

GLOBAL EXCHANGE

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Get Organized!

A How-To Guide That Shows
What You Can Do Within Your
Community to Change the World

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LOOK FOR

WORKING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS: HOW TO MAKE THE SYSTEM WORK FOR WE, THE PEOPLE

Democracy rests on the simple idea that elected representatives serve the interests of those who elected them. Unfortunately, this revolutionary idea doesn't always work in practice. That doesn't mean we should give up on the political process. Rather, it should spur us work even harder to ensure that elected officials—the servants of the people—are following our views.

Democracy, it is important to remember, is not a one-day act we commit once every two or four years. Democracy is a *process* that requires continuous citizen participation if it is to work properly.

This guide offers some pointers on how we can make democracy work for us, the people. Included in this guide are instructions on how to prepare for and meet with elected officials, the best way to contact a legislator on issues of concern, and a tips on how you, as a citizen-activist, can become more politically influential.

I. Meeting with legislators

Without question, meeting with and developing long-term, productive relationships with legislators is the most effective form of grassroots lobbying. This is true for representatives at the local, state, and national level. Everyone who will be meeting with the elected representative (or their aides) should be an active participant in the meeting.

1. Setting Up a Successful Meeting:

Pre-appointment planning

- Gather information about your representative, including their committee assignments and their voting record.
- List your reasons for the meeting in a clear and concise manner.
- Decide who will attend the meeting. Generally the more people, the more likely it is that you will meet the legislator rather than just staff. A small representative group or a coalition of leaders may be the best bet.
- Determine how much time you will need. Fifteen to 20 minutes is generally the longest. appointment with a legislator you can expect, so be concise and present only two to three points for discussion.

Call your representative's office to schedule a meeting

Organize your resources for the meeting

- Select the specific topics to be covered (contact Global Exchange for the latest updates on your issue).
- Create a typed agenda for the meeting.
- Prepare materials, including specific requests, that you can leave with the legislator.
- Assign roles for the meeting, making sure to involve every partner.

Practice for the meeting

Confirm the appointment

- One week before the meeting.
- The morning of the meeting.

2. Suggested Format for the Meeting:

Introductions

- Connect with the person with whom you are meeting. (Example: If it is an aide, ask what brought them to work with the representative.)
- Describe who you are and what you do in the community.
- Explain why the issue is important to you. Show that the issue is personal and communicate your concerns on a personal level.
- Give the representative (or their aides) a typed agenda and a list of your requests.
- Show that you are local—legislators pay particular attention to constituents. You need to show that your support can help this person get reelected.

Acknowledge your legislator for any previous positive actions

Presentation of Issues

- Stick to your agenda and assigned roles.
- Involve all of the participants.
- Perhaps show a video or use another creative element.
- Be honest and don't claim to know more than you do about an issue.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Give the legislator a chance to express an opinion. If he or she is supportive, don't be afraid to ask for help in advancing your issue and in contacting other like-minded legislators.
- Keep the communication positive. Never burn bridges. Even though the legislator or the staff person is rude or uncooperative never lose your cool, argue or threaten.

Make specific requests and ask for an immediate answer

- If the representative (or their aides) are unwilling to make a commitment, set a date for a follow up meeting.
- Carefully record any questions, objections, or concerns.

After the meeting determine your next step and plan for follow-up

- Send any materials and information you offered. Follow up on deadlines and if they are not met, set up others. Be persistent.

The next day, send a thank you letter

Follow up with the legislator and their aides!

II. Letters and other written communication

It is important that we tell elected officials where we stand on issues. Our input on human rights, global trade, corporate accountability, peace and reconciliation, and other issues shapes the way our representatives create and implement policy.

When you are pushing an issue or supporting or trying to defeat a bill, writing to your legislators is a very effective way of getting your message across. However, some methods of communication are more effective than others.

1. Personal letters or faxes

The absolute best thing to do is to write a personal letter. Personal letters show legislators that the author is knowledgeable, interested and committed to the matter at hand. Sending a personal letter also alerts the legislator to the fact that the author is politically active. Legislators keep close track of how their mail is running on particular issues, so your letter will have an influence whether the elected official will read it or not. Many legislators argue that one clear, logical individual letter is worth more than a petition with a thousand signatures!

Suggestions for writing personal letters:

- *Be Timely* - Write when an issue is current. Procrastination reflects apathy, and an outdated letter is a sure way to guarantee that your voice will not be heard and that the legislators will assume you don't really care.
- *Be Brief* - Limit yourself to one page and to one topic. The goal is to be read and understood.
- *Be Specific* - Reference specific bill numbers. Include basic information like what the legislation would do and how it would affect you and other people in the legislator's district or state. Remind legislators how their actions affect your issue and your vote.
- *Be Legible* - Clearly sign your name and include your address in the letter itself (envelopes with return address are routinely discarded). Type your letter rather than hand write it.
- *Be Supportive* - Write thank you letters when a legislator supports your cause. Too often they get only "anti" or complaint letters. A thank-you will make you stand out and it will help establish a more personal relationship with the legislator.
- *Don't Be a Pest* - Don't become a constant "pen-pal." Legislative offices track who writes and how often. Avoid being seen as a constantly writing crank or malcontent; it will dilute your message.

2. Email correspondence

Email has become a very useful tool for quickly and effectively communicating with elected officials. Keep in mind, however, that email is easily deleted and often comes in overwhelming numbers. A personal letter will always be more effective.

Suggestions for email communication:

- *Treat it as an electronic personal letter* - Follow the same rules for form and content as you would for writing a personal letter. Avoid the symbols, shorthand or "electronic-speak" that often accompanies personal emails. Write in complete sentences.
- *Title your submission* - Take advantage of the email subject line to give the legislator an idea of what the letter is going to be about. Include the bill number, if possible. This will make it easier for legislator to categorize the email and respond more effectively.
- *Include a home address* - Always provide your postal address somewhere in the body of your email. This will increase your chances of getting a response to your note. Most legislators and legislative staff are not prone to establishing an electronic conversation.

3. Form Letters

"Canned" or form letters are okay, but not nearly as effective as a personal letter or email. Certainly, they are easy to produce and send in. However, they lack personal touch and conviction. Legislators are more likely to discount form letters because they may show a lack of effort, and lack of effort can be translated into lack of interest.

