

The American NGO Coalition  
for the ICC (AMICC)

# *Advocacy Guide*

*How to Make a Local ICC Alliance an  
Effective Proponent for the  
International Criminal Court*

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## **Introduction**

This manual offers some basic tools that can help you be an effective advocate for the International Criminal Court in your community and among the policy-makers that shape U.S.-ICC relations. We hope it will help you and your alliance communicate your message in your local communities to reach local, state, and national decision-makers.

Through a multi-faceted approach using coalition building, earned media, and contact with local officials, you can help demonstrate that there does exist an active and concerned constituency for the ICC and for U.S. leadership in this international institution.

### **I. Building and Working with Coalitions**

Working in a coalition can be a great way to pool limited resources, compare effective strategies, and target new audiences and potential members for your own organization. However, there are important factors to consider before attempting to branch out to new groups.

#### **ADVANTAGES**

- Win what couldn't be won alone.
- Build an ongoing power base.
- Increase the impact of individual organizations' efforts.
- Develop new leaders.
- Increase resources.
- Broaden scope.
- Membership recruiting opportunities.

#### **DISADVANTAGES**

- Distracts from other work.
- Weak members can't deliver.
- Too many compromises.
- Inequality of power.
- Individual organizations may not get credit.
- Dull tactics.

#### **A. Principles for Successful Coalitions**

- Choose unifying issues. There needs to be a common cause, not just a desire to work on one another's agendas. A shopping list of issues will result in chaos and few actual accomplishments.
- Understand and respect institutional self-interest. Recognize that each organization brings its own history, structure, agenda, values, culture, leadership and relationships to a coalition. Avoid unnecessary conflicts.

- Agree to disagree. Member organizations seldom agree on all issues. Agree to avoid issues on which you do not agree.
- Play to the center with tactics. It is usually necessary to play to the groups that are toward the middle when developing tactics for a coalition. However, the coalition's strategy may be to encourage the appropriate organizations to act independently and in their own names, utilizing more militant tactics.
- Recognize that contributions vary. Organizations bring different strengths and weaknesses to the coalition.
- Help organizations to achieve their self-interest. Organizations need to feel that they are benefiting from the coalition, either through attaining a goal, increasing their visibility or expanding their base.
- Achieve significant victories. Groups will only continue contributing if they see concrete, measurable results.
- Urge stable, senior board representatives. Encourage member organizations to be represented by individuals who have the authority to make decisions regarding the participation of their organization.
- Clarify the decision-making procedure. Whatever the structure, it should be clear to all board members.
- Distribute credit fairly. Don't underestimate how important this is to members of coalitions. An organization's ability to raise money, recruit members, build power, attract staff, develop leaders and fulfill its mission depends directly on the amount of public credit it receives, particularly in the press. Organizational self-interest is legitimate. Groups join coalitions to gain power, not to give it away.

### **Tips to Keep in Mind**

In the past, international affairs issues have not received enough domestic political support to prevent them being programs cut when federal budgets are tight. It is simply more difficult to rally people around issues that seemingly do not affect their daily lives. However, in today's globalized world, events abroad do increasingly affect the everyday lives of Americans, and the key is to make this point repeatedly and in a way that seems realistic to the "average American."

- 1) Be creative. Reach out to groups that may not seem immediately to have an interest in the International Criminal Court or other international issues. These types of partnerships not only increase the base of your coalition, but they provide new audiences and new vehicles for communicating your central message.
- 2) Be strategic. Concentrate your efforts on groups that really have something to offer and that are not engaged in activities that may be counterproductive to your own efforts.

- 3) Be realistic. Don't spend disproportionate amounts of time attempting to recruit new

## **B. The Organizer's Job**

There is a difference between organizing an individual membership organization and a coalition. With a coalition, you are not creating an entity in which anyone who so desires may participate. You are carefully assembling the appropriate groups, in the appropriate order, to ensure that all who should be in are invited, seemingly simultaneously. This must be done carefully, and it requires a skilled organizer who can juggle a number of things at once. You must talk to all the key players at about the same time to avoid anyone feeling as if they are the last to be consulted or invited.

You should function in several roles:

- 1) Work with the leaders who are sent from the member organizations and help them participate fully.
- 2) Minimize tensions among coalition members by helping them work together.
- 3) Build the coalition – illustrating how participation within the coalition will build the organizations or participants.

The program of the coalition should be carried out by and through the affiliates. You should disseminate information and ideas to affiliates and help them to mobilize their own members to support/oppose an issue.

Consider these questions when setting up your coalition:

- What competing organizational self-interests may exist between members?
- Which organizations will contribute the most and which have the most to gain by participating?

There is one cardinal rule of coalition building - never become involved in the internal politics of any coalition member organizations.

Building a coalition and making it work effectively requires tough analytical strategic thinking, clear understanding about how coalitions work, savvy staff, and hard work.

## **C. Expanding Your Coalition**

The success of your efforts to expand your coalition depends in large part upon your ability to recruit volunteers to assist you. The keys to volunteer recruitment are:

- Reaching out to coalition partners.
- Training.
- Record-keeping.

- Being prepared with a task for willing volunteers.
- Recognizing that there is no such thing as a "free" volunteer.
- Volunteer appreciation.

Reaching out to coalition partners: Local affiliates of your partner organizations can yield a wealth of volunteers. A meeting of the leadership of local affiliates should be scheduled as soon as possible to create a working group to plan and implement activities. Each local affiliate should be asked to provide staff/members to help organize activities when needed.

Many of the local affiliates hold regular meetings of membership/activists. Ask to attend those meetings to discuss the need for action and to recruit volunteers. Also reach out to organizations which are not partners but are likely to sympathize with your efforts. Possibilities are minority organizations, women's organizations, seniors' organizations, and environmental groups.

College campuses are a great source for volunteers and organizing activities. College students tend to have more time to spare in the evenings and weekends and are often more comfortable than others in taking a very visible role in an event.

Seek out sympathetic groups on campus and ask to address a scheduled meeting or work through the representatives of the group. Since transportation can often be a problem for college students, try to hold planning meetings near or on campus and help arrange transportation to an event/rally/demonstration, etc. It is always your job, to the best of your ability, to ensure the safety of students. Remember they may lack the maturity and experience of other volunteers.

