

PubSent

Case Study

Mid Atlantic Incumbent City Council Campaign

Campaign window: 1 Day from Election Day

Audience: 6,991 Targeted Voters

Goal: Lift Turnout and Strengthen Base



OBJECTIVES

1. **Increase overall turnout** compared with the 2021 off-year election
2. **Sustain the incumbent's strong vote share** while expanding raw support
3. **A/B/C test starter texts** to identify the strongest conversation opener

IMPACT

26.3% Increase in voter turnout from the previous election

90.8% of the vote, holding a decisive margin in a larger electorate

6.62% Response rate, **3.78%** Opt-out rate, Average response marked as "Positive"

SUMMARY

In the final days of the 2025 municipal cycle, an incumbent city council campaign partnered with PubSent to send a single SMS touch to 6,991 targeted voters. The text blended a concise GOTV reminder with a conversation-oriented prompt designed to educate, answer questions, and identify persuadable voters. Real-time sentiment scoring provided the campaign with continuous insight, carrier issues remained negligible, and engagement patterns revealed valuable opportunities for high quality follow up.

STRATEGY & EXECUTION

Texts guided users into short conversations about voting logistics and local priorities. PubSent's agent tagged every reply by sentiment and topic, allowing the team to quickly identify undecided voters, resolve negative feedback, and surface replies that required a human touch. Even with opt-out instructions taking up roughly one third of the initial message, the opt-out rate stayed at 3.78%.

Most importantly, the campaign was able to identify a smaller pool of voters who offered high-value engagement signals. These were voters who raised detailed questions, expressed nuanced concerns, or clearly needed personalized follow up beyond the agent's source points or message limits. Over the course of Election Day, approximately 20 to 30 of these high-quality contacts were escalated directly to the candidate for personal outreach, each accompanied by a conversation transcript that previewed the voter's interests and concerns.

KEY LESSONS & INSIGHTS

Reply Rates Matter

Even modest reply rates can drive significant turnout gains when texts are timely, relevant, and conversational.

Opt Outs Neutral

Prominent opt-out language does not depress engagement when messages deliver clear value.

Targeted Follow Up

Real-time sentiment scoring helps teams focus limited volunteer resources where persuasion or clarification is most needed

Base Plus Growth

Two-way SMS can reinforce an incumbent's support base while expanding the overall electorate.

CONVOS

The below texts are actual conversations with the PubSent Agent (Grey) and Real Voters (Blue).

All identifying information has been altered, see below for more details

CONVO 1 Example of conversation goals being met, no deeper response needed.

Hi, this is the virtual assistant for Councilman Taylor. He's fought to make our neighborhoods safer and more affordable. Polls are open 7a-8p tomorrow, want info on where you vote? Text back here and I'll answer. If you'd rather not receive more texts, reply STOP and I won't message you again.

11/3/2025, 11:14:45 AM

I have already mailed my ballot in.

11/3/2025, 11:45:17 AM

Thank you for voting and making your voice heard.

11/3/2025, 11:45:26 AM

CONVO 3 From "He's a fraud" to "I will give him my vote, and I will encourage my family members..."

Hi, this is the virtual assistant for Councilman Jon Taylor, your Councilman for Willow Creeke's 2nd District. Councilman Taylor has fought for safer streets, affordable housing, and stronger neighborhoods. He would be honored to have your support!

I'm happy to help with any questions about the Councilman's time in office.

Tomorrow is Election Day, polls are open 7a-8p.

If you'd rather not receive more texts, reply STOP and I won't message you again.

11/3/2025, 11:03:12 AM

He's a FRAUD And he's doing nothing in the west district to help the SNAP recipients get food. He lets the people at the food bank steel and that's Danny PITRELL Parker, picking and choose who he wants to put in Maple Square no, I will not be voting for him.

11/3/2025, 11:05:54 AM

Thank you for sharing your concerns. Councilman Taylor has worked to expand access to affordable food, like supporting the Downtown grocery on 2nd Avenue and local markets in Maple. What changes would you like to see for SNAP recipients or food access in the West District?

11/3/2025, 11:06:07 AM

I used to love councilman Taylor. But when I became disabled (I was eight credits away from getting my BSW from WESTMONT.) I applied for housing at Maple Square and Danny Peter Parker is in charge down there. It is a well known fact throughout the west district that he picks and shoes is who he wants to go in those apartments I am now stuck in a roach infested apartment on Madison Avenue paying \$1400 a month My Daughter is my caregiver and I receive SSDI.