Nonetheless, if you are embarking on a form letter campaign, keep these two iron-clad rules in mind:

- *Include your address* - A great number of form letters have no obvious space for you to LEGIBLY write in your address. Without an address, the legislator has just a piece of paper. He or she won't know whether you are a constituent or not.
- *Give extra effort* - Take an extra 30 seconds to write a 1- or 2-line personal note at the bottom of the form letter. Briefly restate your concerns. Ask for a written response. Any effort to make a form letter personal will help it be noticed.

4. A very few words about petitions

They usually don't work. Few people read petition papers and many of the people who sign them have no idea what they are signing. Legislators know this and overwhelmingly discount their importance.

Petitions also tend to be poorly prepared and legislators have difficulty or no time to look through thousands of signatures to determine if any constituents signed on.

Petitions, however, are better than nothing at all, and logistically they are much easier than letters if you are out tabling at, say, a concert or farmers market.

Bottom Line: Write personal letters or pay your legislators a visit.

III. Phoning your legislators:

Phone calls are a relatively effective way of communicating your concerns to your legislators. Phoning is especially important when a bill is moving quickly through the legislative process and time is short. The opportunity cost is that issues need to be relatively simple to be communicated well.

- *Be simple* - Call about one issue at a time. If possible, refer to the bill number and what the bill will do.
- *Be brief* - Introduce yourself, state how you feel about a particular bill or issue and ask for the legislator's support. If the legislator is undecided, ask to be updated on his or her stance after a period of time or ask for a meeting where you can argue your position.
- *Be logical* - Call your own representatives before you call any others. Your local legislators are always your first priority. They owe their political fortunes to you and your neighbors.
- *Be connected* - Always leave your name and address, particularly if you are a constituent. To keep track of how the constituency feels on certain issues legislative offices often log phone calls. Legislative offices usually respond to phone inquiries by a mail after a brief period of time. If you phone to express an opinion but refuse to leave an address, you are wasting your breath.
- *Be smart* - Always say thank you. Never be abusive or threatening.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A DEMONSTRATION

The people's right to peaceably assemble and to "petition the government for a redress of grievances" is one of the most important freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution's Bill of Rights. The right to freedom of association is a bedrock requirement of a functioning democracy. Without this right, the people lose one of the best tools for making their views known to those who hold power. Marching in the streets, holding demonstrations, staging protests—these are some of the most effective ways of at once showing support for a cause, drawing new people to that cause, and attracting the attention of those in positions of power.

The street march and the corner demonstration have a proud place in US history and in the history of social movements around the world. The abolitionist movement, the women's suffrage movement, the labor movement, Gandhi's anti-imperialist movement, the civil rights movement, and the movement against the Vietnam War all made good use of marches and demonstrations. Today, that tradition is alive and well, from the streets of Seattle to the boulevards of Washington, DC.

Organizing a demonstration may sound like hard work, but it doesn't have to be. Gather together two dozen of your friends, make some signs and come up with some chants, and you're ready to protest the unsavory voting record of a local politician or the unaccountable misdeeds of a local corporate executive.

All you have to do is hit the streets!

Some Types of Demonstrations:

Vigil

Candlelight vigils are a well-known way to remember lost lives or commemorate other kinds of victims. They are generally solemn and reflective, and intended as a way to honor a person or a group of persons. A good example is the "Take Back the Night" vigils or the events held in the wake of September 11.

Picket Line

This type of demonstration consists of a group of people holding signs and chanting and marching outside a building or office. If you have ever seen workers on strike, you have probably witnessed a picket line. Pickets are also a popular tactic with the anti-sweatshop movement and other groups who have used protests in front of corporate retail chains as a way to hold corporations accountable for their actions.

March

A march is much like a picket line—people hold signs and shout chants—except that the crowd is walking from one designated point to an agreed upon destination. Marches are usually a good idea when you are expecting a particularly large crowd, or when you want to convey a message in the selection of your route or your destination. An example of a march is any of those that occur on the National Mall in Washington, DC such as the Million Man March.

Sit-ins and Other Types of Civil Disobedience

When an injustice becomes so great that people of conscience can no longer tolerate it, non-violent civil disobedience can be a crucial tactic. Pioneered by American author Henry David Thoreau and made popular by Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., non-violent civil disobedience offers a way of taking direct action without resorting to force.

Probably the most well-known type of civil disobedience is the sit-in. Typically, protesters occupy the space of a decision maker—whether a corporate executive, a university president, or an elected official—make a demand, and refuse to leave until the demand is met or negotiated. Sit-ins have also taken place in front of the retail stores of corporations.

In recent years, civil disobedience has become more creative. Sometimes protesters chain themselves together to block an

intersection or lock themselves to a building's entrance. Sometimes protesters scale down buildings to unfurl giant banners.

Important note: *Civil disobedience is by definition unlawful. If you plan to organize a sit-in or similar demonstration, we encourage you to obtain legal advice in advance. We suggest the American Civil Liberties Union or the National Lawyers Guild.*

Steps for Organizing a Demonstration:

Identify and reach out to supporters/Create a coalition

As with organizing any event—whether a house party, teach-in or protest—it is essential to bring together a key group of people who are committed to the project. It is also useful to reach out to other groups to see if they would want to contribute to the demonstration. Campaigns work best when they are anchored by a *coalition* of groups and individuals. Who else might be interested in helping to plan the demonstration? What natural allies do you have in the community? Try to find coalition partners sooner rather than later. Coalitions work best when everyone is involved in the process from the beginning.

Building coalitions among different constituencies is not only key to organizing a big demonstration—it is also essential to forming an energetic and broad-based social movement.

Assign tasks and determine roles

It is useful to make sure everyone knows their assigned tasks. When organizing a demonstration, you probably want one person responsible emceeding the protest itself; one person in charge with getting the required permits, and if necessary, being in contact with the police; one person responsible for working with the media; and one responsible for signs, art, and chants. *Everyone* should be responsible for spreading the word to the general public.

Location-location-location/Permits and officials

You want to hold your demonstration where there is a lot of traffic—either auto traffic or pedestrians or both. Because you want to connect with as many people as possible, visibility is key. A lousy location can undermine the best organized demonstration.

It is important that you know your rights regarding the use of space, whether you are organizing a demonstration on a college campus or along a public street. Many towns require permits for demonstrations, especially if you will be using amplified sound such as bullhorns. Permits are almost always required for marches since they may disrupt traffic. Talk to the campus or community police about your demonstration and determine what permits you need.

