



# Media Toolkit

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## **MEDIA TRAINING 101**

For many activists, access to the media seems out of reach. But you might be surprised to learn how easy it can be to get the media interested in your story, if it's pitched right. The simple guidelines and suggestions on the following pages will equip you with the tools to effectively communicate with members of the press issues that are important to you.

In this document you will find tips on:

- 1- how to pitch to your local media;
- 2- how to write a press release;
- 3- giving an effective interview;
- 4- and writing letters to the editor.

## **HOW TO PITCH YOUR LOCAL MEDIA**

It is important to know and understand the media before you make your first call (or pitch).

### **WHAT IS YOUR GOAL**

Before calling your local media, take time to determine your overall goal in getting press coverage. Ask yourself:

- Is our event or issue newsworthy?
- How is our event different from other local events?
- Are we trying to educate the community about climate change?
- Are we providing new ideas for economic growth?
- Do we need volunteer help or some sort of other action?
- Is this information in the news release or media alert that I sent over?

### **WHO TO PITCH**

Keep this goal in mind when you're reading your newspaper, watching local television news or listening to the radio. Keep track of the names and outlets (newspaper name and TV or radio station) where reporters that are covering climate change, jobs or economy related issues. If there is a specific reporter who has covered one of these issues in the past, this should be your first point of contact.

If you cannot find who the right person to contact is, take time to research the Web site and find out who has written similar stories in the past. You can also call the news desk and ask to speak to an editorial assistant. The editorial assistant should be able to help you figure out who will be most interested in covering your story.

### **WHEN TO PITCH MEDIA**

Members of the media work on strict deadlines. When you reach the reporter, ask if they are "on deadline." If they are, ask when the best time to call is and contact them at this time.

Mornings are preferable for newspaper reporters. This is when they are most easily reached and have more time to talk. Reporters are generally on location covering stories in the afternoon and write in the afternoon and early evening. Television media has assignment editors who staff the newsroom phones throughout the day and night. It is best to call them between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., unless you have breaking news. This way you can avoid their busy time during the morning and afternoon newscasts and get their attention for your story.

## PITCHING TIPS

### Use the steps below as a guideline:

- Make sure you give the media a day or two of lead time before your event, if possible.
- When you call a reporter, identify yourself and the organization you are calling from.
- Ask if it is a good time or ask if they are on “deadline.” If it is not a good time to call, ask when a better time would be and make sure you follow-up.
- Briefly explain what it is you are calling about and that you would like them to consider covering/writing a story on it.
- Be prepared to give answers to the reporter’s questions, so learn your subject. If you do not have the answer, tell them you will find out and call them back as soon as you do.
- Let the reporter know about opportunities to speak to an authority figure or get a first-hand experience, such as coming out to see your event.
- Ask if you can fax or e-mail additional information to them, such as a news release or fact sheet.
- Give them your contact information and let them know they can call you with additional questions.
- Thank them for their time.

### Some phrases you might want to use:

- **“Are you on deadline, or do you have a quick second?”**
- **“I wanted to give you the heads up on an interesting story idea....”**
- At the end of your pitch, a good way to end is: **“Does this sound like the kind of thing you’d be interested in covering?”** If the reporter says no, that is a great opportunity for you to ask, “Well, what kinds of stories are you interested in covering?” so you know better what will work in the future.
- Don’t forget to make a follow up plan. **“Great, so I’ll send you X,Y,and Z, and the contact info for you to get in touch with A, B, and C. When’s a good time for me to call back and follow up with you?”**

### Sample pitch call script:

“Hello Malia. Do you have a second? Great. I know you cover Climate Change and policy and I wanted to give you a heads up about an interesting angle on the climate policy debate that is taking place this week in Congress. We are a civil rights organization and some people might not expect us to take a position on climate policy. But we believe that America has a real opportunity right now to fight pollution and poverty at the same time. Global warming legislation can and should build an inclusive green economy that provides pathways out of poverty and expands opportunity for all American workers and communities, particularly those who have been shut out of the current pollution-based economy. Our local job training program is helping low-income youth, some with police records, get jobs installing solar panels and weatherizing buildings. We think that national climate policy should invest in these local green-collar job opportunities for our community. Thanks very much for your time and consideration!”



Date of release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Tuesday, May 6, 2008

**Media Contact:**  
Marni Tomljanovic  
Sunshine, Sachs and Associates  
[tomljanovic@sunshinesachs.com](mailto:tomljanovic@sunshinesachs.com)  
212.691.2800

Contact name and phone

Headline in bold. Strong action verbs. No acronyms.

## **GREEN FOR ALL HILL BRIEFING URGES CONGRESS TO SUPPORT GREEN-COLLAR JOB INITIATIVES**

*Green Jobs Act of 2007 and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants would provide much-needed support for green-collar job development and training*

Sub-header in italics

Lead paragraph tells you what happened. Most important info is up front. Simple and clear language.

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Green For All, an organization dedicated to building an inclusive green economy, today urged Congress to take critical steps to support and promote a robust green economy. Green For All, in collaboration with The Apollo Alliance, Center on Wisconsin Strategy, Center for American Progress, and The Workforce Alliance, and together with their Congressional champions, organized the Hill briefing to discuss the promise and practice of green-collar job initiatives and what federal policymakers can do to help develop an inclusive green economy, including fully funding the Green Jobs Act of 2007 and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program.

