



## **A Practical Guide for State and Local Action Promoting Taxes on Sugary Drinks**

Based on years of substantial research into the factors that contribute to the obesity epidemic in the United States there is little doubt that sugary beverages – including carbonated sodas, sports and energy drinks, and fruit drinks – are among the main culprits. Consumption of empty calories in those beverages has doubled in the past thirty years, and young people, in particular, are heavy users. Concerted advocacy on all levels (local, state, and federal) is necessary to moderate soda intake and reduce Americans’ caloric intake, both to improve health and to avoid the further dramatic escalation of health care costs. For more information about sugar-sweetened beverages and their health impacts, [click here to read our fact sheets](#).

One of the best-established public health means of reducing the influence of soda consumption on obesity involves raising taxes and the prices of sugary drinks, a strategy successfully used to limit harmful cigarette use. Imposing taxes on sugary drinks also would provide substantial new revenue that could be used for health programs to combat obesity, improve school lunches, or provide fresh fruits and vegetables for underserved populations, among other beneficial uses. Alternatively, the new revenues could help states, counties, and cities balance their budgets and avoid staggering cuts to vital social and/or infrastructure programs.

Numerous web resources provide solid background information that supports a policy decision to tax sugary beverages (See: attachment 3).

### **Getting Started**

Introducing or raising taxes on popular and heavily marketed sugary drinks will require more than just getting the policy right. Effective campaigns for taxes on sugary drinks must address a wide range of political, organizing, media, and advocacy issues. This “Action Guide” will address some of those issues and provide readers with examples of advocacy tools that can be used to help move a soda-tax proposal forward. Where possible, this information is based on lessons learned from beverage advocacy efforts from around the country. Additionally we will share materials developed in numerous jurisdictions where the sugary beverage battles are being fought. This guide will provide a broader view of what’s involved in advocating for taxes on sugary beverages and prepare readers to play an effective role in promoting that health-enhancing policy.

In all likelihood a proposal to impose taxes on sugary beverages will come from a state or county executive, a state-agency official, or a legislator. It might take the form of legislation, a proposed referendum, or a ballot initiative. As has occurred in several states, the “soda” tax issue may arise in connection with an industry-sponsored ballot



referendum to repeal (get rid of) legislation that imposed a tax. Accordingly, the politics and target audience for a campaign must be adapted to the particular circumstance. However, the [basic rationale for supporting a tax](#) remains the same.

## **Amplifying the Harm**

Optimally, proposals for taxes on sugary drinks will be introduced following substantial education, for both policy makers and the public, about the tragic and costly consequences of obesity and overweight. In particular the increased risk to children of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, dental caries, and other serious illnesses should be highlighted. Advocates must then amplify the connection between soda, obesity and its resulting health problems, as well as identify the potential for significant new revenue from sugar-sweetened beverage taxes that can fund programs to protect children, feed the hungry, or balance the budget. If at all possible, advocates should coordinate with official policy proponents (state government executives, legislators, county officials, health department officials, et. al.,) before launching a campaign.

## **Readying a Proposal**

Here are some of the key components of a campaign:

### **1. Set the stage:**

- Clarify the proposal. What beverages will be taxed? How big a tax? Will the tax be imposed per ounce of fluid or be based on sugar content (teaspoons) of the beverage? Will the tax be a sales tax, a repeal of a sales-tax exemption, or, preferably, an excise tax? Will the revenues be earmarked (to what program?) or directed to deficit reduction?
- Are all the right political and organizational players involved? Engage individuals and organizations from diverse socioeconomic status and races/ethnicities. Reach out to health, education, youth, and faith communities, among others. (See attachment 1)
- Who is the public face of the campaign? Who are the best spokespeople or organizations to take the public lead?
- If possible, conduct opinion research on public attitudes regarding sugary beverages, soda taxes, and campaign messages (from both tax proponents and opponents). Design arguments to “sell” the tax. In general, proposing an earmark of the revenue to a popular health or social program maximizes support for a tax on sugary beverages.
- Develop an advocacy plan, outlining talking points, lobbying plans, public education, media, research, and leadership activities, as well as which group or individual will implement the plan’s components. Identify a trusted key decision maker or designate a core group of designated decision makers to resolve ongoing potential policy or political issues.



