



Alliance for Nuclear Accountability DC Days 2010 **Organizing at Home**



Participating in DC Days is a very empowering experience for local organizations. It gives a deeper meaning to the work we do as grassroots activists, a deeper sense of commitment to our community and world, and satisfaction in 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!

Here are some ideas for helping you and members of your organization participate effectively in DC Days 2010:

Send several people from your group and your community

Find volunteers from your group to attend. This is a great way to turn a group of individuals into a team of skilled activists. 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 groups:

- Active volunteers
- Board members
- Staff
- Young people, high school & college students – sending a young person to DC can be a life-changing experience.
- 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.

Fundraising

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 members 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 a host for your members in DC so you won't have to pay for expensive hotels.
- Dances
- Art/service auctions
- Raffles

- Yard Sales
- Spaghetti dinners
- House parties
- Bowl-a-thons or other 'a-thons
- Phone bank your membership
- Incorporate participating in DC Days into your yearly organizational plans, along with fundraising opportunities

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 dogsitting during 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. Contacting the media before you leave and while you are in DC can provide excellent local coverage for you and your group. A media consultant will be available in the ANA DC Days headquarters to help you work this out. To get coverage, you will need to use as many media outlets as possible. There are several ways of getting your story out:

- Write letters of "Thanks" to folks who helped get you to DC and describe your experiences.
- 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!
- Hold a community meeting: 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.
- 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.
- Write an op-ed for you local newspaper.

Recruiting DC Days Participants

- Recruit reliable volunteers.
- Reward your interns, donors, volunteers, or board members for all their hard work by sending them to DC Days.
- Use your personal contacts to recruit or raise money for your trip.
- When recruiting participants, contact local high schools/colleges/universities with environmental, political and security groups.
- Contact those who have written or signed opinions or written a letter on nuclear issues.
- Contact lists of those who testified at or attended nuclear-related hearings.
- Recruit influential and powerful folks in your community who support your work.
- Inviting your donors and members to DC Days is a great way to say thanks and to inspire them to continue to support our cause.

Training Recruits and Team-Building

First Meeting:

- Have the first meeting as a casual meeting or get-together. Beer and pizza or popcorn are always crowd pleasers. If possible, try watching a video of your work or a related issue to get folks talking. For example, you may want to watch "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 visit famous places, being a part of the democratic process, seeing famous policy makers face-to-face, the pizza party, award ceremony, and all the other things that make DC Days great. DC Days is work, but it's also a lot of fun.

Second Meeting:

- At your second meeting, go over past fact sheets of the major issues (they are available on the ANA website). Stress that this year's issues will be similar but not necessarily the same.
- 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.
- 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 "2 minute expert" on their subject. Tell each participant: you will probably know more than the aide or legislator you will be talking to. If you omit or forget something, there will be a team leader there to fill in the blanks. If you really do not feel comfortable talking, every meeting needs a note taker and a timekeeper, but we encourage everyone to speak. You will be happy you did, and there is power in numbers: the louder we speak the more they have to listen!

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 lots of little bills to avoid paying for all the other folks with whom they share a taxi. And 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 amount of money needed for 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!