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www.uufn.org/docs/CitizensResourceKit.pdf

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark (UUFN)

Citizens Resource Kit

Citizens Resource Kit

The information in this document is available for use by all who promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and practice justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. Compiled by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark, DE (UUFN), 2008, 2009, 2010.

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Using this Document

1 Using this Document

1.1 About this Document

The Citizens Resource Kit is a compilation of guidelines that has been researched, composed, and contributed to by several members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark (UUFN), under the leadership of the Social Justice Steering Committee (SJSC). The SJSC started assembling this kit in April of 2007. See the date on the title page or in specific topics pages to determine the date of the latest updates.

1.2 Obtaining or Updating this Document

Contact Pam G. Green by e-mail at PamGGreen@yahoo.com or phone 302.368.4946 to obtain a hardcopy or electronic copy of this document. The electronic copy in PDF format contains hyperlinks to websites. If you have topics to contribute, please contact any member of the Social Justice Steering Committee. Please notify Pam of any errors.

1.3 Future of the Information in this Document

This document is posted on the UUFN website, at www.uufn.org/docs/CitizensResourceKit.pdf. Alternatively, look for the Social Justice icon on the lower left of the home page. Our goal is to keep this information up to date. We provide this information regularly to other Unitarian Universalist organizations.

2 Lobbying, Our Right and Responsibility

2.1 Engaging in Our Democratic Right and Responsibility

The information in this section is from *Inspired Faith, Effective Action; A Social Justice Workbook for Unitarian Universalist Congregations*, and from the Human Rights Action Center.

Lobbying Our Democratic Right and Responsibility

Lobbying is a powerful mechanism for changing hearts and minds. Communicating with elected officials is a positive effort to influence and educate those who make policies that affect our lives. We can do this with telephone calls, e-mails, letters and cards, but the best way to put a face to our issues is to make a lobby visit. Group lobby visits are one of the most highly effective forms of advocacy.

Preparation for Visit: Schedule a visit with the official's scheduler, explaining that you are a constituent who would like to discuss a particular issue or legislation. Prepare for the visit by learning about the official's priorities and specifically his/her record on the issue for which you are lobbying. Prepare a packet of supporting materials, if possible, with information about your organization and contact information. Some materials could be fact sheets, articles, editorials, polling information. Think ahead about your "talking points" and if you are in a group, choose a facilitator to introduce the topic and keep the conversation running smoothly.

Visit: Dress in business or casual business attire. Greet your official and/or staff person warmly with introductions and a "thank you" for the meeting and for any supportive actions that the official has taken on your issue. If you are in a group, take turns presenting your main points with any facts and personal stories that can make an impact. Be brief, clear and to the point. Speak with passion, but polite without anger. If you are asked a question to which you do not know the answer, say so, and tell them you will get back to them with the requested information. Make specific, clear requests: what legislation you would like them to vote on and how you would like them to vote; what bill you would like them to co-sponsor; who you would like them to speak to. Ask for a commitment. Will they support your position? If not, why? When and how will they make their decision? End on a positive note. Recognize where you disagree, but communicate where you believe you have shared values and common ground.

Lobbying, Our Right and Responsibility

After the Visit: Debrief with your group. Report how the visit went to others in your congregation or organization. Follow up with a “thank you” letter to the elected official or staff person reiterating your position and any commitment that was made in the visit. Encourage others to do similar visits. Lobbying can be empowering and even fun!

2.2 Obtaining US Legislative Information

Legislative information sections in this document are researched and maintained by Pam G. Green, and were last updated and verified in June 2009. Websites cited in these sections often change. Please send any corrections and recommendations to: PamGGreen@yahoo.com.

You can obtain US legislative information maintained by the Library of Congress, by reviewing the Thomas website: <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

In the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, the Thomas website was launched in January of 1995, at the inception of the 104th US Congress. The leadership of the 104th Congress directed the Library of Congress to make federal legislative information freely available to the public. The Thomas website has expanded the scope of its offerings to include the following:

- Bills, Resolutions
- Activity in Congress
- Congressional Record
- Schedules, Calendars
- Committee Information
- Presidential Nominations
- Treaties
- Government Resources
- For Teachers
- Help and Contact

2.3 Determining Who Your Legislators Are – for Any State

You can determine who the legislators are for any district in any state by using the Project Vote Smart website: <http://votesmart.org/index.htm>. From the home page, enter a 9-digit zip code. Project Vote Smart returns the names and contact information for state and US officials.

If you enter the last name of a legislator, Project Vote Smart returns a list of names or a name, with links to detailed information about those legislators, often with a picture. This detailed information includes committee assignments and voting records.

Lobbying, Our Right and Responsibility

If you do not know the 9-digit zip code, Project Vote Smart will help you find it, by linking to the US Postal website: <http://zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp>. This tool requires that you enter a valid address.

