

Beyond War: Campus Organizing Manual



www.unitedforpeace.org

*W*elcome to DEMOCRACY! Here we stand, not so much at a crossroads as a downward spiral waiting to be turned into a positive upward spiral. It is the hope that this toolbox for action will offer ideas and resources to keep your anti war movement on a roll and with a positive spin.

*D*emocracy, it is important to remember, is not a one-day act we commit once every two or four years. Democracy is a process that requires continuous citizen participation if it is to work properly. This guide offers some pointers on how we can make democracy work for us, the people. Included in this guide are instructions on how you, as a citizen-activist, can become more politically influential.

*W*e the students of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Beyond War Movement, to ensure a peaceful future for the United States.

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October 26, Washington, D.C. (ap photo Evan Vucci)

First and Foremost: Know Thy Neighbor

One of the major necessities of building a movement is knowing your neighbors. This is an opportunity to seek out people of different backgrounds, political stripes, communities, eating habits, occupations, ethnicities, citizenships, orientations, majors, minors, party habits, eye colors...you get the drift. All these folks who have one thing in common: They are against the attack on Iraq. The bear hunter at the end of the hall, the bean sprout eater in the next door apartment, the NRA supporting prof, the tree hugger dean of students, the graphic design student at the local community college, may have more in common than first meets the eye.

Go forth and talk to these characters! We want to talk about these politics, they are on our minds and we want to organize. We are looking for outlets to discuss, debate and to ultimately help us decide where we stand on these pertinent issues. These people, like you, are the movement. They are the people at the rallies and they are the organizers. This is a people's movement, and if there ever was a time we needed the people, it's now! Of course, you know this. So let's grow this movement, from the roots up. Let's make it strong, creating a hybrid of the cross sections that unite us, that *make us* "The People," and show the government who *they're* working for!

And that's what it's all about

The student anti war movement is alive and kicking. You know this, your fellow students know this, but do the media (corporate, independent and university) know it? Does the world know that American students across our country are rallying and crying out *with* them for Bush to stop his short-sighted "pre-emptive" antics? Does the college down the street know what you are doing? Are they at your events? Are you at theirs?

What this packet is all about is organizing against an unnecessary war. What we need to do is be in contact with each other and organize on a national and global scale.

Start here:

- Go to www.petersons.com and type in your town name. Do a search on their website for "student organizations." Look for organizations that look like yours, or look like they may have a similar focus.
- Call them. Talk with your fellow organizers. Tell them what you are doing and ask them what they are doing to get this attack to stop before it starts.
- Join forces, finances and folks.
- Stay in contact with the national umbrella folks who will have resources and open ears to what you may need. The website is **www.unitedforpeace.org** and you can post your activities and contact information there. Do this so we may all benefit from your organizing efforts.
- **To keep in touch, email your contact information and your planned activities to mmbeyondwar@hotmail.com**

So While

This manual is all about "how to organize," the goal is to get all of us to organize *together*.

Now

Go Forth and Collectively Organize!

How to Organize a Demonstration:

This *is* what democracy LOOKS like!



The people's right to peaceably assemble and to "petition the government for a redress of grievances" is one of the most important freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution's Bill of Rights. The street march and the corner demonstration have a proud place in US history and in the history of social movements around the world. Gandhi's anti-imperialist movement, the civil rights movement, and the movement against the Vietnam War all made good use of marches and demonstrations.

Organizing a campus demonstration may sound like hard work, but it doesn't have to be. Gather together two dozen of your friends, make some signs, come up with some chants, and you're ready to protest your federal representative who supports the war on Iraq or you can chill on your town's Federal Building's steps for a while with some signs and clever chants.

Some Types of Demonstrations:

March

A march is much like a picket line—people hold signs and shout chants—except that the crowd is walking from one designated point to an agreed upon destination. An example of a march is any of those that occur on the National Mall in Washington, DC such as the Million Man March.

