

Email For Advocacy and Community Organizing: Basics, Essentials, and Best Practices

Email Composition Best Practices

These training materials have been prepared by Aspiration in partnership with Radical Designs and ScoutSeven

Funded by the Community Technology Foundation of California

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Learning Goals

- ▶ Design for Clear Messaging
 - Know what you want your user to learn and do
- ▶ Keep Tone Casual and Personal
- ▶ Design for Skimming
 - Subject line is critical
 - Information should be easily accessible
- ▶ Know The Art of “The Ask”

Email Composition

- ▶ Each email should have a clear goal/message
 - Don't try to do too much in one email
 - Your supporters may not come away with a memorable message
 - Come up with a key message or activity that you want your supporters to do or remember
 - If you are trying to educate your supporters on an issue give them links for background
 - Don't email a position paper

Email Composition

▶ Develop/Frame Your Message

- Be seductive
 - Be inviting, not bludgeoning
 - Be inclusive, be welcoming
- Achieve conversational tone
 - Be personable
 - Avoid technical jargon or “insider” language

Email Composition

- ▶ Email is a casual and personal method of communication
 - Strive to be both in your communications
 - Write in the first person voice
 - Signed by an individual.
 - Don't be afraid to convey personal information about your relationship to an issue or a campaign
 - When possible, use mail merge to include the person's first name in the email

Email Composition

- ▶ Casual & personal method of communication
 - Develop different roles and voices for different individuals who emails are from
 - Develop expectations around those people
 - Action alerts, fundraising, organizational updates
 - Recipient can feel a personal relationship w/you
 - By extension with your goal
 - Make sure that your emails express a tone of excitement and involvement
 - They won't care if you don't

1st Person Narrative

A few days ago, I got the best Christmas present I could have wished for. I found out that one of the dirtiest power plants in the country is cleaning up its act, and that my actions had something to do with it.

Personal History

Four years ago, I joined Greenpeace because I wanted to take direct action to protect the environment. That's why in July 2004, I scaled a 700-foot smokestack at Hatfield's Ferry power plant to raise awareness of its polluting practices. You may remember me and the other five activists from that day as the "Smokestack Six." We spent nearly 20 hours together on that smokestack and it's an experience I will never forget.

We knew on that day that our protest had made a difference, when we received an outpouring of support from all over the world. Knowing how many lives we had touched made the five days I spent in jail as a result of the protest much easier. But it wasn't until last week that I realized the true significance of what we had accomplished.

Relationship to Issue

Hatfield's Ferry recently announced that they were spending **\$400 million** on new equipment to clean up the plant! This is a tremendous victory for the environment and one of the proudest moments of my life. I know that if it weren't the generous support of people like you, this action could not have taken place and Hatfield's Ferry may not have changed its dirty ways.

Donation Appeal

It's so nice to end the year on such a high note, but there's still much to be done in 2006 and we still need your help. If you've already made your donation - thank you so much. If you haven't, or could give a little more, please consider a special year-end donation today to help protect the environment. We have a tough year ahead of us, and every bit helps. Please keep us in action so we can achieve even more victories in 2006.

Picture Name



Jessica Miller
Activist/Supporter Services Representative

Email Composition

- ▶ Key premise: you have minimal time to engage reader
 - Key message should be stated up front
- ▶ Think in terms of Subject line and 3 main points
 - State the problem
 - State your solution
 - State ways to get involved



Subject

Urgent Action: Free the Panchen Lama!

Problem



On April 25th, Gendhun Choekyi Nyima, Tibet's Panchen Lama will turn 17 years old and spend yet another birthday as a prisoner of the Chinese government. Over a decade ago he and his family were unjustly detained by Chinese authorities and have been held under house arrest ever since. No information about his whereabouts or well-being has been released.

Solution

This week, Tibetans and their supporters will protest at Chinese embassies and consulates around the world calling for Gendhun Choekyi Nyima's freedom. Please help secure the release of the 11th Panchen Lama by sending the message below now.

Action



Send a letter to the following decision maker(s):
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Li Zhaoxing

Below is the sample letter:

Subject: Free the Panchen Lama Now.

Take Action!

Instructions:

[Click here to take action](#) on this issue or choose the "Reply to Sender" option on your email program.

Tell-A-Friend:

Visit the web address below to tell your friends about this.

 [Tell-a-Friend!](#)

What's At Stake:

On April 25, 2006, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, Tibet's 11th Panchen Lama will turn 17 years old and spend yet another birthday as a prisoner of the Chinese government. He has not been seen or heard from in over a decade, since he and his family were abducted by the Chinese government.

