

## GenEQ Action Tools: Media Advisory, News Release & Press Kit

A successful campaign will utilize the media as a method of disseminating information. Articles in newspapers, interviews on the radio and coverage from television stations about your issue are essentially free advertising. But first the media need to know about your events and efforts.

### **The Media Advisory**

A media advisory is a mini news release designed to get reporters to an event rather than tell them the whole story. It should contain just enough information about the event to pique the curiosity of reporters. In order to get TV coverage, it is important to entice the media with an interesting visual presentation, symbolic location or other camera-friendly imagery.

Include in the advisory the “who, what, when where, and why” of the story. A contact name and phone number/email, website, the names of the individuals participating, and the time of day and place (including directions if necessary) are essential to include in your advisory. Print reporters don’t always travel with photographers so you may want to mention good camera opportunities (“good visuals”). Be careful not to give away too much in the press advisory – it is an appetizer and your event is the meal. Also keep in mind that your opponent will probably receive a copy of this somehow – you may want to consider what you’ll do if they show up to the event.

Find out what form of communication the media outlets prefer and send out the media advisory at least one week before your event. Many print reporters prefer email but there could be smaller media outlets that still prefer to be faxed information. Regardless of delivery a follow up phone call to ensure the advisory was received is appropriate. If you are contacting a print reporter keep in mind that afternoons between 2pm and 5pm are usually dedicated to meeting deadlines – it is best to not call at that time.

### **The News Release**

Writing a good news release is an integral part of getting the media to cover your campaign’s efforts. A reporter sees so many news releases each day that an average of just seven seconds is spent on each one. So the one you create needs to be stylistically appealing, professional, and contain no errors. A good press release will deliver your message in a concise and provocative manner.

Quotes are an effective and creative means to achieving this goal. Reaction statements and direct quotes add color – they are the only acceptable way to use subjective language and exclamations. Intersperse paragraphs that include quotes with ones that do not. It is also perfectly acceptable to quote yourself or to make up a quote from a leader in your organization or the community – but only if you have her/his permission to do so.

Because many people read just the first paragraph of a story it is recommended that the inverted pyramid style is used to present the most important information at the beginning of the release. Also, if the release is too long for the space available, the editor will cut paragraphs beginning with the last one. Media outlets will often use a well-written news release as the bulk of their story.

A news release has a basic format:

- Logo, letterhead, or heading
- Date of issue
- Release date (“immediate,” or time and date after which it is okay to print the story)
- Contact name, phone number, email and website
- Headline – succinct and informative
- Indent paragraphs five spaces
- Double space
- One and a half inch margin
- When a release runs more than one page, head each page with a shortened version of the headline.
- For a release running more than one page, use the word “more” at the bottom of each page.
- Two ways to mark the end of the release: “-30-” or “###.”

As with media advisories you should find out whether a reporter prefers email or fax – most will prefer the former. You should also find out when a publication goes to print – many GLBT and campus papers are weekly or bi-weekly publications and you don’t want to miss out on getting your story printed in a timely manner. Also keep in mind that there may be on-line only publications in your community to target.

### **Press Kit**

A press kit was once an important vehicle to pass on important information about your campaign to reporters. But in the era of electronic media the press kit has become stream-lined and a one-pager is sufficient for hard-copy to distribute at your event. The one-pager should include a brief history of your campaign, brief bios of major players, citations of previous articles on your issue, the news release and any other facts or figures about the issue a reporter may find helpful. Make sure your contact information is included – a reporter may have follow up questions while working on her/his story. Further, if you provide professional and helpful information you could become a reporter’s “go-to” person on this particular issue – the person to contact for comment when other issues related to your campaign arise. The email version of the press kit can take the same format but include hyper-links to any press stories, blog entries or op-eds/editorials about the issue. Be sure to include a link to your website.

### **Timeline**

The first item to create is the media advisory. This should be written at least four days prior to the event and should be faxed out three days prior to the event. A follow-up call should be made between distribution of the advisory and the event itself. When you call, ask if the reporter has received the advisory and then pitch your story to the reporter. Remember that you are competing with other news for coverage.

Next you should create your news release and press kit. Be sure to give yourself enough time when writing your news release that it may be proofread and edited. The press kit is given to the media when they arrive at your event.

The day before the event, you should refax the media advisory.

For more information, contact HRC’s Youth & Campus Outreach Program at [campus@hrc.org](mailto:campus@hrc.org).