

Suggested Guidelines for Local Groups regarding the Chancery Visits

MEDIA and PUBLICITY

October 4-8 – Compile a list of local media contacts

- If you do not have a local press list and / or local contacts, begin now. Contact the local newspaper and get the name, email, phone, and fax number of the News Editor and the Religion Reporter. If you live in a big media market, they may even have a person assigned to GLBT issues – if so, get that contact information, too. Don't forget the weeklies and/or neighborhood papers (if you live in a large media market)
- Contact the local TV stations and get the fax number of the "Assignment Desk". If you can, get the name of the Weekday News Editor.
- If you have local radio talk shows, start compiling that information as well. Most music stations are not going to be interested at all.

October 11-15 – Begin pulling together resources

- Make copies of letters you sent to your bishop, or any other important documents that press may or may not want to see.
- Finish the press list information, and forward it to Laura@soulforce.org – so we have them in our media database.
- Make sure you have designated a "spokesperson", know the location, the number of people participating, your main talking points, and if working in coalition, know the contact information/spokesperson for the other organizations as well. This will also be the media contact person. This person **MUST** have a cell phone, and respond to media calls **IMMEDIATELY!**

Week of October 19 –

NATIONAL PRESS RELEASE GOES OUT to media and email lists

Send out local press releases and/ or cover letter along with National Release

- Press generally want a story to be 1) local 2) timely 3) controversial. This event has all three.
- In your press release or cover letter, remember the WWWWW – Who, what, when, where, and why. These should be clear, concise, succinct, and all in the first two paragraphs. Then include a quote by someone that addresses the personal aspects of this action for him or her. (This quote does NOT have to be from the spokesperson.) Conclude by stating the goal. Do not state opinions (except in the quote) and do not write in "first person", but rather as if you were writing a "news item" and reporting on it. And don't forget to include a local contact name and cell phone number.

- AFTER your release/cover letter is drafted, if you would like Laura to review it, email it to Laura@soulforce.org with DRAFT PRESS RELEASE in the subject line.
- The best days to send out a press release are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, at least 2 weeks prior to the event – so deadlines for weekly papers are met.
- It is important to email AND fax your release / cover letter ALONG WITH the National Release.
- Follow up the NEXT DAY to make sure they received it, and if so, introduce yourself, ask if they have any questions, and ask if they will consider covering it, or doing a pre-event story.
- If they don't remember receiving it, resend it again, and follow up again the next day.

ELECTION NEWS CYCLE – October 31-November 5 –

- There is nothing that you can do during this time, EXCEPT prepare.
- Prepare and write a media alert, and be prepared to send it out Sunday night, November 7 (A media alert is a reminder to press that the event is about to take place). It is almost like a “press release”, however, the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY are bullet points, making it easy to read – most other details are dropped, however a good short quote that “sums up” the purpose of the event is fine. Again, include contact information.
- Start thinking about and preparing press packets, based on the number of media you have contacted and/or have the possibility of showing up at the event. It is OK to have too many press packets, but you don't want to run out. Include the local and national releases, a flyer on Soulforce, your letter(s) to the Bishop, and information on your local group. Include a business card if you have one.
- Decide if you are going to have a “news conference” – a specifically dedicated time that you want the media to show up and tell them what is happening (or going to happen). Make sure that if you do this, you have some “news” to give them. Include this time and location in the media alert, if applicable.
- If you are considering a news conference, make sure you have located a place near the event to hold it, away from traffic noise, but visible to all. Decide if you need amplification, a noise variance, or a podium. Secure those items. Decide on speakers. The most you want to speak is 3 people, for 3 minutes each. Keep it short, simple, and succinct!

November 7 – Sunday night

- Although this is not the best time to send out a media release, it is the only time we have given the elections and the event on Tuesday. Fax and email local and national media alerts to all your contacts.
- Make sure this goes to TV stations (News Desk), as TV News basically plans nothing more than 24 hours ahead of time – always subject to change. Do not be

discouraged if you don't get a commitment from them. It is the nature of this medium. If it is a slow news day, you have a good shot at getting some coverage.

November 8 – Monday, day before the National Call to Prayer and Vigils

- FOLLOW UP WITH ALL MEDIA PEOPLE. Get commitments if possible. Resend Media Alert or Press Release if needed. Tell them this is a great story, why they should be there, and who else will be covering it (if applicable).
- Make sure press packets are finished.
- If you are having a news conference, make sure the amplification system is in working order.

November 9 – Tuesday, National Call to Prayer and Vigils

- Designate one person to be on the look out for press, get their business card, and hand out press packets– if this is not the spokesperson, make sure the designated person knows where the spokesperson is at all times.
- If you are having a “news conference”, make sure you “set up” at least 15 minutes prior to scheduled start time, and START ON TIME!
- Ask TV camerapeople when the story will run, and what time. Get someone to tape it if possible
- Ask newspaper reporters when their story will run, and offer to be of any help you can, and let them know they can call you if they have any questions.

November 10 – Wednesday - Follow-up media work

- Look for articles about the event. Find out if TV News shows ran. Keep a copy of all articles.
- Post your coverage / articles (email or links) to the Local Group Leaders listserve.

November 10-14 – THANK YOU NOTES

Send a handwritten thank you note (email will suffice if you must) to each reporter who covered the event

November 14-17 – USCCB in Washington, DC

November 18 - congratulate yourself!

Thank you for the work you do!

Laura Montgomery Rutt
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