



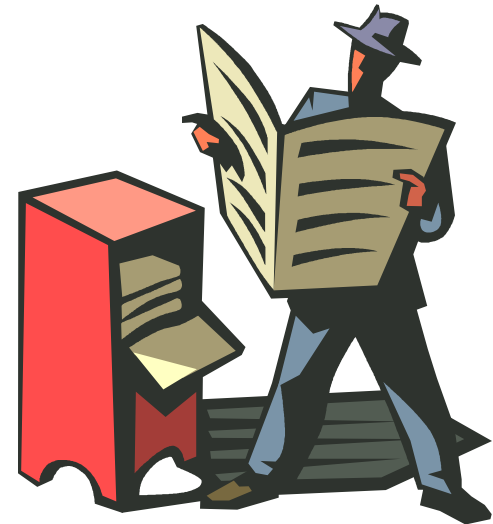
Harnessing the POWER of LOCAL MEDIA for Social Justice

Lisa Peters

Group Leader of the D.C. Chapter of RESULTS

Purpose

- **This training is designed to:**
 - Highlight the importance of using the print media in your organizational work
 - Share tools to help engage the media, focusing on the print media
 - Provide resources where to learn more
 - Answer your questions



- Working to create the political will to end hunger and worst aspects of poverty
- Empowering individuals to have breakthroughs in exercising personal and political power
- Over 30 years of advocacy experience
- Time tested strategies and tactics
- Active and engaged network that builds relationships with legislators, media and local communities
- Priority 2012 campaign: using tax policy to break the cycle of poverty

RESULTS Activists

- 800 active volunteers in about 100 communities around the country
- Everyday people who want to make a difference
- In 2011, our activists had...
 - Over **250 meetings** with congressional offices, including 87 face-to-face meetings with U.S. House members and 23 face-to-face meetings with U.S. Senators
 - **215 strategic media placements**, including editorials, Op-eds, and letters to the editor
 - Over **100 outreach and community events** around the country

Why Work with the Media?

- Powerful tool in education and advocacy
 - Editorial pages most read section in the paper after front page
- Strong media work can move decision-makers to alter behavior, change positions, and alter perceptions on an issue
 - Legislators keep track of what their local papers are covering
- Gives you the chance to educate the public about your issue
 - Key component of building political will
 - Reaches a much wider audience than any other medium

How Do I Best Engage the Media?

➤ **Understand your audience**

- Your first audience is not the readers, but the editors and reporters who decide whether to cover your issue
- These folks are overworked and understaffed so the more work you do up front to help them, the better chance you will get published

➤ **Do your homework**

- Research and know your issue as best you can
- Have data and stories that make a strong case for your issue or program
- Find a way to connect your issue to something local
- Anticipate the other side (esp. when pitching editorials)

How Do I Best Engage the Media?

➤ Write well

- Newspapers want good writers
 - You must be able to communicate your point briefly and effectively
 - If you are a good writer, they will publish you again and again
- No worries! Good writing is a skill anyone can learn
 - The more you do it, the better you get
 - Read other pieces in your paper to get a feel for the kinds of letters they publish
 - EPIC Laser Talk format can help

How Do I Best Engage the Media?

➤ Write well (cont'd)

➤ Be brief

- Don't use 50 words when you can say the same thing in 10
- Pick your strongest point and build around it
 - Resist temptation to say everything you want in your piece

➤ If a national issue, make it local first

- Newspapers want to see how an issue affects people in their community
- Use a local example or story to illustrate the broader issue

How Do I Best Engage the Media?

➤ **Be Patient and persistent**

- Not every letter or op-ed gets published, not every editorial gets written
- Keep at it — keep sending in letters on the things you care about
- If your local paper won't publish your piece, send it to another paper in your state (don't forget weekly papers) or a national paper like the *NY Times* or *Washington Post*
- If your letter does not get published, call the editorial desk and see ask to speak to the editor in charge of letters or op-eds. Ask what they look for in pieces they publish so you'll know better the next time.
- Work at building relationships with editorial staff

Tips for Getting Published

➤ Letters to the Editor (LTEs)

- LTEs are the easiest way to get published and papers like to publish them
 - Short focused letter stating your position
 - Gives the paper a sense of what's important to readers
- Keys to getting a LTE published
 - Brevity — 150-250 words are what most papers allow; the shorter the better
 - Mention a recent story or issue covered in the paper; remember that papers want that local angle
 - Be provocative, not insulting
 - If you want legislative action, mention lawmakers by name