## **II. Membership Building**

In an ideal world, all ICC alliances would have considerable budgets at their disposal and would be able to embark on expensive television and direct mail programs aimed at recruiting new members. In reality, very few organizations have this ability. A much more cost effective way to encourage people to join your alliance is through recruiting targeted members of groups who have joined your coalition and through events your alliance will hold or be a part of.

Make membership recruitment a key component of you coalition building work. In an earlier section, the benefits for being part of a broad-based coalition were outlined. Chief among these should be membership-recruiting opportunities for your alliance. When meeting with leaders of the groups represented in your coalition, make membership recruitment a top agenda priority. Be careful to stress that you are not looking to steal a group's members, only offer them an opportunity to also be involved in your ICC alliance.

Every activity you attend (whether it's an event or meeting) you should come with a stack of ICC alliance brochures in hand.

At every event or meeting, make sure all in attendance know about upcoming activities such as special events, monthly meetings, or letter writing campaigns to local Members of Congress.

Ask heads of organizations in your coalition to write a letter to their members, encouraging them to be active in international affairs by joining their local alliance. Follow up those letters with a letter or call from your alliance membership chair or president.

Hold a yearly "signature event" with a well known speaker around significant ICC dates, such as July 1, entry into force of the ICC Statute, or July 17, International Justice Day. These events are designed to keep current members interested and to bring in people from the public who may have heard of your speaker. Use this event to recruit new members by having membership recruitment part of the agenda. Ideally, ask your keynote speaker to include a call for new members in his or her remarks.

Keep current members engaged with monthly meetings. These meetings can be informal or formal. When sending out a notice to your members, encourage them to bring a friend in hopes of convincing them to join. These meetings are important to keep current membership engaged. They are also an opportunity to plan for an upcoming special event or plan for legislative lobbying. Inviting a speaker to these meetings may draw a better attendance rate by current and potential members. Your speaker could be the head of a local group that has recently joined or is considering joining your coalition.

Always look for opportunities to be part of other events in your community. Many expositions or conventions allow you to man a booth where literature can be distributed. As with all events, have membership pamphlets on hand and encourage anyone showing interest in the ICC to take one and join.

Using new coalition partners and events are keys to increasing membership as well as keeping current members engaged in your alliance. You should use any opportunity that involves people from outside your regular organizational contacts as a way to recruit new alliance members.

### **III. Media**

In the world of the twenty-four hour news cycle, no organization can afford NOT to be media savvy. We hope this section explains some of the basics of what is called "earned media" and more importantly, how to use the media to increase your alliance's influence over the public discourse. In the process, a good public profile will help you build or expand your coalition, as well as aid in the recruitment of new members.

#### **A. What is your Message?**

Every successful media campaign has one central component: a compelling message. Big organizations hire high-priced media consultants and pollsters to determine which messages work the best with the public. Most small groups don't have the time or the resources to hire consultants. Therefore, it is up to you and your organization to determine what your group's message will be.

A message is not an issue. A message is not a slogan. A message is not a strategy. A message is not two pages long. A message is specific information presented as a comparison to a part of the general public who:

- a) need to be mobilized or energized
- b) haven't made up their minds on an issue.

Play devil's advocate when building your message. Try to imagine what the average person, who doesn't follow ICC issues, would think about what you are trying to convey. Always keep the message simple and easy to understand. Convey the message by themes. And, most important, keep your message short enough to fit into a fifteen-second "sound-bite." This is a concise way to encapsulate your message so the press easily reports it.

The following is an example of a simple and effective message:

*We should honor our commitments.* (In reference to US signature nullification.)

A theme is the building block for an effective message. Themes help prove your message to the public. An example is the following:

*The U.S. government, through its support of the Dayton Accords, significant financial assistance to the former Yugoslavia, and participation in peacekeeping in Bosnia, has demonstrated its commitment to success of the Bosnian peace efforts. Now, the US administration is threatening to prevent the continuation of the Bosnian peacekeeping mission unless American peacekeepers are given complete immunity for any serious crimes they may commit while serving abroad.*  
(This theme builds on our message "We should honor our commitments.")

A message should fit on a 3x5-inch card and be no longer than a couple of sentences. It shouldn't be a page long, nor should it be one word. Be as creative as possible with themes, but your message should remain constant, always keeping your target audience in mind.

## **B. Holding a Press Conference**

Press conferences are called when important news needs to be conveyed. They are an important tool in getting your message out to the general public. However, they require a lot of work and should be taken seriously. Giving misinformation or insignificant information is worse than getting out no message at all. For example, do not have a press conference to announce that your alliance has a new organizational member. In this case, fax the media a press release and have new member organization call and introduce him/herself to the press as a way to begin building a relationship with the media.

You should call a press conference for big events - to release a study by your organization, to grant the press access to an important speaker they otherwise wouldn't have. But, if you overuse the press conference, the press will be less likely to show up to your events when they are important.

Timeliness of a press conference is the key to getting coverage. Every press conference needs a "hook" or reason why the press should attend. For example, hold an event highlighting the election of the ICC judges, or an important case being investigated by the Court.