If you are planning to risk arrest, you should make extra arrangements. It is a wise idea to have trained legal observers on hand to take notes and document the event. The National Lawyers Guild can provide suggestions on finding legal observers: www.nlg.org or 212-679-5100.

We also recommend that before engaging in non-violent civil disobedience, some members of your group should take part in non-violence training. The Ruckus Society offers regular direct action camps, and can suggest other trainers in your area: www.ruckus.org or 510-763-7080.

Get the word out: Turnout is crucial

A large number of people at your protest demonstrates broad public support for your cause. Both the media and the decision makers you are trying to influence will be looking closely at the number of people at your protest to see if you have real community backing. Develop a specific strategy for outreach and publicity, and set a goal for the number of people you want at the demonstration. Then create a plan for reaching out to *10 to 100 times* as many people as you hope will be there. Assume that only a fraction of the people you contact will actually show up.

Key to a successful outreach strategy is the production of materials like event fliers, direct mail invitations, email invitations, and public service announcements. Distribute the fliers as much as possible among friends and colleagues to be disseminated publicly at coffee shops, community centers, bulletin boards, cultural centers, other events, churches, schools, universities, etc.

You can also use the press as a tool to get the word out. Write a press release and send it to campus and local media to get the media to cover the event. Send a flier or public service announcement to radio stations and community newspapers to get the event announced on the air or in the events section of the newspaper. The sooner you have materials ready, the better, especially in regards to media.

Speakers and Schedule

Whether you're holding a solemn vigil or a loud march, you will want speakers at your event. Gather a group of people representing a wide range of constituencies—young people, old people, people of color, working class people, professionals. Just as a large number of people illustrates support for your cause, so does a diverse range of speakers. Decide on the order in which you want your speakers to address the crowd. Give speaker about two or three minutes and ask them to keep it short. Remember: this is a demonstration, not a teach-in.

Also, always make sure you have an emcee who is in charge of the speakers' order. It's this person's responsibility to bring a bullhorn or amplifier and to keep the program moving smoothly.

Slogans and Chanting

Don't assume that you will suddenly think up chants in the heat of the protest. This won't happen, so you need to prepare chants beforehand.

A few days before the demonstration, set aside some time to brainstorm catchy slogans that can be learned quickly by a crowd. Be as creative as you can. Even if you're working on a very serious issue, it's always a good idea to come up with a chant that might make people smile. Keep in mind that the passersby are people you want to educate, not alienate.

Make copies of the chants to give out to fellow demonstrators. Have someone in charge of leading people in the chants.

Signs and other materials

Colorful signs are *essential* for capturing people's attention. Make signs that have bold letters and clear messages—the fewer words, the better. You can paint your signs by hand or enlarge photos that illustrate your issue. Make sure your signs are readable from far away and make for good photo-ops. As with chants, the use of sarcasm or a play on words can be an effective way of communicating.

Literature and handouts

A bright, colorful sign may catch someone's attention, but then what? Most people won't have the time to stop and chat about your cause. That's why it's important that you bring educational materials to hand out—some sort postcard, fact sheet or flier that discusses your issue. The average person on their lunch break may not be able to hang out and learn about the issue, but if you give them something to stick in their back pocket, chances are that they will read it later.



Puppets and other props

Life-size puppets offer a fantastic way to dramatize your issue, and they make a great visual for television cameras. Other kinds of props like giant banners will also enliven your demonstration. Making art a central part of your protest will help you attract more attention. Art will also make your demonstration more fun for those involved.

Creative actions, skits and songs

It's always a good idea to think of new ways to express your point of view. Maybe you don't want to have another protest with people changing and shouting. Perhaps you want something more original.

Skits and other kinds performance provide an excellent way to grab people's interest. Write and perform a short play that explores your issue. For example, anti-sweatshop activists have organized "sweatshop fashion shows" to show people who the real fashion victims are. A song and dance performance is another fun way to attract attention and get your point across.

Invite the media/prepare press packets

A well-organized demonstration on a busy street corner can communicate with hundreds of people. But if the media covers your demonstration, you can reach 1,000 times as many people. Make sure you designate someone to be responsible for doing outreach to the media. For details on how to do effective media outreach, see the Media How To in this guide.

On the day of the demonstration, make sure you have plenty of press packets prepared. A press packet should have all the background material a reporter would need to cover your story. Include your original press release about the event (which should explain why you are protesting) and also any fact sheets or other campaign materials you may have. At least one person should be responsible for handing out press packets to reporters and also getting the reporters' names so you can contact them about future events.

HOW TO PASS A LOCAL RESOLUTION

Getting your City Council or County Board of Supervisors to pass a resolution in favor of a policy you support—or against a policy you are fighting—is an excellent way to boost your campaign. During the struggle against South African apartheid, local resolutions banning investment in the racist regime were key to eventually bringing down the government. More recently, Fair Trade activists have increased the demand for Fair Trade Certified coffee by passing resolutions that mandate cities only serve their employees the socially responsible blend. Non-binding resolutions that simply express the city's opposition to or support for an idea can also be effective. For example, when citizens were fighting a corporate rights treaty called the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) in the late 1990s, non-binding resolutions declaring cities and towns “MAI-Free Zones” were essential in educating people about the dangers of the agreement, and eventually stopping it from becoming law.

Local resolutions represent grassroots democracy at its finest. They give ordinary citizens the opportunity to address pressing international issues right in their own community, and in the process increase awareness about things that may seem far away. They're a concrete expression of the old bumper sticker: “Think Global-Act Local.”

So how can you pass a resolution in your community?

Plan Your Campaign

- **Determine what kind of resolution you want to pass.** Your overall campaign goals (ending US military aid to Colombia, fighting the FTAA, etc.) will naturally influence your decision. Depending upon the nature of your campaign, you may want to pass a binding resolution that will actually effect city policies or a non-binding one that is simply the expression of an opinion. You should know that, in general, non-binding resolutions are easier to pass. (A sample anti-FTAA resolution is enclosed. Global Exchange has other resolutions that may fit your campaign.)
- **Identify and reach out to supporters.** Campaigns work best when they are anchored by a *coalition* of groups and individuals. Who else might be interested in helping to pass the resolution? What natural allies do you have in the community? Try to find coalition partners sooner rather than later. Coalitions work best when everyone is involved in the process from the beginning.
- **Determine who will work with you to pass the resolution and what their roles will be.** As with any campaign effort—hosting a teach-in, organizing a demonstration, etc.—it is useful to make sure everyone knows their assigned tasks. When trying to pass a resolution, you probably want at least one person responsible for communicating with elected officials, at least one person responsible for working the media, and at least one person responsible for putting together public education materials. *Everyone* should work on spreading the word to the general public.
- **Plan a timeline for the resolution campaign.** Make sure you know when, and how often, the city council meets and how long it typically takes for a resolution to be passed. In bigger cities, it may take months for a resolution to become law.