Organize a march:

- When you are expecting a particularly large crowd
- When you want to convey a message in the selected route or destination.

Sit-in

A sit-in is probably the most well-known type of civil disobedience.

Examples of sit-ins:

- When protesters occupy the space of a decision maker (representative or a University President)
- When protesters occupy an intersection or lock themselves to a building's entrance (this is considered a blockade)

Walk Out

A walk out is used to gain the attention of people who might not otherwise be aware that there is an anti war movement going on (this is especially effective in class, a meeting or other place where it is “inappropriate” to walk out).

- As you walk out there is usually one act of solidarity. This can be walking out in silence, putting an armband on, putting tape across your mouth in an “x” to represent being silenced, etc.
- There is a designated meeting place for the people who have walked out where there may be a rally, sit in, vigil, march or an act of civil disobedience
- A walk out requires a coordinated effort and does not need to be covert

Candlelight vigils

A well-known way to remember lives lost or commemorate other victims. Examples include “Take Back the Night” vigils, the events held in the wake of September 11 and mourning the victims of the US sanctions on Iraq utilized candle light vigils. Candlelight Vigils usually are:

- solemn and reflective
- intended as a way to honor a person or a group of persons
- really cool at night in front of your representatives’ house-don’t forget your signs!

Civil Disobedience

Civil Disobedience has, in recent years, become more creative. In the ’99 Seattle WTO protests, people chained themselves to the entrance where the delegates were to enter. Sometimes protesters will scale buildings to hang signs or unfurl banners. Certainly, these are not the only types of civil disobedience...be creative!

- Civil disobedience can include refusing to pay taxes or chaining oneself to a building or otherwise obstructing the daily business of others
- It can be a part of any other type of demonstration or stand on its own
- *It is important to note that Civil Disobedience is by definition unlawful. If you plan to organize a sit-in or similar demonstration, we encourage you to obtain legal advice in advance.* We suggest the American Civil Liberties Union or the National Lawyers Guild.

Tabling

Tabling is one of the most efficient ways of distributing information to the folks. You just set yourself up in your student union with a table, some fliers with information like who your representatives are, some facts and figures or a sample letter to your representatives.

- Catchy signs or games will attract attention
- Have a solidified pitch for when people approach you at your table
- Be explicit about your anti war stance
- Have information to back up your stance (check out www.unitedforpeace.org for some good fact sheets)

Peace Camps

Peace camps effectively combine tabling, walk outs, sit-ins, and sometimes civil disobedience. Students can bring tents, sleeping bags and tirelessly learn and pass on their knowledge to passers by.

- As always, have a directed message
- Have materials with facts and figures regarding your issues that are ready to be handed out

- Attract media attention by incorporating other actions simultaneously. For example, have a hunger strike at your peace camp.
- Colorful signs, outfits and other gimmicks will attract attention and help to create a space for discussion
- The ultimate goal of a peace camp is to be a visual reminder of the anti-war movement and a consistent source of information

Steps for Organizing a Demonstration:

Identify and reach out to supporters/create a coalition

Campaigns work best when they are anchored by a *coalition* of groups and individuals. As with organizing any event, it is essential to bring together a key group of people who are committed to the project. It is also useful to reach out to other groups to see if they would want to contribute to the demonstration. Think “diversity”!

Some questions to think about when organizing:

- Who else (student, professor, campus group, etc.) might be interested in helping to plan the demonstration?
- Do other schools (universities, community colleges, high schools etc.) have planned activities?
- Who are the natural allies in the community?
- Who of other political stripes may you be able to go into coalition with? There are some groupings out there that could be called surprising and take the power of a movement to new levels. For example, when labor and environmentalists get together against globalization, they are unstoppable.

Assign tasks and determine roles

Make sure everyone knows their assigned tasks. One person should be assigned to each of the following tasks:

- Protest emcee
- Getting the required permits, and if necessary, being in contact with the police
- Working with the media-outreach and follow up
- Developing signs, art, and chants
- Turnout person (getting the folks there!)

