

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A MEDIA INTERVIEW

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE MEDIA CALLS

- **Know your key message.** What is the most crucial point you want the reporter to convey to the audience? Use every interview as an opportunity to deliver a key message about the harms of censorship.
- **Be prepared to answer the standard "Who-What-When-Where-Why and How" questions.** Have supporting facts and examples on hand.
- **Prepare for the question you DON'T want them to ask.** What are the tough questions you might anticipate, and how can you address them while circling back to your key message?

FORMAT MATTERS

Different types of media offer different opportunities and pitfalls. Here are some pointers related to traditional media outlets:

- **Print**
If participating by phone, be certain to have supporting materials in front of you (talking points, fact sheets, etc.). Anticipate that the reporter will record your conversation whether you participate by phone or in person. Print reporters are looking for short, concise quotes. Avoid jargon and know that all information provided may also appear on social media platforms that promote the publication's content.
- **Radio**
Remember the voice. Use lots of expression. Highs and lows. Enthusiasm. Use simple, colorful language that paints a picture for the listener. If participating by phone, make certain you are on a landline (not cell) and that supporting materials are in front of you (talking points, fact sheets, etc.). If in studio, keep supporting materials simple, so you are not rustling papers. Most radio stations post interview clips with supporting text to their website, so anticipate that the reporter will record and post your conversation regardless if you participate in-studio, in person, or by phone.
- **Television**
How you look is as important as what you say. All the techniques used in public speaking -- keeping an open face (eyebrows raised), maintaining good posture, using hand gestures, and varying your vocal expression -- will help you appear as a credible and enthusiastic spokesperson. Props such as a book, poster, or large photo can add interest.

- **Look at the interviewer** -- not the camera or the audience -- unless you are doing an interview by remote, or the interviewer is behind the camera.
- **Practice "active listening."** Look at who is speaking. The camera may still be on you.
- **Picture who your audience is and imagine speaking directly to them** -- from your heart and your mind. Use stories and examples listeners can relate to.
- **Wear more makeup than you normally would.** Some stations provide professional make-up assistance.
- **Avoid harsh colors like black, navy, white, bright red, and patterns.** Rich colors such as bright blues, rust, wine, or purple work, as do charcoal gray or brown. Dress as you would for a business meeting.
- **Keep jewelry simple.** Medium-sized earrings or a pin can help focus attention on the face. Avoid dangling earrings or necklaces that move or glitter when you talk.
- **Glasses should have non-reflective lenses.**

TIPS FOR STAYING IN CONTROL

- **Don't answer a question you don't fully understand.** Say, "I'm not sure I understand the question, are you asking...?"
- **Buy yourself time to think by saying,** "That's a good question." Or, "let me think about that and come back to it."
- **"Flag" key thoughts with words and phrases** like "The most crucial point I want to make is..." or "This issue is critical because..." Ensure your message is quoted by repeating it often.
- **"Bridge" to the positive.** When asked a "negative question, answer briefly without repeating any "hot" or negative words. Add a positive statement.
- **Bridge the answer to the question to your key message** using phrases like:
 - "Our primary goal is..."
 - "What's important to us is..."
 - "As a matter of fact..."
 - "You know, *Chris*, I don't have the answer to that. What I do know is...'
- **Complete the loop.** Bring every answer back to messages on free expression.