



**AMERICAN COALITION
FOR FATHERS AND CHILDREN**

**Developing your local
shared-parenting group--
A guide and manual
of best practices**

Edited by:

John G. Maguire, ACFC Director of Communications

Julie Weiss

Michael McCormick, ACFC Executive Director

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Abraham Lincoln

With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions.



Adlai E. Stevenson

Democracy cannot be saved by supermen, but only by the unswerving devotion and goodness of millions of little men.

ACFC MISSION STATEMENT

We, the members of the **American Coalition for Fathers and Children**, hereby dedicate ourselves and our efforts to the creation of a family law system, legislative system, and public awareness which promotes equal rights for ALL parties affected by divorce, and the breakup of a family or establishment of paternity. It is our belief through our involvement and dedication, we can have a positive effect on the emotional and psychological well-being of children.

We believe equal, shared parenting time or joint custody is the optimal custody situation.

We believe the best parent is both biological parents.

We believe grandparents should have rights and access to their grandchildren.

We believe gender bias should be eliminated from family law and from future legislation.

We believe **BOTH** biological parents should be responsible for the emotional and psychological wellbeing of their children, as well as financially responsible.

We believe in the concept of fairness and equity in support for ALL families; and, that all children involved in a blended family should have equal rights, and do deserve equal rights and equal protection under the law.

We believe child support orders should be reasonable, realistically reflect the cost of the children's basic needs, and reflect the relative parenting contribution of both parents in a shared parenting plan.

We believe when parents are given equal rights, equal responsibility follows; when parents have equal access to their children and support levels are reasonable and reflect the true cost of raising a child, parents will comply with court orders.

We believe when equity is created in our laws, the conflicts inherent in divorce situations dissolve and that, in the end, this is the greatest gift which we, as parents, could possibly bestow on our children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACFC appreciates the various articles from Martin Witbeck, Tom Rettburg, Bob Maschi, Michael Bowman, John Maguire, the Capitol Resource Institute and Michael McCormick.

DEDICATION

This manual is dedicated to those individuals who have demonstrated the courage, initiative and leadership necessary to bring about positive social change.

ACFC thanks the editors, John G. Maguire, Julie Weiss and Michael McCormick for their effort in taking a loose collection of writings from a number of sources and turning it into the cohesive manual. ACFC particularly recognizes John Maguire for his outstanding leadership and perseverance in bringing this publication to fruition.

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Introduction to the ACFC Manual

Twenty-three million American children rarely see their fathers, and over 7 million haven't seen their fathers in more than a year. Studies show repeatedly that the absence of a father in a child's life is the number one predictor of delinquency, drug use, teen pregnancy, incarceration and child suicide.

There is currently a myth that dads are disposable, and that Big Brother government can step in and do all that dads used to do. This myth has been catastrophic for families. Marriage is the best environment to raise children. However, in the event a divorce takes place, or for parents who were never married, ACFC intends to raise public awareness of the need for Shared Parenting plans, crafted by the parents, which assure ongoing involvement by both parents in the day to day lives of their children.

The crisis caused by father absence in America (and the world) is such that every region needs strong, fatherhood advocacy organizations to assist fathers, while counteracting and correcting governmental and societal forces aimed at the further destruction of American families.

This manual provides a basic overview of what is necessary to create and develop an effective organization. Although few fledgling groups can be expected to establish and follow all these suggestions at the outset, it is important to have this material available for use when needed.

The profound anti-family agenda that currently exists is not in the best interests of children, causing social and economic disasters. There is clearly a need for organizations to counter the forces arrayed against the American family. ACFC seeks to have strong affiliate organizations in every city and state across the nation for those parents who want to be involved in their children's lives, those who are finding it hard to do so because of biased family laws, judicial actions, and regulatory policies.

We believe local group effort will be the catalyst for improving the situation of fathers and mothers and children. Only local groups can arrange activities that:

- meet the needs of dads and moms within our communities
- educate the public, lawmakers and social policy makers

- organize grass roots activism to foster needed changes

ACFC wishes success to all organizations dedicated to these aims and desires to build bridges wherever possible. While numerous groups exist across the country—some for years and some for months—we believe much of the U.S. has meager coverage for organized shared parenting advocates and there is opportunity for many, many times more groups, as well as members.

ACFC intends to work along established groups with their ongoing and often excellent programs. Additionally, we welcome formal affiliations of existing groups with ACFC and we are willing to contribute to their success. Finally, in a locality where a group of individuals seek to form an affiliate of ACFC we encourage support this endeavor. Effectiveness is the standard by which organizational strength should be measured.

The ACFC national membership offices can help new groups get started by providing advice, like this manual. We can also help with some of the needed administrative tasks, like providing a template membership database) and taking care of mailing “first meeting” notices to ACFC members in the area.

It is the goal of ACFC to have local affiliate organizations that are committed, caring and well organized. We welcome those individuals who are dedicated and ready to make a difference in educating members, legislators, the judiciary and the general public of the tragedy of “institutionalized” family destruction and the disgrace of denying children love and time by a parent, second wife, grandparent or other family member.

Our Affiliate Development manual was designed to give suggestions and advice by successful veterans on how to go about forming a strong and vibrant group in your area. For organizations that already exist, we intend to provide information that will strengthen your groups. We want to share information between groups so the wheel need not be invented again and again.

I want to thank you for your interest in starting an organization in your local area, and affiliating with the American Coalition for Fathers and Children. I look forward to working closely together and invite you to telephone me if I can be of assistance. We can make a difference in the lives of our children.

Michael McCormick
Executive Director, ACFC
February 2004

1. Organizing a New ACFC-Affiliated Group

TURNING INDIVIDUAL INTEREST INTO A GROUP EFFORT

To establish an effective local group, our experience indicates a core group of at least three conveniently located and cooperative individuals are needed. There must be a commitment and willingness to see it through at least the first several months and, during that time, other individuals possessing leadership qualities should continually be sought. While it often takes but one motivated self-starter to begin the local group, the more successful groups have shared responsibility. The vision for the group should be discussed at frequent pre-public meetings. Occasionally someone wants to start something alone. However lack of a core group may indicate the first criteria for an effective organization has not been met. Developing a core group should be the first task.

ACFC can help during these formative stages. The national office receives numerous calls daily from parents—whether they are categorized as visitors, married, step, custodial or non-custodial—and in addition, from second wives, grandparents and other concerned family members. These calls indicate the depth of the problem and the need for organizations to advocate on behalf of their concerns. Most callers agree to add their name to our roster, and, in many cases, these persons also wish to become active in local organizations.

Sometimes local groups may already exist and we may encourage you to associate with them, as opposed to starting your own. But the needs of the community are great, and the decision to start a group is yours, based on your goals and intent. For example, if the group in your area is "educational" and you desire to be more active legislatively, then the best option may be to form a group with that mission. Or, if you are a second wife, and want to meet with other second wives, then the option is either to start a new group or to form a sub-group of an existing local group. Associating with an existing group may offer the benefit of established

infrastructure and contacts with supports or the press.

It is fundamentally true that a person's interests and talents must not be constrained, especially in the no-pay domain of advocacy and support organizations. Put your energy where your heart and interest lie—that is, where you will be most effective in the long run. Leaders: if you try to put a fledgling lobbyist in the job of, say, entering names in a database, you may not see that person last! Mundane administrative tasks need to be done, but must be shared by agreement or done by someone with a penchant for such tasks.

ACFC may be aware of individuals in your area who also desire to contribute or lead. We can set up contacts with these persons. Also, we will gladly send out initial meeting notices to ACFC members in your area. Should you wish to take advantage of this, please discuss your ideas with our National Membership Office, and provide the following information at least four weeks in advance:

- 1. Meeting place (directions helpful)**
- 2. Meeting time**
- 3. Contact person**
- 4. Phone number**
- 5. Additional information you wish to release.**

What things are needed to form a group?

For a shared parenting advocacy group, it is easy to create a checklist of items to be tackled. The reality is that a hierarchy of tasks must be established. Otherwise there may be more tasks than persons and the group will essentially cease to function as a group.

As core leaders establish the vision for the group—feel free to think big but don't get lost in it—the experiences of the individuals will become apparent with respect to how the structure of the group will be set up. Corporately minded individuals may see the group organized around a business plan. People with support-group background may see a looser organizational structure. Ideally, the core group will have an individual with experience with non-profit organizations. However, this is not likely. While the core group may function well as a cooperative, agreeable, effective “meeting of equals,” there are both legal and time-tested reasons why a traditional hierarchical structure for the organization should be adopted. Also, although other procedures for operating groups and regulating discussion exist, it is our experience that Parliamentary procedures, or something similar, should be adopted for general group meetings, or at least be the default when business is the topic.

You must also decide whether the intention is to have the group meet legal non-profit status, that is, become a 501(c)3 organization as defined by the IRS. The advantage of doing so is tax deductibility for contributions can be offered and less regulation of the group will exist. However, if that is your path, you must meet the guidelines regarding the activities of the group. Alternatively, a PAC may be formed if your activities will be primarily political and legislative. Know the legalities of these distinctions in your state.

Below are the minimum recommended items to acquire early on in the formation of your group. It's clear these items fall into the categories of (1) basic requirements for meeting the public education or support function of the group (2) group structure (3) administration (4) internal operational plan (5) hardware and (6) legal. As this list expands, it will develop outward, toward media relations, research, legislative projects, and so on.

- Three individuals, minimum, to serve as the board of directors. More can be added later, but keep it small.
- Three officers, who can be board members. President, Treasurer, and Secretary.
- A post office box.
- A general meeting place
- Frequent meetings by the core group that is the board, plus “mandatory” monthly meetings.
- Scheduled public meetings
- Basic membership handouts.
- An understanding of basic legal requirements for non-profit groups, or PACs, in your state.
- Application for incorporating in your state. This may require bylaws.
- A federal tax id number (apply with the IRS)
- Bank account and bookkeeping program. You need a federal tax id number for the bank account. Quick Books can serve as your bookkeeping program.
- Computer, printer, and access to xeroxing capabilities.
- Group letterhead
- Mission statement

Some inexpensive ways to get exposure for your first meeting

You may know a neighbor, friend, or co-worker that's interested. Some cable companies will put your meeting notice on their community boards. You can run an inexpensive ad in your local newspaper. You can pass out meeting flyers. You may also:

- Post your meeting notice on Internet boards
- Put your meeting in the Calendar section of your newspaper

Your first organizational meeting

Your first organizational meeting can be conducted in an informal manner. Many people will have these meetings in a restaurant or in someone's home. There is an enormous amount of information to cover at the first organizational meeting.

• ***Don't be discouraged*** if you don't get everything covered in your first meeting. It may be necessary to have two or three additional meetings before you're ready to officially start your group and have your first "General Meeting".

• *Don't be discouraged* if your first meeting is not well-attended. Remember that out of every 30 people you may get only one dedicated person willing to get involved. If you can establish three or four dedicated people in your first meeting that will be sufficient.

The two most important topics of discussion for your first organizational meeting should be:

1. **The basic requirements needed to get your group operational.**
2. **Chapter Officer positions.**

THE BASICS TO GET YOUR GROUP UP AND RUNNING

Hardware

Computer: It is highly desirable to have a computer that your group can use to draft meeting announcements, write letters, press releases, etc. Most likely one of your core-members will own a computer that can be used, and is knowledgeable in its use.

Fax Machine: The ability to send and receive faxes is important for quick communication and press releases. Normally one of your core members will have fax capability.

Financial

Funding: At the grass roots level in which we operate, little money is necessary to begin a chapter. Core members may be willing to donate money so that initial operating expenses may be met. Costs involved in printing materials, renting a postal box, phone charges, and mailings, etc. will need to be discussed and fundraising efforts will be necessary. At each General Meeting a donation box and a request for donations should be made. If you have an itemized list of items that you need and costs involved attendees of your meetings will normally help financially.

At a local level sources of funds must be explored. Please refer to Chapter 11, for fundraising ideas and strategies.

Public Outreach

Meeting Place: Living rooms or restaurants are adequate for the first few meetings until your membership reaches ten or more members. Local colleges, schools, churches, libraries, or community rooms may offer space for little or no cost. Try not to change the location of your meetings too often or your members will get confused and miss meetings because they were unaware of the meeting location. Try to find a location that is accessible, comfortable, and professional. You may want to avoid locations that have limited, dark or paid parking.

*The meeting location is a **very** important factor in whether or not the public will attend*

your meeting.

Communications

Phone Line: You must have a phone to take calls for the chapter. One of your core member's personal phones may be used initially. It is highly desirable to have an answering machine if there isn't anybody to answer the phone line that mentions a brief description of your organization, as well as your meeting dates, times, and location.

Note: Generally the person assigned to answer the phones for your organization has a job and isn't always available to answer the chapters phone lines during normal business hours or certain hours of the day, which can result in lost calls. The ACFC maintains a 24-hour live answering service at 800-978-DADS. The national membership office, which can be reached at that number, is staffed six hours a day, from 11 am to 5 pm, EST.

Postal Services

PO Box: You should have an address or PO Box that can remain constant for one year. It is highly recommended that you receive mail at either a PO Box or at a Postal Center, and not at your personal residence. Postal Boxes are less expensive. The advantage of using a postal center is that you can receive Federal Express packages, whereas at a PO Box you cannot. Fees at Postal Centers are higher but they do offer more services.

Printing

At some point it will be necessary to have printed materials to conduct business, such as:

- Business Cards
- Letterhead
- Brochures

OFFICERS

The success of any organization will rely on the hard work and dedication of its Officers. Officers should be selected individuals capable of being in leadership roles.

It is highly desirable to have enough people to fill all these positions immediately when starting an organization. The reality is that you probably won't. Always keep your eyes open for talented individuals who may possess the skills needed to fill these offices. Often times you will have interested candidates approach you at your General Meetings.

President, Chair, Co-Chairs (Mandatory)

Responsible for overall leadership, management and direction of the organization. Reports directly to the Board of Directors. Oversees all facets of the chapter activities. All Officers

"must" report to him/her, and "must" receive authorization from him/her on any and all new projects and before publicly speaking to newspapers, television, etc. Will organize speakers to speak at the monthly Core Meeting. Will also be responsible for general public meetings, e.g.

Secretary (Mandatory)

Responsible for writing minutes of each Officer's Meetings as well as the monthly General Meetings. The minutes of the meetings will be sent to all of the Chapter Officers. The Secretary will remind the Officers of meeting time and locations. Gets mail from the Post Office Box. Sends out correspondence as needed. In charge of maintaining the meeting sign-in sheets at each General Meeting and giving the sign-in sheets to the Membership/Media Contact person when completed. Will type up meeting agendas for each General Meeting.

Treasurer (Mandatory)

Sets up initial bank account. Responsible for all chapter deposits; donations and membership checks. Submits quarterly reports of the chapter account to the Officers. Purchases supplies for the chapter-needs approval of the President. Responsible for reconciling the monthly bank statements.

Research and Education

Responsible for doing studies and research in all areas of family laws. Keeps updated on new research and studies and provides this information to the public at the General Meetings. Also, informs the Media Contact person so they can educate the public on the research.

Membership Coordinator

Responsible for initial telephone contact, answering the organization's phone lines. Will keep a database of members, supporters, and incoming calls. Will send out new member brochures. Will fill out a telephone statistic log each month and distribute to the Chapter Officers to evaluate the major referral sources. Takes messages and refers calls to the appropriate Chapter Officer. All media calls go to the Media Contacts and Spokespeople. Sends out mailings to members.

Media Contact and Spokesperson

Responsible for media interviews - radio, newspapers, television etc. Will video tape all media events and keep an archive of the media tapes. Will keep copies of all magazines or newspaper articles. It is possible to have more than one spokesperson but the initial media contact should go through the Media Contact person first. Will keep a log of all the media events. Will send out press releases. Will get Public Service Announcements to radio shows, television, and to print. Responsible for press releases.

Legislative Contact

Responsible for working with legislators to keep them informed of the goals of the organization, educate them, lobby to promote bills the organization supports and suggest killing bills they oppose. Organizes teams of members to meet monthly with respective legislators and schedules accordingly. Will organize members to testify in front of the legislators. Will organize phone trees when bills are being voted on and additional support is needed to pass or kill a bill.

Special Events Coordinator

Promotes our organization through planning of special events- i.e. Protests, courthouse rallies, etc. The goal should be for two special events a year, possibly around Father's Day. Responsible for organizing and coordinating special events with all members to ensure good participation in the event. Will work in conjunction with the Director, Membership and Media Coordinators, and the Advertising Director

Advertising

Responsible for advertising avenues to help promote our organization, such as bulletin boards, cable TV community activity announcements, newspaper community calendars, etc. Must get approval on all ad and copy before it is released by the Director and the Media Contact person. Distributes flyers regarding your organization to increase memberships. Any media leads would be referred to the Media Contact & Spokesperson.

Fundraising

Responsible for organizing fund raising events to raise money for chapter activities. Entertainment books, Holiday Boutique, etc. All events need to be approved by the Director.

2. How to Develop and Strengthen Your Affiliated Group

By Martin Witbeck

Welcome ACFC Affiliate Leader! It's nice to have you on board. You are the people who are on the forefront of a growing avant-garde grass roots movement. Thank you for your interest, efforts and dedication to solving one of the most pressing social problems of our time. As an affiliate leader, you will be substantially involved in reversing destruction in the lives of children, families, and fathers.

OVERVIEW

Why is it important to manage a shared parenting group?

What techniques can be applied by anyone to grow a shared parenting group?

How do I deal with the problem of ...

Where do we go from here?

Why is it important to manage a group?

A group in ACFC fulfills many roles. We provide support services, educational material, and time-tested suggestions about how to make the most of the situations members find themselves in. But this is only the surface. In reality we are much more. In order to accomplish our goals we must manage our time well and focus on the most important things we need to do. In this chapter I hope to give you suggestions on how to be the most effective with the time you have available.

Certain techniques anyone can use to grow a group

Basically you must make a plan and follow the plan. Our plan, and probably yours, should include HIGH, MIDDLE and LOW priorities. Without making priorities, you risk having your group go in all directions at once—and therefore, nowhere.

High Priorities:

- 1) Get the national ACFC phone number listed for free in the "Community Service" pages in your local phone book, 1-800-978-DADS.
- 2) Find a free place to meet at your local library, city hall, community center, church, synagogue, or other public place on a regular basis. Schedule and reserve it for monthly meetings.
- 3) Tell the national office when and where your meetings are being held. Provide them with other vital statistics such as who new members can contact for immediate assistance.
- 4) Incorporate and start a checking account.
- 5) Maintain a list of the people who become members including their names, phone numbers, and addresses.
- 6) Contact your new members at least once a month by phone
- 7) Send out a short newsletter regularly.
- 8) Reassure prospective members you can help them by providing information. Help them by providing information.
- 9) Teach teamwork and ask your members to help out in very specific ways.

Medium Priorities:

- 1) Send out free public service announcement on cable about your meeting time and place.
- 2) Get your meeting time and place listed in the local paper public service calendar regularly.
- 3) Invite lawyers, social workers, psychologists, judges, private investigators, lobbyists, police or any other professionals who have an interest in family law to speak at your meetings.
- 4) Encourage members to attend meetings and bring current information about law and related topics to each meeting for the group to discuss.
- 5) Get the media involved by writing positive articles. Be sure to get your number listed with your name. Make sure the media knows you are an ACFC affiliate group. If you do not have a phone or website, use the ACFC phone number and website in your releases. (1-800-978-3237).
- 6) Encourage members to meet with legislators as often as possible during legislative season.
- 7) Actively seek after grants for services for fathers and children.

Low Priority:

- 1) Putting out flyer advertisement.
- 2) Special events.

No Priority:

- 1) Spend excessive time helping one individual. This can destroy your organization.
- 2) Lose sight of your real goals and reason for providing your services for free.
- 3) Spend all of our energy on big one-time events. We're in this for the long haul.

4) Spend money advertising for members.

Group Goals

Our primary goals are to do the following:

- Increase membership.
- Influence legislation.
- Help children, families, and fathers through education and self sacrifice.

We do this by doing the following: A) Develop an emotionally safe environment for fathers to begin helping fathers. B) Educate members how to help themselves and other fathers by working as a group on common goals. C) Obtaining funding to train adults who were raised fatherless or by a non-fatherly father about the importance of fatherhood and how to be better fathers and mothers. D) Follow the plan above.

How to Prioritize Group Responsibilities

Manage your time. Decide how much time you have available for these activities. I usually recommend the average member try to spend ten hours a month on these activities. Next, divide up your time among the activities you want to pursue. Your high priorities should not be all consuming. Give them say 50% of your time commitment or five of your ten hours. Give your medium priorities a little time each totaling 35% of your time commitment. Spend only 15% of your time on the low priorities. By following this pattern you will begin moving your goals ahead immediately, even if you have only one person.

Teach each person this pattern, but, when you get three or more you will need to begin specializing. To specialize, you as the leader will need to pay attention to what each person is doing and encourage new comers to fill in spots where you need them to keep the percentage of efforts of the group balanced according to priority, just as you did for yourself in the beginning.

When doing an activity, always think about it in terms of will it meet our major goals. For instance what should we consider when we write articles to be published in the media. The primary goal for this is to gain new membership. Yes, we want to educate the public too. However, stating too much of the truth at once can keep an article from being printed. The public nor media is educated as well as we are to the needs of the family. They don't understand the fundamentals. Give the media milk not meat.

We have to nurture public opinion along. Historically fathers groups have been painted by their detractors as something evil. When writing to the media at first you must stick to facts and figures to gain credibility. As you get known better, start adding more of the real story. Eventually people will see your side of the matter if you are not offensive and you take a pro-child, pro-family approach. We need the article to get published to get our phone number out there so be careful about what you write. A great resource for research on statistics is the ACFC web page at www.acfc.org.

Group Meeting Agenda

Group meetings must contain certain elements. Here is a sample program or agenda for the regular meeting.

- First half hour: Introduce ACFC who we are and what we do, review recent events, present the schedule of upcoming events, state the benefits of membership, and tell the prospective members the two most important things they can hear: 'We can help.' and 'You are not alone!'
- Second half hour: Give each new member two or three minutes to tell us why they came and ask them what they hope we can do to help them. Give them feedback as a group. Give the prospective members the phone number of an existing member who would be willing to listen to more details and give more guidance to the person in private. **DO NOT GIVE LEGAL ADVICE!** Legal advice is reserved for attorneys. Any advice given to a non-member can be considered legal advice. To avoid legal advice communicate by telling them experiences you are aware of that other people and yourself have had and refer them to a lawyer for advice.
- Next hour: Have a speaker talk about a current issue.
- Closing: Have members share what they have learned during the last month with the group. Ask members to bring information to the next meeting to share with the group. Touch on upcoming calendar events and encourage members to be involved in the activities. Hand out membership applications and ask prospective members to join.

HIGH PRIORITIES

1) Best Method for Contacting Prospective Members

It was a year and a half ago when we had an average of 10 people attending our monthly meeting. We had no money and were trying to contact prospective members by spending hours handing out flyers at the grocery store and at public events. We wanted our number to be in the phone book but it seemed too expensive to get it listed. This is what we did.

We were already paying for an answering service to take messages for us. It worked really well. For \$13.00 each month we had a voice mail box which would hold up to 12 mail messages. We answered the few calls we received a couple of times each week. We used an answering service to avoid relying on an individual member's phone numbers. Because people tend to move we felt it would be better to have a stable number we could put on our literature. We felt another benefit of having an answering service was that any member could call in from any place and pick up the messages. However, now that our number is in the phone book and on our business cards our use of the line has skyrocketed from 5 calls a week to the present 40 plus calls each week.

We decided we should get our phone number put in the community service section of the phone book where the phone company lists free of charge community service organizations. When they asked what we did, we explained to them we do support group activities as a community service. They readily added our number to the community service section of the book. In fact because we fit many of their categories we requested our number be put in more than one place in the community service section. They did put our number in more than once. This year they even agreed to put our number under "Discrimination."

Most phone books have a community service section like the ours where public services are listed free of charge. Because most of our new members find us through the community service section of the phone book, we believe getting a number in this section of the phone book is one of the most critical elements in growing a successful group.

2) We are experiencing an increasingly high number of prospective member contacts coming from our business cards. We hand out 3 to 4 business cards to every person who walks in our door. Members buy the cards from the group and hand them out. Members also put the cards on community bulletin boards at places such as the grocery store and library. Business cards work because they give us the best form of professional advertisement, the personal referral. Men can carry them in their wallet, whereas flyers would require a purse to carry around. We expect the referrals from this source to exceed the number of referrals we get from our listing in the phone book in the near future. Everyone who walks in the door knows two or so other people who are getting a divorce. It is very easy for them to give the card to others. The growth from this form of advertisement should keep increasing.

