



## Media Guide

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## Introduction

Like the “moderate” voter, swaying in each election, the media is a fickle creature. Mandatory deadlines and heaps of potential story ideas, news reporters, cameramen and photographers appear at their own will. Media representatives must filter through an often overwhelming amount of competing messages, balancing today’s news with tomorrow’s. Breaking news stories put everything else on hold, while various news outlets to grab the scoop — competing to be the first to break the news or to be the news outlet with the most complete coverage.

Because of this hectic schedule, constantly pulling media representatives in different directions, they swarm the scenes at times, notepads and microphones in hand and are no where to be found at other times. Even a perfectly organized and executed event can pass by without media coverage. And unfortunately, this selectivity on their part doesn’t help you.

Attention from the media plays an important part in reaching your community. The media helps you promote your causes and recruit volunteers. As a Democratic organization your goals are to:

- Increase voter turnout
- Inform potential voters on local issues
- Win local elections

By facilitating communication, the media helps you contact voters. It keeps the members in your community informed and up to date, which is an essential part to winning elections.

Without the media, your job reaching voters becomes that much harder. Getting through to the media, in spite of their seemingly fickle appearances, is important. And often, it’s a matter of using the right methods. But, luckily, being persistent and professional by following the norms of each industry goes a long way.

So this guide contains tips and advice on communicating with the media. Keep in mind, however, there is no guarantee these methods will increase media coverage of your events and issues. With many other stories and issues on their plate, the media isn’t easy to predict.

## The Mediums of Communication

There are several mediums of communication, each with their own way of conducting business. These include:

Print  
Radio  
Television  
Web

### Paid Media v. Earned Media

The printed newspaper arriving on your doorstep each morning is very different from local jocks bantering on your radio as you drive home each afternoon. Likewise, a 600 word media release, ready for print publication, isn’t appropriate for half a minute of air time on the radio. And that thirty second snippet, quickly giving the “where” and “when” of an event, isn’t appropriate to send to newspapers looking for a more detailed descriptions.

Although each of the four mediums is very different from the others, they do have some things in common. One is that they all include paid and earned media:

- **Paid media** – It’s just like it sounds. It’s paid for and can, depending on the specific outlet, be expensive. It includes advertisements in the newspaper, paid inserts in magazines or even those infomercials broadcast at one in the morning. Mailings sent out to your district are also considered paid media. And even a spot in a local church bulletin falls into this category if there is a financial transaction involved.
- **Earned media** – Earned media, on the other hand, is not bought. Rather, it involves garnering attention from the local television station or making the

headlines of your city's newspaper. Basically earned media consists of assignment editors, reporters, anchors and other individuals choosing to cover your events or information without negotiating payment.

Media representatives are in business (and often consider it their duty) to inform the public about events and topics relevant to their readers and listeners. So when they look for content, news reporters and other individuals turn to local events and organizations for story ideas. They choose what they want to cover and how they want to cover these issues and events. So more often than not, you will not be in control of what they print – even when they cover your events.

Because of this, earned media is also harder to reach. It's still important to try, though. Earned media has a level of credibility not always accorded to paid media. Even though it may take some work, generating media by catching the attention of radio and newspaper persons is worth the effort. And that's what we're concentrating on in this guide – how to work with existing media outlets to promote your events and district issues.

## Compiling Your Media List

### Why should you compile a media list?

Whenever you need to generate publicity, contacting the media is vital. Without hearing directly from you, the media may not hear about your event or issue otherwise. They can't cover an event if they don't know about it. And they may not see your side of an issue in your district if it's not brought to their attention. You'll need to take proactive steps in alerting them.

That means first gathering contact information. But finding a media outlet's contact information can be tedious and time consuming. You don't want to search for this information each time you need it. So here's where your media list comes in handy.

### What is a media list?

A media list is, essentially, a list of addresses and phone numbers of media organizations around your district. Email addresses and fax numbers for these organizations should go in your list. And including the names of relevant contact people from those organizations is definitely appropriate, as well. Ideally you should turn to it, like you turn to your own personal address book - an easy to understand reference for contact information.

And remember, it should include the names and information for many different organizations. Having the contact information for some of your area's media outlet's is good. But, having many is better.

When you need publicity, contacting one media outlet isn't enough. Instead, contacting several media outlets increases your chances for potential coverage. While the local newspaper may not respond, a local television station might.

### How to Create Your Media List

Don't be content solely contacting the largest daily or weekly newspaper in your district. Many other smaller forms of communication also increase the chances your message is heard. For instance, you may want to include community college newspapers, or publications from civic groups in the area. A student in one of your district's community colleges may miss that news blurb about your event on the local television station. But after reading about it in their school paper, that student might hear and even attend. So your job is to:

1. Gather contact information from various media outlets in your district
2. Compile it and create a list.
3. Keep a hard copy on hand and an electronic database

To get contact information for these media outlets, a local library or bookstore may have a media directory. The phone book and the internet are good resources to use when supplementing your list. And don't forget people you already know. Contacts you already know involved in these organizations can help retrieve contact information for you. (Especially when it comes to smaller outlets, relying on others makes information not always available in a media directory or online, available.)

Once you're done collecting and compiling the information for each media type, consider printing out a hard copy. Creating your media guide on a computer word document or excel spreadsheet allows you to make changes easily. Having a hard copy on hand, however, allows for easier access. You may not always have access to the computer's directory file. A paper copy, however, is very easy to transport.

## Your Message

While you may keep and update the same media list for use in several different outlets, your message changes in different circumstances. So remember before you start contacting the media, clarify your message.

1.) First, select the issue or event. Perhaps there's a political issue in your district you wish address by writing a letter to the editor. Or maybe you need publicity for a speech by a local politician in your district. In both cases, consider the subject matter. Make sure there's a substantial message or point before asking for media attention.

2.) Shape your message by asking yourself about the audience. Even though you're going through the media, your audience (and not the media alone) determines the appropriateness of a message. Ask yourself:

- "Who am I trying to reach?" Not all issues and events appeal to all demographics. If applicable, tailor your message to the sensitivities of your audience.
- "What do I want the readers or listeners to learn from this?" Take a few moments to become organized and clarify your goals.

3.) Then take note of the facts. In the case of an issue, really analyze it. Make sure your argument is strong and addresses public perceptions. Before explaining what you know is correct, ask yourself, "What is the opposition saying?" Make sure your argument seals any loopholes. In part your message will be shaped by this comparison.

To help with the messaging process, one of the best tools is the Paul Tully message box, which forces a discussion, of not only what message you want to create about yourself, but also your message defining your opposition (as well as their message on themselves and on you). With relevant issues, go through and organize your message by asking yourself about the message or issue in question:

<b>What we are saying</b>	<b>What is the opposition saying</b>
<b>What you are saying</b>	<b>What they say about themselves</b>

As you will see, while the questions are fairly straightforward, they are designed to examine messages/opinions about the Democratic Party. Using this as a guide, they can help you formalize opinions on issues, from a local perspective, about how democrats are viewed both locally and nationally, answering the questions in each quadrant of the box.

