

Communications 101:

Building Your Message, Press Fundamentals & Interview Skills

Brigid Godfrey

NCDP Deputy Communications Director

bgodfrey@ncdp.org / 650-521-1997

***For Internal Use Only.
Do not share in any
public forum.***

**Please put Questions in
the Chat box and I will
answer them all at the
end!**

Before We Start



Take out your phone and follow NCDP on social media:

Facebook: North Carolina Democratic Party,
fb.com/ncdemparty

Twitter: @NCDemParty

Instagram: NCDemocrats

Join Project Battleground on Facebook

I will send these slides around later

Building your Message

A clear, concise message is the most important step you can take to connect with voters on a personal level.

Your message should originate from your values and priorities, not your policy prescriptions.



I will send these slides around later

Steps for Building your Message

- In these trying times, our message should be rooted in our party's values:
 - This is a time to emphasize our values of interdependence, mutual solidarity, shared purpose, and collective action.
 - **Ensure your message is inclusive and empowering, while emphasizing justice and opportunity for all.**
- You should also consider ***your*** core issues when building your message
 - The easiest way to draft and hone your message is to center it around issues you, and your community, are passionate about. This will come through in your message.

Things to consider when building your message:

- **Why are you running for office?**

- What in your values drove you to run for office?
- What personal motivations have caused you to run?

- **What are core issues in your community?**

- Citizens lacking Healthcare?
- Poor infrastructure?
- School improvements?
- Food insecurity?

- **Why do you care about these issues?**

- Explaining your perspective and reason for focusing on these issues will allow others to better understand your message and point of view.
 - As a parent? Teacher? Community Leader? Volunteer?



The Four Key Elements of a Message



- **The “Ask”**
 - A brief statement on what you and your campaign wants to change.
- **The reason for the “Ask”**
 - Why something has to change? What has made it contentious or worth protesting?
- **What is at stake?**
 - What will happen if the proposed change does not happen?
- **Action to be taken**
 - What can the target audiences do in order to effect or support the proposed change?

EXAMPLE

- **The “Ask”**

- *I want to solve our food desert crisis and reduce food insecurity.*

- **The reason for the “ask”**

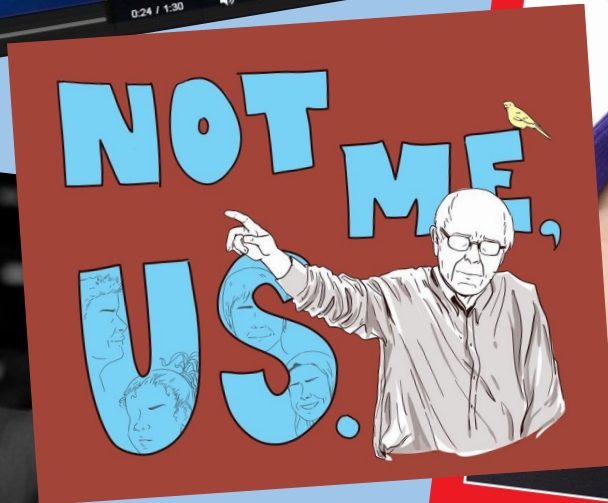
- *For far too long our communities in food deserts have not had access to good and healthy foods.*

- **What is at stake**

- *Both children and adults will continue to suffer if we do not vote for change.*

- **Action to be taken**

- *Vote for me this November so I can help solve this crisis.*



Not all catchy phrases

- While it's nice to be able to distill your core message down to a phrase, it's generally not possible.
 - In fact, the smaller the constituency, the better it is to be more detailed and focus on specific issues.
- It is **your** message, focus on:
 - defining **your values**,
 - identifying **your key issues**
 - laying out the **reasons voters should support you**.



Remember: *Values not Policy Prescriptions*

Homework!

