



CASE STUDY

Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

OPPORTUNITY:

In 2008, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden (“Zoo”) returned to the voters of Hamilton County for a renewal (and slight increase) of a property tax levy to support Zoo operations. The proposed levy would generate \$7 million annually, or about 25% of the Zoo’s annual operating budget.

The Zoo had faced declining budgets in recent years due to Hamilton County budget review policies. The 2008 campaign provided an opportunity to increase public funding support for the Zoo in line with increased private support. The Zoo is the least subsidized Zoo in Ohio, and among the least in the country.

Convincing Hamilton County voters for increased support was a challenging exercise in the anti-tax environment with a struggling economy.

SOLUTION:

Vehr Communications was engaged to provide strategic communications and political counsel to the Board and staff leadership of the Zoo as it sought approval from the Board of Hamilton County Commissioners to place an issue on the ballot to renew and increase property tax support for the Zoo. Vehr Communications was also responsible for day-to-day management of the ballot issue campaign, including all strategic communications (television, radio, print and online), field operations and budget management of the campaign.

RESULT:

In May (2008), the voters of Hamilton County approved the Zoo’s ballot issue with 59% of the vote. The Zoo received the endorsement of every major media outlet in Hamilton County and broad support among Cincinnati’s business and elected leaders.

