

Dealing with the Media

Media Relations for USW Locals

2016

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

The news media communicates images and messages about the union and union issues to a mass audience, and the news media is often the primary source of information that shapes attitudes about our union and union issues.

Attitudes shaped by the media influence behavior, and ultimately we want to influence behavior:

Sign the authorization card!

Don't cross our picket line!

Don't shop at nonunion stores!

We can look at talking to the news media as an annoyance - an unpleasant chore to avoid or get out of the way. Many union leaders and officials look at the media just this way.

Or, we can look at every media contact as an opportunity to tell the union's story to thousands, hundreds of thousands or even millions of people.

We can see the media as a way to shape attitudes that influence behavior.

Our own attitude is the starting point for shaping the kind of media coverage we get.

Proactive, advocacy media starts by looking at the news media as an opportunity to communicate our message, and even more so when it comes to social media.

GUIDELINES FOR MEDIA RELATIONS

The most effective way to win public support is for us to communicate our issues in a positive manner.

As members of a larger community, we share common values and concerns with the public, such as the well-being of our families and the desire to improve our communities, among others.

Viewed from this perspective, we become newsworthy in a positive light.

Here are a few helpful hints to guide you in developing sound media relations:

1. Designate a Press Contact person:

This "gatekeeper" will be responsible for controlling the flow of information as it pertains to the situation and needs to be kept up to date with the best information available.

In addition to the media knowing whom to contact, a designated contact person facilitates message management by eliminating numerous and "unauthorized" spokespersons.

2. Do not automatically assume a negative attitude about the media:

Many of the reporters are very sympathetic to our causes but can only write their stories based on the information we provide them. By providing timely, specific, detailed information, we establish and maintain control of the narrative.

People who work for print publications and radio and television stations are not much different from us. They work for a living and produce product designed and managed by large corporations.

Writers and technical support people (like camera operators, etc.) are often union members, especially in the larger markets. Like us, they report to management and experience similar frustrations.

3. It is not always necessary or desirable to make immediate statements to the press:

If a reporter calls, find out the nature of their story and promise to call them back shortly. Remember to get their name, phone number and the time of the news deadline they are facing.

This will allow time to plan a strategic response and/or conduct basic research. It is always best to jot down a few notes about how to respond before calling back. We may even identify and designate another spokesperson if the nature of the call requires additional expertise.

When returning the call - and make sure it's before deadline - don't be afraid to engage in friendly chit-chat before getting down to business.

If you are uncomfortable about a statement that may be quoted, stop and tell the reporter you want to rephrase it. If you are being recorded for radio and don't like what you've just said, stop and tell them: "Let's do that again."

It's the same for television. (Note: One way to "ruin" on-camera shots and/or statements is to wave hands a few times in front of face. It often leaves no other option but to re-shoot.)

4. Cultivate relationships with the media:

As we all know, it is easier to talk to somebody if we feel familiar with that person.

Develop a reputation as a reliable media source by being consistently professional, friendly and honest with all reporters, including smaller newspapers and trade magazines along with larger publications and stations.

When answering questions, stick to facts that can be verified, and beware of questions that require you to speculate about future events or circumstances.

For example, if a reporter asks a question that should be addressed by management, such as changes to business operations or production, simply explain to them that management needs to answer for its own decisions.

5. Knowing members of the media can help in many ways:

> First, we will be asked to contribute the USW's perspective on a story being promoted by the company or another adversary. It gives our union an opportunity to tell our side of the story or to correct false or misleading information.

> Second, it enables us to pick up the phone and call reporters when we are looking to advance an issue and/or event. Reporters like information, especially stuff that can make for a possible story. It also "personalizes" our union. When the news or assignment desk receives a media advisory or news release, it helps to have an existing relationship.

> Finally, relationships with members of the media enable us to call and check out rumors and/or ask them what they know about them or other information we might be seeking.

If we communicate within these guidelines, we stand a much better chance of having our side of the story told, and told accurately.

GET THE MEDIA TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

The questions the media ask are the story. Depending on the question, you get desired or undesired news coverage, virtually regardless of the answer to the question. Getting the right question asked is the entire purpose of proactive, advocacy media. It's easy enough to understand. Which headline do you want?

"Union Denies Just Wanting Dues from Wal-Mart Workers"

OR

"Wal-Mart Denies Child Labor Charge"

The headlines reflect the information that has been provided to the reporter. The amount, type and quality of information will shape the reporter's question.