1. How do people in the state view local Democrats? National Democrats?
2. A SWOT analysis - what are the strengths & weaknesses, opportunities & threats of the Democratic Party? Locally vs. nationally?
3. How would you describe the mission of the Democratic Party locally?
4. How would you describe the mission of the Democ-

atic Party nationally?

5. What words describe the Democratic Party?
6. What are the top 3 issues in your state? Are they being addressed in the national debate?
7. How do we want people to view the Democratic Party and what we stand for?
8. How do we want people to view the Republican Party and what they stand for?
9. How do the republicans want people to view the Democratic Party and what we stand for?
10. How do the republicans want people to view them?

### Special types of messages

One type of message is shaped by its human interest appeal. That is, it's written or approached as a human interest piece, telling the media and the audience that a real person is affected. This includes discussions of meetings, rallies, speakers and anything else in which the focus is more overtly about people. Notice when a message can take a human interest approach because it can definitely be used to your advantage.

And when it comes to events, gather the details. Neglecting a piece of important information could confuse the media and audience. And it usually reflects well on you and your event when you can supply even the smallest of details. Basically, be ready for any questions that can, and probably will, arise.

### Sample Messages

Now check out the following sample media releases for examples of messages:

The message here is:  
Protecting Social  
Security



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – February 10, 2005

Contact: Janet Meza, Communications Director - 602-298-4200 / [press@azdem.org](mailto:press@azdem.org)

### **State's GOP Takes On Congressman's Fight to Protect Social Security**

**PHOENIX, AZ** – Lobbyist turned GOP Chairman Matt Salmon's sarcastic attack on Tucson Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva's quest to protect Social Security hides the Republicans its true motives of privatizing the federal government. Salmon used his weekly message to gloss over President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security, increasing the nation's debt in the process and attack Congressman Grijalva for fighting to protect Social Security from being dismantled.

"Coming from someone who attempted to dupe Arizonans during his campaign for governor by trying to hide the fact that he was an unregistered lobbyist and whose own track record of "progress" is at best questionable is insulting," said Grijalva.

While Salmon's message to an increasingly divided Party is that "Arizona Democrats such as Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva are doing their best to obstruct progress," he does not mention that Grijalva is fighting to protect a program that has not failed the American people in 70 years. Salmon does not tell supporters how unpopular the current measure to reform Social Security is, how much it is going

to cost the American people and how they still need bipartisan support to get the legislation passed. He does not make mention of how Bush's Social Security plan will affect everyone even if they choose not to participate in a private account their benefits will be cut.

Before Salmon can criticize Congressman Grijalva's views on Bush's proposal by saying that "The Democratic Party is now the party of "no," he needs to focus on taking care of his own back yard. What Salmon is not telling fellow supporters is that his message of "no" is more consistent with the Arizona Republicans Party's lack of vision, inclusiveness and tolerance. As the leader of Arizona Republicans, Salmon supported drawing of lines between moderate and radical Republicans to divide and disconnect individuals with varying ideas, diverse visions and different points of view.

Even while Republicans cannot agree among themselves on what to do about Social Security, Grijalva is simply asking the questions the Bush Administration is not answering up-front. Congressman Grijalva is protective of Arizona seniors as well as younger Arizonans currently investing into Social Security. Matt Salmon and rank and file Republicans should congratulate Congressman Grijalva for putting Arizona values first by demanding responsible stewardship that Arizonans expect to be on their side.

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And the message here is  
about: Young Americans  
in politics



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – February 11, 2005

Contact: Janet Meza, Communications Director  
602-298-4200 / [press@azdem.org](mailto:press@azdem.org)

**YDA Member To 2<sup>nd</sup> Dean Nomination**

PHOENIX, AZ – Young Democrats of Arizona (YDA) member and former state chairwoman Alexis Tameron of Mesa, Arizona will be one of four westerners to 2<sup>nd</sup> the Nomination of Howard Dean to serve as the new Chairman Democratic National Committee (DNC). Tameron is expected to make the motion when the 447 voting members meet on Saturday on February 12, 2005, in Washington, DC.

“Governor Dean’s strength to convene an increasingly growing number of young Americans who did not vote for the current Administration will prove to be just one of the accomplishments he can claim, even before accepting to serve as our Chair,” said Alexis. “He has a clear vision of what it will take to link every component of the Democratic Party and bring it together to begin to unthread the Republican’s invasive control on American private lives,” added Alexis.

The National Young Democrats of America publicly endorsed Governor Howard Dean last week at their “Choose Your Chair” campaign conference call which featured all previous individuals running for DNC Chair. In addition to her role a national youth representative for the YDA, Tameron also works as the Political Director for the Arizona Democratic Party overseeing the Party’s political outreach

and grassroots field operations.

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*The Young Democrats of America (YDA) has been the official youth arm of the Democratic Party since 1932. Open to anyone under the age of 36 who affiliates with the Democratic Party, YDA is a nationwide grassroots organization with 42 chartered states and 780 local chapters. Their 50,000 plus membership reflects the broad diversity of our nation and the Democratic Party. - <http://www.yda.org/>*

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### **A quick analysis**

After reading through both media releases, it's very clear they concern very different subject matters. The first is a reaction to statements while the latter is an announcement of a nomination. And yet both are very clearly written. The message itself is identifiable at the very top of the releases. The headline, "State's GOP Takes On Congressman's Fight to Protect Social Security" and "YDA Member to 2<sup>nd</sup> Dean Nomination" are indicative of the rest of the media release. By reading those two headlines, you have a good idea about the rest of the piece. Your message should be narrow and simple enough to summarize in a similar manner.

Also, look at how the first release addresses Arizonans. In particular, the last line states, "Matt Salmon and rank and file Republicans should congratulate Congressman Grijalva for putting Arizona values first by demanding responsible stewardship that Arizonans expect to be on their side." It overtly answers the question of "whom" by emphasizing Arizonans and Arizona values as well as answers the question of "what" the audience should take away from it.

## **Creating an Event**

### **Why should you create events?**

1. To make information stand out
2. Make information more newsworthy

Sometimes important information gets lost in the shuffle. And sometimes you may realize information you want to get out isn't something the media has grasped just yet or is inappropriate to send "as is." While some things already are events, like the kickoff of a major fundraiser/charity walk and the like, you can also create your own events. More specifically, the information that might otherwise be lost can be revived by creating an event.

For instance, perhaps you have a lot of information regarding a local development issue in your district or even information about a more national issue like social security. You can send out letters to the editor, write a column, call your local radio stations and try to spread the information and your message out as just information. And those are certainly great ways to get your message to voters in your district. But another alternative is to take those issues and make them the center of an event. Perhaps you can bring in a local politician or a knowledgeable individual to speak to people in your district about these issues. You could create a panel interview to discuss certain issues or you could even honor someone in your district.

### **Things to consider**

Make sure to create a tie between your actions and the issue. For instance, if a rival politician isn't looking out for local schools, bring this to the public's attention through an event. But make sure people understand and realize the tie between the two. Basically, make sure your message is clear.

Also consider tying your event around a national day

and not just the nationally recognized holidays either. For instance, national parks and recreation day may be a great time to host an event related to your park services and funding. Check the national calendar for lesser known, but still potentially relevant, days.