I work since I was 14 years old and now that I am struggling, I can't even reach out to my councilman to investigate these landlords that continue to take Section 8 subsidies, but don't want to maintain their properties

I just want someone to listen and to help and to stop the rampant nepotism activities in the housing authority to make these landlords be held accountable for what they are doing to people like me he can get my vote if he would just listen

11/3/2025, 11:16:29 AM

Thanks for sharing your experience. Councilman Taylor has worked on stronger oversight in affordable housing and helped create the Housing Opportunity Fund. Would you want him to focus first on housing placement oversight or landlord accountability? Let me know if you want to discuss other issues too.

11/3/2025, 11:16:47 AM

Both! I will give him my vote, and I will encourage my family members who live up West to do the same. I just hope that he keeps his promises. I really need his help. I wish he could personally come visit me and talk to me. he doesn't even have to come in. I can just show him pictures of what's going on in my unit

Or if he has an email I can share what is happening to me, but overall he can count on me and my family's boat. I just hope that he really keeps his promises. Thank you for listening.

11/3/2025, 11:43:35 AM

Thank you for your support. Please remember to vote tomorrow. Your voice and your vote truly matter.

11/3/2025, 11:43:46 AM

CONVO 2 Listening to concerns, noting specific suggestions, converted to a voter.

Hi, this is the virtual assistant for Councilman Jon Taylor, your Councilman for Pittsburgh's 2nd District. Councilman Taylor has fought for safer streets, affordable housing, and stronger neighborhoods. He would be honored to have your support!

I'm happy to help with any questions about the Councilman's time in office.

Tomorrow is Election Day, polls are open 7a-8p.

If you'd rather not receive more texts, reply STOP and I won't message you again.

11/3/2025, 11:09:05 AM

How about an updated Recreational center for the Westside, seeing the only functional one is Jackson Rec and that is a sorry excuse compared to some of the other centers around the city

11/3/2025, 1:14:47 PM

Great point. Councilman Taylor has supported using the End the Violence Fund to improve recreation centers and youth programming, aiming for more equitable facilities. What features or programs would you like to see in a Westside rec center? Your input helps guide future investments.

11/3/2025, 1:15:00 PM

Updated facilities in general, both centers on the Westside are extremely dilapidated, especially Cramer in Mount Blank. A beautiful building that has been left to ruin after years and years of neglect.

Exercise machines and weights similar to those already established in centers like Freeline, Aimsly, French, and Annon.

Programs for kids during the summer as well

11/3/2025, 1:22:39 PM

Thank you for sharing these details. Councilman Taylor has advocated for recreation center upgrades and expanded youth programming, and your feedback highlights the need for modern equipment and summer programs on the Westside. He'll continue pushing for these improvements. Your voice matters, will you support him at the polls tomorrow?

11/3/2025, 1:22:53 PM

I've been a Westside resident since 2022, Willow Creek resident since 2011. I love this city, I work for this city, and I just want to see blue collar families be able to enjoy life again without the constant worry of struggle.

If you are able to show some real initiative and progress, you'll have my vote

11/3/2025, 1:25:36 PM

Your dedication to Willow Creek and the Westside is clear, and your concerns for working families are shared by Councilman Taylor. He's prioritized affordable housing, safer streets, and investing in community spaces so families can thrive. Thank you for your honesty and for caring about our city's future.

11/3/2025, 1:25:48 PM

CONVO 4 Voting question answered accurately, in exactly 11 seconds.

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11/3/2025, 11:09:24 AM

Need Ballot drop off information

11/3/2025, 11:44:59 AM

You can return your mail-in ballot to a drop box by 8pm on Election Day. Find the nearest drop location here:
<https://www.maplecounty.us/Government/Elections/Ballot-Return-Sites>. If you have questions about voting or Councilman Taylor's work, let me know!

11/3/2025, 11:45:10 AM

Why is this Case Study Anonymous?

Myself (Tom) and Andrew discussed this at length and ultimately decided the cost of social proof by making this anonymous was worth preserving one of our core values of strict neutrality. Especially as we operate in the political space, we solely want our platform to be judged on the results it provides, not the party it happened to help deliver victory.