databases, precinct analysis of past elections, and voter targeting. There are no great differences across candidate age groups in the creation of voter databases; most candidates do it, regardless of age. However, the conduct of precinct analysis by candidates under thirty-five was seven points lower that candidates between thirty-five and fifty-five and seven points higher than among candidates over fifty-five. The other difference that

Table 4.1 Precampaign Analysis and Targeting by Candidates

	Precampaign Analysis		*Voter Targeting*	
Candidate Age	*Voter Data*	*Precinct Analysis*	*Primary*	*General*
Under 35	82.8%	70.5%	83.0%	69.1%
	(n = 105)		(n = 47)	(n = 68)
35–55	82.5%	77.7%	80.5%	72.4%
	(n = 372)		(n = 154)	(n = 283)
Over 55	79.4%	63.1%	57.7%	62.1%
	(n = 141)		(n = 45)	(n = 111)

Source: Hogan (1995).

emerges is in the targeting of voters. Candidates under thirty-five and candidates between thirty-five and fifty-five are far more likely than older candidates to target voters in primaries, and they are somewhat more likely to target voters in general elections. All age cohorts had solid majority responses engaged in targeting, though younger candidates are more prone to convert prior planning into efforts to target voters.

Even with this degree of preparation and planning, taking on an incumbent is a daunting task. The incumbent had been in the assembly for some time and had followed the classic playbook for an incumbent in a competitive district. Handrick describes the district as "leaning Republican," which is also borne out by empirical analysis of statewide elections in the area. The incumbent overcame this partisan disadvantage because of a friends-and-neighbors benefit in his home community of Eagle River and an ability to do lots of constituency service. In sum, given his personal incumbency advantage, "Jim Holperin simply could not be beat." Handrick had planned to wait for the incumbent to retire and then to run. So why the change in plans?

"I was easily talked into running . . . for a number of reasons that allowed us to conclude I had little to lose. The bar had been set quite low, and if I just avoided doing anything stupid, I would be fine. . . . I knew I could perform better than the candidate in 1984 who received only 34 percent of the vote."

So Joe Handrick, a junior at the UW–Madison, ran for the assembly. His evaluation of the district revealed a political context in which an active, Republican candidate might be successful. "I looked at the district, which is conservative and 55 percent Republican but has been going 65 percent for Holperin. I had to find some way to get those voters back to where they were supposed to be, and that meant running on issues."

This evaluation would create a mind-set that framed Joe's career behavior and that emerged in his first campaign as a hallmark of all of Handrick's political campaigns up in the North Woods: using aggressive ideology to polarize

the contest. His entry into the controversy over Native American fishing rights—specifically, the rights afforded to the Chippewa to spearfish for walleye and muskie—was an example of the application of the tactic. The incumbent was vulnerable with sportsmen for his lukewarm opposition to the special fishing rights for the tribes. Combined with the growing unpopularity of Democratic governor Tony Earl, an opportunity existed to take advantage of an issue of interest in the constituency, while also capitalizing on the failed incumbency of Earl. As Joe recalls, "Our three big issues were treaty rights [spearfishing], insurance liability crisis, and taxes. On all three issues Tony Earl was vulnerable, so our task was to connect Earl and Holperin at the hip."

The first campaign was run pretty much on the weekends. Handrick was a full-time student at UW–Madison; he took the fall term off to avoid making the more than 250-mile drive home to campaign. The age issue never really took hold, and Joe had a ready answer: "My youth is not important to the voters. Eleven of Wisconsin's assemblymen were elected when they were under thirty years old." Joe Handrick would not be unique if he won.

Handrick's first campaign was visible and relatively effective. Joe made a strategic decision "to try and win as many towns as I could. . . . I knew that a candidate can create the impression that they ran a close race if they win a lot of real estate." The Democratic stronghold of Rhinelander was out of reach, and in the estimation of Joe and all those around him, it would be won by the incumbent with impressive margins. "We spent a relatively small amount of resources there. . . . I focused on Vilas [the Republican county] . . . this is where the Republican voters are who had supported Holperin. . . . It worked well. I received 41 percent of the vote [and] won Minocqua, Hazelhurst, Woodruff, Arbor Vitae, Plum Lake, St. Germain, Manitowish Waters, Boulder Junction, and Phelps. In [the previous election,] Holperin had lost only three towns . . . around Minocqua, Holperin's huge margins were gone as we won back much of the conservative base."

Handrick campaigned the entire district, and he had the attention and support of major Republicans. Tommy Thompson, challenging Tony Earl for governor, made a strong and public endorsement of Joe and campaigned for him in Rhinelander. Handrick's campaign left an impression on the incumbent, who said in reflecting on the race that "he would counter attacks from his opponent." If anything, the lesson was that while negative campaigning doesn't work, assertiveness doesn't hurt. The result, nonetheless, was an electoral loss to a strong incumbent.

Joe's own campaign postmortem includes geographic analysis of the last three campaigns versus the incumbent, including his own, by township. There was a definite east-west division of the electorate, with Republicans running strongest in Minocqua, Hazelhurst, and northwestern Vilas Counties, and the Democratic incumbents running strongest in the eastern parts of both Vilas and Oneida Counties, especially near his home bailiwick of

Eagle River. This contrasted dramatically with the Republican performance in presidential and gubernatorial contests, where Republicans were strong throughout Vilas County and, on average, ran about ten points better. Holperin had an incumbency advantage throughout the district and a friends-and-neighbors advantage in the townships around East Eagle River. But Handrick did better than any other challenger to Holperin.

In this first campaign, Handrick entered the race with the mind-set that is presumed to be common among first-time challengers to incumbents: Run once to get known, beat expectations, and wait for the open seat. Joe Handrick had beaten expectations and established his name as a viable candidate for representative in the future. He was "back to plan A—wait for Holperin to retire."

Senate Campaign, Age Twenty-two

Fighting the good fight at twenty brought Joe Handrick what many aspiring young political activists crave: attention, recognition, and legitimacy. He returned to school in Madison and also made his way into "big-time" Wisconsin politics, serving as a staffer in the administration of the new Republican governor, Tommy Thompson. It was a part-time position at first and allowed Joe to pursue his degree while also getting networked with the Republican in-crowd in Madison. The plan was to finish college, build stronger ties in GOP circles, and wait for the shot when the seat came open. What happened, though, was another campaign in a bigger constituency.