Location-location-location/permits and officials

Hold your demonstration where there is a lot of traffic. Because you want to connect with as many people as possible, visibility is key. A lousy location can undermine the best organized demonstration.

Make sure to:

- Know your rights regarding the use of space
- Talk to the campus or community police about your demonstration and determine what permits you need
- Have required campus permits for demonstrations, especially if you will be using amplified sound such as bullhorns

Get the word out: Turnout is crucial

Large numbers of people at your protest demonstrates broad public support for your cause. Both the media and the decision makers you are trying to influence will be looking closely at the number of people at your protest to see if you have real community backing.

Planning:

- Bringing music to the event will increase attendance massively
- Develop a specific strategy for outreach and publicity

- Set a goal for the number of people you want at the demonstration
 - Create a plan for reaching out to *10 to 100 times* as many people as you hope will be there
 - Assume that only a fraction of the people you contact will actually show up
- Successful outreach requires production of materials like event fliers and email alerts.

Distribution suggestions:

- Students, professors, classes and colleagues
- Student union, coffee shops, campus events, bulletin boards, cultural centers
- Campus newspaper and radio station
- The sooner you have materials ready, the better, especially in regards to media

Organize Speakers and Schedule

You will want speakers at your event, regardless of what type of event.

Things to keep in mind:

- Decide on the order in which you want your speakers to address the crowd
- Give speaker about two or three minutes and ask them to keep it short
- Make sure you have an emcee that is in charge of the speakers' order. It's this person's responsibility to bring a bullhorn or amplifier and to keep the program moving smoothly.

Develop Slogans and Chanting

Before the demonstration:

- Prepare chants: Come up with a chant that might make people smile
- Brainstorm catchy slogans that can be learned quickly by a crowd. Be as creative as you can
- Make copies of the chants to give out to fellow demonstrators
- Have someone in charge of leading people in the chants

Create Signs and Other Materials

Colorful signs are *essential* for capturing people's attention. Some suggestions include:

- Use bold letters
- Have clear messages—the fewer words, the better
- Paint your signs by hand or enlarge photos that illustrate your issue
- Make sure your signs are readable from far away and make for good photo-ops
- The use of sarcasm or a play on words can be an effective way of communicating

Print Literature and Handouts

It's important that you bring information to hand out—some sort of postcard, fact sheet or flier that discusses your issue. Many students will not have time between classes to hang out and learn about the issue. If you give them something to stick in their pocket, chances are that they will read it later. And remember to include your campus organization website and **www.unitedforpeace.org**!

Puppets and Other Props

Life-size puppets offer a fantastic way to dramatize your issue, and they make a great visual for television cameras.

- Art will make your demonstration more fun for those involved and will draw attention
- Art and Revolution is located in many cities and is a good resource for these sorts of things. You can find them at www.artandrevolution.org.

Creative Actions, Skits and Songs

Skits and other performances provide an excellent way to grab people's interest.

- Write and perform a short play (otherwise referred to as "guerilla theater") that explores your issue. For example, anti-sweatshop activists have organized "sweatshop fashion shows" to show people who the real fashion victims are.
- A song and dance performance is another fun way to attract attention and get your point across

For more detailed information, visit www.unitedforpeace.org

How to Organize a Teach-In

A teach-in is a powerful way to educate and activate your campus. Teach-ins are most effective when they supply real solutions and give opportunities to build coalitions. The best teach-ins are those that immediately give a boost to your organizing efforts and attract new people to your campaign.

Campus teach-ins with a few local professors can be a great way to show support for their extra curricular work and also to forge new relationships with professors, other student groups and other schools.

Before You Start:

Select speaker(s) your group is interested in

- On-campus: professor or campus administrator
- Off-campus: consider reputation, availability and cost; look into local organizations with similar goals and values as your group and they may do it for cheap or free!

