



Communications and Media Strategy: Tool Kit for Breaking Bread and Building Bridges

Communications Resource: This packet is designed to be a communications resource to heighten your organizing and advocacy efforts on compassionate immigration reform. Organizing at the grassroots level is essential in winning comprehensive immigration reform and a pathway to citizenship in 2013, and media attention will be a necessary part of all effective advocacy. The resources below provide faith-based messaging guidance well as sample media advisories, op-eds, letters to the editor and social media tips.

Reaching out to the media to amplify press events will be new for many organizations, and this resource is meant to provide helpful tips to get started. You should also be coordinating with media/communications professionals at Faith in Public Life and local immigrants' rights organizations. Utilize your collective media contacts and collaborate when you are able. If you do not have a comprehensive press list for your local media market, contact Faith in Public Life before you develop your event plans. Comprehensive media outreach is critical to the success of press events and success of larger coalition goals.

Media Strategy

When communications and media are linked to overall tactics, it helps build public support and shift the narrative while also putting pressure on key lawmakers whose votes could make the difference on vital immigration reform policy. Likewise, making sure the faith voice is in the local papers through op-eds and letters to the editor will be a vital component to a comprehensive media strategy.

Messaging and Talking Points

When planning a media event or preparing for an interview, it is important to have a strong, simple message. The **core message** is the one essential, brief statement that defines the issue and connects with the audience. In an interview or at a public event, it should be the first thing you say. The best core messages are personal, concrete and moral. Clarity is more important than eloquence. Supporting messages support and expand upon the core message. Here is a message framework for the current debate.

CORE MESSAGE: Now is the time for Congress and President Obama to create a roadmap to citizenship for 11 million new Americans who aspire to become citizens, and to ensure that immigrant families are treated with fairness and dignity. As a [pastor/rabbi/person of faith], I believe our immigration policies reflect our values as a nation.

- **SUPPORTING MESSAGE #1:** 11,000,000 people, including members of our own community, live in the shadows because there is no path for them to gain citizenship. 2/3 of these people have been here for over a decade. These are our neighbors, our coworkers, and members of our congregations.
- **SUPPORTING MESSAGE #2:** People of faith believe all people are precious in the eyes of God, and Scripture tells us to welcome the immigrant. Providing a roadmap to citizenship – and

all of the responsibilities and opportunities that come with it – fundamentally reflects these beliefs.

- **SUPPORTING MESSAGE #3:** Americans come from many different places and backgrounds, but we share a belief in the dignity of work and a strong desire for a safe place to raise our families. That's what has always brought new immigrants here, and it's something to be proud of.

Establishing your **unique voice** is also important. If you have direct experience with our broken system – as an immigrant, a family member of immigrants, or someone who works with immigrants – sharing a compelling, morally unambiguous personal story is more powerful than any talking point. The best personal stories feature harm done to innocent people, highlight inspiring accomplishments by immigrants, call for injustice to be remedied, and avoid information that doesn't reflect well on immigrants.

Talking points are additional statements that provide information about individual aspects of the issue. When preparing remarks for a public event or for an interview with the media, make sure that your talking points clearly flesh out the debate and will make sense to people who lack background knowledge and aren't already among our core supporters. Here are a few examples that support the core message.

- **Faith perspective** – Welcoming and caring for the immigrants in our midst is a common value to all faiths. As a [Christian/Jewish/Muslim/Skih] leader, I know that [Scripture/sacred text] says we are to welcome, help and protect immigrants and their families, not kick them out or make them 'self-deport.' Building a roadmap to citizenship for aspiring Americans is completely consistent with the values of every religious faith.
- **Family unity** – Families are the foundation of strong communities, but our broken system breaks up thousands of families. Parents and children are torn from each other by deportation, indefinite detention, and a re-entry process that can take decades. We need reform that puts immigrant families back together.
- **Citizenship** – Citizenship for new Americans is a proud tradition in America. Providing a roadway to citizenship for new Americans who are already here is absolutely necessary. Creating a separate, second-class status isn't right, and it isn't the American way.
- **Workers' rights** – All workers, immigrant or native born, deserve safe workplaces that pay fair wages, respect workers' rights and treat employees with dignity.
- **Enforcement** – We are a nation of laws, and that means guaranteeing due process for immigrants and protecting them from cruel and unusual punishments. Our laws and law enforcement need to respect the dignity of all people, the unity of families, and the economic contribution of immigrants.