In 1988, Joe Handrick was again approached to run, this time for the state senate. This would be a bigger, more expensive, more challenging campaign. The Wisconsin legislature has ninety-nine assembly members and thirty-three senators. Each senate district wholly encompasses three state assembly districts. Handrick would be running not just in the two counties of the assembly seat but also in two other constituencies. Again the fight would be against an incumbent Democrat, Senator Lloyd Kincaid. The best account of the decision and the lessons of the campaign come from Handrick's own words, which acknowledge a bad case of youthful hubris:

"Unfortunately, 'me ego' started to believe all the people in Madison who said what a great candidate I was and that I should run against [Kincaid] in 1988. I was working in the governor's office . . . and allowed myself to get talked into something that was probably not in my interest. I began planning a senate run in the spring. The party pledged to make this the number one target in the state."

Joe had resources, expertise, and high-profile backing from one of the most powerful Republicans in Wisconsin history. The campaign was polished and professional; but, of all the campaigns that Joe Handrick waged, this was

probably the most painful and least favorably recalled. It was also, like many of life's experiences when young, one of the most valuable in shaping him.

"[It] was unenjoyable, but I probably learned more in this loss than in any other campaign. . . . Kincaid had never been beaten, so getting 47 percent against him kept my image as a good candidate intact back home. . . . Senate Republicans viewed me as only a marginal candidate. [Political people in] Madison began to view me as a much better strategist and manager than candidate."

This is often the painful juncture for aspiring candidates. While many possess the technical knowledge and political skills to analyze political environments and ascertain successful strategies, candidates and those around them begin to question their quality as standard-bearers. Was Joe Handrick meant to be a political leader or one of those who made leaders? Clearly Handrick relishes in the role of strategist and kingmaker.

"What I like about campaigns more than anything is the planning of strategy and development of the game plan. I especially like doing so in a primary [that is more candidate centered]. In a general election, much of the outcome is decided by the makeup of the district. In a primary, it is much more up to the candidate whether they win or lose. A hardworking, well-organized candidate with a solid plan can outsmart and outwork the opposition."

This perspective on the ability of a candidate to influence elections is widely held by legislative candidates. Returning to the data from the Hogan survey, candidates of all ages are convinced of the ability of a candidate and their campaign to influence the election outcome. This belief if more intense among candidates in primaries (see table 4.2).

Handrick faced admittedly "weak opposition" in the primary and tried to use it as an opportunity to build momentum to the general election. The press portrayed Handrick as "a former aide to Governor Tommy Thompson." Joe tried to parlay that tie and his maturation since his first campaign into greater legitimacy, arguing that "I have the background and experience to be an intelligent, articulate, and effective voice for the North [in Madison]." The campaign focused on three broad issues: economic development, environmental protection, and property tax relief.

Table 4.2 Extent the Candidate's Campaign Influences Election Outcomes

Candidate Age	*Primary*	*Candidate Age*	*General Election*
Under 35 (n = 47)	70.23	Under 35 (n = 67)	66.60
35–55 (n = 153)	75.24	35–55 (n = 281)	64.77
Over 55 (n = 45)	73.63	Over 55 (n = 110)	65.13

Source: Hogan (1995).
Note: Mean for category, based on 100-point scale where 0 = no influence and 100 = total influence.

Things were going well for Joe coming out of the primary, which he won handily. They used the primary to push contacting and practice their voter targeting for the general election. Then, as Joe described in his own words, "things went downhill." He was in over his head and could not keep control of the campaign.

"The campaign was the state's number one target race, and [it was] simply too big of a campaign for me to keep a handle on. In the end we set a new state record by spending over $100,000. During the race, they made me go out and do what a candidate is supposed to do and kept my involvement in strategy and implementation of the plan to a minimum. That took all the fun out of it. I [was] simply not motivated. I was running because others wanted me to—I never had that fire in my belly."

The campaign handlers from Madison were "very good and ran the campaign very well." But it was not how Joe would have run the contest.

Out of the campaign came lessons of maturity and character that stayed with Joe throughout his political career. "Our attacks on Kincaid were not just negative—they were downright mean." In no subsequent campaign that Handrick ran in or managed for another candidate would he go negative, other than engaging in comparative advertising on specific issues. His conscience could not live with it. A note Joe sent me summed up his own thoughts on the effect of that campaign on his reputation:

> The attacks on Lloyd Kincaid led people to believe I was mean. I vowed to never again let others set the tone and tenor of my campaign. I know that candidates are not supposed to run their own campaigns but I would have it no other way in the future . . . candidates can and should control their own campaigns and that this can be done without the candidate getting tied down in deciding what color balloons to have at a fundraiser.

Second, he learned the relative value of types of media and also the limits of media in running for office. "We spent a lot of money and ran a media campaign but never had a network put together in much of the district. In three counties, we had no ground troops, no coordinators, no nothing." The one constant of legislative candidates is the value of doing doors. "I knew door-to-door worked, but [with the failure in the general election,] I saw exactly how. When looking at the primary vote results, we could see which wards we had done doors prior to the primary."

Joe Handrick recognized that part of the failure of the campaign was a product of the same failing as his mentor's challenge to Jim Holperin, in that "we had no overall theme." The campaign was out of his control, run from the top-down; it was run using a generic, impersonal strategy without an appreciation of the particular context of the district; and there was no central

focus to the campaign. The theme of national conservative politics was insufficient to displace a known incumbent in a down-ticket race, because the national forces were insufficient to allow candidates to make a meaningful connection to them.

Hiatus

Two consecutive losses to two different incumbents in two years left Joe Handrick wondering whether he had pushed too hard, too fast, to get to the legislature. As he observed to me, "It was *definitely* back to plan A: Wait for Holperin to retire." He went back to Madison and enrolled at UW to pursue a degree in occupational therapy. "It was time to think about getting through school . . . the plan was to get through school and get home."

Handrick still managed to dabble in some politics at UW. In 1989, he and some College Republicans engineered a takeover of student government. The low-turnout campus elections turned into a laboratory for voter targeting and mobilization. His time in the student senate offered the chance to develop rhetorical devices he would later use in the assembly. And, while working a half-time position for the Republican assembly floor leader, Handrick would grow his relationship with his future wife, whom he met during the 1988 senate campaign (she worked for Bob Kasten). Joe dropped out of college for two years to work full-time for the assembly. As he described it, "the pay was so good," he now was a family man with a spouse, and he had ambitions beyond stocking shelves at Wal-Mart. As he put it during our drive north to Minocqua, "Now I was married and poor instead of just poor."