Lead quote. Punchy, concise, contains your frame. Short and sweet. Often this is what gets used.

“Presidential candidates are talking about the promise of green-collar jobs as they campaign across the country,” said Van Jones, founder and president of Green For All. “That promise is real and our green future is already being invented at the local level. We are here today to make sure all communities nationwide reap work, health, and wealth benefits in this changing green economy.”

More background info and quotes. Note that each quote could be understood by an 8<sup>th</sup> grader—No jargon!

The briefing focused on two recently released reports, [Green-Collar Jobs in America's Cities](#) and [Greener Pathways](#), which outline a strategic framework for developing green-collar job initiatives and pathways out of poverty at the local and state levels. It also focused on the need for federal support to fully realize the potential of the green movement. This includes federal funding of two important new programs created by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA) – the Green Jobs Act and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program.

"Mayors are already working in their cities to develop America's potential for green jobs and green careers, but we know that full funding by Congress of the Green Jobs Act and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program will dramatically accelerate these efforts," said Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer, who is also president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Gives reporters a heads-up on the next step in the drumbeat. Shows that this is an on-

The Green Jobs Act, authorized at \$125 million, is an initial pilot program to identify needed skills, develop training programs, and to train workers for jobs in a range of renewable energy and energy efficiency industries. It targets a broad range of populations for eligibility, but has a special focus on creating ‘green pathways out of poverty.’ The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, authorized at

\$2 billion, is a grant program for local governments to use for retrofitting their communities to save energy and combat global warming, creating tens of thousands of green-collar jobs in the process.

“Solving global warming means investment and investment means jobs,” said Bracken Hendricks, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. “It’s time to stop thinking of protecting the environment as a cost, and start recognizing that ‘going green’ will rebuild a stronger economy on the solid foundation of clean energy, modern infrastructure, and advanced technology.”

In addition to Jones, Palmer, and Hendricks, the briefing also featured Elsa Barboza, campaign coordinator for SCOPE and the Los Angeles Apollo Alliance, and Michael Peck, spokesperson for Gamesa Corporation. The sponsors of the briefing, and strong supporters of an inclusive green economy, were Senators Hillary Clinton (NY) and Bernard Sanders (VT), and Representatives Hilda Solis (CA) and John Tierney (MA).

###

The ### sign shows that this is the end of the release

### **About Green For All**

Green For All is a national organization dedicated to building an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty. By advocating for local, state and federal commitments to job creation, job training, and entrepreneurial opportunities in the emerging green economy – especially for people from disadvantaged communities – Green For All fights both poverty and pollution at the same time.

Brief description of organization, with web site

For more information, please visit [www.greenforall.org](http://www.greenforall.org)

## **TIPS ON GIVING AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW**

### **Preparing for an interview:**

- While you can't script an interview or Q&A session, you can control telling your side of the story.
- Have 2-3 messages you absolutely want to get across, no matter what the questions are.
- Repetition is important – no such thing as too repetitive. You know what is important to the story.
- Keep it simple, stick to your story and what you are most knowledgeable about.
- Do not assume reporters know anything about the topic at hand. It's smart to take a few minutes at the start of an interview to confirm what the reporter wants to speak about.
- Read the newspaper that day and be up to date on current news.

### **Interview techniques:**

- Interviews are about control.
- If a reporter asks you a long list of questions at once, don't let it throw you off and don't get bogged down by taking the questions too literally.
- When you get a series of questions, sometimes you can select the one you like best – the one that gives you the best platform for your messages.
- Or, step back, and give the reporter a broader perspective, "I think what you're really asking is..."
- Don't drag out your answers. Answer the question and stay on point.
- Don't guess if you have no idea on the answer to a question. Ex. "I'm not the right person to address that fact, but what I can tell you is. . ."
- Frame answers in a positive fashion; don't repeat negatives.
- Don't take questions too literally, especially if they're uninformed. Give an informed, general answer, "Here's what we know for sure..."
- If you make a mistake (we all do!) or something just comes out wrong, stop and restate your answer.
- Make your quotes more quotable – use analogies and metaphors.
- Refer to the interviewer by name.
- Keep in mind that you may be interrupted.

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR HOW TO**

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

### **What is a Letter to the Editor?**

- Letters to the editor (LTE's) most often discuss a recent event/issue covered by a publication, radio station, or TV program.
- They are your chance to "sound-off" to your community about issues in the news.

**They are widely read**—so make them an important part of your media strategy.

### **Elements / Hints**

- It is much easier to publish a letter to the editor than it is to place an op-ed.
- Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is a reaction to a story in the paper.
- Respond as quickly as you can.
- Read the letters page—you will learn how to develop an effective letter-writing style, and you will see if someone has already responded with your idea.
- Keep it short and concise—150-200 words. The paper will take the liberty to shorten your letter to suit its format; the more it has to cut, the less control you have of what gets printed.
- Lead with your most important information.
- Focus on one main point and make a compelling case.
- Write in short paragraphs, with no more than three sentences per paragraph.
- Don't write too often. Once every three months is about as often as you should write.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Put your full name, address and phone number at the top of the page and sign the letter at the bottom. You must include a phone number for verification purposes.
- Follow up to see if the letter was received.