

# Guide for Grassroots Activists

By AFGE Council 220 Legislative Action Committee

## 1 Personal Advocacy

### 1.1 How To Write a Letter to Your Lawmaker

It takes only a few minutes to write a letter, but those few minutes can make a big difference. When members of the House of Representatives or U.S. Senate receive enough letters on a particular issue, it does influence their vote. Unless they hear from you, many legislators may not be aware of how strongly their constituents feel about a particular issue. Your words can sway them and help them to understand why an issue is important to the folks back home.

Here are some suggestions on what will give your letter the greatest impact:

**Use your own words and your own stationary.** A handwritten or neatly typed letter is best, so long as long as it is legible. Form letters, photocopies, and preprinted postcards are of very limited value.

**Be concise.** A one-page letter is more likely to be read than one that is longer.

**Personalize your message.** People tend to remember a good story, and one told from the heart is better than a ream of facts. Let your lawmaker know why the issue matters in your life.

Mention your involvement in local organizations and groups, if it's pertinent.

**Identify your subject clearly.** If possible, refer to legislation either by its bill number or by its popular name.

**Discuss only one issue in your letter.** This ensures that the right staff member will see your letter.

**Ask the lawmaker to do something specific.** For example, ask him or her to vote for a particular amendment, request hearings or co-sponsor a bill.

Ask for a reply to your requests and questions.

Be sure to include a return address on your letter.

**If you have time, avoid sending your letter by fax or e-mail.** Most Congressional offices pay more attention to letters that arrive by mail.

## 1.2 How To Formulate a Letter To Your Lawmaker

Name

Address

Date

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_

### **Paragraph 1. Purpose of letter: What you want your lawmaker to do**

I urge you to oppose privatization of Social Security.

### **Paragraph 2. Why this bill is important to you: personalize your letters.**

I work at Social Security and have the advantage of seeing first hand the joy connected with workers who file for retirement benefits and who after many years of labor, look forward to spending more time with their loved ones. I see the relief in the eyes of survivors particularly those with young children when they realize that a monthly check will be forthcoming so they will have economic security and not be forced to sell their home and move away from friends and schools. Social Security is one of this country's noblest efforts and the greatest anti-poverty program. Thanks to the efforts of Franklin Roosevelt and Congress, Social Security guarantees income in old age and disability and is a resource to all working people.

### **PARAGRAPH 3. What's wrong/right with the bill**

This bill, introduced by Senators \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, would reduce or remove guaranteed monthly benefits from federal protection. This effort undermines future benefits by dismantling the program and the economic security of present and future beneficiaries. I am extremely concerned about privatization because of the devastating impact on all workers and particularly the negative impact on women and minorities.

### **PARAGRAPH 4. Reaffirm your commitment to this issue**

I cannot emphasize to you the importance I put on your vote against privatization of Social Security. The American people have means available to them - polls and voting booths to let it be known that they value Social Security's guaranteed benefit structure.

Privatization undermines the economic security of Americans who become disabled, survive the death of the

breadwinner or retire from work. Privatization would destroy our government's *most* popular and successful program.

**PARAGRAPH 5. Ask for a response**

I look forward to hearing your position on this issue.

Name

Address

**1.3 How To Arrange A Meeting With Your Lawmaker**

Most legislators are eager to meet with their constituents. Your opinions are valuable to your lawmakers, and your meeting is likely to be very influential. Keep in mind that you don't have to be an expert to get your point across. The message you will bring to this meeting is that of a concerned citizen. Lawmakers at any level of government like to use recess periods in their districts to hear from their constituents, and nothing impresses members of Congress quite as much as someone from back home willing to make a personal visit to their Washington, D.C. office.

To request a private meeting with your Senators and Representatives, you should: Call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 for your lawmaker's Washington, D.C. phone number. You can find their district office number in your local telephone book;

Ask to speak with the appointments secretary or scheduler;

Introduce yourself as a constituent, stating where you live;

Tell the appointments secretary which issues you would like to discuss with your lawmaker;

Request a 30-minute meeting with your legislator (you may be given a shorter appointment, but any time is better than none). While it is best to meet directly with your legislator, if he or she is unavailable, you can schedule an appointment with the legislative aide responsible for issues.

**Before the Appointment**

It's a good idea to send a follow-up letter or fax confirming your appointment. Remember to include your name, address and daytime phone number.