2.4 Obtaining Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Status – for Any State

The Delaware League of Women Voters recommends this website as the best open government site available. For information about what is happening in other states, replace the last two letters with the two-letter abbreviation of the state of interest:

- Delaware www.rcfp.org/ogg/index.php?op=browse&state=DE
- Maryland www.rcfp.org/ogg/index.php?op=browse&state=MD
- New Jersey www.rcfp.org/ogg/index.php?op=browse&state=NJ
- Pennsylvania www.rcfp.org/ogg/index.php?op=browse&state=PA

2.5 Finding Legislative Websites for: DE, MD, NJ, PA

Each state website maintains its own navigation pattern, level of information, and naming conventions.

- Delaware www.legis.delaware.gov
- Maryland www.mlis.state.md.us
- New Jersey www.njleg.state.nj.us
- Pennsylvania www.legis.state.pa.us

2.6 Checking a Bill in the Delaware State Legislature

You can navigate the Delaware legislative website www.legis.delaware.gov to locate the text of a bill or to check its status, to find contact information for Delaware state legislators, and to learn the composition of committees. To check a bill, go to the Bill Tracking menu option on the home page. Enter the session number you choose to search. The current General Assembly (GA) session number is 145. This session of the legislature recesses at the end of June. The legislature convenes anew in January, as GA session 146.

The Delaware legislative website, re-designed in 2008, provides two rolling lists on the home page: *What's New*, and *Committee Hearings*. When the legislature is in session, an audio link is available.

3 Influencing Public Policy

The information in this section is from *Inspired Faith, Effective Action: A Social Justice Workbook for Unitarian Universalist Congregations*, and from the Human Rights Action Campaign. The *Inspired Faith Workbook* uses this exact title: *Tips for Writing Letters to Your Legislators & Letters to the Editor: An Opportunity to Educate and Influence Public Policy*.

- Clearly define the problem and your opinion for a solution.
- Keep your letter short and to the point.
- Make your most important point in the first paragraph.
- Personalize the letter, stating how your issue affects your life or the lives of people in your family and community.
- Make your letter timely, referring to recent legislation or to an article in the newspaper.
- Express appreciation for actions and/or statements made by your representative or other policy makers in support of your issue.
- Frame your message with language that expresses your values and uplifts unity between people, rather than fear and division.
- Express your commitment and passion with respectful language, without ranting or demonizing people who have opposing views.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and/or a person who has some expertise with the issue, if you do.
- Be specific about the action you want done.

Letters to your legislators make a difference because it takes effort to write a letter, and therefore, is taken seriously. Letters to the editor can influence the public dialog and policy on an issue. The editorial page and letters to the editor is one of the most widely read parts of the paper and one of the first pages many elected officials turn to.

4 Communicating Our Values

4.1 Thinking Points, Communicating Our American Values and Vision

This section was authored by George Lakoff.

“We must articulate the progressive vision and stand up for our values and principles. The secret is effective communication...the use of words and language in the service of our deepest convictions. Simply correcting a lie with the truth is not enough. We must reframe from our moral perspective so that the truth can be understood and be a part of public discourse. Frames are not just words...they are mental structures by which we understand and interact with the world.”

“Conservative values are based on the Strict Father Model. The strict father is the moral authority in the family, and there are absolute rights and wrongs. Conservative morality centers on authority and control. The strict father model is gendered. Parents in this model cannot be gay or lesbian or transgendered people. The ‘defense of marriage’ is really the defense of the strict father model. Legitimizing gay marriage delegitimizes the strict father model and it threatens their family model.”

“Progressive, liberal values are based on the Nurturant Parent Model. Morality centers on empathy and responsibility for self and others. If there are two parents, both are equally responsible for the moral development and nurturing of the family. The nurturant parent model is non-gendered. Empathy is the capacity to feel and connect with others and responsibility means acting on that empathy with responsibility for self and others. From empathy and responsibility, a set of core values follows: protection, fulfillment in life, freedom, opportunity, fairness, equality, prosperity and community, because nobody makes it alone and communities are necessary for anyone to lead a fulfilling life. Naturally flowing from these progressive values are four core political principles which may be largely unconscious, but they are used over and over again as the basis of arguments for progressive policies and programs:”

- The Common Good Principle
- The Expansion of Freedom Principle
- The Human Dignity Principle
- The Diversity Principle

“When one model is activated, the other model is inhibited. In order to be successful in activating the nurturant model in our political landscape, we need to reach out and communicate in public and in conversation with bi-conceptual people who identify with both progressive and conservative values.”

Communicating Our Values

4.2 Guidelines for Communicating Our Values

Lift up a vision of unity with language that conveys compassion, empathy, commonality, and reconciliation, not language that demonizes and insults people who may have opposing views.