Here's what you can do to get the right question asked:

- Develop a clear, concise statement of the issue;
- List simple facts to support your position;
- Provide "sound bites" to illustrate your points; and
- Package and distribute all of the above to media.

There are a number of formats you can use including:

- Press advisory - a shorter version of the issue information that is tied to announcing a specific press event; or
- Press packet - a group of documents on the issue given to the media.

Proactive, advocacy media takes shape with your effort to frame the questions asked by the media.

YOUR MESSAGE AND TALKING POINTS

What is Important?

Developing Your Message – a message is not an argument or a debate. It is not a set of facts.

Your message is the one thing you want the audience to remember that is most likely to influence their behavior in a desired direction. Your message must be stated and be understandable with one or two simple sentences.

An easy way to help develop your message is to think in terms of a newspaper headline.

To gain support, state your message in terms of:

- The broadest possible public impact;
- Commonly held values; and
- A current issue in the news.

Staying On the Message

Once you have developed your message ... stay with the message. Don't let it get clouded with minor issues or other issues. You want the media to focus on what is the main issue that you want to address.

Talking Points - Talking points are the facts, figures or other documentation that you present to back up your message.

Keeping Everyone Informed - Everyone who might represent you should have copies of the message and talking points.

GET SOMETHING TO HAPPEN

News is something - virtually anything - that happens. If nothing happens, there is no news. To get news coverage, you have to do something. Think in terms of verbs - handbill, picket, demonstrate, release, announce, call, etc. The more dramatic the action, the more likely it receives news coverage.

News can be:

- Releasing survey results;
- Announcing a new initiative;
- Filing NLRB charges;
- Calling for legislative action;
- Handbilling consumers; or
- Virtually any organized, visible public activity.

The action becomes the "hook" that makes your message the news. The news value of your action depends on:

- General interest in your message;
- Timing; and
- Staging.

For example, calling for toughening OSHA enforcement after a major workplace accident that cost human lives is more likely to get covered than just a general call for OSHA reform. Issuing your call for OSHA reform at the site of the accident with family members of the victims is even more likely to get coverage.

Proactive, advocacy media often means "manufacturing" the news to get the news media to communicate your message.

NEWS CONFERENCES

A news conference can help publicize our event to many news outlets that serve a common local area. If we are planning a rally, vigil, free clinic or other large event, a news conference can be used to publicize the issue.

Getting the Media's Attention

- Write a News Release or Advisory that will serve as your announcement of the news conference/event to the media.
- Be sure to include who, what, where, when and why.
- Keep it short!
- Make sure to include a contact name and phone number.
- E-mail or fax your release one day before the event to all your media outlets.
- Call to make sure the event is going to be covered.

Things to Consider

Who's Coming: To maximize media attendance, try to have a high-profile personality participating - a community leader, councilperson, religious leader, union leader.

Diversity: Try to show a cross-section of participants/supporters. This will demonstrate that the issue is a concern to everyone. Strive for ethnic and gender diversity.

Location: Use a location that is easily accessible but also visually interesting for the media. Examples include a plant gate, steps of the state capitol, hospital.

Use Visual Aids: Put a USWA banner or logo behind the podium or on it. Use charts or graphs and handout materials.

Press Kit: It's a good idea to provide a press kit for members of the media to take with them. It should include, but not limited to, a copy of the press release, any printed graphs or statistical information supporting your issue, background information about your local and the USWA, and photos if possible.

Sign-In Table: Provide an area near the entrance where the media can sign in. Provide a sign-in sheet for their name, media outlet, phone, and fax.

When To Hold The Event: Try to hold the news conference on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Avoid Mondays and Fridays. Hold the event between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm. Earlier than 10:00 a.m., is hard for reporters to make it. After 2:00 p.m., is sometimes too late for the evening news. 10:00 am or 11:00 am are the best times because many noon newscasts will include the event.

Follow Up: Call assignment editors to confirm they know about the event. Talk it up as much as possible to encourage coverage! Many TV stations do not make their assignments until the day of the event. It is worth calling the TV assignment editors early on the day of the event.

Setup: Are you using a microphone? Is there electricity? Do you need a podium? Arrange a press table. This is where reporters sign in and pick up materials. One person should be the "meeter & greeter" of reporters. If it is an outdoor event, is there a backup location in case of rain? All participants should stand together behind the mike or podium so that everyone is in the picture. Make sure that visuals are not placed too high so as to be out of the picture, or too low so as to be blocked by the participants.

Speaking Order: Determine the order of speakers in advance. It is preferable to have each person come to the microphone and introduce him/herself. Distribute a speakers list to the press as well as the speakers themselves.