Once you have an idea for your event and message, you consider:

**Programming** – Thinking back to your message, make sure your event clearly reflects the message. This is perhaps the most important part in planning for an event. Unfortunately, it's often the most neglected. Make sure to spend enough time on it.

**Logistics** – More than “where” and “when”, make sure the size of the area is appropriate, there will be enough chairs, and all other relevant details involving the needs of your audiences, speakers or in any activity. And remember to consider the audio visual needs. If you have a speaker, where will they stand? If in front of a larger audience, how will they be heard? Do they have presentation material that relies on a projector or other technology?

**Media** – Where will the media sit? Did you successfully attract the media? What are their needs? What can you do

Go through this checklist, to make sure everything's covered when relevant.

- Microphone (lavaliere, hand held, cordless, ect.)
- Podium (standing or table top)
- Mult box (equipment that allows media to get audio from the speaker when the event doesn't allow them to get up close)
- Video projectors, screens, tape recorders, camera recorders, etc.)
- Room set-up (Is the room setup theatre, classroom, rounds, ect?)
- Lighting
- Podium sign
- Signs
- Banners
- Picture perfect background (Is your stage framed for a good picture?)

to make the event more “newsworthy”? Take a few moments to really consider what the media will think about your event.

*And don't forget to ask yourself...*

### Is it picture perfect?

If anticipating a media representative's arrival, be conscious of your surroundings. Part of the media's job generally involves delivering a visual picture of the news they are delivering. A news story may include a photograph of the event or, in the case of online and electronic broadcast mediums, a short video clip. And very often, these additional features determine the placement of a story. A story with an interesting picture is generally more likely to find its way to the front of a paper, online news site or be featured on television.

So creating a visually pleasing element to your story is important. Give the media representative a scene in which they can easily find a picture. Make sure the scenery and background of your event is clear.

Also, pay attention to indicators that reveal the intention of an event. While a picture may say a thousand words, sometimes one picture looks an awful lot like another. For instance, a picture of a speaker at a podium could be confused for a multitude of events that host speakers if the picture only consists of the individual and a plain podium. But adding a banner in the background, noting the occasion or noting it is a Democratic event adds a different dimension to the picture. So taking some time to think about the appearance and background of your event may help make your event look picture perfect.

## Your Tools

There are several different ways to get your message to each media outlet – refer to the medium’s section to determine which is best. But, for the most part, there are six main tools you may need:

- **Media Advisory** – A media advisory is essentially, a very brief advanced notice about an activity, policy, issue or announcement.
- **Media Release** – A media release is your information written in the form of a news article. It’s a formal announcement of something currently going on, new changes, events and more. It is also used to make an official statement from your organization on a specific issue or policy.
- **Rapid Response** – It is an ADP online tool, facilitating in writing letters to the editor.
- **Letters to the Editor or News Director** – Written in response to a news article or piece, opinion column or even another letter (in printed medias), letters to the editor and letters to the news director give input to the staff. They may also be a way of showing appreciation, by complimenting the media on their coverage of an issue. In the case of printed media, the letter may be published in the newspaper.
- **Opinion Column** – Used in the printed medias, opinion columns appear in the Opinions/Editorials pages providing written commentary on recent news events. Submitting a guest opinion column to a print media outlet is a way to ensure, if it is actually printed, your perspective is represented.

- **Phone** – A phone is important, and not just because of follow-up calls. Media outlets using radio can be reached through radio call-ins. Just like the phrase suggests, you call in to the radio station to spread your message/give your opinion on the radio air waves.
- **Media Kit** – Your media kit is a small collection of material to introduce your organization and your topic to the media. By sending a media kit ahead of time and keeping extras on hand at an event, you can provide media outlets with more information.

## The Media Advisory

A media advisory should appeal to the media and catch their interest in the event or activity. To begin, write a preview of the event, including the important details like “when” and “where.” It’s essentially just a write up of your event and message. And try to engage the media’s interest. While doing so, make sure to include informative facts. Your media advisory should be:

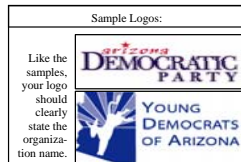
- Very clear and easy to read.
- Brief - try to keep it under one page long.
- Concise – Don’t use larger words or extremely complex sentences when shorter and easier to understand ones work. Remember, everyone should be able to easily read and understand your message.
- Refrain from using exaggerated clichés, words and phrases.

### The Standard Format

After you have the bulk of the media advisory written, focus on the format. A media advisory is written with:

#### A logo or large heading placed at the very top.

From the moment a reader picks up your advisory, they should recognize its origins. A standard logo with your county organization or district written across it does this if used consistently. If you don’t already have a standard logo, make sure to use something at the very top that lets the reader know it’s from your



district. And remember, it doesn’t have to be fancy. Something simple and clear is sometimes more effective.

#### The phrase “For Immediate Release” or

“Embargoed until...” Underneath your logo should be a statement notifying the media representative when they can use the information. Simply written as “For Immediate Release” followed by the current date lets the media know they can use that information right now. On the other hand, the phrase “Embargoed until” followed by a date in the future tells the media they can not disseminate that information until the future date listed. This is generally used when there is time sensitive data that must be released quickly to the media, but, for some reason or another, can not be released to the public at the moment. In most cases you’ll use “For Immediate Release.”

**Contact information.** Next is the contact information, listing a name, phone number and email address at which you or the relevant person can be reached. And make sure that there is contact information for someone, such as the communications liaison, that may be reached at all times.

**A headline revealing your topic.** A headline starts the rest of the article by introducing your audience (the media representatives) to the subject. It usually contains a verb and gives the audience an idea about where the rest of the topic is going. For examples, check out the attached media release sample.

**Three “#” signs at the end of the piece.** By placing a “# # #” at the very end of your piece, the media representative knows the piece has ended. Often, in the media’s world, articles of information will just end when the information ends. But this lack of an obvious conclusion could leave the reader wondering when to expect the ending of the piece and whether they’re missing a

continuation onto a second paper or not. So the symbols “# # #” are used to avoid any confusion, used in both media releases and media advisories.

**Compliance disclaimer.** Legally, any organization that files with the Secretary General must, by federal law, include a compliance disclaimer. The compliance disclaimer designates who paid for the message (insert the organization) and whose authorization it contains. For instance, it may say “Not authorized by any candidate or candidate committee”. Or it may say “Authorized by” a specific individual or committee, if the that individual does endorse the message of the advisory.

By requiring written recognition, the law is aimed at avoiding possible misrepresentations and any possibility of misleading the audience.


### The Final Steps

Once your media advisory is in the proper format, send it out one or two days before the event. It should be advanced notice, but not so advanced that people forget about the event. The objective is to persuade the media into attending your event after reading the media advisory, increasing your chances at getting media coverage.

After sending out the media advisory via email or fax, don't hesitate to make a follow-up phone call. Calling media outlets serves as encouragement and as another reminder to attend the event.

After writing and reviewing your media advisory, you should then:

- Send out the advisory one or two days before the event
- Make a follow-up call



This county logo is located at the top of the advisory.

Here we let the media know when they can use the information.