In 1995, at age 6, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, Tibet's second most important spiritual leader. Shortly thereafter, the young child and his

Action

Action

Background

Email Composition

- ▶ The subject line is the most important part
 - Keep it short yet snappy so it stands out in the inbox
 - Give enough info to interest, but not too much
 - No CAPS in subject
- ▶ Testing technique: send n messages with 1 subject and n messages with another
 - Test open rate of different subjects if your email tool will allow you to

Email Composition

- ▶ People do not read emails; they scan them
 - Make it easy for supporters to quickly find info
 - Design for ease of consumption
 - Be aware of where “the fold” is on the email
 - Make sure all important information is above it
 - Focus on making message “skimmable”
 - Provide good section headers
 - Use white space to break up info
 - “Less is more”

Email Composition

- ▶ People do not read emails; they scan them
 - Create a predictable format so users know
 - What to expect
 - Where to find different types of info in the email
 - Create links to in depth background or related information
 - Do not send giant paragraphs with analysis
 - Have easy to use links with short URLs.

NEWS THAT WORKS
afl-cio NOW

Find out more at the
[AFL-CIO Now news blog.](#)

- [Unemployment Aid Extended for Hurricane Survivors](#)
- [Who's Getting the Money to Rebuild the Gulf Coast?](#)

[Will Katrina Obliterate Aid Benefits?](#)

[UnionShop™ ONLINE](#)

The AFL-CIO Retail Store for Activists

Buy Union Made at
[The Union Shop Online.](#)



Dear David,

On April 22, the citizens of New Orleans will vote for the first time since Hurricane Katrina.

New Orleans residents who are registered voters and were displaced by the hurricane are still eligible to vote in their home parish if they have not registered to vote anywhere else. We need to reach as many of these voters as soon as possible to make sure they can vote in the elections April 22.

If you are an eligible New Orleans voter or know someone who is, you can request an absentee ballot up until April 18 to vote in the primary election. You also can call the Louisiana Secretary of State Elections Division at 1-800-883-2805 or [visit its website](#) for more information about voting.

Please help us spread the word by forwarding this e-mail to your friends and family. If you know people displaced by Katrina, please let them know they have time to vote in their local election.

It was New Orleans' poorest, most vulnerable residents who were hit hardest by the hurricane, and it is their rights at risk when the state makes it difficult for them to vote. This election comes at a crucial time in our nation's history as Congress considers reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act.

We cannot allow those who would erode our rights to get a foot in the door. All of us who care about preserving and protecting the hard-won right to vote have a stake in making sure New Orleans residents can vote April 22.

Please forward this e-mail to friends and family, and let those who were displaced by the hurricane know they are eligible to vote in the April 22 primary election.



Know a Katrina Evacuee?

Displaced New Orleans residents have until April 18 to request an absentee ballot for the April 22 elections. You can call the Louisiana Secretary of State Elections Division at **1-800-883-2805** or [visit its website](#) for more information about voting.

Background Links

Bold to Highlight

Action

Image

Action

Action

Dear Friends of Verified Voting:

As another New Year approaches, we reflect on what a busy year 2005 has been, and how much more remains to do in order to achieve transparent, reliable and publicly verifiable elections in our nation.

Through both of our organizations, VerifiedVoting.org (501-c-4) and The Verified Voting Foundation (501-c-3), we work to help those interested in election transparency -- whether officials, lawmakers or concerned citizens -- with research, information, commentary, materials and key connections as needed. None of this would have been possible without your ongoing support, for which we're very grateful. Below are some of the highlights we'd like to share with you.

VerifiedVoting.org

This year we've seen **19 more states pass voter-verified paper record requirements** (*the most recent, Wisconsin, is awaiting the Governor's signature!*)

Our legislative analyst helped with wording and key concepts for some of those bills, and we generated action alerts so that concerned citizens in those states could write to their lawmakers about the bills, coordinating with state and national groups to try to leverage the greatest support possible. Our thanks go out to all those citizens, groups and national organizations for pulling together, over and over.

We submitted written testimony on state efforts, such as an Alaska provision requiring audits (it passed!), and California's audit legislation (passed!), and have helped activist groups write county-level resolutions calling for manual audits.

This year we published "Draft Model Legislation" for voter-verified paper records and manual audit provisions, assisting anyone working on developing such a bill for their state. We also published "States with Audit Provisions" -- a resource used by citizens, lawmakers and even other research agencies.

We supported federal voter-verified paper record legislation in both the House and Senate. As part of a coalition of organizations, we helped plan, train for and participate in citizen meetings with lawmakers both in Washington DC (June) and in your own districts (August) with the HR 550 Lobby Days, and our Democracy Days (June). We also sent out action alerts resulting in thousands of letters to members of Congress on voter-verified paper record legislation, and hired a political adviser in Washington DC to help keep this issue visible with lawmakers and their key staff, and to help build much-needed affiliations with conservatives on this issue.

The Verified Voting Foundation

Some of our Foundation work is highly visible (public testimony), but much occurs behind-the-scenes, including providing links and connections to valued resources for those that need them, and more.

Verified Voting's founder Dr. David Dill testified about the urgent need for voter-verified paper records in several venues:

- the Carter-Baker Election Reform Commission (April),
- the Senate Rules Committee, at its first hearing on this matter (June), and
- the Election Assistance Commission in (July).

The Carter-Baker Commission heard the message: "Paperless electronic voting is hostile to election transparency..." In September they recommended voter-verified paper records for all voting systems.