Length of Speeches: Each speaker should keep remarks short. The overall length of the news conference should only be 20-30 minutes (including time for Q & A). If there are a lot of speakers, each may only be able to speak for 2 minutes, or so. Not all participants need to speak. Ask groups to send a representative, even if he or she does not wish to speak - this shows the depth of support. Get copies of speakers' statements and distribute to the media. If they are ready in advance, they can be included in the press kits. If not, they can be placed on the press table.

Questions: Often the press will ask questions. They may direct them specifically to one speaker. If not, you, as the host should be prepared to answer or direct the question to one of your counterparts.

Interviews After the Press Conference: Reporters often want one-on-one interviews with speakers after the Q & A period. This is your chance to clarify or cover information not brought out during the Q & A.

Post-Event Follow-Up: After the event contact the media who attended to see if they have everything they need. You could offer to send a good quality photo to the newspapers.

Basic Writing Tips for a News Release

- Golden Rule: In working with local news media, find out just how they want to receive news releases from you. Then tailor your releases to fit their specific needs. Our goal is to get the media to use our news. We increase our chances if we make our releases easy for an editor to consider.
- Put the name and address of your organization at the top of the page (local or district letterhead works fine). Also at the top, list the date and a primary contact person and telephone number.
- Give the release a headline; make it very simple and straight forward -- the gist of the story in a few words.
- The most important information in the story goes in the first paragraph, the "lead." The paragraphs that follow support the lead with information of descending importance. Newspapers call this writing style the inverted pyramid. This makes it easy for an editor, who handles lots of copy quickly, to cut the story from the bottom without having to rewrite it.
- Keep it ONE PAGE in length, if possible.
- After the last paragraph, type the word "END," or the number "30," signaling that there is no more to the story.
- Many of our stories concern upcoming events. Provide the information in this order: time, date, place (including address and room number as needed). Example: The meeting is at 7:30 p.m. Thursday (Sept. 28), in Room 208 of the Municipal Building, 222 Carson St.
- Write in concise, declarative sentences. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Try to follow the subject-verb-object word order in sentences. Use active rather than passive voice.
- Double check to make sure that your release spells names of people correctly and that listed phone numbers are accurate and web site addresses are functioning.
- Photographs can be in color or black and white. Check ahead to see whether your newspaper accepts digital photos and in what format. Be sure that the object of the picture is in focus, close up and has good contrast. Photos that are too dark or too light do not reproduce well in newsprint and most likely will not be used. Newspapers will not return your photograph, so don't send your only copy.
- Check regularly with a news organization to learn where to send a release. Often, this will be the editor or city editor of the newspaper. For radio or television, it's normally the assignment editor or assignment manager.
- Email, fax or deliver news releases. Almost all newsrooms have email addresses. These change with staffing changes. Keep your contact list up to date.
- Hand-deliver news releases or photographs periodically and ask to meet the editor. Simply introduce yourself and hand-deliver your materials. Offer resource materials.
- When a publication runs an article you have submitted, it's nice to follow up by writing a thank you card to the editor or reporter.

Tips to Get Noticed

- Make a follow up call a day or two after sending a release and one day before an "event." Call with additional information regarding the release already sent.
- Send the release to several people in large news organizations, particularly anyone who has reported on your area of interest previously. Keep a media journal of names and media outlets who have visited before.

Examples and Templates

News Advisory

UNITED STEELWORKERS

USW News

UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS

[Date Goes Here]

News Advisory:

More information, contact:

[Contact First & Last Name] [Phone (XXX) XXX-XXXX]

[Contact Email]

[Headline Here]

[A Brief Subheading]

[Dateline City & State] – The United Steelworkers (USW) today ...

[Body paragraph two.]

[Body paragraph three, etc.]

[BOILERPLATE] *The USW represents 850,000 men and women employed in metals, mining, pulp and paper, rubber, chemicals, glass, auto supply and the energy-producing industries, along with a growing number of workers in public sector and service occupations.*

ATTN ASSIGNMENT/EDITORS: Photo Opportunities, Interviews

WHO:

WHAT:

WHEN:

WHERE:

News Release



For Immediate Release:

[Date Goes Here]

More information, contact:

[Contact First & Last Name] [Phone (XXX) XXX-XXXX]

[Contact Email]

[Headline Here]

