



Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

*A national network of organizations working to address issues of
nuclear weapons production and waste cleanup*



DC Days 2012: Organizing at Home

Participating in DC Days can be a very empowering experience for local organizations. It adds another dimension to the work we do as grassroots activists, builds a deeper sense of commitment to our community and world, and provides the satisfaction knowing that even one person can have an impact on public policy decisions. It just takes that one person asking a policy maker a question or seeking an answer to a problem to make a difference. YOU can be that ONE!

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability has compiled the following list to make DC Days a more meaningful experience for you and members of your organization.

Recruit several people from your group

Coming to DC Days together is a great way to **build community and turn a group of individuals into a team of skilled advocates**. Activists will learn a broad range of skills that will be useful to your organization in the future, from learning how to raise the money to increasing participation and to learning the most effective ways to report back to your community. As you think about who would be good to send, consider the following:

- Active volunteers
- Board members
- Staff
- Interns, youth, high school & college students – sending a young person to DC can deepen their commitment to nuclear issues and your organization
- Representatives from diverse and impacted constituencies
- Community or governmental leaders
- Allied friends and organizations

All participants will need to have some stamina for long days on Capitol Hill, flexibility in dealing with changing circumstances, and a good sense of humor.

Fundraise together

Since the cost of participating in DC Days can be as high as \$1000 per person (including airfare, lodging and food), it is important that no individual needs to raise the money alone. When local groups come together to raise the money to send representatives to DC Days, it adds to the interest and commitment of not only participants but also the community. If you have ever fundraised for a cause, you know the thrill of learning that others share your views and are willing to support your efforts. Suggestions for raising the money include:

- Find someone to donate frequent flier miles or tickets to cut your travel costs dramatically
- Find someone to host your group in DC so you won't have to pay for expensive hotels
- Ask friends and family to sponsor you, then invite them to a party or report-back after DC Days to share what you learned on your trip.
- Dances
- Art/service auctions
- Raffles

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- Yard Sales
- Spaghetti dinners
- House parties
- Bowl-a-thons, Walk-a-thons, post-holiday sponsored diets, or other 'a-thons
- Phone bank your membership
- Incorporate participating in DC Days into your annual organizational plans and budgeting.

Even those who can't afford to donate in these tough economic times can make an impact by volunteering to help raise money for the trip or providing child care or petsitting while your delegation is at DC Days.

As always, be sure to thank your contributors and donors.

Reporting back to the Community

After you return from DC remember to share what you've learned with your organization and your community. **Contact the media before you leave and while you are in DC**, to ensure local coverage of our issues and your group. A media consultant will be available in the ANA DC Days headquarters to help you with this. To get coverage, you will need to use as many media outlets as possible. There are several ways of getting your story out:

- Write an op-ed for you local newspaper
- Write an article for your newsletter
- Talk to a reporter at your local newspaper, TV station or radio station. Live call-in shows from DC or from home can be fun!
- Write letters of "Thanks" to folks who helped get you to DC and describe your experiences
- Hold a community report-back at your local library or community center: have all DC Days participants give a small presentation, then answer questions
- Write articles for other organizations' newsletters
- Give presentations to allied organizations. Churches and temples are often good places to share experiences
- Sponsor house parties where you share your slides or videos. These can be opportunities to raise funds to subsidize next year's DC Days delegation.
- Be sure to keep your members and your community updated on how your work went. If you won a major concession, be sure to let your donors know. Results speak for themselves

Recruiting and Training DC Days Participants

Recruiting Participants

- Reward your interns, donors, volunteers, or board members for all their hard work by sending them to DC Days.
- Invite your friends, family, and other personal contacts.
- When recruiting participants, contact local high schools/colleges/universities with active environmental, social justice, political, and security organizations.
- Contact those who have written or signed op-eds or written a letter on nuclear issues.
- Contact lists of those who testified at or attended nuclear-related hearings.
- Recruit community leaders and your influential supporters.

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- Inviting your donors and members to DC Days is a great way to say thanks and to inspire them to continue supporting our cause.

Training Recruits and Team-Building

First Meeting:

- **Make the first meeting a casual gathering.** Potlucks or just beer and pizza are always crowd pleasers. If possible, screen a video of your work or about our issues. One example is *Amazing Grace and Chuck*, a kids' nuclear weapons protest film starring Jamie Lee Curtis and Gregory Peck.
- **Explain what the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability (ANA) does** and how your group ties into ANA.
- **Stress the fun parts of DC Days**, such as the chance to enjoy the National Cherry Blossom Festival, visiting famous places, being part of the democratic process, attending the pizza party and awards ceremony with famous policy makers. DC days is work, but it's also a lot of fun.

Second Meeting:

- **Go over past fact sheets** (available at ananuclear.org). Stress that this year's issues will be very similar to last year's and that we need to stay focused because we will only have a short amount of time with each congressional office.
- Have each participant **choose a field of "expertise"** that they will feel comfortable exploring and researching. Emphasize that the meetings are short, so they only have to be a "two minute expert" on their subject. Tell each participant that they will probably know more than the aide or legislator that they talk to. If any one participant omits or forgets something, there will be a team leader there to fill in the blanks. If someone does not feel comfortable talking during lobby meetings, remind them that every meeting needs a note taker and timekeeper, but we encourage everyone to speak. There is power in numbers: the more of us speak up, the more they have to listen!
- **Explain the Sunday training and stress its importance.** Go through each step (from previous years) and emphasize workshops and meeting signups. Newcomers only have to sign up for a few meetings a day. Try to remove the fear factor by making all phases of the training fun and emphasizing our team approach to meetings.

Before DC Days

- Using the map of Capitol Hill from the packet, have all participants **become familiar with the locations of all House and Senate buildings** and know how long it takes to get from one side of the Hill to the other. Remember, the DC Days HQ is only blocks from the Senate office buildings and about a 10-15 minute walk from the House office buildings. Remind your DC Days participants to always **have plenty of small bills to avoid paying for everyone with whom they share a taxi.** For the sake of their comfort and sanity, make sure everyone has **shoes they can do a lot of walking in.**
- **Try to find home-stays in DC.** It is more fun and greatly reduces the cost of the trip. Contacts in DC are often willing to take in fellow traveling activists.
- If you want to go, raise your own \$\$\$. Don't forget to ask family and friends!
- **Start out rested and healthy**, we work hard and play hard.
- Try not to be stressed! The best way to get around this is to prepare. Spend plenty of time **studying the fact sheets in the weeks leading up to DC Days.**
- Have Fun and Change the World!

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