**For Immediate Release – March 16, 2005**  
Contact: Janet Meza, ADP Communications Director  
- 602-298-4200 / [press@azdem.org](mailto:press@azdem.org)

**Bush' SS Plan Will Hurt More Than 800,000 Arizonans**

The Pima County Democratic Party and Young Democrats of Arizona will host a forum Promises Kept – Preserving Social Security, on Sunday, March 20, 2005 at the Carpenter's Union Hall (606 South Plummer), Tucson, Arizona. Doors will open at 1:30 p.m. and the program begins at 2:00 p.m.

Bush's visit to the state will undoubtedly include a mention of his plan to dismantle Social Security. If Bush's private account scheme succeeds the cuts in Social Security would affect 863,874 Arizonans comprised of spouses, children, retirees, widows, widowers, disabled workers and their families. <sup>(1)</sup>

Place your headline at the top and be descriptive. The reader should know the subject just by looking at the heading.

In a very noticeable location, contact information is given and then repeated.

For general information contact the Pima County Democratic Headquarters at 520.326-3716. Media should contact Janet Meza at (O): 602.298-4200 ext. 29 or (Cell): 202.489-6006.

**Who:** The Honorable Congressman Raúl Grijalva  
Nina Roosevelt Gibson  
Pima County Supervisor Richard Elías

**What:** Promises Kept

Preserving Social Security

**When:** Sunday, March 20, 2005  
Doors open at 1:30 p.m. / Event start time is 2:00 pm.  
Seating is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

**Where:** Carpenter's Union Hall  
606 South Plummer  
Tucson, Arizona

The important details are clearly noted. Doing so, the media representative can quickly find the information when needed. For instance, the media representative should be able to quickly find the location information while on their way to the event.

**Co-Sponsors:** *Arizona AFL-CIO, Association of Retired Americans (ARA), Steelworkers Association of Active Retirees (SOAR), Democratic Chairs - Juana Mase (LD-26), Diana Rhoades (LD-27), Ward Wallingford (LD-28), Carlos Salaz (LD-29) and Laura Hogan (LD-30).*

This symbol at the bottom of the piece signals the end of the advisory's content.

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As of December 2003. Social Security Administration. 2003. OASDI Beneficiaries by State and County. [http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs.statcomps/oasdi\\_sc/2003/index.html](http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs.statcomps/oasdi_sc/2003/index.html)

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<http://www.pimademocrats.org/>  
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The compliance disclaimer is very brief, but clear. Follow the same format on all advisories.

## The Media Release

### What is a media release?

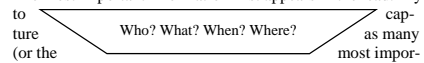
This is a formal announcement of your activities. Sometimes you may want to release more information than possible within the constraints of a media advisory. Sometimes you may want to send out both a formal media release and then a media advisory. And in some cases (anything *not* involving an event) a media advisory just isn't appropriate. For instance, you may want to inform people about an outreach program involving local high schools in your district. Because it's ongoing, there isn't a specific media friendly time and place to invite the media to attend. And yet it's still important to inform the media and the people in your county. The media release, on the other hand, may be a nice fit for this situation.

### How to write a media release

Written as a formal announcement, the media release is sent out in the format of a news article. As such, it's written exactly as you'd like them to publish it. This doesn't guarantee the media outlet will publish your media release in that format or even publish it at all. While sometimes a media outlet chooses to publish your media release, the information from the media release is often used to supplement the news gathering of a reporter. Either way, just getting those facts out to the public, is your primary objective.

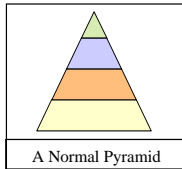
### 1.) Create your lead

Since media releases are written like news stories, the inverted pyramid format is used. You'll start with a "lead". The most important information first appears in the lead. Try to capture as many of the "who," "what," "when" and "where" as you can in that first sentence. It should grab the reader's attention while informing.

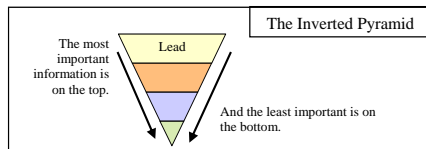


### 2.) Build your pyramid

Then imagine a pyramid. The base is much larger than the top and the width increases as you move from top to the bottom. Invert it and the opposite is true. Now as you move from the top to the bottom of the pyramid, the width decreases.



Similarly, the most important information of your "how," "why" and other supplementary information – is placed higher than other details. After sorting out and presenting the most important facts in your lead, you'll stack the rest of your information in order of importance. The more important a piece of information included is, the higher it appears in your article. And the opposite is true as well.



### 3. Review for content and style

Once you're done laying out your information, go back and review your piece. Make sure it is:

- **Concise** – Your media release should be brief and to the point. Editors and media representatives receive hundreds of media releases. Getting to the point quickly increases the chances your media release will hold the media representative's interest long enough gather the most important details. Clear up anything that detracts from the point you're making.
- **Well-written** – Your media release doesn't have to be written like an elaborate, 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian novel. In fact, simple is often better. Aim for about a seventh grade reading level. Readers of varying abilities should understand your points. But at the same time, don't neglect spelling and grammar. A piece filled with spelling and grammatical errors isn't impressive. It's actually one way for your media release to end up in the waste basket. Read and review your piece for errors before sending it.
- **Factual** – Unsubstantiated (in the context of your article) claims, and anything an outsider may consider illogical, are also reasons a media outlet may ignore your piece. Make sure to stick to logical and substantiated claims, avoiding any sort of statement of belief such as "we're the best".
- **Honest** – You're going to put the best possible spin on your event, issue or otherwise. The media outlets know that and expect it. So put the best spin on your event without crossing the line. While you may want to stretch your cause to make it sound extremely appealing, don't. Even if it doesn't seem like a quickly observable exaggeration or it is actually a quote from someone with prestige, be cautious. Stay away from

anything that could be construed as an exaggeration. Back yourself up with facts and solid information. The more credible you sound, the more likely the media representative will take you and your issue/event seriously.

- **Timely** – Make sure the piece is relevant to today. Media outlets are generally very sensitive to the timeliness of issues and events. If you're commenting about an activity taking place last month, it could fall into the category of "old news" and be disregarded by the media representative, depending on the type of publication. For instance, a monthly publication may cover your story and give you publicity. For others, like a daily paper or television station, the story may be too "old" and untimely in the media representative's eyes to receive coverage.

#### 4.) Put it in the correct format

Like creating a media advisory, don't forget your:

- Logo
- "For Immediate Release" or "Embargoed until..." statement
- Contact information
- Informative headline
- Closing symbols
- Compliance disclaimer

And once you're done putting on the finishing touches, send out your media release. You can email it or fax it. Faxing works well because it distinguishes your piece from other media releases the media outlet receives. While a media representative may receive hundreds of emails, that media outlet probably doesn't receive nearly as many faxes. Or you can even add a media release to your media kit.



Place your district logo at the very top of the release.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – May 11, 2005  
Contact: Janet Meza, Communications Director - 602-298-4200 / [press@azdem.org](mailto:press@azdem.org)  
Reed Adamson, Deputy Communications Director

This phrase lets the media know they can use the information when they receive it.