### **1. Fourteen Steps to a Successful and Professional Press Conference**

- 1) Determine if a press conference is appropriate. If so, decide on a theme or themes, keeping your message in mind.
- 2) Decide on a time and place for the press conference. It is best to hold press conferences between 10 AM and 2 PM, Monday through Friday. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are the best. Sundays can also be good, but it is often difficult to schedule speakers on that day. Call an Associated Press (AP) reporter and ask if he or she will check the AP date book for a good time to hold a press conference. The date book is simply a calendar of news events for reporters. The AP is the best place to check on a date because if they show up to your event, it is almost guaranteed that your story will receive wide coverage. Are there any other major events in the community on the day of your planned press conference? Make sure you hold the press conference in a location that is easily accessible to the media you are most interested in reaching. Finally, don't forget Mother Nature. If you are holding it outside, always have a back up location in case of rain.
- 3) Find a main speaker and arrange any additional speakers. You should also build a small crowd of supporters.
- 4) Help speakers write their speeches, being mindful of the message and theme your organization wants to convey. Speeches should last no longer than 20 minutes. Keep this in mind when writing your speeches, which generally shouldn't be more than 3 minutes to 5 minutes each. You don't want the media packing their bags before you've finished.
- 5) Compile a press list of all television and radio stations, newspapers and newspaper wire services (AP, UPI, Knight-Ridder, Reuters) in your area. Do not limit your list to only the stations you watch on television and listen to on the radio. Call all listed in the phone book and ask for a fax number to the news room, not the station's general fax number. Keep this media list for your records and future events. Find out who the assignment or managing editors are at each TV station (these are the people who ultimately decide what airs and what doesn't, not the reporters). Find out the beats of reporters at the major newspapers (i.e. if you are doing an event on global health issues, you want to invite the reporter who handles health issues for the paper).
- 6) Write a media advisory (see addendum below), a faxed release to news media outlets, that briefly tells them about your press conference. Fax it to all local press offices and organizations who may be interested in attending your event at least two days before the event. Give them enough information to interest them in attending, but not so much information that they feel able to write something up without bothering to attend. Call the newsroom (ask to speak to the news director or assignment editor) after faxing to make sure they received the fax and begin to pitch your idea for a story. Don't fax out the media advisory too soon- reporters work on short cycles and will replace it. But you should never send one too late, either, or time slots may be filled up. Give 2-4 days notice to news organizations.

- 7) Write a press release (see addendum below) to take to the event to pass out to the media representatives that attend. Finding out the whole story as it unfolds is their incentive to come to the event. Later, fax the release to the media outlets that didn't attend.

Sometimes outlets that don't show up may still cover the event by getting the news from the release. Offer to visit news stations and newspaper outlets with your main spokesperson after the event.

- 8) Put together a media packet folder with all the additional information not in the press release. This media kit should include bios of speakers, research data that reporters may want to use in their story, background info about your alliance including lists of ongoing activities and upcoming events and a list of organizations involved in the event along with a short description of them. This helps reporters write their story. The more information you give them, the more likely they will cover the story thoroughly and accurately.
- 9) The morning of the press conference, call the media to remind news organization of your event and to see which ones will attend. Again, ask for the assignment editor at TV stations, news director at radio stations, and specific reporters or an editor at most newspapers. Some radio stations may want to do a pre-interview at this time over the telephone. Be prepared. This is a good opportunity to let people know that the event is going on and to reinforce your message.
- 10) Arrive at least a half hour early for the press conference to set up visuals (posters, your organization's banner, etc.), a podium, maybe a sound system and a tape recorder. Remember to have a visual component (e.g. your organization's banner or a poster) for television or news photographers. A caption and a photo also can convey your message. Many press conferences encounter problems with microphones and other electronic equipment. Check and test these thoroughly in advance.
- 11) Don't wait too long for late-comers from the press. Start no later than 10 minutes after the time scheduled on the media advisory. Hand out your press packet and have each reporter record his or her name on a sign up sheet. Keep this for future records. If there are two or more media representatives there on time, start on time. Be sure to introduce yourself and your spokespeople to the press. Building a relationship with the press will help you in the long-run.
- 12) Thank the press for coming when the event has finished. Make the speaker available for individual interviews afterward. Set up a banner with your organization's logo as a backdrop for the interview
- 13) That evening, record the coverage of the event on a home VCR for your records. Also be sure to clip all print coverage of the press conference for your records. Send in copies of your clips to the national organization.
- 14) Enhance the theme of your press conference with follow-up letters to the editor or op-ed pieces in the paper. Schedule the main speaker on a talk radio show during the week.

## **2. Pitching a Story**

Media advisories are great tools for getting a reporter interested in attending your event. An even better way to ensure attendance is to back up your advisory with a strong pitch to the relevant person at a given media outlet. This is a difficult part of the process and it's not always easy to get someone to take your call, let alone listen to your pitch.

Outlined below are a few steps to help ensure that if you do have an opportunity to talk to a reporter or editor, you make the most of it. Some of these suggestions will undoubtedly seem simple, but when it's time to make that call it's often harder than expected to be brief, on message, and to the point.

- 1) The most important part of making a successful pitch is making sure you are pitching the best person you can. What is meant by that is, if you're calling a TV station, you want to be talking to an assignment editor or managing editor. That's not to say that having a good relationship with a reporter isn't important, but the final decision about which events are covered and airs lies with the managing editor. This is a slightly different case with daily newspapers, where having a good relationship with a reporter is often the key to getting your story covered.
- 2) You will likely get only one shot at pitching your story. There is nothing wrong with being persistent, but you certainly don't want to bother a busy reporter with several phone calls and faxes. One way to cut down on the number of calls is to make your pitch when you call the reporter to confirm that they received your advisory. Just ask them if they got your fax, and then move quickly to your pitch, thereby killing two birds with one stone.
- 3) When you are on the phone with the reporter or assignment editor and they are giving you an opportunity to convince them that your story is worth covering, emphasize why your story is important to the public and the fact that your broad-based coalition reflects that public interest.
- 4) Emphasize the importance of using this story as a "local tie in" to the larger national or international story. For example, suggest the event is their opportunity to make the ICC relevant to the local leadership. A local angle is always better for them than another national or international story.
- 5) Most importantly, stay focused on your message, be brief and to the point, and don't tell them so much that they no longer feel the need to cover your event. Don't be offended if they turn you down. Establishing a long-term relationship is most important. You want the reporter in your community to call you when he or she is looking for comment or background on a story involving the ICC because they consider you a reliable, informed, and friendly local voice on these issues.

## **3. What to Expect the Day of the Event**

Expect things to be hectic, but if you've carefully planned all the small details and have called the press and know who's showing up, everything will turn out fine. Remember, the press tends to run 5-10 minutes late. Don't be discouraged if no one from the media is there on time.

The press does not expect you to give a highly polished press conference. In fact, if your event is too polished, they may be suspect of your group. You may be more effective if your spokespeople are average people and not highly paid talking heads.

Despite their reputation, the press is not out to make a fool of you or your organization. If you forget lines of your speech, feel free to start over; if your visual effects get blown away, improvise. Remember, unless the event is being covered live, stations will edit the story down to around one minute.