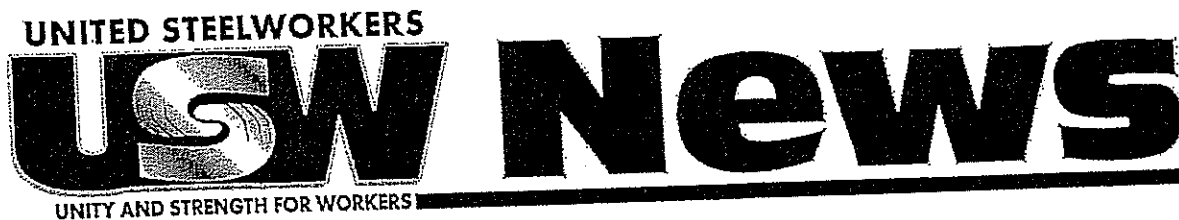
[A Brief Subheading]

[DATELINE CITY AND STATE] – The United Steelworkers (USW) today ...

[Body paragraph two.]

[Body paragraph three, etc.]

[BOILERPLATE] *The USW represents 850,000 men and women employed in metals, mining, pulp and paper, rubber, chemicals, glass, auto supply and the energy-producing industries, along with a growing number of workers in public sector and service occupations.*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March XX, 2012

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Michael Scarver (412) 562-2342 (o);
(412) 225- 5235 (c); mscarver@usw.org

MEDIA ADVISORY

Photo & Interview Opportunities Available

USW- Sponsored Town Hall Forum to Examine Voter Suppression Campaigns in 2012 Elections

The democratic process is under attack as we approach the 2012 Elections. Restrictions are being designed or implemented nationwide to suppress voter turnout. The United Steelworkers (USW) is appalled by these tactics and looks to foster open discussions about efforts to suppress and restrict voting rights for many Americans.

- WHO:** Elected official name & title; clergy name & title; ACLU name & title; USW rep. & title
- WHAT:** A Town Hall Forum
- WHEN:** Time, month, day, year
- WHERE:** Name of facility; street address; city, state, zip
- WHY:** Voter restriction efforts could deny voting rights to many citizens, including seniors, minorities, low-income workers, young and first-time voters

Photo Opportunities and Interviews Available

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2012

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Michael Scarver (412) 562-2342 (o);
(412) 225- 5235 (c); mscarver@usw.org

MEDIA ADVISORY

Photo & Interview Opportunities Available

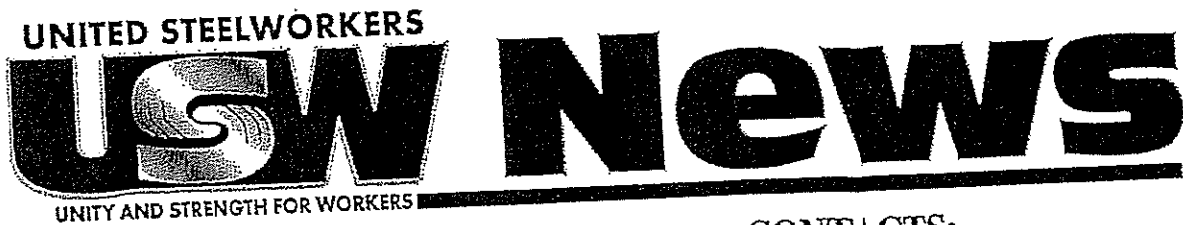
USW-Sponsored Town Hall Forum to Examine Voter Suppression Campaigns in 2012 Elections

(Charleston, S.C.) -- The democratic process is under attack as we approach the 2012 Elections. Restrictions are being designed or implemented nationwide to suppress voter turnout. The United Steelworkers (USW) is appalled by these tactics and looks to foster open discussions about efforts to suppress and restrict voting rights for many Americans.

- WHO:** Speaker: Congressman James Clyburn; Panelists include Rev. Joseph Darby; Susan Dunn, ACLU; Julie Hussey, S.C. League of Women Voters; Rep. David Mack, S.C. District 109; Dot Scott, Charleston County NAACP; Moderator: Fred Redmond, USW International Vice President
- WHAT:** A Town Hall Forum
- WHEN:** 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 1, 2012
- WHERE:** International Longshoremen Association (ILA) Hall,
1142 Morrison Dr., Charleston, S.C.
- WHY:** Voter restriction efforts could deny voting rights to many citizens, including seniors, minorities, low-income workers, young and first-time voters.

Photo Opportunities and Interviews Available

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 2, 2012

CONTACTS:
Wayne Ranick (412) 562-2444
wranick@usw.org

USW Lauds Pennsylvania Court Decision to Halt Voter ID Law from Being Implemented During 2012 Election

Calls on Court to Prevent Voter Suppression in Future

(Pittsburgh) – The United Steelworkers (USW) said that the Commonwealth Court decision that delays the implementation of a restrictive voter identification law in Pennsylvania that could have prevented hundreds of thousands of legally registered voters from casting ballots is the right one.