Other political opportunities would beckon, too. Handrick was passed over for the chance to run in a special election in the senate seat he contested in 1988 (the party candidate ultimately lost in the primary to an unknown twenty-four-year-old), but he did get back into campaigning, managing an open seat race in another North Woods district adjacent to his own home district.

On returning to Madison, Joe found that his boss in the assembly, Randy Radtke, was the Republican chair for redistricting. Randy brought Joe in to work on what would be Joe's legacy in Wisconsin: the crafting of legislative maps. In the 1990s, states across the nation were making extensive use of new geographic information system (GIS) technology to craft legislative maps. Handrick was not initially a principal in the crafting of maps, but, when exposed to the technology and asked to participate, his spatial analytic abilities became evident to Republican mapmakers. "When they sat me down at the terminal, I just had a knack for being able to see how to craft the kind of districts they wanted, with the right political skew and in a fashion that would be attractive to a court."

Wisconsin would end up going to federal court to have its state legislative

maps, and Joe would ultimately craft the legislative map proposal Republicans forwarded to the federal courts. While the court did not formally adopt those maps, the map that the court produced was sufficiently similar to Handrick's map that the convergence of his map and the logic of a court-drafted plan were evident; it was a de facto adoption, and in the Milwaukee area the Handrick map was directly adopted, including its proposed minority-majority districts. After redistricting, Radtke retired, and Handrick returned to occupational therapy school. Plan A would be put into motion in short order.

Prior Planning Ensures Performance: Success at Age Twenty-eight

In 1992, as redistricting was winding down and Joe was getting back to school, rumors started to circulate that Jim Holperin was casting about for a full-time job and would retire from the legislature. When the rumors started, Handrick established a fund raising operation, in order to have money on hand should the seat come open. Soon there was a few thousand dollars in the account.

It was time to go back to the district. Periodically, during the summers, Joe had worked at the local supermarket—Trigs—as a supervisor. In early 1993, he started spending weekends back in the district, bagging groceries and "seeing literally hundreds of locals." There was a tremendous rationale for making the lengthy trip, up and back, every weekend for Joe: "I feared that I would be accused of being a carpetbagger. It was five years since I had run for the senate." He also became more active in the local GOP organizations in Oneida and Vilas Counties, and he started helping local candidates with campaigns. "I built some nice IOUs in the process," Joe recollected, "and the fact that I built a voter list for the Thirty-fourth District and shared it with other candidates didn't hurt, and I helped design their ads." Handrick set himself up as the volunteer consultant of choice for like-minded candidates, while crafting an organization for his assembly run.

The opportunity to capture District 34 very nearly slipped through Handrick's hands. In late 1993, word leaked from the governor's office that Tommy Thompson was going to appoint Jim Holperin to a full-time state job. This would not have fit Joe's window of opportunity as "there would be a special election. . . . I could finish school by early 1994, but not in time for 1993." Handrick inoculated against losing his place in the order of succession by sending an announcement to the state capitol that he was moving back to Minocqua to "prepare for a special election." The goal of the move was to scare Democrats into talking Holperin into deferring his retirement, for fear that Handrick would win any special election. Democrats at the time held a narrow 52–47 majority in the assembly and did not want to cede a seat. Holperin delayed his departure by nearly a year.[1]

The announcement of Holperin's retirement was accompanied in local papers by a story announcing Handrick's filing of candidacy papers with the State Elections Board. Included in the story was the notation that, in his last race for the Senate, Handrick had a thousand-vote plurality over the Democratic incumbent inside the borders of assembly District 34 and a 76 percent vote margin in the 1988 GOP primary inside the district. Front-runner status was not conferred, but his viability was readily noted by the local press. Before Holperin's retirement announcement, Handrick had filed for a position on the County Board. Joe recollects that he "used the race as a dress rehearsal for the upcoming state assembly primary." Joe Handrick won over incumbent Robert Wendt by a margin of 318 to 138. Now the real campaign would start: running for assembly District 34.

Winning in 1994

Unlike Joe's previous efforts, this time he confronted a broad field of similarly ambitious competitors. The open seat had loosened political ambitions in both parties, as nine candidates filed. The challenge for Handrick was to stand out, first in the Republican primary, and then in the general election. As Handrick saw it, "whoever was the winner of the GOP primary would win the district. . . . The district was trending more conservative, and the Democrats would be hard-pressed to find another Jim Holperin." Winning the primary would propel him toward general election success, especially if Handrick used the primary to build up his name recognition and create a feeling of momentum. While still young, he was a veteran campaigner, a known political operative, and far more mature and seasoned at twenty-eight than he had been at twenty.

At the very least, Handrick needed to win his hometown. His perspective on primaries in rural Wisconsin was that they were friends-and-neighbors events: "In a primary a candidate should win their home town. Our strategy was to . . . win Minocqua by more than the [other candidates] win their hometowns by doing a better job of getting out the vote, and to come in second in all the other candidates' hometowns by having a better network, working harder, and [having] a better-delivered mass media plan." It was not unlike the previous circumstances of running for student council. Handrick had to be better at home than everyone else and then be everyone's second choice.

The big break came through a campaign stunt, designed to separate Handrick from the rest of the pack. "The challenge was standing out among nine candidates. Our vehicle for doing this can be summed up in two words: *the dog*." Joe is a dachshund enthusiast and has a large Dachs by the name of Molitor.[2] "In parades, we pulled a trailer with a kiddy pool on it filled with water. My fifteen-pound dachshund would splash around in the pool and try to kick out the water. Our sign said, 'Joe Handrick will make a splash in Madison.' The response was unbelievable. Everyone was talking about the 'guy with the dog' . . . we had our TV people film a parade in July knowing this would be our TV ad come August and September."

Doing TV in a Wisconsin assembly primary was "almost unheard of," but TV in the North Woods is cheap and can drive up name recognition rapidly for a candidate. "If others were to do TV, it would be in the last five or six days before the primary. . . . Our TV started twenty-one days out . . . the opposition went into panic mode." Joe from Minocqua was all over the TV, by himself, for over a week.