Never lie to the press and never be afraid to tell the press you don't know a particular fact about an issue. If you don't know a fact, tell a reporter you'll get back to them with the information and follow through on your promise ASAP. You will gain more respect this way than if you try to bluff or stall your way through a tough question. Expect the unexpected, especially weather, and have a backup location if your event is scheduled for outdoors.

#### **4. Tips on Speaking to the Press**

- 1) If a reporter calls, take the call. Don't be intimidated or afraid to deal with media inquiries. If you are not sure of the answer to the reporter's questions, simply jot down what the reporter wants to know and assure him/her that you will return the call as soon as possible.
- 2) Be specific. Ascertain what the reporter needs. Does the reporter want a quote, or just background information?
- 3) Verify the reporter's deadline. Be sure to get back to the reporter before that time.
- 4) Don't stonewall or ignore the media. Neglected reporters have a long memory. Keep in mind - you may need the same reporter someday. Try to answer the reporter's questions as quickly and completely as possible. Don't become defensive with tough questions. Look at them as a chance to answer tough critics.
- 5) Don't become too friendly with reporters. You will find that your relationship is strictly professional, no matter how friendly the reporter may seem. If your defenses are down, and you give inside facts to a reporter, you are simply giving him news information, and that information may appear in print whether you like it or not
- 6) Nothing is ever off the record. Keep that in mind, and your media relations will be friendly, yet professional.
- 7) Feel free to call reporters when you want to pitch a story. But, don't bother reporters with unnecessary calls - be selective as to when a "follow-up" call is necessary, and use that opportunity to pitch your story. Reporters' time is precious, and if you respect their schedule, they will see you as a more reliable news source.

### **Addendum: Media Advisories**

Media advisories simply alert the media that an event will take place. Media advisories convey very specific information, such as the time, date and location of an event. They also convey what the press conference or the event will be about. Pique the reporter's interest so he or she will want to find out more, but don't give away everything you want to say either.

The following is an example of the layout and content of a media advisory:

MEDIA ADVISORY  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
[date]  
CONTACT:  
[name]  
[phone #]

[Title/Headline]  
[Paragraph explaining what will go on during the press conference]  
Who: [the name of the organizations and speakers present at the event]  
What: [what your group will be doing, most likely holding a press conference or special event]  
Where: [where the event will be held, giving exact location, address, city and state of event]  
When: [the exact time and date of the event, including the year]  
(these symbols (####) are put at the end of a media advisory or press release to denote the end of the fax)

### **Addendum: Press Releases**

Press releases are your version of the story of your event and are typed up before the event takes place. Don't keep any information back in the press release like you did with the media advisory. Press releases are usually a page in length, although can rarely be two pages. Reporters want to know your "spin" on the issue but also want to get as much information in the smallest amount of space possible.

Some papers have been known to re-print word for word an organization's press release as the actual story, so keep that in mind when you are composing it. Provide as much third party validation for your points and proposals as possible. The press assumes that you have an axe to grind and a bias. If you can support your claims with facts from organizations the press considers unbiased, your message's credibility will be greatly enhanced.

This sample press release has the "look" that reporters and news directors expect from a professional event.

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**CONTACT:**

[date]

[name]

[phone #]

[Title/Headline-something that commands attention]

[LOCATION OF THE EVENT]- Proceed with the narrative telling your story about the event. Use important, eye-catching information, good sound bites and short quotes  
Less important information and statistics are a good conclusion to your press release.

- 30 -(this symbol denotes the end of a press release)

**Tips on Writing a Press Release**

1. Start first with a headline which is in bold typeface and set apart from the rest of the press release. Make it catchy and newsworthy. As with headlines in the newspaper, this line will help the reporter or editor decide whether or not to read on. The best place to start when writing a press release is with your message and theme. The purpose of having a press conference is to convey your viewpoint on the issue.
2. Press releases are like pyramids. The most important and flashy information (e.g. good quotes, the main attack) is given in the first paragraph. More general information (e.g. statistics, information about the organization) is given later in the press release.
3. Begin to think like a reporter. Press releases and media advisories must always pass the skim test. Reporters are sent many more media advisories than for events they can actually attend. If you skimmed your press release and media advisory as a reporter, without knowledge of your issue, would you be interested in attending the event and making sure it received coverage?
4. Use colorful quotes, buzz words and sound bites freely. Sound bites are good because they make it easy for reporters to summarize your message in their stories. You already have the quotes because the speeches are already written for the event. The quotes should include the most important sound bites. This part of the release usually gets covered.
5. Make sure you include the sources to back up the claims in your speech and media packet. Empty rhetoric won't fly with today's cynical media and citizenry.

**C. Other Ways to Get out the Message**

**1. Letters to the Editor**

Letters-to-the-editor are vehicles for expressing an opinion, and most often discuss a recent event or issue covered by a publication, radio station, or television program. They can be used to express an opinion about the event/issue, or discuss the paper, magazine, radio station or television station's coverage of an event/issue.

While opinion-editorial pieces (see below) are usually written by individuals known for their credibility or experience with an issue, letters-to-the-editor are frequently written by lesser known individuals. Encourage supporters in the area to write letters-to-the-editor expressing their views on a particular issue.

Letters-to-the-editor should be used to:

- Rebut statements by groups or individuals.
- Provide audiences with information or a point of view you want them to know.
- Point out or correct misinformation.
- Connect local problems and concerns to specific votes/actions of the incumbent Congressperson.

Letters-to-the-editor should be well-written, clear and concise. Remember, editors often abridge letters due to space limitations, so make sure you lead with your most important information. Because your letter needs to be brief to be published - usually no more than 200-250 words - focus on one main point and make a compelling case for it. When expressing your point of view, include the names of prominent people or organizations who share your opinion to demonstrate the broad-based support for your position. Letters-to-the-editor can also be signed by more than one individual to show unity of opinion. Offer to draft a letter or a sample letter for appropriate persons to encourage them to submit as letters-to-the-editor.

Most publications include information about how to submit letters to the editor. Check the pages where the actual letters are printed. If the paper's mailing address is not there, simply call and ask for it. Many publications will also accept e-mailed letters-to-the-editor.