Example: *“American polls show that in our democratic society, we believe that all people should be treated with fairness.”*

Use your own authentic, positive concepts and frames, not the language used by the conservative right. Equal rights for all, commitment and love of all families, economic fairness for all couples is the language of progressives.

Example: *“Our Constitution supports everyone’s civil rights.”*

Communicate as a person of faith and moral values, not allowing people of different religious backgrounds to monopolize and claim the higher moral ground.

Example: *“As a Unitarian Universalist, I believe and support the inherent worth and dignity of every person.”*

Keep it personal, avoiding general rhetoric.

Example: *“I know gay friends who have been fired because of their sexual orientation.” “My partner of 20 years and I cannot benefit from joint health care plans, tax benefits of married heterosexual couples or Social Security benefits.”*

Always stay respectful, calm and non confrontational when you are in dialogue with someone that you want to influence. Use “I” messages and body language that conveys active listening. Example: *“I may disagree with you, but I respect your right to have your own viewpoint. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about this important issue.”*

5 Contacting the Media

5.1 Writing a Letter to the Editor

Most newspapers list their requirements for submitting letters to the editor directly on their editorial pages. These requirements include length, format, and identification of the person submitting.

Writing a Letter to the Editor

If you've never written a letter to the editor before, look at these seven simple steps as a quick way to help you organize and express your thoughts effectively. If you're a more experienced writer, use this section as a refresher to make your letters more relevant and meaningful.

Making what you say matter to small-minded editors

Make no mistake about it, "small minded" is probably one of the nicest things an editor has been called. Those of you who've already taken the time and effort to write unpublished letters probably have a few other choice words for them. But let's stick to small minded, because this is a topic for all ages. And, besides, you'll actually need to be small minded temporarily as well – that is, you'll need to think like them – if you really want to get published.

First, you'll need to understand what we mean by small minded. You may not agree with the articles, features and letters an editor publishes. But if an editor is keeping his or her job, that editor must be selling magazines and papers to a pretty large number of people. That's because they are keeping a very specific audience in mind. They are publishing what people are looking for – and in today's world that means quick, easy-to-read, and relevant. Make your letter to the editor all of that simply by following "The rule of one."

The rule of one:

Write in one day, to one person, with one point backed up by one example that encourages one action in one paragraph. Write at least one rough draft and let at least one person read your final draft. Then write one more letter.

One too many points to remember? Let's break it down into bite-sized chunks.

Write in one day: As a general rule, if you're taking more than one day to write a response to a hot issue, there's a good chance it won't be hot anymore. Your letter needs to be relevant to be newsworthy, and that means you've got to get it to the editor as soon as possible (without being sloppy, of course).

Contacting the Media

Write to one person: Your letter is more effective and more likely to get published if you are responding to one reporter's piece. This is not a hard and fast rule, but newspapers are a lot less likely to publish generic "soapbox" letters that speak to a point not made in the paper.

Make one point: Think about the one thing you want to say. Try to write it in about seven words or less, as if you had to title your own letter (you don't by the way). Sure, the environment is in danger. But if a local editor has to choose between a letter that rambles aimlessly about the dangers of global warming and nuclear power plants in general OR a concise letter that talks about John Doe's mismanagement of toxic waste dump X in Wilmington, Delaware, the editor is likely to choose the second letter.

Use one example: One of the most common mistakes with letters-to-the-editor is that they don't back up their point with facts. Anyone can say there is a problem with global warming. But if you have information readers are not likely to know (i.e. a 10-year study by XYZ University was just completed showing the earth's temperature was increasing by X degrees every year due to chemical ABC) you're a lot more likely to get published.

Encourage readers to take one action: If appropriate, give your readers an action to take – from buying blue to writing their congressman. It's a better finish to your letter than "In conclusion..." and it might give someone who doesn't know how to help a way to support your cause.

Write your letter in one paragraph: Sound tough? It is. But you can do it, and it's a lot easier to add a small amount of supporting information to one paragraph than to cut from ten. Rarely is there a reason to write more than four paragraphs, and make sure you're within the word count limit of the paper or magazine you're trying to be published in. Additionally, the shorter the letter is, the less work for an editor. Less work for an editor makes your letter more likely to be published.

Write at least one rough draft: At the very least, and that's for very experienced writers. Write as many as you think are necessary. Yes, you should only take one day to write and send your letter, but rough drafts are a must. If you're able to write a cohesive letter (that gets published) in one draft, you don't need this guide.

Let at least one person see your final draft: And that person should be someone who can be honest with you. Try to get them to tell you what you're writing about in just a few words. Get them to look for errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar or even simple logic. It's always better to have someone look over your work so that editors, who have no time for mistakes, don't pass your letter by.