- Identify what resources are already available and what additional resources will be necessary. Consider cash and in-kind contributions for meetings and rallies, media, public education, advertising, travel, materials development, and other activities and expenses.
- Identify key media outlets and personnel and establish contact with them to educate them about sugary drink taxes. Plan media events/releases.
- Anticipate and catalogue industry arguments, strategies, and constituencies.

## **2. Build a coalition:**

- Involve grass-tops individuals and grassroots groups or organizations, including young people where possible.
- Seek diversity, including low-income and minority groups, and unanticipated allies (e.g., health insurers, military leaders, business leaders)
- Establish core principles, talking points, goals, messages, and “bottom-line” negotiating points.
- Develop trusted coalition leadership and diverse spokespeople.
- Share information with coalition participants and meet on a regular basis.
- Invite input and participation from coalition.
- Engage coalition members in rewarding and productive high-profile activities or actions.

## **3. Find Local Experts**

- University academics (economists, communications experts, nutrition scientists, physical education, opinion research specialists, among others.)
- Health practitioners
- Educators
- Youth activists and coaches
- Lawyers
- Chefs and food preparers
- Public health workers
- Public relations and advertising companies
- Military recruiters

## **Be Visible and Vocal**

### **1. Use the Media**

- Prepare and place print, radio, and television advertising
- Have designated coalition spokespeople meet regularly with key reporters to keep them up-to-date on the campaign’s issues and ideas.
- Prepare persuasive memoranda to educate news media executives about the sugar-sweetened beverage tax and garner editorial support



- Request meetings with newspaper editorial boards and managers of radio and television stations. Keep the meetings small, and involve a cross-section of the most influential and persuasive coalition members
- Prepare and submit timely opinion articles from key or influential campaign spokespeople and deliver on-air radio and television opinion statements
- Place opinion/educational articles in organizational newsletters/publications
- Submit strategic letters to the editor of local and statewide general-circulation publications
- Organize creative media events and activities, including rallies, possibly centered around the release of research, opinion surveys, or reports. Also use this strategy with “opposition research” that exposes industry’s political pressure or anti-health practices
- Publicly celebrate and recognize key supporters or leaders of the campaign, particularly elected officials
- Stay prepared to respond publicly to developing events
- Hammer away on the continuing and escalating human face of the social, health, and economic costs of obesity and the contribution of sugary-beverage consumption to the epidemic
- Use social media to your advantage. Blog, post youtube videos, and create and use facebook and twitter accounts to generate and maintain buzz about the campaign.

## **2. Notes/tips about working with the media**

- Establish on-going relationships and information sharing practices. Don’t wait until you have an event or a press release ready to go.
- Develop a relationship of trust. Always ensure the accuracy and timeliness of your materials and statements.
- Respect reporters’ time. Be consistent, clear, succinct, and avoid pestering them when they’re on deadline (unless you have an urgent story).
- Be generous about sharing sources. If you’re not the right contact, refer reporters to someone who’s the expert or who can best help. A good story is the best reward!
- Localize the issues as much as possible and put a human face on the message (without stigmatizing overweight individuals, see [Rudd Center Website](#) for more information)
- Use sympathetic and/or popular spokespeople
- Keep good records of your contacts with media representatives
- Don’t overload your media contacts; try to make news when you really have something important to share
- Consider using “exclusives,” if it can lead to highlighted coverage of the issue or an important relationship with premier media outlets
- Don’t avoid controversy; the media love it.