If possible, assemble a group of like-minded individuals or groups, (preferably one who are among the lawmaker's supporters), to accompany you.

Meet with your coalition ahead of time to agree and determine

1. what your message should be;
2. spokesperson or lead speaker;
3. different people to answer specific questions;
4. a note taker;
5. a follow-up letter writer;
6. appropriate fact sheets and other material to leave the lawmaker.

### **During the Appointment**

1. Dress nicely. Don't let your appearance detract from your message or impair your credibility.
2. Introduce yourself and tell your member or staff person what organization you represent, where the group is located and the size of its membership. If you are lobbying as an individual, make sure to mention that you're a constituent. If you have any family, social, business or political ties to the legislator, mention them as well.
3. Start with a compliment. If possible, thank the member for a good stand he or she recently took on an issue and/or mention if you voted for the member. At a minimum, thank them for taking the time to meet with you.
4. Take the initiative by stating clearly and concisely what issue you want to discuss, what your position is on it and what action you want the member to take. Keep your message simple to make sure your lawmaker understands your position. Follow it with facts about why he or she should take your position.
5. Stress how the issue will affect the member's district or state, and, if possible, tell a personal story, which highlights your experience with the issue and why you care about it.
6. Give the legislator a brief fact sheet (1-2 pages max), which outlines your position, explains what the bill does (if there is one) and why he or she should support your viewpoint.
7. Mention any other organizations, important individuals, government officials, and legislators, which support your position. If you are a part of a large coalition, mention the number of members it has.
8. Be a good listener. After you make your pitch, allow the member to respond. However, bring the conversation back to the issue at hand if the member goes off on a tangent or tries to evade it.
9. Answer any questions to the best of your ability, but if you don't know the answer, admit it. Try to provide the information promptly in a follow-up letter.

10. Ask a direct question to which the legislator can respond “yes,” such as, “Can we count on you to cosponsor the bill?” Press politely for a commitment, unless the member is clearly opposed to your position or to making a commitment.
11. Always thank the member for his or her time at the end of the meeting, even if he or she did not agree with your position.

### **After the Appointment**

Immediately after the meeting, write down any information you learned about the member’s position or concerns so you can share it with others and use it to develop your legislative strategy.

Always follow up with a prompt thank you letter signed by all the interested groups—even the ones who could not attend the meeting. In the letter, reiterate your key points and any commitments the member made to you. Include all follow-up information you promised to provide.

Write a letter to the editor about the meeting, or otherwise publicize your event in a community newsletter.

Let your organization’s lobbyists know what your lawmaker had to say.

## **1.4 Fifteen Tips For How To Write A Grassroots Message**

A grassroots message seeks to persuade someone to act. It is no different than convincing your spouse or friends to join the PTA or buy a car. The scientific or legal complexity of a public policy issue should not divert you from commonsense arguments using everyday language.

1. **Localize the issue:** Connect the resources to the readers everyday life.
2. **Personalize the issue:** Use personal pronouns, such as you, we, me, us, and I. The use of contractions also make the message more friendly.
3. **Write in short active sentences.**
4. **Avoid paragraphs longer than eight lines.**
5. **Emphasize the bottom line:** Go easy on facts, statistics, administrative or legislative processes.
6. **Avoid acronyms and technical language.**
7. **Highlight the key points** you want to make by using bullets, different fonts, underlines, etc.
8. **Explain how the problem can be fixed:** A bill is moving in Congress or an agency is going to issue a regulation.
9. **Spell out a clear and concise message:** State the message and restate it.

10. **Make it clear what action you want the reader or audience to take**—to write to Senator \_\_\_ or attend a public meeting. Be certain that the suggested action also is clearly stated and restated.

11. **Emphasize deadlines:** A vote or public hearing will take place on such a date.

12. **Avoid asking the reader to do more than one or two things.**

13. **Make it user-friendly:** Always tell how a person can contact the target. Provide the address, capitol switchboard number, e-mail address, etc. If you are encouraging attendance at a public meeting, always give detailed directions on how to get there.

14. **Always try to sound optimistic:** Refer to previous successes. The hardest part of persuasion is to convince your audience that their action will make a difference.

15. **Never promise too much:** Don't say your letter will make the difference, but say instead; your letter will *help* make the difference.