### **Arizona Democrats Call on Republicans in Congress to Restore Medicaid Funding** *Arizona Will Lose \$223,363,000 in Medicaid Funds*

Inserting both a phone number and an email address at the top of the release makes it easier for the media to refer back to.

**Phoenix, AZ** - As more Americans lose their jobs, they lose their health insurance as well. Today, Medicaid is relied upon more and more to help people get the medical care they need, and states are already struggling to fund their share of the program's costs. Now, as Medicaid is becoming more important, the Republican Congress has outlined a budget framework to cut billions from the program—a total of \$10 billion over the next 5 years.

A simple dateline with the city and state starts the article. It helps the reader quickly identify the location.

In Arizona alone, this will mean a loss of \$223,363,000 in federal Medicaid funds.

The headline comes before the main body. If appropriate, using a subheading may provide the reader with additional information.

"While our state is already straining to cover the costs associated with Medicaid, Republicans in Washington are undermining this vital program by cutting needed funding. As a result, our representatives in Arizona's State Legislature will be left to pick up the tab," said Jim Pederson, Arizona Democratic Chair. "It is unconscionable that because of the fiscal recklessness of Republicans in Congress, including massive tax giveaways for the wealthy and

big corporations, the uninsured and those without little or no access to health care will suffer as a result.”

Faced with the \$10 billion cut, state governments are now being forced to consider proposals to both, limit the scope of services offered, and to have beneficiaries pay more for their care to make up the difference.

###

**Paid for by the Arizona Democratic Party**  
[www.azdem.org](http://www.azdem.org)  
**Not authorized by any candidate or candidate committee.**

2910 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85012

Like with the media advisory, this symbol lets the media represent-

Your compliance disclaimer also goes on your media release as well. You will use the same format here as you did in the media advisory.

## Your Contact Information

Contact information as mentioned in the aforementioned descriptions of your tools, seems to be a recurring theme. And that's because it's very important to include contact information on any outgoing communication with the media. A media representative may have questions or need more information. Without contact information, an otherwise interesting and newsworthy activity could be dropped and not given coverage. This defeats the purpose of contacting the media at all.

Remember, the major objective is to get your story, event or issue heard through the media and working with the media by supplying information is central to this goal. So make sure to supply the media representative with a phone number and/or email address to reach you. Consider supplying them with a cell phone number as well, especially when holding an event.

A cell phone will allow the media representative to contact you easier when you are not in a traditional space like a home or office. Because media representatives live by deadlines, a time delay in gathering information (by being unable to contact you) may mean missing a deadline for them. The paper, the news show or radio broadcast will not be delayed. Rather, the spot your information may have gone in, will be filled with another story. Being able to supply them with last minute details may enhance your chances of getting your event or issue covered.

Additionally, a cell phone number works well when you are at an event and unreachable by a home or office phone. A media representative may try to contact you for more information. Or perhaps they may try to locate the event when lost. Being able to reach you through a cell phone makes their job a bit easier and increases your chances for coverage.

## Rapid Response

To help you quickly and effectively reach publications when writing a letter to the editor, the ADP has an online system called Rapid Response. It allows users to write one letter and automatically send it to one or several newspapers of your choice from a list provided. Large and small newspapers throughout the valley are listed.

And take note: the most effective use of the Rapid Response system is to address issues going on in your local community. While it is certainly an opportunity to react to national issues, most local newspapers focus heavily on local issues. And many local newspapers will not publish information irrelevant to their coverage area. Remember to keep it local.

Also pay attention to the type of letter and where it is sent. While some letters may be appropriate to send to many media outlets, responses to specific publications are not. If you are responding to a story, column or editorial that appeared in Pima, a copy editor or media representative from another part of the state will not print it. Make sure your letter is relevant to each media outlet.

Once you have an idea for your letter to the editor and have thought through your message, visit:

[www.azdem.org/rapidresponse](http://www.azdem.org/rapidresponse)

From here you'll pick the newspaper you want to send your letter to, or pick "all" to send your letter to all of the newspapers listed. You'll then fill out the blank spaces for your name, email address and the like. Type in your letter and then hit send. It's that easy. Make sure to revisit the page on writing letters to the editor to create yours in a way that will encourage editors to publish it.

## Letter to the Editor or News Director

Writing a letter to the editor or to the news directors are great ways to:

- Give the editor or news director feedback
- Get your thoughts and views published

Knowing how the public received a news story, editorial or even another letter may shape how the editor or director perceives his audience. For instance, a director that receives only positive comments from a story that some might find offensive may think his audience appreciates the story. In reality, many people could have disagreed with the story and not reacted to it. Without their reaction, the news director or editor may not know or understand how many readers or listeners felt. Since the media caters to the interests of their audiences, an understanding of their audience is generally important to anyone in the role of a media manager.

The second way letters to the editor work is through publication. Because of the nature of broadcast media, this is a tactic for the published media. A newspaper or magazine publisher may have a section devoted to letters to the editor in their publication. There they take letters, chosen either by a unique point or to use the letter as a representation of diverse views or as a representation of reader reaction. For instance, several people may disagree with an opinion article published and write letters to the editor. But only one or two may make it into the publication. Whatever the reason, you can increase your chances of having your letters published by writing insightful letters and making certain they are:

- **Brief** – Letters are typically 250 words or less. The amount printed is often dependent upon the amount of space the editor has left.

●**Clear** – Make sure to write in a simple manner that lets your audience quickly understand your comment or argument.

●**To the point** – Because a letter is brief, there isn't much room for anything else. Move quickly to your point. If the editor has to cut your letter to print it for spacing issues, you want to make sure he doesn't miss your point. Writing your letter in a way that gets right at your point helps ensure this doesn't happen.

●**Filled with a fact or several** – Facts help improve your credibility. And credibility is usually a good thing to build.

●**Only on one topic** – Like moving quickly to the point, sticking to only one topic improves clarity and helps ensure the editor doesn't miss your point.

**Edited** – While your letter doesn't have to be amazing, it should be edited. Take a few moments to reread and edit your own letter, or have someone else reread and edit it. Poor grammar and avoidable misspellings aren't very impressive.

## Opinion Columns

Another method of spreading your message is the opinion column. Like published letters to the editor, getting an opinion column published is specific to the print media. Appearing in the "Opinions/Editorials" (or Op/Ed) section, newspapers rely on individuals to add perspective on news issues in the country and in their local area. This makes it a great place to insert your organization's standing on an issue in your area and to respond to issues as well.

### Why should you write an opinion column?

As Democrats, it is imperative that activists make every effort to submit columns giving an alternative viewpoint. Reading extremely conservative copy by the opposition and not doing anything about it defeats the activist in all of us. Simply put, if you disagree with something you read or heard from a media outlet, let them and others know. You never know whose mind you'll change. But more importantly, you'll let other readers know there's another side to the story.

### How to write an opinion column?

Unlike other news formats, an opinion column is less formal in structure. In most cases, an opinion column is very much like a written argument. A point or statement is made and then given support.