Party people in Madison thought that the dog was a singularly bad idea; it "didn't fit" the campaign mold that the assembly leadership likes to see. Voters had a very different reaction. "We were," Handrick said, "the highlight of every little parade we went to. People just went crazy when they saw Molly splashing around in that pool. And when we put it on TV," he continued, "it caught everyone's attention. Two days after the dog ad began, volunteers from Madison were doing a literature drop, and they reported that nearly every person they saw said, . . . 'Yep, that's the guy with the dog.'" Handrick admits that he stole the idea of the dog from Senator Russ Feingold, whose offbeat 1992 campaign ads helped fell Republican Bob Kasten. The catch line of Handrick's dog ad was "Joe Handrick doesn't care if his dog gets soaked, but taxpayers have been getting soaked long enough." As Joe noted to me recently, "the dog stuff was also a reflection of my desire to avoid the 'mean' label that I got in 1988."

Handrick had other advantages. He was an experienced candidate, one who had built a political résumé from the experiences of electoral defeat. Unlike his previous campaigns, he had a legitimate background in public service, and he was the only candidate with experience in state government. On the other hand, he also tried to run on the "outsider" track, and, like many Republicans who ran in the 1994 elections, he challenged the status quo. He won the Republican primary, carrying his hometown and coming in second everywhere else.

With the primary behind him, Joe turned to the general election. Party help came from Madison, and, with the memories of his Senate campaign, Joe worked hard to keep control of method, message, and strategy. The decision to use TV early and intensely accrued benefits going into the general election. His best estimate is that, based on the strong primary showing, they came into the general election campaign with a twenty-point lead. This suited Handrick, because "it put us in the position of being able to stay positive and let the other side be the negative campaign. When attacked we hit back, but . . . in a way that tried to portray the opposition as mean and our side as victims"—again, the opposite of his 1988 senate campaign.

Handrick's general election opponent was a U.S. Army reserve lawyer

from Rhinelander, Jenny Owen. Owen was in line with the constituency and Handrick on many issues. The issues that differentiated them were partisan, ideological wedge issues that favored Handrick in this conservative constituency. Owens was an advocate of government-sponsored universal health care and prochoice on abortion.

The campaign was not without problems or setbacks, and Handrick observed that he has never been involved in a campaign where "the people in Madison did not screw up on at least one issue. Usually it is a technical thing, like where they claim that an incumbent voted one way" when in fact the opposite was the case. In Joe's 1994 campaign, the "screw-up [was] that Scott Jensen wrote our TV scripts after the primary, and in the crime spot I said, 'No more cable TV in prisons.'" After the spot aired, a staffer informed Joe that there was a "problem—'we don't have cable TV in prisons in Wisconsin' . . . normally I would have panicked, but . . .I was aware that some counties had cable in their county jails, and that is a form of prison." There was really no downside, in Joe's mind, because "I dare the opposition to raise this as an issue—I'd have made them look like they're defending prisoners."

In the closing week, his opponent depicted Handrick as a professional politician, and she used push-polling to paint Handrick as a right-wing radical.[3] He inoculated against these efforts on two dimensions. Joe's campaign ran a prepared TV spot, showing Joe in his white hospital coat as an occupational therapist, walking around a hospital and talking about how, as a therapist, helping people lead more independent lives was also part of his qualification to legislate and also consistent with his political philosophy, that government should help people live independent lives. They flipped the effect of the push-poll in the media. Joe prevailed on one of the local TV affiliates to break the story, and a grievance was filed against the Owens campaign (Democrats were later chastised and fined for the use of this campaign tactic).

Handrick won 56 percent over Owens's 44 percent, a fifteen-point swing from his first effort in District 34. The election in 1994 was a watershed in American politics, and Wisconsin Republicans garnered substantial gains. According to Handrick, his win and others were not necessarily part of any broad-based national tide; rather, he attributes the gains to opportunities that were cashed in by the GOP. "Republicans took the assembly because three Democrats retired from GOP seats in Districts 1, 2, and 34. The gains coincided with '94, but the national tides of '94 didn't matter. Wisconsin just does its own thing. It doesn't follow national trends." A look at Vilas County (the northern county in District 34) lends credence to this observation. Running in an open seat, Handrick carried the county by a margin of 1,345 ballots and 58 percent of the vote. Republican governor Tommy Thompson carried the county by a margin of 4,088 votes and 73 percent of the vote. Democrat Jim Doyle, who won the attorney general race statewide, lost Vilas County by seven ballots, while Democratic secretary of state candidate Doug

LaFollette carried the county by 628 ballots. In 1986, Thompson carried Vilas with 67 percent of the vote as a challenger, while challenger Joe Handrick lost the county by 362 votes. Some of the surge in Republican ballots can be attributed to national tides, though an equally valid explanation is the elimination of Holperin's incumbency advantage. The notable swings in ballots from candidate to candidate substantiate Handrick's mirthful observation that in Wisconsin, "ticket-splitting is our favorite pastime."

Now Joe confronted a question that had never occurred to him before: "What do you do when you're twenty-eight and you've accomplished everything you set out to do?"

Outgrowing an Old Dream

Joe Handrick attained a seat in the Wisconsin General Assembly on his third try. He had pursued the assembly all of his adult life and had delayed his formal education and the initiation of his professional career to work in politics. Along the way he picked up skills and abilities in campaign management and media relations, and he proved adept in the application of new technologies, particularly the use and application of geographic information systems to the problem of crafting legislative districts.

By 1999, he was in his third term in the legislature. He was a member of a close majority in the chamber, led by an energetic speaker, Scott Jensen, and was chair of the assembly committee that was preparing for the coming legislative redistricting. He had several legislative accomplishments and a reputation as a serious legislator with a strong independent streak. However, he was also restless and dissatisfied with the legislative life and was tiring of his role. As he described it to me as we left a fund-raiser in the Fox River Valley, "a trained monkey could do my job." He was tired of sitting on the floor, hitting a button with the party line, and not having substantive input into legislation or strategy. "There was no challenge. . . . When it was evident that I could not exercise power in the institution, I decided it was time to move on. But I wanted to do the redistricting."

Joe left the assembly in 2000. But, as he was headed out the door, he laid the foundation for his transition to a postlegislative career as a consultant and lobbyist that will prove far more lucrative than his position in the legislature. Postlegislative politics is being good to Joe Handrick, and he is still young and energetic enough to enjoy his new role.

