



Starting a Branch

Introduction

Two of our most frequently received emails are “*do you know of any branch in our area*” and inquiries about “*how do I start a branch?*” The WI-JBGC is happy to provide these individuals with the resources they need to organize.

Authority to Create a Branch

Due to the decentralized nature of the greater *John Brown Gun Club Movement*, there are no established requirements for starting a branch, other than what is applied by using the namesake of the radical slavery abolitionist, *John Brown*. Our movement is naturally of a leftist nature, as we seek to advocate for the defense, organization, and otherwise empowerment of marginalized communities in the face of reactionary violence. While we refer to them as *branches*, this is an incorrect term only used for simplicity because each organization is independent and separate from each other. They may differ in ideology, focus, organizational structure, etc.

What You Need

All you need to start a branch is a few friends and a defined purpose. What if you are passionate about starting a club and don't have the friends to do it? Well, then just start with the organization, go out and do stuff yourself, and get recruits along the way. The WI-JBGC, in all of its popularity, was started by just one person, so if you start with a group of friends, you're already in a better spot than we were.

Define Activity

The JBGC movement is famous for two things. First is our community defense, picking up arms in order to protect our communities, such as one of the many times the [*WI-JBGC attended protests at the State Capitol*](#), or when the [*Elm Fork JBGC ensured the safety of a drag show*](#). Along with this comes our second most famous activity; providing an inclusive environment for firearms education, seeking to advocate for and educate those who may not feel safe in, or are otherwise not included in the traditionally right-wing gun spaces. Our clubs may maintain educational resources and commit to political activism for our advocacy.

Aboveground vs Underground

While defining your activity, it is important to consider whether you will be an aboveground organization, performing legal activism, or an underground organization, performing clandestine operations, and to plan your organization accordingly. Each option has unique benefits and challenges.

Aboveground allows you to get the message out quicker, gain more recruits, serve as a beacon for those interested in education & getting involved in revolutionary activity, but has the cons of being under more scrutiny, being more or less regulated to legal activity, and your organization becomes a known target for repression.

Underground allows you to have a direct & immediate impact, to better safeguard the privacy of those involved, more secure recruitment, and to provoke both gov't & corporate change quickly, but poses the risk of backfired repression, imprisonment, and [*RICO*](#).



Maintain Firearm Competency

If you are going to attend public events armed, you should maintain competency with your firearm. We've outlined, at the very least, four things to do; (I) be competent in maintaining firearm safety rules, (II) be competent in your weapon's operation, use, and be accurate at the ranges you are willing to engage, (III) make informed decisions about your ammunition such as utilizing hollow-points in public spaces, and (IV) learn how to patch up a gunshot wound.

Operational Security (OPSEC)

When you've defined your organization, you should define the unique threats it may face. If you've chosen to be an aboveground organization, you need to ensure that all public-facing material that can be associated with your group does not violate law. If you've chosen an underground organization, you need to ensure that all your volunteers are on the same page about operational security procedures. Plan & prepare for possible outcomes.

Per deepgreenresistance.org, do not discuss...

1. Your involvement or someone else's involvement with an underground group.
2. Your or someone else's desire to get involved with such a group.
3. Your or someone else's participation in illegal action.
4. Someone else's advocacy for such actions.
5. Your or someone else's plans for a future illegal action.
6. Don't ask others if they are a member of an underground group.
7. Don't talk about illegal actions in terms of specific times, people, places, etc.

Personal Security (PERSEC)

Whether your organization is an aboveground or underground model, you need to be cognizant of what information about you is available, and how it could be used to find you, which then poses a risk not only to yourself, to your employment, but to your family & friends. Do your social media profiles tell people where you work, went to school, what city you live in, what your hometown is, or how old you are? With a legal name, a city, and an age, one can use services like *BeenVerified* to access critical information such as an address, workplace, criminal record, vehicles, known associates, places you frequent, et cetera. Do you post pictures of yourself, and if you do, what can be used within those pictures to pose a risk to your security? Are you in a work uniform? Do you have any documents visible? Any landmarks that could be used to identify where you live or work? Do you have a *LinkedIn* page with a work history or a resume? Be aware of what information is available about you and your volunteers online, and mitigate that harm before it becomes an issue.

Prepare for the Journey

The WI-JBGC had a long, lonely, difficult journey leading up to the success we've found. Be passionate about what you do and do not take on more than you can handle. Have a corps of dedicated revolutionaries who will take the pressure off of you to avoid burnout. Read books like [*Shut It Down*](#) (Lisa Fithian) to help you prepare. Read, read, read again; read theory to ensure that what you are doing is effective and conducive to the revolutionary struggle. And realize that you are going to make mistakes. We can't read all day, otherwise there would be none of us to fight. Act first, we'll learn along the way, and with improvement comes success.



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