

Producing a Constitutionally Protected Event

**A Users Guide for Political
Activists**

By

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**A step by step handbook for anyone in the
United States planning a peaceful assembly
to petition the government for a redress of
grievances**

Producing a Political Event

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Introduction

The production of a political event is unlike anything you have ever done. It will require all the knowledge of the commercial event producer, the concert promoter, the business event planner and the volunteer coordinator. You must also be a fluent and passionate speaker to your issue/candidate 24 hours a day. You will need to have a good understanding of constitutional law, election law, basic economics – and be able to ride out the inevitable parade of inflated egos and hurt feelings that will come to you for advice, counsel and 3 minutes in a program that is already running too long.

Political events have their own set of rules which share some similarities with their commercial counterparts, but are ultimately governed by the exquisitely simple first amendment to the US Constitution: “ Congress shall make no law respecting the an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; *or the rights of the people to peaceably assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances*”.

The final clause that I italicized is the only law permitting you to hold a rally, stage a protest, plan a march, set up a house party, circulate a petition and yes, raise the funds at these events to pay the bills. That simple clause is under constant attack by civil authorities throughout the country as they attempt to regulate and restrict your right to assemble. Those

restrictions include drawn out permitting processes, the imposition of arbitrary fees, often intimidating attitudes, requirements for excessive/ expensive security, plus any other creative means they can dream up to quell the people's right to gather. It is therefore incumbent on you, the political event organizer or fund raiser to learn how to put together an event that meets or exceeds all the imposed requirements even with the inherent disadvantages that comes from operating within miniscule budgets your commercial counterpart could not imagine.

Raising the necessary funds both to pay for the actual event and to sustain a campaign need not be the scary prospect many fear if the approach is done with a clear and creative mind. Fundraising can be incorporated into an existing event, or can be stand-alone. One section that follows will deal exclusively with this, so feel free to skip to it! I have included proven ideas I have used many times.

This brochure is divided by topic to allow for development of those areas requiring your attention. Many events will only require understanding only a few of the sections, while the larger and more complex event will require familiarity with all.

Have a good event.

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Defining Your Issue, Setting up the Organization

- Establish a production committee
- Define the issue – purpose for the event
- Simplify the description of the planned event and its purpose - try to describe it in one breath
- Select a name that is easy to remember, catchy and precise
- Be reachable, but...
- Do not use your home address or phone for public access, other than legal requirements such as permits or licenses. If you choose to use your home number, prepare to be flooded with phone calls, have zero life and set yourself up for early burnout.
- Get a PO Box, either private or USPS.
- Check into private P.O. boxes, which are usually more expensive, but immediately available and offered in 3 month contracts.
- Use Voice Mail. It is completely respectable, inexpensive and the outgoing message need never indicate your 'office' is your kitchen table. Any voice mail system can be set up in a 'tree' system – press '1' for this and '2' for that. Such a system allows easy routing of calls to the right person immediately.
- Put together a working budget and timeline.
- Monitor approximate costs to keep the group focused on your real needs and where to trim.
- Keep very accurate books – funds in/out will be your weakest link if challenged

- Get a business license – or verify that you don't need one. This can be tricky, so check it out.
- Open a bank account. It will be needed to cash checks and will greatly ease accounting during and after your event. Only bother with a checking account. If no one in the production group is comfortable with the task, consider paying an accountant/bookkeeper to make sense of your receipts/books. The cost is well worth it.
- Design a letterhead and use it in all correspondence.
- Get an email address on Yahoo, Hotmail, or similar free web based systems. It will become your prime email address.
- Buy or lease a fax machine. They are invaluable – get one.
- Keep a log of all phone calls with the civil authorities and always send follow up letters outlining what was said.
- Keep a log of all phone conversations with the civil authorities, speakers, volunteers, suppliers and the public– and can be a simple spiral notebook.
- Don't waste time on the 'non profit' option, for as a political event, is usually closed to you. In rare situations, if the event is focused on a general issue and does not advocate for a particular candidate or legislation – operating under an umbrella may be worth exploring, as it will decrease some costs, i.e. insurance.

