



## Media Contacts

*National:*

**Philip Dine**

National Association  
of Letter Carriers  
202-662-2850

*National:*

**Sally Davidow**

American Postal  
Workers Union  
202-842-4250

## Media Tips

Here are some tips for dealing with the media before, during and after the rally. Look them over, and use only what makes sense for you.

**1) Contact the media as soon as possible.** Call (do not e-mail, fax or send a letter) the newspaper(s) in your area, including any weeklies, ask for the City Desk, and tell them you'd like to talk to a reporter or an editor about a story with broad impact in the community.

Do the same with the radio stations (ask for the news editor) and TV stations (assignment desk).

Tell them in just three or four sentences that you work for the post office, what you do (don't focus on the union) and that they've surely heard that the Postal Service is facing a crisis and decisions are going to be made soon that will affect every resident and every business in the community. But there's a ton of misinformation out there, and you'd like to provide some facts and some context so their readers (or listeners, or viewers) will have the real story.

It's best if you can eventually get transferred to a reporter who might actually cover the story. If not, urge the editor or whomever you speak with to have whichever reporter is assigned to the story give you a call as soon as possible, so you can discuss the story.

Leave a couple of phone numbers, and perhaps an e-mail address, for a reporter to reach you. Many reporters work odd hours, and they won't necessarily try during normal work hours.

**2) Our goal in contacting the media is only partly to alert them to the rally, but at least as important to get them to write about the issue beforehand.** If they do that, it's more likely it'll be a longer, enterprise-type story that gets at the real issues, as opposed to a simple news story about an event. (Ideally, they'll do that and then also cover the rally.) An advance story, including one that runs the day of the rally, also will boost public and media attendance at the rally itself.

Newspapers are the most likely to do an in-depth job prior to the rally. TV is more likely to wait until the rally to show up, but those visuals can still be valuable, especially if you're invested time beforehand explaining to the producer/reporter what's actually going on at the Postal Service. Radio's somewhere in between; depending on the station's news resources it might do a report before, or just show up.

**3) The way to spark media interest is not to jump right into a set of facts or figures, or talk about legislation or politics, or about how someone is trying to destroy the Postal Service, or any other specific angle. Nor is it to focus overly on the rally, the union role, the petition, etc. Rather, it's to provide some broad journalistic reasons why the reporter or media outlet should pursue this story,** rather than a dozen others they could do instead. In other words, what's in it for the reporter/news outlet if they devote time and resources to this story? Why should they care?

Here is a sample of a way to approach it:

"I'm calling with a story about the U.S. Postal Service, which as you've surely heard is facing a crisis about its future. But that crisis isn't what you

## Media Tips (continued)

and your readers (viewers, listeners) may think it is. You've heard that the Postal Service is losing billions of dollars a year sorting and delivering the mail, that this is the result of the Internet and fewer people sending letters these days, about a possible taxpayer bailout being imminent, and thus about the necessity of severe cuts in services to residents and businesses, including post offices being closed and Saturday delivery being eliminated.

"Well, as someone who works at the post office, I'm here to tell you that this is almost entirely wrong. The Postal Service isn't broke. It's actually made more than \$600 million in profit the last four fiscal years sorting and delivering the mail. It also has tens of billions of dollars in surplus funds that Congress could give it access to. And, looking forward, the Internet presents competition but also offers a lot of opportunities for the Postal Service to provide new services to businesses and residents.

"We can discuss this in more detail if you'd like. But first let me tell you briefly why this is a great story for your newspaper (or station) to pursue, even ahead of the rally.

"Because the conventional wisdom is so wrong, you could really startle your readers (listeners, viewers) by providing the actual facts and putting the situation in context. People are going to wonder, why didn't I know this stuff before? You would kick off a lively public discussion, once people had the real story and understood the big picture.

"This is a matter of major local importance, to every resident and every business in our area, especially small businesses on Main Street that are open Saturday and need to send and receive financial documents, or the many elderly in our area or folks who need medicines on the weekend, or our rural areas that would be particularly hard hit by reductions in services (whichever of these most applies in your area).

"It's a story that could have a practical impact, because despite the efforts by some to depict service cuts as inevitable, in fact everything is up in the air. Congress will soon be considering these issues, and the actions (or inactions) it undertakes could either save or destroy our Postal Service. Giving people accurate information and context is critical in those decisions. So you'd be performing a real public service.

"This is not a difficult story that's going to take a lot of heavy listing. It's not a 'he-said, she-said' story where everyone has conflicting information and you—and your audience—won't know what's accurate. I'm going to tell you the part of the story that's been neglected, and everything I'll tell you, you can verify on your own. So you're not going to go on a wild goose chase. This is, in fact, a rather simple story."

You tell an editor or reporter those types of things, and any journalist worth his or her salt is going to be in-

trigued. If they're not, you don't want to waste time talking to them.

**4) Once there's some interest, ask how you can provide detailed information about the Postal Service in the most convenient way for them.** Would they like to meet, should you call back when they have some time, do they want you to fax them the information sheet you have?

If you do meet, or talk further on the phone, summarize the various points on the information sheet in any way you feel comfortable, or just tell them the story as you know it. They'll ask questions and you'll get a conversation going. The information sheet is for your use as you see fit, including to simply give to the reporter.

When you get into the substance, make sure to mention not only mail-related topics but others that indicate the value of the universal network in ways many people aren't aware of—such as the Cities Readiness Initiative and homeland security (especially if you're in one of the areas where that program is underway: Minnesota, Kentucky, Massachusetts, California, Pennsylvania).

**5) A couple of reporters who really take an interest and will pursue this aggressively are more valuable than a lot of lukewarm ones.** So don't spin your wheels. If you find one or two reporters who seem smart and committed to the story, focus on them.

One dynamite story will be far more helpful than 20 perfunctory reports. Even one good report—especially if it's before the rally—will prompt every assignment editor or producer in town to ask his or her staff why they missed it and order them to get on the damn story. TV and radio often take their lead from the morning newspaper.

**6) Feel free to use the national media contacts in any way that's helpful to you,** or to offer to have your regional officers or national president call the reporter if he/she needs more information or wants to expand the story beyond the local level.

7) Remember, no matter how well the rally goes, **the vast majority of people in your area are going to know only what they read or hear about from the media.** In addition, any media interest you spark may well endure beyond the rally, and an informed and engaged public is our best weapon. Public opinion is critical in itself, and the actions that can result—such as phone calls and letters to legislators—can also lead to political movement.

**8) Don't stop your efforts after the rally is over.** If you've built relationships with any reporter, those are valuable so keep the dialogue going. The rally wasn't why they worked on the situation at the Post Service—the issues were—and those continue.

So, all your efforts dealing with the media are extremely important to our future.

Good luck!