Write your message! Remember this is fluid, it will change as you grow as a candidate. Write a few sentences that:

- Define your values
- Identifying your key issues
- Lay out the reasons voters should support you

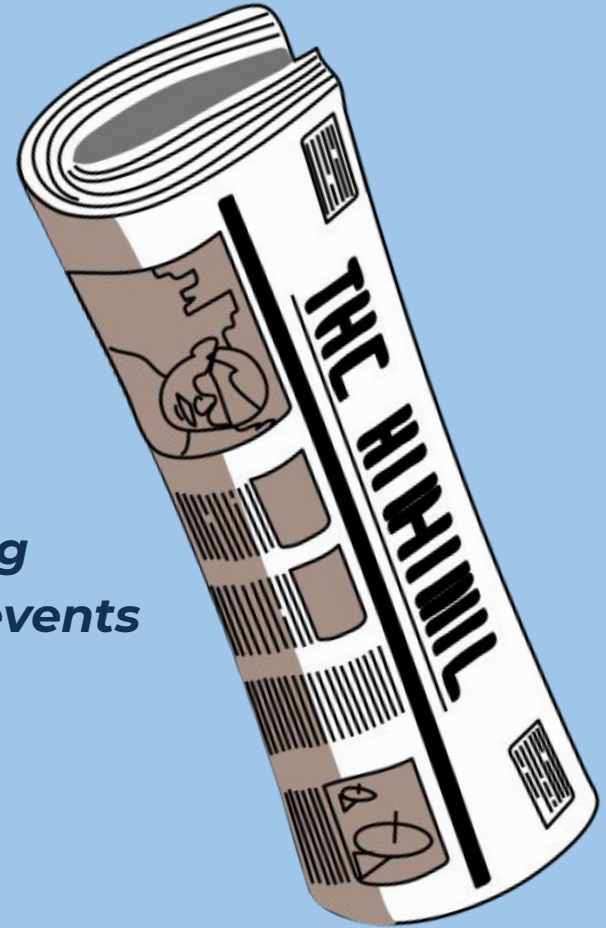
This will be a great way to work through your thoughts and start articulating your goals! Also, don't feel like you have to adhere to those three sections, write what feels natural.

If you want to, email it to me at bgodfrey@ncdp.org!

Press Basics

What to know and who to know!

Local media is a great way to connect with voters, especially as traditional campaigning methods like door knocking and in-person events become more difficult.



I will send these slides around later

Connecting with your local press

If you don't already, you'll soon get to know the important papers and important journalists in your district!

Here are some preliminary steps to connect with them:

- Email them and introduce yourself
- Invite them to coffee and meet them face to face (after we lift social distance guidelines)
- Build a press list



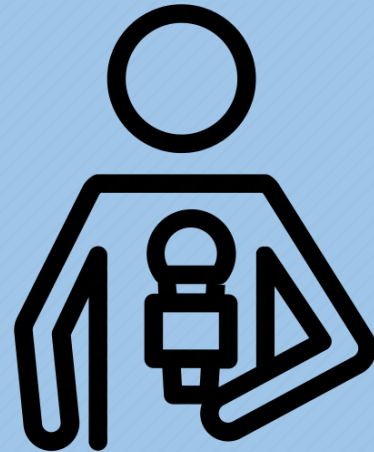
****If you want help building a press list, email me and we can talk it through*

Communicating with the Press

The media, especially local media and television, are an important conduit to reach voters and spread your message.

There are several main ways to communicate with the press, both written and spoken, to help you spread your message and control the narrative:

- Press Releases
- Media Advisories
- Interviews



Types of Written Media Releases

- **Press Release**: A collection of information, usually including pre-written quotes used to make an announcement or comment on a current event.
 - Typically less than 350-400 words and include a header with a media contact, subject line, body, and quote
 - There are two different types of press releases:
 1. Traditional Press Release;
 2. Statements.
- **Media Advisory**: A document with the “Who, What, Where, When” of an event you would like press to attend. Example of this could be press conferences or open press campaign events.