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Selecting a Site

- Location is everything.
- Good access and egress for the public and the crew
- Availability of nearby power and water
- Parking – on street or in pay lots. Consider times when on street parking is free
- Public transit – Publicize public transit access in all publicity
- Well known location – where other civic events take place
- A ‘secure’ site or one that can be made secure – covered in the ‘Security ‘ section
- Have a back up site ready in the event the civil authorities present legitimate concerns – be prepared to negotiate with them
- An attractive location will look great in photos. Think camera angles. - Photo ops
- Pavement is a bonus – allows for easy drive in of gear and any staging/booths.
- Plan protection from inclement weather.

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Permits

- Determine whether you and your group intend to obtain a permit and be prepared to stand by that decision
- Understand that the permitting process may be the most difficult and time consuming part of any event
- Stay intensely focused. Keep the circle of those involved as small as possible.
- Determine the EXACT civil authority responsible for the desired space
- Call that person/office and tell them you want a permit for a political event. If the permit or application exists, have one sent to your PO box. If no application exists, and one may not, ask for the exact procedure you need to follow to hold the event.
- Read the permit application slowly and deliberately. Generally, the permit application will be some sort of info packet spelling out the rules.
- Use a highlighter to mark anything you do not understand or what simply looks weird.
- Check the rules. Are they for commercial events? Remember that you're political and protected by the First Amendment.
- Call back, and work your way up to the person who can actually make decisions. Get their phone extension or desk phone number. Offer them yours.
- Type the application (no pencils!) and make a few copies for yourself. Having an extra copy always comes in handy.

- Use the business address (PO Box) and voice mail number if possible. If the application does request your cell phone or pager number (many do), add in writing 'do not publish' and initial it.
- Question any fee – as you are applying for a 'constitutionally protected event'. Now, a word about fees. Some jurisdictions will attempt to levy assorted charges for items they will claim are not part of the constitutionally protected provisions, such as electric power, clean up, security, etc. There is not space here to cover every possible contingency, but if this is your situation, see contact info in the last section and let's see what can be worked out. There are usually ways to encourage the civil authorities to see the light.
- Be honest in the application. If vending is expected, say so. Likewise any amplified music, as that may involve more permits (all questionable!) for generators, vending, stage construction, etc.
- Make a 'Good Faith Effort' (remember that term) to follow every rule. .
- Never lose sight of the fact that THEY CAN AND MAY MAKE YOUR LIFE DIFFICULT, BUT CAN NOT DENY YOU A PERMIT.
- Contact the legal advocates in your area if you feel that the civil authorities are being petty and throwing up too many hurdles or expenses – see last section for web addresses.
- Restricting your right to assemble through the requiring of excessive charges is simply not permitted.

- Getting off a good foot is essential. Don't start the process with an attitude, or you'll just get pissed, as will the civil authorities. Act like a concerned citizen doing your constitutional thing. The law is actually on your side.

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Event Programming

- Block out the time for the actual event and create a simple time grid
- Start planning in 5 minute increments with the understanding that that may change
- Keep ego struggles in check as they may well be relentless – maintain your sense of perspective
- Choose an emcee. It should be a person comfortable speaking to a crowd and able to put other speakers or performers at ease. This person needs to greet speakers upon arrival at the stage and generally be their host.
- Keep the event on schedule with a carefully selected ‘stage manager’ that works with the emcee and the sound people to quickly move equipment around and closely watch the time.
- Place a large clock near the microphone so everyone on stage can clearly see it.
- Save the headline speakers for last.
- Allow plenty of time for set changes if live music will be in the program – ask the performers what they want, then what they need and work those details into your planning.
- Invite representatives of groups already identified and aligned with your issue
- Be careful that musical performers do not overshadow the issue
- Consider an ‘open mike’ as part of the program – though realize it will require extreme flexibility

- Consider contracts/letters of agreement or releases with speakers and performers in the event media wants to record all or part of the event.
- Make arrangements for any post production projects well in advance
- Prepare for requests during the event from people not on the schedule but wanting to share a song/poem/thought from the stage. If it can work, invite them, but if not, you may need to firmly explain the time restrictions you are dealing with.