Find a Champion—Someone in Local Government to Introduce Your Resolution

- **Identify a county supervisor or member of the city council who you think will be sympathetic toward your issue.** This is essential. Without a government official who will actually take ownership of the issue and make it his or her cause, it will be difficult to successfully pass a resolution. You can identify likely champions by investigating officials' voting records and asking your coalition partners if they have any allies on the city council.
- **Make contact with your champion.** Find people who live in the official's district or ward and request a meeting with the representative. Once you arrange a meeting, try to organize as diverse a group as possible to represent your cause. By involving a wide range of coalition partners in the discussion, you demonstrate that your issue has community support. At the meeting, make a strong case for why the resolution is important and why the city should pass it. (For more tips on meeting with elected representatives, see “How to Make the System Work” in this toolbox.)
- **Get your champion to introduce the resolution to the council for a vote.** When you meet with the elected official, you should present them with sample text of the proposed resolution. This will make the official's job easier, and make them likelier to support your issue.
- **Chart the political landscape.** When meeting with your champion, ask them to predict which members of the city council are likely to support or oppose the resolution. Knowing your allies and opponents will help you in your campaign.

Work with City or County Staff

- **Get to know the city staffers.** In many city halls, especially those in small towns, the unelected bureaucrats wield as much power as the elected representatives. That's because the staff are permanent and work full time, whereas the elected officials come and go and often work only part time. It's crucial, then, that you get the city staffers on your side. Ask for meetings with the city manager, the city attorney, the pension fund manager, the city purchaser, or whoever else may be affected by the proposed resolution. Explain to them why the resolution is important. If you gain their support, you are much closer to winning the campaign.

Educate the Public

- **Spread the word.** Without real public support, passing your resolution will be difficult. At the same time, one of the main reasons for working on a local resolution is to educate the public about the issue you care about. The resolution is, in a sense, a vehicle for educating the public. There are several ways you can do this.

- **Try to get the media interested.** Once your resolution is introduced and scheduled for a vote, contact the media and ask them to do a story about the campaign. Resolutions give local media a way to cover larger issues through a community angle. Write letters to the editor and opeds in support of the resolution. (For more on media outreach, see "How to Work with the Media" in this toolbox.)

- **Host a public forum about the resolution.** It may be a good idea to hold a teach-in or other educational event to talk to your fellow residents about the resolution. Organize a film screening that addresses your issue. Bring an inspiring speaker into the community to talk about why the resolution is important. Global Exchange can suggest speakers that can boost your campaign. (For more information on hosting educational events, see "How to Organize a Teach-In" in this toolbox.)

Lobby Other Elected Representatives

- **Make contact with other officials.** "Lobbying" is just a fancy word for letting your elected officials know how you feel about an issue. Communicating with your representatives is a right, not a privilege. You should make sure all of the representatives on the city council have a packet of information about your resolution. Try to get constituents from different districts to arrange meetings with their representatives to show support for the resolution.

- **Expand the base of support.** As the date of the vote approaches, make sure you are working with residents across the city and asking them to call or write their representatives in support of the resolution. Constituents throughout your town should be contacting their representatives on the city council. There are some ways to coordinate this. Organize a city-wide "call-in" day during which people from every neighborhood will call their representatives in support of the resolution. If a particular representative is opposed to the resolution, do targeted outreach in that neighborhood.

- **Cover all the bases.** In some cases, especially with binding resolutions, committees or subcommittees will consider the resolution before the full city council does. Make sure you attend these meetings and present the argument for your resolution during the public comments section of any hearings.

- **Pack the house.** On the day your resolution is going to be voted on, make sure the city council chambers are filled with supporters of your resolution. Bring colorful and eye-catching signs to show support for the resolution. Encourage supporters to speak in favor of the resolution during the public comments section, and make sure you have a few people ready with prepared remarks. The day of the vote is your final chance to show that the community really cares about your issue.

Follow Up

- **Make sure that what the resolution calls for actually happens.** This is crucial when it comes to binding resolutions. Keep in touch with your champion and city staff to ensure the resolution is being implemented. If it isn't, make sure all of your supporters, your champion, and the media hear about it.

SAMPLE ANTI-FTAA CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION FROM THE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ, CA

WHEREAS The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) would be essentially an extension of the NAFTA to the entire western hemisphere....

WHEREAS The negotiations surrounding the FTAA have been held secretly, without allowing for any effective public evaluation or input....

WHEREAS NAFTA's Chapter 11 Investor to State Lawsuits, which will be included and strengthened in the FTAA directly threaten the sovereignty of local and state governments...

WHEREAS This sort of corporate power would diminish the efficacy of local environmental laws and regulations...

WHEREAS The FTAA will undermine the Social Services that are essential for a thriving community...

WHEREAS The strict intellectual property laws within the FTAA will have devastating impacts on the people living in the global south...

WHEREAS Local businesses and workers would be harmed by the increasing powers granted to large corporations...

WHEREAS Local resolutions like this one have been instrumental in defeating other destructive trade agreements such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Santa Cruz:

1. Is in direct opposition to the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas;
2. Petitions the federal government to refuse to sign any new trade and investment agreements, such as the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, that include investor-state provisions similar to the ones included in NAFTA;
3. Urges the U. S. Trade Representative withdraw any further negotiation on the FTAA;
4. Requests U. S. Trade Representative to release their proposals for the agreement and their written submissions to the nine negotiating groups of the FTAA. We also request the release a comprehensive list of the representatives to the FTAA negotiating groups from all 34 countries involved;
5. Urges the U. S. Congress to adopt stronger sovereignty safeguards in implementing legislation for the FTAA and other trade agreements, now and in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be forwarded to the U.S. Trade Representative, to the state Congressional delegation, and to the Congressional committees with trade jurisdiction, and be made known to the people of Santa Cruz.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A TEACH-IN

A teach-in is a powerful way to educate and activate members of your community. By offering qualified speakers of intellectual and/or experiential expertise, a teach-in provides a way to explore crucial local and global issues. Teach-ins are most effective when they supply real solutions and give opportunities to build powerful citizen coalitions. The best teach-ins are those that at once give a boost to your existing organizing efforts while also attracting new people to your campaign. A teach-in can also be an effective way to fundraise for your group.