Example of Written Media Releases



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2018

Contact: Robert Howard, RobertHoward@ncdemocraticparty.org

NCDP Statement Celebrating the Anniversary of the Affordable Care Act

Raleigh – Today, North Carolina Democratic Party Chairman Wayne Goodwin released the following statement on the eight-year anniversary of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), which has helped more than 20 million previously-uninsured Americans gain health insurance:

"Eight years ago, President Barack Obama signed into law one of the greatest Democratic achievements of the last fifty years, the Affordable Health Care Act. Since then, 20 million Americans have gained access to better care, including hundreds of thousands of families here in North Carolina, while countless others have benefited protections for pre-existing conditions and more.

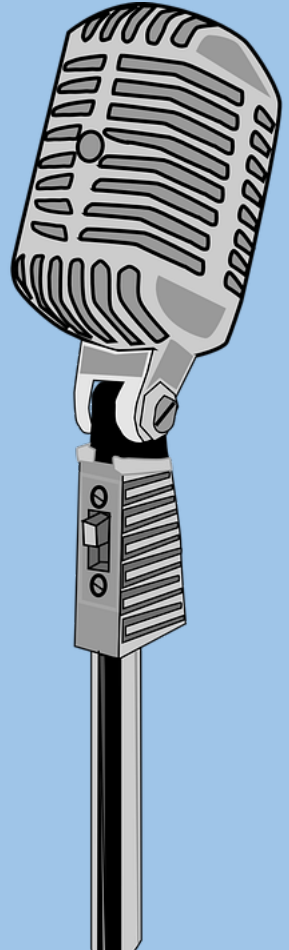
"Republicans in the General Assembly have stood in lockstep with Washington Republicans to undermine these achievements. General Assembly Republicans continue to deny care to 650,000 North Carolinians while DC Republicans' sabotage efforts have resulted in millions losing health insurance and higher premiums. This year, Democrats promise to hold Republicans accountable for their attacks on our health care and build on the successes of the ACA to ensure that every North Carolina family has access to affordable, quality health care."

###

Interview Skills

Interviews can be nerve wracking, but remember that you're the expert on your values and motivations and we can help you prep for the rest!


I will send these slides around later



clushgifs



I'm not sure what to do with my hands.



**WELL, DICK, HERE'S THE DEAL: I'M THE BEST THERE IS, PLAIN
AND SIMPLE. I MEAN, I WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND I PISS EXCELLENCE.**

imgflip.com

Vocabulary!

- **On Background**: Nothing you say can be used in the piece but the journalist can take the knowledge and use it to do their own reporting.
- **Off-the-record**: The journalist can use the information you give them, and publish quotes anonymously with your approval but they will not name you or indicate where they got the information.
- **On-the-record**: The journalists can, and will, quote you with your name and title.

Before speaking to a reporter, you should have clear answers to these questions:



- Is this on the record, on background, or off the record?
- What is the reporter's angle for this story?
- If the reporter reached out to you, what is their deadline?
- What is my objective for this interview?
- What is my "home base" – the message I can always return to if I get lost in the interview?



Homebase Message

- A “home base” message, is the message you can always come back to if you get lost in the interview?
- It should be 2-4 sentences and summarize your position on the core issue you are discussing in the interview.

Example: *Our representatives in the general assembly should be working with businesses and communities to help eliminate the food desert crisis. My opponent has proven they are not going to prioritize this issue. Voters should support me because I will bring healthy foods to our underserved communities.*

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Outlet: **CBS News**

Hit Time: **12:00pm**

Date: **March 31, 2020**

Length: **20 minutes**

Subject: **State/National Conventions During COVID-19 Outbreak**

Journalist: **LaCrai Mitchell**

Points to Make:

1. The NCDP felt that postponing conventions and moving them to a virtual platform was the best possible solution to keep our delegates and all North Carolinians safe while also complying with DNC convention guidelines
2. The NCDP consulted with the DNC, the Association of Democratic State Committees, our NC Democratic Party leadership team, and state and local health professionals to come to this decision

Homebase message: The well-being of our delegates and the public at large are our highest priority. The Democratic Party as a whole is committed to responsibly responding to this health crisis and the actions of our national party down to our country parties reflect that goal. Decisions are still being made about the national convention but we are confident the DNC will put all attendees' health and safety at the forefront of their choices.

