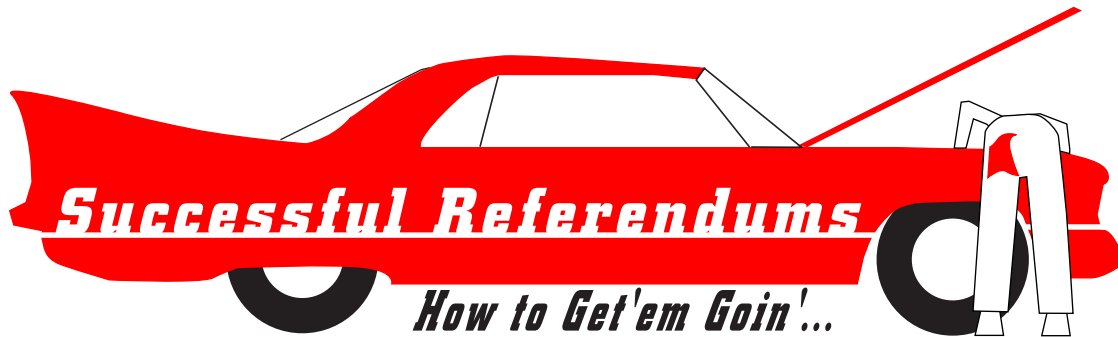


# The BCA Memo

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**W**hen the auto mechanic tells us our car needs to be repaired, we can understand the necessity to perform the repair work to keep the car running, but we have a somewhat different view when handed the bill. Reaction to the financial responsibility for the work is a little more difficult to accept. Passing a referendum for necessary repairs and remodeling is similar in the mind of the voter. *They have to understand the needs and the related costs before they will agree to the repair work.*

The voting public won't approve an "open checkbook" on the spending of their tax dollars. A referendum must clearly define the needs and goals in order to avoid voter misconception and generate community wide support. Providing a comparison of existing facilities to a publicly supported standard is important for voters to identify "what is in the referendum for them." A community that understands the result will support the effort to obtain the result. *We all understand what an automobile running in tip-top shape means to us, therefore we accept the financial responsibility to keep it running in that manner.*

It is also important to involve the voting public in the decision making process. Voters who have their say and who believe their opinions matter are more likely to be supportive. A campaign process which includes volunteer participation, public meetings where all can have their say, and is driven by the participants, will provide a sense of ownership in the need. *We accept the financial responsibility for our cars, in part because we own them and we understand what is necessary to keep the car running.*

A referendum process needs to convince the voter of what could be built for a specific amount of money. Descriptions of the resulting product are necessary to help the voter visualize the impact on their lives and their community. Specialists can help develop the referendum process with the public body seeking voter approval to spend tax dollars. One of those specialists is an architect. It is important to hire an architect that understands your specific needs and building type. Architects can produce and document the 'Needs Assessment' information to describe in detail the end result of the referendum. Two

dimensional drawings such as site plans, floor plans or elevations and three dimensional renderings are helpful tools which convey the possibilities to voters. Architects are specialists in

producing these visual aids. *Just as we hire a specialist for the specific repair work on our car, we must hire the specialists necessary to develop a successful referendum process.*

It is important to make the referendum message to the voter as clear and direct as possible. Give voters one or two major themes that are compelling and easily understood. Expressing the urgent need for improvements or the upgrades in educational value to the community are very compelling messages. Describe these messages in clear, concise statements or use visual aids that convey information in direct terms. A clear and direct message can be a strong message to emphasize the referendum's need. *Most of us do not understand the inner workings of an automobile and we need a mechanic that can explain the needed repairs in simple, clear terms for us to accept the financial responsibility. Just as we trust our mechanic to perform the proper work, a well informed public will be more likely to support a well-thought out and clearly communicated referendum.*

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