1. **First, choose and develop your topic.** Refer back to the section on choosing your message if needed. And then take the following into consideration:

*Region* – While the opinion pages do reflect national and international topics, focusing on local topics is advantageous. For most newspapers, local issues and controversies are given priority over national topics. Editors often prefer running articles about local topics from guest columnists rather than

anything more remote. So when submitting a guest column, think about writing on a local topic before a regional topic, a regional topic before a statewide topic and a statewide topic before a national topic.

*Scope* – A column is much longer than a letter to the editor but still restricted in length. Keep your column under 800 words. And remember the restraint this creates. When choosing your topic and support, make sure your topic allows you to write several hundred words.

A strong column fit for publication shouldn't say the same thing over and over again. Pay attention to the number of points your column makes, and the amount of information and different subtopics included. Make sure you have enough information to make your column long enough without repeating yourself. But do make sure that any information added doesn't overshadow a column that provokes a strong argument. Your columns should be raise a strong thoughtful discussion. About a political debate. It should not be an essay.

And remember, your topic shouldn't be overly complex or broad either. Editors and the newspaper's audience tend to be very critical. They will point out flaws and holes in your column. Writing about an overly broad topic leaves room for more flaws and holes. With only a few hundred words to develop your topic, you may not have enough room to cover all of your bases. Make sure your topic is narrow enough.

Check this by summing up your topic. You should be able to summarize your main point and purpose in one to two sentences. One tip to making your topic narrow enough is by simply being specific about your topic and issue.

**2. Write about something you know.** People writing a column topic on something they are familiar with will increase their chances of getting it published. Use your

expertise on a topic you know something about to reduce the length of time it takes you to get up to speed on an issue.

**3. Create your hook.** In your introduction, you can state your topic. But more often, however, columns begin with a hook. The hook is one to a few sentences in your beginning, specifically written to catch the reader's attention. They "hook the audience in." You can use a brief analogy, a fascinating fact or even a quote. Just make sure you don't get too off topic.

**4. State your main point.** Your main point can be stated in the first paragraph, or you can build into it, placing it in the third or fourth paragraph. Either way, your main point should be placed somewhere towards the beginning of your column. Doing so is important because it gives direction and meaning. It lets the reader know, early on, there is a reason you're writing and there is a reason they should continue reading.

**5. Make your claim, support it and move on.** The rest of your piece will be just a continual process of making your sub-points to support your main point and supplying support, examples and details. Once you've made your case, move on to the next point. Give details, but also avoid being redundant.

**6. End with something notable.** Often, pieces in the newspaper will just end when the information ends. Writing an opinion column, even a guest column, is different, however. Your ending should wrap-up the piece, and it should leave them with something to ponder. Make sure your main point is firmly in their mind as the editor and audience finish reading.

### **Publishing Your Column**

Also note that opinion columns may be harder to get published, depending on the newspaper or magazine. Some newspaper or magazines refuse to allow people not on their staff to write columns. Others welcome columns and even reserve space for a weekly guest column. Generally, though, editors are open to publishing a guest column if it is well written and expresses a much needed perspective on an issue (especially a local issue). And, though it may seem difficult to get an opinion column published the first time, the second time around is much easier. Once an editor knows you can write a column and can be depended on, they are generally more willing to let you write a second column at a later time.

Talk to the editor at a specific publication for their policies and to let them know whenever you're interested in writing a column.

## **Media Kit**

### **What is a media kit?**

The media kit is essentially an introduction to your organization. It contains a collection of materials gathered to help the media representative better understand your organization, its goals and projects. For this purpose, a media kit is a good idea for every county but not for every LD – they are all part of the county party and would there is no need for the repetition of kits.

### **Why should you use a media kit?**

In covering an event or issue for your organization, the media representative may want to put your event or issue into context. Instead of reporting simply the straight facts of the topic at hand, references to the history of your organization or to other projects might provide their readers with more insight. To make those references, the media representative may need to ask for basic background information.

They may ask questions such as “When did your organization start?” or “How long has \_\_\_\_\_ been in charge of that committee?” Unprepared, finding this information may take a while. But anticipating these basic background questions by creating a media kit, however, may save time. By placing basic information such as contact information, a history of your organization and other relevant background information into one folder, you create an easy reference tool for both you and the media representative.

And media kits are especially helpful when trying to develop a working relationship between yourself and the media outlets. Having information ready and available makes a good impression. It shows the media representative you are prepared and are willing to work with them. So it's not only an efficient time saver, but it's also a nice gesture to the media representative. And remember, a good relationship with the media is vital to receiving good news

coverage.

#### **How should you use it?**

A standard media kit should be created and copies (several folders) kept on hand. The basic information in the media kit will not change too dramatically since it will always be an introduction with background information. Do note, you may have to make updates, however.

Once you have your standard media kit, you can then insert a new media release or pitch letter depending on the specific need and the specific topic. This way, your media representative will receive the information about your event or issue, supplemented by preassembled background information as well.

#### **When should you use a media kit?**

Your media kit can be used anytime a media representative needs more background information. You can send your media kit to a media representative or keep it on hand to distribute as needed. For instance, bringing a few media kits to an event (with a media release about the event inside) is a great way to promote your event as a newsworthy topic to media representatives attending. Giving them information already gathered may serve as encouragement to further cover the event.

#### **How do you create your standard media kit?**

To create your media kit, grab a two-pocket folder. In this folder you'll place a:

**Business card** – As mentioned previously, contact information is important. Place a copy of the contact person's business card in the folder – in the slot for business cards, usually on the right, inside flap.

**Relevant extras** – Photos, brochures and any other supplementary information relevant to the topic are

very appropriate – as long as they contribute new information of to a better understanding of the topic. A lot of information about the same thing detracts from your goal of keeping the media representative interested. An interesting picture on the other hand, goes a long way in capturing their interest.

Do make sure, however, to include your biographies of your officers and a brief history of your County Democratic Party.

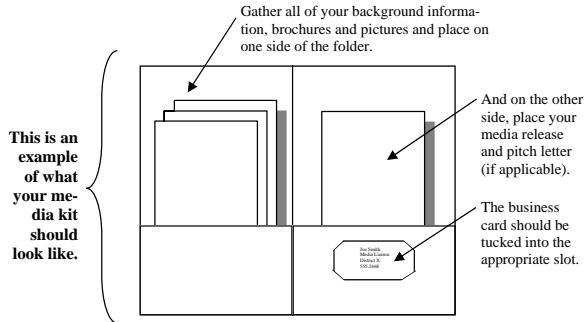
**Media Release** – Placing a media release in your kit releases more information about your event or activity. It's a nice, written point of reference for the media outlet.

**Pitch Letter** – Your pitch letter is a very brief piece enticing the reporter or other such media person to read the media release. It's a very short paragraph or two explaining why the media's audience is interested in your event or activity. You might even suggest several angles for their story.

#### **What should you do after creating your media kits?**

1. Once assembled, send your media kit to various media outlets.
2. Make a follow-up call. You should contact the reporter or media representative to ensure they received the materials. And while doing so, consider the time of day. Calling in the morning or early evening is good because it's generally the media's "down time." Assume the media representative is bombarded with announcements for other events and reports and be patient and persistent.