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Stage/Sound

- Stage must be suitable for and must fit on the site
- Arrange for stage delivery and assembly the day before at the very latest. Try to avoid day of event set-up.
- There are many options for staging, from simple risers to complex scaffolding. Stages are generally sold in sections. Shop around for what you want, but don't rent more than you need.
- Stage covering is good for protection from the sun, but useless in a rainstorm.
- If you choose to erect a stage, you will have to deal with the local building/code people.
- The trick is to stay under the height limits (ground to stage deck) and not pay any permit fee.
- You will have to comply with basic safety regulations – and may need to provide a drawing to the building dept. to satisfy their questions.
- Remember to get steps, or
- Be prepared to build a ramp to the stage (the stage company should be ready for that request), and have a safety rail on the ramp and on the sides of the stage to meet the ADA
- Stay in constant communication with the relevant civil department so they will have more trouble throwing last minute obstacles in your way.
- If you are having music as part of the program, especially any dance music, you will want to rent barricades to keep people off the stage. Check with a local concert company and see where they rent

‘bicycle barricades’ – basic bike racks can work fine for front of stages.

- Traditional stage barricades come in 4x8 ft sections and are braced together. You will need the front and side measurements of your stage when getting a price for them. The price for barricades will be about \$5 per linear foot and is far less than having damage to the stage or gear from rowdy people in the front of the crowd. Bike racks are cheaper and easier to set up.
- If in a major city with a large turnout expected, consider a 2nd stage with a smaller sound system. – More intimate setting. A 2nd stage keeps the crowd moving which also helps vendors

Power.

- If you are on the grid, a back up is still a good idea as lines do get cut and circuits do short out.
- Generators are rented by the Kilo Watt (kW)
- Generators come in all sizes – larger ones (50,000KW) will require an electrician and possibly an electrical inspection. Once up and running, they supply good power you simply plug into as you would an outlet.
- Generators can be noisy and may smell – so consider their placement carefully.

Sound

- If at all possible, contract sound enhancement to a professional company so it is done right.
- Avoid borrowing ‘band gear’ that may be fine in a club, but not in an open-air rally.

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Publicity

- Must have access to a decent computer with graphics
- Line up an artist ASAP.
- As soon as you have time and place secured, create a poster
- There will be time to fill in any speakers/performers – ask artist to leave space for that info
- Use 4-ups (1/4-page flyers) – full sheet flyers are too expensive and get tossed
- Target your audience – concert lines, inside shows, campuses
- Put flyers into people's hands. Stacks left around just get thrown away
- Press Releases – must be current and to the point (no rambling!)
- Remember to think like a reporter, - deadlines, stacks of press releases and a cranky editor. Make their life and their work easy – do the hard work for them
- Set up a press conference or a 'media-avail' with prominent speakers
- Target your media – use fax machines AND email to get out your press releases
- Concentrate on supportive papers and writers – Offer passes, exclusive interviews, free recordings
- Create publicity – fly over, trucks, etc.
- Aim high – local stringers for national media need to be contacted.
- Use the net to cross post to Usenet groups, ignore protocol

- Have one person act as media liason
- Think in terms on reaching millions rather than thousands on site
- Prepare press packets with short bites of useable info
- Offer to escort print or broadcast media to interview speakers, coordinators
- Supply a 'multiplex media box' allowing for a line feed from your stage. These can be rented from sound equipment companies and will guarantee clean sound for television or radio
- Try to account for all media on site – collect business cards

Poster –

- Must have jump out graphics – dark on light stock
- WHAT WHEN WHERE Everything else is incidental
Must be readable from a distance

After event –

- Tape all local news and buy every paper for at least a week – look for letters to the editor
- Ask others around the country to do the same - very hard to track wire services