Tips for Getting Published

➤ Opinion-Editorials (Op-eds)

- Guest columns, usually 400-600 words
 - Papers usually have both local and national op-eds (Krugman, Krauthammer, etc. are syndicated op-eds)
 - The smaller the paper, the better chance of getting published
 - For many papers, anyone can submit an op-ed; for others, you need an “expert”
- Keys to getting an Op-ed published
 - Can elaborate more but don’t ramble
 - Tout those local angles
 - Be strategic in who submits it
- If paper won’t publish as an Op-ed, ask if you can edit it down to an LTE



Number of Nonstops
We Fly Each Day:

3,200+

Nonstop flights information based on average number of flights available each day.


SOUTHWEST.COM



HOME NEWS LOCAL SPORTS RAVENS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE HEALTH OPINION MARKETPLACE SERVICES

Home → Collections → **Food Stamps**



The cruelty of cutting food stamps

Millions rely on the SNAP program, yet Republicans propose to balance the budget on their backs

August 22, 2013 | By Jami-Lin Williams

As an infant born in Waterville, Maine, to a single, teenage mother, I relied on food stamps for the first four months of my life. My family's economic status later required me to participate in other federal assistance programs like Head Start and the National School Lunch Program, so that I would have access to adequate nutrition and greater opportunities. Today I am a successful young woman with an undergraduate degree from Wellesley College, a master's degree from Stanford University, and a bright future.

I know that food stamps (now known as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP) and other forms of assistance gave me a chance at a life that my family could not provide on its own. I also know I'm not the only one.

5

 Tweet



Submit

Number of Nonstops
We Fly Each Day:

3,200+

High Efficiency Furnaces

lennox.com

Lennox® Heating Systems Deliver More Comfort & Lower Utility Bills.

Tips for Getting Published

➤ Editorials

- Cream of the crop in media advocacy
- Unlike LTEs and Op-eds, which are the writer's opinion, the editorial is the organizational position of the paper
 - Just like endorsing a candidate, editorials are the paper endorsing your position on an issue
- Once a paper takes a position, they usually stick to it unless there is a significant change in circumstances; also, they generally write about it more than once
- Not written by you but by the editorial writer
 - If paper is large enough, may have several writers who focus on certain areas

Tips for Getting Published

➤ Editorials (cont'd)

➤ Getting an editorial published

- Do your homework and have it ready before you call
- Call up the editorial page and ask to speak to the writer that covers your issue
- Ask if he/she has a few minutes to discuss an issue you would like them to write about
- Make your “pitch” (use the Laser Talk) — explain the issue, explain why the paper should take your position, be prepared to respond to counterarguments
 - Use a “hook” to increase your chances. For example, if there is a local event coming up that relates to your issue (Tax Day, World AIDS Day), include that as a reason why the paper should write about it

Tips for Getting Published

➤ Editorials (cont'd)

➤ Getting an editorial published (cont'd)

- Offer to provide background info on your issue and research supporting your position (VERY IMPORTANT)

- Short research papers, links to articles/publications

- Follow up in a few days to see if any more questions

➤ If you can, build a relationship with the writer

- Don't just contact them when you want something
- If they write a piece you like, send them an e-mail telling them so
- Writers will remember you later when you want to pitch an editorial idea

➤ Can also request a meeting with the editorial board

- Be strategic in who attends (include community leaders who carry weight, if possible; clergy, business leaders, etc)

Engaging the Media for Events

➤ Media Advisories

- Way to alert the media about an “event”
- Should be brief (less than one page) with the essential details: time, place speakers, visuals your contact info
 - Make date and time info is very prominent
- Give them a “teaser” about the event (prominent speaker, good visual) but don’t tell them everything
- Send to outlets (newspapers, radio, TV) about 3 days before the event, the day before, and the morning of the event
 - Can even hand deliver
- Call media contacts no later than the day of to see if they got the advisory and if someone will be able to attend
 - This helps you build relationships with your reporters

Engaging the Media for Events

➤ At the Event

- Plan your event so that it will be interesting to the media
 - Have it at good location
 - Good visuals (kids, clients, backdrop)
 - Good speakers who will engage the audience and give good quotes
- Be sure to have someone at the event looking out for the media and greeting them when they come
- Designate someone to be the spokesperson for your organization to answer questions
- Have press packets, especially if press is not that familiar with your organization
 - Statements from your speakers (if you have them prepared beforehand)
 - Information about your organization
 - Contact information