Legislator

Joe Handrick had a good legislative career. As a freshman, he asserted his intention to follow his conservative principles but also to consider what his constituency wanted. First and foremost, he saw himself embodying the inde-

pendence of the rural North Woods. In a piece of correspondence, he laid out for me his perception of the role of the legislator:

> There are some lawmakers who always vote their conscience no matter what their constituents believe. Others always put their finger in the air and side with the majority. On issues of personal moral or religious issues I vote my conscience—abortion, for example. I'm pro-life and that's how I vote. If a poll showed my district was pro-choice, I would still be pro-life. As it works out, this problem never arose for me because on issues like abortion and the death penalty, the majority of my constituents share my views.

Sometimes, the need to reconcile his informed perspective on an issue with the less informed perspectives of his constituents would rear its head. In those situations, Joe said, "I try to vote the way my constituents would if they had the same information I did," which allowed him latitude in going against his conservative constituency. He noted, though, that "this can be tricky."

"Take the gas tax. . . . If you asked voters if they supported a penny increase in the gas tax, they would say no. If you asked voters if they supported making Highways 29 and 51 into four-lanes, they would say yes. In 1997, I had to decide whether to support a one-cent increase in the gas tax. Without it, the Highway 29 and 51 projects would have been delayed. . . . I had to use my judgment, and in my judgment, the majority of residents in my district would have supported the one-cent increase if the question were not asked in a vacuum but was coupled with the question relating to Highways 29 and 51."

Joe Handrick was a voice that represented the perspectives and priorities of his constituency, though he would temper the delegate role. He asserted the independence of representing this last frontier of Wisconsin and, implicitly, also his independence as representative of the North Woods.

As a freshman legislator, his prior experience working with the assembly inculcated in him an immediate appreciation of the need to follow the norms of the chamber, especially in terms of cultivating allies and forging cooperation with other players. "One of the first things you learn is that you can accomplish nothing on your own. An effective legislator must work with colleagues, members of the senate, the governor, the press, the lobbying community. Passing laws truly is a team sport." A failure to recognize the need for cooperative behavior in the chamber would only further frustrate a legislator's ambitions, because "a legislator who never compromises is a legislator who will never accomplish anything."

Handrick was not above being forceful in pressing home his views or in challenging the core tenets of his opponents. At the time he was in the Wisconsin assembly, he was the only occupational therapist in the United States to serve as a legislator. As such, he did bring a unique perspective to issues relating to persons with disabilities. One of his hallmark moments on the floor of the legislature was when he made "rather strongly-worded statements aimed at Democratic lawmakers on disability issues . . . liberals have a very condescending view of persons with disabilities. They view them as helpless citizens who need their big government 'compassion' and care. In my view there is nothing compassionate about a political party that seeks to do things for people rather than giving people the tools they need in order to do things for themselves."

Handrick was in the legislature when sweeping changes were made in the social welfare system. He credited this as the top "team" accomplishment of his three terms, as it fit his philosophy of government as a helper. "[Before reform,] if parents on welfare became employed they would lose their benefits and receive no help in obtaining health care and child care. We said, 'This is wrong.' Instead of paying people not to work, let us help them obtain employment and use the money we were using to pay them to stay home and use it to help with child care and health care. . . . Because of our work . . . thousands of people are going to live better lives, more independent lives . . . that is a very rewarding feeling [to break the cycle of dependency]."

He was also hard at work on specific legislation related to constituency issues. Northern Wisconsin has long been a vacation spot for people from Milwaukee and Chicago. The cool breeze of the lake country and the outdoor recreation opportunities grow some of these communities by a factor of ten in the summer, and, more recently, many retirees created permanent homes in District 34. One consequence of this historic vacation trade is the existence of old, historic structures in close proximity to lakes, rivers, and streams. Many of these structures violate newer state laws regarding construction near water sources and in wetlands. But, because these structures predate the creation of these laws, they cannot be arbitrarily pulled down for nonconformity.

The other side of the issue that concerned Joe was the fate of such structures if they were damaged or destroyed by accident. The boathouses, small vacation cottages, and dinner clubs that nestle up to the bodies of water are part of the character of this region. On occasion, a boathouse might collapse or a restaurant might burn, and issues of reconstruction of facilities versus environmental preservation would come into conflict. The preservation and protection of these structures was important to Handrick, and he sought as a legislator to deal with the problem of nonconforming structures.

"If you drive around the North, you notice there are hundreds of small cottages and homes that could never be built today. They are on property that is not large enough on which to construct a home given current zoning laws. The change [in the law] we made says that if you own [a nonconform-

ing property that is damaged or destroyed] by fire, wind, or vandalism and if your property does not allow you to relocate the structure to make it conforming, you can rebuild in the existing 'footprint.'"

This was one of several examples of Handrick acting to find practical compromises to problems confronted by his constituency. In some other areas—equalizing the fishing rights of other residents with the rights of the Native Americans, or limiting legalized gambling—he was less successful.

Strategic Reelections

Reelection campaigns for the young incumbent in District 34 were uneventful but never taken for granted. Handrick ran two reelection campaigns, in 1996 and 1998, and won each by large margins. However, he never got past the observation that "paranoia is why incumbents survive." Much like other legislators we meet in this book, Handrick waged constant politics in order to deter potential strong challengers and obliterate others who might run. His specialty was working to take out potential challengers before they could run against him. Most typically this meant trying to knock local Democratic officeholders off balance or out of office. During a conference with me and a legislative staffer in Madison, Joe recalled one such effort.

"We went to this kid—he looked to be about twelve—who was running against this Democratic mayor, and we said, 'Hey, we're here to help you beat [the incumbent].' He couldn't believe that we wanted to come in, do GOTV for him, help him with money and advertising and door drops. Well, we did, and this kid, he becomes mayor of Rhinelander."

Strategic campaigns were run against county board members, school board members, and other local officials. Such practices served three purposes. First, it tried to eliminate potential rivals for Joe's seat in the assembly; a vanquished challenger is less formidable. Second, in addition to the removal of immediate threats, Handrick built up a reservoir of goodwill with other local GOP officials and the local party by building grassroots strength. Finally, he kept his campaign organization and get-out-the-vote data in top shape by constantly exercising it in various off-year local contests. In both 1996 and 1998, Handrick was reelected by substantial margins.