Contacting the Media

Write more than one letter: Choose another topic that is important to you and write a letter about that. Then send it to a different newspaper or magazine. This accomplishes two things: It gives you practice (which even the most experienced writers need) and it doubles your chances of being published. Either way, you and your cause win.

5.2 Lists of Newspapers in DE, MD, NJ, PA

The information in this section was last updated in March 2010. The contacts here are for Letters to the Editor. Publicity submissions for fellowship and fund-raising events frequently require different targets, especially for large newspapers. Please e-mail any corrections and additions for Letters to the Editor contact information to:

PamGGreen@yahoo.com.

5.2.1 Delaware, New Castle County

The News Journal

950 Basin Rd.

New Castle, DE 19720

www.delawareonline.com

www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION

e-mail: letters@delawareonline.com

Community News

6300 Limestone Rd.

Hockessin, DE 19707

www.communitypub.com

e-mail: editor@communitypub.com

The Newark Post (new office location May 28, 2008, phone and fax numbers the same)

218 East Main Street

Suite 109

Newark, DE 19711

www.newarkpostonline.com

Note: *The Newark Post* is also the headquarters for the Delaware Business Ledger and the Chester County Pennsylvania *Business Ledger*.

5.2.2 Delaware, Kent County

Delaware State News

Dover, DE 19903

<http://de.newszap.com> <http://de.newszap.com/region/>

e-mail: newsroom@newszap.com

Contacting the Media

The Dover Post
609 Division Highway
Dover, DE 19901
www.doverpost.com

Milford Beacon
www.milfordbeacon.com
news e-mail: cliff@milfordbeacon.com

5.2.3 Delaware, Sussex County

Coastal Point
P.O. Box 1324
Ocean View, DE 19970
e-mail: Darin.McCann@coastalpoint.com

Cape Gazette
P.O. Box 213
Lewes, DE 19958
Fax: 302.645.1664
e-mail: newsroom@capegazette.com (“Letter to the Editor” in subject line)

Delaware Coast Press
P.O. Box 309
3712 Highway 1
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971
e-mail: dcp@gannett.com

The Leader and State Register
P.O. Box 1130
Seaford, DE 19973
e-mail: leader@newszap.com

Seaford Star/Laurel Star (2 papers)
628 West Stein Highway
Seaford, DE 19973
Fax: 302.629.9243

The Sussex Countian
P.O. Box 40
13 South Front Street
Georgetown, DE 19947
Editorial Fax: 302.856.0925

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Contacting the Media

5.2.4 Maryland

Cecil Whig
P.O. Box 429
Elkton, MD 21922
Fax: 410.398.4044
www.cecilwhig.com
e-mail: whigletters@chespub.com

5.2.5 Pennsylvania

Daily Local News (Chester County, PA)
390 Eagleview Boulevard
Exton, PA 19341
e-mail: letters@dailylocal.com

The Philadelphia Inquirer
Box 41705
Philadelphia, Pa. 19101
Fax 215-854-4483.
www.philly.com/inquirer
e-mail: Inquirer.Letters@phillynews.com

5.3 Selected List of Radio Stations in DE, NJ, PA

To obtain information about radio stations in your area, check website www.ontheradio.net. The radio stations in the following table were identified by selecting news, news/talk, and public radio within a 40-mile radius of Newark, DE.

Wilmington radio stations WDEL and WILM offer live, local, call in talk-radio programs, most weekday mornings.

There are many area all-music stations, not listed here.

Radio Station	Phone	Website	Notes
WDEL 1150 AM	Studio Phone 302.478.9335 Bus Phone 302.478.2700	www.wdel.com streaming online audio Wilmington, DE	Weekday mornings local call-in talk show, <i>Live and Local</i> with Al Mascitti, weekdays 9:00 AM News programs with

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			Allan Loudell, weekdays 12:00 noon to 1:00 PM, and 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM
WILM 1450 AM	Studio Phone 302.395.9456 Bus. Phone 302.395.9800	www.wilm.com streaming online audio Wilmington, DE	Weekday mornings local call-in talk show, <i>News Talk AM</i> with John Watson, 9:00 AM
WTMC 1380 AM	302.760.2080	www.deldot.org	DelDOT traffic, all the time
WPHT 1210 AM		www.thebigtalker1210.com	Talk daytime, Phillies in season
WDOV 1410 AM		www.wdov.com	CNN News news talk
KYW 1060 AM		www.kyw1060.com	newsradio news all the time <i>Dateline</i> broadcasts of community events
WHYY 90.9 FM		www.whyy.org streaming online audio	NPR Philadelphia
WVUD 91.3 FM		www.wvud.org streaming online audio sometimes available	University of Delaware (UD) student station, Newark, Delaware
87.7 FM			ABC TV audio, Philadelphia
WNJB 89.3 FM			NPR Bridgeton, NJ