Outreach:

- Planning ahead is essential to generate a sizable crowd
- Use flyers, calendars, direct mail, email, phone calls, campus radio, campus paper, word-of mouth

Collaboration:

Collaboration is a key component to a successful event. Brainstorm and ask other members of your group for suggestions of other campus groups that may be willing to collaborate with you.

Planning the Teach-In:

Select a date: The date will be dependent on other factors, such as the availability of the speakers, availability of a venue, and whatever else is being planned on campus around the same time.

Tips for selecting the date:

- Try not to have your teach-in coincide with other campus events
- Organize an event around a date that has some significance (Veteran's Day)
- Try to coordinate with other universities in your area and join forces
- Join each other's groups at each other's teach-ins. This can also be an effective way of networking similarly thinking professors to build momentum in that community
- Check www.unitedforpeace.org to see what other groups are organizing that might team up with you

Select the space: Often space on campus is available for free as long as the proper permits are obtained. Check with your school Administration for procedures.

Develop and distribute outreach materials:

- Create event fliers, direct mail invitations and email invitations
- Distribute the fliers as much as possible among friends and colleagues

Evaluation and follow up:

After the event has ended successfully, consider all that went well and all that did not

- Learn from the mistakes and remember what worked
- Thank your co-sponsors, the audience, your members and anybody that helped to make the event a success
- Use the teach-in to build new relationships and strengthen old ones

How to Pass a Campus Anti-War Resolution

Getting your Student Government, College or University to pass a resolution opposing war is an excellent way to boost your campaign. A resolution is a concrete expression of the old bumper sticker: "Think Global-Act Local." There are 2 types of resolutions. A Non-binding resolution expresses a group's opposition to or support for an idea. A Binding resolution requires specific action by your school. Check out the work of Hampshire College and the U of Texas-Austin, they've passed rockin' resolutions.

Planning Your Campaign:

Identify and reach out to supporters

Campaigns work best when they are anchored by a *coalition* of groups and individuals.

- Which other campus groups might be interested in helping to pass the resolution?

Determine who will work with you and what their roles will be

Important Roles:

- Communicating with campus officials
- Working with campus media
- Putting together educational materials

Plan a timeline for the resolution campaign

- Know when and how often the approval committee meets and how long it typically takes for a resolution to be passed

Identify a leader to introduce your resolution

- Without a campus leader who will actually take ownership of the issue and make it his or her cause, it will be difficult to successfully pass a resolution
- The leader should introduce the resolution to the campus for a vote
- When you meet with the leader, you should present them with sample text of the proposed resolution

Educate the Campus:

Spread the word

Without campus-wide support, passing your resolution will be difficult. At the same time, one of the main goals is to educate the campus community about the anti-war effort.

There are several ways you can do this:

- Get the campus newspaper interested
- Host a campus forum about the resolution and its implications in the antiwar effort.

Generate Campus-Wide Support:

Make contact with Professors and Administration

- Give student government, professors and administrators a packet of information about your resolution
- Get students from different schools to arrange meetings with their student governments to show wide-spread support for the resolution

Expand the base of support

- Work with other student groups on your campus
- Work with student groups on other campuses

Cover all the bases

- Attend all committee meetings, regarding the resolution, leading up to the vote
- Show support for other schools' efforts

Show Support

- The day of the vote is the final chance to show that the campus really cares
- Pack the house
- Bring colorful and eye-catching signs to the vote to show support for the resolution

Follow up on the resolution

- This is especially crucial when it comes to Binding resolutions
- Keep in touch with the Leader to ensure the resolution is being implemented.
- If it's not being implemented, make sure all of your supporters and the media know

For more detailed information, visit www.unitedforpeace.org

Sample Campus Anti-War Resolution

UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS OF STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

RESOLUTION OF THE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

October 5, 2002

Rochester, New York

WHEREAS, the United States and Britain have been bombing Iraq on a virtually continuous basis since the end of the Gulf War, and

