

Media 101 and Working With Reporters

Having a great campaign message is important – but it'll only get you so far if no one is listening. Using the media is a great way to reach a larger audience and increases the likelihood that elected officials will pay attention to your issue. Forms of media that you can use to get the word out include:

- newspaper articles
- letters to the editor
- op-ed columns
- radio and TV
- blogs

When pitching a reporter to get them to cover an event you're organizing, be sure to emphasize what makes it newsworthy. Why should the reporter want to cover your event? Your pitch should answer this question. The following are all great hooks to get the media's attention:

- visuals
- high crowd turnout
- important/noteworthy speakers
- timeliness
- local impact

The "Seven C's of Messaging" apply to your pitch to reporters – keep it concise and compelling. Be sure to explicitly ask the reporter if he/she will attend your event.

Tips for working with reporters

- **Build a relationship:** Getting to know reporters will make your work with them more effective. Reach out to reporters who cover environment, energy or political issues, tell them about your work and let them know that you can be a resource to them. You can even ask to meet with them in person.
- **Respect their time:** Reporters are often crunched for time, so be sure to ask if they're on deadline when you reach out to them. They'll appreciate your consideration of their needs.
- **Stay on message:** Reporters or elected officials will often make small talk or lead you off-topic, so make sure to bring the conversation back to your message. If you ever feel flustered or lose your train of thought, just re-state your message. This is where repetition is critical – the more often you repeat your message, the more likely it will appear in the media.
- **Don't wing it:** If you don't know the answer to a question, don't make something up! That can seriously damage your credibility. It is perfectly acceptable to tell a reporter or elected official "I don't know the answer to that. Can I get back to you?"
- **You're never "off the record:"** Anything you say to a reporter can appear in the media, so don't say anything you might regret later.