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- **Volunteers**

- Post notices in free column of papers
- Put need for volunteers on voice mail and early version of flyers
- One of your production groups needs to take on task of volunteer coordinator
- Standardize/simplify a volunteer registration form
- Most sections of this handbook are headings for volunteer crews
- Note special skills – EMT's, carpenters with tools, computer, general security, etc.
- Have at least one pre event meeting – familiarize everyone with the rules, the site and each other.
- Infiltration will now become a sad but very real fact even within completely legal groups. There is little you can do about it, but realize your circle is now open. As the civil authorities and law enforcement are showing increased interest in infiltration, surveillance and quite possibly provocation, it becomes absolutely necessary to maintain the small inner production group as the core.
- Set up shifts for all volunteer crews on a simple block grid – it's expected
- Figure on a 60% flake factor – if you need 100 people, get 200
- Make volunteers a visible presence during the event by using unique colored/designed t-shirts, which also provide a great perk.
- Do not tolerate inappropriate behavior by anyone while wearing a volunteer shirt

- Not every detail of the event needs to be conveyed to every volunteer
- Keep everyone's spirits up – stress the issue(s), not the event production hassles
- Have central check in on site – info booth – with all schedules/needs
- Welcome walk ins – shirts if possible, and put on schedule grid immediately
- Maintain mailing list so as not to lose anyone.
- Send thank you notes to all volunteers after the event.

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Vending - Food

- If possible, select a Food Co-ordinator from within the production group

If not...

- Set a reasonable fee – compare with other one-day events in your area.
- Secure a generator for the food area – and a reefer truck – to store/sell ice and other perishables. These items must be contracted as early as possible.
- Food vendors are intense business people, deal with accordingly.
- Notify the Health Dept. as soon as possible – well before the usual 2-3 week notification time.
- Any Health Dept fee goes directly to the Dept., though you can assist vendors by obtaining and distributing the necessary paperwork
- Health regulations may require a food handler's permit for anyone in the booths. This is the responsibility of the booth owner, not you.
- Locate food booths in clusters – they are messy places.
- You will need garbage/recycling near by.
- Avoid guerilla food set-ups (grilled cheese sandwiches made on Coleman stoves) they can cause you to be shut down.
- High protein foods (meat, ice cream – even milk for coffee) are trouble – ask to review all proposed menu items as part of the food vendor application process.

- Work with the Health dept. people. They generally don't want hassles, but can make your life miserable if they want to
- There are always different rules for one-day events – different than for permanent cafes.
- Will always require fire extinguishers in every booth with a stove, and be prepared for sneeze guards, screening and ground cover requirements.
- Visit other events and pay close attention to the food area,
- The event will be required to provide a 3 compartment sink/ wash station – a very good reason to limit food to pre prepared items unless your staff and budget allow for these up front expenses.
- Food people need the longest set up time. Try to get their booths in the day before – everything but the actual food.
- Drop word at other events – scout for the food you want and personally invite them.
- Others will come, but at least you'll already have a core of vendors and be able to pick and choose others that fit your expected crowd.
- Determine menu restrictions. Meat? price? beverages? A food sponsor might want to limit what kind of beverages and in what kind of cup is used - be willing to negotiate.
- Understand water and power needs well in advance of the event
-
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Vending – Non Food

- Vending can help pay for the event – supplying pre event operating funds
- Simple math: 50 booths at \$50 = \$2500
- Consult your permit. May be limited to ‘cause items’ – items directly associated with the purpose of the political event. Food booths are separate
- Circulate your interest in getting vendors far and wide
- Establish firm cut off dates for applications
- Blanket/strolling/alternative vending – reduced rate, no formal load in
- With vending may come an insurance requirement – if there is no vending at a constitutionally protected event, there is no insurance. Determine your situation.
- Expect \$5 million’ General Liability’ – shop around, and be prepared for a \$1,000 premium.
- Expect the civil authorities to want a percentage of vendor’s gross sales.
- Expect enforcement of business license requirements – inquire about one-day/trade show licenses and pass that info to your vendors.
- Require all vendors to sign a ‘hold harmless’ contract – and a statement that they are responsible for getting their license/tax situation in order before the event.
- Payment of a percentage to the event is an option, but can be a real pain – it’s your call.