- When interviewing, concentrate on your message, distilled down to two or three key points, repeated (in different ways, if possible) at least twice each. Answer questions by sticking to your story line. Use appealing metaphors or framing.
- Keep it simple.

### **3. Collaborate with law makers and public officials**

- Develop trust by ensuring all information materials are accurate; regularly share intelligence on political and substantive issues
- Identify and recruit constituents of legislators to make contacts with their legislators
- Involve legislators and public officials in coalition activities
- Identify and train experts and other witnesses to testify and lobby in support of proposed legislation
- Create media opportunities for willing legislators
- Conduct issue briefings, utilizing legislators' and others' expertise
- Use policy leaders to motivate the coalition and to resolve potential policy disagreements within the coalition

### **4. If at first you don't succeed...repeat as necessary. Rome wasn't built in a day.**

## **Resources**

Here are some additional materials and resources that might be helpful in a sugar-sweetened beverage tax campaign:

Attachment 1: Typical allies and coalition partners (maybe from a local and state initiative)

Attachment 2: Model legislation

Attachment 3: Advocacy materials and background research

Attachment 4: Sample press releases

Attachment 5: How to set up an Editorial Board Meeting

Attachment 6: Sample edit memo

Attachment 7: Sample letters to the editor, opinion articles

Attachment 8: Presentations

Attachment 9: Examples of advocacy ads



## **Attachment 1: Allies and Coalition Partners**

**Typical allies and coalition partners can be from local and state initiatives. This list will help you get started.**

- State and local politicians
- Representatives from state and local Departments of Health or Education, especially when revenue from the soda tax will be allocated to their programs
- State or local affiliates of major health organizations (for example, American Heart Association, American Public Health Association, American Dietetic Association)
- Physicians', dentists' and nutritionists' offices
- Hospitals
- Obesity clinics
- Statewide and local advocacy organizations/associations that focus on public health, nutrition, healthy eating and/or obesity issues
- Statewide and local anti-hunger organizations
- Statewide and local organizations that promote physical activity or fitness for youth or adults
- Recreation centers, youth sports and activity programs
- Schools, principals, teachers, school nurses, physical education teachers, parent-teacher associations
- Community development organizations
- Farmer's markets
- Local WIC affiliates
- Faith-based organizations
- Youth development organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, or YMCA
- Local public health, epidemiology or nutrition professors
- University departments of Public Health, Epidemiology, Nutrition, etc.
- Associations of health professionals
- Local experts on health issues
- State and local pro-health research, lobbying and policy groups
- Local newspaper columnists, opinion writers



## **Attachment 2: Model Legislation**

### **NPLAN:**

[http://www.nplanonline.org/sites/phlpnet.org/files/SSB\\_Tax\\_Legislation\\_FINAL\\_20100405.pdf](http://www.nplanonline.org/sites/phlpnet.org/files/SSB_Tax_Legislation_FINAL_20100405.pdf)

**CSPI:** see **appendix 1**, CSPI Model Tax Soda-Tax Legislation.

## **Attachment 3: Advocacy materials & background research**

### Community Catalyst SSB Tax Policy Brief:

[http://www.communitycatalyst.org/doc\\_store/publications/SSB\\_tax\\_policy\\_brief.pdf](http://www.communitycatalyst.org/doc_store/publications/SSB_tax_policy_brief.pdf)

### Ounces of Prevention — The Public Policy Case for Taxes on Sugared Beverages (NEJM):

<http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/industry/SodaTaxNEJMApr09.pdf>

### The Public Health and Economic Benefits of Taxing Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (NEJM):

<http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/policy/BenefitsSodaTaxNEJM9.09.pdf>

### New York State Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Alliance SSB Fact Sheet:

<http://www.nyshepa.org/documents/NYSHEPA%20SSB%20Fact%20SheetFinal2%20%2010%20doc.pdf>

### Rudd Center Policy Brief, Soft Drink Taxes:

<http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/reports/RuddReportSoftDrinkTaxFall2009.pdf>