## **2. Opinion-Editorials**

Opinion-editorial pieces (or op-eds) are longer commentaries filled with editorial opinions and facts about an issue. These are usually reserved for leaders of local or national organizations, or people with an expertise in a particular field or who have personal experience with an issue. Oped pieces are usually no longer than 800 words, but you should call the local paper for limits and availability of space. The media looks for specific features when considering op-eds for publication or broadcast. These include:

- A strong clear opinion.
- Well-documented, well-researched facts and arguments.
- Essays that educate the reader/viewer about a given issue.
- Hot or relevant issues that are interesting to the local/regional area.
- Examples, anecdotes and facts.
- Authors with established credibility and experience with the issue to validate their opinions.

Editors often reject op-eds because they are poorly written, too long, or untimely. You can also increase your chance of publication if you submit your op-ed piece with a cover letter briefly explaining your subject, why it will capture the reader/viewer interest, your story's main points and the background of the individual who wrote or signed the op-ed. The cover letter should capture the essence of the argument in a sentence or two and explain why it is relevant and/or timely.

If the paper doesn't seem interested in op-eds, ask if they will let your spokespeople come in for an editorial board meeting or a meeting with an individual reporter.

### **3. Editorial Board Visits**

Editorial board meetings need to be carefully planned and executed. An editorial board can range in number from ten editorial writers to one writer who is the paper's editor. After scheduling an editorial board, find out who from the paper will be attending and ask if they plan to write a news story from your meeting. Before attending the meeting, try to determine from local allies the political biases and issue interests of the individuals you will be meeting with.

The individuals you recruit for your editorial board meeting should be credible, well-versed and able to succinctly speak about the issue of concern and why it is so important. Local facts, figures or examples should be used to provide "punch" to your arguments. Stress only three or four important points. Have your spokespeople clearly state what they believe, why they believe it, and the effect it will have on their community.

Find out the paper's editorial position before the visit. This can be obtained from the paper's past editorials, or from relevant interest group allies. Be prepared to counter the opposition's view as the editorial board may play devil's advocate, but of course, never let the environment become hostile.

If a news story or editorial resulting from the meeting is negative or does not adequately reflect the views presented, have an ally write a letter to the editor reiterating the points made in the meeting. The letter should clearly state why the writer disagrees with the editorial/story, without being in a hostile tone. If a positive story or editorial is written following the meeting, have someone write a letter thanking the paper for "doing the right thing."

### **4. Local Talk Radio**

Try to schedule yourself or a member of your organization as guests on local talk radio shows. This is a great way to get your message out there without being edited. Even if the talk radio in your area does not seem to be on your political wavelength, you may still be able to be a guest. (They like the challenge of having a guest with an opposing view. Remember, conflict sells).

Call the producer or the host and pitch your idea (see "Pitching a Story"). Have a specific piece of legislation or an agenda and pitch yourself in such a way to make the show seem interesting to the host.

The best way to get rid of pre-show jitters or anxiety is to know the issue as well as you can. Tell the truth and stick to your script. Practice "taking calls" from listeners with members of your organization. Be prepared to be challenged and have your arguments ready. Keep your cool and never get angry or abusive with a caller or the host. Identify two or three key points of priority that you can be sure to make during the course of the show.

You can also establish a cadre of callers that will listen to certain shows and call-in with questions about your issue. Provided your callers with times of shows, hosts' political leanings, call-in numbers, and talking points. Several callers that voice the same opinion on one show can be an equally powerful display of support for the ICC.

## **5. Flyers**

Flyers are inexpensive ways to directly communicate your message to the public. Most include a simple design or graphic, a simple message and a call for action. Example: "Please Call Congressman X at 555-1234 and tell him to vote against H.R. X because it prevents US cooperation with the ICC." Hand out flyers at fairs, public meetings, rallies, parades, booths at large events, town hall meetings, grocery stores, outside of post offices, etc. Always ask permission to hand out flyers from the event organizer or building manager. Recruit volunteers to hand out the flyers and always brief them beforehand on the issues you are promoting.

## **6. Paid Print, Radio or Television Commercials**

Most small non-profit organizations usually do not have the budget to pay for advertising their message. But on occasion, a well-placed ad can bring immense credibility to your organization and your issue. Shop around for the best deals and the best rates. Your group may be eligible for a non-profit advertising rate.

Radio and television ads are sold by a points system. 100 points means the average listener will hear your ad once during the week. 1000 points means your ad will be heard 10 times during the week by an average listener. Buy the time slots you want, if available, not what the person selling you the slots wants.

Most radio stations will help you produce your ads, as will most television stations. Production may include help with your script, a professional voice for the ad, music and final editing for your ad. But if you want top quality, be prepared to pay more for it and hire a professional media firm. Radio and television ads are expensive, so know what you want before you buy and don't accept anything you don't like.

Newspaper ads are sold by the column inch. Layout of your ad is often included in the price of the ad itself. It is best to have a professional lay out your ad according to the specifics of the newspaper, unless you are proficient at layout yourself in Quark Express or a comparable computer graphics program. Be sure to ask the newspaper if they need the artwork on disk or hard copy.

## **7. Public Service Announcements**

Most radio stations are willing to do public service announcements (PSAs) to publicize an upcoming event or to spread a message about a good cause. Call individual stations to get their

conditions/requirements for PSAs. Keep in mind that this method should only be a secondary way of getting your message out, because there is no way of ensuring when and how often a PSA will be broadcast.

## **8. The Internet**

The internet is becoming increasingly more popular as a way to stay in touch with each other and to research particular topics of interest. E-mail is an effective way to communicate with members of your organization who have access to a computer and a modem. Anyone who has used the internet for e-mail knows that like your mail box at home, the your e-mail inbox gets full of unwanted junk mail messages. Keep your messages to a minimum and don't include anything that you consider confidential. The internet is a great way to build a crowd for an event to inexpensively send important information (like a newsletter or issue updates) to your members and partners. Keep in mind that not everyone has access to the internet, but encourage members of your organization to use it. You can also set up a homepage where members of your local alliance can go for information about upcoming events or other news.

## **IV. Legislative Advocacy**

As constituents of a Member of Congress, each of you has the power to have your voice heard by an individual directly involved in national policy-making. The great thing about American politics is that you don't need to make a trip to Washington, D.C., in order to be heard. In fact, you can often be more effective by staying right in your Congressional district. However, since you are only one of many constituents to whom your Member is accountable, how you choose to frame and articulate your message is very important to the overall effectiveness of your efforts.