3) Our list of member's names, phone numbers and addresses is as good as gold. It is your most important tool to effectively accomplish your goals. The phone numbers provide a quick way of contacting everyone to let them know about late-breaking events such as an unscheduled rally or a short scheduled hearing on one of your pending bills in the legislature. If everyone has phone numbers of everyone else, positive communication begins to happen without the leaders' direct involvement. This is when good things start to happen. The address list is the only way to keep current addresses so you can mail out your newsletter. Read about the importance of the newsletter in number 5 below.

4) New members are very fragile. They do not know yet how they want to help out or even if they want to help out. **They do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.** A phone call may be time consuming but it is a good way to keep in contact and begin the mentoring process. People don't want to work with people who are strangers. Don't be a stranger. Be a friend.

5) A newsletter is a must. A newsletter gives people the feeling the organization is concrete, provides some contact with the group and helps people feel like they belong. It also gives members a chance to practice their writing skills. They can publish an article in the newsletter before they send it to the newspaper. A more important reason for the newsletter is that (as we are told) we group must agree on an agenda before approaching legislators to change law. The newsletter is a good means of sharing ideas and coming to a consensus before you

present things to the outside public. It also provides a means of commentary by those who have information for the entire membership. Many members come to meetings as a direct result of articles they read in the newsletter. The newsletter is critical to maintaining an actively involved membership group. Our group has always done better when a newsletter is being mailed out regularly. It builds and maintains the interest level of members.

6) We can't do a lot to help individual member cases. Legally we can't be a surrogate attorney. Legally we can educate, provide support group services and share information. We can not practice law. If somebody wants to represent themselves pro se it is up to them to do the research. Some people get upset when we don't do everything for them. It can't be helped. I for one want to help a lot more people than one or two. I want to help hundreds. Since this is my volunteer time I reserve the right to spend it how I see fit.

If your group wants to get into this sort of personal care, that is up to you. Personally, unless this activity is funded by grants I think it will kill much of the volunteerism of your current members. From my experience, most members would rather work with the legislature than fight some angry ex-spouse for someone they hardly know who won't do the work necessary for themselves. We are here to provide direction. We can point people to the state statutes. We can teach people how to research case law. We can point them to studies and statistics but they have to be willing to dig out the information themselves. If you limit yourself to pointing out resource material and sharing personal experiences, you will still have time to accomplish your other goals too.

7) Teamwork. For some men it is very hard to work with other men. Our spirit of independence teaches us to do it ourselves, and if we fail, take it on the chin without complaining. The people who want to see us fail like to say that men are not capable of working together. Yet the biggest and the best organizations in the world are run by men. We get along great and we work together well. Until men begin trusting each other more and believing that men are good, we will be lost. Instead of acting like men are dogs and women are angels we must stand up for the truth. We must show by our actions in supporting each other that this is not the case. We must try to avoid supporting the activities of people who are selfish, whether they are women or men. This is how we build trust. When we trust each other, we can then work together. We can build a world class organization by working together to debunk the lies that are told about "men" to sell and promote anti-family agendas.

MEDIUM PRIORITIES

1) Public service announcements are your second best way of communicating with the public. Yes, get the phone number listed in the phone book. But, not everyone thinks to look in the phone book under the community services page. Some of our most active members made their first contact after hearing a public service announcement or reading a newspaper article. This form of free advertising reaches people who tell their friends who need our help about us. This is a very important tool to use to connect with people. Contact your local cable company and newspapers and give them information about the education and support group services you

provide along with your meeting time and place information.

2) Inviting professionals to speak to your group provides two benefits. First, having them speak brings current important information into the group. In our group, we always learn important things from our speakers. They have taught us how to lobby effectively. They teach us points of law. They help us to stay focused and unprejudiced. They sharpen our minds. Eventually you will be able to invite the most influential people in your state into your meetings.—as we do.

More important than what you learn is what they learn. Just by sharing our stories with them, they learn. They learn we are good guys and our children need help they can provide. They learn all is not wonderful in wonderland and that they can help. We have had some wonderful experiences and seen changes in people when they come to know us.

No matter what you think most people are actively pursuing their agendas because they believe in them. They believe they are good people. Treat them with respect even if their views differ from yours. Do your best to teach them but don't be afraid of failure. We can't win everybody over and we don't need to. Most people already agree with us. Powerful people who we do not know yet actually agree with us. Until they know we can be professional when talking to people we disagree strongly with, they will avoid us at all costs. Prove yourself; then they will come to you. Prove yourself an angry man and your detractors **will** destroy you!

If you or any of your members are angry with someone, do not invite them to your meeting. This will invite trouble. The last thing we need is to set back the clock to the time when we were seen as just a bunch of angry men caring about no one but themselves. We can not afford a bad experience with anyone, especially our detractors. They can hurt us the most.

3) When your members become actively involved in finding and bringing information to the group, something magical happens. They begin to get excited. Then they begin trying to figure out what to do with this information. Help them to stay focused on the group goals as they decide what they want to do next. Encourage all of your members to make good use of information brought to the group by others. Some people enjoy doing research, others enjoy presenting information. Make the most of the skills and interests in your group.

4) Media. That's an exciting word. It is really exciting when the media does a good job on your story. Be careful that no one makes comments casually. Keep all your comments down to one liners, especially for TV. The sound byte is all important. Make sure you don't have any sound bytes that sound bitter or angry. These are the most provocative and they *will* be shown. They are also the ones that make you look the worst to the public. The media and public digest small amounts of information at a time, so prepare and practice your comments accordingly. Don't forget to have them print the ACFC number on the screen or run it as part of your signature in the paper. It's 1-800-978-3237.

5) How do you meet with legislators? It's easy. Walk into their offices and ask for ten minutes of their time. Hand them written copies of your 10 minute presentation and supporting cites of studies and reports. Even if they are not present, the printed copy and your personal visit

will help. Find someone who likes your message and ask him if he knows anyone who can come talk to you about lobbying or if he knows any other legislators interested in these issues. You will get to know some exciting people who can write or sponsor legislation or can speak at your meeting. Eventually, they will have to own the ideas. **You will be in a position of just trying to keep your legislation on course** by sharing information and educating people who have a say.

LOW PRIORITIES

1) It helps to organize membership drives occasionally. One way to temporarily boost your new memberships is to pick a Saturday to hand out flyers. First make sure it is legal according to your local law. Then go out in groups of two to four people. Stop by your local grocery store, mall or Wal-Mart. Put the flyers on as many cars as you can as quickly as you can. If anyone asks you to leave, leave. If a policeman is around leave. We don't want to give anyone the opportunity to hassle us. Do not get into any discussions. Just hand them a flyer and tell them to refer to it. It should have the phone number, meeting information and interesting bullet points on it.

2) Special events are great but short lived. They take a lot of energy. Picketing gender-prejudiced movies is an example of one kind of activity that has been effective. Another one is a musical presentation dedicated to fathers. We rarely meet our goal of getting new members by these activities but they do help us meet our goal of increasing the public awareness of the issues. This can be very useful when there are important bills pending in your legislature.

We usually invite the media to our Fathers Day weekend. We hold a rally on the court house steps on Saturday. Somebody brings a lectern and microphone. On election years we invite candidates to speak. In our location, this is a good time to get on the Ten O'clock News. On Sunday we have a Fathers Day picnic. The media likes to take the opportunity to get some good shots of fathers and their kids (if they have them) on Fathers Day. The media tends to give us more coverage when we have more events to cover on the weekend. We do get our notices out to them in the proper time frame before the scheduled event. Usually they need a week's notice to plan to have a camera crew or staff reporter attend.

Dealing with difficult people

There are many people who walk off of the street into your meetings. Most are good well intentioned people. Some are not so nice. Some are people who have no scruples and just want to see if we have a magic bullet that will help them beat their former spouse down. Normally they try to hide this for a while but sometimes they are forthright. It is quite easy to deal with the worst ones because they reveal who they are. When they find that you stand strong for your values they tend to not want to be involved and they stop coming back because we **will** not give them a billy club.

The people who tend to be a problem are the ones that come in and decide they know better how to run your organization than you do. They try convince everyone that they are

smarter and better than you are and they should leave you and follow them. If you have developed a group with integrity, these attackers will eventually go away. A more serious form of this attack happens when this person goes behind your back outside of the meeting bad mouthing leadership. If this is happening I encourage you to encourage them to leave the organization and start their own group. Also, contact the national organization and request advice on how to deal with this person. It's sad to say, but some people who walk in the door deserved their divorce and brought it on themselves. And yet even these men probably received additional penalties from the courts just for being male. We should try to help these men if we can.

Where do we go from here?

From here we work hard and we work as a team. We sacrifice when necessary to accomplish a common goal. We attend all the public hearings on proposed legislation that we can. We point out facts to counter misinformation. We correct Lenora Weitzman's wild and admittedly erroneous and frequently quoted statistics every time they are quoted. We educate people about the truth. We teach people the knowledge we gain from all sources especially the ACFC manual. We work hard and sleep well. We know we are here because we know children are best cared for by birth parents whether in a post divorce family or not. We get laws changed enabling us to take responsibility for the children we brought into the world and for whom we want to be responsible.

Other organizations burden their affiliates with rules

“Groups should print and mail membership manuals. Reimbursement to the national office should be sent in quarterly. Groups should send renewal notices to their members.”

We don't require this kind of work from our groups! The ACFC national office takes care of all of this busy work effectively.

Wish lists for groups

The following items are highly useful in building a successful group. It is not necessary to form a group with these items, but this list should serve as a goal to achieve as soon as possible.

1. Fax Machine
2. Membership Cards
3. Computer with database to enter your new and potential members in. You can use Access, Act, Goldmine, or similar programs.
4. Database to enter names and address of media representatives. The same products can be used.
5. Local newsletter or supplement to the national newsletter "Fathers & Families"
6. Office Space
7. Bulk mail permit
8. Board of Advisors with respected and recognized individuals in the group's local area
9. Web page that can be linked into the ACFC web-site
10. Bookstore with materials available to your members
11. Buttons and bumper stickers

12. List of referrals to attorneys, mediators, psychologists, and other professionals
13. Informational brochure for your group
14. Resources from other divorce groups and organizations
15. Public Service Announcements that can be given to the media
16. Support groups
17. Separate 501(c)3 tax exempt status

3. How to Handle Telephone Inquiries

By Bob Maschi and Tom Rettberg

INTRODUCTION

Answering and returning phone calls from first-time contacts is one of the most basic and most important functions of our volunteers. This is usually done at a stressful time in the caller's life, a time when we can make a difference--with the very people who drive our future membership.

To do this well, you must be part organizer, part social worker, part friend, and full of common sense. This is not glamorous work. Few people will realize the importance of your role. But it is also where you can do the most immediate good and learn the fastest. Before calling, have an *information intake form* handy and a list of Coalition affiliates with their phone numbers.

Each call and caller is unique. *We do not want to take away from that fact.* They all have to be treated as individuals. But many have shared concerns that fall into a pattern.

Man served with restraining order

This is the toughest one to deal with. Usually those who call us are victims of *false* allegations of domestic abuse and have a common ex parte order against them. The order was taken out against them as a strategic maneuver in a divorce, or is an action by a person who is, in fact, the abuser. These men have recently been escorted from their home by the police, have no contact with their children, have virtually no clothes or property, are embarrassed to speak to their friends and family, are worried about their reputations, their employment. They may not even have a place to sleep. They also have a court date within ten days and are worried about preparing for it--but they know nothing about the way the system works. (Some may even believe that truth or justice will be served when they get to court and can speak up and explain the lies made about them.)

In this and any other case regarding a restraining order, you must insist that they in no way violate the order. The jails are full of men who have, even innocently or unintentionally, violated orders. Explain that, even if the woman (wife or girlfriend) is initiating the contact, this man must refuse all contact, make no return calls, say nothing. Only when the order is dropped (vacated) by the court can communication of any kind occur.

Also attempt to deflect their anger away from the woman. She is perhaps not at fault as much as the court system and lawyers are. The current setup encourages false abuse claims and their amplification into matters of into criminal liability.

Man paying child support he cannot afford

Another tough one. There is nothing that we can do for these people other than to listen and be understanding. Explain that part of our program is to change state child support guidelines and the policy of the court to treat fathers as walking wallets. Ask them to become involved with us.

Also, advise them that the agenda of the court or the Department of Revenue often involves forcing family members and friends to pay the child support to keep the father temporarily out of jail. The result will be that he and those around him will be bled dry. Stress to the caller that this is not acceptable, particularly since many cases involve irresponsible spending on the part of the custodial mother.

If he explains, as one did recently, that the child support agency is "after him like he's the FBI's #1 terrorist," tell him he has to stand up for his rights in the all-too-frequent cases of inability-to-pay or bureaucratic mistakes. He must resist being bullied into paying and paying for support agency screw-ups. Check your state's law, and insist on an ability to pay hearing. No one should be incarcerated for contempt if he does not have the ability to pay. Explain that when enough child support payers voice their dissatisfaction with the support agency, then change will happen and not a moment before. Joining the coalition will foster this.

Tell the man calling that if he has lost his job or had an income drop, he must file a downward modification request with the court immediately.

Father has no contact with kids

The saddest cases are those fathers who haven't been able to see their children for a long period of time--and don't know when they will see them again. They feel helpless, depressed and confused. They need you to listen and believe. For example, if a man tells you how close he was with his kids, he may really *need* to hear that he is a good father. Explain that the problem is societal right now. Let these men know they are not alone, and many fathers are going through the same thing. Perhaps tell them about your own experience with denied or prevented access.

Do not offer pity. Make it clear that local support groups can offer sympathy and perhaps even assistance, but that advocates like ourselves offer solutions and education by way

of involvement. What is the solution? We must become organized as will be required to change the law and policy of the state. Tell them the best thing to do is TO BECOME INVOLVED.

Men needing more than average emotional support

For the rare suicidal or potentially violent man, the motto is LISTEN AND BELIEVE. Only once or twice in hundreds of calls are you likely to encounter this. Use discretion. One idea might be to have others promptly call the man as well. You may want to check back with him periodically. Let him know that even strangers care about him. Also try to focus his attention on his children and away from the problems affecting him. Hint that his children will need him later in their lives and there are sometimes miraculous outcomes to some of these situations.

If he is suicidal over a fraudulent restraining order (suicide or murder-suicide is a risk, we believe) ask him to pull back, let some time go by, seek help with family or friends, and focus on those who love or need him.

Women callers

Women (second wives, grandmothers, mothers, siblings, significant-others, etc.) call for many reasons, but two reasons top the list.

A. They may be frustrated and confused about the court process they have witnessed. (Who wouldn't be?) These women may carry much of the "luggage" of their family member or loved one, but rarely do they have the opportunity to stand before the judge and speak their mind. These women are also victims of the system's disregard for fathers, who are so often treated as irrelevant by female members of the legal, support agency, or court bureaucracies. (Their criticism of the manner in which fathers are treated is often refreshing to hear.) They also might not be receiving the attention and support they need as a man they love is engaged in the court process. Your group should encourage women members. You want to have many women who would be happy to talk to women callers. Arrange to have one or two women follow up with a call.

B. Some women telephone us on behalf of a brother, son, friend or husband. They may not have even told the father involved that they have intended to contact us. The father may not want to get involved. (Many men believe, we think wrongly, that getting involved with a fatherhood organization will hurt their "chances." Emphasize to them our educational aspects.) However, it is probably best to remain professional and friendly and leave the door open for future communication. Send them some of our materials if appropriate. If you do your job well, they will call back.

Legal advice

Many callers seek legal advice. Inform them that you are not an attorney and cannot, by law, provide direct legal advice. Free legal advice by practicing attorneys is not plentiful. As fathers, they have little chance of receiving any free legal services.

Most conversations will have an exchange of ideas and comments, but do not answer a question to which you do not know the exact answer. Wrong advice can land somebody in jail or destroy their chances. Be careful. For example, you may make the seemingly harmless suggestion that he should file a motion and personally serve the papers on the mother, yet if he follows your advice and it happens that she has a restraining order against him, he will end up in jail.

Find out if there are organizations in your state which help pro se litigants.

Documenting the caller's info, and follow-up

Information intake forms are available that make it easy to record the caller's important information. You must get his or her name, with correct spelling, address and phone number. Email addresses are also useful. Make sure to make a note on the form if the caller requests no mail or call-backs.

MAIL them a recent newsletter, glossy brochure, flyer or other document that seems useful. Include a membership sign-up form. Personalize the packet with your card and a hand-written, brief, "hello and thanks for calling" note.

THANK THE PEOPLE FOR CALLING.

Calls from people victimized by false allegations

It's a sad truth that many divorces are accompanied by false allegations of physical abuse or child sexual abuse.

Reports show that 60 to 80 per cent of all accusations of child abuse are unfounded. This high rate of false accusations devastates innocent families for many years. It also dilutes the efforts of those professionals involved in real abuse cases, keeping help away from children who really need it.

One group that deals with this situation is called VOCAL—Victims of Child Abuse Laws. VOCAL is for those who are falsely accused of abuse or neglect. False allegations result in innocent children being torn from their families, subjected to needless foster care, lengthy interrogations, intrusive physical exams and unnecessary therapy due to misdiagnosis. This is bureaucratic child abuse. Abuse of children is abuse, regardless of the source.

VOCAL has a home page at www.vocal.org, and a mailing address at 7485 E. Kenyon Avenue, Denver, CO. Other resources can probably be found on the Internet.

Urge the caller to attend your group meeting. He may find help there, and if he is among the many men who are falsely accused, he needs the support of the group for the sake of his mental health.

4. Media Relations: It Takes Skill to Get The Word Out To The Public

By John Maguire, ACFC Communications Director

Yes, indeed, Virginia, it's a sad truth: most divorced fathers and fatherhood groups find dealing with news reporters really hard. "Why won't they run our stories?" runs the complaint of an anguished man in Boston. "They hate us--they'll never pay attention--they don't care about kids at all."

Such comments come from despair and frustration. The newspaper, radio and TV coverage we need is so important. How else can we help other fathers and children? How else can we get the legislature to pay attention to our sponsored bills? How else can we get the word out to judges and the public about the worst abuses going on in the courts? There is so much injustice, so many juicy and dramatic cases. *Man arrested at his daughter's First Communion, and so on.* Just like any other minority, we are upset. Yet we cannot get the media to pay attention.

Yes, the reporters and editors are hard to reach. Yes, it's true they don't seem interested in what's going on in the courts and with our children much of the time. Yes, they do treat divorced fathers with disdain. But it's also true that some of the press problem is our own behavior. We put amateurs in charge of our press relations. We make mistakes, and we alienate the press people.

Solution? Do the job right. In this chapter I will outline what has worked in Boston, where we have gone quite a way toward turning around one of the most media-hostile towns in the country in a mere six months. We will show you how to set up a media-contact operation if you are starting out. We'll cover:

**The "Press Release"--the basic tool of public relations work.
The vexing question--though it seems to be simple--"What actually is news?"
How to run a state-wide media-relations operation.**

THE PRESS RELEASE IS THE BASIC TOOL

The "press release" is a written document of one or two typewritten pages. The press release is your written communication to the editors and reporters in your area.

The pile of press releases on the City Desk of a newspaper constitutes the starting of each day's business. Many news articles result. Larger papers use press releases merely as starting-points for their own reporting. Very small papers may print a press release almost as you submit it, if it is professional enough.

What does an editor do when he gets a press release?

He takes it out of its envelope, or off the fax machine, and scans it rapidly as if it were a news story in a paper. He checks to see if it interests him, if it is timely and clear. He wants to know if it is "news" as he understands "news."

Format

Use the standard format for a press release. You will gain credibility from the editor or clerk who first looks at it. Be aware that papers are deluged with releases; each editor looks for an excuse to toss them. So a well-written, clear and neat press release has a much better chance of being used than a confused, sloppy piece of work.

Use one of the standard formats, and you will improve your chances of having your news item picked up. You'll find them in any public relations handbook in a library or your local bookstore.

The press release is a news story. You must try to write it like a news article, putting the most important point of the story in the first sentence. Less important detail comes lower in the story.

Heading

Put it out on your group's letterhead, or on a special letterhead that says PRESS RELEASE. Use white 8 1/2 by 11 paper.

The top third of the page should contain:

The name of the press contact, or more than one press contact, **and his or her phone numbers.**

The release date. In most cases, the press release is dated and the phrase "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" is prominent at the top of the page. In some cases, if you are giving editors advance notice of a story, you may tell them a later release date. In that case, you'll say something like:

For Release after 6:00 a.m. July 5, 2005.

The headline. Make this headline quite brief. Use the present tense, and imitate a newspaper headline. It should be specific, and should tell the editor what the news is in the press release. For example:

"Maine Dads Announces Picketing Protest in July
Of Judge Havemyer's Courtroom."

"Fatherhood Coalition Calls on Governor
to Reform Child Support Guideline Procedure"

"Next Meeting of Divorced Dads
To be Held July 19 in St. Barbara's Church."

Body

Usually, the story begins with a "dateline"--which is the name of the town or city where the news is being released from.

The "dateline" goes in capital letters, is followed by a dash, and then the story starts. Here are some examples:

BOSTON, MA.-- "We call on the Governor to announce 2003 as the Year of the Child-Father Bond," declared Ned Holstein, M.D., as picketers walked in front of him on the pavement near Old City Hall.

MILWAUKEE, WI (Nov. 12, 2003)--A coalition of second wives' groups today delivered a petition with 12,000 signatures on it to Governor Wilkinson. They sought a change in the law with regard to child support enforcement after the first wife remarries.

Sometimes the dateline contains only the city involved. Sometimes it contains both the city and the date. Which you want to use is your choice.

The second format, in which the date is given right after the city name, emphasizes the timeliness of the story. Use it when a very specific time-bound event has happened.

The lead paragraph

The first paragraph should tell what has happened, or what is going to happen, clearly and succinctly.

It's important to answer all the 5W and H questions in the press release, and the opening paragraph should certainly answer the WHAT, WHO, WHERE AND WHEN questions if at all possible. (See discussion in Part II.)

In the press release, be quite specific about times and places, especially if you are announcing a meeting. If your meeting is going to be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Congregational Church at 1615 Old Towne Avenue on Saturday, Dec. 8, 2003--you should say so.

The worst mistake you can make is writing vaguely about details of time and place. Many newspapers will not call you back, but will dump your release instead. Here's some writing advice:

Keep the press release short. One or two pages at most.

Make sure it is very clear. Keep your paragraphs and your sentences short.

Get the facts correct: you must double-check names, addresses and telephone numbers.

Use lots of white space. Make the release appealing to the eye.

Send by fax, mail, or email?

It's your choice. If you are disseminating your release widely (to maybe 50 publications) mail makes more sense.

The fax is faster, but editor preferences vary. It's a good idea to call an editor before you send the press release, in fact, to check whether he or she wants to get it by mail or by fax. Whatever they say, do.

Phone call follow-up is crucial

Follow up the release. Make a timely phone call to the City Desk or Metro Desk Editor or (if it's TV, the Assignment Editor.) Call the day the release should have arrived, or the day afterwards, and make sure it got there.

Offer to give the editor or reporter any additional information they may need.

Tasks on the day of the event

If you have gotten a meeting announcement published, that's a win. But if your press release announces an event, now you must deal with reporters at the scene. Do these things:

1. Designate one or two press spokesmen, and have them identifiable. Make them wear name tags or something.
2. Carry a couple of spare copies of the press release you sent out.
3. Bring along some other printed material on the topic.
4. Ask the photographer or cameraman if there is anything they need in terms of angles, lighting, things they would like to get in the frame.

Three more ideas about releases

What's the difference between a press release and a "media advisory"?

A press release is a news story, in brief format, and it encapsulates and suggests to the editors what you think the news is in your event.

A "media advisory" is a note to the editors telling them something is going to happen. A "media advisory" is often faxed to TV and radio stations to keep them up to date on a public event like a demonstration, or the like. The assignment editors use the advisories in keeping track of what is happening in their areas on the given date.

Is there a particular style I should use?

Be clear and simple, give people's names and addresses in full. Be clear. Beyond that, the "AP' Stylebook" is a very good reference tool for putting things in standard American newspaper style. It's called *AP Stylebook and Libel Manual* and is published for \$14 by Addison Wesley.

