

# Web Sites For Advocacy and Community Organizing: Basics, Essentials, and Best Practices

## Influencing Decision Makers

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

Funded by the Community Technology Foundation of California

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# Learning Goals

- ▶ Know your range of online tool options in aggregating and conveying public support
- ▶ Learn best practices for online “action” tools
- ▶ Identify appropriate contexts for online petitions
- ▶ Understand “Letter to the Editor” tools

# Influencing Decision Makers

- ▶ Tools that let you reach these targets
  - Online “action” tool
  - Petition tools
  - “Letter to the editor” tools
- ▶ Tools which directly contact targets require updated databases of contact information
  - Legislative database
  - Media contacts

# Online Action Tool

- ▶ AKA “Send an email, send a fax”
- ▶ Goals:
  - Engage your supporters
  - Pressure your target
  - Educate your membership and the public
  - Create media pressure
  - Build your list
  - Broaden your exposure

# Online Action Tool

## ► Best Practices

- Make actions timely and urgent
- Don't target legislators who are already with you
- Constituents matter more than non constituents
- Have supporters "opt in" for email updates
- Send a thank you and copy of action to user
- Only ask for the information you need
- Have link to privacy policy

# Online Action Tool

## ► Best practices

- Identify number of actions you need in a timeline
- Some tools allow for user to craft message with talking points
- Remove or disable actions that have already happened
  - Have start and stop dates for action
- Consider verifying supporter email before sending to target

# Online Action Tool

- ▶ The facts on reaching decision makers
  - Most email messages don't reach Congress
    - Hand-written letters are most important action
    - Phone calls come next
    - Faxes are usually received
    - Email not perceived as very important
  - “Smaller” targets have bigger responses
  - Try to get supporters to place phone calls

# Online Action Tool

- ▶ How people get there
  - Email Alert
  - Link from another site
  - Movie/Flash animation
  - Advertisements (online/print)
  - Word of mouth (rare but possible)

# Online Action Tool

## ▶ Action Alert Workflow

- Before
  - Post Action and details on website
- During
  - Send email to your list, linking to action tool
- After
  - Thank and update supporters at end of action
  - Tag or make note of supporter interests
  - Contact target/media with your aggregate numbers of people who have taken action

# Online Action Tool

- ▶ Possible user “action” click-paths
  - Watch a movie / follow a link
  - Take Action
    - Find their representative
    - Write a letter / Make a call
    - Take action by customizing message
    - Sign up for email alerts
    - Go to tell a friend page
    - Go to donate page

## The Senate must not pardon President Bush for breaking the law

This week, the Senate is planning to quietly hold a vote that would pardon President Bush for breaking the law by illegally wiretapping innocent Americans. So far, Democrats and some Republicans are holding strong against the bill, and there are good chances to stop it if enough of us speak up.

**"The Senate must not pardon President Bush for breaking the law by illegally wiretapping innocent Americans. Instead, Congress should be holding him accountable."**

### 1 Speak Out

Han Shan, a compiled petition with your individual comment will be presented to your senators and representative when you click the button below. (Not Han Shan? Click [here](#).)

Your message to your senators and representative: (optional)

I authorize MoveOn.org Political Action to send an email statement containing my comment (see right), in my name and from my email address, as part of the petition delivery process.

[Submit petition](#)

(see [privacy policy](#) below)

#### YOUR COMMENT TO CONGRESS

TO: Your Senators  
CC: (Your Representative)  
FROM: (Your Name and Email)  
SUBJECT: Do not Pardon the president for breaking the law

Dear Senators,

(Your personal note)

Many legal experts agree that the president's program to wiretap Americans who have nothing to do with terrorism violates the law. President Bush already has the authority to wiretap suspected terrorists—but he chose to reach beyond that.

Congress should be trying to hold him accountable. Instead, some in Congress are trying to let President Bush off the hook completely. And this legislation would give the President even more unchecked power.

The Senate must not pardon President Bush for breaking the law.

### 2 Tell Others

This campaign is based solely on word of mouth. It is **CRUCIAL that you tell others**. To transmit a brief letter to your e-mail circle, just press:

[Pass it on](#)

### 3 Contribute

**Donate:** Can you make a [financial contribution](#) to support this campaign?

#### [Privacy Policy](#)

We do not share the information you've given us with unaffiliated groups without your explicit permission.

## The Senate must not pardon President Bush for breaking the law

Thank you. Your name has been added to the petition and your comments will be delivered to your senators and representative.