7 Steps to engaging media outlets:

- 1) **Consult IIC and Faith in Public life on media strategy** from the very beginning of press event planning. Identify potential event speakers and strategic locations that are easily accessible for television and print reporters.
 - Additionally, identify leaders who can serve as point people for writing media advisories and press releases (and also feel free to share with Faith in Public Life for feedback).
 - Print or make signs for supporters to hold at press event emphasizing key faith messaging.
 - Order a podium sign so cameras and reporters can clearly identify who and what you are representing.

- Make sure a sound system and podium are available at event.
- 2) **Connect with someone who is part of your coalition** and who has worked with the media before. Do they have a press list? Does it need updating? Make sure you have a press list ready a week before you plan to send your media advisory. If there is no press list in your planning group, connect with Faith in Public Life to request a custom press list. Comprehensive press lists are crucial to the success of your media event.
 - 3) **Be on Message! Integrate the Faith Voice.** Make sure your message and press outreach materials are consistent with the message of your larger coalition. Does your message help change the public narrative in a positive way? Does the message put pressure on the target lawmaker whose decisions you are trying sway? Is it an empowering message for impacted immigrant communities?
 - FPL can provide assistance w/ spokesperson training in advance of press events to ensure all speakers are on the same page and their unique faith voices are fully heard and understood by the news media.
 - The faith voice is a unique value added to the humanitarian message. It is important for the public and the decision makers to understand that people of faith support compassionate immigration reform.
 - 4) **Send a media advisory** to media outlets two to three days ahead of time. Cut and paste the advisory into the body of an email. Do not send attached documents. Send again in the very early morning on the day of the event. (See below for suggested format.)
 - 5) **After you've sent the media advisory to press, make pitch calls** to print sources such as newspapers 2-3 days in advance of event. Place pitch calls to television assignment desks the morning of event.
 - 6) **In advance of event**, draft a press release that includes quote from the speakers at your press conference, and bring print copies of the press release to press event. (See below for suggested format.)
 - 7) **Assign a media point person** at the event to collect reporter names, the outlets they work for, and email addresses and phone numbers. Give reporters a press packet that includes brief speaker bios, the media advisory, press release, and a fact sheet that includes information about your organization.
 - 8) **Send the press release.** Cut and paste the release into the body of an email, and send it to media immediately following the event. The press release should contain speaker quotes, and emphasize the effective outcomes of the event.
 - 9) **Monitor the media for stories about your event, and send to the Interfaith Immigration Coalition so we can track the progress. You can register your event and give a report back by clicking this [LINK](#).**

Social Media

Social Media serves several purposes: it helps with outreach for actions and base building, puts pressure on decision makers, builds public support, and serves as a source for the latest news on immigration reform. The most popular social media sites are Facebook and Twitter, but now there are an endless array: Tumblr (a blogging site), Instagram (for images and photos), the list goes on.

1) **Website, Facebook, Twitter!** You can use websites, Facebook and Twitter as outreach tools to get the word out about your event or action. Once you have a flier, you can post on your website, email it to your list, or post it on Facebook. Make a Facebook event and invite as many friends as possible, post the event on Twitter as well. There are lots of ways to make social media work for you. Some suggestions include linking social media accounts so that what is

posted on one site automatically goes to the other, retweeting and sharing posts that other organizations have posted, or using a social media management site like HootSuite to automatically schedule your posts for a specific day and time.