Look at your site!

- Imagine foot traffic flow – where booths would look best – where they are going to be seen by the public.
- Plot the entire site on paper. Get a good map of your site.
- Standard booth space is 10x10 – allow for walk through space every 4 booths
- Allow for Fire Lanes – usually 20 feet
- Have everything staked/chalked the day before. Establish firm load in times and time for vehicles to be off site –
- Remind any difficult vendors that they are at a political event and to work with, not against the organizers.

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• **Garbage/Recycling**

- Set up Recycle Stations throughout site
- Find out before event – who can take what. There may be restrictions on certain plastics and polystyrene.
- Involve food coordinator in any recycle plans
- Consider hanging samples of what goes in what containers on string over the containers – cans; paper plates, water bottles, etc.
- Will need flatbed or large pick up to haul out bags
- Distribute empty bags throughout the crowd – with instructions from stage to pick up everything.
- Limiting or prohibiting glass is always an option – with clear signage at entry
- Get ‘sharps’ containers for broken glass, medical equipment, and needles.
- Have good gloves for recycle crew
- Replace all bags before main crowd hits – then just sit back
- 40 yard dumpster may be required on your permit
- Budget in dumpster rental, haul in/out, and dump. Remember that garbage is priced by weight, so rain and food will result in a higher dump fee
- Provide special perks for recycle crew – special shirts, back stage access, food.
- Hold recycling crew in the highest esteem

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First Aid

- Will need a pop-up/tent/yurt/teepee – SHADE!
- General liability concerns will prevent active assistance
- You may only place aspirin or Band-Aids on a table and let folks self-administer, provide a place to rest, or offer water.
- Medical at a rally is mostly triage
- First Aid must be on radio and have a cell phone to call 911
- Notify aid units of the event – do not expect the civil authorities to notify anyone
- If you are required to provide an onsite aid car – the specific requirements must be comparable to any other event.
- Have a box of rubber gloves; make certain all event staff have some in their packs.
- Use Red Flags to be spotted in crowd to guide aid car
- Contact hip medical teams, those who work concerts and festivals in your area to get their list of medical people.
- Note medical people on your volunteer forms – ask for EMT's, docs or nurses
- Identify emergency egress routes for aid car
- Clear all radios during any medical emergency
- Most problems will be from too much sun and too little liquid – or superficial scrapes and lacerations

Supplies to figure in:

- Cots, band aids, peroxide, q-tips, latex gloves, gauze, tape, pads, sun screen, moleskin, ice packs, aspirin, and Lots of water.

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Toilets/ Water

- Permit may specify the required number – if not go with your best guess of expected attendance. Toilet rental companies have a set formula
- Contact toilet rental companies as early as you can to avoid conflicts with other events
- Be sure to tell them that there will be no alcohol – it keeps usage/costs down
- Try to arrange delivery very early on the day of, or the day before
- Have a map ready to show drivers – with exact locations marked
- Place wheelchair accessible units in prime locations
- Ask your supplier about units designed for men only. They keep lines moving.
- Place in clusters of 2 or 4 for ease of drop off and increased visibility
- Have at least one toilet backstage, and one solely for use of food handlers. It may be required in your food permit and is just a good idea.
- Place on flat ground – may need plastic or plywood under them to protect turf
- Make certain that toilet paper is included in rental price – and get the key to the toilet paper spool!!
- There may be a holding deposit, otherwise plan on paying the driver on delivery or pick-up
- Get an emergency phone number – a 24-hour number – in case a pump out is necessary or something very strange happens.
- Toilet people are very cool – work with them.