When a press release conforms to AP Style, it looks professional and acceptable to editors. The AP style covers such matters as what to abbreviate, what to spell out, and how to handle spelling variants. Make sure your group's most skillful writer writes your press releases.

What do I do after they cover us? What do I do next?

Great question! After the press has covered an event of yours, congratulations! Maybe you made the front page--great! But your job as media officer is not over. You make records, you keep an archive, and you use it.

Why? You must get the most mileage possible out of the coverage, and with copies--every news story can go further. So,

Clip the story in several copies.

Make crisp, clean xeroxes of them, and use those xeroxes in future publicity efforts.

Your clips should be very neat, very black-on-white, and should carry the date and page of the clip, and the logo (perhaps reduced) of the newspaper on it.

If you have gotten TV or radio coverage, save a high-quality video tape or audio tape. Videotapes and audio tapes can be used in future events. Audio tapes of important call-in shows are inexpensive to reproduce. Use a local producer if possible, but if not, contact ACFC. We will put you in touch with a low-cost audio tape producer who can reproduce multiple copies of an audio tape.

KNOW WHAT NEWS IS, SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND REPORTERS

You don't need to know much about the news business, but some things are basic. Most important is this: the news business is a two-tiered business.

There are reporters, and there are their bosses, the editors. (What I say below will be cast in the language of newspapers, but the same facts hold true for radio and TV news as well.)

In order to get a story in print, or on the air, you need a **DOUBLE** Commitment from both the editor and the reporter.

The editor's commitment is more important. The assignment editor must commit to cover a story; that is, he or she must **ASSIGN** a reporter. Then the reporter does the story. Sometimes your primary contact will be with a reporter. But he will still need his editor's permission to cover the story. So, even if your first contact is with a reporter, remember that the editor's commitment to your story is the most crucial one.

TV news vs. newspaper

In newspapers, the city editor assigns stories. On TV, there is usually an "Assignment Editor" by name.

Because TV is an expensive news medium--any news story will require at least two people: and sometimes three--TV assignment editors are more cautious than their newspaper brethren. A newspaper editor may let a reporter spend a few hours on an event that doesn't turn into a story, but a TV assignment editor has no such luxury. Almost every hour of reporter and cameraman time has to produce footage for the evening news.

It's harder to get TV to cover something, therefore, and TV is far more interested in the visual than in ideas. A newspaper may send a reporter to interview some second wives; TV will probably not do it unless it is part of a planned event, with a public panel, a time and a place.

How a reporter gathers it

A reporter gathering information tries to answer six basic questions for the reader. Who, What, Where, When, Why and How?

You need to know these questions because they obsess the reporter and you as the media person is there to serve the reporter. If you can fully and easily answer the 5Ws and H for a reporter, he will regard you as a professional, and helpful, and like you. Ask yourself these questions.

Who: Who are the important people in the story? Are their names full and properly spelled? Are they identified, with age and address? Who is speaking, attending, witnessing?

Who is commenting? Who is taking a symbolic action?

What: What happened or what is going to happen? What is the major event of the story? This should go in the first sentence.

Where: Where is the main event taking place? If you are holding a public event, good directions to the place are crucial. If it's a march, where does it start and where end? If the event is in a large building, the exact room number matters.

When: Exactly when is the main event taking place? Exactly when did it take place? If it has several stages, what are the key times in the event?

Why: Why are these events are important to the reader? What do they matter? Why did they take place? Why is so-and-so attending? What are the answers to the "Because" questions?

How: Give details about the how of the event. How it started, how it happened, what the place was, or the mood.

What reporters and editors think news is

Millions of events occur in the world every day. But the reporters only write about or produce film about a small number of these events. *In other words, reporters take the raw material of the world and cast some of it into the form of "news stories" for their readers.*

Reporters have to focus on what *their editors* think might be "news." Neither a reporter nor you can talk an editor into covering a story that he thinks is not news. Hardly ever will an editor run a story as a favor--except maybe in a very small town. Editors make their decisions on the basis of "traditional news values": and you should know what they are.

What qualities make an event "news" in the eyes of the editors? Here's how the editors think about it:

Proximity.

Nearness. Editors ask "Is it local?" in every newsroom in the country. "Is it nearby?" A paper will cover anything local--in its own circulation area--that it would never cover anywhere. If you are doing a demonstration in Springfield, and you can tell the Springfield papers that 15 men and women from Springfield and surrounding town will be present--that is called "making it local." When in doubt, if you want to earn an editor's interest, find a "local angle" on a story. A two-car fatal in your town is news in your town's paper; the same size accident 50 miles away will never make your town paper.

Timeliness

Timeliness is a value common to almost all news stories. It refers to how recent an event is. Without an element of timeliness, most events cannot be considered news. For instance, a fatherhood demonstration that took place last year is not news--one that is happening today at 9:00 a.m. is. When does news become "old news?" It varies in different cases--but it's much shorter than you might think. Most events that are more than a day to a day and a half old are not considered news. If you look in a newspaper, you will see very few events covered that are more than day and a half old.

Social Prominence

Prominent people make news--even when their actions are minor. Gossip columns are about the minor doings of the well known. Anything the President does is news; anything Mrs. Clinton does can be made out to be news. On a smaller scale, movie stars, advocates of social causes, prominent politicians--all these people make news just because they are well known.

Impact

The more an event affects people's lives, the more impact it has. The editor thinks: "How many people will be affected by this event? How many people are interested in this event?" When you are selling a story to an editor on the basis of impact, you need to say, "This event is going to have a large impact on the 55,000 divorced fathers in your circulation area."

Conflict

Two competing forces, each vying to defeat or replace the other: this is conflict. Conflict between identifiable individuals makes for great news stories. When you are doing a demonstration, for instance, make it really clear what the conflict is: who disagrees with whom, and why, and what the consequences will be.

Bizarreness or rarity

A rare event is sometimes, though not always, considered news. "Man bites dog" is the classic statement of the rare event, or the role-reversal. These rare events are more likely to be news if they involve one of the other news values, like prominence or conflict. Another kind of bizarre event is the role reversal--the reversal of expectations. "Pope gives speech with automatic weapon on his shoulder."

"Currency"

"Currency" describes a different sort of timeliness. When an event is timely, it has happened in the day or two before publication. "Currency" refers to the news events relating to issues or discussions that are current. For instance, a panel discussion by some doctors in your city is usually not news. However, if the papers have been full of discussions of a possible breast-cancer cure, and the doctors are going to talk about "Recent Advances in Cancer Treatment" the panel discussion has gained new interest. Another way to think about currency is, "If other media are already covering it, it may be news *just for that reason.* ")

How to craft your idea to make it more interesting to an editor

We've just listed seven different news values, with timeliness and proximity leading the list. All that means is *news of the here and now* really matters to newspapers and TV stations. These seven news values are additive—the more news values in the story, the more “newsy” and appealing the story. A story with **nearness and conflict** is better than a story with mere **nearness**.

Let's look at how additive news values work. For instance, with the man bites dog" story, we can imagine more news values. Like so:

- "Angry man bites neighbor's dog." Bizarre and Higher Conflict (Anger)
- "Man bites dog on Main Street." Bizarre and Nearby:
- "Police chief bites dog on Main Street." Bizarre and Nearby and Prominent:

--"Police chief bites dog on Main Street; health department warns on rabies risk."
Bizarre and Nearby and Prominent and Possible Impact:

Many newspaper stories have more than one of these news values at the same time. The more of these news values are visible in a story, more "newsworthy" a story. Knowing this helps you sell the idea of your story to the editor.

When you want to sell a story to an editor, see if you can get more than one "news value" into your pitch. Your event will of course be local, but see if you can stress the number of people impacts. That will convey IMPACT. See if you can draw a prominent person into the story, or else focus on the "currency" of the ideas. When you focus on the currency, you point out to the editor that other media--perhaps higher class than his--are already covering the idea. This is the appeal to current interest. ("You see, Mr. Editor, this story is timely and a national story. Notice that Time magazine had a story about child support inequities on the cover last month!")

FULL COURT PRESS: DOING MEDIA RELATIONS ACROSS A WHOLE STATE

Get organized by gathering a "media team," and picking a team leader

Form a media-team; don't have the job done by just one person. Two or three people ought to be on the team, and if one or more of them is a woman, all the better. (The team should not be all women, though.)

It's important to pick the right person for the job. In media relations, the wrong man can produce disasters that take months to fix. Try really hard to put a former reporter or public relations person in charge of the team. The best news media director is one who has worked in the business and is committed to your cause.

Do not get confused about the idea of "relations with the media." You actually must set up and continue relationships with the real men and women of the news business in your locality. If there are 500 people in the news media business in your locality, you have 500 potential relationships. The key ones, though, are with the City Editor and the reporters in your town. In reality, it is unlikely that you need to be friends with 500 media people. But the top 20 or 30 or so--the "opinion leaders" among journalists--they do matter.

These people are gatekeepers--they control what gets into their papers, and thus what gets in front of the eyes of citizens, judges and legislators.

When you are doing something in public, give the papers a full week or two-week notice of meetings, demonstrations, etc.

Think about multiple "publics" the way a professional media person does

If you think only of "the" public, you will be confusing yourself. There is more than one public out there.

Sure, there is a "general public" that reads the papers and watches the TV news. But within the general public are key sub-groups. PR people call them "publics" or "sub-publics." As a media person, you should target your messages to reach not only the general public, but also the important sub-publics.

This is the professional PR person's expertise: the analysis of sub-publics. But you can do the same thing! Do what the PR pros do, when you are designing your media relations plan. Ask yourself;

"Who are our publics? Who do we need to reach?" "What is the best way to reach each public?" "Is direct communication by postcard or newsletter or telephone call the best way to reach all the members of a sub-public?" "Are we leaving out any small but crucial group of opinion leaders?" "What about the state's legislators? What about the bank presidents? What about local industrialists?"

What is a sub-public? It depends on the purpose of an organization. Since we are a fatherhood and family movement, it is anyone we need to be in communication with. That could mean: The legislators of your state. The Family Court judges in your state. The editors in your state. The members of your organization. The members of other groups that support traditional family values like the child-father bond. The lawyers, the church groups, the rich potential donors.

Try to reach each sub-group with regular targeted communications.

Avoid the classic blunders in press relations

In other words, do not:

1. Make it hard for the media to find your event or meeting. Instead, hold meetings or public demonstrations at times and places where media coverage is EASY. TV coverage is very expensive, and news stations are more likely to cover something within 20 minutes of their station than something an hour away.
2. Plan an event, but do the media coverage plans last. Instead, do the media coverage plans first. Decide what the "news" will be, and who you want there from the beginning of the event-planning process. How? Decide what news story you want to emanate from the event. Write up a make-believe headline that you would like to see printed about the event. Then structure the event so it has a chance of producing that headline.

3. Push an editor to run something the very day of an event.
4. Forget that your editors are running material about your events not as a favor to you but as a favor to their readers. (Remember, even the least sophisticated country editor or producer is interested in serving up something interesting to his or her readers.)
5. Ask editors to run things as a favor to you. Instead, ask them to run things as a favor to their readers.
6. Think negative. "They'll never be interested. They never run our stuff."
7. Neglect the power of letters to editors.
8. Neglect to keep good clean copies of everything you have published in the papers--from letters to op-ed pieces to news articles to editorials. Very clean copies are a must, because they can be xeroxed and serve as background for the next press event you have.
9. Panic over every press release that looks ignored
10. Get angry at the media for ignoring you. (If they ignored you this week, they still noticed that your release came in. They may even feel a little guilty about not covering you. Assume they'll cover you next week.)
11. Let very angry or distraught men speak in front of TV cameras. We all have very good reason to be angry, because the damage done to our children has been so immense--but your group's leaders must NOT give much camera time to the really distraught. If, in their understandable agony, men make threats, or talk about "blood running on the courthouse steps" or the like, the public and reporters will shut the door on you and your message for years.

17 Things to do

1. Study this chapter carefully. Take courses in news writing at local colleges.
2. Putting your group's name and address and your name and phone number at the top, so reporters can get back to you.
3. Write letters to the editor regularly.
4. Write notes to the reporters and editors who cover you fairly, thanking them briefly and telling them why what they did was good for children.
5. Stress the welfare of children over and over again. Do not let the femi-nazis seize the

turf of "child protector." Men are the natural protectors of their children, and we must assert in public again and again that the welfare of children--our own and the community's, now and in the future--is our primary concern.

6. Compile clean copies of all your press materials, and once a month, or once a quarter, sent out a very clean Xeroxed packet to other news media summarizing the coverage. It could be called "The Sioux City ACFC News Coverage Bulletin" (for instance) and it would include every clipping you got in three months period. The purpose here is to remind the editors that you are getting more coverage than even they have noticed. Another purpose is to amplify the sense of your presence in the editor's mind.

7. Think of winning editors and reporters to your side of the story one person at a time. Keep a list of the 10 to 20 top editors in your region, and work on them, one at a time. Cultivate them.

8. Remember your goal is not to get little blips of coverage, but to use the little blips of coverage to change the pattern of coverage in your area. You are, in other words, not just lighting matches, but attempting to set grass fires. (The match is the individual press release, or coverage for a single event. The grass fire is the pattern of increased coverage, again and again, of our issues and ideas and complaints and visions.) Do remember you are changing the pattern of coverage. You are setting grass fires in the public conscience. Keep your eye on your goals for a year down the road

9. Do set the biggest goals possible. Aim high. If you usually get your meeting noted in one paper, next month, aim to get it announced in three different publications. If you are usually happy to get in a 30,000 suburban weekly, try to get noticed in the nearby 125,000 regional daily. Aim, in the same fashion, for statewide coverage by the Associated Press of some of your activities. Think in terms of circulation: how many eyeballs might have seen your message in a given month?

10. Do consider the key sub-publics you are trying to reach. Remember that the general public is reached through the news media, but smaller publics can be reached directly.

11. Do remember that reporters have a very different sense of time than normal people. For a reporter, 24 hours is two news cycles (morning papers and evening papers). Reporters are adrenaline-buzzed, super deadline-oriented. For reporters, at least on daily papers, 15 minutes is a substantial amount of time--at least on deadline.

12. Do send out business cards or rolodex cards to media telling them how to get in touch with you.

13. Do be very reachable. Nothing is more frustrating to a reporter and more damaging to the movement than to have your press spokesman returning calls 48 hours after he gets them. If your organization must use a tape message system, it is best to use a phone company voice-mail setup with punch-button options. That way your message can say, "If this is a call from a member of the media, please press three now" and when the reporter

gets into mailbox three, he can get one or two live numbers. In all but the smallest towns, the media team should aim for this standard: returning all media phone calls within two hours.

14. Do be reachable, part two: A pager or cell phone also makes sense. When your media friends call, and get the "message for reporters" let them get a pager or cell phone number.

15. Do stress the word "fairness" in your press releases. Reporters are NOT interested in doing good, but they are interested in serving their readers with lots of information. That means they seek--on their best days when they are feeling ethical and serious--at least two sides to every story. This leaves you a great opening to say "There's another side to this story, and in fairness to your readers, it makes sense to cover this side, too." Repeating: stress the matter of fairness, covering both sides of a story, covering other sides of a story, being fair to the reader.

16. Do seriously cultivate the Associated Press office in your state. The state AP office, usually located in the capital of your state, is the traffic manager for news in your state. (In some states, the AP has two bureaus in the capital city: an office downtown, and a smaller office actually in the state legislature building.) The state AP runs a "state wire" on which all kinds of minor news, not of interest elsewhere, is transmitted. (**Two Killed in I-43 Crash or Demonstrators Crowd Padukah Family Court**; etc.) Make sure the men and women in the AP office know who you are, and call them and get them to see the statewide significance of your actions. Learn the names of all the people in the AP bureau in your state and call some of them. It can be hard to bond with AP reporters because AP reporters usually don't leave the building, but only rewrite stuff from local papers. Nonetheless, they are very important. You'll have to make extra efforts to talk to them, and meet them, but it will pay off.

17. Do consider going for a statewide "echo" on every important local story. Send clips of important stories in City A to top editors in City B and C and D. Let them know what their fellow editors are doing around the state, when it furthers our cause and helps give a sense that a social change is happening.

Ambitious project: get the funding for a staffed statewide fatherhood news bureau

You may, in your area, *try* the strategy we have used in Massachusetts. The Fathers and Families organization formed a state-focused News Bureau, with an office, secretarial help, computer, several phone lines, Internet connection, fax, and so on. We have a News Director whose part-time job is to put out pro-father publicity all across the state. Our mission in the News Bureau is "to change the culture and public understanding of the child-father bond in Massachusetts in one year."

Key to this has been a serious business plan, donated office space, and an aggressive fund-raising effort all aimed to support this media outreach operation.

Here in Boston, we consciously try to reach not only the general public, but also several sub-groups. Here are the targets we go for, consciously:

1. The general reading and viewing public through the newspapers, radio and TV. Our press releases go to city editors and news editors for that purpose.
2. The editors and publishers of all the papers in the state.
3. The editorial-page editors in the state. These men and women set the tone, not for coverage, but for discussion in their communities. They are "opinion leaders." We have a plan for mailings to the editorial-page editors. We have them on a separate mailing list, and we send them "heavier" think-pieces, and columns and analyses. We forward to them key pieces published in other media.
4. The probate and family court judges in this state (about 40 of them) are another key public. We have a monthly mailing of clippings we think they should know about. These clips naturally focus on the importance of the child-father bond, the problem of Move-Away Moms, and so on. We may be dripping water on a rock with this plan, but at least we've got the water dripping every month. Besides, some portions of the judiciary may be more open to our message than others. It's important to reach them.
5. Our donors. This small group (about 10 so far) gets regular communication from us, with clips and discussions of our "wins" in the recent period.

You may not have the money, time or office space to run a more elaborate media campaign, but you should be aware that when you do have the funds, a media plan that targets different key audiences on a regular basis works very well. Each audience has different assumptions, and different intentions. Judges are a different group from second wives, and they are a different group from family therapists. You want to differentiate your message for each of these groups, when you can afford to.

5. Lobbying to Influence Legislation in Your State

This chapter is a compendium of information about knowing and influencing your state legislature. Many of these ideas on influencing legislation at the state level are adapted with permission from the excellent materials published by the Capitol Resource Institute of Sacramento, CA. Although these ideas refer to California legislation, they are widely applicable.

Note: This guidebook is adapted from one published by the Capital Resources Institute of California. Look for similar materials published in your state about your legislature. The general attitude or tactic of knowing your legislature in detail will pay off. Your opponents certainly make a point of studying the legislature, knowing how it works, who is in it, who is a friend and who an opponent.

STRUCTURE OF THE LEGISLATURE

The process of government by which bills are considered and laws enacted by the California State Legislature is commonly referred to as the legislative process. The California State Legislature is made up of two houses: the Senate and the Assembly. There are 40 Senators and 80 Assembly Members representing the people of the State of California. The Legislature maintains a legislative calendar governing the introduction and processing of the legislative measures during its two-year regular session.

Idea All legislation begins as an idea or concept. Ideas and concepts can come from a variety of sources. The process begins when a Senator or Assembly Member decides to author a bill.

The Author A legislator sends the idea for the bill to the Office of the Legislative Counsel, where it is drafted into bill form. The draft of the bill is returned to the legislator for introduction. If the author is a Senator, the bill is introduced in the Senate. If the author is an Assembly Member, the bill is introduced in the Assembly.

First Reading/Introduction A bill is introduced or read the first time when the bill

number, the name of the author, and the descriptive title of the bill are read on the floor of the house. The bill is then sent to the Office of State Publishing. No bill except the Budget Bill may be acted upon until 30 days have passed from the date of its introduction.

Committee Hearings After introduction, a bill goes to the rules committee of the house, where it is assigned to the appropriate policy committee for its first hearing. Bills are assigned to policy committees according to subject area. For example, a Senate bill dealing with health care facilities would first be assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee for policy review. Bills that require the expenditure of funds must also be heard in the fiscal committees, Senate Appropriations and Assembly Appropriations. Each committee is made up of a specified number of Senators or Assembly Members.

During the committee hearing the author presents the bill to the committee, and testimony may be heard in support or opposition to the bill. The committee then votes on whether to pass the bill out of committee, or that it be passed as amended. Bills may be amended several times. It takes a majority vote of the committee membership for a bill to be passed and sent to the next committee or to the floor.

Each house maintains a schedule of legislative committee hearings. Prior to a bill's hearing, a bill analysis is prepared that explains the intended effect of the bill on current law, together with background information. Typically the analysis also lists organizations that support or oppose the bill.

Second and Third Reading Bills passed by committees are read a second time on the floor in the house of origin and then assigned to third reading. Bill analyses are also prepared prior to third reading. When a bill is read the third time it is explained by the author, discussed by the Members, and voted on by a roll call vote. Bills that require an appropriation, or that take effect immediately, ordinarily require 27 votes in the Senate and 54 votes in the Assembly to be passed. Other bills generally require 21 votes in the Senate and 41 votes in the Assembly. If a bill is defeated, the Member may seek reconsideration and another vote.

Repeat Process in Other House Once the bill has been approved by the house of origin it proceeds to the other house where the procedure described above is repeated.

Resolution of Differences If a bill is amended in the second house, it must go back to the house of origin for concurrence, meaning agreement on those amendments. If the house of origin does not concur in those amendments, the bill is referred to a two-house conference committee to resolve the differences. Three members of the committee are from the Senate and three are from the Assembly. If a compromise is reached, the bill is returned to both houses for a vote.

Governor If both houses approve a bill, it goes to the Governor. The Governor has three choices: sign the bill into law, allow it to become law without his or her signature, or veto it. A governor's veto can be overridden by a two-thirds vote in both houses. Most enacted bills go into effect on the first day of January of the next year. Urgency bills, and certain other measures, take effect immediately after they are enacted into law.

California Law Each bill that is passed by the Legislature and approved by the Governor is assigned a chapter number by the Secretary of State. These chaptered bills are statutes, and ordinarily become part of the California Codes. The California Codes are a comprehensive collection of laws grouped by subject matter.

The California Constitution sets forth the fundamental laws by which the State of California is governed. All amendments to the California Constitution come about as a result of constitutional amendments approved by the voters at a statewide election.

HOW TO CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR

Telephoning is especially effective when issues arise on short notice. Here are some general tips on telephone lobbying

- Be sure to talk to the right person. It is not necessary to talk to your representative, but be sure you are speaking to a staffer who can help you. Ask to speak with the person who is handling the specific bill; however, if the office is receiving many calls, they may be simply registering "yes" and "no" calls.
- Keep your call short and to the point.
- Be factual.
- Be specific.
- Be courteous and helpful.

You can make an organized "telephone tree" in your community or state

A telephone tree is a way to organize and mobilize many people in a short time. The idea is for one person to call a specified number of others, who each will then call a specified number of people. This idea works especially well when set up in advance of important votes and events.

1. Select five people to begin the alert. Each one must call five. Each of those five must call five more and so on...
2. Each person should have the names and telephone numbers by his telephone or any other convenient, accessible place for a political emergency. Each must also have written down five names each of their five people have. (That's 25 names and numbers.) That way, if they cannot contact one of their five, they can call the next five and the chain will not be broken.
3. A tree can be continuous. However, if you wish to ascertain effectiveness, establish a feed back system whereby the last person in the chain calls someone earlier in the chain. This is a little more complicated and often is used only for local, community telephone trees.
4. For state-wide networks, organize the telephone tree in a circular pattern so that calls

begin in one area and work outward. This helps keep telephone costs down. Consider organizing the 'tree' by Assembly and Senate districts.

DEAR MR. POLITICIAN:

By Michael Bowman, Executive Director, Capitol Resource Institute

If you are like most Americans, understanding the legislative process can be overwhelming and complicated. In my years at the California State Capitol in Sacramento, I have learned that good people have strong opinions. But when it comes time to influence their elected officials, these good people usually do very little. The challenge is to learn how to effectively voice your opinion and get results.

Hit the target

If done correctly, writing to your legislators can be very effective. It's always best to write only your own legislators. If a letter is not from their own constituent, many legislators will throw it away. *It's a basic truth that legislators are only interested in those who can re-elect them to office.*

Even if your legislator is greatly opposed to most of your opinions, let the member hear from you. Although he disagrees with you, you may help turn his active opposition into passive opposition, which actually helps other legislators who may champion your views.

Personal touch

Contrary to the usual instruction from civic guides, the best way to have your letter read is by crafting a handwritten letter on simple store-bought stationery. Legislators are more likely to read letters that took like a personal note from a friend. If writing on behalf of your business, then a typed letter on business stationery is a must. Keep the letter short and simple. If you want to write on three separate issues, the standard rule is to write three separate letters.