### Taxing Sugared Beverages Would Help Trim State Budget Deficits, Consumers' Bulging Waistlines, and Health Care Costs (CSPI):

[http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/state\\_budget\\_report\\_-\\_sugar\\_tax.pdf](http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/state_budget_report_-_sugar_tax.pdf)

### Liquid Candy (CSPI):

[http://www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/liquid\\_candy\\_final\\_w\\_new\\_supplement.pdf](http://www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/liquid_candy_final_w_new_supplement.pdf)

### CSPI Soft Drink Tax Question & Answers:

<http://www.cspinet.org/liquidcandy/qa.html>

### CSPI Key Components of a Soft Drink Tax:

<http://www.cspinet.org/liquidcandy/keycomponents.html>

### Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Taxes and Public Health:

<http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/20090731ssbbrief.pdf>



Small Taxes on Soft Drinks and Snack Foods to Promote Health (Am. Journal of Public Health): <http://www.cspinet.org/reports/jacobson.pdf>

NYSHEPA Talking Points: See Attachment 3. NYSHEPA Talking Points in G:\Prevention\Soda\website\Attachments

Alliance for a Healthier Vermont Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.allianceforahealthiervt.org/faq.php>

Councilmember Cheh's Office, 10 Myths About the Soda Tax: [http://www.marycheh.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=145&Itemid=41](http://www.marycheh.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=145&Itemid=41)

#### **Attachment 4: Sample press releases**

CSPI, Council Urged to Put DC School Kids Ahead of Special-Interest Opponents of Soda Tax: <http://www.cspinet.org/new/201005131.html>

CSPI, Maine Taxes on Soda, Beer, Wine Applauded: <http://www.cspinet.org/new/200804181.html>

CSPI, New York State Tax on Soda Cheered by CSPI: <http://www.cspinet.org/new/201001191.html>

NY State Department of Health, Bronx Neighborhoods Targeted by Beverage Lobby for Tax Protest Would Benefit Most from Reducing Sugary Drink Consumption: [http://www.health.state.ny.us/press/releases/2010/2010-03-30\\_bronx\\_targeted\\_by\\_bev\\_lobby.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/press/releases/2010/2010-03-30_bronx_targeted_by_bev_lobby.htm)

NY State Department of Health, Who Supports A Sugary Beverage Tax? Plenty Do!: [http://www.health.state.ny.us/press/releases/2010/2010-02-18\\_support\\_tax\\_on\\_sugared\\_beverages\\_grows.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/press/releases/2010/2010-02-18_support_tax_on_sugared_beverages_grows.htm)

NYAM Statement of Support: <http://www.nyam.org/news/press-releases/2010/10130.html>

NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hhc/html/pressroom/press-release-20100308.shtml>



## **Attachment 5: How to set up an editorial board meeting**

See **Appendix 2**. How to set up an editorial board meeting (via League of Women Voters)

Covering Kids and Families:

[http://www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org/actioncenter/module\\_ModuleID=4.php](http://www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org/actioncenter/module_ModuleID=4.php)

AFL-CIO: [http://www.dawninfo.org/co/tools/toolsPDF/how\\_to\\_ed\\_board.PDF](http://www.dawninfo.org/co/tools/toolsPDF/how_to_ed_board.PDF)

## **Attachment 6: Sample edit memo**

Keep Arts in Schools (see bottom of webpage):

<http://www.keepartsinschools.org/Resources/GuideToEditorialBoardMeetings.php>

The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center:

<http://www.pennbpc.org/memo-editorial-page-editors-and-columnists-state-budget>

## **Attachment 7: Sample letters to the editor, opinion articles**

New York Daily News/State, city health chiefs: Hiking the price of sugary soft drinks in NY will raise money, save lives:

[http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2010/03/28/2010-03-28\\_state\\_city\\_health\\_chiefs\\_hiking\\_the\\_price\\_of\\_sugary\\_soft\\_drinks\\_in\\_ny\\_will\\_raise.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2010/03/28/2010-03-28_state_city_health_chiefs_hiking_the_price_of_sugary_soft_drinks_in_ny_will_raise.html)

Huffington Post Mike Jacobson opinion piece

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-f-jacobson/a-soda-tax-is-a-good-polit\\_b\\_530528.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-f-jacobson/a-soda-tax-is-a-good-polit_b_530528.html)

NY Daily news Kelly Brownell opinion piece:

[http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2009/02/18/2009-02-18\\_want\\_a\\_healthier\\_state\\_save\\_gov\\_paterson.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2009/02/18/2009-02-18_want_a_healthier_state_save_gov_paterson.html)

NY Times Mark Bittman opinion piece:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/14/weekinreview/14bittman.html>

Seattle Times Marina, McDonald op-ed:

[http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2012415314\\_guest22maranan.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/opinion/2012415314_guest22maranan.html)

NY Times Nancy Huehnergath letter to the editor:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/30/opinion/lweb30soda.html>



NY Times Nicholas Kristof op-ed:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/18/opinion/18kristof.html>

### **Attachment 8: Presentations**

MD Food Policy Workgroup Presentation:  
[http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/md\\_foodpolicyworkgroup\\_cspi.pdf](http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/md_foodpolicyworkgroup_cspi.pdf)

Rudd Webinar:  
<http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/policy/SoftDrinkTaxWebinarPPT3.9.10.pdf>



## **DRAFT**

### **Healthy Beverage Promotion Act of 2010**

#### **Section 1: Establishment of Obesity Prevention Program Fund**

There shall be established in the joint custody of the state comptroller and the commissioner of health a special fund to be known as the Obesity Prevention Program Fund, which shall be a distinct fund for the purpose of supporting improved access for all residents to fresh, healthy, local food and exercise and other activities to prevent chronic disease and promote health, prioritizing communities with a disproportionate burden of obesity and chronic disease.

There shall be credited to the Obesity Prevention Program Fund [fifty percent] of proceeds from Section 2 of this Act.

#### **Section 2: Tax Rate**

(a) There is hereby levied and there shall be collected a tax on every soft drink manufacturer, bottler, wholesaler, or distributor to be calculated as follows:

(1) [ten cents (\$0.10)] per 12oz. bottle soft drinks sold or offered for sale;

(2) [\$10.09] per gallon of syrup or simple syrup sold or offered for sale;

(b) A retailer who purchases bottled soft drinks, syrup, simple syrup or powder or base product from an unlicensed distributor, manufacturer or wholesale dealer shall be liable for the tax levied in subsection (a) of this Act on those purchases.

(c) The [Comptroller] shall adjust the rate in Section 2 (a) for inflation on June 1, 20xx, and every [year] thereafter based on the Consumer Price Index for urban consumers (CPI-U) as determined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

(d) Manufacturers, bottlers, wholesalers or distributors shall add the amount of the tax imposed by this section to the retail price of sweetened beverages.

#### **Section 3: Definitions**

As used in sections 2 above, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Bottle" means any closed or sealed glass, metal, paper or plastic container or any other type of container regardless of the composition, size or shape.



