

GRASS

ROOTS

ORGANIZING

In this grassroots activism guide, you will learn how to organize and take action with a community of like-minded patriots in defense of constitutionally-limited government today. Remember, government goes to those who show up. If you don't show up, know that the special interests and Washington elites absolutely will.

NETWORKING

101

Build. Organize. Collaborate. And as you do, think carefully, tactfully, and be mindful of the American revolutionaries who did so first, in the attics and hidden rooms of the thirteen colonies, talking and organizing as they prepared to risk their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor for the cause they believed in.

Today, we call this practice “networking.” If your local group is going to succeed, networking must be practiced at the local and state levels. Networking allows your group to focus on what it does best—to mobilize citizens to take action in the political process. This will be an essential test for the Tea Party Movement: Can we all work together on the core values we believe in without being diverted by small differences of opinion. Remember Ben Franklin’s admonishment to his colleagues: “If we don’t hang together we will surely hang separately.”

Collaborating with other organizations will assist you by providing information, resources, and people who may become members of your group. By building coalitions, you can recruiting more people, spread the message in your local community, and open up lines of communication with one another. No one person or group needs to be in charge—it is merely a way to keep the lines of communication open and to allow for greater cooperation between likeminded groups around the state.

A great tool we’ve created called [FreedomConnector](#) allows you to build these coalition online as well. Based on geo-location technology, [FreedomConnector](#) is our online activist networking platform where you’ll immediately find groups, events and people right in your local area. You can sign up now at [FreedomConnector](#).

ASSEMBLING

The original revolutionaries weren't just about meeting and organizing—they were also about action. Thanks to their actions, today you have the right to freedom of speech. We suggest you exercise it.

Work together with your coalition to set up a protest, one that will be peaceful but focused on a particular issue. Pick a location, date, and time in your town—Main Street at an intersection with lots of traffic is ideal. Tell your friends, family, coworkers, and everyone else you know about the protest. Build an RSVP e-mail list so that you can provide quick updates if something changes and a Facebook group so that the group members can communicate with one another. Make handouts about the reason you're protesting, and five to ten signs with legible slogans (write in large letters) that send a clear message to the public and the media.

You should also reach out to others to publicize the protest. Call your local talk-radio hosts and ask them to announce the location, date, and time on the air for a few days leading up to the protest. Send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper announcing the protest. E-mail the bloggers in your area and ask them to post a notice about the protest. Write a press release and send copies to the local TV stations, radio stations, bloggers, and newspapers. Call the reporters who cover local events or politics and leave messages on their voice mail.

On the day of your protest, show up with your group; be loud, visible, and happy; and engage the public. Wave your signs, make lots

of noise, and move around to get attention. It goes without saying, but be peaceful; the original revolutionaries knew that a nonviolent approach (destroying tea instead of people) was the right and wise path. Think tactically, but come in peace, and never break the line or the windows.

Local town halls provide you with access to your elected politicians, where you can make yourself heard on a regular basis (which won't require a trip to the state capital or Washington, D.C.). This is a long fight, not a brief one—so you should be sure to utilize these opportunities as they come.

Elected officials often host town hall meetings in their districts to showcase their achievements and to solicit feedback from their constituents. Such meetings are a prime opportunity for you to ask your lawmakers to state their position on an agenda of lower taxes, less government, and more freedom, on the record and in an open and public forum.

Town hall meetings are typically held throughout the year, especially during the congressional recesses. Thousands of Americans attended these town hall meetings in 2009, letting their opposition to the Obamacare bill be known and effectively slowing down (and nearly stopping) the legislation.

You should get on the invitation list to attend the meetings by calling your local office, and bring as many members of your group who can attend. Write your lawmakers and ask to be put on the invitation list for their town

ASSEMBLING

101

meetings and ask to bring members of your chapter. When you receive word that a town hall meeting is scheduled, be sure to make plans to attend, and share this information with the members of your chapter through e-mail, Facebook, group meetings, or other forms of communication.

Often, especially after August 2009, some cowardly congresspeople and senators will not make their town hall meetings public or will not do town halls at all—they don't even want to answer the questions. This is an opportunity for your group to wage a brief public relations campaign to convince the legislator to hold open forums for his or her constituents. We encourage groups to write letters to the editors of local newspapers and call local talk-radio stations, asking why the legislator refuses to either hold town halls or refuses to make the details public.

