

Press Release

Tips for Writing Effective Press Releases



Press releases are an effective means for Retired Educators Associations to draw attention to their organization, community events and volunteer activities, and to express their positions on important public policy matters via the media. Press releases can be proactive or reactive in nature, should look and sound like a printed news article, and be written to capture the interest of journalists so they publish your news to their readers/viewers. Strong press releases have a compelling headline, and a lead paragraph that gets straight to the point, followed by additional relevant information and interesting quotes. The body of the press release must convey your organization's key messages while answering all the basics questions – the Who, What, When, Where and Why – of your chosen topic.

BEFORE WRITING

- ✓ **DO** develop a list of media contacts in your state with their contact information. These lists can be made up of both large and small media outlets, with the realization that small outlets may be more likely to need, and subsequently print, your content.
- ✓ Consider asking your local unit chapters to develop their own media lists as well. They can then help you spread your organizational messages as widely as possible when you have something to share via the media.
- ✓ **DO** determine if your press release topic is “newsworthy”. Your press release likely will be competing for attention with other organizations and topics. To increase your chances of being published, try to time your press release as part of a larger or ongoing story or narrative.

WHEN WRITING

- ✓ **DO** include the date of your press release and the location from which it emanated.
- ✓ **DO** provide a specific point of contact for media inquiries for your REA, their phone number and email address.
- ✓ At the top of your press release, **DO** write a bolded headline that summarizes your press release in 4 or 5 words to catch the attention of the reviewing journalist.
- ✓ **DO** consider including a sub-headline in italics that further explains and summarizes your press release.

- ✓ **DO** write your press release like it is an already-printed news story, exactly how you want to see it published. Think of your press release as your printed wish list for how you would want to see your event or position covered and publicized.
- ✓ Like all news stories, **DO** write your press release in the 3rd person.
- ✓ In the body of your press release, **DO** provide answers to the 5 W's – the Who, What, When, Where and Why – of your chosen topic.
- ✓ **DO** write in simple, concise, and easy to understand language.
- ✓ **DO** be brief. Press releases by their nature are brief, typically between 300 to 400 words.
- ✓ **DO** include a quote or quotes. Make sure to include the name and appropriate organizational title for the quoted REA leader or volunteer.
- ✓ Below the body of your press release, **DO** include background information about your organization – who you serve, how many members, when your REA was founded, and your mission statement that reflects who you are, what you do and why. For help in crafting your organization's mission statement, please review the "Mission Statement" section in NRTA's [Image and Branding](#) fact sheet.

MESSAGES

- ✓ **DO** determine and use your most powerful organizational and public policy messages in your press release. For help determining your organization's most powerful messages, please review the "Five Steps to Powerful Messages" section in NRTA's [Image and Branding](#) fact sheet.
- ✓ For messaging on public pensions:
 - ✓ **DO** focus on the earned nature of public pension benefits. Teachers have paid into the system on time and in full over their entire working careers

and earned their financial security in retirement. Take every opportunity to remind legislators and the public of this fact.

- ✓ **DO** highlight the positive economic impact public pensions have on state and local economies and taxpayers. The AARP/NRTA/NIRS State Facts sheets, as well as NIRS' Pensionomics 2014 report, are wonderful resources that can help you show the positive impact that public pension benefits have on state and local economies, job creation, tax revenues, and in preventing costs associated with employee turnover.
- ✓ **DO** talk about the dedication of teachers who spent their whole careers serving others and their communities, often taking money out of their own pockets to help their students learn.
- ✓ **DO** talk about the fact that all hard-working Americans should have a secure retirement and that there is broad public support for the financial security afforded by pensions.
- ✓ **DO** avoid using partisan or political rhetoric that could undermine the impact of your press release.

WHEN SEEKING TO BE PUBLISHED

- ✓ **DO** submit your press release electronically (by email) if possible.
- ✓ **DON'T** send email attachments; instead include the text of your press release in the body of your email message.
- ✓ **DO** follow up with the newspaper to find out if they plan to publish your press release or write a story on your chosen topic.

EXAMPLES

- ✓ Examples of some recent press releases can be found [here](#) and [here](#).