Start by stating your position. Use only a few sentences to say why you believe the legislator should support you viewpoint. Never threaten or ridicule. If you do so, your name will be entered into a computer and from then on your letters will be ignored. Remember a handwritten letter is best. If your writing is poor, then print. If you must, use a computer. Post cards are not nearly as effective, but they are better than just signing a petition, and they are much better than doing nothing.

Following up

When writing letters, always ask the legislator how he intends to vote on the issue. Secondly, request that he tell you how he voted. Finally, to increase your credibility and build influence, follow up with a thank-you note if the legislator agreed or voted with you. Tell him that you appreciated his vote, and urge him to continue to support you. Relationship is everything. When your letters treat legislators like they're family, they pay greater attention to you and your issue. Most politicians care what people think. And that's why your letters matter.

(Reprinted from *California Citizen April 1993*)

HOW TO WRITE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

When writing letters, keep in mind the following

Use personal stationery or letterhead of your organization.

Print legibly or type your letter.

Be sure your return address is on the letter as well as the envelope.

Identify yourself as a constituent and voter. If you actively supported him, say so. If you have special credentials or expertise relative to the subject of your letter, say so.

Send letters to appropriate committees a week in advance to be listed as support or opposition in the analysis.

Always send a copy of your letter to the author of the bill.

Discuss only one issue (i.e. bill) per letter. Be as brief as possible.

Know your facts. Do not make charges you cannot back up or support. Do not simply rely on what someone has told you. Loss of credibility is almost impossible to regain.

Be constructive. In most cases, a bill has been introduced because a problem exists.

Enclose articles from newspapers or other information that backs up your position.

Avoid form letters. While letter-writing campaigns are sometimes important, personal letters are the most effective.

Be reasonable. Don't threaten. Don't ask for the impossible.

Concentrate on your own representatives, unless you are writing for a state-wide organization. Elected officials are generally not responsive to constituents of other officials. Exceptions include committee chairmen and others who are in especially powerful positions.

Once you have established a working relationship with a member of the staff, address your letter to him or her. It will probably receive higher priority treatment.

Remember to write letters thanking elected officials when they vote the right way or take action that is pleasing to you. The opposition may be attacking him. It is important that he knows you will be there when he needs you and that you appreciate him.

You may receive a form letter which thanks you for your letter and states that he "will keep your views in mind." Continue to contact his office until you get an answer and your specific concerns or questions are answered.

A GOOD FORMAT FOR LETTERS INCLUDES:

Specifying the bill or issue in as detailed a way as possible. For example, give the bill number if possible.

Giving details of your concerns, including costs, moral concerns, academic or legal arguments, political repercussions for him, and so on. Make your arguments concise, effective and credible.

Asking your representative to take a specific action and to respond to you in a specific way.

PROPERLY ADDRESSING YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

Correspondence to all elected officials may be correctly addressed as The Honorable (full name). The term is a title of distinction accorded to any elected or appointed government official. It is a title of respect, not one of rank or office, and may be retained after retirement.

President of the United States	<i>Dear Mr. President</i>
Vice President of the United States	<i>Dear Mr. Vice President</i>
Cabinet Members	<i>Dear Mr. Secretary</i> <i>Dear Madam Secretary</i>
Supreme Court	<i>Dear Mr. Chief Justice</i> <i>Dear Associate Justice</i>
United States Senator	<i>Dear Senator (last name)</i>
United States Congressman	<i>Dear Congressman (last name)</i> <i>Dear Congresswoman (last name)</i>
Governor	<i>Dear Governor (last name)</i>
Lieutenant Governor	<i>Dear Lieutenant Governor (last name)</i>
Attorney General	<i>Dear Attorney General (last name)</i>
State Senator	<i>Dear Senator (last name)</i>
State Assembly member	<i>Dear Assembly member (last name)</i>

GETTING A COPY OF A BILL

It is always helpful to get a copy of legislation that you are concerned about. The simplest and most common ways of obtaining a copy of a specific bill:

Write or visit the Bill Room at the State Capitol. The address is Bill Room, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 96814

Check out the Senate web pages (you can access Assembly or Senate bills at www.sen.ca.gov) for copies of legislation.

Write or call your local Assemblyman or Senator's office.

TIPS ON VISITING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Talking to a legislator on his or her position in person can be extremely helpful in getting the vote you want on a bill.

Take a walk through the halls of your state capitol, and try out some of these ideas

1. Find out which legislators sit on the committee that will be hearing the bill. (Ask your representative for a list of who sits on each committee or order a directory from your state's citizen information group, if there is one. The League of Women Voters may have such a directory.)

2. Set up appointments with committee members to discuss the bill: because of time pressure on legislation, it is often easier for a constituent to get in to see him or her than for a non-constituent. Constituents also make more of an impact.

3. Be honest with the scheduling person on the amount of time you need for your appointment.

4. If a member is unavailable, ask to speak to his or her key aide.

5. Have material you can leave with the office with a summary of your position.

6. When the meeting with the legislator occurs, be able to highlight the bill and your points quickly. Be prepared to list other supporters and discuss the issues that concern the opposition. (Remember to say *Thank you* after the meeting.)

7. If the legislator doesn't agree with your position, be gracious about the difference in views and ask if there are any amendments that would make the bill acceptable to him or her. If amendments are suggested, take them back to the author and other supporters of the bill. After a decision is made on the amendment, make sure you get back to the member who suggested the amendment. If the member doesn't have any suggestions for amendments, thank him or her for spending the time with you and listening to your views.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How do I find out who my legislator is?

A: You have several legislators representing you: a State Assembly Member, a State Senator, a Congress Member and a U.S. Senator.

Check out the government pages, in front of the white pages, in your phone book. Under State Government there should be listings for Assembly and Senate (State Senator). If you live in a large community there may be several listed. If so, turn to the county listings for Voter Registration. They can let you know who your representatives are by using your zip code.

The Internet now offers this information as well. You can check it out at Capitol Resource's web site www.capitalresource.org by clicking on the legislative addresses page.

Q: What is the difference between a State Senator and a U.S. Senator? Don't they do the same thing?

A: A State Senator represents you at the state level. A U.S. Senator (California has 2) represents the whole state. So every person of the state is a constituent of a U.S. Senator.

Q: How do I find out about important bills coming up in the Legislature?

A: Newspapers, radio, magazines, television news, newsletters of various organizations and word of mouth are the traditional ways of receiving information about upcoming legislation. There is a new avenue of information on the Internet, the Senate web page (www.sen.ca.gov). It has a Subscription service that will keep you up-to-date as bills progress through the legislative year.

Q: Will someone read my letter?

A: Yes, probably not the legislator, but letters are tallied and the information is given to the member.

Q: Should I hand write or type a letter?

A: In this age of computers and copiers, handwritten letters stand out as the symbol of time commitment, and involvement. (with the exception of letters from organizations, which should be typed) Please remember that your letter must be legible, so print if you are in any doubt of your penmanship.

Q: If I only write one letter who should it be to?

A: The representative from your district. (State Senate, Assembly or Congress) Your vote is very important to the member, so your input carries the most weight. Letters written to other members may or may not be counted. But letters, calls and visits from constituents mean votes or the lack of them come election time.

Q: When I call my legislators office, will I talk to the legislator?

A: Most likely not. Legislative and committee staff are the people that you will be communicating with most of the time. They are your liaison to the legislator.

WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

This is an extremely effective way of influencing the public as well as decision-makers. Find out the fax number, e-mail and addresses for letters to the editors of all newspapers in your community.

Letters to the editor are the most widely read items in the newspaper. Reasons to write such letters include:

Commenting on national or community problems

Publicly thanking an elected official for his position on an issue

Publicly criticizing an elected official for his position on an issue

Commenting on the way the paper or other media cover news stories or endorse candidates or positions on issues

When writing letters to the editor, keep in mind the following:

Be courteous. Avoid name-calling and exclamation points. Using questions is a good tactic.

Keep the letter short, under 250 words. It is unlikely that all of it will be printed if it is longer.

Be sure of your facts, and use them! Try to come across in a way that appeals to "common sense."

Watch the words and phrases you use. For example, the abortion issue has been fought by opposing sides which have chosen excellent labels, namely "pro-life" and "pro-choice."

Frame the issue in such a way as to achieve maximum public support. Use language that will be convincing to the average reader. A reasonable tone helps.

Try to take the offensive rather than remaining on the defensive.

Be timely. Write as soon as possible after the event or issue has been reported. Faxing your Letter is a very effective way to be heard.

Encourage friends to send in their own letters. The more letters, the more likely the newspaper will publish them.

HOW TO CALL A RADIO TALK SHOW

Calling a live talk radio program is a great way to influence thousands of people at once. In every community, there is at least one news/talk radio station or Christian-format station which has call-in talk shows. Some news/talk stations have talk shows morning, afternoon, evening and overnight. If you do a little preparation, calling a talk show and getting on the air is helpful to changing minds and affecting hearts. After all, why should only people who disagree with you be heard on the radio? You should be heard too! Here's how:

Listen to the show for several days to hear how the host works with the callers; listen for good callers to learn what you can about their style.

Write down the call-in numbers and fax numbers to the talk show. These are given out on the air, or you can get them by calling the station's business office.

Listen to the show for topics about which you can call in. When the host gives the numbers, call in right away.

If the host allows listeners to decide the topic, call in if you have a good topic. In this "open forum" format, a good opening statement is "Have you heard about ___?"

When making the actual call, don't use a cordless phone. Cellular calls are OK if the connection is clear.

If you get a 'busy signal, keep calling because persistence will get you on the air.

A "screener" will answer the phone and ask for your name and city. Screeners look for people who can get to the point, but they also look for callers who have energy and flair. Everyone qualifies. Just present yourself in a way that works.

If you're new to this, practice what you want to say before you call. It is OK to work from notes, but never read what you've written.

Relax. Be yourself, and speak up in a friendly and confident manner.

If you get on the show, you may get on quickly but most likely you will have to wait in line for 10, 15 or 20 minutes.

When the host takes your call, say hello to the host and get right to your point. Don't ramble on and on, because most on-air calls last only a minute or two.

Appeal to the broadest number of listeners by avoiding labels and terminology that may make some listeners think you are biased or "narrow-minded."

Ask the host if he agrees with you, and if you disagree with the previous caller, say so.

This may generate more discussion, and most hosts love on-air conflict.

Talk radio shows influence the civic process by criticizing or commending elected officials, talking about upcoming votes and addressing current issues. Talk radio dialog generates strong public opinion.

If appropriate, suggest that people call their state assemblyman or choose other leadership to represent them.

Be careful not to dominate the time, and don't let the host think you are taking over the show or you will find your call "dumped."

Prepare by asking yourself what would be the likely criticism of your point of view. Knowing how to respond to hard questions will increase your strength.

To shape the minds of religious people, call a religious talk show. Otherwise, focus on calling the news/talk shows, which reach larger numbers of people.

Most talk shows will not allow the same caller on the air for two or three weeks, so space your calls.

Call with confidence. Speaking out can change hearts and minds, so make use of the media available to you, and encourage your friends to do the same!

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

Legislators usually make decisions regarding how to vote on a bill prior to the committee hearing. However committee testimony can sway undecided votes. Factual testimony also shows broad-based support for legislators, who have indicated they support your position on a bill.

Knowing the system and respecting the rules will lend credibility to your position. Committee members hear many hours of testimony and often from the same lobbyists who are paid to present certain viewpoints. As a citizen lobbyist, you will be able to bring some fresh views to the system. It is important to understand the system in order to make your point in the best manner possible. This will make your unique perspective seem even more relevant to the members.

The chairperson of the committee can limit the number of witnesses for each side and limit how much each person can speak. You may not be able to give the committee as much oral information as you have prepared. It is important for you to bring written copies of your testimony and supporting documents to give to each committee member. Give the copies to the Marshall before you sit down at the witness table and ask him or her to distribute it to each of the members.

Call ahead to ask if there will be any special order of bills, if testimony will be limited, and if so, how.

A committee may hear the bills in a predetermined order or go in order of when the bill's author signed in. You can check with the Marshall.

At the committee hearing the author will present the bill. The Chair will call witnesses in support of the bill first and then opposition witnesses.

Make sure you read the latest version of the bill prior to the hearing and make your testimony relevant to what the bill actually does.

Bills are often heard in more than one committee. In the policy committee, speak to policy issues; in a fiscal committee, make your testimony relevant to financial concerns.

If you are testifying in favor of a bill, call the author's office ahead of time and let them know you plan to testify in favor.

It is acceptable to read your testimony; however try to make eye contact with the members.

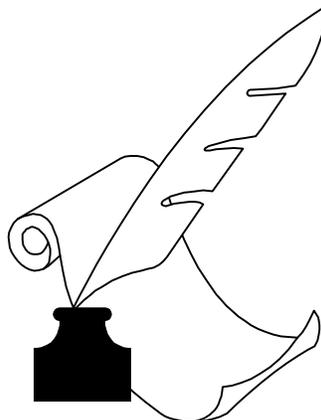
Do not go over your time limit if one has been established.

Do not ask questions of the Chair, or other members, without the permission of the Chair.

GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS

Across the Desk The official act of introducing a bill or resolution. The measure is given to the Chief Clerk or his or her representative at the Assembly Desk in the Assembly Chamber or to the Secretary of the Senate or his or her representative in the Senate Chamber. The measure then receives a number and becomes a public document available from the bill room (or at www.leginfo.ca.gov). Each proposed amendment to a measure also must be put across the desk in the Assembly or Senate in order to be considered for adoption.

Act A bill passed by the Legislature and enacted into law.



Adjournment Termination of a meeting, occurring at the close of each legislative day upon the completion of business, with the hour and day of the next meeting being set prior to adjournment. Adjournment Sine Die Final adjournment of the Legislature; regular sessions of the Legislature, and any special session not previously adjourned, are adjourned sine die at midnight on November 30 of each even-numbered year.

Adoption Approval or acceptance; usually applied to amendments, resolutions, or motions.

Amendment Proposal to change the text of a bill after it has been introduced. Amendments must be submitted to the Legislative Counsel for drafting or approval.

Author's amendments - Amendments proposed by the bill's author. Author's amendments to a bill

may be adopted on the floor prior to the committee hearing on the bill with the committee chair's approval.

Hostile amendments - Amendments proposed by another member and opposed by the author in a committee hearing or during Assembly or Senate floor consideration.

Analysis of the Budget Bill The Legislative Analyst's comprehensive examination of the Governor's budget, available to legislators and the public about six weeks after the Governor submits the budget to the Legislature.

Appropriation The amount of money made available for expenditure by a specific entity for a specific purpose, from the General Fund or other designated state fund or account.

Appropriations Limit A limitation in the California Constitution on the maximum amount of tax proceeds that state or local government may appropriate in a fiscal year. The limit is based on 1986-87 fiscal year appropriations, and is adjusted annually.

Approved by the Governor Signature of the Governor on a bill passed by the Legislature.

Archives Refers to both location and contents of public records kept by the Secretary of State, including copies of all measures considered at each session, journals, committee reports, and documents of historic value.

Assembly The house of the California Legislature consisting of 80 members, elected from districts determined on the basis of population. Two Assembly districts are situated within each Senate district.

Assistant Chief Clerk Performs the duties of the Chief Clerk of the Assembly in his or her absence.

Author Member of the Legislature who introduces a legislative measure.

BCP (Budget Change Proposal) A document prepared by a state agency, and submitted to the Department of Finance, to propose and document budget changes to support operations of the agency in the next fiscal year; used in preparing the Governor's

Bicameral Refers to a legislature consisting of two houses (see Unicameral).

Bill A proposed law, introduced during a session for consideration by the Legislature, and identified numerically in order of presentation; also, a reference that may include joint and concurrent resolutions and constitutional amendments.

Bill Analysis A document prepared by committee and/or floor analysis staff prior to hearing the bill in that committee or on the floor of the Assembly or Senate. It explains how a bill would change current law and sometimes identifies major interest groups in support or opposition.

Blue Pencil The California Constitution grants the Governor "line item veto" authority to reduce or eliminate any item of appropriation in any bill including the Budget Bill. Years ago the Governor used an editor's blue pencil for the task.

Bond Bill (general obligation bonds) A bill authorizing the sale of state general obligation bonds to finance specified projects or activities. Subsequent to enactment, a general obligation bond bill must be approved by the voters.

Budget Proposed expenditure of state moneys for the next fiscal year, presented by the Governor in January of each year for consideration by the Legislature; compiled by the Department of Finance, in conjunction with state agency and department heads.

Budget Act The Budget Bill after it has been enacted into law.

Budget Bill The bill setting forth the spending proposal for the next fiscal year, containing the budget submitted to the Legislature by the Governor.

Budget Change Proposal See BCP.

Budget Year The fiscal year addressed by a proposed budget, beginning July 1 and ending June 30.

COLA Cost-of-living adjustment.

Cal-SPAN (The California Channel) The cable television channel that televises Assembly and Senate proceedings.

Call of the House On motion from the floor to place a call of the house, the presiding officer directs

the Sergeant-at-Arms to lock the chambers and bring in the absent Members (by arrest, if necessary) to vote on a measure under consideration. Action is not taken on an item under call until the call is lifted, at which time it must be immediately voted on.

Call the Absentees Order by the presiding officer directing the reading clerk to call the names of Members who have not responded to the roll call.

Capital Outlay Generally, expenditures to acquire or construct real property.

Capitol Press Corps Those members of the press who cover events in the Capitol.

Casting Vote The deciding vote the Lieutenant Governor may cast in the case of a tie vote in the Senate.

Caucus (1) A closed meeting of legislators of one's own party.

(2) Any group of legislators who coalesce formally because of their common interest in specific issues.

Chair The current presiding officer, usually in the context of a committee hearing.

Chamber The Assembly or Senate location where floor sessions are held.

Chapter When a bill has been passed by the Legislature and enacted into law, the Secretary of State assigns the bill a "chapter number" such as "Chapter 123, Statutes of 1992," which is subsequently used to refer to the measure in place of the bill number.

Chapter Out When, during a calendar year, two or more bills amend the same section of law and more than one of those bills becomes law, the bill enacted last (and therefore given a higher chapter number) becomes law and prevails over the bill or bills previously enacted (see Double Joint).

Check-in Session Certain weekdays when legislators do not meet in formal legislative sessions, they are required to "check in" with the Chief Clerk of the Assembly or Secretary of the Senate. Mondays and Thursdays are ordinarily floor session days. Check-in days are typically Tuesdays and Wednesdays

assembly employee elected

by Assembly Members at the beginning of every two-year session to serve as principal parliamentarian and record keeper of the Assembly. Responsible for all Assembly daily and weekly publications.

Co-author A member of either house whose name is added to a bill as a co-author by amending the bill, usually indicating support for the proposal.

Codes Bound volumes of law organized by subject matter. The code sections to be added, amended, or repealed by a bill are identified in the title of the bill.

Committee of the Whole The Assembly or Senate meeting as a committee for the purpose of receiving information.

Companion Bill An identical bill introduced in the other house. This procedure is far more common in Congress than in the California Legislature.

Concurrence The approval by the house of origin of a bill as amended in the other house. If the author is unwilling to move the bill as amended by the other house, the author requests "nonconcurrence" in the bill and asks for the formation of a conference committee.

Concurrent Resolution A measure introduced in one house that, if approved, must be sent to the other house for approval. The Governor's signature is not required. These measures usually involve the internal business of the Legislature.

Conferees Members of a conference committee.

Conference Committee Usually composed of three legislators (two voting in the majority on the disputed issue, one voting in the minority) from each house, a conference committee meets in public session to forge one version of a bill when the house of origin has refused to concur in amendments to the bill adopted by the other house. For the bill to pass, the conference committee version must be approved by both Assembly and Senate. Assembly conferees are chosen by the Speaker; Senate conferees are chosen by the Senate Committee on Rules.

Confirm The process whereby one or both houses approve the Governor's appointments to executive offices, departments, boards, and commissions.



Consent Calendar File containing bills that received no dissenting votes in committee.

Constituent A person who resides within the district represented by a legislator.

Constitutional Amendment A resolution proposing a change to the California Constitution. It may be presented by the Legislature or by initiative, and is adopted upon voter approval at a statewide election.

Consultant Ordinarily, a professional staff person who works for a legislative committee.

Contingent Effect Section in a bill indicating that it is to become operative only upon the enactment of another measure (to be distinguished from double jointing).

Contingent Funds The funds from which moneys are appropriated by the respective houses for their operating expenses.

Convene To assemble a meeting. Each house of the Legislature usually convenes twice a week. Daily File Publication produced by each house for each day the house is in session. The publication provides information about bills to be considered at upcoming committee hearings and bills that are eligible for consideration during the next scheduled floor session. Pursuant to Joint Rule 62(a), any bill to be heard in committee must be noticed in the Daily File for four days, including weekend days. The Daily File also contains useful information about committee assignments and the legislative calendar.

Daily History Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after each house has met. The History lists specific actions taken on legislation. Each measure acted upon in that house the previous day is listed in numerical order.

Daily Journal Produced by the Assembly and Senate respectively the day after a floor session. Contains roll call votes on bills heard in policy committees and bills considered on the floor, and other official action taken by the body. Any official messages from the Governor are also included. A Member may seek approval to publish a letter in the Journal on a specific legislative matter. At the end of a legislative session, the Journals are bound.

Desk The long desk in front of the presiding officer of the clerical work of the house. Also, a generic term for the

staff and offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the Assembly.

Desk Is Clear Statement by the presiding officer that there is no further business before the house.

Digest Prepared by the Legislative Counsel, it summarizes the effect of a proposed bill on current law. It appears on the first page of the printed bill.

District The area of the state represented by a legislator. Each district is determined by population and is designated by a number. There are 40 Senate districts and 80 Assembly districts.

District Bill A bill that generally affects only the district of the Member of the Legislature who introduced the bill.

Do Pass Motion that, if adopted by a committee, moves a bill to the floor or to the next committee.

Do Pass As Amended Committee motion that a bill be passed with the recommendation that the floor adopt specified amendments.

Double Joint Amendments to a bill providing that the amended bill does not override the provisions of another bill, where both bills propose to amend the same section of law (see Chapter Out).

Double Refer Legislation recommended for referral to two policy committees for hearing rather than one. Both committees must approve the measure to keep it moving in the process. Typically used for sensitive subject areas that transcend the jurisdiction of one policy committee. Bill referrals are made by the Assembly and Senate Committees on Rules for their respective houses.

Dropped Author has decided not to pursue the passage of the bill.

Enacting Clause The following phrase at the beginning of the text of each bill: "The people of the State of California do enact as follows."

Engrossment When a bill is amended, the printed form of the bill is proofread by staff to assure that the amendments are inserted properly. After being proofread, the bill is "correctly engrossed" and is thereupon deemed to be in proper form.



Enrollment Whenever a bill passes both houses of the Legislature, it is ordered enrolled. In enrollment, the bill is again proofread for accuracy and then delivered to the Governor. The "enrolled bill" contains the complete text of the bill with the dates of passage certified by the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the Assembly. A resolution, when enrolled, is filed directly with the Secretary of State.

Ex Officio (literally: out of or because of one's office) The act of holding one office by reason of holding another. For example, the Lieutenant Governor is, ex officio, a member of the Regents of the University of California.

Executive Session A committee meeting restricted to committee members and specifically invited persons.

Expunge A motion by which an action taken in a floor session is deleted from the Daily Journal (for example, "Expunge the record").

Extraordinary Session A special legislative session called by the Governor by proclamation to address only those issues specified in the proclamation; also referred to as a special session. Measures introduced in these sessions are numbered chronologically with a lower case "x" after the number (for example, AB 28x).

File See Daily File.

File Number The number assigned to a measure in the Assembly or Senate Daily File. The file number changes each day as bills move on or off the Daily File. File numbers are assigned to measures on second and third reading; in conference; unfinished business (a bill amended in the other house and awaiting concurrence in amended form); and Governor's appointments. Legislation is taken up on the Assembly or Senate floor in chronological order according to file number. Items considered on the floor are ordinarily referred to by file number.

Final History The publication printed at the end of every session showing the final disposition of all measures.

Finance Letter Revisions to the Budget Bill proposed by the Department of Finance and addressed to appropriate committee chairs in the Assembly and Senate

read three times before final passage. The first reading of a bill occurs when it is introduced.

Fiscal Bill Generally, a measure that contains an appropriation of funds or requires a state agency to incur additional expense. The Legislative Counsel's designation of whether a bill is a fiscal bill appears at the end of the Digest found in the printed bill. Fiscal bills must be heard by the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees in addition to the policy committees in each house.

