

Getting Our Message Out This Recess

The majority of Americans are with us on the need to address the crises our country is facing. Unfortunately, last August we saw a vocal minority attempt to disrupt town hall meetings between representatives of Congress and their constituents.

That's why constituents like us need to show up, make our points clearly and calmly, and be counted among the majority of Americans who are standing up for change.

When you go to an event, be sure to stay grounded in your message and goals. Don't react or allow yourself to be thrown off. Responding to disrupters allows them to frame the issue. Stay calm, and stick to your core message.

Here are some key tips to help you be prepared for an event:

- **Bring more people than the other side has.** Recruit! Recruit! Recruit! It should be obvious to everyone—including press—that you represent the majority. This is crucial. Ask your friends and family to come with you!
- **Arrive early—an hour ahead if you can**—and claim the best spots for visibility and signs. Get familiar with the venue beforehand, and make a staging plan.
- **Ask questions and make comments early in the event.** The first few question-askers set the tone for the whole event—so don't be shy! Be proactive about getting in line to speak.
- **Be visible.** Bring signs and leaflets, and whenever possible, post your signs all over the place so that you stand out. Encourage others to hold signs in every place where a TV camera is likely to be so that next to every right-wing sign, there's one of your signs with your message.
- **Stay calm and avoid confrontation.** Avoid feeding into the hostile atmosphere that right-wing disrupters are attempting to create. Stay cool and calm even if the room becomes tense or confrontational, be respectful, and remember to speak from your heart about these issues.
- **Be on the look-out for reporters.** Check with your local MoveOn Council to see if there's a media coordinator at the event—and direct any reporters towards that person. If you end up talking to a reporter, and they ask questions that focus on right-wing disruptions, don't take the bait—bridge to talk about the issues!

Above all, stick to your prepared message and don't be reactive to attempted disruptions. Our job is to make sure the issues are the story. When the story is about the issues, we win.

And remember: Any orchestrated right-wing turnout is only happening because we are moving toward historic progressive changes. We stand for the Main Street, Majority position. Let's keep moving forward to solve the problems of our time!

If you have questions, ask your Field Organizer or Regional Coordinator for support.

*Tips adapted from "Responding to Right-Wing Attacks in the Field,"
Health Care for America Now, 8/4/09.*