

Tips and Tools for Organizing Resolutions in Defense of the Bill of Rights

This page describes how community members in Northampton, Massachusetts, planned and implemented a successful resolution effort, and provides links to the documents and tools they used. We invite you to borrow our chronology and documents and adapt them to your needs. If you are working on a resolution in your community, please contact us via email at BORDCweb@attbi.com.

Initial Planning:

Chronology	Tools
<p>Initial Meeting:</p> <p>Two people gathered friends and colleagues, including the director of the regional ACLU chapter, to an initial meeting. Meeting attendees formed the Northampton Bill of Rights Defense Committee and agreed to hold a public forum and to circulate a petition in order to gain community support for a City Council resolution.</p>	
<p>Networking and Outreach with ACLU:</p> <p>Members contacted the state ACLU and attended statewide meetings of its Civil Liberties Task Force. The state ACLU, in turn, provided help, including literature and a list of local members for mailings.</p>	
<p>Community Outreach and Fundraising:</p> <p>Committee members set dates for forum and next meeting to plan the forum, then sent out an invitation letter to individuals, businesses, and nonprofits and to ACLU members in the community. The letter asked people to endorse the forum and to make a donation to cover expenses such as copying and postage.</p> <p>Benefits of this effort:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some endorsers joined the committee; • Endorser list formed a network for distribution of the petition and public forum poster, and for rallying to speak in favor of the resolution at the City Council meeting; • List of endorsers from the community on poster and program gave the effort credibility and showed its broad support and appeal. 	<p>Invitation letter (<u>HTML</u> or <u>Word document</u>)*</p>

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* Underlined text in the righthand column indicates a document that can be downloaded from our web site at www.gif.org/NBORDC. Click on the **Tools** button, then click on an underlined item to view and save the document on your computer.

Public Forum and Community Education:

Chronology	Tools
<p>Committees:</p> <p>In preparation for the public forum, we formed several committees.</p>	<p><u>List of committees</u> with descriptions of their responsibilities</p>
<p>City Government Contacts, Program Participation:</p> <p>We contacted and met with sympathetic City Council members, Mayor, and Police Chief about our committee's concerns and plans. The City Council President agreed to sponsor a City Council resolution. He and the Police Chief agreed to be panelists; the Mayor introduced the panelists.</p>	
<p>Other Program Participants:</p> <p>The Program Committee chose other participants to cover topics of the new laws and their impact on civil liberties, and the impact on immigrants and students.</p>	<p><u>Poster and Program Sample Topics</u></p>
<p>Spreading Effort to Nearby Towns:</p> <p>We contacted people in other towns about effort. Activists in two other towns (Amherst and Leverett) put related articles on their town meeting warrants (the agenda of items to be voted on).</p>	<p><u>Local Efforts</u></p>
<p>Promoting the Forum:</p> <p>To promote the forum, we sent a press release to media, put up posters, and developed a program. The release and poster were also sent to our endorsers. We also developed <u>this web site</u>.</p>	<p><u>Press release</u></p>
<p>Showing Community Support:</p> <p>We wrote a petition, which was introduced and circulated at the forum.</p>	<p><u>Printable Petition</u></p>
<p>Distributing Educational Materials:</p> <p>At tables at the forum, we placed fact sheets, literature and articles, petitions, buttons for sale (Dissent is Patriotic), and collection cans.</p>	<p><u>Links</u></p>
<p>Postcard Campaign:</p> <p>One table at the forum had preprinted postcards to legislators. Attendees wrote their return address on the cards and signed them. Stamps were provided.</p>	<p>Sample 2-sided postcard (<u>Word doc</u>)</p> <p><u>Tips for a letter-writing table</u></p>

Public Forum and Community Education (continued)

<p>Videotaping the Event:</p> <p>We had the forum videotaped. We informed participants in advance and noted in the program that "This event is being videotaped." The video has been broadcast on local community access cable TV in its entirety twice. Excerpts have been broadcast on another program once.</p>	
<p>Continuing to Educate and Gather Support:</p> <p>After the forum, we continued petitioning: Tabled (with literature), put petitions in stores and offices (including those of our endorsers), gave committee members and forum attendees petitions to circulate, and placed online petition and printable petition on our web site. The process was useful not only for gaining signatures but for educating people who were not previously aware of the USA PATRIOT Act.</p>	<p>Online petitions: English and Spanish</p> <p>Printable petition</p>

The Resolution:

Chronology	Tools
<p>Draft Resolution:</p> <p>Met with City Council resolution sponsor to draft resolution. The Mayor, Police Chief, and other City Council members reviewed the draft in ongoing negotiations to create a document we could all support.</p>	<p>Resolution</p>
<p>Lobbying Efforts:</p> <p>Made sure each City Councilor was contacted by a committee member.</p> <p>Sent postcards, emails, and press releases asking community members to call their City Councilors and ask for their support and urging them to attend the City Council meeting and to speak in favor of the resolution in the "public comment" period. (Don't overlook high school and college students as speakers!)</p>	<p>Sample postcard for lobbying City Councilors; same content was also sent via email.</p> <p>Sample press release prior to meeting.</p> <p>Sample email urging attendance at City Council meeting, sent via local listserves; same content was also sent via postcard.</p>

The Resolution (continued)

<p>Demonstration of Community Support:</p> <p>Completed petitions were turned in by endorsers and were picked up from stores that had kept them on their counters. At the City Council meeting, we delivered the signed petitions (with more than 1000 signatures!) to the City Council.</p> <p>Many endorsers and local high school and college students used the public comment period before the meeting to express their support for the resolution. We made previous arrangements with potential speakers to offer the perspectives of diverse community members.</p>	<p><u>Printable petition</u></p>
<p>PR:</p> <p>After unanimous City Council vote, sent out press release nationally via email and fax and posted on IndyMedia.</p>	<p><u>Final press release</u></p>

Follow Up and Ongoing Outreach:

Chronology	Tools
<p>Press Release and Emails:</p> <p>Continued sending press release and emails to inform activists, law professors, and others working and writing on this issue to visit the web site and to provide contacts who may be interested in pursuing similar resolutions in their community.</p>	<p><u>Final press release</u></p>
<p>Follow up on resolution</p> <p>Made sure final resolution document was sent to parties specified and that all the “Therefore’s” of petition were implemented, including reporting components, which required a mechanism in place to receive and disseminate the reported information.</p>	
<p>Form statewide coalition</p> <p>Networked with elected leaders and community members of other cities and towns in the state that have passed resolutions. As a coalition, visited all members of state’s congressional delegation.</p>	
<p>It's Up to You!</p> <p>The groundwork has been laid, and we encourage people to borrow any documents from this web site that you find helpful. Help us make this web site a clearinghouse of information on Bill of Rights defense efforts nationwide. Contact us about efforts you are working on, or others that you know about.</p>	<p><u>http://www.bordc.org/</u></p>