“Today’s ruling is a victory for everyone who values fairness in our democratic process, and anyone who supports the idea of one person, one vote,” said USW International President Leo W. Gerard. “It is important that those who are legally registered be able to cast their votes without these completely unnecessary restrictions, which were clearly designed to deliver elections to Republicans.”

The Pennsylvania Voter ID law, one of the most restrictive in the country, generated national publicity when it went into effect this March. Opponents filed a lawsuit in May to stop the law, which the state said could prevent 760,000 legally registered voters from casting ballots. According to today’s injunction, voters may be asked for IDs this November, but they will still be able to vote if they do not have one.

“Today we celebrate the fact that everyone’s vote will count this fall in Pennsylvania,” said Fred Redmond, USW International Vice President for Human Affairs. “But our work is far from over. Now, we must continue to fight to make sure that right-wing efforts to suppress the vote do not survive in Pennsylvania, or anywhere else in the United States, now and in the future.”

The USW represents about 850,000 workers in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean in a wide variety of industries, ranging from glassmaking to mining, paper, steel, tire and rubber to the public sector, service and health care industries.

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NEWS ADVISORY:

Dec. 9, 2013

More information, contact:

Donnie Blatt – 614-888-6052 (office); 740-504-8900 (cell)
or dblatt@usw.org

Steelworkers to Rally, Deliver “Save Ormet” Petitions to Ohio Gov. Kasich on Wednesday

PITTSBURGH –The United Steelworkers (USW) today said that Local 5724 in Clarington, Ohio will rally at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2013, before sending a delegation that will include Ormet retirees, laid-off workers and family members to deliver thousands of petition signatures to Gov. John Kasich.

The USW has arranged a meeting at the Riffe Center in Columbus at 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, where the USW delegation will invite Kasich to attend the Local 5724 holiday gathering and present the first batch of signed petitions collected through the union’s “Save Ohio Jobs” campaign to restart Ormet’s smelter in Hannibal.

The union has urged the governor to prevent the permanent closure of the facility by bringing the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), American Electric Power (AEP) and Ormet back to the table to negotiate a resolution that will allow the facility to resume full operations.

The USW represents 850,000 men and women employed in metals, mining, pulp and paper, rubber, chemicals, glass, auto supply and the energy-producing industries, along with a growing number of workers in public sector and service occupations.

ATTN ASSIGNMENT/EDITORS: Speakers, Interviews, Q & A, Multimedia, Photo Opportunity

WHO: USW members, leaders & retirees from Ormet

WHAT: Send-off Rally; Petition Delivery

WHEN/WHERE: Rally – 9 a.m. – USW Local 5724 | 105 Union Drive | Clarington, Ohio

Petition Delivery – 2:30 p.m. – Riffe Center | 77 S. High St. | Columbus



For Immediate Release:

Dec. 11, 2013

More information, contact:

Tony Montana – 412-562-2592

**Steelworkers Deliver 9,000 Signatures to Save Jobs at Ormet,
Invite Governor to Holiday Food and Toy Drive**

PITTSBURGH –The United Steelworkers (USW) today said that a delegation from Local 5724 in Clarington, Ohio delivered approximately 9,000 petition signatures to Gov. John Kasich urging him to bring the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), American Electric Power (AEP) and Ormet together to negotiate a power supply arrangement that will allow the bankrupt company's aluminum smelter in Hannibal to resume operations.

The delegation, which included retirees, laid-off workers and family members, also invited Kasich to the union hall next week to help distribute food and toys donated by Steelworkers from Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania to workers and their children.

USW District 1 Director David McCall said that communities throughout the Ohio Valley are already suffering, and permanently closing the smelter will cost the state millions in lost income tax revenue, unemployment benefits, retraining and social services.

"These jobs support families and sustain communities, and Ohio desperately needs more of them – not fewer," McCall said. "We simply cannot afford to allow AEP to drive Ormet out of business."

Last month, the union launched a multimedia campaign via the web site, www.saveohiojobs.org, to generate signatures for the petition asking for the governor's help to save Ormet. The USW will continue to collect and deliver signatures until the matter is resolved.

The USW represents 850,000 men and women employed in metals, mining, pulp and paper, rubber, chemicals, glass, auto supply and the energy-producing industries, along with a growing number of workers in public sector and service occupations.