



## **Writing a News Advisory and Release:**

### ***News Advisory***

The news advisory is a notice to give media outlets a heads-up about an up-coming news event or story. If the advisory is a notice about an event, it is typically sent out 2 to 3 days before the event, followed by calls to reporters to ensure they received it. They are very short and don't need to include all of the background details. You want to offer just enough information to convince reporters to cover the story and attend your press conference or other news-worthy event. It is more of a Who/What/Where/When of the event that is sent out a few days in advance. You will provide more details on the day of the event or breaking news in the News Release.

### ***News Release***

The news release is your main communication to reporters and media outlets to offer a concise summary of the information being released at the news event, background details, and quotes with speaker's titles and affiliations which reporters can use to build a story around. The release is handed out at the news event and distributed to other media that did not attend the event. All of your talking points should be written into the news release, offering sources for your facts and phrasing opinion statements as quotes from your group's spokesmen. Think of the news release as a pseudo-news story. It is written in the third-person and should sound like a newspaper article. Some media outlets will reprint the release itself as a story; but the vast majority will use it as the basis for writing their own story.

### ***Format***

- Start by printing advisories and releases on your organization's letterhead, or put your logo and name at the very top of the page. If you are co-releasing with other organizations, put all logos at the top of the page, (if it fits), and at least list the names of all organizations in alphabetical order (centered) with a symbol (a small dot or square) between names
- Below this, include NEWS RELEASE or NEWS ADVISORY (centered)
- Next comes the date and contact information. This is usually done with the words For Immediate Release or Embargoed Until 07/04/09 if the information in your release is not yet public. Put the date immediately below. Next include Contact: with the name of your group's designated spokesman and a phone number and email.
- Now comes the Headline and Subhead. The headline is in boldface and should grab the reporter's attention. It should be very short, ideally no more than eight words. The subhead is directly below, in italics, and gives you an opportunity to flesh out the headline and offer

another teaser to get the journalist to read your release. Sometimes you will see two subheads used, if there are multiple angles, but it is best to limit yourself to just one.

- Next comes the dateline and the body. News outlets want to know if your story is local, or national news. Put your town and state in boldface and parenthesis to tell reporters where you are writing from. Now you can write the main body of your release.
- For news advisories, include a What/When/Where/Why above the body. It should look like a memo, with 'What' followed by a sentence about your event and its purpose. The When is followed by time, day of the week and date. The Where gives a full address or the phone number if you are publicizing a conference call. The Who lists who will speak at the event, especially if it is public figures, politicians or experts, with their titles and affiliations.
- Lastly, include your boilerplate, a couple of lines about your organization, so that reporters know who you are. The boilerplate should be the same for every release. Include your group's website here.
- Publicists used to use -30- to indicate the end of the news release or advisory when fax was the primary method of transmission. As most releases are now emailed to reporters and published on a group's website, ### is printed at the bottom of the page to indicate the end of the release.

### ***Additional Tips***

- Send advisories and releases by email. Do not send attachments, as reporters don't like to open them. Copy your release directly into the body of the email. (Use notepad to clear your text of any weird symbols that occur when you "cut and paste" the text from a word file to email. Reporters will appreciate getting clean text.)
- A few media outlets still prefer fax. When you do follow-up calls, you can ask them if they prefer a fax.
- Use your attention-grabbing headline as the subject-line of your email. You can preface it with "News Release:" or "News Advisory:"
- If you are sending the release to multiple reporters, use the Bcc field rather than the 'To' field, or email each reporter individually. This avoids your message going directly to junk mail and allows reporters to see the information immediately instead of seeing a lengthy paragraph of email addresses.
- The first sentence of the body should hook the reader, so start with a dynamic sentence that tells the reporter why they should cover this story. The next 1-2 sentences will provide context. The reporter should have a basic idea of what the story is about and why it is interesting after reading the first 2-3 sentences. Details can come in the second paragraph.



- Back up your facts! Offer citations or sources for any facts so that reporters can quickly verify them. It is easiest if you link directly to the source. In Microsoft Word or Outlook, just highlight the fact and use Insert->Hyperlink from the Toolbar. You can also use this to link to background documents on your website, since it can be impossible to offer the full history of the problem in the release. NEVER use the words “Click here” as this will ensure your release is delivered to the reporter’s junk mail box.
- Keep it short. The advisory should never take up more than a page, with plenty of white space. The body of an advisory is only one paragraph. A release is longer, but should be kept between one and one and a half pages. If your release is too long, it won’t be read. You can provide additional information and history as links. Use short sentences and short paragraphs to make it easy to read.