During the interview, remember to:

- **Take a breath or a pause before answering** to collect and organize your thoughts.
- Eliminate pause words like “um” or “yeah...” and focus on your core message.
- **Be authentic, passionate, and confident, and do not be afraid to repeat your message.**
- Repeat your message. Think through a few ways to say your central message. Or just repeat it.

During the interview

- Express your values, not policy prescriptions.
- Be quotable and concise, especially with your “home base” message. Avoid long, winding, and bland stories.
- Keep a confident, aggressive posture and try not to get put on the defensive or explain in-depth. **You should drive the message, not your opponent.**
- Avoid speaking in absolutes, including giving simple “yes/no” answers. Absolutes are easy pitfalls and can paint you into a box with little room to maneuver.



During the interview

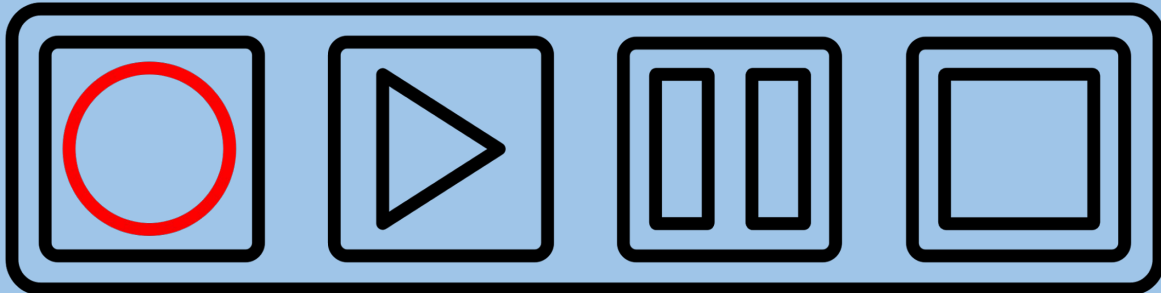
- Pivot off of tough questions by bridging topics from negative topics to your campaign message. This is a crucial skill but it's tricky.
Pivoting too early can look like you're dodging the question altogether, prompting follow up questions.
- Examples of pivots/bridges include:
 - "That's an important issue, but what this topic is really about..."
 - "I'm going to Raleigh to solve problems, and one of the problems I think is most important is..."
 - "I can't speak for X, but I can speak for my campaign, which is focused on..."
 - "What people should know about this campaign is..."

During the interview

- **Stick the landing.** At the end of each answer, hit your message and stop talking.
- **Don't speak just because there's silence.** If you're happy with your answer and stuck the landing, don't feel like you need to speak more just because there's silence.
- Finish the interview by **repeating your central message**, even if you have to force it in by saying, "Before we leave, one thing I really want to make clear..."

After the interview

- Watch out for the “live mic”!
- **Thank the reporter** and mention that if there’s anything they’d like to clarify or if they have additional questions to **reach out to you or your staff**.



Final Thoughts

- **It's Okay to Be a Little Afraid of the Press**

- Be careful and think through everything you say on the record, remember anything you say to a journalist can (and will) end up in a paper

- **We're Here to Help**

- We, both the party and the caucuses, are always here to help!
- It is helpful for us to see everything that is being said on the record - and an extra set of eyes never hurt.

- **Focus on Raising Money and Talk to Voters**

- Don't take any of this to mean you should be going out and making press, your #1 job is to raise money and talk to voters



Brigid Godfrey

NCDP Deputy Communications Director

bgodfrey@ncdp.org

650-521-1997

Some ways I can help you!

- **Advice for pitching stories**
- **Interview prep and Interview skills**
- **Highlighting your actions in an NCDP release**
- **Building a press list/ contacting local outlets**
- **Message building/ comms plan building**
- **Medium posts**
- **Speech Drafting**

Me social distancing while still helping you run your best race!



QUESTIONS?