2) Images and Graphics: Images are attention grabbing and easily shareable, which is why there has been a shift towards images rather than text for events, call in days, or educational purposes. Try pasting a short message on top of an image that is symbolic to the cause. The Interfaith Immigration Coalition frequently puts together images to be shared on social media. You can find those on the IIC FB page). If you choose to make your own images, here is a helpful hint: If you make sure your image is a square shape, it won't get cut off when you post it on Facebook, which means people can view the whole image without clicking on it.

3) Pressuring the Decision Maker: A unique tactic to put further pressure is to make sure to tweet at key decision makers using their Twitter handle in your tweet. When you use a Twitter handle, such as @speakerboehner, the account will be notified of the post. You can also go “like” the decision maker’s Facebook page and you will be able to post articles and comments on their Facebook page. Sometimes you can even become a Facebook friend of the decision maker and post on their wall.

4) Connect to Interfaith Immigration Coalition Social Media: Make sure you have liked the IIC Facebook page and other member organizations’ pages. We have included a list of all IIC Steering Committee social media accounts for your convenience. Then you can easily share articles, images and messages to your own account. Similarly, look up your favorite organizations on Twitter, follow them for updates and re-tweet what is most important. Remember: ultimately, the more effort you put into your social media, the more you can get out of it. It’s helpful to follow lots of organizations working on immigration reform, but also follow members of Congress, news sources, and other accounts that you think might be helpful and interesting to you.

5) Use Hashtags to identify themes and allow for posts to be grouped together: A hashtag is identified by a # symbol followed by a word or phrase (without spaces). When used on Twitter, it creates a link to a feed of all the tweets using that hashtag. Some popular hashtags surrounding immigration issues are: #immigration #DREAMact #citizenship #RI4A or #faith. Remember, you only have 140 characters for your whole message, so try to keep hashtags short (#comprehensiveimmigrationreform would take up way too much space) and limit yourself to two hashtags per tweet.

***Sample Facebook posts and Tweets, Info-graphics and text-overlay on images can be accessed at www.interfaithimmigration.org**

Sample Media Advisory – Media advisories provide the who, what, where and when of your press event and give media a “heads-up” that your event will be happening. While providing a framework of the event, a media advisory is primarily designed to tell the press what makes your event visually compelling and give reporters a reason to come and learn more. Media advisories are not designed to spell out the whole story, or else reporters will have no reason to attend the event.

MEDIA ADVISORY

[INSERT DATE]

CONTACT: NAME, PHONE, EMAIL

Alabama Faith Leaders Converge on Statehouse to Pray for Repeal of HB-56

Montgomery, AL - Prominent Alabama pastors, bishops and other religious leaders will gather for a prayer service and press conference on **Tuesday, Feb. 28 at 1:00 p.m. at the Alabama Statehouse** to pray for and urge repeal of the anti-immigrant law HB-56. The faith community in Alabama is continually speaking out and mobilizing advocacy efforts to repeal HB-56, which makes it a crime for churches, charities and even neighbors to offer help to anyone who is not a legal resident.

Participants in the prayer service and press conference will sign an oversized copy of a letter to state legislators urging them to repeal the law because it “not only unfairly targets a very vulnerable segment of our society, but also is contrary to our faith teachings to welcome the stranger in our midst and to love our neighbor regardless of race, country of origin, or immigration status.” After the event, faith leaders will meet with state legislators to convey their concerns about HB-56 and request that it be repealed.

WHAT: Prayer event and press conference with faith leaders speaking out against HB-56 and urging its repeal

WHO: Prominent Alabama faith leaders and people of faith, including:

Rev. James Evans, Pastor of Auburn First Baptist Church, Auburn, AL

Bishop James Levert Davis, Servant Prelate of the 9th Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

WHEN: Tuesday, February 28 at 1 p.m. CST

WHERE: Alabama Statehouse, 11 South Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36131

Religious leaders will pray, share stories from their churches, and stand up against legislation that criminalizes people of faith from following their churches' teaching to act as the Good Samaritan. The law has created a climate of fear and suspicion that divides Alabama's churches and communities and has been a disaster for Alabama's economy and agriculture.

