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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE US

Media Relations Training

For Local Leagues



Communications Team
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE US

Introductions



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Training Goals

- Local Leagues feel prepared to speak to press about 2022 elections in their community
- Local Leagues understand their rights and responsibilities when speaking to press



Today's Agenda

- Press relations best practices
 - Being available
 - Responding to press inquiries
 - Answering questions
- Before the election
- Election Day
 - Rapid response
 - What to raise up the flagpole
- After the election
- Dealing with unfavorable press
- Questions

IDEA: watch for our extra suggestions to implement if you have the capacity/comfort/ability!

Press Relations Best Practices

DON'T PANIC!

Reporters are people with a job to do just like you.

Be responsive to media requests yet measured in how fast to respond.

Review the request a few times before determining how to respond.

If the request isn't clear, ask the reporter to clarify or restate their story needs or questions.

CREATE WIN-WIN SITUATIONS

We have goals, and reporters have goals. In working with press, find ways to meet LWV's goals while helping reporters meet some of their own.

Identifying what would be a win for the LWV and for the reporter is an effective decision-making process for identifying if, when, or how to respond to media request.

Press Relations Best Practices

Being Available

- Designate a spokesperson
 - Someone with a title in your League
- Be reachable, be available
 - Email address on your website
- Prep with key messages
 - Talking points on LMS

IDEA: Also designate someone to “play publicist”

IDEA: Practice! Watch White House press briefings

IDEA: Prep a general member to be available for interviews as a “regular League member”

Press Relations Best Practices

Responding to Press Inquiries

- Verify the reporter
- Evaluate your capacity & expertise
- Questions to ask
 - What's your deadline?
 - What's the interview format?
- Turning down inquiries
 - We're a volunteer organization
 - Can't this time, but keep us in mind!

IDEA: Ask who else they've talked to for the story

IDEA: Buy yourself time to respond by stating that you need to check your schedule

Press Relations Best Practices

Answering Questions

KEY POINT:

We're not there to answer a reporter's questions

We're there to deliver our message to the reporter's audience

Press Relations Best Practices

Answering Questions

Get from their question to your message:

- “That’s a really interesting question. It makes me think of...”
- “What voters really need to know is...”
- “Yes, I think that’s true, and here’s why...”

IDEA: Share a story. People remember stories more than stats. Use the story as representative of the issue.

IDEA: Statistics/data can support your message, but only share one data point. People don’t remember more than one.

Press Relations Best Practices

Answering Questions: Basics

- Don't make things personal
 - Address the problem without addressing individual feelings
- Focus on solutions
 - Don't focus on how we got here, focus on how we get where we need to go
- Bake the question into your answer
- Have talking points & pivots ready
 - Talking points on LMS

Press Relations Best Practices

Answering Questions: On the Record

- Act as if everything you say is on the record
 - Talking with reporters
 - Anything public, including social media
 - We recommend: during election season, refrain from politics on social media
- If a reporter reaches out on social media
 - Don't respond on social — give them your contact info in a private message

IDEA: Audio record interviews on your phone

Before the Election

NOTE: this training is specific for election season.

The focus for this period is: combatting mis- and disinformation that would keep voters from voting.

Prioritize media opportunities related to GOTV and elections.

It's ok to pass on media opportunities not related to the election.



Before the Election Messaging

Main Messages

- Getting out the vote
- Election info for voters
 - VOTE411 has all the info you need to make your voice heard!
- Candidate stances/voter guides
- Responding to early voting issues
- Inoculation messaging to combat misinformation



Election Day Messaging

Rapid Response

- Establish a network
 - Spokesperson can tap for information before responding
 - Election rapid response guidance on LMS
- Plan the day
 - Where will the spokesperson be located throughout the day?
 - Polling place makes a great backdrop

IDEA: Send a media advisory for press to meet the spokesperson

IDEA: Have League member poll workers available to speak with reporters (be sure to follow rules set by elections administrator)

Election Day Messaging

What to Raise Up the Flagpole to Your State League

- Any violence
 - Law enforcement involved
 - Emergency service required
- Things preventing people from voting
 - Technical failures
 - Voter suppression



- Get to safety, call 911
- Contact state League
- Direct reporter questions to LWVUS



- Call Election Protection Hotline (866-OUR-VOTE)
- Raise to state League
- Could be a trend, so we must coordinate a response



IDEA: Put your state League contact in your phone

After the Election Messaging

IDEA: Issue a statement from your League to local press

- What we saw: turnout, participation
 - Generally positive, but mention issues if they were significant — offer solutions and a way forward
- Thank election workers
- Democracy in action

IF THERE IS VIOLENCE AT YOUR POLLS: Work with LWVUS on a post-election statement

- Post-election message template on League Management Site



Dealing with Unfavorable Press

It's unfortunate, but it happens

We don't want to breathe more life into inaccuracies or attacks.

Sometimes we should ask for corrections. Sometimes there is not a benefit to doing so.

Evaluate your communications channels. It's not always best to go through the media — we can do corrections without elevating unfavorable press.

Contact media@lwv.org for guidance in responding.



Questions?



We'd love your feedback!