<b>Checklist</b>
<p>Double check to make sure you have everything, including a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pocket Folder</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Business Card/Contact Information</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Background Information</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Brief History of the County Democratic Party</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Officer Biographies</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other Pictures or Brochures</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pitch Letter (as needed)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Media Release (as needed)</li> </ul>



## The Print World

As mentioned earlier, each medium operates differently. Print publications use the written word to send messages and information to the masses. Media advisories and phone calls to the newsroom work well. Media releases also work well. Because of the ability to print written pieces and the large push for a variety of content, send print publications like newspapers, magazines and the like, your media releases.

Additionally, there are letters to the editor and opinion columns. Because of their nature, it's not the appropriate way to get publicity for an event. If your goal is to create publicity for an event, use a media release or a media advisory. But in the case of other messages such as issues facing your district, letters to the editor and opinion columns work well.

Although the media may not always print them, submitting several letters or columns, from as many different people as possible, increases your chances. And remember, there is an effect even if the media outlet chooses not to publish your letter or column. Contacting the media through this format provides feedback they will take into consideration when determining future stories to run. For more information about letters to the editor and opinion columns, refer to the section on "Letters to the Editor or News Director" and on "Opinion Columns."

<b>Review</b>
<p>You can reach the printed media best through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media Advisories</li> <li>• Media Releases</li> <li>• Letters to the Editor</li> <li>• Opinion Columns</li> </ul>

## TV & Broadcasting

When it comes to television, the media can be reached through:

- Media Releases
- Media Advisories
- Letters to the News Director
- Phone Calls to the News Director

### Media Releases and Advisories

Media releases and media advisories sent to print publications are applicable to local television stations as well. But because they are not print based, local television stations and broadcast will not print your media release. Media releases and media advisories can, though, inspire media representatives to cover your topic, event or activity for possible broadcast. And that's exactly what you want.

### Getting Past the Gatekeepers

You can also write letters or make phone calls to the news director, assignment editor or producer. These directors decide which stories to cover and how they're covered. In the news room, the news editor/director is in charge of the news department. Meanwhile, the assignment editor is the person who actually gives reporters and crews their assignments, sending people out to cover the topics. When it comes to deciding which stories get coverage, the assignment editor is a very important person. And the producer writes the newscast and lineup for the show.

These individuals provide direction to the rest of the staff and as gatekeepers, filtering through potential news stories and deciding when and how much time is given to individual stories. So it is these three that make very good

contact people. Because they have a strong influence in the decision process, taking time to get to know/personally contact the news directors, assignment editors and producers may be advantageous.

If you choose to call the news director, producer or assignments editor, aforementioned issues apply. Call in the morning or in the evening. And remember to be patient and persistent, assuming they have other stories and issues competing for their attention.

But don't necessarily cast aside any other possible contacts in favor of just contacting the news director. While the hosts or anchormen appear on television news stations, often reporters write and investigate the news they cover. While hosts/anchormen and reporters may not necessarily choose their own stories (depending on the station), their opinion is valuable. A story idea pitched to the news director from his staff members may be given more consideration than an idea pitched from someone the news director doesn't know.

## Radio

To reach radio broadcasters, you can also use the following methods:

- Public Service Announcements
- Media Releases
- Media Advisories
- Radio Call-ins

Like television broadcasting stations, media releases and media advisories entice media representatives. Capturing their interest increases the chances a radio station representative will appear at your event or discuss your issues on their shows.

Additionally, you can reach radio stations through public announcements. Public service announcements (PSA's), like the media advisory, announce events. Only these events are typically **non-political**. So events like charitable drives, book drives or blood drives fall into this category among many others.

### How to Write a PSA

In creating a PSA, keep in mind, it's much shorter and less formal than your other media tools. In one sentence or up to 75 words sum up your information, making sure it includes the important information. When read aloud, it should be about 30 seconds long.

Because of the more informal nature of radio disc jockeys, write your PSA as though it's a transcript. See, you or someone from your organization may read it on the air. Or it may be read on the air by an employee of the station. With employees of the station possibly reading it, there's no guarantee the information will be read on the air in the form you submitted. But they might. An employee from the station may read your PSA word for word as it is written. So write your PSA the way you want it read. Make sure it sounds

chatty and simple. It should be very conversational.

Once it's written, submit your PSA to the radio station. Some stations take announcements only weeks before the event. Other stations may differ. Call each radio station early for more information regarding their policies. Perhaps you can place their response and relevant submission information in your media guide.

To sum it up, a PSA is:

- 75 words or less
- About or less than 30 seconds long
- Informal and Chatty
- Informative

### Radio Call-Ins

Then there's the radio call-in. Unique to radio, a radio call-in is exactly as it sounds. Basically you call the radio station, hoping to get on the air. Radio talk show hosts and disc jockeys often have discussions in which they invite their listeners to call-in and join. You can contribute to these discussions by promoting the Democratic view point, supporting local politicians, asking questions or even just to creating conversation. And you can also call in to promote your events.

### Making a Call Sheet

Take note, though, radio stations vary their programming throughout the day and even throughout each hour. With stations programming music, news and sports among their various shows, not all formats lend themselves well to

call-ins. The best opportunity for call-ins are during line talk shows. The times for these vary between morning, noon and late afternoon drive time. For instance, a radio station may devote their morning rush hour time slot to a certain music lineup, breaking only for commercials and not commentary. In this case and in others it isn't always possible to call your preferred radio expecting to get on the air.

On the other hand, a radio station may specifically schedule a call-in talk show by a host/disc jockey or two at a certain time of the day. Knowing when these are scheduled can be advantageous. Calling shows you know take call-ins reduces wasted time.

And since talk shows exist on a variety of different stations, making a radio call-in spreadsheet is helpful strategy. Enter into a spreadsheet the times and station phone numbers for call-in shows. Make sure to include:

- Time it airs
- The station call letters
- The dial number
- A current phone number
- The show's name
- Host or producer's name

Your call sheet may end up looking something like a longer version of this sample:

Time	Call Letters	Dial #	Show	Producer	Host	Phone
7pm-9pm	KXXT-AM	1010	On Second Thought	Jeff Farias	Mike Newcomb	602.254.5001
6-9am	KXXT-AM	1010	Charles Goyette	Ernest Hancock	Charles Goyette	602.230.8255

Just by looking at the spreadsheet, you ideally should be able to see which shows are on at each specific time. So whenever you have time to devote to a short call-in, the phone numbers and station shows are conveniently in one place.

Add both shows in which you can participate as an audience member and those in which you can be interviewed. Some radio stations have an open discussion with their audience members, allowing anyone interested to call-in. At other times, a talk show host or disc jockey may prefer to speak just to one individual, interviewing them and making them a guest on the host/disc jockey's show. Both types are good ways to participate.

You can also make weekly conference calls or monthly radio show appointments. This is basically when a host/radio disc jockey specifically sets aside time to talk to you or a local politician. You can use that time to discuss a topic brought up by the host or even to promote your own events. By scheduling the call ahead of time, you save time that might otherwise be wasted in failed attempts to call-in. And the radio host also benefits by having content for their show.