WHEREAS, the Bush Administration has presented no credible evidence that Iraq has intentions of harming the citizens of this country or that Iraq presents a threat to the United States, and

WHEREAS, the Bush administration is seeking any pretext to overthrow the government of a sovereign nation in violation of international law, and

WHEREAS, a war with Iraq would require the redirection of vital resources and funds to a destructive, senseless, and illegal goal while further strengthening an administration that has restricted the civil liberties of its citizens, and

WHEREAS, this administration is using the so-called war on terrorism to distract the American people from the vital issues they confront,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that United University Professions goes on record as strenuously opposing the Bush Administration's march toward war with Iraq, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United University Professions urge its members and affiliates to get involved with the organizations working toward stopping the Bush Administration's march toward war with Iraq.

United University Professions will send copies of this resolution to all members of the Congressional delegation of New York State, to the White House and to the leadership of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, to New York State United Teachers, to American Federation of Teachers, to the AFL/CIO, and to the press. Further UUP requests that delegates to this Delegate Assembly inform their campuses of this action and endorse "Stop the War" rallies including the International Day of Protest, October 26, 2002, in Washington, D.C. and other cities.

FUNdraising

You may need money to sustain the work you have been and will be doing. There are many ways of fundraising, some of which will be listed here. Be creative and think outside the box on this one!

Donations:

- Collect money at all your rallies, marches, teach-ins and other demonstrations.
- Seek out sponsors: Some cool companies will donate product to sell for a fundraiser. Look for local and national companies.
- Check with local foundations for support
- Don't forget to ask your friends or sympathetic sororities and fraternities and other individual student who may have resources to donate!

Student Government:

While it can be difficult to squeeze it out of them, it's worth asking and following up.

- Remind them that they are there for you and your campus organization is under extraordinary pressure with the status of current events.

Host a party!

Invite a few of the organized to invite a few of their friends to a party with a cause.

- The anti-war party is BYOB (if you're of drinking age, of course) and the organizers are going around with buckets discussing issues and asking for a buck or two. Education *and* fun!
- **Concert at a local club or bar:** Get a location, some local musicians, a table or two for the anti-war effort and charge a few bucks at the door. Be sure that the cover charge will cover publicity, venue and musicians plus a little something for copies for the next rally.
- It's worth asking the venue and the musicians to donate their services, allies are around every corner!

Bake Sale:

Combine a traditional bake sale with you Anti-War tabling efforts to create an easy fundraiser.

- Charge \$1 for a cookie and on the price list say what you'll be spending the money on. For example: \$1 copies, \$2 posters, \$3 goes towards a bullhorn, \$100 getting Noam Chomsky to speak at your next teach-in!

Tips for Success:

HAVE FUN! Sell folks on the movement. The people who build the movement are as important as the funds you raise. Pull in some fun, creative folks and watch the fundraising take off.

Ask for help: Don't be timid! You are the heart and soul of this movement. Let people know this and let them know you need financial help. There are national organizations and business that want to see the student movement thrive and succeed.

For more detailed information, visit www.unitedforpeace.org

Working *with* the Media

There is no question that we need to democratize our media, but as we do that we must also work *with* the media to broadcast the messages and values that are important to us as anti-war activists. A fantastically well organized rally attended by 100 committed citizens is a beautiful thing. And if the media covers the rally, you will reach many times that number with your message. When organizing your anti-war event, remember to contact your local media as well as your campus radio and newspaper.

Press Release:

- Informs reporters about your event, report, or issue
- Should tell all the information a reporter needs to write their piece
- Envision and write the press release as the news story YOU would want to see written
- Sent out the morning of or the day before the event

Elements:

- The headline will make or break a news release
- Spend 75 percent of your time writing the headline and the first paragraph
- Include the most important information in the headline, and make it punchy
- The headline can be up to four lines if necessary, including a sub-head, if used, but keep it short and remember to use a large font
- Important information should jump off the page—most reporters will only spend 30 seconds looking at a release
- Use the inverted pyramid style of news writing. Make your most important points early in the release.

