

# How to Coordinate a Press Event

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Each story that we get in the media raises the Union's profile in the community. So getting media coverage is great. However, a lot of thought needs to be put in before a media event is planned. For example, some basic questions need to be answered before even starting to plan an event. Each story needs a hook, so the same applies for an event. Also, don't be afraid to be creative. If you're trying to get some press coverage, then your story needs to "sell." (Note: some of these tactics can also be used for coordinating direct actions and developing member outreach campaigns)

The following is a guide.

**Take control of the story:** Before you set the date for your press event, do the advance work of researching the topic the press event will be addressing and why it is important to talk about now. Find out which reporters and media outlets cover the topic. Think about the false assumptions already out there on the topic, and then move forward with re-framing the message.

**Frame the story:** As you're coming up with your message and how you're going to pull it off at the event, don't just think about telling the media what you're doing. Think about telling them why. Make sure there are enough sound bytes that frame the story. Structure your story like this:

1. Problem
2. Solution
3. Action

Speak with the language of values.

**Visuals:** As you begin to put together the themes for your story, you will get an idea about the spokespeople who can best convey the message and what visuals will tell the best story. Protests and speaking behind a podium are common visuals at press events. However, those tactics are cliché, and they should be avoided as much as possible. Think about all the innovative things that people have done to get effective press coverage:

- At a live U.S. Conference of Mayors press conference in Chicago, a Black Lives Matter protester interrupted the press conference and stood in front of the podium in silence holding up a sign urging Mayor Rahm Emmanuel to resign.

The sign had a memorable hashtag inscribed on it. **Good choice of location and memorable message.**

- After the U.S. government demanded that Apple give the FBI a backdoor to hack into an iPhone recovered from one of the San Bernadino shooters, privacy supporters staged a rally at the San Francisco Apple store and displayed stickers on their iPhones that read: “I do not consent to the search of this device.” **Good timing and strong visuals.**
- Remember when wrestling star and actor The Rock showed up at the Republican National Convention? He took the stage and, staying in character, rallied the crowd. It was bizarre and cool, all at the same time. **Bottom line: Go for the shockers and use the people who have name recognition to drive the main points home.**

**Press coverage:** The next pages provide an outline for mapping out press coverage. Make sure to try to follow a timeline so that the press event has multiple opportunities to get covered. Also, prepare the following materials for spokespeople, when you can:

- **Talking Points:** These talking points are for internal use and NOT for distribution to the press. They can be used by any spokesperson who will be speaking to the media or other audiences to interest them in your efforts. It is important that everyone adheres to these talking points so that audiences across the state hear the same consistent message about the Union.
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):** These FAQs are for internal use and NOT for distribution to the press. They will help your spokespersons prepare for interview questions, especially those that are more difficult.
- **Factsheets:** These factsheets are for internal use and NOT for distribution to the press. They provide data points and numbers that validate the overall narrative of the Union’s progress. While the data of the factsheets can be used liberally, do not make the mistake of relying too heavily on them. A list of numbers and figures is less compelling than telling the big picture story.

**Message discipline:** If a member is quoted at a press event, make sure that she knows the message and practices. There is no “off the record” when it comes to the media. If a reporter asks a question, a sample bridge could be:

- “...I think the important issue is”
- “...I think the real point is”
- “...I think the larger question is”
- “...the reason I’m here is”

Make sure to be quotable as well. Be a character in a story—establish your connection to the issue. Also, keep in mind that it's OK to say "I don't know the answer to that" or "I'll get back to you on that." Don't say "no comment." It makes you look guilty. Lastly, when mentioning your talking points, make sure to back them up with facts. Do not lie or make stuff up EVER.

## Timeline for Conducting Media Outreach

4 Weeks Before	3-4 Weeks Before	2 Weeks Before	1 Week Before	3-4 Days Before	Day of Event
Send op-ed to target publication	Send PSA and community calendar listing or blog post	Send drop-in article or blog post	Send letter to the editor if op-ed is unsuccessful	Send media advisory to media	Send press release to media

### Four Weeks Prior to Activities

**Op-Ed:** Thirty days prior to your launch, email the op-ed to the editorial page editor at your local newspaper and follow up with a phone call to emphasize the importance of the news. Do NOT send the same op-ed to more than one newspaper at a time. If your op-ed is using your event as a news hook you will want to aim to have it run either on the day of the event or shortly after it. Coordinating with editors in advance will ensure enough time to secure placement and work through any potential feedback.

### Three to Four Weeks Prior to Activities

**Public Service Announcement (PSA) and Community Calendar Listing:** Send the PSA radio scripts to the public affairs directors at your local radio stations three to four weeks prior to your event. If the planned activities include a public event, send a community calendar listing to the community calendar section at local daily and weekly newspapers. With both cases, make follow-up calls a few days after sending to make sure they received the materials and to encourage them to use the announcements.

### Two Weeks Prior to Activities

**Drop-In Article or Blog post:** Send a short article or blog post to local community newspapers and magazines, organization newsletters, relevant websites, and church bulletins. These types of weekly/monthly publications can need two weeks' lead time, but some drop in new items daily.

**Letter to the Editor:** If the op-ed is unlikely to run in any local publication, email a letter to the editor one week prior to your event. If the op-ed is going to run in the local newspaper and the community has a second local newspaper, you can also send the letter to the editor to ensure that opinion pieces about the news appears in both publications. Also encourage other workers, retirees, parents, business leaders, and other community partners to submit their own letters to the editor in support of your efforts.

### Three or Four Days Prior to Activities

**Media Advisory:** Three to four days before your event, email the advisory to television, radio, and newspaper outlets. Send it to the assignment desk or news director, unless you have established relationships with specific reporters. Make follow-up calls to each outlet to be sure that reporters know about your effort.

### **Day of Announcement or Event**

**Press Release:** Tailor the news release to emphasize the news that is being announced or what will take place at the press conference. Be sure to include a quotation from at least one spokesperson. Email the release to local television, radio, and newspaper outlets on the day of the announcement or the day the event begins. But do not send it earlier than the announcement time or the start time. Follow up to see if the reporters need more information.