Signing the petition is only the first step. It is crucial that you [tell others](#) to keep the ball rolling.

### 2 Tell Others

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#### **Petitions and Surveys**

For petitions and surveys you've signed or completed, we treat your name, city, state, and comments as public information—for example, we may provide compilations of petitions, with your comments, to the President and legislators, other targets, or to the press. We will not make your street address publicly available, but we may transmit it to members of Congress and to the President as part of a petition. This is a standard industry practice in such situations. In no such case will we disclose your email address or phone number, without your permission. We may also make your comments, along with your first name, city and state available to the press and public online.

#### **Sending Emails Via MoveOn.org Political Action**

In certain cases, we enable you to send individual e-mails to the President, legislators, and other targets as well as Letters-to-the-Editor to various news publications, through our website. These messages are sent in your name, with your e-mail address as the return address and your full name and contact information is provided as part of the submission. These messages will only be sent out under your name as you approve them on an individual basis using our email tool. You are solely responsible for the specific message(s) you send using our email tool.

#### **Email from MoveOn.org Political Action**

MoveOn will send you updates on this and other important campaigns by email. If at any time you would like to unsubscribe from our email list, you may do so by [completing this form](#).

For our complete privacy policy, click [here](#).

## The Senate must not pardon President Bush for breaking the law

Here's a brief letter you can send to your email circle. Please send it along right away, but please only contact people who know you personally. Spam hurts our campaign.

Click here to **open a new e-mail** and invite your friends, family and colleagues to get involved:

[Invite friends and colleagues.](#)

Or, you can **cut and paste** the text below into an email message:

Subject: Don't let the Senate let President Bush off the hook for breaking the law

Hi,

This week, the Senate is planning to quietly hold a vote that would pardon President Bush for breaking the law by illegally wiretapping innocent Americans.

The bill would let the administration off the hook for breaking the law and make it legal to wiretap Americans, in secret, without any oversight whenever they want to.

Democrats and some Republicans are holding strong against it, and if enough of us speak up we can stop it. Can you sign the petition opposing the Republican move to pardon President Bush for breaking the law?

<http://pol.moveon.org/dontpardon/>

Thanks!

### The final step:

**Donate:** Can you make a [financial contribution](#) to support this campaign?

[Privacy policy](#)

# Tools Survey

- ▶ **Democracy in Action**
  - [www.democracyinaction.org](http://www.democracyinaction.org)
- ▶ **GetActive**
  - [www.getactive.com](http://www.getactive.com)
- ▶ **CapWiz**
  - [www.capitoladvantage.com](http://www.capitoladvantage.com)
- ▶ **AMP**
  - [www.radicaldesigns.org](http://www.radicaldesigns.org)

# Online Petitions

- ▶ Primarily good for list building and enhancing sense of user engagement
- ▶ Best practices
  - Make it easy to sign (no scrolling, small form)
  - “Opt in” for displaying signer's name
  - No need to show more than name, city, state, and organization
  - Only show total # of signers once it gets large
  - Display dignitaries first in list

# Online Petitions

## ▶ Best practices

- Have a cut-off date and a petition delivery plan
  - Not delivering can lose users' invaluable trust
- Send thank you letter to each signer
- Offer opt in to mailing list
- Mapping petitions signers geographically is cool
  - <http://forwardtrack.eyebamresearch.org/>
- State privacy policy clearly
  - Follow it!

# Online Petitions

## ▶ Tool survey

- Application services providers (stand alone)
  - [www.petitionsite.com](http://www.petitionsite.com)
  - [www.petitiononline.com](http://www.petitiononline.com)
- Integrated
  - [www.democracyinaction.org](http://www.democracyinaction.org)
  - [www.radicaldesigns.org](http://www.radicaldesigns.org) (AMP)

# Letter to the Editor Tools

- ▶ Allows supporters to send letters to editors of appropriate publications
  - Letters are most effective when customized and built from talking points rather than boilerplate
  - Ask supporters to inform you if it gets published
- ▶ Tool survey
  - Downhill Battle Local Ink
  - Democracy In Action



## SIGN-UP!

JOIN AMERICANS WORKING  
TO CHANGE WAL-MART.