### **A. Setting up Meetings with your Member of Congress**

You should always be able to set up a meeting with a staff member of your Congressional office, whether it is in a district office or the Member's Washington office. However, by working together with members of your coalition that represent a diverse range of interests within your district, you may be able to obtain a meeting with the Member. Here are some general tips for setting up and conducting a Congressional appointment.

#### **1. District Office**

Depending on the size of your district, there are anywhere from one to three district offices of your Member of Congress. Most Senators have district offices in major cities in the state. Keep in mind the Member will most likely only be available in the district on weekends or during Congressional recesses, so if you want to meet with the Member it will have to be during those times. Congress goes on recess around most major national holidays - for a schedule of when Congress is in session in Washington, see the following websites:

[http://www.senate.gov/legislative/legis\\_2002\\_sched.html](http://www.senate.gov/legislative/legis_2002_sched.html) (for the Senate), and  
[http://www.house.gov/house.2002\\_House\\_Calendar.html](http://www.house.gov/house.2002_House_Calendar.html) (for the House).

- 1) Call the office and ask to speak with the Member's scheduler. If the receptionist asks you to identify yourself, make sure to say you are a constituent.

- 2) Tell the scheduler why you are calling and what you (or your group) would like to discuss with your Member. Some schedulers may request that you fax a formal request for a meeting to the office. Make sure to communicate the names and organizations of all members of your group, and specify those who are constituents.
- 3) If the scheduler wants to get back to you, make sure you follow up with them if you don't hear anything within a few days.
- 4) Before the time of your appointment, make sure you do some research on your Member if you are not familiar with his/her positions, especially on your issue. If your meeting is with a staff member, try to find out what issues that person covers and how much experience he or she has in the office.
- 5) When the time for the meeting comes, be prepared and concise. Assume that you may have to start with the basics of your issue, but attempt to assess right away how much the Member/staff knows, and if they are knowledgeable, jump right into the substance of the issue. However, keep in mind you may only have a few minutes, so know ahead of time what main points you want to make in your meeting. The following is a sample outline for your presentation:
  - Introduce yourself and other group members. If you are part of a coalition, briefly describe what your coalition does.
  - Give a quick background summary of your issue (this is the part to skip if the Member/staff seems knowledgeable of your issue.)
  - Explain what your position on the issue is, and why. It is helpful to make links with your district, e.g. "I support the Organization X because I know it does XXX for my business in your district, which employs 30 of your constituents." If you are part of a group, and especially if your group represents a wide range of interests, make sure each person has a chance to contribute to this part of the discussion.
  - Explain what you are asking of the Member of Congress and why. Try to be as specific as possible, e.g. "I'm asking you to vote for H.R. XXXX, which is scheduled for a vote in the next few weeks, because it enable the US to share the benefits I just mentioned." Don't assume your issue is on the Member's radar screen or that the Member/staff knows when relevant votes or action will take place.
  - Finally, try to gather any information the Member/staff may have on your issue. For example, try to find out when unknown events might be taking place, or if the Member seems supportive of your issue, who he or she may think could be other possible allies of your cause.
- 6) Have a "leave behind" ready to hand to the Member/staff at the beginning of the meeting. Your packet of information should include a one-pager on your organization, and a separate

page on why the Member should support your particular issue. Any necessary background information should also be included, but try to keep everything as brief, clear, and concise as possible.

- 7) Follow-up. Send a short thank you note and any information that you promised in the meeting or that might be helpful for the Member to carry out any promises he or she made during the meeting. Keep the Member in the loop in the future by sending him or her your newsletters, e-mail alerts, etc.

## **2. Washington Office**

If you do happen to be making a trip to Washington and have time to set up a meeting, follow the same procedures. If you do not know your Member's Washington phone number, call the Senate switchboard at (202) 224-3121, or the House switchboard at (202) 225-3121.

## **B. Writing Your Members of Congress**

Members of Congress want to hear from you. They know and realize their response to your inquiry/comments may translate into votes in the next election. That is why grassroots communications are so effective. You have the unique opportunity to have your message heard and, for better or worse, will most likely receive a personal response from your Member.

Congressional offices are busy places. They receive hundreds of calls, letters, emails and visits per day. How then, do you get your message heard? Here are a few tips to keep in mind when writing to your elected officials.

1. Length: Letters should be concise and to-the-point. Try to keep your letter to one page (typed), and never exceed two pages.
2. State your purpose: In the first paragraph, let the Member know why you are writing. Use the second, third and fourth paragraphs to make your point.
3. Include specifics: If you are writing about specific legislation, try to include the bill number, the title or some reference to the bill. Bill numbers are written as follows: House Bills: "H.R. add bill number" and Senate Bills: "S. add bill number".
4. Just the facts: State your position using facts as the basis for your position. Include how the legislation will/might affect you and/or your business directly. Avoid emotional or philosophical arguments (remember, be concise).
5. Request a Response: Ask for your Member's views, but do not demand their support or opposition. Be polite. Kindness and respect will go a long way toward making your position heard. Rude, demeaning, and other inappropriate words and tone will only decrease the value of your message.
6. Be Friendly: Do not hesitate to include additional information to add a "friendly" tone to the letter. For example, if you are a supporter of the Member, feel free to say so.

7. Getting Credit: Make sure that your name, address and phone number are on the letter. Without this information, it is unlikely that your correspondence will be read. Use the following format when addressing your letter:

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20525  
Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

### **C. Phone Banks to a Member of Congress' Office**

Setting up a phone bank for members of your organization to call their Members of Congress on a specific issue is a great way to mobilize your partners and get out your message. Good phone bank locations include union halls, law offices, or anywhere with easy access to a large number of phones. Hundreds of calls to the Member's district or Washington office can be more effective and easier to organize than a press conference. It is a good idea to provide callers with a short script to keep the message consistent. The script should include information about the issue and the Member's phone number. If you still want press coverage for your issue, call the press to show them all of the people who are working at your phone bank operation. An interview should cover the basics of who you are and what your message is.