- (b) "Bottled soft drink" means any ready-to-consume soft drink contained in a bottle.
- (c) "Distributor, manufacturer or wholesale dealer" means any person who receives, stores, manufactures, bottles or sells bottled soft drinks, syrup, simple syrup or powder or base products for mixing, compounding or making soft drinks for sale to retailers or other manufacturers, wholesale dealers or distributors for resale purposes.
- (d) "Natural fruit juice" means the original liquid resulting from the pressing of fruit, the liquid resulting from the reconstitution of fruit juice concentrate or the liquid resulting from the restoration of water to dehydrated fruit juice.
- (e) "Natural vegetable juice" means the original liquid resulting from the pressing of one or more vegetables, the liquid resulting from the reconstitution of vegetable juice concentrate or the liquid resulting from the restoration of water to dehydrated vegetable juice.
- (f) "Nonalcoholic beverage" means any beverage that is not included in the definition of "Beverage" under the Federal Alcohol Administration Act.
- (g) "Place of business" means any place where soft drinks, syrups, simple syrups or powder or base products are manufactured or any place where bottled soft drinks, syrup, simple syrup, powder or base product or any other item charged under this title is received.
- (h) "Powder or base product" means a solid mixture of basic ingredients, including sugar, used in making, mixing or compounding soft drinks by mixing the powder or other base with water, ice, syrup, simple syrup, fruits, vegetables, fruit juice, vegetable juice or any other product suitable to make a soft drink.
- (i) "Retailer" means any person, other than a distributor, manufacturer or wholesale dealer, who receives, stores, mixes, compounds or manufactures any soft drink and sells or otherwise dispenses the soft drink to the ultimate consumer.
- (h) "Sale" means the transfer of title or possession for a valuable consideration of tangible personal property regardless of the manner by which the transfer is accomplished.
- (i) "Simple syrup" means a mixture of sugar and water.
- (j) "Soft drink" means any nonalcoholic beverage, whether carbonated or noncarbonated, sold for human consumption, that contains 5 grams of added sugar or other caloric sweeteners or more per 12 ounces, including, but not limited to, soda, water, sports drinks, "energy" drinks, colas and any flavored drinks, any diluted fruit or vegetable drink containing seventy percent (70%) or less of natural fruit juice or natural vegetable juice, any frozen, freeze-dried or other concentrate to which water is added to produce a



nonalcoholic beverage containing less than seventy percent (70%) natural fruit juice or natural vegetable juice, a powder or base product, and coffee and tea bottled as a liquid for sale

(k) "Syrup" means the liquid mixture of basic ingredients used in making, mixing or compounding soft drinks by mixing the syrup with water, simple syrup, ice, fruits, vegetables, fruit juice, vegetable juice or any other product suitable to make a soft drink.

(l) "Sugar" includes sugar (sucrose), dextrose (glucose), fructose, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, or other caloric sweeteners, except those deriving from fruit juice, used in the preparation of soft drinks.

#### **Section 4: Licenses**

All distributors, wholesalers or manufacturers of soft drinks whether located within or without the state, who sell or offer syrups, simple syrups, powders or base products, or soft drinks for sale to retail dealers within the state shall obtain a license for the privilege of conducting such business within the state from the [division of taxation].

(1) Any retailer who purchases syrups, simple syrups, powders or base products, or soft drinks from an unlicensed manufacturer, wholesaler or distributor shall obtain a license for the privilege of conducting such business from the [division of taxation].

(2) Any person required to obtain a license under this act shall obtain a license for each place of business owned or operated by him.

(3) The license shall be conspicuously displayed at the place of business for which it was issued.

#### **Section 5: Reports**

A distributor, manufacturer or wholesale dealer and any retailer subject to the tax imposed by this Act, shall, on or before the fifteenth (15th) day of every month, or at the discretion of the tax administrator on a quarterly basis, return to the tax administrator under the oath of its treasurer, or person performing the duties of treasurer, or of an authorized agent or officer as of the last day of the month preceding, a statement showing its name and location, the quantity of soft drinks and/or syrup distributed, manufactured or sold by it within the month preceding, or during the quarter ending the last day of the preceding month if on a quarterly basis, and any other information the tax administrator shall require. The amount of the tax shall be paid to the division of taxation within fifteen (15) days following the assessment of tax by the tax administrator.

#### **Section 6: Effective Date**

This Act shall take effect upon passage.



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## Appendix 2:



### **Meeting With Editorial Boards and Station Managers**

A meeting with the editorial board of local newspapers or with managers at television and radio stations can help the League get out the facts about advocacy and voter education issues. By articulating our opinions on these issues, we have the opportunity to sway public opinion, re-define the debate and put our opposition on the defense.

