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**Media Interview DO’s and DON’Ts**

*As important as your issue is, you may not get many opportunities to be interviewed by the press, so you will want to make the most of it. Campaign managers can also use these tips as a checklist for preparing spokespeople for interviews and ensuring they have access to any needed technology or transportation.*

**DO’s:**

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

* DO preview the questions the reporter gives you.
* DO ask how much time the reporter has.
* DO carefully prepare talking points or sound bites that you want to be sure to include during the interview. Imagine the news headline you would like and create your talking points to match it.
* DO tell the reporter that you are nervous if you are before you get started. This may signal them to coach you through the experience a bit.
* DO use props that connect to the legislation, if possible.
* DO plan your background and clothing if you will be interviewed remotely rather than in a TV studio. Try to avoid having family members, co-workers, or pets behind you, and ensure your background reflects how you want to be seen as a spokesperson. Test out lighting and audio prior to the interview; often poor-quality audio or visual is edited out of news segments. For best lighting, ensure that the light is in front of you, but placed behind the camera. Make sure to keep your notes close to the camera so you can keep your face and eyes up. And remember to look at the camera, not the screen, so that you appear to be making eye contact with the audience. For best sound quality, make sure you are on Wi-Fi, that you are in a room without background noise or echo, and that you are sitting within two feet of your computer or webcam microphone. Campaign managers can be helpful with this if you do not have access to a computer or WiFi.

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

* DO be yourself! Be likable and engaging. SMILE.
* DO share your personal reason for caring about this issue or legislation.
* DO keep answers short and simple, and avoid jargon, acronyms, or technical terms.
* DO stick to your talking points – go back to your sound bites if things get off track!
* DO say “I don’t know,” but offer to get back to them with more information (and do so right away).
* DO stay positive, remain cool and behave as if the camera is always on.

**DON’Ts:**

* DON’T speak “off the cuff.” If a reporter calls unexpectedly, say “I am in the middle of something, but if you tell me a little bit about what you’d like to discuss and what your deadline is, I can call you back.” Then hang up, prepare your talking points, and return the call.
* DON’T guess at an answer or say “no comment” – you can avoid this by responding to a question you don’t want to answer with one of your sound bites.
* DON’T say something negative about a lawmaker, you will likely need lawmakers’ support again!
* DON’T wear all black or all white, small patterns, or logos for products not associated with the interview because they do not show well on camera.
* DON’T become angry or provoked, use swear words, or other inappropriate language.
* DON’T speak “off the record” ever! There is no agreed-upon definition for this, so it is safer to avoid it altogether.