As a campaigner, Handrick was not easily pigeonholed with a variety of national consultants who advocate a top-down, electronic campaign or a one-size-fits all strategy. Despite his evaluation that there was too little grassroots and too much media in his failed senate campaign, Joe sees subtle distinctions of the value of both approaches. As he noted earlier, working doors works. But, at the same time, the other, more visible symbol of grassroots campaigning—yard signs—hold no value to Joe Handrick. "Signs don't vote. If they did, I would be a senator." Handrick recently managed an incumbent campaign where they used no signs, "just to test the hypothesis. Well, we might put *one* out on election day."[4]

While Joe sees media as having limited value by itself, it is highly valuable when used well. "Look, TV is more powerful than any other medium. You can run newspaper ads and put up signs all summer, and no one knows who you are. One week of TV and everybody knows you." Even in small-town Wisconsin, the encroachment of professional political techniques was becoming evident.

This perspective is indicative of an evolution in the politics of the United States. Even in relatively small, local constituencies, the political campaigns are becoming slicker, more media oriented and are increasingly influenced by political professionals. Johnson (2001) observes that this change both affects the opportunities for volunteer participation and is also a product of decreasing campaign volunteerism. When nonprofessionals take part in campaigns, they are driven by numerous motives. The main commonality across them is that they "have personal interests in the candidate, the office, and the issues." In many instances they are continuing a long-standing relationship with the candidate, because they worked for them in the past. Some are looking for entrée into professional politics or government. And, they will work across campaigns when asked, because they are part of a class of amateur political activists who "can usually be relied upon to help other candidates [though their efforts] are almost always limited to their city, county, or state . . . election work is not their principal source of income" (xv).

At the end of the twentieth century, the political landscape of the United States became increasingly professionalized:

> The 1990s witnessed another transformation. Candidates for office below the statewide level were beginning to seek the advice of political consultants. For many candidates, the dividing line was the $50,000: those who could not raise that kind of money had to rely solely on volunteer services . . . professional consulting services, such as phone banks, telemarketing, direct mail, were supplanting the efforts once provided by volunteers. (Johnson 2001: 7)

State legislative campaigns are becoming increasingly costly, even in states with small districts. There has been a decline of engagement in a variety of community activities that undermines the maintenance of small-scale politics on the backs of volunteers. Also, the evolution of communication technologies have changed how even small-scale campaigns are run:

> There is a dwindling number of people who devote free time to helping candidates . . . veteran Republican strategist Stuart Spencer observed that the combination of money and television was leading

> to the disappearance of volunteers. "Because of the new technology, few campaigns are 'people campaigns' any more. You don't need a bunch of little old ladies stamping envelopes to send out a direct mail piece." (18)

It is into this new realm of small-scale political consulting that Joe Handrick had been moving, slowly, deliberately, for a number of years, as he planned, coordinated, and executed campaigns for Republican assembly candidates. His future in politics would come from the part of the game he liked best, planning and executing campaign strategies and allocating campaign resources in order to do the most good.

Why is such professionalization increasing? Well, to look at Joe Handrick, his campaigns, and his postelective career, it is because of the increased access to sophisticated production and analytic technologies—video production, layout software, and computerization—and also because active, intelligent campaign technicians like him take an interest in the art of designing campaign materials and messages. "When you look at my commercials," Joe recalled, "you can see the influence of other campaigns, other advertisements in the ads. What I would do in scripting and planning my own ads is look to national and major-race examples of effective ads—you know, like the 'Morning in America' ad, and find a way to adapt it to my own campaign" or a client's campaign. The production values on Handrick's early TV are about what one would expect in a local campaign, at the high end of the cable advertising food chain, but the content and delivery are very professional. His product improved through time.

Getting Out

Joe from Minocqua was getting tired. The assembly in Wisconsin paid a decent salary by state legislative standards—midthirties—but that pay was not substantial when one considers that a member was constantly gone from home or maintaining two households. The round trip from Minocqua to Madison was five hundred miles, and the drive became tiring after a while. In the spring of 1999, Joe Handrick was into his third term. He had sponsored important legislation for his constituency, completely dominated all comers in his reelection campaigns, and risen to a position of significance on the Reapportionment Committee. Yet, by the end of spring, he was informing the leadership and his constituents that he would not seek another term. At age thirty-three, Joe Handrick was moving on. But to what? And why?

"It first hit me after I won reelection in '98," he told me in the living room of his parents' bed and breakfast, "that I wasn't sure what was next. I mean, here you are, you've accomplished the one goal you had in your life at twenty-eight, and you've risen steadily and done all you can with a job. You start to ask yourself, 'Should I have set my goals higher?' or 'Is this all there is?'" Joe wasn't necessarily bored with politics; instead, his current position posed no challenges. Handrick is very open and specific about the constraints that existed on members to affect public policy design in the majority caucus.

"It got to the point where I realized that a monkey could do my job. I just sat in a chair and pushed green or red depending on where the party was on the issue. Anyone can do that, and you don't have to be very smart to be a legislator if you don't mind having no independence.

"The speaker has total control of everything in the majority caucus," he continued. "If you are not on the inside, completely in line with the leadership, then you are outside." The majority caucus was tightly controlled by a small group of legislators who were close to the speaker and who were completely in agreement with his agenda and would defer to his decisions. Historically, the assembly speaker enjoys substantial power and control, though not always to the extent that Speaker Jensen exercised. "Jensen is brilliant but had to be in control of everything. If you wanted power, you had to be willing to give up your power and your discretion."

A good government advocate, Handrick expressed early and public concerns regarding the party caucus system in the state legislature, and on several occasions he sponsored legislation to defund the caucuses and move their activities out of the capitol. This early recognition of the potential ethical problems in the caucuses was borne out in 2002, when majority leadership in both the assembly and senate were indicted on charges of extortion, ethics violations, and abuse of public office for political activities involving caucus employees. "People now come to me and say, 'Joe, what did you see going on back when you sponsored those bills?'" Joe recalled, with no small amount of regret, that the whole problem might have been avoided.

Ultimately, though, politics and power were not the only reason for Joe Handrick to hang up his spurs. His life had changed dramatically from 1994 to 2000, and he saw other, more important demands on his time. Married in 1990 and elected in 1994, he and his wife were expecting during the 1996 campaign, and Joe campaigned with his new daughter during the 1998 campaign. Another child would arrive in 1999. Handrick put it quite simply to the press: "Many people are qualified to serve in the assembly, but only one person in the world can be my kids' dad." Later, he also commented, "I am leaving for the right reasons. Conservatives talk about family values, and I want to do more than talk about them. Holding this job with two small children is simply not in their best interest."