Water

- Very site specific
- Consider sale of bottled water – as both revenue producer and just out of kindness unless the concern of water privatization precludes that
- Check into tapping water/irrigation lines in parks – can often rent freestanding drinking fountains that attach to the existing lines, or make your own
- Drinking water trucks are very expensive
- Ask the National Guard – they have water trucks they often let ‘community’ groups use for free
- The Stage area must have bottled water, as must your first aid area

- **Wash sinks** – not for drinking water – free standing and rentable
- They may be required if food is vended.
- They are barely functional but do satisfy legal/health requirements – and are rented from the same source as your toilets
- You may need to have one near any food preparation area including one that has hot water (plugs into standard electric outlet).

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Neighbors

- Offer to meet with neighbors of the site – and hear them out
- Community meetings may be required in the permit – but do it anyway
- It may be the first time they have seen and heard from your type in the flesh!
- Suggest area businesses open their lots for pay parking – if they see money in their pockets, they are much happier.
- Have a perimeter security – people on bicycles – warn of parking problems, trash
- Invite neighbor groups to be at the event – set up their special interest tables
- Post notices around the area – that a political event is planned – days before post notice in the neighborhood paper
- Involve the local busy bodies – they hate to be left out. They often fear what they see on TV. Let them get to know you as a real person who wants to work with them – has the same concerns, has kids in school, etc.
- Get yourself invited to address local groups. Always get on the very end of the agenda when everyone is tired and they want to go home.
- Offer to interview with the neighborhood paper – be up front; sympathize with their concerns. You may have friends you are not even aware of. Recognize closet supporters
- Dress so as not to scare them

- You are in the big leagues, with the Constitution on your side

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Communication

- On site communication is absolutely essential
- Hand held CB's can be used, but present too many problems – are easily monitored and jammed
- Rentals of FM's are your best option.
- FM's come in banks of 6 with extra battery packs that snap on
- Get clip on mikes or headsets so you can hear and talk in the middle of noisy crowds
- Need a reliable 120-volt power source for re-charging. Charging takes about 90 minutes
- May need a power strip/surge protector
- A 'base' unit can be rented, but usually not necessary.
- Only put radios in the hands of people who need them – and know the person on radio
- Radios must be at the entrance(s); stage, info, first aid, and security cross over, operations director and vending during load in/out. After those are covered, it's your call
- Security will need radios, but on a different channel from production
- Crossover person with more than one radio (security/production/medic/police) needs to understand all elements of the event
- Need cell phones as back up on as many key people as possible
- Hold quick orientation for anyone not familiar with radio use
- Talk can be friendly/informal – but stress keeping chitchat to a minimum for battery life

- All radio communication will be monitored by civil authorities
- Get bids – reserve radios as early as possible as there may be other events at the same time and local rentals may be gone – consider the out of area companies that ship
- You may need a credit card or blank check as a deposit – plan on \$100 per 6 radios per day. Weekends often count as one day
- Count everything upon delivery – as well as throughout the event. Assign one person to monitor radios – sign them in and out – they are very expensive to replace.

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Security

- If a cool security crew is an option, go with them
- Your permit may require ‘bonded and licensed’ security – however if the cost would cause your event to go broke, you must state as much and offer have ‘peer security’ handle the event
- Your Constitutional rights are not contingent on your ability to pay arbitrary fees!
- Investigate other political events and their security arrangements – find a precedent for use of peer security
- Regardless, put as many t-shirts on site as you can.
- **Urgent areas to cover with full radio/cell phone presence:**
 - **Entry, stage and cash handling areas.**
 - **Entry:** Pat downs or cooler searches may be required. Do NOT agree to any invasive searches. You are not the cops
 - Discourage any open containers – enforce a no alcohol policy
 - Post the ‘No’s’ near the entry – on all flyers, posters – no alcohol, weapons, dogs, narcotics
 - **Stage:** Control access to the backstage area to performers, speakers and others who really need to be there. Look upon that area as a work environment
 - **Money:** Where the site cash is kept
 - Use signage where ever possible – natural dangers, sensitive environmental areas, off limit areas, etc.