Fiscal Committee The Appropriations Committee in the Assembly and the Appropriations Committee in the Senate, to which each fiscal bill is referred upon approval by policy committee. If the fiscal committee approves a bill, it then moves to the floor.

Fiscal Deadline The date on the legislative calendar by which all bills with fiscal effect must have been taken up in a policy committee and referred to a fiscal committee. Any fiscal bill missing the deadline is considered "dead" unless it receives a rule waiver allowing further consideration.

Fiscal Year The 12-month period on which the state budget is planned, beginning July 1 and ending June 30 of the following year. The federal fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following year.

Floor (1) The Assembly or Senate Chamber.

(2) The term used to describe the location of a bill or the type of session, connoting action to be taken by the house. Matters may be said to be "on the floor."

Floor Manager The legislator responsible for taking up a measure on the floor. This is always the bill's author in the house of origin, and a Member of the other house designated by the author when the bill is considered by the other house. The name of the floor manager in the other house appears in parentheses after the author's name in the second or third reading section of the Daily File.

Floor Pass A visitor may not observe the Assembly or Senate from the rear of the chamber without a floor pass. Assembly passes are issued by the Speaker's office; Senate passes are issued by the President pro Tempore's office. Passes are not required for the viewing area in the gallery above the chambers.

h bill introduced must be



Foreign Amendments Amendments not drafted by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

Four-Day File Notice As set forth in Joint Rule 62(a), the requirement that each bill in the first committee of reference be noticed in the Daily File for four days prior to the committee hearing at which it will be considered. At a second or subsequent committee of reference, a notice of only two days is required.

Germaneness Referring to the legislative rule requirement that an amendment to a bill be relevant to the subject matter of the bill as introduced. The Legislative Counsel may be asked to opine on germaneness, but the matter is subject to final determination by the full Assembly, or the Senate Committee on Rules.

Governor's Budget The spending plan submitted by the Governor in January for the next fiscal year (see Budget).

Grandfathering When a preexisting situation is exempted from the requirements of a new law.

Handbook The 3" x 5-3/4" hardbound edition of "California Legislature" published for each two-year legislative session. Contains indexed versions of the Assembly, Senate, and Joint Rules; biographies of members; and other useful information. Published by the Chief Clerk of the Assembly and Secretary of the Senate.

Hearing A committee meeting convened for the purpose of gathering information on a subject or considering specific legislative measures.

Held in Committee Status of a bill that fails to receive sufficient affirmative votes to pass out of committee.

Hijack Adoption of amendments that delete the contents of a bill and insert provisions on a different subject (see Germaneness). May occur with or without the author's permission.

House In California, refers to either the Senate or the Assembly.

Inactive File The portion of the Daily File containing legislation that is ready for floor consideration, but, for a variety of reasons, is dead or dormant. An author may move a bill to the inactive file at a later date. of the legislative session,

measures may be moved there by the leadership as a method of encouraging authors to take up their bills promptly.

Initiative A legislative proposal to change statutory law or the California Constitution, submitted directly by members of the public rather than by the Legislature, and requiring voter approval at a statewide election. To qualify for a statewide ballot, a statutory initiative must receive signatures equal to 5 percent, and a constitutional amendment initiative must receive signatures equal to 8 percent, of the votes for all candidates for Governor at the last gubernatorial election.

Inquiry System A database containing bill analyses, bill status, bill text, votes, and other useful information for bill tracking and research by legislative employees in Sacramento and district offices. The system is maintained by the Legislative Data Center, which is a part of the Office of Legislative Counsel.

Interim The period of time between the end of a legislative year and the beginning of the next legislative year. The legislative year ends on August 31 in even-numbered years and in mid-September in odd-numbered years.

Interim Study The assignment of the subject matter of a bill to the appropriate committee for study during the period the Legislature is not in session.

Joint Committee A committee composed of equal numbers of Assembly Members and Senators.

Joint Resolution A resolution expressing the Legislature's opinion about a matter within the jurisdiction of the federal government, which is forwarded to Congress for its information. Requires the approval of both Assembly and Senate but does not require signature of the Governor.

Joint Session The Assembly and Senate meeting together, usually in the Assembly Chamber. The purpose ordinarily is to receive special information such as the Governor's State of the State address.

Journal See Daily Journal.

Laws The rules adopted by formal governmental action that govern our lives in various respects.

Lay On The Table A motion to temporarily postpone consideration of a matter before a committee or the house, such that the matter may later be brought up for consideration by a motion to "take from the table."

Legislative Advocate An individual (commonly known as a lobbyist) engaged to present to legislators the views of a group or organization. The law requires formal registration with the Secretary of State if an individual's lobbying activity exceeds 25 contacts with decision makers in a two-month period.

Legislative Analyst The Legislative Analyst, who is a legislative appointee, and his or her staff provide thorough, nonpartisan analysis of the budget submitted by the Governor; also analyze the fiscal impact of other legislation and prepare analyses of ballot measures published in the state ballot pamphlet.

Legislative Counsel The Legislative Counsel (who is appointed jointly by both houses) and his or her legal staff are responsible for, among other things, drafting all bills and amendments, preparing the Digest for each bill, providing legal opinions, and representing the Legislature in legal proceedings.

Legislative Counsel's Digest See Digest.

Legislative Data Center Department of the Office of Legislative Counsel that maintains the Inquiry System, operates the database under which legislation is drafted and conveyed to the Office of State Publishing to be printed, and otherwise provides technological support to the Legislature.

Lieutenant Governor The President of the Senate, as so designated by the California Constitution, allowing him or her to preside over the Senate and cast a vote only in the event of a tie. If the Governor cannot assume his or her duties or is absent from the state, the Lieutenant Governor assumes that office for the remainder of the term or during the absence.

Line Item Veto See Blue Pencil.

Lobbyist See Legislative Advocate.

Lobbyist Book The Directory of Lobbyists, Lobbying Firms, and Lobbyist Employers published every legislative session by the Secretary of State; : for \$12.00 from the the State Capitol, or from

the Secretary of State's office at www.ss.ca.gov/prd/ld/cover.htm. Photos and addresses of lobbyists are included with a list of the clients each represents. Employers of lobbyists are also listed alphabetically.

Lower House The Assembly.

Majority Floor Leader Assembly Member who is an issues and political strategist for the Assembly's majority party, second in command to the Assembly Speaker. Elected by the members of the Assembly's majority party.

Majority Leader Senator who is an issues and political strategist for the Senate's majority party, second in command to the Senate President pro Tempore. Elected by the members of the Senate's majority party.

Majority Vote A vote of more than half of the legislative body considering a measure. Constituted by 41 votes in the Assembly, and by 21 votes in the Senate.

Majority Whip One of the members of the majority party's leadership team in the Assembly or Senate; responsible for monitoring legislation and securing votes for legislation on the floor.

Mason's Manual The reference manual that governs matters of parliamentary procedure that are not covered by the Legislature's own written rules.

May Revision Occurring in early May, the updated estimate of revenues and expenditures that replaces the estimates contained in the Governor's budget submitted in January.

Measure A bill, resolution, or constitutional amendment that is considered by the Legislature.

Minority Floor Leader The highest-ranking minority party post in each house; chief policy and political strategist for the minority party.

Minority Whip One of the members of the minority party's leadership team in the Assembly or Senate; responsible for monitoring legislation and securing votes for legislation on the floor.

Minutes An accurate record of the proceedings (see Daily Journal).



Motion A formal proposal for action made by a legislator during a committee hearing or floor session.

Nonfiscal Bill A measure not having specified financial impact on the state and, therefore, not required to be heard in an Assembly or Senate fiscal committee as it moves through the legislative process. Nonfiscal bills are subject to different legislative calendar deadlines than fiscal bills.

Officers Those Members and employees of the Legislature who are elected by the membership of each house at the beginning of each session to perform specific functions on behalf of the house. Assembly officers include the Speaker, Speaker pro Tempore, Chief Clerk, and Sergeant-at-Arms. Senate officers include the President pro Tempore, Secretary of the Senate, and Sergeant-at-Arms.

On Call A roll call vote in a committee or an Assembly or Senate floor session that has occurred but has not yet been concluded or formally announced. Members may continue to vote or change their votes as long as a measure remains "on call." Calls are usually placed at the request of a bill's author in an effort to gain votes. Calls can be lifted by request any time during the committee hearing or floor session, but cannot be carried over into the next legislative day.

On File A bill on the second or third reading file of the Assembly or Senate Daily File.

Out of Order A parliamentary ruling by the presiding officer of a committee or the house that a matter is not, at that time, appropriate for consideration by the body.

Override Enactment of a bill despite the Governor's veto, by a vote of two thirds of the members of each house (27 votes in the Senate and 54 votes in the Assembly).

Parliamentary Inquiry A procedural question posed by a legislator during a committee hearing or floor session. A member must be recognized for this purpose and the question answered by the committee chair or presiding officer.

Pass on File A bill is taken up during a floor session by its author or floor manager according to its order in the Assembly or Senate Daily File. An author may choose to "pass on file," thus temporarily giving up his or her opportunity to take up a measure on the floor.

Passage Adoption of a measure by the Assembly or the Senate.

Per Diem (literally: per day) Daily living expense payment made to legislators when a house is in session.

Petition A formal request submitted to the Legislature by an individual or group of individuals.

Point of Order A request that the presiding officer remedy a breach of order or of the rules.

Point of Personal Privilege Assertion by a Member that his or her rights, reputation, or conduct have been impugned, entitling the Member to repudiate the allegations.

Postpone A motion to delay action on a matter before the house.

President of the Senate See Lieutenant Governor.

President Pro Tempore of the Senate (literally: for the time) Highest-ranking member of the Senate; also chairs the Senate Committee on Rules. Elected by Senators at the beginning of each two-year session.

Presiding Managing the proceedings during a floor session. In the Assembly, the presiding officer can be the Speaker, Speaker pro Tempore, or any other Assembly Member appointed by the Speaker. In the Senate, the presiding officer can be the President, President pro Tempore, or any other Senator appointed by the President pro Tempore.

Press Conference A presentation of information to a group of reporters. Press conferences are frequently held in Room 1190 of the Capitol, the Governor's press room, which is available to Members on a reservation basis (445-4571).

Previous Question If a Member seeks to cut off all further debate on a measure, he or she may call the previous question to seek to compel the body to vote immediately on the issue.

Principal Coauthor A Member who is so designated on a bill or other measure, indicating that the Member is a primary supporter of the measure.

Privilege of the Floor Permission given, by the presiding officer, to view the proceedings from

the floor of the Chamber, rather than from the gallery. Members request that permission on behalf of constituents or other guests.

Put Over A motion to delay action on a measure until a future date.

Quorum A simple majority of the membership of a committee or the Assembly or Senate; the minimum number of legislators needed to begin conducting official business. The absence of a quorum is grounds for immediate adjournment of a committee hearing or floor session.

Quorum Call Transmitting the message that members are needed to establish a quorum so that proceedings may begin.

Reading Presentation of a bill before the house by reading its number, author, and title. A bill is on either first, second, or third reading until it is passed by both houses.

Reapportionment Revising the allocation of congressional seats based on census results. Also used to refer to redistricting (the revision of legislative district boundaries) to reflect census results.

Recess (1) An official pause in a committee hearing or floor session that halts the proceedings for a period of time but does not have the finality of adjournment.

(2) A break of more than four days in the regular session schedule such as the "Easter recess."

Reconsideration A motion giving the opportunity to take another vote on a matter previously decided in a committee hearing or floor session.

Referendum The method, used by members of the public, by which a measure adopted by the Legislature may be submitted to the electorate for a vote. A referendum petition must be signed by electors equal in number to 5 percent of the votes for all candidates for Governor at the last gubernatorial election.

Rescind A motion to revoke an action previously taken.

Resolution See Concurrent Resolution and Joint Resolution.

Roll Call Recording the vote of each member of a committee or of the full Assembly or Senate. Committee roll calls are conducted by the committee secretary, who calls each member's name in alphabetical order with the name of the chair called last. Assembly roll calls are conducted electronically, with each Member pushing a button from his or her assigned seat. Senate roll calls are conducted by the Reading Clerk, who reads each Senator's name in alphabetical order.

Rule Waiver Exemption to the Assembly, Senate, or Joint Rules, for which formal permission must be granted.

Rules Principles formally adopted to govern the operation of either or both houses. These include Standing Rules of the Assembly, Standing Rules of the Senate, and Joint Rules of the Senate and Assembly.

Second Reading Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Second reading occurs after a bill has been reported to the floor from committee.

Second Reading File The portion of the Daily File that lists measures that have been reported out of committee and are ready for consideration on the floor. Measures stay on the second reading file for one day before moving to the third reading portion of the File.

Secretary of the Senate A Senate employee serving as principal parliamentarian and record keeper for the Senate, elected by Senators at the beginning of each two-year session. The Senate Secretary and his or her staff are responsible for publishing the Senate daily and weekly publications.

Section Ordinarily, a portion of the California Codes or other statutory law; alternatively, a portion of the text of a bill. The text of code sections is set forth in bills as proposed to be amended, repealed, or added.

Senate The house of the California Legislature consisting of 40 members elected from districts apportioned on the basis of population, one-half of whom are elected or re-elected every two years for four-year terms.

Sergeant-At-Arms Employee responsible for maintaining order and providing security for the Legislature. The Chief Sergeant-at-Arms in each

house is elected by the Members of that house at the beginning of every legislative session.

Session The period during which the Legislature meets. The Legislature may meet in either regular or special (extraordinary) session.

Short Committee A hearing of a committee attended by less than a quorum of the members of the committee.

Sine Die See Adjournment Sine Die.

Speaker The presiding officer of the Assembly, elected by the membership of the Assembly at the beginning of the two-year session. This is the highest-ranking Member of the Assembly.

Speaker Pro Tempore Member, appointed to this office by the Speaker, who presides over a floor session of the Assembly at the request of the Speaker.

Special Order of Business Occasionally a bill is of such importance that advance notice is given as to when it will be considered by the Assembly or Senate. Notice is given during a floor session by requesting unanimous consent to set the bill as a special order of business on a specific date and time. This assures adequate time for debate and allows all Members the opportunity to be present.

Special Session See Extraordinary Session.

Sponsor The Member of the Legislature, private individual, or group who develops a measure and advocates its passage.

Spot Bill A bill that proposes nonsubstantive amendments to a code section in a particular subject; introduced to assure that a bill will be available, subsequent to the deadline to introduce bills, for revision by amendments that are germane to the subject of the bill.

State Auditor Head of the Bureau of State Audits, which conducts financial and performance audits of the state and local government agencies at the request of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee.

State Mandate State legislative enactment or administrative regulation that mandates a new program or higher level of service on the part of a local government, the costs of which are required by the California Constitution to be reimbursed.

the Secretary of State in the order in which they become law.

Stop the Clock The term used to describe the process of continuing legislative business after the passage of a deadline imposed by legislative rule.

Subcommittee A subgroup of a full committee, appointed to perform work on one or more functions of the committee.

Summary Digests Digests of each bill enacted in a two-year session, as prepared and compiled by the Legislative Counsel. The measures are listed by chapter number, reflecting the order in which they were signed into law.

Suspend the Constitution A motion to waive requirements that the California Constitution imposes, but permits to be waived in a specified manner. A motion to suspend requires an extraordinary vote.

Table See Lay on the Table.

Tax Levy Any bill that imposes, repeals, or materially alters a state tax. The Legislative Counsel indicates in the title and Digest of the bill whether the bill is a tax levy.

Third House Collective reference to lobbyists (see Legislative Advocates).

Third Reading Each bill introduced must be read three times before final passage. Third reading occurs when the measure is about to be taken up on the floor of either house for final passage.

Third Reading Analysis A summary of a measure that is ready for floor consideration. Describes most recent amendments and contains information regarding how Members voted on the measure when it was heard in committee. Senate floor analyses also list support or opposition by interest groups and government agencies.

Third Reading File That portion of the Daily File listing the bills that are ready to be taken up for final passage.

Title The material on the first page of a bill that identifies the provisions of law affected by the bill and the subject matter of the bill.

Two-Thirds Vote In the Assembly, 54; in the Senate, 27. Required, for example, for urgency

ills, which are chaptered by



measures and most measures making appropriations from the General Fund.

Unanimous Consent The consent of all of those Members present, ordinarily presumed to exist in the absence of objection.

Unfinished Business That portion of the Daily File that contains measures awaiting Senate or Assembly concurrence in amendments adopted by the other house. Also contains measures vetoed by the Governor for a 60-day period after the veto.

Unicameral A legislature consisting of one house (Nebraska has the only unicameral state legislature).

Upper House The Senate.

Urgency Measure A bill affecting the public peace, health, or safety, containing an urgency clause, and requiring a two-thirds vote for passage. An

urgency bill becomes effective immediately upon enactment.

Urgency Clause Section of a bill stating that the bill will take effect immediately upon enactment. A vote on the urgency clause, requiring a two-thirds vote in each house, must precede a vote on the bill.

Veto The Governor's formal rejection of a measure passed by the Legislature. The Governor may also exercise a line item veto, whereby the amount of an appropriation is reduced or eliminated, while the rest of the bill is approved (see Blue Pencil). A veto may be overridden by a two-thirds vote in each house.

Voice Vote A vote that requires only an oral "aye" or "no," with no official count taken. The presiding officer determines whether the "ayes" or "noes" carry.

6. Stopping Bad Legislation In Your State

By David R. Usher

Stopping bad legislation is not as difficult as you might expect, particularly *if* it is 'state originated.' Working to stop bad legislation is a crucial step in your group's development. It establishes your presence in the legislative process, and gains you the contacts necessary to put yourself in the position to eventually introduce legislation.

There is no greater satisfaction than to watch a bill fail because just a few folks put their minds together. It does not take many people to kill a bill. It only requires a few intelligent activists willing to take a serious approach to their own futures.

If handled properly, you can establish a great deal of political respect for your group in the first year or two. If you do it badly, however, it will take years to recover.

Below, I will address the key points you need to follow, and keep them in simple checklist form so you can easily revisit them *frequently* to make sure you are on track.

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE:

Remember that most legislators are simply **uneducated** on pro-family perspectives. They have been steeped in anti-family thought for many years. They believe a whole lot of things that are not true. Approaching them in a direct, friendly, informative, expectant manner will educate many *of* them, and also expose your political enemies.

Never assume that most politicians are out to screw you. If you apply this "oppositional" attitude, you will never make friends in the legislature, and in fact, they will not want to have anything to do with you.

Be patient. Spend time with politicians who are interested in what you say, and who reflect back agreement with you.

Pretend you are in their shoes. Try again and again to do this. Most of them are looking for solutions for nasty problems that do not go away. You are selling answers. Present your

position as being the answer, listening very carefully to see if their response shows more than "lip service".

See the section on working political campaigns. Your supporters need to know you will scratch their back if they scratch yours (that is what politics is all about.)

Do not limit your phone conversations and meetings to our issues. While we certainly have our specific issues, politicians will be more likely to adopt our approaches when they come to understand the consistency of ideals with other issues of moral and character value.

Put a pro-family hat on over your fathers' rights hat. By being a pro-family organization, you will avoid being politically labeled as 'one of those angry fathers rights people'. If politicians have had bad experiences in the past, you will be less likely to arouse those feelings.

HAVE YOUR KEY PEOPLE DO LETTER AND PHONE LOBBYING

You want to have one to three people in the your group who are the 'point people', who write the 'overarching' point letters. These letters should be shared with group members so they know the focus points and how to write letters as well. Letters from 'point people' should make it clear that he/she is a spokesman for the organization.

Frequent, short calls and contacts are far better than long calls.

Focus on the committee the bill is in. You must stop it there. Once a bill gets out of committee, it is usually quite difficult to stop.

Use the internet to look up new bills frequently, particularly during the first half of session. Develop trusty pro-family political contacts in the legislature who you can call weekly or more often to find out what new things are happening. These folks will often be your primary source regarding new bills.

Use a couple of your favorite politicians to keep you informed about committee hearings on your bill. It is highly advisable that you develop a close relationship with at least one legislator on the committee. Once this is established, you can count on hearing from that legislator (or the legislator's assistant) to warn you about hearings on the bill. If you have no contacts, then find out who keeps track of scheduling in the house or senate, and contact them frequently.

Hearings will often be listed on your state's internet website. Unfortunately, the website information is often a few days behind. Slippery legislators know this and will schedule a hearing just a day or so in advance. If your committee chair is "on to you", you can expect him/her to schedule quickie hearings, notifying all his buddies, but not telling you about it. So, you must stay on top of things, develop information sources, and loyal legislators who will tip

you off . Sleazy legislators will schedule hearings on Wednesday night (when you have the kids), and during the day (when you have to work but their governmental buddies are paid to work the legislature). Grit your teeth, be prepared to take time off of work, take your kids to the Capitol for an education, and have fun too.

To defeat a bill, your purpose is to convince as many Committee members that the bill will hurt their constituents more than helping them, or cost the state a ton of money, and you must show why. You should also briefly mention a pro-family solution, and suggest that it would be far wiser to dump the bill and come back next session with a pro-family bill more along your lines of thought.

All letters should be short, factual, calm, non-emotional, and scholarly. Avoid use of emotional hyphenated words and excessive use of adjective-descriptors, and avoid using overly strong "daddy language". Observe how feminists write their documents in "bureaucratic" style. Copy this style but using your message instead.

Focus on how the bill (in the big picture) will hurt women and children, or cause disruption of children's' lives. Most family law legislators are pre-focused on helping women and children, and have little interest in what fathers rights activists complain about. Our perspective should only be brought into 'buttress' the "pro woman" language. If you convince them that the bill will hurt women and children, then you will get more support than if you approach the issue solely from a 'fathers rights' perspective. You will demonstrate that you are a real man, not just looking out for his butt, but who truly and selflessly cares about the futures of women, children, men, and society.

Show how it does nothing but benefit the business interests of the Bar. If the Bar is involved as a supporter, you must also show (with studies and reports), why the Bar is wrong. Remember, most folks distrust attorneys anyway, so a convincing letter with supportive documentation will usually do quite well. You may need to go after the legislative analyst for the Bar who is spewing 'legal theory as fad' to get the Bar to back off.

If the Chair of the committee is on your side, then work with the Chair. If the Chair is vocally opposed to your work, or is the sponsor of the offending legislation, initially ignore this person completely and communicate only with the other committee members. Remember, legislation does not get out of committee without majority vote of the committee! This "divide and conquer" approach does several important things.

It keeps the Chair "in the dark" as long as possible.

It will irritate the Chair tremendously. The Chair will likely respond emotionally, making you look like the good guy. You will probably get a terse letter from the Chair restating why the bill is good, throwing out factoids on why the bill is good. Once the Chair has responded in this below-the-belt fashion, then you respond kindly with another short letter stating factually why the bill is bad, with a supporting study attached. *Be sure to copy the whole committee on this letter.*

Steps 1-3 has the effect of isolating the Chair from his own committee. When committee members distrust their Chair, he or she will be in bad political shape from then on.

Continue trading letters with the Chair so long as the Chair rails against you. Always respond with a short, kindly, factual letter with a new report or study supporting your position.

Short, one page letters with a couple of pages from a study or report are the most convincing way to kill bad legislation. Your cover page should briefly say why the legislation is counterproductive to the mutual interests of women, children, men, and society. Point out the selfishness of opposing organizations who may have spawned the legislation.

If a bill is based on federal 'pass through' legislation, it will probably be quite difficult to stop. Funded 'pass through' bills tend to pass without question because states will do anything for free money. You want to strongly oppose this kind of bill, but at the same time confidently work to get legislation you endorse to be "Christmas treed" onto it on the floor. Often, it is not a good idea to be openly talkative about tacking your legislation onto a funded bill. If the other side gets wind of it, they will be prepared to kick your attachments out. It is best to talk about this only with your trusted legislators, asking them to do the attachments for you on the floor. Often, this will occur during the last week or so of session, when the legislature is going nuts. You will just have to patiently wait to see what passed, along with everyone else.

THE GROUP MEMBER'S ROLE

Group members should use what you write as a basis for their letters. Each member should write as many letters as possible. Meetings are a great place for writing letters. Bring stamped envelopes, paper, and pens and have each member write a letter on the spot (this gets them in the habit).

Members should "Adopt a Rep" on the committee, and work that Rep.

Each member should also "Adopt a Rep" outside the committee who is receptive to your issues. That member works with the Rep and makes a commitment to support them during campaign season. You need these Reps to "Christmas tree" legislation on the floor or stalemate bad legislation should it make it to the floor.