## 2 Using the News

### 2.1 How To Write A Press Release

For press releases to be effective, they should be used sparingly. Use them to announce an event, a rally, a protest, or some other tactic your group is going to use. Most media outlets are deluged with press releases. Therefore, it's worth considering alternatives to the press release format.

#### Alternatives to Press Releases

Fact sheets: who, what, when, where, and why.

Position statements: containing a brief explanation of the issue and why your group really cares about it.

“Pitch letter”: addressed to your campaign targets and sent both to the campaign target and the appropriate reporters/editors.

#### Sample Press Release Format

For Immediate Release

Contact:

[Name]

[Telephone Number]

[Headline Keyed to Local Event]

[City, State–](First paragraph: interesting lead sentence, general description of event, date, place, and who is invited)

(Second and succeeding paragraphs: more description, background of an event, and “local interest & quote; angle)

(Final paragraph: program details) For more information about the event contact (media contact or event organizer) at (telephone number).

Whatever format you choose, the document should be double spaced and no more than a page long.

## **2.2 How To Write A Letter To The Editor**

The philosophy behind your newspaper’s letters-to-the-editor page can differ dramatically. The key variable is size of the paper.

Some editors of the letters page see their page as a community bulletin board on which all sorts of opinions ought to be posted. You might see a letter from a homeowner complaining about a recent county commission vote, even if the paper never covered it, for example. This wide-open policy typically is found at smaller papers, where they might be struggling to fill the space they’ve allotted for letters.

More common is the case of the mid-size to large suburban and urban daily newspaper, where dozens to hundreds of letters come in each day. For the editors of these larger papers, relevance is the key consideration. They want to print feedback/criticism/praise for stories and opinion columns that have appeared in their paper quite recently.

When you have evaluated the newspaper you are writing for and have an idea of its circulation, you should begin to outline your topic. First and foremost, know what you’re writing about. Don’t criticize a newspaper’s overall coverage of an issue unless you have truly read every inch of coverage. Don’t embarrass yourself and your organization by claiming that a newspaper doesn’t cover the President’s Commission on Social Security, for example, only to be presented with 431 clips of stories they printed over the past two years. If you’re going to use the media, you must first be a smart, consistent consumer of its products.

Keeping this in mind, it is best to focus your piece on a particular story. Always quote the headline and date in your first or second sentence, i.e. “Dear Editor: Your most recent coverage of the President’s Commission on Social Security privatization was obviously an earnest attempt at covering the bases. However, some important facts were lost in the process....”

Do not feign outrage unless you have a darn good reason to be outraged. The phrase “We are outraged by...” is definitely one of the most overworked clichés in the literature. By all means, however, you should clearly highlight the conflict involved and don’t mince words. If you need to attack someone, stick to the facts and keep the letter dignified. Keep in mind that a tone of restrained indignation is often more effective than strident outrage.

Keep it brief, for the reader’s sake. Four to six paragraphs is the rule, with paragraphs

consisting of only one or two sentences each. If you can't make your point within these constraints, consider writing a full-blown opinion column, often called the OP-ED because it appears on the page opposite the newspaper's own editorials. An OP-ED column should consist of no more than fifteen paragraphs, and ten is a better length.

If possible, fax your letter or column to the editorial page. It gets there more quickly, and seventy percent of editors say they prefer faxes. You must sign your letter and include a daytime telephone number. It's a rare newspaper that accepts form letters or unsigned letters to the editor. If you have more than one paper to work on, send each of them a different letter.

If you haven't seen your letter within a few days, call the editorial office to inquire, politely, what happened. The answers you get will help you the next time you write. Remember that no newspaper is obligated to print your letter, but newspaper editors consider themselves obligated to fairly and accurately present all sides of the issues. Use this ethic to your advantage.

### **2.3 Sample Letter To The Editor**

As a citizen and taxpayer, I was discouraged to learn the Office of Management and Budget Director Mitch Daniels has advised SSA to contract out 34,000 direct service positions in field office, teleservice centers and program service centers. Under the authority of the Federal Activities Inventory Reporting Act of 1998, agencies are required to prepare detailed inventories of all in-house commercial activities being performed by federal employees.

During the Clinton Administration, the SSA motor pool in Headquarters, mailroom operations, security guards and maintenance positions were considered commercial activities. Now the Bush Administration contends that Claims Representative, Service Representatives, Teleservice Representatives and Claims Authorizer jobs should be contracted out.

