Resources for Public Relations and Publicity Chairs

MEDIA CONTACTS

Contact lists should include all major media in the area, including weekly and monthly magazines and newsletters, and cable stations. In addition to local news media, include local churches and synagogues, village boards, other civic organizations, and any organization or group that might possibly be supportive of League efforts in any given area. Don’t forget women’s magazines and publications on political or social issues. When doing a media blitz, use the sources most likely to support that issue/program.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEDIA

Find out who the contact should be at your local newspaper. Meet with that person and discuss what major League events are coming up. Find out what he/she needs from you that will help get your events publicized and in what timeframe. This person doesn’t need to be the editor. You may have a newsroom staff person or reporter as your contact.

Make sure you contact the right medium for the message. If your event has good visuals (e.g., a demonstration or march) you may want to contact tv as well as newspapers. Many cable stations have training sessions for individuals. Having a member willing to train would go a long way toward getting cable coverage of events as well as having videotape that can be used by other Leagues and/or media.

Publicize as much and as often as possible. Just because you don’t get coverage for one event, doesn’t mean it won’t be there for another. Keep trying!

PRESS RELEASE

Distribute a press release when the public should know about information that requires action. A press release offers an opportunity to gain attention for your League's work, and conveys the idea that the public needs to be aware of the information your League is presenting.

Suggested Press Release Components:

- **Date of the Press Release**
- **Contact Information**, including phone number and email of the contact person.
- **THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ______ PRESENTS _________________**
  (Be specific in the title. What is your League doing?)
- **The Introductory Paragraph**: Tell the public which League you are representing, and the basics about this message. The League of Women Voters of ______ is... Are you informing the public of a League activity? If so, include the title of the event, the day, date, time and any cost. Will people of note participate in the activity? If so, include their names. Is there a piece of legislation the public should be aware of? If so, include the bill’s number and name.
- **The Secondary Paragraph**: If you have a quote about the activity or initiative from a League official or someone of note, include that information in this paragraph.
• **The Action Paragraph:** Tell the public what you want them to do with this information. Do they need to make reservations to attend your event, or contact an elected official about specific legislation. This is the space to let people know why this information is important and how it can be used.

• ### (This symbol indicates the end of the release)

• **About the League:** (Tell the media who you are.) The League of Women Voters of ________, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. To learn more about the League of Women Voters of ________, visit (insert website address.)

**SUCCESSFUL OP/EDS**

Op/Eds are short essays that appear next to the editorial pages of newspapers. They are a fantastic tool for Leagues working to influence local or regional policies, bring a new perspective to an issue, or react to developments in their communities.

Here are a few tips for writing successful Op/Eds, thanks to PNN Online, a leading nonprofit newsletter:

• Introduce yourself to your newspaper's op-ed page editor by telephone or email and request the publication's op-ed guidelines. Then follow them.

• **Determine your goal.** What do you want to achieve through your op-ed? Do you want people to behave differently or take a specific action? Keep this goal in mind as you write.

• **Select one message to communicate.** Op-eds are short - typically around 800 words - so you have room to make just one good point.

• **Be controversial.** Editors like essays with strong opinions that will spark conversation.

• Illustrate how the topic or issue affects readers. Put a face on the issue by starting your essay with the story of somebody who has been affected or begin with an attention-getting statistic.

• **Describe the problem and why it exists.** This is often where you can address the opposing viewpoint and explain your group’s perspective.

• **Offer your solution to the problem** and explain why it's the best option.

• Conclude on a strong note by repeating your message or stating a call to action.

• Add one or two sentences at the end that describe your name, title, and credentials as they relate to the topic.