One thing FreedomWorks activists have done in the past is to organize a town hall meeting of their own and then invite the legislator to come. If he or she refuses or ignores the invitation, the group should have a table, empty chair, microphone, and name plate for the legislator. Invite the press to attend the town hall meeting and fill the room with a hundred constituents—then you can turn up the heat,

following up with more letters to the editor from other constituents who are disappointed that the legislator is not even listening to what the people have to say.

If your legislator does hold town hall meetings, be sure to prepare questions ahead of time. Have specific questions in mind, and ask for your legislator's position on a specific bill or issue that you care about. And use your phone or video camera to record the answer so that you can post it on YouTube, Facebook, and your blog. There is no better way to hold politicians accountable for statements they make than to record them and post them online.

Make sure you are the first one to the microphone and that your group members are close behind. Often the first few questions in the town hall will define the entire event. Ask your question clearly and directly and expect a direct answer. If your legislator sidesteps or doesn't answer your question, calmly repeat it. Be prepared for spin but always have some other folks ready to ask the same question a different way, in order to get a real answer on an issue.

Be polite but firm, and be prepared to applaud answers you agree with and let it be known when there are answers you don't agree

with. Be respectful, but don't be afraid to be animated and passionate.

Whether you had the opportunity to ask your question or not, follow up with a letter to your legislator. Let him or her know you attended their last town hall meeting. Ask your question in your letter if you didn't have an opportunity to do so at the meeting. This letter will ensure your lawmakers take you and your views seriously, and will allow for you to obtain a written response addressing your concerns.

We always encourage a multipronged effort when it comes to these high-profile events. Have one team of activists stand outside the town hall meeting and hold up signs with questions or statements that make your points. This will give the media something to report on that includes your messages. It will make a powerful narrative if the people attending the town hall and the media both see protesters outside and concerned citizens inside the meeting with similar messages.

Town halls and personal visits aren't the only way to make your voice heard in a sustained way. During the months-long debate over Obamacare, FreedomWorks members placed hundreds of thousands of phone calls to lawmakers in Washington and around the country. The phone lines were so busy during some days that the Capitol switchboard was giving everyone busy signals. If you can't attend a town hall or make it to a personal meeting, at the very least you should call your representatives' office regularly as issues arise to make yourself heard. When you call, identify

yourself as a constituent; as someone who lives and votes in the district or state, your phone calls carry the most weight. Encourage your friends and fellow activists to call after you have placed yours. State your point quickly and clearly; be sure to limit your telephone call to one subject, and be brief and specific. Your phone call should last only a few minutes. As with any communication with your elected officials, always be courteous, and request that your legislator follow up with a letter.

You should also identify yourself as the leader or member of your local group; over time this will begin to resonate with the offices of elected officials as you build relationships with them.

If possible, explain how the proposed legislation will directly affect you. If you are a small business owner, mention the effects the bill will have on your business and your workers. If you are a teacher, cite your experience in education and explain how the proposed bill would affect what you do. Personal anecdotes are often the most remembered and most powerful forms of communication.

Sometimes the legislator will even quote you on the House or Senate floor when giving a speech about the issue. It may seem like a minor thing, but the Congressional Record of that quote will be around for as long as the United States of America exists—and you will have made your mark on these debates.

PETITIONING

101

Remind your representatives in Washington or your state capital who they actually represent. The most effective lobbyists are constituents, and politicians are keenly aware of the fact that you as a voter hold the keys to their political futures. The simple act of making a visit to your local district office or making a phone call can make a big difference. Most offices have a formula when it comes to constituent contact where one phone call equals another hundred people who feel the same way, so your voice is magnified many times over.

Effective grassroots lobbying can be done at the local, state, and national levels. The same general principles apply, and the following advice can be read in that context. Always remember: the number one concern of all politicians is to keep their job. This means you have the ability to influence their views, and to make a powerful and winning case for freedom.

Whether local, state, or federal, the personnel of the offices of your elected officials are similar. Most legislators have a staff to assist him or her during his or her term in office. To be effective in communicating with these offices, it is useful to know the titles and principal functions of the staff.

Administrative Assistant or Chief of Staff

This staff person reports directly to the member of Congress or state legislator. He or she usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. This person is in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff. You should always attempt to speak to this person if you can't speak directly to the legislator. The next time you are in Washington, D.C., be sure to stop by your congressional and Senate offices and pick up business cards with contact information for key staff members, usually available at the reception desk.