Haven't we learned enough about the contractor employees at our airports? If we cannot trust them with our luggage, why would we give them access to our most private and personal information?

Following September 11, one of the funds giving financial help to the families of the victims went quietly about its business, performing smoothly, with low administrative costs (1%) operating according to clear rules. Virtually every child who lost a parent is entitled to Social Security as are the parents who stay home to care for these children. The first checks were received October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Would you trust corporate profiteers who may or may not be citizens, who do not take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution, who may have criminal backgrounds, ignore veterans preference, who discriminate and can be discriminated against based on race, sex, religion, national origin, political affiliation and marital status to perform this vital function that touches so many lives, at an undisclosed cost?

Make no mistake. This is a campaign about America's future and, more specifically, the financial hopes and dreams of those at SSA and those who contribute to the Social Security trust fund. It's about mortgages and college tuition, pension and retirement plans, widows and widowers, grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and fathers, daughters and sons. Most of all it's about you.

Call your elected Representatives and let them know that Social Security and its employees are not for sale to the lowest bidder. Let them know that you will not sit idly by and allow a misuse of power to rob Americans of this most cherished social insurance program.

The federal government does some things very well. Social Security is one of them.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

## **2.4 How To Hold A News Conference**

A news conference is not unlike a child's birthday party. You want to put together the right elements to get people to come, to give them what they want, and to make your family happy. This requires planning and a sensible location, it requires bringing the right entertainment—this is an analogy for the real news you bring to the event—and it requires inviting and re-inviting the guests.

### **Location**

Make it picturesque if you can, to satisfy video cameras and newspaper photographers. This can be as simple as a river shoreline at the site of a fish kill or a spewing pipeline. If you don't have such a location, then choose a downtown location that everybody in the media can find, such as a big hotel, the steps of city hall, or the office of your organization.

### **Timing**

It's bad to schedule a press event after about 1 p.m. By that time, other, hotter news events could pull the reporters away. 10 a.m. is usually a good time. And avoid

Fridays, because a lot of reporters are swamped with their “weekenders” or Sunday stories.

### **Advisory**

Fax out an advisory at least a day but not more than three days before your event. This is the invitation. It should have the five W’s: who, what, when, where, and why, with the “why” being a one-paragraph dramatic explanation of why this is news, why viewers and readers will want to know what happened here. It is essential that you

call each newspaper, radio or TV station to find out “Did you get our fax?” If they feign ignorance, send it again. Don’t quit until somebody appropriate—a reporter or editor—confirms they have it in hand and tells you whether they will send someone. Send out the advisory again on the morning of your event. If you can fax before 8 a.m., you won’t get as many busy signals. CALL AGAIN. Don’t fear annoying them with your gentle persistence. They don’t mind annoying you. Some reporters will try to persuade you to give them an advance copy or agree to an embargo. Resist. Play fair with everyone, and they’ll all come back again in the future.

### **Entertainment**

It’s always tempting to load up a news conference with as many speakers as you can find. Resist. Remember it only takes one talented magician to entertain 50 kids. Two or three speakers is a good rule, four max if you can’t help it. Set out a pad of paper and title it “SIGN UP SHEET” with columns for Name, Newspaper/Station and Phone Number. Greet reporters and ask them to sign up. Provide paper—reporters love paper in case they forgot to take notes—in the form of fact sheets, the text of any statements or speeches, and a news release. Use other visual aids for video shots: a banner, a graphic chart, a blown-up photo.

### **Choreography**

Make statements brief, punchy, never ponderous. Agree with your partners in advance who introduces, who goes first, second, third, and who will answer questions. After questions, offer your people for taped interviews with radio and TV reporters. Stick to your message. Never say anything off camera that you don’t want on camera. Don’t go “off the record.” Ever tell your brother a secret and get burned? And reporters aren’t even your relatives.

### **News Release**

During or after the news conference, fax out the news release to all outlets. Call everyone who didn’t show up.

## **2.5 How To Do A Radio Talk Show**

The radio talk show format that has been sweeping the country the last few years is an excellent vehicle for getting your message out to a large audience at virtually no cost.

## Commonly Asked Questions

### 1. How do I get on the air?

Your biggest job is to convince a radio talk show host or talk show producer that your “topic,” or “issue” is one that needs to be on the air. You must make the host or producer a believer that your issue is interesting and lively enough to a large percentage of the host and producer’s audience.