Structure / Form

- In the top left corner, type “For Immediate Release.”
- Below “For Immediate Release,” type the date
- Contact Information: In the top right corner, type names and phone numbers of two contacts
- Type “####” at the end of your release. This is how journalists mark the end of a news copy
- Type “MORE” at the end of page 1 if your release is 2 pages, and put a contact phone number and short headline in the upper-right hand corner of subsequent pages
- Print your release on your organization’s letterhead

Distribution

- Bring to your campus newspaper office and radio station
- For off-campus distribution, a release should be sent out the morning of, or the day before your event
- Generally, send a release to only one reporter per outlet

Tips for Success:

(Adapted from Salzman’s “Making the News” and SPIN Project Materials)

- Keep sentences and paragraphs short. No more than three sentences per paragraph
- Include a colorful quote from a spokesperson in the second or third paragraph
- Include a short summary of your organization in the last paragraph
- Mention “Photo Opportunity” if there is one. Be sure to send a copy of the release to the photo desk.
- ALWAYS make follow up calls after you send the release. If your release is announcing an event, make the calls the morning before your event is scheduled.
- There is a sample of a Press Release on Page 13.

Media Advisory

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

- Functions as an FYI that alerts journalists to an upcoming event.
- Gives basic information: who, what, where, when and why
- Sent out a few days before the event

Elements

- Include a headline, similar to the Press Release
- Give a short description of the anti-war campaign and event
- List the speakers at your event
- Include a quote from somebody from your organization who works on the issue
- Provide contact information in the same way as the press release
- Include a short summary of your organization in the last paragraph
- Mention "Photo Opportunity" if one exists
- **The structure and format is the same as the Press Release**

Distribution

- A media advisory should be brought to the campus newspaper and radio station 3 to 5 working days before the event
- Fax or mail (if time permits) your advisory to the appropriate reporter, editor or producer at each news outlet on your press list
- ALWAYS make follow up calls the day before your event, and have the advisory ready to be faxed

Letter to the Editor

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

- Letters to the editor (LTE's) most often discuss a recent event/issue involving students
- They are your chance to "sound-off" to your school and local communities about issues in the news. **They are widely read**—so make them an important part of your media strategy.

Tips for Success:

- **Respond as quickly as you can.** Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is a reaction to a story in the paper
- **Read the letters page**—you will learn how to develop an effective letter-writing style, and you will see if someone has already responded with your idea
- **Keep it short and concise**—150-200 words. The paper will take the liberty to shorten your letter to suit its format; the more it has to cut, the less control you have of what gets printed. Lead with your most important information
- **Focus on one main point** and make a compelling case
- **Avoid personal attacks**
- **Put your full name, address and phone number** at the top of the page and sign the letter at the bottom. You must include a phone number for verification purposes.
- **Follow up** to see if the letter was received
- Helpful Websites: **www.unitedforpeace.org** for hints on how to write a press release and a media advisory; **www.spinproject.org** for help with some basic media stuff and **www.indymedia.org** to post your event

For more detailed information, visit www.unitedforpeace.org

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 6, 2001
11:20 PM

CONTACT: Hampshire Students for a Peaceful Response
Name, address, phone number

Hampshire College Condemns War in All-Community Vote **Believed to be the First School in the Nation to Do So**

AMHERST, MA - December 6 - The students, faculty, and staff of Hampshire College have voted to condemn the "War on Terrorism" and propose alternative solutions. The vote, which was won by a margin of 693-121 (with 11 abstaining or ambiguous votes), is believed to be the first such decision by a college community in the United States. (A majority of the students, faculty, and staff participated in the vote.)

"Our community has spoken," said Michael Sherrard, an organizer with Hampshire Students for a Peaceful Response, which sponsored the vote and authored the anti-war resolution. "We refuse to fall into silent support for an unjust war that kills innocents overseas, and threatens our safety and civil liberties at home."