Legislative Director or Legislative Assistant

The legislative director is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. In some congressional offices there are several legislative assistants and responsibilities are assigned to staff with particular expertise in specific

areas. Depending on the responsibilities and interests of the legislator, an office may include a different legislative assistant for health issues, environmental matters, taxes, and so on. If you can't get ahold of the administrative assistant or chief of staff, the legislative director or legislative assistants are your second most important points of contact with the office.

Press Secretary or Communications Director

The press secretary's responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the legislator, his or her constituency, and the general public. The press secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands, and special requirements of both print and electronic media, and how to most effectively promote the legislator's views or position on specific issues.

This person is often the most sensitive to bad PR or good PR, so keep that fact in mind when you are trying to get a public statement of some kind from the lawmaker. Oftentimes a well-placed call to the press secretary will go a long way toward making sure that the legislator knows he or she will face bad PR by going against the wishes of his or her constituents on a legislative issue, and that matters to every office.

Personal Secretary or Scheduler

The scheduler is usually responsible for allocating a legislator's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. The scheduler may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates and visits to the district, and so on. If you are looking for dates and times of town hall meetings or if you would like to invite your legislator to speak at or attend one of your events, call his or her office and ask to speak to the scheduler. There is often a district or state scheduler as well for members of congress and senators.

Caseworker

The caseworker is the staff member usually assigned to help with constituent requests by preparing replies for the legislator's signature. The caseworker's responsibilities may also include helping resolve problems that constituents present in relation to federal agencies, such as Social Security and Medicare issues, veterans' benefits, passports, and so on. There are often several caseworkers in a congressional office.

PETITIONING

101

Other Staff Titles

Other titles used in a congressional office may include executive assistant, legislative correspondent, executive secretary, office manager, and receptionist. The legislative correspondents, or LCs, usually are the ones who write responses to constituent letters and e-mails. If you can't reach the chief of staff, legislative director, or a legislative assistant, try to talk to an LC who works on the issue that you are concerned about.

Grassroots Lobbying Tips

The most effective way to articulate your views to your elected officials and to affect the outcome of legislation is to sit down and speak with your legislators face-to-face (or with their key staff if they are not available). Usually, either one-on-one meetings or a small group is best. While these personal visits are extremely productive, they also require the most amount of planning.

If you already have appointments scheduled with your lawmakers, be on time. Explain how the proposed legislation will directly affect you. Use specific examples. Always be polite. You will never convince your lawmaker or their staff with rudeness, vulgarity, or threats. Even if you

disagree with the position of your legislator, be courteous and calm. There will be other issues in the future and you'll want to be able to meet with the legislator again.

Follow up on your visit with a letter. Regardless of how your meeting goes, send a letter to your legislator or the staff person you met thanking him or her for their time and reiterating the points you discussed. This gesture will help the cause and pave the way for future meetings.

When in doubt, ask FreedomWorks—we've helped thousands of "citizen lobbyists" affect policy at the state and national level. Remember our resources are at your disposal, and the FreedomWorks grassroots team always stands ready to assist you. If you need ideas on what to write, or even if you have problems locating the mailing address, contact FreedomWorks and we will be happy to assist you.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

It may be that the protest you organized with your group was the first time you've interacted with the traditional media. Traditional media may be falling on hard times generally, but they still provide you outlets where you can become a printing press, distributing your ideas to a wider audience and making sure that false statements are answered with truth.

There are two types of media coverage: earned and paid media. Earned media is free exposure for your organization—it's what happens when the media shows up at an event and covers it or publishes your opinion. The content of earned media is up to the reporter and is difficult to control, but earned media is more credible and—best of all—it's free. Paid media like advertising, on the other hand, costs money, and not many people take it at face value. So it's time to earn that coverage.

Letters

One way of obtaining earned media coverage without organizing an event is to comment regularly in local media by writing letters responding to articles and editorials appearing in local newspapers. Studies show that people read the letters section of newspapers more than they read the editorials by journalists, and these letters are widely read by community leaders to gauge public sentiment about current events.

When you write a letter to the editor, you should always write legibly, include your name, address, and telephone number (newspapers generally will not print anonymous letters),

and be brief and specific. Letters should never exceed one page, and editors might just print an excerpt from it. State the purpose of your letter in the opening paragraph and stick to that topic. Always adhere to the paper's guidelines.

The most important thing to remember is to write nothing but the truth. Do not include false information or rely on dubious sources for your letter, and write about the issues that matter to people, debates that are going on right now, such as responding promptly to stories about pending tax-increases.

Look at published letters in the paper you are submitting to; they will usually have a format you should follow. Don't become discouraged if your letter is not published, as most publications receive more letters than they can print and will often print one letter as a representative of others. Keep trying. Unpublished letters are still read by the editors and can help them determine which topics should receive more attention.

