



National Prayer Vigils February 13-22, 2009

Getting Organized: A quick how-to on planning your prayer event

Before planning any event, it's helpful to first define your goals:

1. **Purpose:** What is the purpose of this event? How does a particular event move you towards your larger community, grassroots, or legislative goals?
2. **Audience:** Who do you hope to reach out to? Your community? Your local, state, or federal officials? What age group? What demographic?
3. **Desired Outcome:** What do you want to happen because of this event? **BE SPECIFIC.** While an event may fall into a larger goal of passing comprehensive immigration reform, for instance, the more specific you can be, i.e. "We want the town mayor to issue a positive statement on immigration" or "We want 30 people to sign a postcard to their Congressperson," the more prepared and effective you can be in your organizing.

Keeping in mind these three goals, consider the following elements when planning your event:

1. Type of event, length and location

- a. Keep both the length of the vigil and the expected attendance realistic, an hour can be a large time commitment for people especially Congress members. Shoot for something shorter – 20 to 30 minutes. Consider what time of day will best serve your purpose.
- b. Location—Does it fit the tone and purpose of your event?
 1. Is it easily accessible?
 2. Does it have the proper sound equipment and electrical outlet access?
 3. Be realistic about your attendance, and choose a location that is appropriate to the size of your event—you don't want to be in a room for 80 if your attendance is 10.
- d. Make sure you have all the appropriate permissions to be in the area where your event is planned.
- e. If you have equipment like microphones, is there access to electrical outlets? Is there an echo?

2. Materials/equipment

- a. What type of equipment do you need? Cameras, banners, candles, microphone, projectors?
- b. Will you be outside long enough that people might need water? For a February event when it might be cold, should you have hot tea/cider/coffee if you are outside?
- c. Do you need chairs if elder people will participate?

3. Leadership

- a. Are there prominent faith leaders in your community who could attend and offer a prayer? Which leaders best represent the faith communities you are aiming to engage?
- b. Will there be a leader/emcee to get the vigil/event started? Who?
- c. Depending on the size crowd you expect, do you need a megaphone? Microphone?
- d. Will you have a sign-in or an information booth? Who will work it?

4. Recruitment—a successful event needs people!

- a. Who do you want to attend this event and how can you make sure they do?
 1. What could prevent them from coming (think weather, time of day etc.) and can any of those obstacles be avoided?
 2. What natural networks in your community or place of worship can you tap into? Who leads those networks? Invite them join you in planning your event to more easily recruit members of their networks to your event.

- b. Do you want people in policy-making positions to come?
 1. **To invite your member of Congress to attend the prayer vigil, send an invitation letter ASAP to their local office and call the scheduler to follow up!**
 2. If your member cannot/does not come, make sure they receive any press releases and/or press coverage from the event as a follow-up.

6. Publicity

- a. Distribute event information to other organizations and have their leaders contact their members
- b. Flyers/Newspapers/Radio announcements—What best reaches your audience? Consider placing an op-ed or writing a letter to the editor of your local paper to promote your vigil.
- d. We'll help you contact your local press— Stay tuned for sample press materials, including: a press advisory to go out before the event (who you are, what the event is and who it is for), a press release for afterward (what happened, your demands, turn out, etc.) and a sample op-ed.

7. Follow-up

- a. Send pictures/video/audio recordings of your event to local/national offices
- b. Get blog posts, pictures, articles about the event everywhere you can.

Interfaith Immigration Coalition
www.interfaithimmigration.org