But do note, that even calling and speaking to the news director or on air personality when you are not on the air can still be advantageous to some degree. While off the air you can give them ideas for future content (your event or issue) they can use when they get on the air. You can also just familiarize the radio media representative with you and your district's issues and events. Networking is usually a good thing.

And finally, remember to retain a hard copy of this call sheet on hand. It just makes life easier sometimes.

## AM Radio Stations v. FM Stations

Keep your listener's in mind as you do these call-ins. Those listeners depend vary with the individual station and the station type.

There are two different types of radio stations – AM radio stations and FM stations. AM typically consists of radio talk shows whereas FM is generally devoted to music. Each uses the airwaves in different ways. And each station covers their own set of topics and has their own style or format.

AM radio station listeners generally expect discussion. A plug for an event or well-thought out comments about an issue are appropriate. But FM provides listeners with more entertainment. With that in mind, a little creativity when calling an FM station may help you reach the audience. Since the type of individuals listening to AM and FM varies, there are benefits to contacting both. The same listeners of one station may be very different from the listeners of another. Attempting to reach listeners of AM and FM stations brings a larger variety of listeners and listener types closer to you.

### **Contacting the Producers**

Another way to reach the radio station is through the producers. Much like television broadcasting, contacting the hosts or reporters (if in the case of a talk news show) gives you some entry. But additionally, to them, the news and/or program director is in charge of program and/or story selection and planning. An e-mail update or phone call to the directors and producers off the air keeps them updated about your district/county events. It also builds a relationship with the producer or director that may help win you more cover-

### **Additional Methods for All Mediums: Newsroom Visits**

Local news from a radio station, a television station or reading the local paper, all stem from their own newsrooms. Being familiar with your local newsrooms and building a relationship between yourself and reporters, editors and news directors in your districts is another helpful strategy. And building a professional relationship with these individuals can be advantageous. These people control the amount of coverage your events and issues receive. Being able to call an individual reporter or media manager puts your issue on a different level than just simply waiting for a media representative to read your email. And calling in with a lead for a potential story could be more effective than a media release sitting amongst other media releases.

Getting into the newsroom isn't like sneaking into a high security government building on a secret mission. It's a lot simpler. And sometimes it's even as simple as making a phone call. In some newsrooms the media secretaries schedule visits to tour the newsroom and meet the editorial board. If you plan to sit down and speak to the editorial board, make sure you are prepared with what you want to say.

Scheduling a visit once a year, gives you the opportunity to meet the editorial board as well as other reporters. Don't underestimate the power of networking. While one shouldn't rely solely on a professional relationship with a few media members, it can be a helpful supplement to your overall media strategy.

## The Web

Unlike the other three mediums of communication, the barriers to overcome in reaching your county through the online world are more technological. Getting a message across through the radio, television and print mediums require cooperation with news and programming directors, reporters and editors when using earned media. Meanwhile, communications using the internet rely on your own technological resources.

Generally, when using the web news and information reach your district through websites and e-newsletters. You choose what goes on your own website and e-newsletters as well as the manner in which the message is conveyed. People in your district as well as anyone around the world can then see your message from their own homes without reading a printed publication or turning on their television or radio. It's a very easy way to communicate with your members, and one that gives you a lot of control.

### Websites

A website is created through the use of html coding and related scripts and graphics. There are many self-help books available if you wish to learn html. Also remember that there might be people in your county willing to help you in creating your site. And there are also many software programs that make it possible to create a website without a comprehensive knowledge of html. Many software programs allow you to use their application to create a page off line and then upload it on to the web. One such program is Microsoft Front Page, but there are also many others. While it seems very intimidating at first, getting used to the programs takes away a large portion of that intimidation.

The ability to place new graphics and new articles of text allows you to control your own content. You can place

reminders of events on a calendar on your site or put up text supporting a local politician – whatever fits your district's needs. A web site gives you that flexibility to tailor it to your needs, placing information relevant to you district. And then you can change your page very frequently or only when necessary; it's up to you.

Just don't forget to link your site to other Democratic organizations. Your site should include links to the following, as well as to local, state and federal elected representatives:

- [www.dnc.org](http://www.dnc.org)
- [www.azdem.org](http://www.azdem.org)
- [www.dccc.org](http://www.dccc.org)
- [www.dccc.org](http://www.dccc.org)

### E-newsletter

The e-newsletter is like an e-mail update. Sent to inboxes like a normal e-mail, the e-newsletter can be sent on a weekly, monthly or bimonthly basis. Much like a traditional newsletter, they contain updates about events and issues in your district. You can also send reminders about events or meetings or urge people to speak on an important topic coming up in a town meeting.

## Additional Tips

- When dealing with the media, **keep their time table in mind**. Imagine this scenario for a moment. A local politician is speaking for the first time on an important and controversial issue concerning your district. The speech and the topic may affect an upcoming local election. If informed a few days in advance, a local television station may want to discuss it on their news show before it occurs. This could be valuable promotion for your event. But if you wait until the evening before the event to alert the media, they may not have room to pick up the story – even if otherwise interested. Or in the case of a newspaper, it may be too late to meet the deadline. While you don't want to give so much advanced notice, media representatives forget about the event, giving too little is also harmful.
- Reporters run on deadlines. **Be responsive when media representatives call for more information**. If they don't have the information they need for a story, they may not run it. This isn't a good thing if the story is inspired by a media release on one of your events. You want media to cover your events, issues and media releases. So cooperating with reporters is imperative.
- **Don't forget to be timely**. Timeliness covers the relevancy a topic has to the current day and time, to current affairs in your district and in the nation. The media is extremely time sensitive. Issues that may have been a great topic and given coverage one week ago may not today for some publications. It depends on the individual topic and the individual publication.  
But if there's a secret to timeliness, it could be summed up in one word: awareness. To relate your topics, events and issues to the rest of the world, knowledge about the rest of the world is very neces-

sary. Keep up with the news, read the newspaper, watch a local news show or even log onto a political blog. Constant awareness of the news and current events is very necessary. It isn't too hard to become aware of current events and it make the job of determining timeliness of an issue a lot easier.

- **Remember to be proactive, not reactive**. The media may not know about an event if you don't tell them about it. Instead of waiting until the media decides your issues are newsworthy, take the initiative and create an event. Make your issue news while you inform you public through your event. And instead of waiting for media representatives to call you, call them. Be proactive and help the media see your issues as newsworthy.
- **Be persistent**. Even if your event or issue is interesting, the media may still overlook it for a variety of reasons. Don't be discouraged – just keep trying. And bear in mind that it's not just the day's top stories that make the news or get covered by media outlets. The most interesting story may be overshadowed by someone else's persistence. Sometimes it's the issues pushed by the loudest people that get coverage. So you have to be one of those persistent people too.

The media may not cover an event if it's overshadowed by other events. And that well prepared media packet folder means little if it's buried underneath many others. Persistence may push that packet to the top of the stack.

Don't be content just to send out a few media releases. Send that media release out to many places. Then don't be afraid to call some media representatives as a reminder. Perhaps do a radio call-in as well. You don't have to stick to just one method at a time. Use several. It might, at first, seem like a lot. And you don't want to offend a media organization or cause them to view you negatively. But being very persistent, within reason, goes a long way.