Each member is a "liaison" to the outside works. They should carry our message to others in the community, at work, church, and other organizations. Note: be careful what you say at work and who you say it to!

WORKING THE MEDIA

Your best writer should be charged with writing "Editorial Opinions" to be sent to your local papers. Editorial Opinions are anything from 250 to 600 words in length depending on the paper. Call the newspaper and find out the criteria.

Study published articles by others (see the news section of the ACFC website), to see how our issues are approached in creative, interesting ways.

Study published articles by radical feminists to see how they take bad policy, put a warm fuzzy 'spin' on it, to make it look good. Your job is far easier, because all you have to do is adopt the same warm fuzzy approaches to making your article more convincing.

WORKING THE INTERNET

It is important to develop a statewide email loop consisting of all fathers rights, second wives, grandparents, and related pro-family individuals. One person should keep this loop informed of events, and make sure that you have the best possible turnouts of letters and testimony. Things can develop quite quickly during legislative season, and the Internet is the only way to instantly disseminate your important information.

If you are not on the internet, get an old 486 for \$400 and get on the internet (get the best computer you can afford). It is 100 times slower to get things done when you have to call 30 people all over the state every time something happens. The internet is our 'equalizer' and is what has given this movement the ability to organize and communicate quickly and cheaply. You will need the Internet desperately to get those studies and reports that you must have to win!

The email loop is ONLY for disseminating useful information, and for those who wish to do something. NEVER use the internet as a 'debate forum' between folks having ideological clashes. Let them have their misery all to themselves, and DO NOT feel obliged to "save them" or make them change their mind. There are some folks out there who truly deserved the divorces they got, and they will hold you back, tear up your group, and drive you nuts if you allow it. Take them off the list and avoid them. If you get involved trying to pour cold water on folks with bad attitudes, you will usually find them blaming you for their argument. To this end, it is necessary to get an email program that supports "Blind CC" (such as Eudora Pro). One person with a bad attitude, or a "plant" from the other side, can destroy your statewide efforts in a hurry by adopting your list and driving everybody crazy.

Even though you might have differences of opinion (or personality clashes) with other fathers groups in your state, it is very important to develop a cooperative spirit if you want to get anywhere. Keeping a distant, friendly relationship going so that everyone testifies is far better than undercutting each other so that nobody shows up. In this case, you will probably discover a

couple of members who like both groups and go back and forth (or attend both meetings). You can nominate this person to be a "liaison" to make sure that important information gets around to everyone.

Set up a simple web page on your server where you can place documents that others around the state can use, such as picket posters, letters, and other information.

DEMONSTRATIONS

Demonstrations can be quite useful during legislative season if done for the right reason and timed properly. The time to do a demonstration is when the chips are looking bad, and your opposition has said or done something really outrageous. If you have the goods in print or on tape, then a demonstration can make your opposition look very bad, and make other legislators distance themselves from the legislation. Remember: legislators are political animals, and run from political danger. *When you demonstrate, be sure that the demonstration makes your opposition, not you, look bad.*

7. Suggestions for Successful Demonstrating And Leafleting

By David R. Usher

The tips below have been developed over nine years of regular demonstrating in the St. Louis area and elsewhere, where we have successfully picketed the county prosecutor at home, a radical women's abuse center, the St. Louis Post Dispatch, various judges, and a supermarket chain.

The below is not legal advice. Assuming that the First Amendment is still intact in your city or town, you should do just fine so long as you check local demonstration ordinances before proceeding. Please note that in some areas there are ordinances outlawing protests within certain distances from a private residence.

WE DEMONSTRATE EITHER TO PROTEST AN ISSUE OR TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

Protesting an Issue

Mature fathers activists do not demonstrate in anger. We do not want to look like angry males, lest we fall into our own worst trap. We demonstrate to gain ground, to make our adversaries look bad in public, to make ourselves look good, to develop media access, and to get our message out to other fathers who may be looking for us.

Demonstrations are one "sweat equity" way of building membership. A good 45-second story on the 10 O'clock news is worth thousands of dollars in advertising.

The best demonstrations get their point across in a helpful way. Certainly, there are rare times for emotional demonstrations. Demonstrations will be most successful if done intelligently rather than emotionally.

I often get our hotline number put on "full screen" as a trailer to a TV news story by letting the interviewer know that we are trying to reduce violence in divorce. Everyone hates that, so

we get lots of free advertising.

My experience is that the media will lose interest if you demonstrate too frequently. It is best to limit your activities to 3-4 demonstrations per year, unless you have a real hot issue that the media keeps showing interest in. Don't demonstrate unless you have an issue worth demonstrating about or they will see through it.

It is occasionally possible to "piggyback" on to issues that the media is already interested in. For example, if your local prosecutor or judge is under fire for some unrelated reason, a demonstration from you will certainly be followed.

THE INFORMATIONAL PICKET

This is better known as "leafleting". It is always done with a "helpful" attitude, and is often far more effective than the "protest". Media and various public organizations are usually more interested in what "helpful" people are doing than what "angry" people are sniveling about. This especially holds true when you have only a small number of people to protest with.

You can take just about any traditional father's issue and turn it into an "Informational Picket." For example, most of us know that between 76% and 95% of serious spousal violence occurs after the date of separation. If framed as a helpful flyer (you are working to reduce violence in divorce), to be handed out at the courthouse, you will be seen as "peacemakers". You will contact more members to join your ranks, and generate some goodwill amongst judges. You can also bet that you will change some attitudes about divorce if you make it clear in the handout that divorce is the problem, not marriage. If you are seen as "pro-family" there is no one in town who can dislike you and get away with it.

Nonetheless, there are times when the formal protest is necessary. We should not be afraid to honestly and peacefully point out those individuals or institutions who callously cause social decay, or who abuse laws for political or personal financial gain. There is a big difference between reacting in anger, and standing up forthrightly in sincere opposition to political or legal abuse.

CHOOSING A GOOD ISSUE

It is critical to choose demonstration issues that make your group look good in public. In order for a demonstration to be successful, it must meet the following criteria:

A. The issue must be simple enough for the average uninformed person to understand and connect with in one 8-second sound byte. If you can't boil your message down to 8 seconds in front of a mirror, it is too complicated.

B. You must be able to "spin" the issue from the standpoint of hurting children and women, or in terms of something that most people can connect with such as sexism, racism, censorship, and child abuse. Most people have no idea that fathers rights are being abused in America, and hence, are not as likely to get interested in what you are doing if that is all you talk about. Bring the fathers points in after you have opened the attitudinal door - it will then follow nicely.

Here are a couple of ideas.

Shared Parenting. Every child denied a loving father is emotionally scarred for life. Women strapped with the responsibility of full time child rearing are nailed to the home and have difficulty working. So why are father routinely denied civil rights as parents without cause?

Failure to report social issues fairly: This is a censorship issue first, a fathers issue second. Most media professionals hate censorship, and most will come to your assistance if you are after a media outlet guilty of clear and ever-present censorship.

Abuse of Support Incarceration Laws: Children get no support when men who are merely unemployed cannot seek work because they are in jail.

Negotiate with your Adversary

In most situations, you should have one member of your group in communication with the offending party. In writing you should state what behavior or action you dislike, and what you want them to do. I usually let them know that we are willing to demonstrate over the issue if they are not willing to cooperate. My negotiations are always cordial, but always contain a "bottom line." I often include relevant reports and studies that back up our position, to educate the opponent so they cannot say that they 'didn't know'.

Most public figures are political creatures who desperately do not want bad publicity. Let them know you will be their political ally in the future if they do what you want. If they see political gain and avoidance of bad publicity, you might see a surprising change in the behavior of your opponent without a demonstration.

Carrying Signs

Signs are the message that will be seen on television. It is best to prepare them on a computer (printed landscape), then blown up to poster size and stapled to poster board. A 20" x 30" size is usually suitable. Home-brew handmade signs can be effective and "down home," but may leave you looking weak.

T-shirts are a sign, too. Make up some ACFC T-shirts if possible, with the hotline number on it in big letters so your number is seen by as many people as possible. It is best to use the national hotline number because this makes you look bigger, and the new members will always be sent to your group right away.

You can also have ACFC posters with the Hotline number on it, but most news editors will cut those out. That is why the T-shirts really are worth every penny. They can't film you without the T-shirt!

Tips on Sign Content:

- A. Do not put anything on a sign that is not demonstrably provable. "My child hasn't had a father for 675 days" is just fine. "Judge Wapner Lies" is not good. "Dr. Smith Steals Children" is begging for a libel suit.
- B. Be very careful in comments made about individuals on signs. If a Judge took 85% of your gross salary as child support, you can talk about that because it is a fact. Just don't call him a thief in the process.
- C. Attack the issues, not the person. You want your opponent to hate the issue as much as you do. You do not want them to hate you.

How To Demonstrate

Stay on the sidewalk, next to the street, on "public property". Don't picket in the street. If there is no sidewalk, walk a strip of grass within 3 feet of the street pavement. Don't go into any private property areas, which usually include mall parking lots (for example). Pick a location that has an appropriate area where you are in sight of the facility, or within camera shot of the facility. If the facility is on the street, and there is little or no sidewalk, don't picket right in front of it. Picket across the street or on one side of it. Try to position yourself so the maximum number of people driving by can see you, and so you can hand out fliers to as many pedestrians as possible. Don't block or cross any driveways or entranceways as you picket, or restrict pedestrian traffic in any way. Keep walking in an elongated circle (so they can't accuse you of loitering or vagrancy). Don't stop to talk to anyone unless they are with the media. If someone tries to start an unfriendly conversation, politely excuse yourself from the conversation and keep on walking.

- A. Every person should have \$20 on them and a drivers license.
- B. Everyone should wear decent clothes, and don't have beer on the breath.
- C. If asked to move by an officer of the law or security guard, don't argue with them unless you really know what you are doing within the law. Just move to a different spot as they request.
- D. SMILE FOR THE CAMERA. BE PROUD. DON'T LOOK LIKE DEATH EATING A CRACKER.
- E. If you are presently involved in family litigation, check with your lawyer first before participating.

F. Don't bring small kids or babies. If you are presently involved in a court action, it is probably best not to bring your kids.

G. Don't put your signs on sticks. They look threatening, and can be used as a weapon. Carry them.

H. Think "Martin Luther King", and don't do anything he wouldn't do.

I. Get there at least 15-30 minutes early to "group up" so you don't miss the media. They will not wait for you to get your act together.

J. Make sure the cameras get shots of a sign with your local phone number on it or T-shirts. You get lots of members that way.

Handouts

In certain instances, prepared handouts have been very effective. For example, if your prosecutor is trying to lock up a disabled guy with an outrageous support order on criminal nonsupport charges, a handout simply describing the absurdity of the situation can work wonders. Make a place at the bottom for folks to sign their names, and ask folks entering the courthouse to sign it and give it to the court clerk on their way into the courthouse. You can bet these will be introduced into the case by the defending attorney.

Handouts are an excellent way to fill out your issue with a more detailed description of a complicated issue. Keep it simple, of course.

Writing Tip: A well-placed question in a headline opens the mind of the reader better than a statement does. 'Why are Fathers Absent?' is far more provocative and will draw more attention to your issue than 'Fathers Receive only 15% Joint Custody.'

Handouts are only effective in locations where you expect pedestrians! But they can help the media understand the story better as well. Often, what you write in the handout will be used on the air as the story is introduced. Be careful what you write ... you never know where it will end up.

Interview Tips

A. NEVER mention even one word about your case or personal situation. The ISSUE is why you are there. If they ask, just tell them; "My situation is no different than a few million other guys across America". If you waste your time talking about your own personal misery, you wont do anything except convince folks you are a defective angry male.

B. Pick your most "knowledgeable" one or two or three guys for interview. All others should be instructed to not talk to the media . Tell them to shyly decline and send the reporters to you. This is very important. If the media isn't warm to your issue, they will surely take the dumbest rant some angry newcomer says and put it on the air or in the paper.

C. "Face guys" must wear suits and look sharp. Have comb and hairspray if necessary so

you look like Ted Koppel.

D. Some interviewers want "feeling", and won't leave you alone until you emote. This calls for an ad-lib to fit the moment. Stay away from words like "angry". Statements with a little feeling, like "I am scared for the futures of our (not my) children" are great. Remember, you are here to serve women, children, and society, not yourself. He who is selfless in his or her approach is difficult to attack.

E. What you say must be said in 8 second sound bites. Practice this if necessary. You have at most two breaths per question to say it.

F. The interviewer will ask you questions like those listed below. Try the suggested answers if you can't think of anything else you like better. //ADD A LIST HERE//

G. Try to keep the interview focused. It is a mistake to let it get off the issue. Either your interviewer will get confused, or overloaded with information, and your story might be weakened to the point where it ends up on the cutting room floor.

H. Preparing your interviewer: It is very important to realize that many of the reporters are just as uninformed as the rest of the world. You can win the hearts of these people very quickly by pointing out how all this nonsense hurts women and children. These people often truly want to help, but often end up helping the wrong people. If you are seen as an individual who truly cares about the well being of women and children, then they will like what you have to say nearly every time.

Scheduling Your Demonstration

It is not a good idea to schedule a protest during the Rose Bowl. Make sure there are not any local or national events of major import that might keep the media busy. Media folks always want the hottest, most picturesque story in town. Don't schedule your demonstration for a time when other and more picturesque events will be happening at the same time.

Press Releases

You should fax press releases to all major media outlets one or two days before the event. The press release should not be longer than one page. Pretend you are writing a short newspaper article, give it the catchiest title you can, and the most elegant story possible.

Be sure to include your phone number in case they want to contact you. The name and number of a backup contact would also be useful. In other words, two names and numbers as press contacts. (Check out the chapter in this manual on media relations for more depth on this subject.)

Notice to Police

It is a good idea to personally call or notify the Chief of Police in the city where you will protest, particularly if you will be demonstrating at the home of a public official. Police get real

worried when a bunch of guys show up by surprise somewhere, and you do not want an overreaction to take place. In my experience, most police support us, and I have seen instances where the police don't even bother to keep an eye on us as a show of trust and support.

Recording. It is my opinion that the tape recorder and camcorder are the most valuable tools of this movement. They are your ultimate protection from false claims made by your opponents. It is "politically correct" for people to go around claiming that some anger-laden fathers rights activist threatened them. The tape recorder and video recorder are your insurance policy and truth detector that will win for you every time.

It is a very wise idea to have someone park their car so as to allow a video to be made of any demonstration, in case a passerby or policeman gets out of line. You can stop a policeman's lie right on the spot if you point to the camcorder, and save yourself a lot of trouble. It is also a good idea for spokespeople to have a micro-cassette recorder on them at all times and to tape record any interactions with police or any other individual behaving in an unfriendly manner. Problems like this are very rare, but due to the seriousness of the situation, the record is most crucial.

If you have telephone conversations or meetings with your opponent, it is a good idea to tape them (if it is legal in your area). You can capture fabulous admissions and protect yourself from false claims of threatening behavior.

Philosophy

No doubt some of you are wondering why I have focused so much on framing fathers issues from a "women's perspective". Unfortunately, we live in a world where the men's perspective is unpopular, and this has made it difficult or impossible for the "traditional" fathers movement to score even minor successes.

The fathers movement failed over the past thirty years largely because we were not united in positively maintaining our social roles as fathers and husbands for the benefit of women and children. We were in the trenches fighting for "rights" against a system that set itself up as a better protector.

By expressing things in terms of how the system hurts women and children, we are setting ourselves up as their true protectors, providers, and nurturers. We are looking out for their interests, where our opposition has demonstrably hurt them in many ways.

When society sees us as being more valuable than "government as substitute husband" we win the loyalty of the women in society, and help turn around the attitudes of so many lost men in society.

We must restore a strong spirit of male kinship that trusts other men and women of the movement, in fully cooperating with other activists regardless of organizational affiliation, in re-establishing a society where men stand up for each other and help each other; and as a country willingly love, provide for and protect the women and children in our individual lives.

8. Dealing Effectively with the Court System

By David R. Usher

INTRODUCTION

It is very important to pursue a strategy over time in changing your courts system. Changing them is a program that takes several years. You must pursue a carefully executed carrot and stick strategy to bring them around. Certainly, not all judges and attorneys are man haters. The problem we face is predominantly an attitude problem -just like everywhere else - where folks do not understand the value of fatherhood.

However, you will experience problems with ideologues, particularly in the Bar Association and up and down the system. These are people who put the business interests of the Bar above everything else. You will come to know who these individuals are because they do not listen to fact. These people will always support anything that makes more business for lawyers, and oppose anything that might reduce it.

Remember that it does not take a lot of people to change the system. It only takes a few good people, working in a coordinated manner.

Strategy Timeline

The following must occur over time if you wish to be successful, preferably in this order. Detailed descriptions of the below are in subsequent sections:

- 1. Develop Data on Judicial Behavior**
- 2. Learn Practice of Law**
- 3. Narrow Your Issues**
- 4. Understand What Judges do and How to Change Them**
- 3. Demonstrate and Leaflet**
- 6. Find Friends in the Courthouse**
- 7. Pursue the Bar**
- 8. Pay Attention to Supreme Courts**

Develop Data on Judicial Behavior

If you want to win at the horse races, you have to know your horses. The same holds true for courts and judges.

So, you must develop a member in your group who is a "researcher" type. One who is willing to go to the courthouse and pull at least several hundred divorce cases to develop judge profiles. Once you know what your judges do, you can help your folks tremendously. Most states allow for an automatic change of judge early in the case. If you boycott anti-father judges, your people will do better and the bad judges will get a bad reputation because nobody wants to be in front of them. This is a time-consuming job, but it is absolutely necessary if you wish to nail judges for what they do.

In your profiles you want to establish simple criteria you can easily pull from each case in a few minutes. Criteria should be classified in terms of percents, and should generally include:

Type of custody awarded (joint legal, joint physical, full joint, sole maternal, sole paternal).

Amount of support ordered against the father or mother, organized by type of custody order.

You must also segregate the data from "consent" cases from adjudicated cases. (Consent cases mean those cases where the judge is merely signing off on a negotiated agreement between the parties. Adjudicated cases are what really tell you about the judge's thinking and actions.)

Learn Practice of Law

You must develop one or more people in your group who will specialize in learning rules of court and pro se practice of law. This will likely be one who has practiced pro-se and won a case by himself/herself. It is necessary to know how the game is played if you wish to know what rules and procedures need changing.

Narrow Your Issues

Early- in the game, most fathers advocates are so overwhelmed by the array of issues that need changing that they have a difficult time focusing on the key issues. You cannot and will not change anything, or appear reasonable, if you take vague, non-directed, angry potshots at the system.

It is important to develop well-documented positions based on fact. Often time the courts are like the legislatures in this way: your opposition in the court system usually is quite thin on fact and long on emotion. Over time, you can convert their support base to your side by taking the hot issue at any given time, documenting it thoroughly; and creating well-written reports and leaflets to be distributed to the "yes" folks (the people in the system who are in a position to change court policy).

Again, utilize the ACFC website studies section to pull form reports on customary issues such as custody, child support, and court procedure. The wheel has already been invented all

you have to do is use it and possibly reshape it a little to fit local issues.

Understand What Judges Do and How To Change Them

You must now step out of your belief system and put yourself in the judge's shoes for a few minutes, so you know why many judges do what they do. You must be capable of speaking to judges on their terms. Many judges greatly dislike the family courts - in fact it is the most hated bench job in the court system. If you can speak to them and show them that your solution will make their job easier, then you have the capacity to change the system in your hands.

Pretend you are a judge. All day long you have attorneys parading in front of your bench, making all sorts of frantic motions alleging everything under the sun. There is no evidence of anything to look at - just a load of "he said" and "she said". You don't get to really meet the parties involved - and when you do you don't have time to really get to know them. Since everyone gets all "dolled up" for court, it is pretty difficult to tell who is the problem.

You don't have much time to study law, but you sure get an education from all those attorneys who both tell you they have the prevailing case cite. It gets pretty complicated, so you have to go with your best guess if you don't already know the answer.

You only have enough docket time to hear minutes of the cases filed in your courtroom, so you will never really have the chance to see any evidence or fact in most of your cases. You have to take your best guess in pushing attorneys to come to an out-of-court settlement in as many cases possible so they don't have to be heard.

If you are a male judge, you are naturally a sucker for a pretty face. If you are a female judge, you might tend to lean in favor of women. You are swamped with work.

Your bottom line: you don't want to see some woman get hurt and your picture on page 1 of the newspaper.

You are involved in politics (although nobody will ever know it because you do it in the back room).

You have people in the Bar telling you what to do, especially women's advocates that work all over the courthouse, and a presiding judge who has a circuit full of caseloads to clear, on your back.

Now you have a better understanding why the court system is a mess, and why; men are in the back seat of the bus. The main reason why we are at the back of the bus is that we do not show up for the divorce war until it is too late - and then only when our individual necks are on the chopping block.

To change a judge, you must first realize that judges are political animals too. They are subject to peer pressure in the judicial lunchroom. They often gossip in the hallways, discussing cases and issues (and cases sometimes get won that way). Judges do not like to be seen as

unfair, and in many cases will change if held up to scrutiny of public opinion.

That is our job, to apply heat on specific issues by highlighting specific cases, until the judge gets the message that he needs to think differently. If you do your job well, you will see some judges changing how they handle cases. If you do it without personally attacking the judge, he may well become your best friend in the courthouse. This does happen, and you can make it happen too!

Be sure to notice when a judge is improving his behavior, and thank him for it when possible.

Remember that courts have been running over men for at least 30 years now. A systemic mindset has developed that cannot be changed overnight. It can, however, be changed over time - a period of years - if you pursue a proper course of advocacy for change of judicial thinking that values fatherhood.

Demonstrate and Leaflet

Here are some basic rules of advocacy that everyone in the group should follow:

Never mail a letter to a judge about your own case. It might get you thrown in jail if it could be construed as being emotional or threatening. Let the group handle judicial relations for you.

Never mail a letter to a judge about any pending case involving a member. Send it through his attorney.

It can be quite effective for an experienced group leader to craft well-written "briefs" regarding bad judicial behavior, so long as it does not involve a member. This letter should be sent to the presiding judge of the jurisdiction, whose job it is to administer all the benches in the circuit. This is particularly useful in highly publicized issues, where you can easily demonstrate errors of the court based on case information that is generally publicly known. When you send this letter, request that the presiding judge distribute it to all his circuit judges if he agrees. This is one way- to develop friends in the courthouse. If you receive a letter back from him informing you that he has passed it along for you, then he probably agreed with you and you know you might have a friend. Your next step is to call the judge and ask him to speak to your group. If things go well, you have a friend in the courthouse you can quietly use to get your thinking into the courthouse. It is quite handy to have such a friend, as you will learn as time goes by.

If you have a case pending, do not participate in demonstrations without first consulting your attorney. If the attorney feels that demonstrating is a big mistake, it may well be. The member should still make his own decision whether to protest or leaflet or not. He should consider attorney's advice and make his own case decisions. However, the group should never pressure the member into anything; such decisions must only be made by the member because it is his case and his win or fall.

It is best to demonstrate and leaflet on a particular issue, holding up the member as being but one example (but only if necessary). It is usually best to demonstrate and leaflet on issues in general, because then you don't put a member at stake. However, there are times when a member cannot afford an attorney and is being so horribly abused that demonstrating on behalf of a member is necessary. Remember -- the public does not get interested in things until they see outrageous and consistent abuses of power - although a particular case can be quite useful as an icon representing that norm.

Demonstrating

Demonstrating is something best left for major issues or serious infractions of judicial ethics. If you demonstrate more than 3-4 times a year, the media will think you are "using" them and intentionally ignore you. Follow the rules of picketing discussed elsewhere in the group development manual.

Leafleting

Leafleting is a highly effective way of promoting your group's issues, while reaching out to folks who need your help. The more you leaflet, the more members you will get. In the early stages of group development, this is an excellent way to get lots of members and make your presence known. There is safety in numbers, and the larger your group is, the more clout you will develop and more brains and hands you will have to get things done.

Leafleting is best done on weekday mornings for about an hour, beginning about thirty minutes before the courts open. This is when most traffic will be going into or out of the building in a short time period. You can spread this effort out by having different folks do it on different days, or making it an "as can" effort. If everyone has leaflets in their cars, they can do the courthouse for a while whenever they are in the area and have a little spare time.

Designing a successful leaflet:

The leaflet should be on legal size paper. This gives you enough paper space to adequately address any issue on a single side of the paper. Since it is an odd size; it won't be easily lost among other papers.