## **V. Candidate Forums**

Candidate forums are a great way for constituents to hear how candidates running for a particular office feel about issues they care about. For the candidate, they are an opportunity to address the concerns of a particular interest group in a fair and open setting. For the sponsoring organization, they are a chance to get more public attention for an issue, as well as the organization itself. By holding informed, professional candidate forums, your organization will become more highly regarded by local opinion leaders, as well as members of the media.

Candidate forums should be viewed as a great opportunity to work with other organizations, raise your alliance's profile with the media, recruit new members, keep current members engaged, and most of all, help to shape the political discourse so that ICC issues are not ignored.

Whether you are preparing a forum with several other organizations for a high profile race, or a smaller forum for a lesser-known race, this section will provide you with the information you need to do a complete, professional job.

Remember to consider all of your options and decide what technique best suits your state or Congressional district and corresponding campaign. The decisions your alliance makes when planning your forum, as well as how well it goes, will have great impact on your alliance's ability to hold future forums. A successful forum will ensure that candidates for federal office adequately address ICC issues and recognize the active ICC constituency.

## **A. Description**

Candidate forums give you a platform that brings together candidates and voters to focus attention on issues. You can design your own candidate forum or work with other community groups to plan a successful joint project. There are many different formats in which voters have the opportunity to question candidates and candidates have the opportunity to express their views on a particular issue. Candidate forums should be open to the media to raise awareness of your issue and to hold candidates accountable for their positions and campaign promises.

## **B. Goals**

- To encourage candidates to commit to a pro-ICC agenda for which they may be held accountable.
- To educate voters on the candidates' platforms on the ICC.
- To energize those who attend to join your local alliance and become more involved in community action on behalf of your issue.

## **C. Issues and Steps to Consider**

Format. It is important to select the option that meets the needs of your community. Remember that complex questions allow candidates to avoid answering controversial questions. Make certain questions are concise, clear and focus on a single concept. Do not ask the candidates leading questions that point toward specific responses.

### **1. Equal Time Format**

In this format, most often an impartial moderator and panelists question the candidates, who are allowed equal response time. Traditionally, the candidates are unaware of the exact questions but know the established focus of the program. Candidates may answer the same question or may be asked different questions, so long as each is given equal time to present his or her point of view.

### **2. Prepared and Spontaneous Format**

Before the forum, the candidates are presented with several prepared questions constructed to elicit specific, detailed responses. A selection of these questions will be asked at the forum. In addition, candidates will be requested to give spontaneous answers to questions that originate with the panel, their opponents and/or the audience.

### **3. Follow-up Format**

In this format, the moderator and panelists ask the candidates questions. To avoid evasive answers to the original question, follow-up questions are permitted. Follow-up questions by opponents force candidates to present exact answers.

### **4. Discourse Format**

A strong nonpartisan moderator is a must for this forum design. The moderator asks a question, and then the candidates discuss the issue. It is imperative to have the moderator control candidates who try to dominate the discussion.

### **5. Town Meeting Format**

Members of the audience ask all questions, but questions may be screened to avoid redundancy. To facilitate substantive questioning, invite several experts on different aspects of ICC issues to attend the forum. The people asking questions will educate the candidate to the concerns of the constituency.

### **6. Feedback/Hearings Forum**

Focus the forum on a specific ICC issues such as the relationship with UN peacekeeping. For each of these issues, select an expert to present their concerns and suggest solutions. After the expert presentation, the moderator or panelists will ask the candidates to respond with specific program proposals to answer the concerns presented. The candidates will be allowed to make closing remarks after all agenda items have been discussed.

### **Budget**

Prepare a budget and financing strategy for the forum. Items to consider include production costs, advertisements and promotions, legal fees (though more than likely, you can have your legal questions answered by other local non-profits that have held forums), publications, and rental costs (site, furniture, etc. if necessary). You can often get costs covered by in-kind contributions.

### **Timeline**

1. Take into account the level of the office and the number of candidates seeking the office and the number of offices included in the forum, but begin planning as early as possible so you can get on a busy candidate's schedule.
2. Invite candidates as soon as they announce their intentions to seek the office. If the candidate forum will target the general election, invite candidates as soon as you know the winners of the primary election.
3. Plan backwards from the dates of the primary or general election.

### **Media and Audience**

The steering committee needs to determine if it will be advantageous to have the candidate forum televised live by commercial, cable or public stations; broadcast on radio; videotaped for broadcasting at a later date or for small group viewing; or a combination of these techniques. Your media strategy should reflect your goals for the forum. This will determine the audience you want to reach and the station you may want to enlist to broadcast the forum.

Televising the forum will reach the greatest number of people but the planning can be complicated by the demands of the station. Also, the one station that broadcasts your forum will most likely be the only one to promote it. Copyright laws may limit televising the forum and may

limit your videotape format at later showings. The station must give written consent on this issue. Having said that, television coverage is obviously more desirable than print or radio only.

The media can be enlisted to support the efforts of your coalition by providing public service announcements and print ads advertising the forum. To spark greater public interest in the event, arrange for several talk radio and TV programs featuring various members of your coalition in informative discussions of basic ICC issues. This will also educate the public on policy regarding ICC issues and highlight the efforts to which you and your coalition partners are committed.

When negotiating with a TV station, consider the following items:

**1. Plan**

Approach broadcasters with a tentative proposal that includes the date, location, format, potential moderators and panelists, content, candidates and other details.

**2. Negotiations**

Know your bottom line requirements and be prepared to compromise on other items.

**3. Program Sell**

Broadcasters are interested in candidate forums because they validate the station's commitment to public service. They will probably be concerned with the following items:

- a) Airing date and time
- b) Exclusivity
- c) Format dynamics
- d) On-air personalities (such as the moderator or panelists)
- e) Copyright
- f) Commercials

To promote the forum in the community consider the following:

**1. Logo**

Identification with a logo and slogan will create visibility and a unifying image. An alliance banner or a banner created for your coalition can be helpful.

**2. Announcements**

Place announcements in local publications.

**3. Flyers**

Place posters, notices, and fliers in public places.

**4. Calendars**

Submit the forum information to "Calendar of Events" sections of print media or appropriate web sites.

## **Documenting the Issues**

The moderator and panelists should be given a general outline of the topics you wish to cover during the forum. The topics should be specific to make certain that the candidates have the opportunity to describe their points-of-view or solutions to problems.

