

Guidelines For Participating Organizations

WHAT GROUPS ARE ELIGIBLE?

The National Coalition Against Censorship brings together a uniquely broad-based group of national, non-profit associations determined to defend free thought, inquiry and expression. Some, such as educational and writers' groups, have major organizational and professional commitments to these First Amendment concerns. Other groups, such as religious and mental health organizations, participate out of a conviction that free expression principles are necessary for the well-being of the individual and the survival of a democratic society. Participating groups do not include any with a direct commercial interest; NCAC thus argues from simple principle.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION ENTAIL?

Participating organizations in NCAC endorse the Coalition's Statement of Concern:

Freedom of communication is the indispensable condition of a healthy democracy. In a pluralistic society it would be impossible for all people at all times to agree on the value of all ideas; and fatal to moral, artistic and intellectual growth if they did.

Some of the Coalition's participating organizations reject all barriers abridging access to any material, however controversial or even abhorrent to some. Others reject barriers for adults, so long as their individual right of choice is not infringed. All of us are united in the conviction that censorship of what we see and hear and read constitutes an unacceptable dictatorship over our minds and a dangerous opening to religious, political, artistic, and intellectual repression.

Participating organizations receive periodic informational and educational mailings and occasional requests to circulate information to their members or constituencies. Representatives are also welcome at educational events organized by NCAC and at NCAC Board of Directors meetings. Groups are encouraged to intensify whatever work they may do on issues involving freedom of expression. NCAC provides extensive information and other support services toward this work. NCAC also creates and welcomes opportunities to collaborate with participating organizations on publications, educational events, action alerts, public statements, letters to public officials, comments on legislation, amicus curiae briefs, and the like.

WHAT FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS ARE INVOLVED?

Participating organizations are asked to provide monetary support by paying dues ranging up to \$5,000 annually. New groups are ordinarily asked for annual dues at a minimum level of \$1,000. However, we recognize that organizations vary in their capacity to pay dues, and invite smaller organizations to discuss the appropriate level of participation. These contributions are of great importance for their dollar value and for their worth in approaching other funding sources.

Every organization benefits from participation in an active anti-censorship coalition of diverse groups, each of which has a unique purpose and constituency. Groups have various reasons for financial support of NCAC:

1. Some groups which do not themselves have an anti-censorship program support NCAC as a means of fulfilling an organizational commitment; NCAC thereby becomes the anti-censorship program of their organization.
2. Some groups support NCAC as one part of their organization's First Amendment activities.
3. A number of organizations support NCAC with significantly more than the normal minimum because they obtain special services from NCAC. While staff resources and expertise are available to all participating organizations, special services require the investment of time beyond what might otherwise be expected, given NCAC's modest staff and budget.

Among special services which NCAC provides are: advice on planning and implementing short and long-range activities; provision of extensive information; help organizing conferences and other programs; speakers and print materials on a variety of subjects relating to censorship and freedom of speech; and referrals to other experts and sources for particular information or services. NCAC also makes available for distribution a wide range of material on the value of free expression and suggested responses to various types of threats.