



TIPS FOR TALKING TO MEDIA

(These tips also working for public speaking.)

PREPARE – Know your material, know what you want to convey. This does not mean you are a know-it-all or are expected to be perfect. Nobody wants *that!*

LEAD WITH VALUES before you offer an issue or statistic. ***“We all have a shared interest in investing in good public health care programs, that’s why adequate Safety-net funding only makes sense ...”***

FOCUS -- **Focus on three main points** or ideas, and present these important points first. Steer the conversation toward those points ***If the interviewer tries to detour you, use **BRIDGING**: *“What’s important is ...” ; “The point is...”*

ANCHOR -- **If you only have time to make one key point, which is often the case, what would it be? That is your anchor.** Get to your anchor quickly and repeat this key message during the conversation. *“The real issue here is...” ; “If you only remember one thing, remember this...”*

POSITIVE -- Cite positive trends and solutions. *“Americans are in agreement that we should have a national solution to the health care crisis, and our history shows that American ingenuity and spirit always rises to the occasion ...”*

NO NEGATIVE -- Avoid negative statements; turn them into positives: *“1 in 6 uninsured sounds bad, and it is, but we can turn this number around taking these common-sense steps ...”*

MUM --**Decide in advance what you are *not* going to say and stick to your decision.** Do not assume that anything you say is “off the record.” If you don’t want to see it quoted in print or on the air, don’t say it.

BRIEF -- **Sound bites should be brief and punchy** (eight to ten seconds). They should make one’s ears perk up, be memorable: use humor, anecdotes, analogies and personal experiences.

STOP! Make your brilliant sound bite, and then stop! Not another word. Don’t give reporters a reason NOT to use the quote you want the public to hear or read.

RESTATE -- **Restate the question in your response to give the interviewer a complete quotable sentence.** *“Yes, (do) the uninsured do struggle with medical debt (?), many must choose between paying for rent or for a life-saving drug ...”*

NO DEER IN HEADLIGHTS – If you are asked a question that you don’t know the answer to, simply say: *“That’s a good question, I don’t have the complete details on it, but I will find out and get back to you.”* Or something to this effect. At a news conference or sit-down interview, have water on hand and take a sip to give yourself a moment to gather your thoughts.

PROMPT -- Return a reporter’s phone call ASAP and absolutely the same day; many are on tight deadlines. If you have prior notice of an interview, anticipate the questions you will be asked. And be prompt with follow-up.

PRACTICE – **Say it aloud**, to another (someone who has previous experience dealing with media & can coach you, if possible). But any practice, even to yourself in a mirror, will help boost your confidence. The repetition will also help you recall information once you’re “on.” Think of it as muscle memory for your brain.

HAVE FUN -- No one interview or news story will make or break a group or issue. Keep practicing using good communication skills: be confident, energetic, sincere. Make eye contact and smile when appropriate. Take a deep breath. Be yourself. You are going to be terrific!