Engaging the Media for Events

➤ Press Releases

- Good way to follow up from an event, especially with those who did not come
- Longer than the Media Advisory but still less than one page
- Include prominent title, detailed information about the event (quotes from speakers at the event, excerpts from report you are releasing), contact information
- Send to entire media list, those who did and did not attend the event
 - For folks not there, gives them a chance to report on it
 - For those there, gives them quotes and other info they may not have caught
- Can also do press releases after other events
 - E.g., big law passes, key decision-maker makes a statement

EPIC Laser Talk

- 4 primary components of the laser talk: **E-P-I-C**
- **E is for ENGAGE**
 - Engage the reader into your piece, i.e. get their attention
 - Brief and to the point—one sentence if possible
 - Use personal story, invoke a value, cite a statistic, thank you
- **Example:** Many American children have missed days of school this year due to the wintry weather; however around the world 57 million primary-school aged children still do not have access to any school at all.

EPIC Laser Talk

➤ P is for PROBLEM

- Now that you have gotten the reader's attention, identify the problem you want fixed
 - Again, be brief, specific, and to the point
 - Identify the problem in language that leads to the solution you want
- **Example:** The world has made steady progress toward universal primary education since 2000, but progress has stalled in recent years. If nothing changes, 72 million children may not have access to primary school by 2015.

EPIC Laser Talk

- **I is for INFORM or ILLUSTRATE**
 - You have identified the problem, now you want to lead them to the solution
 - Can elaborate a little more here (2-4 sentences)
 - If you have a personal story to relate, this is the best place to do it—paint them a picture of the problem and/or the solution
- **Example:** The Education for All Act (H.R. 2780) would build upon current efforts to expand primary schooling by developing a comprehensive integrated U.S. strategy that would address barriers to education, ensure education services for children in conflict regions, and engage with initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Education.

EPIC Laser Talk

➤ C is for **CALL TO ACTION**

- Give readers your solution
- Be as specific as you can as to what you want
- If appropriate, mention legislators by name to get their attention (and send them a copy of your letter when it gets published)

➤ **Example:** Please contact Rep. Van Hollen and ask him to cosponsor this bill. Coordinated efforts to achieve universal education are critical to creating a more just and peaceful world.


VA
HEALTH
CARE

 Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

**VETERANS: VA HEALTH CARE MEETS
THE HEALTH CARE LAW REQUIREMENTS.**

LEARN MORE

 EVER
VET
SHO
ENR

 Jet may have
turned back before
vanishing

 Health-care law
changes create
more confusion

 VIDEO | Top
moments at CPAC


Letter to the Editor

Finding the right tax incentives to improve economic mobility

Published: March 7

I am encouraged to see that President Obama and House Republicans are currently focused on increasing economic mobility [[“Obama budget sets up a debate on poverty,”](#) front page, March 4]. I was especially pleased to learn that both the president and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) support the earned-income tax credit, as this program kept 6.5 million people out of poverty in 2012. Mr. Ryan’s recent report on poverty also alludes to the “cliff effect,” whereby federal benefits decrease so rapidly at a certain income threshold that families actually lose money and benefits as they earn more. Congress and the administration need to work together to ensure that those who move up the wage scale are not punished for doing so.

Lisa Peters, Bethesda

 Get a digital
subscription today

SUBSCRIBE

top

 Policy makers can try to encourage work
either by increasing benefits for low-income

**NUMBER POP
WE GET THE**
news

Flawless Today. Right

Learn More



0



More ▼

Harnessing the Media



**Social Media Best
Practices
Questions?**



Your turn!

RESULTS: www.results.org

- **Take Action Now:** [http://www.results.org/take action/us poverty actions and news/](http://www.results.org/take_action/us_poverty_actions_and_news/)
- **Activist Toolkit:** [http://www.results.org/skills center/activist toolkit/](http://www.results.org/skills_center/activist_toolkit/)
- **Elected Officials:** <http://capwiz.com/results/dbq/officials/>
- **Issues:** [http://www.results.org/issues/us poverty campaigns/](http://www.results.org/issues/us_poverty_campaigns/)

Lisa Peters

lmtreu@gmail.com

Meredith Dodson

Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns

dodson@results.org / [@DodsonAdvocate](https://twitter.com/DodsonAdvocate)

- RESULTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
 - Washington, DC
 - June 21-24th, 2014!!
-
- REAL CHANGE FELLOWSHIP for YOUTH advocacy and outreach training – Includes support for coming to the RESULTS conference!!