

# MEDIA RELATIONS

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTIONS



**Ken Detzner, Secretary of State**

**Dr. Gisela Salas, Director  
Division of Elections**

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# TODAY'S MEDIA

- Technology has dramatically changed information sharing
  - Internet
  - Social media
  - Blogs, podcasts, RSS, et.
    - Smart phones, PDAs
- Market share decreasing for:
  - Broadcast media/ TV news
  - Newspaper circulations



# TODAY'S MEDIA

- Increased pressure and facing uncertainty
- Journalists asked to do more with less
- Time is of the essence
  - Who gets “what” story first?

# WHO ARE REPORTERS?

- Seeking information – It's their job!
- Tremendous pressure from editors for stories
- Short deadlines, lean staff
- Competition on multiple fronts:
  - Social media
  - Print vs. Electronic
- Reporters are not the enemy.



# MEDIA RELATIONS

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- ▶ Provides an opportunity to get information out and tell your story
  - ▶ Voter and Media education
  - ▶ Proactive component
  - ▶ Dispel myths or inaccuracies
  - ▶ Drive the discussion effectively
  - ▶ Reach your critical audience

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- **Where Media Gets Information**
  - Internet
  - The public – candidates, special interest groups
  - White Papers/Reports
  - Industry Trade Publications
  - Past Media Coverage
  - Blogs/Message Boards/Community Forums
  - Other Media
  - Your Office

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- Be **proactive** rather than reactive
  - Voter and media education
    - “The basics of the election process”
  - Routine press releases
  - Public service announcements
  - Post frequently asked questions on website

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- **Be Ready**
  - Timing is everything!
  - Keep it Simple
  - Formulate with Input/Participation from Key Players
  - Closely Guard All Confidential Documents
  - Get accurate information together
- **Act quickly**
  - Be Prepared to Respond Quickly



# MEDIA RELATIONS

- **Always comment**
  - Do not speak without being thoroughly prepared.
  - Focus on message.
- **Keep positive attitude** even when under attack.
  - Never show emotion or anger!
- Put **ego aside** for the greater good.
  - Your message becomes the organization's position.
  - Sometimes it is best to pass the baton to someone else.
- Never be afraid to say "I don't know, I'll find out and get back to you."

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- Think of every media contact as an “**Opportunity**”.
- During times of crisis, **be available** – lack of information could be perceived negatively.
- Do not fear the media.

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- Always comment
- Speak with **one voice** to ensure clear, accurate communication
- **Be consistent with information**
  - Provide Consistent and Convenient Location
  - Regular Press Briefings
  - Spokespersons/Media Contact(s)
  - Messaging
    - Be fair
    - Provide information in a non-partisan manner

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- Coordinate your messaging
  - **Department of State/Division of Elections**
  - **Department of State Communications Director**
  - **Your local County Administration**
- Get Help

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- Keep media informed as information becomes available
- Keep lines of communication open with the media

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- Consider the limitations of office
  - Physical layout
    - Visibility of canvassing board, ballot counting process, etc.
    - Transparency to media and public

# MEDIA RELATIONS

- **BE HONEST!**
  - **Never Lie.**
  - You will get caught
  - Your reputation will be on the line
- **Do not leave the media empty-handed**
  - Be a resource – provide useful information – Media Kits
  - Respect deadlines
- **Listen to the question**
  - Stick to the focus of the story
  - You do not have to tell everything you know
  - There is no “Off the record”

# MEDIA MATERIALS – MEDIA KIT

- **Fact Sheet**

- Comprehensive, but easy to understand
- Handouts and Online

- **Q&A**

- Make it easy to understand – consider your audience
- Drive the message – ask questions you want to answer
- Good interview preparation tool – public and media resource



# MEDIA MATERIALS – MEDIA KIT

- **Statistics, Maps, Charts, etc.**
  - Think of visuals – photos, videos, props, demos, etc.
- **Success Stories or Profiles**
  - Make the story come alive with real people and real stories
  - Use real examples whenever possible
- **Make Your Message Memorable**
  - Be innovative when making announcements

# DEALING WITH MEDIA

## BE PREPARED!

- **Be prepared for success**
  - Speak simply
  - Be brief, but avoid yes/no answers.
  - Stay away from statistics in oral interviews
  - Avoid professional jargon
  - Avoid acronyms
- **Shape your message**
  - Be brief, say what you mean
  - Concentrate on your most important points
  - Use your Fact Sheet and Q & A Sheet
  - Stop talking when done!

# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

## What is a Crisis?

(3 different types)

- Operational Crisis – Emergency (Reactive)
- Organizational Crisis – Issue Management (Proactive)
- Organizational Crisis – Reputation Repair (Reactive)

# DEFINITION OF A CRISIS

- **Emergency**: The unknown, unpredictable...
  - *(natural disaster; technology/equipment related; human error)*
- **Issue Management**: Unstable condition involving the likelihood of an impending abrupt or decisive change
  - *(critical report or media coverage, imminent legal decision)*
- **Reputation Repair**: Integrity or reputation of an individual or organization is threatened
  - *(potential scandal)*

# HANDLING A CRISIS

## Crisis Communication Principles

- **Contact the Department of State immediately.**
- Never try to lie, deny or hide involvement.
- Ignoring a situation can make the matter worse.
- The public and media will usually decide what they are interested in.
- Coordinate message.
- Remember your stakeholders – the voters.
- Promote voter confidence in your communications.

# HANDLING A CRISIS

## Coordinated Communications Plan:

- Scheduled **Press Conference**
- Meeting with **Editorial Board**
- Information to **feature writer**
- **Create Fact Sheet** for dissemination and posting
- Coordinated **webpage** messaging
- Draft and distribute **PSA's**
- Create earned media **photo-op event**
- Create **Feature News Release**
- Secure **Op-Ed** Placement

# CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLANNING

## Development of Communications Plan

**Do It NOW!**

- Media list, Fact Sheets, Q & A, Media Kits
- Primary Contact Points – Front Desk Phones, etc.
- Assignment of Key Roles
  - Spokesperson
  - Staff Contact with Director/Division of Elections, DOS Communications Director
- Message Development – Develop Scenarios
- Media Training for staff

# MEDIA RELATIONS – OTHER POINTERS

- Always assume that you may be on video or in microphone range.
- There is no “Off the Record”.
- You may be taken out of context – it can and will happen frequently .
- Be careful with your message!
  - Corrections- Don't be afraid to contact reporters immediately if you want a correction .



## FINAL THOUGHTS...

- Maintain a Professional Working Relationship with the Media.
- Don't Burn Bridges.
- Reporters can be your advocate when you are trying to get information out!
- **Prepare, Coordinate, Communicate!**

# MEDIA RELATIONS

## Department of State/Communications Director

- **Chris Cate**

Communications Director

Phone: 850.245.6522

Fax: 850.245.6128

- [Chris.Cate@dos.myflorida.com](mailto:Chris.Cate@dos.myflorida.com)

- Secretary of State

Florida Department of State

R. A. Gray Building

500 South Bronough Street

Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250



# MEDIA RELATIONS

## Department of State/Division of Elections

- **Dr. Gisela Salas**
- **Director, Division of Elections**
- 850.245.6268
- [Gisela.Salas@DOS.MyFlorida.com](mailto:Gisela.Salas@DOS.MyFlorida.com)



