



## *So You Want To Demonstrate...*

Demonstrations, protests, rallies and marches don't just happen ... they are created.

The first and most crucial step is to CREATE a mental snap shot of a front page picture that conveys your message in BIG, BOLD, BRAVE imagery. Envision it first. Then bring it to life!



Suffrage Parade August 26, 2011  
Fayetteville Chapter, National Organization for Women  
Downtown Fayetteville, NC

Photo: Frank Maness



Standing Sentinel NCGA April 2015  
Raleigh, NC

Photo: Kirk Ross Carolina Public Press

***From a simple sidewalk demonstration to a city/countywide rally,  
some things really are the same ...***

**Planning Time:**

- Don't underestimate this important step. If it's a city/countywide march you may need 3 to 6 mths or more. If it's a sidewalk protest, 1- 3 weeks might do.
- Nothing is more frustrating to a leader, volunteer or participant than working on a poorly planned project with insufficient time to complete tasks.
- Analyze tasks and create a timeline to accomplish each required task. Establish who will accomplish each task.

**Partners and Participants:**

- Identify groups on your frequency, those tuned in and most likely to partner or participate.
- Identify those in your group with contacts with those groups to do the outreach.
- Make sure partners understand all parameters, scope, restrictions involved.

**Date, Time, Venue (DTV):**

- Consider DTVs that have significant or historical meaning.
- Check your community calendar to make sure there is no highly competitive event being held same time.
- Consider DTV's that are participant friendly - good size matches, accommodating acoustics and parking, cost affordable, safe and handicapped accessible.
- Consider weather arrangements for shelter and lighting – daylight, night dark, windy, rain date.
- Ensure venue is available and book it as soon as possible especially if multiple venues are involved.
- Highly recommend the leader do a walk-through of venue to ensure it meets all needs and can accommodate sound, electricity requirements. Coordinate to make doubly sure water and electricity will be turned on.
- HIGHLY RECOMMEND all volunteers do walk-through of venue at least a few days before the event to confirm layout.
- On day of event, make sure all key volunteers are carrying a list of each other's cell phone numbers. Ensure cell phones are turned on during event. AHEM. Consider walky-talkies for large events.

**Permits, Parking, Potties:**

- Check with city police, county sheriff's office or law enforcement that has jurisdiction to determine if permit is required. Most permit applications are now online but may have a time deadline for submission. Meet personally with police if possible to build a good rapport.
- Some departments will provide traffic cones/signs at no charge. If you are really lucky they will set them out and pick them up. You may have to supply volunteers to act as traffic crossing guards. You may have to make your own traffic signs
- If you are using amplified sound, a permit may also be required. Arrange for the system to include set-up, pick up and associated costs. You may also be required to mail or go door-to-door with sound amplification notices to neighbors and businesses.
- ALWAYS carry your permit to your event. You may indeed have to present it at some point. Make copies and give to key organization officers and volunteers as back-up.
- Portable toilets are expensive but worth it if public building toilets are not accessible. Plan for handicapped accessible toilets. Portable handicapped toilets are available. Make sure you understand when the toilets will be serviced as part of the contract.

## **Security, Medical, Insurance:**

- For sidewalk demonstrations and small rallies there are usually no issues on any of these fronts.
- For larger venues drawing larger crowds, consider what resources, the city, county and state already provide the public as a matter of course. Then determine what you elect to arrange and pay for as a responsible organization.
- Some police departments charge upwards to \$25.00 an hour for an officer's service with a two-hour minimum. However, consult with your organization's attorney if you feel charges are unwarranted or providing protection at no charge to the public is a responsibility of the police agency.
- The same considerations apply for medical needs.
- Insurance is not usually an issue or required for public, sidewalk venues. It may or may not be required in other venues or by your organization. If you are arranging for vendors, insurance and food permits/training may be involved. Always consult if in doubt.
- You may be responsible for walking a route prior to a march and confirming it is a reasonably defect free, safe route.
- Note in publicity if pets are allowed. Guide animals are permitted of course.

## **Press and Media:**

- Send out "save the date" type "calls to action" to partnering agencies and participants as soon as you have a DTV.
- Certainly send out any registration forms well in advance of the event to allow time for participants to plan and respond. Remember to accommodate postal delivery times if relevant.
- Craft media/press releases once you have majority of sufficient details especially keynote speakers. There are plenty of online resources for the format of a media release. Send release to all TV stations, radio stations, newspapers in your area. Send it to all partnering agencies, social media and as many e-mail blast lists as you can.
- Nothing, nothing beats PERSONALLY contacting the media. Pick up your phone.
- Fully use all online social media. Create groups and Facebook events, twitter hashtags, etc.
- Don't peak too early. If you send out all calls and media release details a month in advance and then do not utter another word, ... well, uh ... be very vocal the week before event.

## **Trash:**

- Don't leave any behind.
- Assess how much trash may be generated and determine if available receptacles on site will do the job.
- Some city and county sanitation departments will drop off and pick up additional receptacles at no charge.
- Some sanitation departments will also provide and pick up recycling containers.

## **Demonstration Posters, Props, Performances:**

- Bring whatever supplies you just might need to venue – tape, pen, markers, posters, banners.
- Ask participants to wear certain colors, similar clothing or bring message props.
- Consider a flash dance or street performance at the venue.
- Know and practice what chants, songs you will do and who will lead them.
- Double-check spelling on signs. Make sure no one holds their signs upside down. Those types of errors are viral media nirvana.
- Remember that some permits contain regulations on sign sizes, material.

## At The Demonstration:

- Make sure you have as many people with cameras, taking video as possible to post on social media.
- Prior to event, participants should be aware of program agenda as well as all other venue requirements. This includes making and bringing their own posters and signs with recommended target message.
- Speakers and their comments should have been vetted before demonstration.
- Leave latitude. Be inclusive but do not let harmful or civilly disruptive messages hijack a public event. If you need assistance in that regard, contact the police officer that should be on location or contact law enforcement. Remember, you have the permit and are the authority for what is in order in the area.
- Even at a sidewalk demonstration, huddle up before and after. Thank everyone. Reiterate why you are there. Have someone offer a word of reflection or observe a moment of silence if appropriate.
- Reiterate civility and compliance with law enforcement requests. Best way to avoid arrest if it is not on your civil disobedience agenda is to immediately and respectfully comply with law enforcement directives. You can iron out the problem and negotiate in follow-up conversation. In fact, that usually works.
- Don't waste an opportunity to gather the contact info of persons that might be interested in future actions with your organization. Have a sign-up sheet on hand

## After Action:

- Always evaluate the effectiveness and operations of an action.
- Elicit feedback from participants and volunteers either in writing or calls.
- Thank partnering agencies, volunteers, participants and report results to them.
- Thank city/county agencies that contributed to or supported event.
- MAKE the time to post pictures and video on social media sites.
- Save multiple copies of all media articles and photos for historical archives, scrapbooks, after- action reports.
- Get up the next morning and start it all over again!



ERA Vigil NCGA 2015  
NCGA Raleigh, NC  
Photo Gary Robertson AP

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