- Stress to all that should an uncomfortable situation occur, get out of the way – and get help from people who are trained to handle it. No time for heroics.

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Paying for It

- Keep a working budget – as detailed as possible
- Organize benefit fundraisers throughout the year – friendly clubs may offer a night
- Endorsing organizations need to be asked for a donation
- Keep interest high and cash flow positive
- Set fair vending fees – food and craft
- Event merch – posters, t-shirts
- Arrange for fronted beverages – soda and water – sold on site. Bottlers have ‘festival rates’ just for this purpose. Ask about them
- Donation buckets – 4-gallon buckets with slots cut in lid. Circulate through crowd on regular basis – and in stationary sites. Seen everywhere. People WILL donate.
- Private donations, sponsors – businesses with a vested interest, artists donating their art, etc.
- Offer banner space, perks, prime vending locations etc.

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Legal/Police

- Select one person to act as ‘police liaison’ who will establish and maintain a relationship with the police department throughout the event
- Seek to work with one point person in the police dept. Lt. or higher, as any real decisions will be made at that level
- Understand the police concerns
- Staffing- expense of it – You can not be charged for police time as you are a political event – keep in mind that you are probably messing up their stats and budget for the area.
- Set up a clear ‘life/ safety plan’ – remember and use those key words

Set up contingency plans – what if:

- There are arrests
- Violence takes place – either in response to police action or crowd initiated
- Lost kids
- Find an on-site lawyer – National Lawyers Guild legal observers may be an option. See ‘In Conclusion’
- ACLU – contact them – keep them up to date all through the process so they know what you’re doing re the event. They will want everything on paper for their file.
- However, don’t count on the ACLU to act as your lawyers. They generally only work on appeal cases

– if a permit is denied or something major takes place that is directly related to their mandate.

Offer the ACLU or National Lawyers Guild table/booth space for free

- Make sure all volunteers understand their role in legal/police actions.
- NEVER hassle cops – stay clear of legal situations – witness only – and that from a safe distance. Obstruction of Justice is an easy to charge and impossible to beat ‘crime’

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Insurance

- You may find it required – so be prepared
- Consult directly with the ‘risk management’ office of the civil authority
- As a political event, you should be exempt, however if vending is proposed – even limited – it may be required
- It is issued to insure the entire event – so the civil authority is not responsible
- You are actually insuring the civil authority
- Vendors should have evidence of their insurance or sign a ‘hold harmless’ agreement with you
- Alcohol on site jacks up in insurance – prohibit it – it’s not worth the hassle
- You are looking for ‘Commercial General Liability’ coverage
- Figure on \$1 million for general aggregate, personal injury – each occurrence
- Figure on \$50K fire damage
- It will cost you around \$1K for one day – and is based on the size and number of people expected
- If you are a real non profit (501)(c)(3) – or can be umbrelled by one, the premium will be much less – a few hundred dollars max
- Be very careful that any umbrella group can support/sponsor a political event– don’t just rely on the word of a friend – ask to see the by-laws
- If outside their mission/charter/letter, they may be put into jeopardy with the IRS – and you too

Visit www.eventwiseonline.com for ideas and resources

In Conclusion

This booklet was intended to give a brief overview of what is necessary to actively use the peaceful assembly clause of the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

There can be little doubt that our right to gather in public is under constant attack by those who fear the very people for whom they work- the citizens. It therefore becomes necessary for anyone contemplating the production of a political rally or similar event to understand as much as possible how to put it together to avoid the mistakes that civil authorities will use to deny you and others that right.

I suggest you visit/attend other events. Take this booklet with you to note how other political events are produced as compared to the suggestions here.

It is a good idea to become acquainted with all the local and national laws that pertain to your right to assemble. Two national organizations I would suggest researching are the American Civil Liberties Union (www.aclu.org), and the National Lawyers Guild (www.nlg.org).

I have been involved in the production of large public events for over 20 years and am available to answer questions or provide advice to progressive organizations in their political event planning process.

Good luck in your efforts and with your event.

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