



SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VALUABLE TAX CREDITS THROUGH THE MEDIA

This year, federal and state tax credits are more valuable than ever. Eligible families could receive thousands of dollars in tax benefits – but only if they claim them when they file their 2010 taxes. **The media is an excellent vehicle for reaching a broad audience with critical information about tax credits.** You can organize a press conference, draft op-eds or letters to the editor for print media, or run Public Service Announcements (PSAs). It's not as hard as it sounds – here's how to get started:

➤ ***Hold a press conference.*** You can use a press conference to kick off your tax credit outreach campaign in mid- to late January. But you have to plan ahead.

- At least four weeks before the event ...
 - Decide what you'd like to do and how you'd like to do it. Talk to your network and your coalition about your ideas, get ideas from them and decide on the message you'd like to get out.
 - Decide who you'd like as your featured speaker. You might want to invite a public official or a family that benefited from claiming tax credits. Or you might feature a novel local program or a location where families will be getting help preparing their taxes. Contact your potential speaker early to get on their calendar.
 - Research press contacts. Go online to local newspapers and TV stations. You want to target those reporters that are interested in economic issues, taxes, or families.
- About two weeks before the event ...
 - Prepare your posters, brochures, banners, any props.
 - Prepare your press kit, which should include marketing materials for the group, a press release for the event, quotes or testimonies from individuals, and your contact information.
 - Prepare a list of reporters to invite.
 - Write and fax a news/press advisory — which is simply an invitation that specifies the who, what when, where, and why.
- The week of the event ...
 - Write the statement or introduction you plan to make at the press conference.
 - Finalize all details, and write the press release. Contact the National Women's Law Center if you need help writing a release!
 - Call all reporters the day before the press conference to remind them of the event.
- On the day of the press conference, arrive early at the site to situate speakers, organize material, and so on. After the press conference is over, hand deliver or fax the remainder of the press kits to reporters who were unable to attend.

➤ ***Draft op-eds, letters to the editor, and guest columns for your local newspapers.*** **Keep** your eyes peeled for opportunities to place opinion pieces during tax time (March and April).

- Keep your opinion piece short: highlight what the credits are, how much they are worth, and how they can help families in your area. Note that the federal tax credits are more valuable than ever this year! And if you know of a family whose tax refund helped them pay for a house, or a car, or medical bills, get permission to use their story. (Contact the National Women's Law Center if you need help in drafting.)
- Find a local service provider or advocate to sign the piece.
- Make contact with the newspaper you are targeting.
 - Check online first. If it's a large newspaper, they will most likely have several editors, but a smaller newspaper may have just one.
 - Call and introduce yourself, letting them know who you are, the organization you work for, and what you do there.
 - Tell the editor you contact why tax credits are important to the community they serve. Tell them that tax credits can help working families who need to make ends meet, that families will miss out on thousands of dollars unless they know about the credits and get help filing their taxes, and that refunds from tax credits can have an economic impact in the community. Emphasize that the credits are worth even more this year.
 - Even if the newspaper doesn't run the op-ed or column, let them know how you can be a resource to them. You may be able to pass along stories of individuals who benefit from tax credits or service providers who can comment for other stories.
- Keep your eyes peeled for stories about working families or tough economic times, and send in letters to the editor.

➤ ***Organize a PSA campaign.*** Radio or television PSAs can be an effective tool for informing families about tax credits. It takes planning and resources, but a PSA campaign is truly worth the effort.

- Create your PSA.
 - Find a locally-known public figure or public official and ask them to be your spokesperson.
 - Work with your spokesperson on the PSA text. The National Women's Law Center has sample PSAs on its website.

- Pull together a coalition in support of your PSA campaign.
 - Join with other partners and pool resources to help fund your PSA radio campaign. Some government agencies also have outreach funds that can finance PSAs.
 - Try and connect with your state broadcasters' association. These associations sponsor a program called the Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcement program (NCSA), which helps government agencies and not-for-profits to buy airtime at an extremely reduced rate.
- PSA campaigns can make a difference! In one state PSA campaign, one state coalition received over \$309,925.00 worth of radio advertising for \$12,200.00. The coalition members received a significantly increased volume of tax credit calls, and callers told organizations that they heard about the tax credits through the PSAs.

Now you can get started using the media to spread the word about valuable tax credits!

For materials, resources, or more information about tax credits outreach, visit www.nwlc.org/loweryourtaxes or contact Melanie Ross Levin at mrosslevin@nwlc.org.