

## Information on dealing with the Media and staying "on message"

### Getting Media Attention:

The Fast and Vigil is growing in size and gaining visibility with the press. You can make the most of your participation by alerting your local media to the fact that you are coming to this event.

In 1997, a participant conducted a live radio interview with a station in her home town while vigiling in front of the Supreme Court. Her participation was also covered by the local newspaper. You can do this too!

You already have a media list. It's right there in your local telephone book. Just look up Newspapers, Television, and Radio. Call the news departments, ask for their fax number or e-mail address, send them your release (see below), and call them back to follow up.... Be sure to bring your press list with you to DC. If something big happens, you want to be able to reach your hometown media to give them a local angle....

Please review the following for suggestions on working with the press.

### "How to stay on message"

*From the Ruckus Society's Media Manual*

RUCKUS: Settle on one simple message

Accept it: You are not going to be able to communicate all the main points, sub-points, and shades of gray about the issue as you would like to. An action is like a freeway billboard: It is designed to hammer home one - and almost always only one - message. If you can't focus on one issue as the main reason you are doing the action, you shouldn't be doing the action at all.

AAC: Our issue is "The Abolition of the Death Penalty."

RUCKUS: Choose a strong image that clearly communicates the message Remember the freeway billboard: With one glance it is (or should be) unmistakable what product or idea is being sold. Ideally, your action should communicate the message without any words of explanation - and always in as few words as possible....

If you find yourself saying, "They'll understand it when they read the banner," your message isn't clear enough.

AAC: We have a series of large standing signs (4x8 feet) that together present a longer overall message. These provide great visuals, but they are meant more as visuals than "sound bites." Therefore, the following is important as well:

RUCKUS: Craft sound bites that communicate and enhance the message.

Assemble the media team. Take out a legal pad. Lock the door. Brainstorm simple, short, declarative sentences that express your message. Remember that the average sound bite on U.S. TV is less than 10 seconds....

AAC: We've done a lot of this already. You probably have too. We will have a variety of signs and T-shirts that are short and to the point. To help you get "on-message," the T-shirts are available to registered participants AT REDUCED PRICES. We urge you to wear the message, because that way, if the media uses your image, even if they misquote you or take you out of context, your message is clear from the image.

Here are a few "sound bites." Please know them, practice them, and use them.

(If you have other suggestions, please feel free to offer them!)

"(Morally, economically and socially,) The Death Penalty is Bad Public Policy"

"Execution is NOT the Solution."

"(What we are saying is) It is wrong to kill people who kill people to show that killing is wrong!"

"Don't kill in my name!"

"If we can't trust our government to fill potholes, tax us fairly, or run an election, we shouldn't trust them with the power to kill."

"We seek the total abolition of the death penalty in the United States and worldwide."

"About 98% of murderers who face the death penalty get the alternative of Life without Parole. Why not all of them?"