

HOW-TO

Make the Media Your Microphone

On February 5th, millions of concerned Americans will become change makers equipped with the information and tools they need to hold their elected officials' feet to the fire. To shake up Washington, we need to reach citizens. To reach citizens, we need media attention—a lot of it. Here's how you can get campus, local, and maybe even national media coverage for your event.

We have arranged a timeline with some media ideas to help you promote your awesome efforts. The points on this list are described in detail below. You don't have to do all of these; pick, choose, or adapt depending on what works for you!

1. **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**: Use the Internet: Become a fan of the NTI on Facebook, invite your friends and make your own school/organization NTI group, join us on YouTube, get short updates on Twitter.
2. **DECEMBER**: Meet with your school Public Relations Office, ask the Provost to help you send an email to all faculty, and submit a story to your school newspaper.
3. **EARLY JANUARY**: Hit the school paper again: Write a story about why these First 100 Days are so critical, write a blog, or ask a friend to blog for you.
4. **LATE JANUARY**: Write an editorial and submit to a local newspaper. (you can easily amend it slightly, and submit to multiple publications)
5. **THE WEEK BEFORE**: Send a 5-6 sentence email description to reporters, follow up with a phone call.
6. **FEBRUARY 3-5**: Send out a media alert and a press release, and follow up with reporters.

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE: USE THE INTERNET

- **You can start by tapping into the National Teach-In's network on popular social sites.** Social networking sites can have a huge impact...the message spreads itself.
 - Become a fan of the National Teach-In on **Facebook**, and invite your friends to join you.
 - Join us on **youtube.com**, rate and leave comments on our videos, or upload your own. Share the interesting ones by posting to Facebook, emailing, or blogging.
 - Get short, informal updates about our progress on **Twitter**.
- **Do you blog or know someone who does?** Write about your event! If you regularly read a blog, you don't need to know the author personally to contact them. Most bloggers post contact info on their site because they really appreciate it when their readers let them know about interesting stories. This is especially important if they have blogged about climate change or politics in the past. The more popular the blog, the less likely they are to respond to your first email, so remember that it's normal and fine for you to send a couple of reminders spaced at least a few days apart.
- If you are organizing a Teach-In at your school and you want to communicate with people regularly to organize meetings etc., **creating a Facebook group** is an effective way to do that. **Make sure it's a group rather than a page**; only groups can send out regular messages to all of their members without creating a new event each time (and make sure your group members become fans of the main NTI facebook page too!) Your facebook group could promote your event, talk about the goals of the NTI, link to other cool related stuff on campus, or host your event schedule.

DECEMBER

- Most schools have a **Public Relations Office**, or someone on campus who does media for the college. Contact them and see how you can work together to create some press coverage in local media through the college/university's connections. This is one of the most valuable, time-saving steps on this list---media relations people will be able to answer a multitude of your questions, and be a valuable resource.
- Find out **who edits your school paper**. Contact them, and write a story for the school paper! The story doesn't need to be long, but it should motivate, describe some goals of the NTI, give your contact information, and let people know how they can get involved.
- Most schools also have a **Provost**, or other administrator who is responsible for **mass emails to faculty**. You can draft an invitation to faculty and run it by them. This will be worth it if the email is sent out to all faculty on campus, or even a few major departments! It also doesn't hurt to go ahead and meet with the school President, and ask to have them co-sign the invitation (we also have an endorsement letter on the NTI site for you to check out).

EARLY JANUARY

- Contact the editor of your local newspaper to ask how you could talk about your work with the National Teach-In in their publication. They might connect you with a journalist who could interview you and write an article, or they might even invite you to write a letter as a guest journalist or as a letter to the editor. Calling is usually the best way to do this, followed by an email if they would like more information.
- Traditional print and news media journalists have a lot of stories to pay attention to, so they might not jump on your story as quickly as you would like. Don't be discouraged if they don't pick it up right away, but use this time to **speak with reporters who usually cover this kind of thing, and build relationships with them.**

LATE JANUARY

- **Write an editorial or article** for some local news outlets. When writing a guest article or letter to the editor, write a rough draft and revise it more than once, just like with an essay. It's a great idea to have at least one other person help you revise it, or even co-write it with someone. If you are writing an article, you should tell your personal story. Why did you get involved? What have you been doing with the National Teach-In? What do you hope to achieve? You might even tell a story of something interesting or inspiring that happened while you were working on climate change. Avoid clichés, the more personal, the better.
- Visit your local **Associated Press Office**. Which reporter usually covers this kind of story? Become their friend. Offices around the country can be found at: <http://www.ap.org/>.

THE WEEK BEFORE

- Generate a list of potential reporters that you have come into contact with. **Send them all an email** (5-6 sentences) with links to relevant websites, videos, press that the NTI or your event has already received, your editorial.... or anything you think is attention-grabbing. This email should succinctly describe your event, the NTI national event, and mention any big names that are coming. A quote from the school president or a professor isn't a bad idea.
- Follow these emails with a **phone call** to the same reporter. You can answer any questions that way

FEBRUARY 3

- The day before your event, send out a media alert about your event. We have a sample media alert also under the media section on the Organizers page, but you can also change it or write your own.
- **A MEDIA ALERT**
 - Is written and released before your event.
 - Tells the basic who, what, why, how, where of the activities.
 - Includes a super-catchy, interesting title to get media's attention and convince them to come.
 - Is short, no more than half a page.
 - Describes your event and how it fits into the NTI as a whole.

FEBRUARY 4

- **Follow up** with reporters who responded to your media alert, and call those who haven't. If they are coming to campus, make sure they have everything they need to get to the event successfully and locations to shoot from, equipment, etc once they arrive.
- **Email links to the First 100 Days webcast** to all reporters you have been in contact with.

FEBRUARY 5

- After your event, write up what happened—be ready to send it to reporters early on the morning of February 6. We also have a sample press release on the website, but feel free to adapt it or write your own.
- **A PRESS RELEASE**
 - Is about one page long
 - Is typically written the night after the event and released to the press EARLY the next morning, although you may also write one before your event.
 - Summarizes the highlights of your event, including speakers, good quotes.
 - Serves as the backbone of any reporter's story.
 - Is usually written in Associated Press (AP) style.

THINGS REPORTERS CAN'T RESIST

The most important thing to remember about media outreach is that reporters need a story. There are certain activities, language, and hooks that grab media successfully, and others that do not. Make yours pop out of that stack of alerts they receive each day. Here are some suggestions based on the book Stop Global Warming Now by journalist Bill McKibben and the Step It Up organizing team.

- **Send them pictures of famous people who came** and/or videos to accompany your story. Is your event photogenic? Can they reference clips online (the NTI will provide a space for this). Do you have any good quotes from important people about your event? Lead with them!
- **What is new about the event?** Reporters also like superlatives...ie the “most” of something. Hopefully we have given you the language to do this for the NTI as a whole on our site, but do this for your event, too. What are you doing that is the first, best, last, most creative...? The NTI as a whole is the last chance to launch a movement to impact the First 100 Days of Obama’s term, and get policies in place to save the planet. What are your local hooks?
- **Give your event a local angle.** Think about place and local symbolism, historical significance/reference, or struggle. Maybe give the latest on what climate change is projected to mean for your area.
- **Is this a case of strange bedfellows,** or the happy odd couple? What is the Teach-In at your institution doing to bring people together in new ways?
- **Create Relationships with reporters.** Ask to meet with the editor of a paper for ten minutes in person. If they say yes, it is a worthwhile investment.