Preliminary steps:

What to do before you start to organize a teach-in (*These steps can occur both simultaneously and in any order*).

Select a speaker(s)/speaking topic your group is interested in.

Finding a topic should be relatively easy considering the focus of your group. Pairing a speaker with a topic may be a little more difficult. Some important factors to consider when choosing a speaker are reputation, availability and cost.

Think about your audience and outreach.

What are you trying to accomplish by bringing the speaker? Who do you want to attend the event? How will you conduct outreach? Do you plan on doing media outreach? What about meetings with local elected representatives? Make the most of the opportunity. Flyers, events, calendars, direct mail, email, phone calls, public service announcements, press releases and word-of-mouth are all good ways to get people to the event. When considering all of these questions it is important to plan ahead.

Think about possible co-sponsors.

Brainstorm and ask other members of your group for suggestions of other groups (student, community, religious, etc.) that may be willing to co-sponsor the event with you. Keep in mind that co-sponsors are a key component to generating an audience and sharing the workload and cost of organizing an event.

Plan the event:

The when, where, who and how

Select a date

The date obviously is dependent on other factors, such as the availability of the speakers, availability of a venue, and whatever else is being planned in your community around the same time. Try not to have your teach-in coincide with other similarly themed teach-ins. Also, it is a good idea to organize an event around a date that has some significance in relation to the theme. For example, a labor-related teach-in has more resonance around Labor Day. Or, if part of the overall goal of the teach-in is to affect legislation, have the teach-in before a legislative vote is to take place—whether it is a city, state or national vote—so people can talk to their elected representatives.

Find a venue

The ideal venue is a free venue. Try to get a space donated to you. Churches, community centers, schools and universities are likely to do so. Also, consider the size of the space. The appropriate size of the space chosen is related to how many people are expected to attend the teach-in.

Confirm your co-sponsors

There is no such thing as too much group participation or too much outreach. The point is to get as many people to the event as possible. A larger audience will be generated with outside help. Contact the organizations you think would be interested in being part of the event. Explain to them that you are bringing a speaker for an event and that you would like for them to be a co-sponsor. When they say “yes,” suggest that they help with outreach by inviting their members. Among other things, they may be able to help publicize the event by putting it on their web site, or adding their name to a press release. Also, don't be afraid to ask them for financial support. It costs money to host, transport and feed speakers. Explain this to them. This is not too much to ask if the organization's name is associated to the event as a co-sponsor. Offer in return to include their name on any publicity materials that will be produced.

Develop outreach materials and conduct outreach

Key to a successful outreach strategy is the production of materials like event fliers, direct mail invitations, email invitations, public service announcements and press materials. Distribute the fliers as much as possible among friends and colleagues to be disseminated publicly at coffee shops, community centers, cultural centers, other events, churches, schools, universities, etc. Also use the press as a tool to get the word out. Write a press release and send it to campus and local media to get the press to cover the event. Send a flier as well to make sure the event gets announced on by radio stations and included in the community calendar or events section of local newspapers and magazines. The sooner you have materials ready, the better, especially in regards to media.

Prepare to host

Decide who will pick up the speakers from the airport, bus station or train station. Decide where the host will stay and do your best to make the chosen place as comfortable as possible for the guests. Home stays are fine, but try and make sure that the speakers have their own rooms, if possible. If you have arranged for a hotel, make sure everything is in order. Finally, make sure to have your organization's materials at the event for tabling purposes. And don't forget the all-important donation basket! Use the teach-in to build your donor base so you continue your important work.

Take advantage of the speakers' presence in your community

The media can be used as an effective tool to spread your message more widely. A well-planned teach-in may attract hundreds of people, but an article in a newspaper or an interview on the radio can reach thousands of people. Organize visits and/or interviews with the speakers and local journalists. Also, if your work includes a legislative strategy, set up meetings with local congresspersons. (More information about how to work with the media and elected officials is enclosed.)

Evaluation and follow up

After the event has ended successfully, consider all that went well and all that didn't. Learn from the mistakes and remember what worked. Thank your co-sponsors, the audience, your members and anybody that helped to make the event a success. Use the teach-in build new relationships and strengthen old ones. Organize!

HOW TO HOST A HOUSE PARTY

A house party is essentially a scaled-down, more intimate version of a teach-in. Just like a teach-in, a house party is a chance to educate, organize, and hopefully raise some money for your campaign. The key difference is scale—instead of doing public outreach and striving to attract dozens or hundreds of people, a house party is geared toward your existing circle of friends, relatives and neighbors.

House parties played a key role at the beginning of the struggles against Jim Crow laws and the war in Vietnam. During those efforts, organizers held informal get-togethers in their homes during which they informed their friends and relatives about the injustice they were trying to end. This was a great way of spreading information, building energy, and raising money—and eventually the efforts percolated into a real movement. Today the house party remains a valuable way of reaching those you most want to connect with—the people closest to you.

A house party is one of the simplest ways to educate people about and fundraise for the work that you are doing. The essential idea is bring people together—old friends, new friends and friends of friends—to dialogue with them about your work in a cordial atmosphere.

House parties are a good venue to explain a complicated issue to many people at once, allowing them ask questions and get more information. It can also be a place for a group of people to meet someone famous or important, or someone who brings interesting information about the issue you and/or your group is working on. You or your selected speaker tells their story to an audience that is then moved to do something to support your cause—volunteer, write a letter to their elected representatives, or give money. The main goal of a house party is often to raise money for your campaign after educating people about why their support is so important.

Although all of us at some point have held house parties, it is useful to go over the obvious and not so obvious details about having a successful party.

There are five basic steps to putting on a house party:

- Find the person who is willing to host the party at their house and take on other related responsibilities related to the event.
- Prepare the list of people to be invited.
- Design the invitation.
- Choreograph the event, particularly the pitch.
- Orchestrate the Pitch.
- Evaluate and follow up.

Find a Host

The host of a house party has many important duties to fulfill, and they don't just include providing the house and some food. The host, with the help of co-organizers, invites those who they think might be interested in the issue(s) to be discussed. An ideal host is somebody who understands the issue(s) at hand, can easily discuss it, and is not afraid to ask their friends, or those present, for money.