There were other, powerful ethical reasons for Joe's decision to move on. In 1994, he had run for the assembly as an advocate of term limits. In a press release timed to coincide with his retirement announcement, Joe stated that

> there are a lot of big egos in politics. Candidates need to have a certain amount of ego. You need to believe that you can do the job,

> you need the self-confidence that you can make a difference. Where some politicians go wrong is in thinking that the office is about them and forgetting what is really important. . . . [T]his is why I support term limits. People who serve too long simply get too wrapped up in themselves and in getting reelected. They forget who sent them there and what they sent them there to do.

In the end, Joe from Minocqua was confronting the dilemma of many in public service. His personal context had changed; he had children and a spouse, and therefore variety of personal life demands that competed with legislating. He was also professionally frustrated. The situation he described with the leadership and the process by which power was allocated and policy was crafted also frustrated him; he could no longer tolerate the limitations on his ability to affect policy in the legislature. Handrick was going to phase out of his role as assemblyman and phase into the role of campaign consultant and redistricting consultant for the assembly Republicans.

Postlegislative Career

After leaving the assembly, Joe Handrick started slowly, deliberately to build a clientele in Wisconsin politics. While he was no longer in the legislature, he was still in Madison, housed across the street from the capitol building in an office tower full of government relations law firms and lobbying groups. He was starting small, doing work for two groups, the Bear Hunters and the organization that represents the seven hundred anesthesiologists in Wisconsin. His major contribution over the past two years, though, was a reprise of his 1992 role as the creative master of the Republican legislative redistricting proposals for the assembly and senate.

Handrick was a master of electoral analysis. He knew where to find information and how to glean useable knowledge from numbers that is implicit and based on understanding the totality of issues and messages associated with particular candidates and their circumstances. In 1992, he demonstrated his marriage of technical and political skills in crafting a set of maps for the assembly Republicans that, while not entirely adopted by the federal court panel, were sufficiently close to court-applied standards that they anticipated the map crafted by Judge Posner and his colleagues. In 2001, Handrick would confront a similar challenge, as redistricting bogged down into a stalemate between Republican assembly speaker Scott Jensen and Democratic senate majority leader Chuck Chvala. Again a federal court would craft the maps, and, again, Handrick demonstrated remarkable skill in crafting a set of map proposals that, while not adopted by the court, again reflected the priorities of the court and anticipated the design of the map created by a three-judge panel.

Handrick, together with former Republican caucus staff from the assembly, was contracted as an independent consultant, working through the law firm representing the assembly in redistricting, to develop legislative maps that would stand up to a high degree of scrutiny by the courts and that would also be favorable to Republicans.

Legislative district plans are evaluated on a variety of dimensions, some of which are legal, constitutional, political, or aesthetic. It is expected that state legislative plans will be designed so that all legislative districts have approximately the same number of residents. Legislative district plans cannot violate the racial provisions of equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment, and they must also comply with the Voting Rights Act while navigating the restrictions against race-based redistricting that arise from Supreme Court cases in the 1990s. State-specific legal standards must also be considered, such as the Wisconsin requirement that senate districts be composed of three whole assembly districts.

Then, a variety of political and aesthetic factors are typical of the "good government" mentality of fair legislative maps. Superior legislative plans under the assumptions of the good government perspective are expected not to divide towns or counties needlessly; not to create needlessly oddly shaped legislative districts and to pursue overall compactness as a virtue of the map as a whole; to avoid needless incumbent pairings from one party over the other party but also not to consider incumbent placement over other criteria; and to have no more political impact than necessary of the balance in the chamber, in order to accommodate population changes since the last census. All Joe Handrick had to do was to craft a set of potential legislative maps that would incorporate all of these features, in a map that was superior to an alternative that Democrats or some intervening party might propose, and that the Court would accept.

As Joe recalled to me, "Our conversations and initial planning indicated that, if we just drew a fair map, we could get a map that would advantage us in the coming decade. . . . I recalled our work with Professor Bibby [John Bibby, of UW–Milwaukee] in the previous redistricting and set about trying to find a measure of partisan fairness that would allow me to baseline changes in the map. We tried to avoid splitting up towns and cities needlessly and worked to draw compact districts."

Just because Joe Handrick produced a fairly neutral map (his best map had very low population deviations, compact districts, competitive districts, very few town divisions, and a very low rate of senate voter disfranchisement) did not mean that he could not craft a better map for Republicans. "Oh, I could have crafted a map that would have allowed us tremendous advantages . . . we could have really done the Democrats." But that map would not have been as good on other, neutral factors that courts might consider when evaluating maps. And, to assist the lawyers and political leaders in the assembly in

convincing those with more partisan motivations of the wisdom of the "fair" map, Handrick crafted a "doomsday map. It was the worst-case scenario of what the Democrats could do to us if we were not careful." That map was helpful in convincing those with highly partisan motivations to pursue a strategy of minimizing harm.

The trial established the basic soundness of this strategy, which was advocated by the Republican legal team and implemented by Handrick's electoral artistry. Experts for the various maps on all sides attempted to debunk opposition maps and to advocate for the principles of their client maps. Issues of electoral fairness were interspersed with questions about equal protection and the implementation of the Voting Rights Act vis-à-vis the Wisconsin maps. But, for the federal court, the goal was to collect information, assess the validity of the claims of the various parties, and then take action based on the principles of neutrality and fairness that are the hallmark of court-drawn maps. The court would undertake to remedy what it identified as legal and constitutional defects under the old legislative map, while making no more changes than necessary.

The Handrick map ended up being not far off the mark. The map produced by the three-judge panel remedied the constitutional and legal defects in the old legislative map, and, while it did not come as close as Handrick's maps in terms of population deviations, there was remarkable similarity to the Handrick maps in terms of the neutral "good government" elements of the map. The placement of new districts ensured that Republicans would not only retain control of the assembly but might also win the senate. For his efforts, Joe Handrick was well compensated.

Running the Conduit

Working in redistricting can be interesting and lucrative. However, redistricting and reapportionment are "seasonal" work; most states will only craft legislative boundaries once per decade, in the wake of the census. Joe Handrick was a talented artisan of electoral maps, and he planned to develop future consulting opportunities for the next reapportionment and redistricting after 2010. In the meantime, he had to find other work.