YOUR E-MAIL:

FIRST NAME:

LAST NAME:

ZIP CODE:

JOIN

### Homepage

#### Take Action

Sign up

Adopt a Wal-Mart

Download central

Fair Share for Health  
Care

Six Demands for  
Change

Plan or find an event

Host a banner

#### Why Wal-Mart

## Writing Letters to the Editor

### Spreading the WakeUpWalMart.com Message

Writing a letter to the editor is an effective way to voice your opinion to policymakers, the media and the public. The letters help amplify and localize our message, respond to inaccurate information, inform the local community of our activities, and raise public awareness about our movement and why Wal-Mart needs to change into a more responsible corporation.

Your letters should personalize your concerns about Wal-Mart and address how you believe Wal-Mart negatively impacts your community, town, or state. In your own words, you should express your opinion and tell your community how and why you think Wal-Mart needs to change.

Through our new Letter to the Editor tool, you can instantly respond to a wide list of local, state and national newspapers about any Wal-Mart issue that concerns you. Please keep in mind, though, every paper will have slightly different submission criteria, so read the details about format and length carefully.

Remember, the letter to the editor section of your local newspaper is very popular and is widely read. Don't be discouraged if your letter isn't printed immediately. Every submission counts!

Your letters will continue to build a public groundswell for Wal-Mart to change, hold Wal-Mart accountable, and make Wal-Mart a key public and political issue -- so keep those letters coming.

### Use this tool to send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper

Start by choosing your state...

New York



Choose State



Join America's Campaign to Change Wal-Mart

★ Our Blog

Contribute

Sign Up

Wal-Mart Facts

Research

Take Action

In The News

Press Center

Community Fights

Forum

## SIGN-UP!

JOIN AMERICANS WORKING  
TO CHANGE WAL-MART.

YOUR E-MAIL:

FIRST NAME:

LAST NAME:

ZIP CODE:

JOIN

### Homepage

#### Take Action

Sign up

Adopt a Wal-Mart

Download central

Fair Share for Health  
Care

Six Demands for  
Change

Plan or find an event

Host a banner

#### Why Wal-Mart Needs to Change

Latest News &

## Writing Letters to the Editor

Now, choose your local newspaper...

- Adirondack Daily Enterprise  
61 Broadway  
P.O. Box 318  
Saranac Lake, NY 129830318 ([website](#))
- Brooklyn Daily Eagle  
30 Henry Street  
Brooklyn, NY 112011338 ([website](#))
- Buffalo News  
One News Plaza  
P.O. Box 100  
Buffalo, NY 142400100 ([website](#))
- Catskill Mail  
414 Main St.  
P.O. Box 484  
Catskill, NY 124140484
- Cortland Standard  
110 Main Street  
P.O. Box 5548  
Cortland, NY 130455548

September 20, 2006

To: Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Subject:

The Wal-Mart Health Care Crisis

To the Editor:

Despite over \$11 billion in profits, Wal-Mart doesn't pay its fair share for health care. According to new analysis, Wal-Mart's health care crisis cost taxpayers an estimated \$1.4 billion in 2005 and will cost an estimated \$9.1 billion over the next five years.

It's wrong, and it must stop.

It's time our elected leaders, Republicans and Democrats, pass Fair Share Health Care legislation which holds large, profitable corporations, like Wal-Mart, accountable.

Sincerely,

Your signature will be added from the information you provide below.

Click on a point to add it to the letter.

- The dirty little secret behind Wal-Mart's business model is that they pass on the costs of a responsible business (health care, wages, etc.) onto the American taxpayer.
- The American people support Fair Share Health Care legislation. In a recent national poll conducted by Zogby International, 64 percent of Americans believe Fair Share Health Care legislation will help reduce the number of workers without health insurance.
- We all pay the price when irresponsible companies like Wal-Mart make billions but refuse to provide affordable health benefits: our health insurance costs increase, responsible businesses health care costs increase, taxpayers are stuck footing the bill, and our health care providers are squeezed by the massive costs of uncompensated care.
- Wal-Mart, and their special interest lobbyists, will stop at nothing to protect their irresponsible business practices. Wal-Mart has aggressively lobbied against Fair Share for Health Care, and even hired over a dozen lobbyists in Maryland alone. But, no amount of money can deny the will of the American people, which is why Fair Share is now the law in Maryland.
- Fair share health care is good for our state and good for America.

**SIGN AND SEND THE MESSAGE:**

First Name  \*

Last Name  \*

Email  \*

Phone  \*

Street  \*

Street 2

City  \*

State/Region  \*

Zip/Postal Code   \*

# End Of Section

- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ Comments?

## Thank You!

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