Prepare the List of People to be Invited

Once someone has volunteered to host the party, the organizers of the event help that person decide who is to be invited. In figuring out how many people to invite, keep the following factors in mind: As a rule of thumb, invite three times as any people as you want to attend. Begin by inviting the host's friends and neighbors. Don't forget the people who you know are interested in the issue. Focus on expanding your base of supporters—that way you increase your numbers... and your budget.

Design the Invitation

An invitation does not have to be fancy and can be easily printed at a copy shop, so expenses should not really be an issue. If you have access to desktop publishing computer programs, attractive invitations can be produced without much difficulty or cost. The invite should reflect something about the host, the guest speaker, and/or the crowd. Also, don't forget to "hook" the guests by mentioning the issue(s) to be discussed.

Finally, remember to include the following: an indication that people will be asked for money. A line such as "Bring your questions and checkbook" or something similar is fine. Also offer people a way to contribute even if they can't come to the party—a reference like "I can't come, but enclosed is my donation" is suitable. Remember a RSVP to help prepare for the party, and directions on how to get to the house along with the host's telephone number.

Choreograph for the Event

Parties sometimes fail because of disorganization. Since the idea is to ask people for money, make the party easy—cater to your guests as much as possible without overdoing it. Do what you can to make it easy for them to find parking, find the house, find the bathroom, get to the food, relax, and have a good time. In other words, help them to help you. It is also a good idea to have a guestbook where guests can write down their contact information. This is useful in keeping track of supporters. Although it may sound obvious, remember that a party is a party—it supposed to be fun, so make it fun. Food, music and refreshments all contribute to creating a friendly atmosphere that will help inspire guests to contribute to your cause.

Orchestrate the Pitch

Everything at the house party should be built around the pitch. Time the pitch about one hour into the party to make sure everyone is present when it happens. The host calls for everyone's attention, introduces himself or herself and welcomes everyone. If there is a presentation, the host introduces the presenter. After the presentation, the host should be the person to make the pitch. A pitch must be made. Don't be shy. It's one of the main reasons for having the house party to begin with.

Although some do not agree with the tactic, it is useful to station “decoys”—a few pre-selected people who agree to quickly contribute after the pitch is made. They break the ice and generally make people feel more comfortable about giving money by being the first to do so. Also, decide ahead of time *how* people can contribute. Choose beforehand whether people should place donations in a basket, or designate people to go around and collect the contributions.

It is very important to not hurry the pitch. Give people time to write checks, give cash, whatever. Don't just carry on quickly into the party—if the pitch person starts to party then everyone else will take their lead...and forget to contribute. Obviously, this is not a desired result.

Evaluate and Follow Up

After a house party, evaluate what went well and what could have been done better. When doing this keep in mind the previous points, with special attention to the presentation and pitch. Write and send thank-yous to everyone who gave money. Add the guests' information to your or your organization's records for later use.

HOW TO USE THE MEDIA TO BROADCAST YOUR MESSAGE

Whether we like it or not, the mainstream media has a massive influence on politics in the US. There is no question that we need to democratize our media, but as we do that we must also work *with* the mainstream media to broadcast the messages and values that are important to us as progressive activists. A fantastically well organized rally attended by 100 committed citizens is a beautiful thing. But if the media covers the rally, you will reach ten times that number with your message. If you want to talk to people outside the choir and bring new people into the struggle for social justice and human rights, media coverage is a must.

Telling a story or communicating a point of view to reporters and editors from mainstream publications is a special art. You have to be clear and brief and at the same time deeply thoughtful. You have to know certain tricks of the trade that will help your issue stand out from the hundreds of other interesting things happening in the world. This guide will help you get your important issues into the media's eye. It contains basic primers on how to write a press release, how to pitch a story, how to write a letter to the editor, and other important tips.

If you would like more guidance on how to work with the media, feel free to contact Global Exchange's communications department. GX's communications team is more than happy to put media skills into as many hands as possible. You can contact Jason Mark, jason@globalexchange.org and 415-255-7296 x 230; or Alvaro Rojas, alvaro@globalexchange.org and 415-255-7296 x 351. Best of luck!

PRESS RELEASE HOW TO

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

What is a Press Release

- Informs reporters about your event, report, or issue.
- More detailed than the advisory—should tell all the information a reporter needs to write their piece.
- Envision, then write the press release as the news story YOU would want to see written.
- Sent out the morning of or the day before the event.

Elements

- **Headline.** This will make or break a news release—include the most important information in the headline, and make it punchy. The headline can be up to four lines if necessary, including a sub-head, if used, but keep it short (and remember to use a large font).
- Important information should jump off the page—most reporters will only spend 30 seconds looking at a release.
- Spend 75 percent of your time writing the headline and the first paragraph.
- Use the inverted pyramid style of news writing. Make your most important points early in the release and work your

way down.

- Keep sentences and paragraphs short. No more than three sentences per paragraph.
- Include a colorful quote from a spokesperson in the second or third paragraph.
- Include a short summary of your organization in the last paragraph.
- Mention "Photo Opportunity" if there is one. Be sure to send a copy of the release to the photo desk.

Structure / Form

- In the top left corner, type "For Immediate Release."
- Below "For Immediate Release," type the date.
- **Contact Information:** In the top right corner, type names and phone numbers of two contacts. Make sure these contacts can be easily reached by phone. Including the contact's home phone number, if appropriate.
- Type "###" at the end of your release. This is how journalists mark the end of a news copy.
- Type "MORE" at the end of page 1 if your release is two pages, and put a

contact phone number and short headline in the upper-right hand corner of subsequent pages.

- Print your release on your organization's letterhead.

How to Distribute It

- A release should be sent out the morning of, or the day before your event. In some cases, you may want to send an "embargoed" copy to select reporters ahead of time, meaning that the information is confidential until the date you specify.
- Generally, send a release to only one reporter per outlet.
- If your release announces an event, send it to the "daybooks." A daybook lists news events scheduled to take place in the region on that day. Someone from each major outlet reviews the daybooks each morning.
- **ALWAYS make follow up calls after you send the release. If your release is announcing an event, make the calls the morning before your event is scheduled.**
- Have a copy of the release ready to be faxed when you make the calls.

MEDIA ADVISORY—HOW TO

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

What is a Media Advisory?

