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The Importance of Editorials and Engaging Editorial Boards

Meeting with an editorial board can help your message receive the attention it deserves. Outreach to editorial boards can result not only in editorials that take a progressive stance on an issue; they can also affect news coverage throughout the paper. The single best way to influence the content of editorials is conducting a briefing with editorial boards, although sending materials and following up by phone can also be helpful. Opinion editorials (op-eds) are an extremely powerful and cost-effective way to both educate a large number of readers about your issues, and influence policymakers. Policymakers and their aides read op-eds, which is why securing favorable editorials and meeting with the editorial board on your issue is essential, particularly for campaigns targeting legislation. Good editorials also help establish an organization as an authority.

- 1) **Do your research:** Review the paper's stance and coverage on your issue first. The editorial board will appreciate your familiarity, knowledge and ability to discuss angles that haven't been covered yet.
- 2) **Target the right paper and writer:** Most editorial boards have one head editor and a handful of writers, each focusing on issues like the environment, health and policy. If it's a national story, you may be able to work with the appropriate editorial writers to find local angles.
- 3) **Get to know the gatekeeper:** The editorial board and some individual writers have assistants. Introduce yourself and get as much information as you can about the best way to approach them.
- 4) **Send a formal pitch:** This 1-2 page letter should clearly state the editorial position you want the board to take and communicate. Tips: create a sense of timeliness and urgency, and use credible spokespersons. If your spokespeople are not well known, establish their background and what makes them experts.
- 5) **Provide persuasive documentation to bolster your arguments:** Include in your information at one or more fact sheets that immediately highlight your issue and lay out the facts that support your perspective. Encourage editorial boards to review reports and background information that detail recommendations on the issue. Only use documents with solid analysis behind them.
- 6) **Be persistent:** Follow up with friendly phone calls, suggest meeting dates, and send background information by mail with a personal note. It can take a couple months to secure an editorial. As with reporters, always be pleasant no matter what they write.