Op-Eds

Editorials appear in most newspapers and are vehicles by which citizens can make extensive comments on articles and policies. When writing an op-ed, be sure to keep your piece concise and include specific information.

The average length of an op-ed should be between four hundred and nine hundred words. Check with your local paper concerning length requirements. Your op-ed should be timely, concise, and to the point. Make sure that you drive home one or two main messages

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

101

in the piece. Organize it well and make the strongest case for your point of view. Utilize every word to the fullest and don't waste time with ad hominem attacks or other distractions. Get right to the point.

When arranging the publication of an op-ed piece, a phone call to the editor can be helpful. Leaders of organized groups often have a much better chance of getting an editorial published in the local newspaper than the average person. You will have a much better chance of publishing a letter to the editor than an op-ed, but this shouldn't discourage you from submitting one.

Radio and Television

Calling the talk shows in your area is a great way to help get your message across to thousands of listeners for free. Call your local radio and television stations and ask if they have open forums—talk shows where callers can discuss any subject with the host. If so, try to get on the air to make short, concise, positive statements about limited government. You can take comfort in knowing that your brief statement in support of our position was heard by the station's listeners.

You can also call talk shows and ask the producer if there are any scheduled shows coming up that will discuss our issues. If one is scheduled, try to get a representative booked to appear on the show. Be sure to monitor your local radio and television stations and participate in these shows and alert fellow volunteers so they may do so as well.

FreedomWorks often has opportunities to book activists who we work with on national media outlets like Fox News, MSNBC, CNN, PBS, and the broadcast networks. If you prove to be an effective media voice for limited government, we will be happy to include you in future opportunities. Producers are always looking for good spokespeople who can go on the air live.

Building Media Contacts

Build a media list, or assign that responsibility within your group. Keep this information handy, as you'll want to refer to it when you're ready to mail your letters, place your telephone calls, or send e-mail.

Every local leader should have a big list of the reporters and producers who have covered local, state, and national politics. Many reporters are assigned to covering political

events in the city or state in which you live. Get to know them personally and communicate with them often. They need you as a source just as much as you need them to write a fair piece about your group and your events. As frustrating as the mainstream media can be, there are good reporters and producers who are honest, objective, and looking for the true story. Work with these folks and you can help shape the narrative about our movement.

Offer to take your local beat reporters out to lunch or for coffee to get to know them. You'd be surprised at how few people actually do this, which is a major missed opportunity. Good journalists will take you up on your offer because they need to know their subjects very well in order to cover them correctly.

Try to focus on building not only the list of media contacts but also the quality of the list. This will go a long way toward making you a more effective communicator through newspapers, radio, and television. We can and should get our message out on traditional media outlets. To just throw up our hands because of media bias would be both foolish and counterproductive. And remember that you represent all of us when you speak to the media. Stay focused. Everything is on the record!

NEW MEDIA

101

In the days of the original revolutionaries, few things held as much power as the printed word, equipping thinkers with the ability to write and rapidly distribute words and ideas to the broader population. Where Ben Franklin measured his distribution in weeks and months, today you can measure it in seconds, instantly connecting, sharing, and coordinating with others around a common goal—and just by using free tools that already exist.

The online world can be immensely intimidating to someone who is just figuring out social media. There is a constant influx of information and content, and making sense of it all may seem overwhelming. The trick is harnessing that information and using it to engage other activists. It has helped the Tea Party movement grow and connect in new ways, and the power of these tools is undeniable. Using them may not be quite as difficult as you think.

It's important that you view your printing press role as one of meeting people where they are. People check their Facebook and Twitter accounts on a daily basis, and that's where you can engage them easily, frequently and free of charge.

Facebook

Facebook is the most widely used social media platform. It's incredibly user-friendly and easy to learn. Be sure to "like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/freedomworks.

Getting started on Facebook is free and takes about five minutes. Use your real name—it's tempting to use the name of your group—but that is what the Facebook "Pages" are for. Your profile should be about you.

Remember, this is the Internet, where nothing is truly private. Facebook, however, has privacy settings that you should take full advantage of. The safest way to approach online privacy is to simply not post things you're not comfortable sharing. You have the ability to hide your age, location, and networks. Don't want people to know where you work? Don't post it.

The next step is to connect with others. When you sign up, Facebook will search your e-mail contacts for people you know who are already on Facebook, and you can automatically add them as friends if you choose.