- Functions as an FYI that alerts journalists to an upcoming event.
- Gives basic information: the who, what, where, when and why.
- Sent out a few days before the event.

Elements

- **Headline.** This will make or break the advisory—include the most important information in the headline, and make it punchy. The headline can be up to four lines if necessary, including a sub-head, if used, but keep it short (and remember to use a large font – it's eye-catching!).
- **Short description of the event and the issue.** Make it visual ("Citizens will carry large placards and life-size puppets to the Governors Mansion to protest the latest cut in education funding.")
- **List the speakers at your event.**
- **Include a quote from somebody from your organization who works on the issue.** This quote should be the main message that you are trying to convey

to the press, and in extension, to the public. Therefore, it should be clear, well thought out and strategic.

- **Contact information.** In the top right corner, type names and phone numbers of two contacts. Make sure these contacts can be easily reached by phone. Include the contact's home phone number, if appropriate.
- **Include a short summary of your organization in the last paragraph.**
- **Mention "Photo Opportunity"** if one exists and be sure to send it to the photo editors of local news outlets as well as to reporters – they don't always share information with each other!

Structure / Form

- In the top left corner, type "Media Advisory."
- Beneath "Media Advisory," type the date.
- Type "###" at the end of your advisory. This is how journalists mark the end of copy.
- Type "MORE" at the end of page 1 if

your advisory is two pages, and put a contact phone number and short headline in the upper-right hand corner of subsequent pages.

- **Print your advisory on your organization's letterhead.**

How to distribute it

- A media advisory should arrive at news outlets 3 to 5 working days before the event.
- Fax or mail (if time permits) your advisory to the appropriate reporter, editor or producer at each news outlet on your press list.
- If your region has a "daybook" (you can find out by calling the newsroom of your largest local newspaper) be sure to submit your advisory. A daybook lists news events scheduled to take place in the region on that day. Major news outlets review the daybooks each morning.
- **ALWAYS** make follow up calls the day before your event, and have the advisory ready to be faxed.

PITCHING YOUR STORY

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

- **Telephone calls are the most effective way to communicate with reporters.** Pitch calls are essential to an effective media strategy. Reporters are on paper overload—chances are they never saw your faxed release or advisory.
- **Target your reporters.** Contact reporters who cover your issue, and reporters you have a relationship with. If you have to make a "cold call," ask the general assignment editor or producer who you should speak to.
- **Find a "hook" for your story.** Show the reporter how your story is significant, dramatic, timely, controversial or impacts a lot of readers.
- **Always pitch the story first,** and then ask if they received your release or advisory. Immediately capture the interest of the reporter—they won't wait

for you to get to the point.

- **Keep the pitch short and punchy.** Reporters don't have time for long pitch calls, so get to the most interesting and important information in the first 90 seconds. Don't forget the Who, What, Where, When, and Why.
- **Be enthusiastic and helpful.** If you're not excited about your story, why should the reporter be?
- **Never lie to a reporter.** They may not like what you have to say, but they must respect you.
- **Be considerate of deadlines.** Pitch calls are best made in the mid morning (9:30 to noon). If you sense a reporter is rushed or impatient, ask them if they are on deadline and offer to call back.
- **Only pitch one reporter per outlet.** If you do talk to more than one person

(which sometimes is necessary), make sure the other reporter knows that you've talked with someone else.

- **Close the deal.** Ask the reporter if they are interested or if they are coming to the event. Most will not commit over the phone but they will think about it.
- **Offer to send information.** If they don't commit to attend your event. Offer to send them information if they cannot attend. (Remember to send the information right away.)
- **Don't get frustrated.** Pitch calls can be frustrating when reporters don't bite. But remember that every phone call keeps your issue and organization on their radar screen, and is an important step in building an on-going professional relationship with reporters.

HOLDING A MEDIA EVENT

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

What is a Media Event?

- An activity intended to generate news coverage. They often involve gimmicky visuals, playful stunts, props, etc.

Hints

- Determine if your event is newsworthy. The more of the following characteristics it has, the more likely it will get coverage:
 - Novelty
 - Conflict
 - New data, symbol of a trend
 - Simplicity
 - Humor
 - Prominent figure involved
 - Action
 - Bright props and images
 - Local impact
 - Holidays, anniversaries.
- Build your media event—site, speakers, visuals—around your message and slogan.
- Make it fun. If you don't look like you want to be there, why should the press?
- Don't be afraid to employ stunts. Sexy and trendy events take precedence over long range things with the media.
- Consider timing. Is your event competing with other things? It is best to stage an event Monday through Thursday, 10 A.M. though 2 P.M.
- Find an effective location. Consider the following questions when choosing a location:
 - Is the site convenient? Reporters are busy and won't travel far for an event.
 - Is your site too commonly used for media events? Try to find a unique location, if possible.
 - If your event is outdoors, do you have a backup location? A little rain or bad weather won't ruin an event, but severe conditions will. Also consider if it is possible to postpone it if the weather is very bad.
 - Do you need a permit? Check with the local police department.
 - Arrange to have photographers take pictures of your event.
 - Display a large banner or sign with your organization's logo.
 - The event should last 15 to 45 minutes.
 - Distribute information about your issue and organization at the event.
 - Remember equipment. Will you need a megaphone, podium, or portable microphone?
 - Have spokespersons ready to be interviewed.
 - Find out which reporters attended the event. Follow up with the no-shows.

FUNDAMENTAL TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

- Discipline your message! Use your slogan or message as much as possible.
- Familiarize yourself with three soundbites (with backup information). Write them down.
- Always turn the question back to your message.
- Anticipate questions.
- Know the opposing points.
- Practice—even people who speak all the time practice.
- An interview is never over even if the tape stops rolling. Everything you say to a journalist is on the record.
- Don't get frustrated by difficult questions—just stick to your messages.
- If you slip up, don't worry. Just ask the reporter to start again (unless it's live).
- If you need more time to think, ask the reporter to repeat the question or ask a clarifying question—or simply pause and think before answering.
- If you don't know an answer to a question, don't force it. Try to return to your message. If it's an interview for print media, tell the reporter you'll track down the answer later call them back.
- Tell the reporter you have more to add if he or she overlooks something you think is important.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR HOW TO

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

What is a Letter to the Editor?

- Letters to the editor (LTE's) most often discuss a recent event/issue covered by a publication, radio station, or TV program.
- They are your chance to "sound-off" to your community about issues in the news. **They are widely read**—so make them an important part of your media strategy.