### 2. How do I make the host or producer believe my issue is interesting and lively enough to make it an idea worth their consideration? Why should the host or producer CARE about my issue?

You MUST stress that their listeners—and even the host and/or producer themselves—are affected directly or indirectly by your issue. You MUST show how people are affected. By showing how people are affected, you answer the host’s or producer’s question of, “why should I care about this issue?”

### 3. What can I do to strengthen my arguments and position while talking to the host or producer?

Bring or send the show host or producer any local newspaper editorials, which support your issue. It especially helps if the editorial is from a local newspaper within your state. If a newspaper writes an editorial on your issue, the host or producer has a tougher time dismissing both the timeliness and the newsworthiness of a talk show on your issue.

If (and only if) you or your colleague have had previous experience with talk shows, public debates or speeches about your issue, stress that experience. By showing the host or producer that you’ve done some public speaking on your issue, you show him/her that you’re more likely to do well or “sound” effective and engaging on his/her show.

Show that other radio talk shows have aired your issue.

Be confident. Hosts and producers don’t want a “shrinking violet,” but a guest who is willing to strongly defend a position.

## 2.6 Sample News Release

### NEWS ADVISORY:

#### **“Will Americans Vote Social Security Issues this Fall? NCSSAFOL Releases Nationwide Poll Results”**

**WHAT:** News Conference Tuesday at Social Security Headquarters to release results of nationwide bipartisan voter poll by GOP and Democratic pollsters on behalf of *Social Security employees*.

**WHO:** Witold Skwierczynski, President of the National Council of Social Security Field Operations Locals and John Gage, President Local 1923 Social Security Headquarters

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. Tuesday, August 6

**WHERE:** Front of Altmeyer Building Main Entrance 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21235.

**CONTACT:** *Jan Hoppenstein 410-965-5566*

Refer to the Communications and Public Relations section of the CD for more information about using the media.

## 3 Organizing Your Local for Legislative Action

### 3.1 How To Operate A Phone Bank

Phone banks can be a very effective advocacy tools if they are set up properly. They can be used to generate support for a campaign, to find volunteers for projects, or to get out the vote for a campaign. For example, when you need to influence one or two key legislative members, a phone bank can offer the quickest means of generating significant public support.

A Phone Bank Has Three Basic Components:

1. at least one location with a number of phone lines;
2. lists of local names and phone numbers to call; and
3. volunteers to do the phoning.

The phoners will need supervisors to organize and assist them, scripts telling them what to ask people to do, background materials on the issue, and snacks and beverages to keep morale high and to make work enjoyable.

#### **The Plan**

Early planning is vital to a successful phone bank. There are four things you should do:

1. Gather lists from all the groups in your organization's, coalition or from other groups whose members would be likely to help.
2. Establish a pool of activists who are committed to phone banking and other projects.
3. Look up all the phone numbers for your telephone lists.
4. Identify places in each locality where there are enough phones to hold a phone bank.

### **The Roles**

Each phone bank should have a *supervisor* who is capable of making quick decisions and coordinating the project.

The calls are made by a *volunteer operator* who has an up-to-date address and phone list, a script and a positive, warm and friendly voice. The request message should be written out for the operator to follow. The request for help should be in the name of your organization.

Someone should also be assigned to the role of *record keeper*. This person should come up with a system for people to report the results of each phone call. The data gathered during phone banking will be very important for your group's future efforts.

### **The Script**

Questions should be phrased so that the "correct" answer is in the affirmative. If for any reason, the person being called upon acts annoyed or reluctant, the operator should be instructed to retreat gracefully without offending the person. When such reactions occur, operators should be told to strike these people from future lists.

Each operator should have a list of key questions with space to record additional information. The type and quality of phone responses received should be recorded with the member's permanent record for later reference. The record keeper for the project is responsible for keeping track of the response forms.

### **Some Things to Remember**

There are several crucial facts which need to be remembered:

An average phone caller can complete 12 calls per hour.

The best time to operate a phone bank is between 5 and 9 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekends.

Good phone bankers can handle three hours of phone calls in one night.

Most phoners participate for social purposes. Make sure to build social events into your phone bank. Bring food and drinks to the event, and allow for a "break time" reception after a shift.

If you are asking your contact to perform some task, such as calling their lawmaker, you will have to make many more calls than the number of responses you hope for.