Faith leaders also joined a recent “One Heart, One Alabama” rally and lobby day on February 14 at the Statehouse, urging legislators to repeal HB-56 because of its devastating shortcomings and impact on Alabama's economy, business climate and communities.

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Sample Press Release - A press release is sent immediately following the event and gives organizers the opportunity to frame the event in a way that best promotes success and forwards organizational goals. A press release is also a means to tell press what you are demanding from lawmakers or targeted decision makers.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[INSERT DATE]

CONTACT: NAME, PHONE, EMAIL

Kansas/Missouri Bishop and Clergy Urge Senators to Show Moral Courage and Support the DREAM Act in Tomorrow's Vote

With the Senate to vote on the DREAM Act tomorrow, Kansas and Missouri religious leaders – including a Lutheran Bishop, a Presiding Elder of the AME Church and a Catholic brother — held a telephone press conference on Friday, December 17, to call on Kansas and Missouri Senators to listen to their conscience and vote in favor of this compassionate and common-sense legislation.

The DREAM Act would provide young people brought to this country as infants or children the ability to earn legal status through military service or higher education, and fully contribute to our economy and society. Faith leaders around the nation are mobilizing during the advent season to urge our political leaders to listen to the plight of these talented and patriotic young people and to support their future by voting for the DREAM Act.

“The DREAM act will give hope to young people and bring healing to our nation. I see this as an investment in our future, an investment in our young people who have gifts to share and can contribute to the economic vitality of this country,” stated **Rev. Dr. Gerald L. Mansholt, Bishop of Central States Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.**

“This is an issue that senators on both sides of the aisle can get behind.”

“There are now young adults who live in the shadows of our community who are being marginalized,” said **Presiding Elder Joseph Forbes, Ebenezer AME Church, Kansas City, MO,** speaking of the moral urgency of the DREAM Act.

“This is my country. There have been periods when her light was dim, but she’s always come back to brightness. I want my country to be a caring and compassionate country.”

The unwavering commitment from faith leaders in Kansas and Missouri, and from communities throughout the United States, demonstrated the deeply held moral and patriotic values at stake, and the faith community’s belief that courageous leadership from Washington can make a difference in the lives of thousands of young people.

“These are wonderful, generous, bright, fun-loving and hard-working young people who know next to nothing about the countries in which they were born. They identify with the US—the only home they really know,” said **Br. Jim Krause of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Kansas City, MO.** “The Dream Act is extremely needed to let these children live here legally in the only country they’ve ever known.”

The faith community stands alongside economic experts, military leaders, university presidents, and the majority of the American public in supporting compassionate, common-sense legislation that will help ensure America’s vibrant future and give thousands of talented young people the opportunity to pursue their dreams, rather than deporting them to countries they’ve never known as punishment for decisions in which they had no say. As the Senate prepares to vote tomorrow, the faith community will be mobilizing support and calling on Senators to vote “yes” for the future of thousands of young people across the nation.

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Sample Letter to the Editor

Letters to the Editor of your local newspaper are a great way to amplify the faith voice on immigration. Effective letters respond to an article written in the same media outlet, either expressing support for the original article or demonstrating an opposing viewpoint. Newspaper web sites and opinion pages usually specify how long a letter should be. Here is an example letter to the editor.

(Start with a specific reference to a recent article about immigration, and express disapproval or approval.) As a Pastor/Rabbi/ Imam (or a lay leader) in (Denomination/ Organization), our faith tradition teaches us to welcome the stranger as though they were born among us. We believe that all are created in the image of God with equality and inherent dignity. It seems both political parties are ready to make a change on immigration. We must push forward for a pathway to citizenship, any enforcement should have humanitarian provisions, and we cannot be part of passing any legislation that would make some immigrants into a permanent underclass. I and many other faith leaders are praying that (name of lawmaker) makes the right decision.

Opinion Editorial

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition will be collaborating with Faith in Public Life and Americas Voice on drafting Op-Eds for high level faith leaders who will be able to get published in local or even national media outlets. Please contact Rev. Noel Andersen at nandersen@churchworldservice.org to coordinate together on putting together an Opinion Editorial.