Before the forum, a simple candidate questionnaire can be developed and sent to the candidates. The results can be distributed at the forum. A checklist of specific issues with space for notes may help the participants if they want to record the stated positions of the candidates.

Sponsoring organizations can display nonpartisan literature about their groups. This will give members of the audience a chance to contact you for assistance, more in-depth information or opportunities to volunteer or join your alliance.

Any written information that will be available should be shared with the panelists, moderator and candidates.

It is helpful to prepare evaluation surveys for members of the audience and for the steering committee.

## **Planning Task Force**

Invite several community organizations to a meeting to plan a candidate forum. These can be existing coalition members or groups you hope to include in a coalition. Request that organizations send the people who will be assigned to work on the forum.

Share past experiences organizing candidate forums or town hall meetings.

Determine the particular race for which the candidates will be invited, the format and the forum's date and place during the first meeting. The "hot" candidates or political offices that are of greatest interest and have the most impact on the community will evoke the maximum response from the voting constituency and the media. For example, U.S. Senate races are higher profile, but only if it is a competitive campaign. A close U.S. House race will generate more coverage than a one-sided Senate race.

Appoint a forum coordinator. Try to select a coordinator during the first meeting. The coordinator's responsibilities may include:

- Developing a timeline
- Facilitating and scheduling steering committee meetings.
- Serving as the liaison to all involved organizations.
- Serving as the point person for negotiating with candidates and/or campaigns.
- Acting as the steering committee spokesperson for media
- Maintaining adherence to deadlines Coordinating activities
- Assisting as other concerns arise
- Ensuring attention to legal guidelines
- Documenting and archiving all activities for evaluation and future forums.

Form a working team and organizational structure during the initial planning stage. This will create ownership for everyone who is sponsoring the event. Dividing the responsibilities will ensure the diverse talents of the different players will be best utilized and that the burden of work will be shared.

### **Moderator and Panelists**

A non-partisan statement of purpose by a neutral spokesperson at the outset and conclusion of the candidate forum is imperative to set the tone for the evening. For legal reasons, it is safest if the neutral spokesperson is not directly aligned with sponsoring organizations. This person will present the opening remarks, introduce the moderator and panelists and deliver closing remarks. Avoid personalities that represent an allegiance to a particular candidate or political party. It is sometimes helpful to enlist the help of an unbiased local TV or radio personality. This adds credibility and attracts media attention to your forum.

### **The Moderator**

- Responsibilities: Ensures that the entire format works fairly for all candidates, manages the time, enhances the discussion, enforces rules, keeps time and copes with the unexpected.
- Qualifications: Confidence in front of an audience, audience appeal, knowledge of the issues, acceptability to the candidates, no partisan identification, flexibility, broadcast experience (not necessary but is a plus).

### **The Panelists**

- Responsibilities: Represent a broad range of points of view, exhibit independence in questioning candidates, knowledge of the issues, adherence to legal guidelines.
- Qualifications: Confidence in front of an audience, skillful at posing questions, acceptable to candidates and audience credibility.

### **Approaching the Candidates**

- It is essential that the steering committee develop written criteria for inviting the candidates. If the office you select has several announced candidates, you are required to invite all "viable" candidates of all parties. One standard for deciding who are the viable candidates is all candidates who are above 5 percent in major public opinion polls.
- Contact candidates as soon as the tentative date and format have been decided. Send a formal invitation and then meet with the candidates or their staffs, in person, to present the details of the forum.
- When scheduling, be as flexible as possible about the date, recognizing that candidates have full schedules during the election season.

- Avoid needless negotiations with the campaign by selecting a balanced format from the beginning. The format should protect the interests of all candidates and provide equal opportunity for each to state his or her views.
- When all candidates have agreed upon the details, have all principals sign the document. This may seem awkward, but a written agreement from the candidates as to site, format and other participants will avoid most last-minute complaints.
- All candidates will want to distribute campaign literature. Make sure each candidate is given equal opportunity to provide his or her campaign's literature. You may also elect to not allow any literature to be distributed. That obviously must also apply to all candidates.

## **VI. Summary of Legal Concerns**

- Non-partisanship: Remember, you are required to refrain from engaging in partisanship or even the appearance of partisanship.
- Invitations: All viable candidates must be invited. Determine your criteria at the outset of your planning, put it in writing and share it with invited candidates.
- Neutrality: The location must not be selected for political reasons. (i.e. Do not invite republican and democratic candidates to debate in a union hall.)
- Issues: Center the forum on a broad range of issues that correspond to the agendas of sponsoring organizations.
- Written agreement as to equal opportunity: All candidates should be given equal time unless the format specifically states that equal time is not guaranteed. The candidates should be aware of the format and document their consent.
- Questions: Questions and questioners must be unbiased and nonpartisan.
- Follow-up: Any reports on the forum must be free from editorial comments on the candidates, endorsements, opposition or criticism.
- Site Selection: The selection of the site for the candidate forum can be critical to the success of your event. Selection based on non-political considerations-a neutral forum-is the legal mandate. You should consider a variety of factors when choosing your site.
- Accessibility: Convenient access for the physically disabled, public transportation and/or parking.
- Size: Comfortably houses the number of people expected with easy viewing areas for press, cameras and audience. Keep in mind, there are few things worse when holding an event

than a room that looks empty. If your alliance can successfully fill the room and hold a professionally done candidate's forum, the media, other organizations, and future candidates will be more likely to show up in coming election years.

- Layout: A physical arrangement conducive to audience participation.
- Technical requirements: Adequate electrical capacity, sound system, telephone hook-ups, equipment movement in and out of and around the facility.
- Neutrality: Constituency base near the site does not appear to favor one candidate over another.
- Donation: Everything from in-kind contributions of the site to the financial commitment of sponsoring organizations.
- Miscellaneous: Security, insurance requirements, reception area, rest rooms, furniture, waiting rooms, etc...

## **VII. Evaluation**

The following factors will let you know whether your candidate forum was a success:

- The number of invited candidates that participate.
- The number of voters that attend the event.
- Media coverage of the forum.
- Candidates' responses on ICC issues in post-forum campaign literature.
- Future campaign appearances.
- Audience evaluation forms received at the close of the forum.