We published charts showing the "Accessibility and Auditability" features offered by different voting systems (carefully researched by staff and interns), and the advantages of optical scan voting systems with ballot-marking devices, and greatly expanded the "Accessibility" section of our website.

This year we updated one of last year's important projects: the Election Incident Report System (EIRS). This infrastructure we helped develop and implement (with Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, the National Coalition for Voting Integrity and our clients, the Election Protection Coalition) enabled the capture of 44,000 individual reports of problems encountered in the November 2004 election.

Some of that data is currently being used in legal actions to help prevent similar occurrences in future elections. The Foundation and several talented and dedicated volunteers updated the system and deployed it in 2005 elections in several states.

EIRS and the Verified Voting Foundation also provided information to, and were cited as a resource in, the recently-issued Government Accountability Office (GAO) critical report on Electronic Voting.

The Verified Voting Foundation sent written comments on the Draft Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) issued by the Technical Guidelines Development Committee (TGDC) of the EAC this year, and provided a mechanism that assisted thousands of you to do the same.

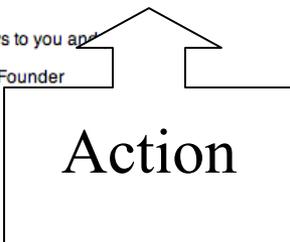
Having a team member in our nation's capital also allowed us to do more this year on developing relationships with disability advocates, and representing our organizations and issues at EAC, NIST, TGDC and other election reform forums. (She also helped launch a non-partisan election reform think tank for area university students.)

For both organizations, there's more: interviews, public speaking, participation in election reform conferences and panels, serving as expert witnesses, updating the website, answering inquiries, letting folks know about hearings, etc.... If you would like to know more about any of these activities, please contact us at any time.

Your support is invaluable in making all of this reform possible. Please keep us in mind as you think about your year-end [charitable donations](#). Such contributions give us much-needed flexibility to devote the necessary time and resources to the most important election reform issues. (Unrestricted funds are especially crucial as they let us respond quickly to issues as they arise.) Thank you in advance for your consideration.*

Happy Holidays to you and

Dr. David Dill, Founder



Action

Doing “The Ask”

- ▶ “The Ask” refers to what action you want your recipients to take
- ▶ Make it easy to see “The Ask”
 - Make The Ask specific
 - Repeat The Ask several times in different places
 - Use a sidebar and graphics to highlight The Ask
 - Give multiple options and methods for people to take action and participate

Dear David,

As the nation focuses on ways to improve our health care system during National Cover the Uninsured Week, a bill that could gut your health insurance is making its way through the U.S. Senate.

The bill, S. 1955, would allow health insurers to bypass state requirements for minimum benefits. That means it could eliminate key benefits in your coverage, including cancer screenings, contraception, emergency services, mental health care and diabetic supplies. Stop S. 1955 from gutting your health insurance. Tell your senators to oppose the bill.

[Click Here to Take Action](#)

Every state has written specific health protections into its laws, requiring insurance companies to cover certain necessary services. S. 1955, pushed by Wyoming Sen. Mike Enzi (R), would allow insurers to jack up prices for services they're now required to cover—or eliminate coverage for them altogether.

The Enzi bill would encourage discrimination, letting insurers raise premiums based on your age, your gender, your health status and more. It would price the elderly and the sick out of the insurance market, taking health care coverage away from those who need it most.

Don't let Congress cut your benefits and raise your premiums. Tell your senators to oppose S. 1955.

[Click Here to Take Action](#)

The Enzi bill hands to powerful corporate trade organizations, which want to sell

Don't Let Congress Cut Your Benefits

Take Action

S. 1955 would cut health coverage by eliminating state standards for benefits. Tell your senator to protect your health care by opposing S. 1955.

Take Action

Ask in
Sidebar

The Ask
in the text

The Ask
repeated



Dear David,

25 October 2005



I've been writing to you for weeks about Kimberly Clark, maker of Kleenex and destroyer of ancient forests. Kimberly Clark wipes out three million tons of virgin forests EVERY YEAR, and wastes them on disposable tissues. Well, there's just one week left before we make a stand against Kimberly Clark. Will you stand with me on November 3?

RSVP Now! Join us, and thousands of others across North America, for a day of action against Kimberly Clark.

On November 3, you have the power to make change. Tell your neighbors, your friends, your family and your local grocery store shoppers,

3 Ways to Help

1: Donate Now
Help Greenpeace Take a Stand. Become a Member Today.

2: Take Action
Visit our Action Center and take action today.

3: Tell a Friend
Forward this message to a friend. Help spread the word.

Make a Difference

Americans use 8.2 million tons of tissue paper products every year-- 55 pounds per person. If every household in the United States replaced just one 70-sheet paper towel roll made from

Multiple Ways to Take Action

Background

The Ask in the text

Summary

- ▶ Design for Clear Messaging
 - Know what you want your user to learn and do
- ▶ Keep Tone Casual and Personal
- ▶ Design for Skimming
 - Subject line is critical
 - Information should be easily accessible
- ▶ Know The Art of “The Ask”

End Of Section

- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ Comments?

Thank You!

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