#### **NEWSPAPERS**

Various organizations (for profit and non-profit) meet with newspaper editorial boards on a regular basis. It is an opportunity for organizations like the League to share their point of view and attempt to sway the board to their side or move them to a neutral position or soften their opposition stance. It also provides an opportunity to pitch specific stories and establish the League as the “go-to” organization on the issue at hand when news occurs around the issue. An editorial board meeting should include the editorial page editor, an editorial writer and, possibly, a reporter who has been or will be writing on the issue at hand.

#### **SET UP A MEETING WITH YOUR NEWSPAPER:**

- Decide the two to four people who should represent the League of Women Voters in the meeting. Participants could include the state or local president, the advocacy chair or voters’ service chair, and one or two citizens that have been directly impacted by the issue being discussed.
- A community leader that has an established relationship with the editorial board may make it easier to make an appointment and add a level of “legitimacy” to the meeting
- Call the editorial page editor for an appointment. Editors generally like to meet between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Be sure and ask who from the newspaper will be present at the meeting.
- Smaller newspapers may not have a full editorial board, and the editor may want to meet with you along with a reporter.

#### **PREPARE FOR THE MEETING:**

- A pre-editorial board meeting should be held with all participants at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting with the editorial board. This allows you time to gather more facts and information that may not have been thought of ahead of time.



- Search the newspaper's archives for any and all articles/op-eds/letters to the editor relating to the issue at hand. Read them all.
- Learn something about the background of each of the participants from the newspaper. (Articles, op-ed, conservative vs. liberal etc.)
- Have a briefing packet prepared to give to the editorial board. The packet could include:
  - A clear and concise statement on the League of Women Voters position
  - Frequently asked questions and answers (talking points)
  - If possible, a synopsis of a story of an individual that has been impacted by the issue and a brief statement on other participants
  - Fact sheet
  - Summary of work the League of Women Voters has done around the issue and any other information that helps establish the League as THE expert in the area on the issue.
  - League contact information

#### **MAKING THE PRESENTATION:**

***Important Note: Remember you are always speaking on the record – do not share anything that you do not want to see in print.***

- Only one participant should act as the spokesperson. The spokesperson acts as the facilitator of the meeting by introducing herself/himself and asking other members of the team to briefly introduce themselves. The spokesperson then presents the League's position in a 10-15 minute presentation (She/he should pass out the briefing packet so the editorial board can follow along and take notes). After the initial presentation the spokesperson should ask the editorial board if they have any questions and then direct them to the appropriate members of the team.
- It is important that each participant stays on message – repeating the main talking points and not arguing with the editorial board members. Remember to stay calm if the editorial board takes a different view than you.

#### **CALL TO ACTION: ASK THE NEWSPAPER FOR A SPECIFIC RESPONSE/ACTION:**

- Ask them to make a decision on their editorial stance based on the facts you have presented
- Ask if you can submit an opinion page article for their consideration
- Ask if they would be willing to write an article focusing on the individuals that have been impacted by the issue
- Ask them to call the spokesperson if they have any follow up questions/comments
- Send a follow-up letter within 24 hours thanking them for the meeting and restating your position on the issue and invite them to contact you with any questions.

#### **TELEVISION AND RADIO:**



The goals of meetings with television or radio stations is the same as with newspapers but there may be some difference in the organizational structure of the stations:

- Often the general manager of a radio or television station is the chief "editorial" officer.
- Each station also has a program manager and a public affairs director who control editorial feedback and talk-shows. Be sure and ask if you can participate in the talk-shows.
- Each station has a news or assignment director who decides what news will be covered.
- When calling to set up a meeting ask to speak to the manager (not the general manager) and the news and program directors.
- Most television people will want to meet with you at the beginning or end of the day.
- Be prepared to do an "on-the-spot" interview (dress appropriately)