There are several ways you can approach your Facebook account. Most people will only add and accept requests from people they know. However, as an activist, you should use

Facebook as an opportunity to connect with other people who want to network with you.

It's also useful to create a "fan page" for your chapter or group. There's no cap on the number of people who can "like" your page, so invite your friends or even run an inexpensive targeted Facebook ad.

The Blogosphere

Blogs are a huge component of the online news world. Today's bloggers have expansive audiences, and many function as investigative reporters, digging up dirt, and pointing out political trends. Some bloggers now have equal standing with commenters at newspapers and other forums. They shape the conversation at constant speed, and you may want to subscribe to some of their sites by email.

Starting a blog is simple and free. Platforms like WordPress, MoveableType, and Blogger make it a point-and-click process. Just sign up, choose a catchy name and a template for your site, and you're free to start writing.

Linking is maybe the most important way to get your blog noticed. Has another blogger covered a story that you can add something to? Post a link to their piece, quote the relevant part, and then add your response. Some sites will display the links to people who have linked their story—they're called trackbacks and are a great way to drive traffic to your site. SEO (search engine optimization) is important to make sure more people see your posts, so choose headlines that are descriptive, with words that people will use in their Google searches.

Blogging is time-consuming, and it isn't for everyone. There are, however, ways you can contribute to the conversation without maintaining your own site. At RedState, everyone can be a diarist in just a few minutes. Have a story or some coverage of an event? Post it as a diary. Sometimes the editors will promote it to the front page.

Also, if you don't know how to get attention for an event or story, pass it on to a local blogger. Chances are that people who matter will read that person's site. An example would be a blogger we know from Kansas. Now, he doesn't have the traffic of one of the major sites, but he has a feature that allows people to subscribe to his blog by e-mail. His subscribers include the mayor, every member of the city council, and the staffs of both. What this means is that when he voices concern or support for particular policies or initiatives, people are listening.

YouTube

Video has become the most powerful medium in the online world, and YouTube provides you with a simple way to share footage and clips with the world.

You can start your own YouTube account for free. It's linked to your Google account, so the people in your contacts will show up as suggested subscriptions. Upload original videos for your subscribers. The title and description for the video are important—make them as clear as possible so more people will find your video when they search for a particular topic.

NEW MEDIA

101

Even without making your own YouTube account, the platform is a great resource. You can link videos, share them on Facebook, Twitter, and your blog, and promote other videos if you think they are interesting and useful. Having news clips, videos of candidate speeches and interviews, footage of events, and other media clips available can prove invaluable.

Twitter

There is an incredible amount of information on Twitter, a short-form blogging platform where users can share brief thoughts, links and information. Don't be intimidated by it, but try to use it toward your own ends, and as a source for news and information. Our Twitter handle is @freedomworks.

We suggest you use a real photo for your avatar, and to spend some time to get your bio right—it's the only thing that people will have to figure out who you are, and you only have 160 characters to do it. At FreedomWorks, we simply list our tagline—Lower Taxes, Less Government, and More Freedom.

Twitter is based on a system where people “follow” each other, to read others' thoughts. Follow people you admire and follow the

people who they're following. Pick an active Twitter personality you are familiar with and pay attention to who they talk to and to the lists they create of people they follow, which are all linked on the right-hand side of their profile page.

Engage others in conversation, and open the lines of communication. One of the best uses of Twitter is to cover an event—you can easily post photos from your smartphone in the middle of a crowd and keep people informed. People want new information, and Twitter feeds that demand. There are also a host of applications that make using Twitter easier, such as Tweetdeck or Hootsuite.

That said, don't let Twitter become a distraction, a time-suck from more important things, or a place where you just argue with people who are on the other side. As Alinsky put it, “a good tactic is one your people enjoy,” and “a tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.”

GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZING

Our nation was conceived to protect the inalienable rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of the individual, not of the collective or groups of special interests. The miracle of the Constitution is the simple genius of limited government and its singular devotion to protecting individual liberty.

The Founders designed a government that was to do only that which was both right and necessary; the rest was to be left up to the states and individuals. It is simply the best organizational chart for running a society ever created. However, this division of labor only works if people mind their own business. The problem is that politicians and bureaucrats often do not know their limitations and make it their business to mind yours.

The Tea Party movement is asking to simply be left alone, hence the motto of the movement: "Don't Tread on Me."

The federal government should only exercise those powers we the people have delegated to it through our Constitution and stop treading where it isn't welcome.

We hope you will use this guide to remind them so.

101

101