Handrick's primary role since the end of the redistricting litigation was to run a campaign finance "conduit" for the organization representing anesthesiologists in Wisconsin. This entailed examining legislator voting and behavior, networking, and making recommendations regarding the targeting of donations that channel through the conduit.

He was approached by the organization to come to work for them directly as an executive director. While Joe clearly wanted to work with the organization, given his own professional ties to the health care industry, he did not especially want to be tied down to one client, one job, and acting as

Table 4.3 Candidate Use of a Political Consulting Firm (%)

Candidate Age	*Strategy*	*Ads*	*Direct Mail*	*Polls*	*Voter Info*	*Phone Banks*	*Management*	*Fund Raising*
Primary								
Under 35 (n = 47)	17.0	19.1	19.1	10.6	10.6	10.6	8.5	6.4
35–55 (n = 155)	15.5	18.1	25.2	14.2	9.0%	8.4	6.5	5.8
Over 55 (n = 46)	10.9	6.5	17.4	10.9	8.6	8.6	6.5	4.3
General Election								
Under 35 (n = 68)	11.8	8.8	16.2	20.6	11.8	5.9	5.9	5.9
35–55 (n = 284)	15.5	14.1	21.8	15.5	12.0	9.2	12.3	5.3
Over 55 (n = 114)	14.0	15.8	25.4	13.2	7.9	10.5	4.4	4.4

Source: Hogan (1995).

an association executive director might limit his ability to pursue other options. Instead, he suggested that the organization contract him to perform political action on their behalf. The cost was actually somewhat less to the anesthesiologists than if he had come to work for them directly, because the organization did not have to pay payroll taxes or provide benefits to Handrick. For Joe, it meant higher pay and more autonomy, though he would be carrying the tax burden of self-employment.

In addition, Handrick continues to be active in local campaigns, developing mailers for candidates and interest groups, and also occasionally managing a candidate and developing strategy for assembly candidates. This career has potential for growth, especially in a state where the professional legislature and a competitive two-party environment ensures a stream of money for competitive campaigns. Most state legislative campaigns have not used consultants extensively, but the areas where expertise is most often retained dovetails with Handrick's interests. Hogan's survey indicates that consultants were often retained to perform direct mail and, in primaries, to develop advertising (see table 4.3). Handrick has tapped a professional niche, though it is a boutique industry at present.[5]

Conclusion

Joe Handrick had an early, clear vision of his political ambitions. Those ambitions resided in Madison, as a representative of his neighbors. It was a burning desire, and it was never expressed as a function of any one overarching policy concern or as a part of a larger ambition to attain statewide or national office. Handrick wanted to do government, to act as a conservative voice in a legislature that was, for him, often too liberal. He wanted to represent the values of his neighbors and promote what he describes as the core of the conservative creed: helping people help themselves.

The road to public office for Joe Handrick was not easy. The close calls of his initial campaigns also contained tough lessons about winning and losing that shaped his campaign philosophy and that also caused him to confront both self-doubt and the ego that accompanies the attention paid young, effective politicians. He deferred other goals, including his education and his professional career in occupational therapy, in order to pursue politics. However, it was not until the political context of the constituency changed and Handrick found closure on parts of his life, most notably his education and the initiation of his professional career, that he attained political success.

The Joe Handrick that ran at age twenty was bright, hardworking, and ideologically defined. He did exceptionally well when his performance is compared to expectations, and he was identified as a comer, a rising candidate with promise. But he was also very young, he made mistakes, and there was a limit to his ability to portray himself as a candidate beyond the scope of ideology and energy. The Joe Handrick who ran and won at twenty-eight was a more fully realized candidate. He had a career, a campaign theme that went beyond ideology, and a campaign style that fit his constituency. His win would not have been possible without the person who had lost twice previously. Handrick was considered a serious contender for an open seat because he had worked so hard in his previous campaigns, defying expectations and pressing hard two different incumbent Democratic legislators. He paid his dues, taking the hard lessons of defeat and incorporating them into a campaign plan that would propel him to his personal goals.

Once he achieved his political goal of election to the assembly and had legislated for five years, he discovered that the environment of the legislature did not allow him the scope of participation he sought. His forms of independence and empowerment were not consistent with the power structure of the Republican-controlled assembly; he was unwilling to cede independence to achieve power. Joe moved on from elective office.

If we return to the contexts described in chapter 1, we see that Joe's career is shaped by a variety of changing contexts. The access context held constant. The structural context changed, especially with regard to the continuing value of the legislative seat. In Handrick's first three legislative campaigns, he existed on the first dimension of the legislature's structure, as a recruit, and continued on that dimension as a retained member. He found areas of specialization within the institutional structure. But, ultimately, the existence of a seat that was safe for him and the desire of the leadership to retain him were insufficient to offset the third prong of the legislature's structuring role—authority distribution within the chamber. His needs were not met by the internal organization of the legislature, and therefore the value of his seat was diminished in his eyes.

The context that was most altered was the personal context. Joe Handrick at twenty had one purpose: to run for office. Joe Handrick at twenty-eight

was married. Joe Handrick at thirty-three was a father, with a daughter and a son on the way, and, in his mind, legislating and parenting were not consistent pursuits. For Joe, the question he asked of himself in 1994 was irrelevant; it was no longer a matter of what to do after he had accomplished everything he set out to do. In 2000, it was a matter of whether the ambitions of his early youth were consistent with his personal and professional needs. And they were not.

Notes

1. Holperin had his share of constituency challenges in his last few years in office. In 1990, he was the subject of a recall election because of the spearfishing issue. Holperin opposed special spearfishing privileges for Native Americans, but because he wasn't an active voice against the spearfishing treaty, the most virulent opponents came after him.
2. This is the obligatory baseball reference in this book. Paul Molitor played for the Milwaukee Brewers for fifteen seasons, hitting .306 with over two hundred home runs.
3. A *push poll* is a technique where biased question design, under the guise of polling, is used to persuade a voter by emphasizing candidate negatives.
4. Joe called me before the book went to press and indicated that the incumbent in the experiment was reelected by exactly the same margin as before, when he put out five hundred signs.
5. As an aside, in primaries and general elections, consultant use was typically lowest among younger candidates. Young candidates in general elections most often used professional consultants to develop and implement polls, while other candidates most often used firms to handle direct mail.