

Media Interviews:

Strategies and Tactics for Successful Interviews

FIRST, KNOW YOUR MESSAGE. THEN DELIVER IT.

THE BASICS

- Practice out loud beforehand if you know there will be press-- Know what you want to say, then you can say what you know.
- Take a deep breath. Reporters are just people, and in most cases, they really want to hear your story. You got this.
- Take a minute to remember what you want to say. There's no need to feel hurried- they want a good, usable quote from you, so take a minute to get it together.
- Sometimes reporters ask questions you don't feel prepared to answer. Luckily, you already know what you want to say! Answer the question you want to answer, even if that's not the one that was asked.
- Include the question you want to answer in your answer—it makes a better sound bite.
 - *Reporter: What brings you to Springfield? Answer: We're here in Springfield today because..."*
 - *Reporter: How would these cuts impact you? Answer: The governor's cuts hurt me because..."*
- If you are asked, "Is there anything else you'd like to say?" The answer is always yes. Repeat your basic message one final time.

Added tips for TV

- If you're outside, take off sunglasses.
- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, and stand up straight.
- Look at the reporter, not the camera.
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Don't worry if you say something unclearly or feel like you're rambling. There's a solution! You stop talking, take a breath, and say, "To be clear, the reason I'm here today is..."

BEYOND THE BASICS

Take the right approach

Cultivate a positive attitude

- Don't dread it as a chance to make a mistake- this is an opportunity to educate people.
- Don't approach it passively as a simple question and answer session – you are there to answer the questions you want to answer.

Take charge

- Be confident. And if you're not, pretend you are.
- You will say only what you want to say, no matter what you are asked, so you are in control.

Staying on message

- **Answer the question you want to answer. That may not be the same as the one that was asked.**
- Repeat and reinforce your main message – “here's the bottom line,” or “the real reason we're here today is...”
- Don't assume the reporter gets it the first time- you can repeat what you've already said.

During the interview

- Be safe, not sorry—never lie, and never exaggerate.
- When you don't know the answer, it's okay to say “I don't know.”
- Don't think out loud.
- When questions are repeated don't change answers- stick to your main message.
- Don't answer hypothetical questions.
 - Ex:
 - Reporter: If the Governor were to ask you what to cut, what would you say?
 - Answer: That's a false choice. Programs all work together to make our state stronger. Lawmakers should choose revenue instead of cuts.
- Don't make predictions or assess the chances of something happening.
 - Ex:
 - Reporter: Do you think the Governor's budget has the support it needs to pass?
 - Answer: The real issue here is the way this budget impacts my family...
- **Don't take the bait- you came to say what you want to say—not what they want you to say.**