Elements / Hints

- It is much easier to publish a letter to the editor than it is to place an op-ed.
- Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is a reaction to a story in the paper. Respond as quickly as you can.
- Read the letters page—you will learn how to develop an effective letter-writing style, and you will see if someone has already responded with your idea.
- Keep it short and concise—150-200 words. The paper will take the liberty to shorten your letter to suit its format; the more it has to cut, the less control you have of what gets printed. Lead with your most important information.
- Focus on one main point and make a compelling case.
- Write in short paragraphs, with no more than three sentences per paragraph.
- Don't write too often. Once every three months is about as often as you should write.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Put your full name, address and phone number at the top of the page and sign the letter at the bottom. You must include a phone number for verification purposes.
- Follow up to see if the letter was received.

GLOBAL EXCHANGE

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, August 27

Contact: Jason Mark, 415-558-9490
or jason@globalexchange.org

Anti-Sweatshop Activists Target Levi's Human Rights Group Will Protest Retailer's Refusal to Join Other Companies and Settle Saipan Lawsuit

When: Wednesday, August 28, 12:00 Noon

Where: Levi's Flagship Store, 300 Post Street (@ Stockton) in San Francisco's Union Square

Who: Walter Johnson, SF Labor Council; Nikki Fortunato-Bas, Sweatshop Watch; Carmencita Abad, former Saipan sweatshop worker; Medea Benjamin, Global Exchange; and dozens of protesters.

What: Labor and human rights activists will protest Levi's refusal to follow other retailers and settle a class-action lawsuit targeting sweatshop abuses on the US island of Saipan. Nineteen major retailers have already committed to a ground-breaking agreement that will help eliminate sweatshop abuses in the US territory. But Levi's, which likes to promote itself as a socially responsible company, is refusing to take the same step and work with non-governmental organizations to improve conditions in Saipan's factories.

"Levi's likes to promote itself as this very socially responsible company," says Global Exchange founding director Medea Benjamin. "Yet in recent years Levi's has closed dozens of factories in the US, slashing tens of thousands of good paying jobs. At the same time, Levi's is refusing to acknowledge its complicity with worker abuses in Saipan. Nineteen companies have already committed to improving conditions in Saipan—why can't Levi's do the same?"

In January 1999, Global Exchange, Sweatshop Watch, the Asian Law Caucus, and the garment workers union UNITE initiated a class action lawsuit on behalf of workers in Saipan, a US territory. According to the complaint, foreign garment workers in Saipan are often forced to work 12-hour days, seven days a week, in unsafe, unclean conditions that violate U.S. labor laws, while sewing clothes for America's leading clothing retailers. The historic settlement reached with 19 of the defendants will fund an independent monitoring program and require the retailers to purchase garments only from factories that adhere to strict labor standards in a comprehensive model Code of Conduct. Factories would be required to guarantee overtime pay for overtime work, provide safe food and drinking water and respect employees, basic human rights.

Human rights activists say the continued opposition from Levi's is unconscionable.

"Workers in Saipan continue to suffer from routine repression of their basic rights," says Benjamin. "That's why we will be out in front of Levi's on Wednesday, talking to consumers and urging them to contact Levi's and tell the company they don't want jeans made in sweatshops."

For more information about the Levi's protest or the Saipan lawsuit, contact Jason Mark at 415-558-9490 or jason@globalexchange.org. ###

GLOBAL EXCHANGE

For immediate release:
August 22, 2002

Contact: Jason Mark, 415-558-9490 or
Medea Benjamin, 415-235-6517 (cell)

“No War on Iraq,” Protesters Will Tell President Bush at Stockton, CA Fundraiser

Anti-War Demonstrators Caravan from San Francisco to Stockton to Greet President Bush on Friday Morning

San Francisco, CA—Hundreds of anti-war demonstrators from throughout Northern California, including a bus caravan from San Francisco, will greet President Bush in Stockton on Friday morning to protest his administration's proposed war on Iraq. Bush is scheduled to headline a fundraiser for California gubernatorial candidate Bill Simon on Friday morning.

“What was Iraq's act of aggression against us that justifies war? There has been no attack on the US, no Iraqi threat of war, no Iraqi connection to September 11,” says Medea Benjamin, founding director of the international human rights organization Global Exchange. “Northern California is going to tell George Bush loudly and clearly that the United States should not go to war with Iraq. War should be the last resort among the tools of U.S. foreign policy, not the only tool we have.”

The protest will take place at 10 AM near the Spanos Jet Center, 4800 S. Airport Way in Stockton. (Note: The exact location of the fundraiser and protest have yet to be determined; please call 415-235-6517 to confirm the location on Friday morning.)

Global Exchange, a San Francisco-based human rights organization, and the International Action Center are two of the Bay Area groups sponsoring the protest. Stockton and Modesto peace groups will also participate in the protest.

The anti-war demonstrators says the proposed U.S. invasion of Iraq is illegal and ill-considered. In Stockton, they will raise a host of objections to a war against Iraq, among them:

There Is No Justification for Going to War. The international coalition that fought the first Gulf War was cemented by the principle that one country cannot invade another without provocation. Now the White House is poised to dismiss the coalition to launch an unprovoked invasion of Iraq. This would violate the US's historic policy against using force preemptively.

Iraq Does Not Pose a Clear and Present Danger. There is no evidence that Iraq is still developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. During the 1990s, United Nations weapons inspectors dismantled all of Iraq's major weapons factories and destroyed nearly all of Iraq's weapons and long-range missiles. In terms of conventional arms, Iraq's military is now at one-third of its pre-Gulf War strength. According to Ex-Marine and former UN Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter, Iraq presents “absolutely nothing” of a military threat.

When It Comes to Invading Iraq, the US Has Zero Allies. All the countries of the Middle East—including Kuwait—are opposed to a war with Iraq. Our allies in Europe think an invasion is foolhardy. Only Great Britain's Tony Blair has offered tepid support for a US attack on Iraq, and his approval is tempered by widespread opposition from the British public and his own Labour Party. An invasion of Iraq would isolate the US from the rest of the world and shatter the principles of international cooperation and mutual defense that are key to US and global security. ###

Global Exchange is an international human rights organization dedicated to promoting environmental, political and social justice. Since our founding in 1988, we have increased the US public's global awareness while building partnerships among peoples around the world.

To order copies of this How-To Guide, e-mail peace@globalexchange.org or call 800-497-1994.

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