At the top, the leaflet should have your group logo, contact information, and a catchy title that summarizes the problem. It is often best to frame the title as a question (which draws the reader in better). For example, "**Fathers Double-Charged Child Support**" does not draw the reader in as effectively as "**Should Fathers Pay Double Child Support?**" The "question" format is also better because you then are educating and awakening the public (who then will not like the judge) as opposed to the first method (where you are directly attacking the judge). Remember, the judge may change much faster if the "general public" does not like him.

The leaflet should be written without angry words, diatribes, or excessive use of hyphenated descriptors (intended to magnify words). Excessive use of hyphenated descriptors makes your leaflet harder to read and makes you sound radical and angry.

Writing your leaflet in a thoughtful, scholarly manner will get you much farther with

intelligent people than will a terse leaflet. (Note: ask yourself why Warren Farrell is the leading author in the movement, not someone else).

Framing the Leaflet Discussion - Strategy is as Important as Content

Strategy: your language must reach out to everyone, in terms of what they want and how they would wish to be treated. In particular, it must include what women want, showing how what the judge does hurts women. If your leaflet comes across as anti-woman; you might as well put them in the trash can yourself.

Position: You are the good guys with the white hats on bearing answers, not men's hell raisers. If you cannot do it with a clean smile on your face, you are hurting your cause.

Salesmanship: You are selling fatherhood. Sell it as cleanly as possible without calling names. (Did you ever trust a car salesman that told you that the car down the street was a piece of junk?)

Logic: Your job is to “turn the system inside out on itself”. Show the paradoxes, collisions with law and appeal to your readers sense of humanity and common decency. You must show how courts are violating the law on a regular basis.

Help: You are appealing for a little help from them. Make sure you appeal for a few seconds of their time to help you. If they like you, you might get some.

Issue: Narrow your focus to clearly address the issue at hand. Describe it from social, legal, and moral perspectives, and as a matter of conscience. Be sure that you show how the policy hurts women.

Closing: Always end your leaflet with a short paragraph requesting help from the reader. It is quite effective to leave a space at the bottom for the reader to put their name and address. Close the leaflet by saying,. "If you agree that (such and such) is wrong, you can greatly help improve the courts by entering your name and address below, and turning this leaflet in to the clerk's office as you enter the courthouse this morning."

Finding Friends in the Courthouse

If you are doing a good job you should find that you have a few friends in the courthouse rather quickly. You will come to know who they are. Often it will be a judge or two. Keep these judges names out of the limelight - you don't want your opposition to know who your supporters are.

You want to develop one or more judges, who will become your friends as time goes on. They will NOT want to be seen in public as being your friend. They can't be your friend in public because then they would not be "neutral" and they would never hear another case again.

It can be quite effective for an experienced group leader to craft occasional, well-written "briefs" regarding bad judicial behavior, so long as it does not involve a member. This letter

should be sent to the presiding judge of the jurisdiction whose job it is to administer all the benches in the circuit. This is particularly useful in highly publicized issues, where you can easily demonstrate errors of the court based on case information that is generally publicly known.

When you send this letter request that he distribute it to all his circuit judges if he agrees with your analysis. If you receive a letter back from him informing you that he has passed it along for you then he probably- agreed with you and you know you might have a friend. Your next step is to call the judge and ask him to speak to your group. If things go well, you have a friend in the courthouse you can quietly use to get your thinking into the courthouse. It is quite handy to have such a friend as you will learn as time goes by.

Every communication sent to the courts must be written as if you are a lawyer addressing an issue. It must be professional and to the point. If you send even one emotional, angry diatribe you will be seen as a bunch of nuts and your opportunity to make headway will be blown for years.

Never put anything in a letter to a court that could be remotely construed as being a threat or a "veiled" threat unless you want to end up in jail. It is extremely unwise to make demands such as; "If you don't (whatever) by (date) then we will have no choice but to (action). Remember: chess masters never tell their opponent about the next move. Neither should you. State what you don't like, and then leaflet and demonstrate if they don't stop the unreasonable behavior.

Pursuing the Bar

The Bar association is our real problem. No attorney or judge in your state has a job without a license from the Bar. Just like any other trade association, the Bar looks out for its business interests above anything else - and quietly expects its members to play that game.

Unlike dealing with judges, who you must address very carefully, the Bar can be addressed much more directly. The Bar is a defenseless dodo bird that is easy to attack. The deepest fear of the Bar association is that the general public will not like attorneys. Since hardly anyone trusts attorneys to begin with, you can easily make a lot of mileage and gain political support quickly by going after the Bar for its policies and antifamily lobbying efforts.

You need to get copies of Bar publications regarding child support, gender bias committee reports, and any other family law related reports they print. The first thing you will find is this: the Bar is lazy. It does not bother to cite studies and reports in coming to conclusions regarding what sorts of policy are the most useful or effective. Instead, they quote a couple of "leading" attorneys, who manufacture convenient experience-supported factoids at the drop of a hat. Since their agenda usually runs against prevailing studies and reports, it is easy to show the shallowness of their agenda.

By showing the public that the Bar cannot be trusted to tell us what to do in family matters, you can lessen the effect that the Bar has in writing and passing legislation.

Supreme Courts

State Supreme courts are required to revise support tables on a regular basis. It is extremely important for you to organize your members to appear at any hearings held and to file briefs with the court. Visit the ACFC website studies section for a good selection of papers on these issues. Keep in touch with a local attorney who follows these events so you know when and where these hearings will be.

9. The Benefits of Affiliation with ACFC

One of ACFC's primary objectives is to work with our affiliates to assist them in the effort to have 50/50 Shared Parenting become the rebuttable presumption for parents facing a situation where their children will not be living with them on a full time basis.

Our purpose is to facilitate the flow of information and resources across the country which will hasten the adoption of our common goals. Together we can achieve success.

This is an enjoyable chapter to write if for no other reason than we have an opportunity to "toot" the ACFC horn. Besides the manual you are currently holding in your hand, there are a number of additional reasons for affiliating with ACFC. This section provides an opportunity to share the rationale for being associated with an organization providing a national perspective on the problems faced by divorced and unmarried parents. When you are asked, it will be useful for you to be able to provide an explanation of the need for, and benefits of, national association.

PERSPECTIVE ON THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Your affiliation with ACFC provides the public with greater perception of the depth of the problems facing parents separated from their children. When organizations from around the country join together with the purpose of supporting a national organization it sends a strong signal that the problems being experienced locally are part of a much larger systemic problem which needs attention at all levels, local, state and national. As you work to shape public opinion and policy in your area your efforts are enhanced when others you work with know you are part of a large national association focused on the same issues.

ACFC receives requests for information from members of the press, legislators and individuals almost every day. Part of our effort is geared toward putting these information requestors in touch with our local organizations.

CROSS FERTILIZATION OF IDEAS

One goal of ACFC is to help our affiliates become effective agents for change. This manual is an example of part of that effort. Our Affiliate Leadership Advisory Council is another part of that effort. By drawing on the experiences of leaders in efforts around the country we can develop “best practices” which provide the opportunity for affiliates to develop organizations without needing to “reinvent the wheel.” ACFC facilitates this communication among affiliated organizations through its website by providing current information about the movement and developments around the nation.

MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND A RECOGNIZED “BRAND”

The ACFC media campaign conducted over the past six years has been the most effective in the history of the fatherhood and shared parenting movements. ACFC and its personnel have appeared in hundreds articles, news stories, papers, magazines, radio programs and television. We have also been involved in numerous media appearances with our local affiliate organizations and our goal is to continue to drive the press we receive back into our affiliates for the purpose of raising the exposure level of our local groups and providing the “local/national” issue perspective crucial to shaping public support for our combined efforts.

At other places in this manual you have read about the importance of developing your media presence. ACFC has a full time professional working to gain exposure for our issues. His name is John Maguire and he is a valuable resource willing to help you understand how to develop relationships with the media in your area. Please call him if your local press has contacted you and you need assistance in working with them.

The ACFC “Brand” and logo is well known and provides a reference point for discussion of the issues. While not as broadly known as we’d like in the general public, most people know of ACFC if they have been affected by the issues of divorce. Even more importantly, ACFC is well known to the press and to government officials, particularly those officials working and interested in the area of family services. Your ability to claim affiliation with the organization raises your level of credibility when working on issues in the state. As an aside, ACFC bumper stickers are available at low cost to you and are literally displayed on thousands of cars across the country.

GROWING YOUR LOCAL AFFILIATE

Every day ACFC receives calls from people around the country interested in the issues and wanting to know how they can help, or where they can go for help. ACFC actively refers these

people to your local organization. If there is no active affiliate in their area we keep a list of all the people interested and once someone or a group of people comes forward to start a new affiliate we re-contact all the ACFC members in that area and let them know a new group is forming. The value you receive from dues paying members referred by ACFC is of significant benefit in helping your organization develop financial solvency.

ACCESS TO QUALITY RESOURCES

There are a number of resources available to affiliates. The website, ACFC's Affiliate Leadership Advisory Council, the Shared Parenting Tool Kit and knowledgeable speakers are all available to our affiliates.

There is a special segment of the website specifically for leaders which provides excellent information on the "how to's" of running an affiliate and samples of legislation being pursued in states around the nation.

The ACFC Affiliate Leadership Advisory Council is comprised of the leaders of ACFC's top affiliates from around the country who are dedicated to providing insights and advice on how to develop an effective organization. Collectively these individuals represent years of experience in working with the issues and know how to "get it done." Leadership Council members have put together legislation, can teach you how to get your legislation passed, show you how to get your issues carried by the press, and give you the benefit of years of experience in developing quality organizations which have staying power.

As you work to build your organizations remember ACFC exists for the purpose of helping your affiliate become a leading advocate for active two parent involvement in our kids lives. We want to assist you, and ask that you assist us, with developing standards and practices that will result in nationwide acceptance of the principle that "Children Need Both Parents."

10. Raising Financial Support for Your Group

By Michael McCormick

The movie Jerry Maguire made famous the saying "Show me the money." Of the many tasks facing any new organization, finding money and making it show up can be one of the most challenging. For all the tremendous efforts of individuals who contribute countless hours to the cause, there always comes a time when someone must stand up and write a check in order for the efforts to continue. While there may be several of these "benefactor" types willing to write this check one or even several times eventually you will need to have a plan for generating a financially self sustaining operation. The ability to consistently attract funds is what keeps our most effective non-profit organizations operational year after year.

We all know these large groups seem to be able to generate money just for the asking, and they have professional staffs that do nothing but identify sources of funds. By the same token, it's also true many of these organizations started as a result of one or just a few people banding together to realize a vision. One of the country's largest member based organizations started as a college intern's project. The organization is now more than a million members strong with a budget in excess of \$15,000,000 per year. The question then, becomes how do we go from where we are today to being what we know we can be?

PEOPLE WANT YOU TO SUCCEED

You may be surprised at how many individuals and organizations want you to succeed and are willing to help you make that happen. So what are the things that those willing to write you a check want to see? First, they want to see that your organization is stable. Stability doesn't mean you have been around forever, it means that your leadership has a history, regardless of the endeavor, of being able to accomplish goals and reach objectives. Secondly, you should be able to effectively and efficiently communicate why you want the money, what you will do with the funds and why it makes sense from the donor's perspective to supply the money.

Generally you will be expected to supply a written plan when you are asking for anything greater than a modest sum of money. Written plans serve several important purposes. Not the least of which is that it will get your team members on the same page of the play book. Everyone will know what their role is with regards to the project. Many times contributors will speak to several members of your organization before making the contribution. A plan everyone

is comfortable with means all your members will be relaying the same message to your contributor(s). Consistency of purpose, communicated to your donor by each person from the organization the donor speaks to, conveys the message that members of the organization are on the same wavelength. A written plan gives you a yardstick against which your success can be measured. Be prepared for donors to ask what kind of giving those asking for the gift have done.

What should be in the plan? A description of the project or program for which money is being raised. Include in the description a timeline for the project. Is there a one time need for funds or a need for funding on an ongoing basis. Work out the budget for the project. Also included should be a description of the individuals involved in the project and any particular qualifications or areas of expertise they have which will help the project be successful. Never, ever talk to a prospective donor from the perspective of we need your gift or we might not be here tomorrow. No one likes to think they may be throwing their money away.

Okay, so where and how do we get the money? There are a number of ways. First off know that individuals give approximately 93% of the charitable dollars raised today. Foundations account for only about 7% of all funds raised. Both are viable sources of funds and the approach to each is similar insofar as they will both want to see similar things from the organization. Let's look at approaches for each type of giver.

APPROACHING THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR

There are several ways to approach individual contributors. One good way is to hold a small dinner for those people you believe can support the organization in a substantial way. Expect these contributors to want to know what kind of giving you have done before they part with their dollars. The kind of initial giving that takes place can set the tone for your whole campaign. The individual gift amount is not as important as how the gift is viewed. For instance, a modest gift in terms of dollar amount can have tremendous impact if the giver is giving sacrificially. Five dollars given from a person who only has ten dollars is a sacrificial gift. You need to be willing to part with your own dollars when asking others to part with theirs.

Once you have identified a good potential giver, don't stop talking to and pursuing them even if they turn you down on the first request. Most people of means worked hard for the money they have. You may be turned down several times before the gift is made, and you may just be turned down to see what your reaction is to being turned down. If you do not get the contribution on the first try, keep that potential donor informed of what you are doing, your successes and needs, and let them see by both your actions and words that you are in it for the long haul. Persistency breeds respect. The ability to proceed in the face of adversity indicates character. So keep on asking. The most important element in the equation is not necessarily the giver it's the tenacity of the person asking. The single greatest indicator of success will be how often you ask.

Many times individuals may be willing to contribute but might not want to go first. This situation provides you with a tremendous opportunity. At this point you can set up a pool of gifts, in which one gift triggers multiple gifts or you might try a gift matching program. In the

pool of gifts you may have a situation where many people will give once somebody else goes first. It typically works like this, a donor might say: "You know, I would like to support your cause, I'm concerned mine might be the only gift you get and if it is it won't be enough." Ask the donor if they would contribute if you had commitments from others to give. Assuming the answer is "yes" then this is your opportunity to create a pool of gifts through multiple individuals by approaching others to say; "we have giving commitments, we need to have X dollars of commitments before people will fulfill their pledge." With 10 people-ready to commit \$1,000 if someone else goes first, it's much easier to get an individual to go first. A word of caution however, make sure you have a pool of commitments before doing this, if you do this and can't fulfill the other commitments you will have lost your credibility and may cause irreparable harm to your organization.

A matching program can work well with both individuals and foundations. This program works in such a way that a donor, wanting to assure theirs is not the only gift, will give you a "match" for all other dollars you raise. The match may be dollar for dollar, 2 to 1, etc.. Anytime you feel you have a giver who may be hesitating with a gift because of concern about the organization not raising enough support you might consider offering one of these alternatives.

Show your donor why it makes sense for them to give the gift. Just like we send our children to school to be educated it is the organization's responsibility to educate potential donors on *why* they should be contributing. When you meet someone *who* gives freely you can be sure it is because they have been educated by others before you on the importance of giving. If possible relate the request for a gift directly to an expected impact or result in the life of the giver.

HAVE A PLAN AND KEEP ASKING

In summary, when approaching individuals who have the ability to make substantial gifts, have a plan, keep the potential donor informed as to the organization's progress, even if the potential donor hasn't given yet, and ask, ask and ask again.

Another source of funds for your organization are foundations. Foundations come in several types and fund a multitude of causes. You will typically want to work with foundations which are independent. This means the foundation supports and awards grants to organizations that send applications to the foundation. Don't spend time on operating foundations, operating foundations are funding activities and organizations the foundation has previously selected and do not typically accept applications from the public.

A tremendous resource for locating foundations is the Foundation Center. The Foundation Center is located in New York City with supporting offices in several cities around the country. There are national collections of material in New York and Washington, DC and field offices in San Francisco, Cleveland and Atlanta. The Foundation Center is supported by foundations for the specific purpose of helping groups locate resources for fund raising. Don't worry if you are not in one of the cities above, the Foundation Center has a network of over 200 participating libraries around the country. These library collections provide the core Foundation Center publications relating to philanthropy and foundations. The phone number of the main New York

center is 212 620-4230. The website is located at <http://www.fdncenter.org> and contains valuable information.

Many people have the idea that Foundations want you to go through the application process just so you can get turned down. This is not the case. By law these foundations must give away 5% of their asset base each year. In 1996 this amounted to almost \$10,000,000,000, (that's right \$10 billion). So make the effort to get funded. The Foundation Directory, published by the Foundation Center will give you a profile of each foundation, the amounts of money they have awarded, grant request submission requirements and types of projects the foundation will fund. Like people, foundations have their own "personality" and gravitate to specific types of causes and requests. The Foundation Center provides excellent material on how to write an effective grant proposal and how to approach the foundations.

There is no "magic" secret to getting money from Foundations. You must apply and make it easy for the foundation to do business with you. The process of getting funds from a foundation can take several months. It may seem like they want a good deal of information from you and it may seem like a lot of effort, but when notification of the grant is received, the work will have been worth it. Don't wait until the end of the year to apply, many foundations have made their grant decisions for the current year by September. Remember, that like individuals, the key to getting funds from foundations is to ask. If you don't get funded this year, keep applying.

Another source of funding and one of the fastest growing fund sources is the grant making public charity. These are primarily Community Foundations and their purpose is to raise money in a specific geographic area and then give the money away in that area. You can locate information about these foundations in your area through the National Directory of Grantmaking Public Charities.

SMALL GIFTS COUNT, TOO

Far and away the most money raised in America today comes from the folks who give \$10 here, \$50 or \$100 there and the like. Every organization needs programs collecting contributions at this level. The amount of interest (not to mention money) you can generate is tremendous. We've all seen the bake sale at school to send kids to camp and other similar programs. You might consider the grown-up version of these same types of activities. Member based organizations with an annual membership renewal fee can keep a constant stream of dollars flowing. Many people are more inclined to give when they also receive something tangible in return. Fund raising dinners in support of the organization are a good way to go. Developing a yellow pages directory for supporters by selling listings to local businesses works. Putting together a calendar with local business advertising on the calendar makes sense. It can also be a good idea to work together with other groups or organizations on fund raising projects. Have a booth at their event.

Consider teaming up with local businesses to raise support. One of the best programs I've seen is where local merchants ask customers if they want to round up their purchase to the next dollar with the proceeds helping the local organization. The ideas for raising funds in this way

are limited only by your imagination.

On a final note should you have a donor who wants to make a major contribution of either stocks, old life insurance policies or property, or wants to know about the tax incentives available by making major gifts, contact the national office of ACFC. We can help you secure those types of gifts and will be happy to illustrate the tax benefits of various giving strategies for your potential donor. Our approach is to maximize the living benefits for the individual making the gift and show them the many substantive benefits associated with giving. ACFC has professional staff who will help your group facilitate major gifts.

Fundraising comes down to asking for the gift. A wise individual once said the "five rights" of successful giving come down to knowing how to; "Ask the right person, to ask the right person, for the right amount, at the right time, for the right reason." Enjoy the effort, successful fundraising is one of the most rewarding endeavors you'll ever undertake.

SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS ON FUND-RAISING OPPORTUNITIES

Fund-raising has to be an integral part of all your group's activities. The most important factor will be the one over which you have total control; your attitude. Every thing you do, every service you provide, every method you employ, are all fund-raising opportunities. Your attitude needs to be entrepreneurial and opportunistic.

Consider the sources of potential funding support. They include -

Member Dues

Donations from individual members

Fees for service

Donations from supporters in the general public

Foundation support

Local United Way Support (as an agency)

Corporate/Foundation support

Local government funds

State/Federal support

Members of the Board of Directors/Trustees

Further Ideas on Foundation Support

The keys to foundation support are research, preparation and approach.

Begin by doing your homework. Remember your group is serving a defined geographical area. Local foundations are much more likely to support you than national foundations (i.e. Ford, Rockefeller, etc.). Call the headquarters of the Foundation Center in New York City at 1-800-424-9836. Ask for the local Foundation Center closest to you. These are valuable repositories of information and expertise. If you can visit a Foundation Center, do so. Many

sponsor classes to train you to do effective fund-raising. Most classes are free.

The foundation world exists to support worthy activities. They do not want to waste time - yours or theirs. They want to help you direct your efforts.

Even if no Foundation Center is nearby, a local library or university should have an essential reference, "The Foundation Directory". This Directory will provide all the information you need to get started. The information is organized in a variety of ways.

Start with the closest geographical area. Then, look for the appropriate "Major Interest" code. Each foundation lists the general type of activities they support. For ACFC, the Major Interest Code is usually called 'Family and Child Welfare' under the general category of 'Human Services'.

Each foundation entry will list the number of grants and the total given. By simple division you'll get an average grant. This is useful in matching up your needs with their average grant. If you are seeking \$40,000 in annual support, it is probably a waste of time to target a foundation with an average grant of \$1,250.

The entry will then list most of the agencies funded last year. This gives you a 'feel' for the level of commitment to your type of activity.

Guidelines for applying are then listed and this will indicate how complicated (and therefore, how much of your time) it will be to submit an application. Some will request a brief (two pages) letter of inquiry. Some will then consider that letter as your application, accompanied by a budget, a 501(c)(3) determination letter, a list of your Board, and accountability criteria.

Other foundations will consider your initial letter and reply, asking for a complete proposal. This proposal may have to follow the Foundation format. (they'll provide it; or follow a local "Grantmaker Common Application Form", or, they may expect you to produce a complete proposal with no guidance.)

This section will also indicate application deadlines. In any event, use this "Directory" as a basic guide and contact the foundation director for an annual report, a guideline statement and an application package.

At the end of the Foundation entry is a very important list - the Officers, Directors and Trustees of the foundation. Familiarize yourself with these names - they are the 'movers and shakers' in your community. Check out the names in 'Who's Who,' the newspaper, society pages and ask your Directors if they know any of them. "Who's Who" will give you educational, business, corporate and philanthropic *affiliations*. One of the delights of this endeavor is to discover heretofore unknown connections. You may then ask your contact to provide a personal or written endorsement of you and your group.

The strongest personal endorsement is not off a resume. It comes from someone with credibility at the foundation who indicates that you're stable, reliable and credible. In other words, given funding, you will follow through and achieve what you plan. Personal credibility is most important. Remember-foundations assume yours is a worthy cause. They are not funding a cause -they are funding you.

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR MEMBERS HELPS BRING IN FUNDS

We would like to share a tale of two fatherhood groups. Both are good, fairly strong. They have different ways of acting, though. We'll call them the Enthusiasm Fatherhood Group and the Businesslike Fatherhood Group.

Enthusiasm Group has a master membership list. It sends a newsletter out to its members irregularly, about once every four months. Once a year, near the end of the year, it sends out an appeal for donations and membership renewals. That's it. During periods of high press coverage, the members read about it, but when press coverage is low, Enthusiasm Group seems to disappear completely from the radar screen.

Businesslike Group also has a master membership list, but it uses that list far more actively. Businesslike Group is structured around regular monthly meetings, and a yellow postcard goes out to every group member every month, announcing the date, time and place of the meeting, special speakers, and so on. Thus the entire membership is reminded every month of the existence of the group, along with a sketch of the group's news.

Businesslike Group also sends out a newsletter every few months.

But the real difference comes once a year at the end of the year. Where Enthusiasm Group relies on the mail, Businesslike Group uses the mail and runs a phonathon for a week. A volunteer phone bank works for several evenings one week, and every member receives a phone call and is asked for support. The callers are members, and the President of Businesslike Group is right there, and he can talk to anyone who wants to talk to him.

Here's how Enthusiasm Group fell into its habit of raising funds only once a year. It is run by a group of 15 of so energetic activists whose main interaction is with each other, and a core of 30 followers, and the press. This group of 15 tended to forget about the 400 or so dues-paying members who never showed up for demonstrations, because they were out of sight. It delegated fund-raising to a treasurer, and his main idea was a fund-raising letter. No one else found fund-raising interesting, and so it was done his way.

Businesslike Group has an executive director with a history of success in self-employment. He tended to think of the group's membership as "customers" who needed to be kept in good standing. He kept fund-raising in mind steadily. He was always looking for ways

to ask people for financial support, and regarded the monthly post-cards as a business service that the group owed its memberships in return for their dues. It was not easy to get those cards out every month, but it mattered.

Businesslike Group is now on much steadier financial footing and has a budget many times that of Enthusiasm Group. Can you see why?