However, organizers were quick to defend the right to free expression of those who disagreed with the vote.

"As a diverse community of strong individuals, there are some at Hampshire who do not support our views. Even if they are in the minority, their opinions, and rights to free expression, must be respected. We wish that politicians and the media would extend the same respect to those of us who oppose this unjust war, or who happen to bear the same skin tone as Osama bin Laden," said Donald Jackson, also a member of Students for a Peaceful Response.

Hampshire has a precedent for trend-setting political statements. In the early 70s, students voted for the impeachment of President Nixon. The college was also the first to decide to divest from apartheid South Africa. With this vote, organizers hope to make a similarly strong public statement, and build a movement which can similarly change the course of U.S. foreign policy.

Students for a Peaceful Response is a multi-campus coalition in Western Massachusetts formed in the wake of September 11, and active in the growing nation-wide student movement against the war. It is organized around six points of unity: mourning for the victims of the September 11 tragedies; a call for the peaceful pursuit of justice, rather than war and militarism; condemnation of religious, racial, and ethnic scapegoating and bigotry; opposition to the curtailment of civil liberties; desire to provoke discussion of the root causes of terrorism; and recognition of global justice as the condition for a true and lasting peace.

Full text of the statement approved by the community:

[Full text here]

###

Working with your elected officials...and we *do* mean “YOUR”!

Without question, meeting with legislators is the most effective form of grassroots lobbying. This is true for representatives at the local, state, and national level. Everyone who will be meeting with the elected representative (or their aides) should be an active participant in the meeting.

Meeting with legislators

Before the Meeting:

Gather information about your representative

- Committee assignments: Go to www.house.gov and www.senate.gov
- Voting record: Go to www.vote-smart.org

List your reasons for the meeting and opposing war in a clear and concise way

Decide who will attend the meeting

- Generally, the more people, the more likely it is that you will meet the legislator rather than just staff. A small representative group or a coalition of leaders may be the best bet.

Determine how much time you will need

- 15 to 20 minutes is typical, so be concise

Organize your resources

- Create a typed agenda for the meeting
- Prepare materials that you can leave with the legislator
- Assign roles for the meeting, making sure to involve every partner

Practice for the meeting

Confirm the appointment

- One week before the meeting
- The morning of the meeting

During the Meeting:

Connect with the person with whom you are meeting. (Example: If it is an aide, ask what brought them to work with the representative.)

Describe who you are and what you do in the community,

- Stress that you are an involved college student.
- You are an important person part of an important population!

Explain why the issue is important to you.

- Utilize the fact that you represent a youthful population and you are interested in engaging this representative

Give the representative a typed agenda and a list of your requests.

Make specific requests and ask for an immediate answer

- If the representative (or their aides) is unwilling to make a commitment, set a date for a follow up meeting.
- Carefully record any questions, objections, or concerns.

After the meeting:

- Send a Thank-You Letter
- Determine your next step and plan for follow-up
- Send any materials and information you offered.
- Follow up on deadlines and if they are not met, set up others.

Tips for Success:

- Acknowledge your legislator for any previous positive actions
- Stick to your agenda and assigned roles
- Involve all of the participants
- Be creative: Perhaps show a video or use another creative element.
- Be honest and don't claim to know more than you do about an issue.
- Keep the lines of communication open Give the legislator a chance to express an opinion.
- Keep the communication positive. Even if the legislator or the staff person is rude or uncooperative never lose your cool, argue or threaten.
- Mention the massive force you carry behind you!

Communicating with your legislators

It is important that we tell elected officials where we stand on the war on Iraq. Our input shapes the way our representatives create and implement policy. When you are pushing any issue or supporting or trying to defeat a bill, writing to your legislators is a very effective way of getting your message across. However, the more personal methods of communication are more effective than mass communication (petitions or form letter campaigns).