- Make sure you are calling the right people. On a get-out-the-vote drive, phone banks are used to reach known sympathizers. When trying to generate support for an issue or candidate, uncommitted and apathetic voters are sought by phone. When the effort is aimed at generating action from the grassroots, call the committed. When looking for canvassers and volunteers call only the very committed so-called “second mile conservationists.”
- The following formula will help you to determine the number of workers, lines and days needed to complete a project. Suppose you want to make 1000 phone calls. At twelve contacts/hour, it will take you about eighty-three hours. At three hours of calling per evening it would take twenty-eight staff days. Thus, if you borrowed an office with seven lines, it will take you four nights to make your calls.

### **Phone Banks and Canvassing**

One goal of phone banks can be to get group members within certain legislative districts to agree to canvass their neighborhood to promote an issue, and to take an informal poll.

Results of this poll can then be presented to a wayward legislator to help her reconsider her position and can then be given to the media.

Things to remember:

One phone can be expected to solicit thirty canvassers from among a membership per eight-hour day.

When organizing a door-to-door canvass by phone bank, detailed street maps are needed.

### **3.2 How To Set Up A Letter-Writing Table**

One simple outreach strategy is to set up a table displaying information on your issue and encouraging people to write to the appropriate lawmaker. Union meetings, sporting shows, or other events that promote interest and caring are good locations. However, the local mall or anywhere there will be heavy traffic is also appropriate.

Draft a short sample letter that people can use as a model. One or two paragraphs are sufficient. Be sure to include the lawmaker’s and the writer’s address. (Tape the sample letter to the table where it will be easily seen.)

In addition to a table, don’t forget to bring enough chairs for the person(s) who are running the table, and 3-4 seats for the letter writers.

Bring plenty of recycled paper, pens, clipboards, envelopes, and scotch tape.

Have a Congressional or state legislative directory.

Another useful aid is a directory that matches zip codes to Congressional districts.

Depending on time and location, the letters can be taken directly to the appropriate lawmaker's district office, or mailed. (To help defray postage, you might want to have a collection plate on the table as well.)

**Important Addresses:**

**To a Senator:**

The Honorable (name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

**To a Representative:**

The Honorable (name)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**To the President:**

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**To state or local authorities or agencies:**

For example:  
Florida Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
6500 Pensacola Blvd.  
Pensacola, FL 32505

**3.3 How To Develop Community Action**

Many important reforms in public policy and laws at all levels begin with local citizens willing to devote themselves to a cause.

Success comes with a step-by-step realistic plan to heighten public awareness, network with like-minded citizens and coalitions, develop a clear message and workable solutions, and persuade your legislators that your goal is worthwhile.

**Find Dedicated Individuals**

Identify potential supporters and determine which groups and communities are likely to back your cause. Find leaders and VIPs to help lend credibility and attract publicity. Keep a list of names and telephone numbers of important people. Places to look for volunteers include

public or consumer interest groups

former and current public officials and their staff

up-and-coming politicians

prominent activists and community leaders

political parties and civic groups

### **Educate The Public**

Compliment your media campaign by distributing literature whenever and wherever possible: at hearings, public meetings, club meetings, and anywhere potential supporters might congregate.

### **Target Your Resources**

Spend time and resources only where there are individuals likely to join your cause. Focus your resources for the greatest impact and the lowest cost.

### **Conduct A Rally**

As support for your effort grows, plan an event to show lawmakers and the press the public's concern for your issue. Send notices to the media at least two weeks in advance. Follow up with phone calls a few days before the meeting. Notify the public through flyers and advertisements your local radio and TV and paper. Convince community leaders to commit to bringing people with them. Put the name of your group or effort on a banner or a placard so the media can pick it up in photos. Have fact sheets for the press and public.

### **Recruit Volunteers**

Volunteers are the backbone of activism. Make public announcements and circulate sign-up sheets at meetings to recruit new volunteers. Make sure there is enough work to keep volunteers busy or they may become frustrated and lose interest. For each volunteer position, list the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications.

### **Working With Coalitions**

There is strength in numbers. Uniting with a coalition of organizations, groups or individuals with a common interest is a powerful way to advocate for an issue. Clearly define the issue or purpose for which you are coming together. Keep coalition members informed and involved through open communications. Let Coalition members know quickly about any developments so they can help update others with similar interests.