Now, Businesslike Group has an executive director who is a professional with an office and a secretary; this guy is inherently organized. But even Enthusiasm Group could have made better decisions early in its history. When it delegated the fund-raising to one man and let him write the checks, it became hostage to the way its treasurer wanted to do things. And the treasurer was not a real customer-service kind of guy.

11. Tips on a Successful Organization

David A. Roberts, Chairman, ACFC

MANAGING A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

It is often said that a non-profit organization (NPO) is a business like any other, and should be managed like a business. The difference lies in the non-profit status, which leads to critical differences from the way most businesses are run. This paper explains how the **American Coalition For Fathers And Children (ACFC)** operates, which is somewhat different from the way many people normally think of a business. The purpose is both to explain the ACFC philosophy, and to offer ideas for how local organizations can operate compatibly with ACFC to achieve our common goals.

According to recent Gallup polls, the overwhelming majority of the American people recognize that fatherhood is one of the most critical social issues today. But most of government, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy are still operating from a philosophy at least thirty years behind the times. Currently, half the children in America grow up without their father at some point in their lives. This trend is spreading throughout the world. Repeated studies have shown a link between fatherlessness and child pathologies such as school dropout, delinquency, drug use, teen pregnancy, incarceration and child suicide. Most of society is still unaware of the magnitude of this problem, and the cause-and-effect relationship between fatherlessness and social breakdown. The social engineers who have caused this catastrophe are still generally proposing solutions that make the problem worse, rather than better. Thus the primary mission of ACFC is educational.

As a national organization ACFC seeks to mobilize the majority who already agree with us, through a network of local groups for individual support, and to deal with local variations of the problem. The ACFC Affiliation Policy is designed to encourage maximum local initiative through voluntary association with local groups. Consistent with this, the national organization operates internally with the same consensus decision-making process that it applies in relations with local groups. Because of already existing agreement and common interest, there is no need

to control any person or group. Instead, we unite around our common goals.

The mission of ACFC has far-reaching implications. The world economy is changing rapidly from an agricultural/industrial base to the Information Age. Family structures and social attitudes that evolved in previous times need to be adapted to an economy where men and women are equally qualified for most jobs. Previous family and business structures emphasized control in ways that may have been necessary to provide for the material needs of mankind, but limited personal growth for both men and women in ways no longer acceptable or necessary for most people. ACFC believes that we must now grant to men in the home, the same equality that women have achieved in the workplace. ACFC is forging a new consensus on equality between men and women, both at home and in the workplace, and is organized consistently with that purpose.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Most of us have some ideas of the way a business ought to be run, either from experience as a manager, or as an employee of a business. Generally most employees think that management ought to do a better job, and most managers think that employees ought to a better job, but most of us have already thoughts on this subject. This comment is hardly as frivolous as it seems, but suggests a principle from the field of quality management called "continuous improvement." No matter what our experience, either as a manager or as an employee, all of us could do better, and hopefully whatever our role, most of us will find useful ideas for improvement in what follows.

The achievement of quality management is better understood as a "continuous process", rather than as a condition that is ever finally realized. Situations and personnel are always changing. Any organization is best thought of as a team effort, and management must stay on top of ever changing situations. This particularly applies to NPOs, which are mostly volunteer efforts where everyone's contribution is important to the overall effort. Profit or salary is the primary motivator in a normal business, but anyone involved in an NPO is probably doing so at some personal sacrifice, and could make more money elsewhere. The primary motivation in NPOs is personal commitment to the purpose of the NPO. Perhaps the most important difference in management style between profit and non-profit businesses is that authoritarian management methods are rarely appropriate to the non-profit world. Consensus building techniques where everyone's opinion is sought and valued are the best alternative. NPO management is primarily a job of setting goals that represent the common purpose of the group, and will achieve its common purposes.

NON-PROFIT STATUS

Since the dawn of history, people have gathered together in groups to achieve what they believed to be worthy public purposes. Although Western culture exalts and emphasizes the individual, mankind is also a social animal, and many people will always be willing to make sacrifices for the public good. In America, Congress recognizes this public spirit in Section 501

(c) of the IRS tax code, which provides favorable tax treatment to groups engaged in charitable, educational or scientific purposes. Unfortunately, because Congress gave only general direction to the IRS, most of Section 501(c) is left up to quirks of interpretation by IRS regulations and various court rulings.

This field is such a muddle that any group seeking status under Section 501(c) is well advised to consult an attorney. A critical question is whether to apply under 501(c)3 or 501(c)4. Both require that the organization not "inure to the benefit of any private individual." Both are tax exempt, but 501(c)4 places no limits on lobbying and denies tax deductions to contributors. 501(c)3 allows these tax deductions, but generally limits lobbying expense to about 10% of the total budget of the organization. The muddle enters the picture in questions of exactly what constitutes lobbying, and in accounting requirements. The states also vary in their treatment of non-profits. The ACFC Group Development Manual is some help, but you should seek the assistance of a good local attorney and an accountant before seeking this status.

ACFC is a 501(c)3, but depending on exactly what a local group wants to focus its effort on, 501(c)4 may be the preferred choice. In view of our clear interest in lobbying, this is a critical area for us. The IRS is known for audits that can destroy an organization that doesn't follow their rules, but can be fairly reasonable if you do follow their rules. Don't expect the IRS to make much *effort to* tell you what their rules are. Don't even assume that the IRS knows themselves what their rules are - the IRS is notorious for giving bad advice. Our best advice is that until a local organization is big enough to afford a good attorney, it shouldn't even apply for 501(c) status. As long as it's only a few people meeting in someone's living room, there is no need for the hassle. People don't need the "help" of the IRS to do good things.

OPEN AN OFFICE

As soon as possible your organization should try to move beyond the living room or kitchen table meeting stage and open an office. We hope you are already at the office stage, because a formal office of some sort is critical to give focus to your efforts. People in politics and the media will take you much more seriously if you have an office, with someone answering the phones during regular hours in a businesslike manner. Restoration of fatherhood for half the children in America is a serious business. We can't expect to achieve this goal without serious effort.

Opening an office may not be as hard as first imagined. Quite likely, someone in your organization may already have office space to donate, office equipment to use, and/or a receptionist to answer the phones. All you may need to do to get started is to put a new phone line in an already existing office, have the receptionist answer that phone in the name of your organization and forward the calls to whomever in your organization is appropriate to handle them. Be creative in getting started. Try whatever works for you.

CLEAR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Whatever the level of operation of your group, you need to establish a clear structure to

your organization as soon as possible. The fundamental nature of any organization is getting people to work together toward common goals in a coordinated manner. To do this effectively, it is essential that each officer in your organization understand their part in the larger whole. One of the best ways to do this is to create an organization chart. It doesn't have to be fancy, but is a one page document that lets everyone know at a glance what their relationship to the larger whole is.

Such a chart is exactly what you need to give to a receptionist, if you are just opening an office. It is also perhaps the easiest way to keep the organization in balance as it grows, and to assure that someone is responsible for each part of the whole effort. Each box on the chart should include the name and phone number of the person handling that function. In addition to the President or group leader, someone should be handling membership services, the media, legislative issues, and fundraising and group activities. Don't overlook boxes for your attorney and accountant when you get to that point.

The point is that you don't need anything as complicated as an Organization Manual, but you do need a clear organizational structure. A one page organization chart is all that you need to get started, and an essential management tool in any case. One of the best ways to motivate people is to give them a job to do, and confidence that if they do it well, it will contribute effectively to the overall purpose of the organization. Motivation is especially important in the non-profit area, because individual financial profit is not and cannot be the reason that people are involved in the first place.

This is the basic organization chart.
Fill in names and phone numbers for all positions.

Name of Organization

Board of Directors

President

Membership Services

Media Relations

Legislation

Activities

Fundraising

Legal

Accounting

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

As indicated above, because of the essentially volunteer nature of non-profits, consensus decision making is the preferred choice. Once you open an office, it may be necessary to pay a secretary and/or other staff members. Because of market forces in the non-profit world, even then you should expect to be able to find someone who is willing to do the necessary jobs at less than they could make elsewhere. Money is tight everywhere, and the same principle applies to you as applies to any business: pay as little as you can to get each job done. The non-profit world continually faces the problem that you usually can't simply order people around, or there will be serious problems. The solution to this problem is consensus decision making. Managers used to the for-profit world may need to adjust their thinking to this idea.

The ACFC Organization Manual states that giving direct orders should be avoided whenever possible. It is an indication of a prior defect of management, and subject to Quality Assurance analysis and recommended corrective action. It should always be assumed that employees are working largely because of commitment to the cause of the non-profit, and this commitment must be relied on. NPO managers in particular need to be aware that whenever an order has to be given to accomplish a task, initiative and morale within the group is inevitably reduced. Whenever possible, NPO managers should try to talk out problems, rather than use the "simple" solution of giving orders.

ACFC applies the same principle of voluntary association based on an assumption of goodwill, both inside our organization, and outside our organization in the ACFC Affiliation Policy. This principle is both essential to the non-profit world, and a key to the success of ACFC. The same principle of voluntary association based on mutual respect is essential to family structures of the future.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The purpose of a Board of Directors is to manage the affairs of the organization. Having a Board of Directors assures that there actually is an organization, not just one individual carrying all the load. It isn't absolutely necessary to have a Board of Directors, but if you want to get 501 (c) status, the IRS requires at least three Board members. There is no upper limit, but you should probably keep the number of directors small enough that it is easy to get everybody together in a room to discuss issues. A Board should also be small enough that every member gets a chance to be heard on all issues, so that a consensus that represents the entire Board can be reached. Too many people on a Board is one of the surest ways to create factions and divisions within a group. The Board of Directors of ACFC is limited to nine members for these reasons.

Board members should be people who have demonstrated sacrifice and commitment to the purposes of the group. This is the best assurance that they care about the issues, and will continue to be involved in the organization. Other than commitment to the issues, ability to attend Board meetings is probably the major requirement. You might consider creating a Board of Advisors for people who are committed to the cause, but can't attend Board Meetings. The more people you can involve, the stronger your group will be.

A Board of Directors should set general policy, but not try to micro-manage details of the organization. Nobody likes to sit through long board meetings discussing trivial details. Minor operational questions should be left to the President or chief executive officer to decide, who should refer major policy decisions to the Board for guidance. A Board meeting should have a written agenda, or simple list of issues to cover, and you should stick to it, going through the list one-by-one. When you finish the agenda, adjourn to a coffee house for further informal discussion if desired. It is a lot easier for people to continue to attend Board meetings if they are efficiently conducted.

Properly done, a Board of Directors can make a major contribution to broadening the base of support and influence within your community. In general, NPOs should operate more like a family than a profit oriented business. A Board of Directors should be the central vehicle for consensus building within your organization, and operate according to the same principles that are necessary to solve the current crisis of American families.

ROTATION OF LEADERSHIP

Although at times it may seem that certain individuals are essential to the success of an organization, if over time an organization does not move beyond this idea, it is inevitably self-limiting. Just as democratic governments and corporations do, the strongest organizations have an orderly succession of leadership. For one person to remain in any position of leadership too long is inconsistent with the principles of consensus building and shared decision making, and particularly inappropriate for NPO management.

The same principle applies at all levels of an organization. Rotating positions within an organization develops leaders who are better able to understand each other's perspective and work more smoothly together. When more than one person has experience doing a given job, the organization can continue to function smoothly if that person gets sick, goes on vacation, or is unable to continue for any reason. Likewise at the upper levels, an organization will do better over time if several people who have experienced the top perspective remain in the organization and can be called on if necessary. We need to think in terms of long-term solutions to long-term problems.

Perhaps one of the most critical tasks of NPO management is to cultivate the skills and talents of everyone in the organization, with a view to developing leaders who can function at all levels and grow with the organization. Generally, we must be developing the same skills within our organizations that will be necessary for successful families in the new age of personal growth that mankind is entering.

HOW TO DO GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING AND LOBBYING

By David Usher

We are engaged in a struggle to change public perceptions and the legal system at the same time. People often ask me which is easier, to change law and let the public follow, or to change the minds of voters so that laws follow. The analogy that seems best to me is "a rising tide lifts all boats." PR and legislation are so closely intertwined that we cannot make meaningful divisions. The real issues in educating the *public* and in lobbying for different laws are the same. We need careful organization, we need money, and we need people to get the job done. Setting up or strengthening your organization and finding money are two different problems. This section will help you with the people part of lobbying and public relations.

THE GRASSROOTS PROCESS HAS SIX STEPS

1. Find your members or volunteers.
2. Train them and target their energies..
3. Motivate them.
4. Reward them.
5. Keep them around.
6. Capitalize on their work.

1. Find your members or volunteers

Look everywhere. Train your members to look everywhere. Put up gaudy colored signs in supermarkets. Run ads in the nickel press, the school paper, the union magazine, the church bulletin, the coin dealers' trade sheet. Remind current members to bring *a* friend to meetings. YOU bring someone new to every meeting! Talk to people everywhere you go. Pester the local TV and radio stations for public service announcement space, and provide them with tapes to run. Hand out business cards with the name of your group and the mission statement summarized on the back. Use bumper stickers, coffee mugs, t-shirts with the group's name and phone number prominently featured.

2. Train them and target their energies

Never assume that your members know what to do. Tell them specifically. Hold "citizen lobbyist training sessions" either in place of a regular meeting, or as a special event. Make these meetings desirable : have cookies, pizza, soda, babysitting available.

Give the members sample letters to press and politicians, lists of phone numbers and

sample phone scripts. Send an experienced campaign volunteer with them the first time they work on a campaign.

Give them exhaustive lists of possible lobbying/campaign/publicity activities, and ask for a tentative commitment on the spot of what they might be best at. Explain the court-watch program and give them court-watch forms. The same goes for the attorney evaluation sheets. Make sure every member has a copy of the state's information on the legislature and legislative processes, and any other printed information about local press, government and civic organizations. Plan to work on campaigns to elect and un-elect friendly and unfriendly politicians, especially those who are or might someday be in crucial positions.

Make friends in the media whenever you can, by being polite, businesslike and ACCURATE. Make your regular monthly meetings a PR event by having an in-house project every month.

Never make the mistake so many men's and fathers rights groups have made -- never isolate yourself and your group as the "only true religion." Cooperate on a defined and limited basis with anyone who shares even one of your goals. There are literally thousands of groups out there doing some of the same work you are doing. Combine your efforts and multiply your effectiveness.

3. Motivate them

Tell your people in no uncertain terms why they need to work the plan and what will happen if they don't. A good example might be:

"Last year senator so-and-so was the chairman of the rules committee and cast the tie-breaking *no* vote that kept our bill from reaching the floor for an open discussion and a vote ON THE RECORD. As a result of his *no* vote, we do not have a recorded vote on our issues, and we don't know for sure who will really vote with us and who will not. Now we have a wonderful opportunity. Senator so-and-so's opposition tells me that his district is changing and he is vulnerable. If we can provide the opposition's campaign with four volunteers, we may have a different face in senator so-and-so's seat next year. Bob, I know you'll volunteer. Who wants to help Bob, or are you all interested in seeing senator so-and-so veto out our bill again next year?"

Always provide sodas and food for your volunteers.

Print up impressive looking appreciation certificates and hand them out liberally. Give anyone who wants it a title as "official whatever."

Allow people the absolute maximum of autonomy in the volunteer jobs, and acknowledge their ownership of the job. Take every opportunity to compare the "how it is now" with "what we are working for."

4. Reward them

When someone is on TV, show the tapes at meetings so the glory gets shared. Bring copies of letters to editors to the meetings. Talk up every achievement. Copy and distribute any good news in print.

When even a small amount of legislative progress is made or a local newspaper columnist changes his or her stand even slightly, recognize the progress for the victory it really is.

Have a poster with pictures of the stars of the group, and make sure everyone gets on it for something. Have family pizza parties, picnics, ball games or whatever, not just for the fun but also specifically to reward yourselves for a job well done.

5. Keep them around

Everyone is busy and everyone has competing demands on their time. Through the strategies listed above, local newsletters, regular meetings (third Tuesday of every month at the Elks club on Main Street) will keep them coming back.

Make a “long-term goals” poster and mark it off as you take the steps. It's just like reading a novel -- publishers know if you can coax people into reading the first two chapters, they will read the whole book. Get your members hooked on a long term plan, and provide lots of fun in watching even the smallest parts happen.

Closely control negative and hostile people who want to do nothing but gripe or discuss their personal cases endlessly. Provide a "support session" for emotional stories and venting, and keep it totally separate from the business meeting.

Have a clear, positive agenda for each meeting and stick to it so people can see that things get done. Everyone wants to be on a winning team. Make yours look like a winner!

6 Capitalize on their work

Once you have a group of loyal members writing letters, making phone calls, monitoring the media and the courts, and so on, you must do something with the social impetus they create. If you do not have the experience and skills to plan and implement a long-term state lobbying strategy, the American Coalition For Fathers And Children will help you train regular part or full time lobbyists and craft a lobbying plan that will work. Together we can make a huge difference.

When the votes come down, press and legislators who hear about your issues only three times a year will default to the status quo. But press and politicians you helped elect or helped get ahead—those who have file folders and phone logs full of your members' ugly stories--those people will respond to your agenda. With the grassroots support in place, lobbyists have an easier, or at least a possible, job. Get your grassroots going, and the personal daily lobbying will follow.

HOW FATHERS CAN WORK ON POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

By David R. Usher

Working on political campaigns is an absolute necessity. Many fathers' advocates do not understand how family law became so anti-father and anti-family. Here's why: fathers never showed up in the legislatures, caucuses and campaigns.

But there is an even better reason to work campaigns. Those who listen when you make the rounds of the legislature, and those who are willing to stick their necks out in the political arena, both need and deserve your political support. If you don't help them stay in office or get elected, you are only making your legislative efforts more difficult.

Better yet, it is a wonderful thing to have friends in the legislature who will tip you off about things in the legislature, warn you of impending doom, and give you political tools to diminish the other side during legislative season.

The easiest way to get this boost is to simply work for a few hours putting out yard signs or working a poll for candidates you support. Group leaders should come to know who their strongest supporters are. At a minimum, one person in the group should be the political analyst: keeping track of supporters and networking to groom new ones. Once you have found one trustworthy supporter, you can use this legislator to point you to others who are likely to also be supportive.

The best way to start is to look up candidates who are strong pro-life and anti-gambling supporters. While these are not our issues per-se, they do fit the pro-family mold. If you are going in cold, you may need to do a little education work because a legislator who is stone cold on our niche of pro-family law may not have the slightest idea of what a pro-family divorce statute might look like.

Many of these politicians are quite concerned about divorce and father-absence, but few of them know what to do about it. They traditionally fall into the old solutions of child support for lack of understanding. A little the education on your part will go a long way in a hurry. For example, convincing a legislator that increasing child support is just like providing funding for abortions will score a hit almost every time with a pro-life legislator.

Do not think I am suggesting you become a pro-life activist. It is simply an issue that has very strong parallels; the question has to do with the futures of children and the killing of the intact two-parent families that traditionally raise children and serve the interests of most women best.

Again, your thrust with politicians and campaigns must **not** be as a father's-rights activist. This paradigm will not get us anywhere -- as has been proven over 25 years of fruitless efforts. Society does not care what men want. It only cares about what is good for women and children.

Most women simply want a decent home with kids, a white picket fence, two cars and as few problems in their lives as possible. The other side sold many women on the idea that divorce could give them these things without needing a husband. Government literally enticed women out of the family, many of whom are now fed up with cheap government solutions that do not work. It is a fact that 30 years of divorce, illegitimacy, and government entitlements have left more women and children in poverty, and at risk for their personal safety, than any other event in the history of America. They already basically know this--and all you have to do is point out the value of having a husband to win them over.

When you come along talking about how having a husband is the greatest predictor of happy, secure lives for women--you will have many open ears among both liberal and conservative grassroots women. Most grassroots men will be attracted to this as well, for we "feminist" men were brought up to do whatever we think women want, no matter what.

When you talk like this to legislators, you will be teaching them how to win on true pro-family turf - but without getting too deeply into specific issues. In any campaign, sweeping feel-good statements do far better than detailed diatribes on issues that "Joe Citizen" knows little about. Hence, your campaign education work should generally teach your supporters how to win on pro-family issues.

This style of pro-family activism gives us what we want, not by demanding it for fathers, but by convincing normal women that having a solvent husband in their life is more likely to get them what they want than anything else. We have loads of studies and reports proving that father-absence is the primary predictor of poverty for women and children, and of illegitimacy, truancy, teen drug abuse, gang involvement, domestic violence, and a whole array of social problems. By pointing out that having a husband ends most of these problems, for the benefit of women and children, we have a politically-correct pro-family agenda that the other side cannot effectively counter.

HOW TO "SCOUT" POLITICIANS

- Do not play party politics. There are as many antifamily Republicans as Democrats -- they just show their antifamily colors a bit differently. Things will vary state-by-state; just get to know yours -- and then play party politics where it is convenient to do so.
- Do not assume that politicians know what they are doing in family law. Few politicians know why family law is so messed up. They react out of 30 years of bad legislative habits, and most just need a good education.
- Keep your eyes open for potential on both sides of the aisle, supporting any candidate who is willing to work our issues. Often, a politician who was creamed in a divorce; or who has a close relative who has been through that wringer is an excellent candidate -- especially if you can demonstrate that what you know provides answers to the problems he or she has seen.
- Watch what politicians do with their feet, not with their lips.

- Politicians who do not listen to factual studies and reports, those who reject them in a hail of emotional retorts, are politically sold out. Don't waste your time trying to teach these poor souls -- you don't want them to teach them how to fake a pro-family position. Spend your time with those who are interested in fact and who want to know more.
- During elections, keep a close eye on hot races involving candidates you really like and candidates you really dislike. Focus on saving the politicians you really like and grooming supporting candidates opposing incumbents that you do not like. Focus on candidates in the House or Senate committees that deal with family issues.
- People need to focus on the makeup of the judiciary committee because these folks affect the progress of fatherhood legislation in your state.

When your legislators win--then you can discuss specific legislation you would like to see in the future, but not during the campaign. Legislators go nuts during campaigns, and are unlikely to be interested in drafting legislation or getting into deep discussions.

WHAT TO DO DURING ELECTION CYCLES

- Get hold of a candidates list (with names, addresses, and phone numbers) as early as you can after close of filing. You can get this at your local county election commissioner's office, or possibly download it off the internet.
- Go to your group members and ask them if they would like to "adopt a politician." Since most of us would like to do that, you should get a lot of volunteers. Ask your members whether they want to do yard signs or work a poll on election day.
- Call candidates you wish to support right away and give them names and numbers of one or two members (preferably in their district) who have volunteered. Call the members back so they know who they have adopted.
- Analyze the races of legislators you don't like. Call up the opposing candidates to see if you like them. Also, be sure to check them out to see if they have a chance of winning! Candidates who have little speaking presence, or who are hot under the collar, are not likely to win. You may wish to ask some incumbents you know (who are politically hip) if so-and-so has a chance of winning. Lesson: you do not have a lot of folks to volunteer. So volunteer them wisely!
- If your state has judicial elections, work the family courts as if your life depended on it (it does).

OTHER IDEAS:

- If your organization is a 501(c)3, it is best not to make political donations. Keep your support work limited to "non-expenditures": providing volunteers.

- Remember that in races for state Representatives and Senators, just a few helping hands will make or break a campaign. These races are often funded on but a few thousand dollars for yard signs and bumper stickers (their presence across the community has a real effect on voting). Many campaigns fail for a lack of hands to get them in place because so many Americans are desperately apathetic.
- If you are very politically active and well liked in your community you can offer to do stump appearances for your candidate at local meetings. During election season, candidates sometimes end up with two events at the same time and can use a trusty "known" person to stump for them.
- Encourage members who have a little play money to make small contributions to candidates. A \$100 contribution will get your candidate about 12 yard signs or 100 bumper stickers.
- If you are seriously into politics, get to know the higher-ups in your Republican, Democrat, and possibly other parties. The executive directors of these parties can be quite helpful in steering races, and you can be a big help if you trust the party enough to teach them how to win on pro-family terms.

In closing, I would like to point out that the new age of pro-family politics is something that ACFC discovered in the last five years. We are teaching the politicians of this nation what to say and what to do for the next century --and developing the language one day at a time. We are the cutting edge of pro-family politics, and will pass along what we have learned as fast as we can. It is a little difficult for fathers' rights activists to not complain about our problems. Give yourself time, and keep your mind open to new ways of promoting our issues--not as complaints, but as positive pro-family policy attractive to both politicians and the average American voter. Remember that positive political campaigns do best. When they find something they think will help them and give them what they want, Americans vote for it.

END OF MANUAL