Personal letters or faxes

The absolute best thing to do is to write a personal letter. Personal letters show legislators that the author is knowledgeable, interested and committed to the matter at hand. Many legislators argue that one clear, logical individual letter is worth more than a petition with a thousand signatures!

Tips for a Successful Letter:

- **Be Timely:** Write when an issue is current.
- **Be Brief:** Limit yourself to one page and to one topic. The goal is to be read and understood.
- **Be Specific:** Reference specific bill numbers. Include basic information like what the legislation would do and how it would affect you and other people in the legislator's district or state. Remind legislators how their actions affect your issue and your vote.
- **Be Legible:** Clearly sign your name and include your address in the letter itself. Type your letter rather than hand write it.
- **Be Supportive:** Write thank you letters when they vote against legislation like the War Powers Act or the Patriot Act. A thank-you will make you stand out and it will help establish a more personal relationship with the legislator.
- **Helpful Websites:** www.house.gov and www.senate.gov will have the addresses and fax numbers of your representatives.

Email correspondence

Email has become a very useful tool for quickly and effectively communicating with elected officials. Keep in mind, however, that email is easily deleted and often comes in overwhelming numbers. A personal letter will always be more effective.

Tips for Success:

- **Treat it as an electronic personal letter** - Follow the same rules as you would for writing a personal letter. Avoid symbols, shorthand or "electronic-speak." Write in complete sentences and don't forget the date.
- **Title your submission** - Take advantage of the email subject line to give the legislator an idea of what the letter is going to be about. Including the bill number will make it easier for legislator to categorize the email and respond more effectively.

- **Include a home address** - Always provide your postal address somewhere in the body of your email. This will increase your chances of getting a response to your note.

Form Letters

“Canned” or form letters are okay, but not nearly as effective as a personal letter or email, they lack personal touch and conviction. One alternative is to have a form letter for others to copy, in their hand writing, with their personal touch. Stick them all in one envelope and off they go, to be counted and represent your campus’ interest.

Tips for Success:

- **Include your address**- Without an address, the legislator won’t know if you are a constituent or not.
- **Give extra effort** - Take an extra 30 seconds to write a 1 or 2 line personal note at the bottom of the form letter. Briefly restate your concerns. Ask for a written response. Any effort to make a form letter personal will help it be noticed.

Phoning your legislators

- **Be simple** - Call about one issue at a time.
- **Be brief** - Introduce yourself, state how you feel about the war on Iraq and pertinent legislation, and ask for the legislator’s support.
- **Be logical** - Call your own representatives before you call any others. Your local legislators are always your first priority.
- **Be connected** - Always leave your name and address, particularly if you are a constituent. To keep track of how the constituency feels on certain issues, representatives often log phone calls. If you phone to express an opinion but refuse to leave an address, you are wasting your breath.
- **Be smart** - Always say thank you. Never be abusive or threatening!

Tips for Success:

- **Helpful Websites:** http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW_by_State.htm , or www.house.gov and click on “write to your representative.” For representatives’ phone numbers go to www.senate.gov and click on Senators by State.
- **Pass out fliers** on campus with the bill name and number, and your rep’s phone number. Also ask allied professors to make announcements in their classes.
- **Create and send out** a concise email alert to your lists, with the rep’s phone number and address. Encourage recipients to forward to other local or university lists.
- **DORM STORM!!!** Get some cell phones together and crash the dorms. Knock on dorm room doors and tell them about your cause and encourage them to call and put in their vote: **This is what democracy looks like!**
- **Set up a table with phones** at your student union or other community space. For both the dorm storm and the table, offer the students and professors a piece of paper with an idea of what to say...the first time you call a reps office can be scary.

For more detailed information, visit www.unitedforpeace.org

Organize!

Notes

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This document was adapted primarily from Global Exchange's Toolkit for Action, which can be found at **www.unitedforpeace.org**

If you would like more of these packets, or know someone who does, email mmbeyondwar@hotmail.com