2010 Program Toolkit
# Handbook for Advocacy/Programs

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I. Role of the Advocacy and Research/Programs Department

The Advocacy and Research/Programs Department at the NAACP National Office consists of four programmatic departments. Each department focuses on research, advocacy, outreach, and programming in their field. Currently our team includes:

- **Climate Justice:** The Climate Justice Initiative was developed to provide a vehicle to educate the NAACP membership, and by extension communities of color across the US, about the connection between climate change and civil rights as well as to provide a platform and mechanism to advance just climate policy. CJI does this by uplifting how climate change disproportionately impacts communities of color, providing training to the units on understanding and addressing civil rights issues connected with climate change, linking the units with technical assistance and other resources, as well as developing and implementing a plan to advance a climate justice advocacy agenda.

- **Criminal Justice:** The Criminal Justice department provides research and advocacy support for NAACP State Conferences, Branches, Committees, Youth Council to guide the development and implementation of effective strategies that will result in establishing policies and practices at the state and local level to make communities more safe.

- **Education:** The Education Department leads the Association’s work to eliminate the severe racial inequities that continue to plague our education system and ensure that every student of color receives a quality public education that prepares him or her to be a contributing member of a democracy. The Education Department provides the national strategy and coordination for the implementation of the Association’s strategic plan around educational improvement. It also provides assistance to units implementing the strategic plan through policy guidance, training, and programmatic support.

- **Health:** The Health department fulfills the NAACP’s commitment to eliminating the racial and ethnic disparities in our health care system that plague people of color in the United States. The NAACP brings our national voice to assist in the eradication of these racial and ethnic disparities, with a focus not only on disease prevention, but on the social and environmental factors that affect health and wellness. In addition the NAACP is engaged in the workforce development movement to increase the number of minorities represented in the medical and public health profession, and a leading presence on governmental advisory workgroups and national coalitions developed to provide counsel on cultural competency in the health care system.
A Director for each department oversees the research, advocacy, and outreach in their field. This outreach includes communication with the state conferences and units on a regular basis. Directors share key events and deadlines as well.

Additionally, the NAACP has the Financial Freedom Centers. This new division will be located in Washington, DC. The mission of the NAACP Financial Freedom Centers is to facilitate the enhanced capacity of African Americans and other underserved groups to obtain affordable and competitively priced credit and financing, including mortgage loans, small business loans, and consumer loans. These Centers will be designed to monitor lending practices to ensure fairness and to provide African Americans and other underserved groups with knowledge and information to effectively manage their personal finances and credit in today’s economic environment.

If you have questions regarding any of these departments, please contact the Director. You can find more information on our website at: http://www.naacp.org/advocacy/index.htm.
II. Victories to Remember

As we advocate for our issues into the future, it is crucial for us to remember our past. Here is a look at some of the key victories we have had.

- **1909** On February 12, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded by a multiracial group of activists, who answered "The Call." They initially called themselves the National Negro Committee.

- **1915** The NAACP organizes a nationwide protest D.W. Griffiths racially-inflammatory and bigoted silent film, "Birth of a Nation."

- **1917** In Buchanan vs. Warley, the Supreme Court has to concede that states cannot restrict and officially segregate African Americans into residential districts. Also, the NAACP fights and wins the battle to enable African Americans to be commissioned as officers in World War I. Six hundred officers are commissioned, and 700,000 register for the draft.

- **1918** After persistent pressure by the NAACP, President Woodrow Wilson finally makes a public statement against lynching.

- **1930** The first of successful protests by the NAACP against Supreme Court justice nominees is launched against John Parker, who officially favored laws that discriminated against African Americans.

- **1935** NAACP lawyers Charles Houston and Thurgood Marshall win the legal battle to admit a black student to the University of Maryland.

- **1941** During World War II, the NAACP leads the effort to ensure that President Franklin Roosevelt orders a non-discrimination policy in war-related industries and federal employment.

- **1946** The NAACP wins the Morgan vs. Virginia case, where the Supreme Court bans states from having laws that sanction segregated facilities in interstate travel by train and bus.

- **1948** The NAACP was able to pressure President Harry Truman to sign an Executive Order banning discrimination by the Federal government.

- **1954** After years of fighting segregation in public schools, under the leadership of Special Counsel Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP wins one of its greatest legal victories in Brown vs. the Board of Education.

- **1955** NAACP member Rosa Parks is arrested and fined for refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Noted as the catalyst for the largest grassroots
civil rights movement, that would be spearheaded through the collective efforts of the NAACP, SCLC and other Black organizations.

- **1960** In Wichita, Kansas and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, members of the NAACP Youth Council launch a series of non-violent sit-ins at segregated lunch counters. These protests eventually lead to more than 60 stores officially desegregating their counters.

- **1964** U.S. Supreme Court ends the eight year effort of Alabama officials to ban NAACP activities. And 55 years after the NAACP’s founding, Congress finally passes the Civil Rights Act.

- **1965** The Voting Rights Act is passed. Amidst threats of violence and efforts of state and local governments, the NAACP still manages to register more than 80,000 voters in the Old South.

- **1979** The NAACP initiates the first bill ever signed by a governor that allows voter registration in high schools. Soon after, 24 states follow suit.

- **1985** The NAACP leads a massive anti-apartheid rally in New York.

- **1987** NAACP launches campaign to defeat the nomination of Judge Robert Bork to the Supreme Court. As a result, he garners the highest negative vote ever recorded for a 1989 Silent March of over 100,000 to protest U.S. Supreme Court nominee. The Silent March was attended by over 100,000 activists to protest U.S. Supreme Court decisions that reversed many of the gains made against discrimination.

- **1991** When avowed racist and former Klan leader David Duke runs for US Senate in Louisiana, the NAACP launches a voter registration campaign that yields a 76 percent turn-out of Black voters to defeat Duke.

- **1997** In response to the pervasive anti-affirmative action legislation occurring around the country, the NAACP launches the Economic Reciprocity Program... And in response to increased violence among our youth, the NAACP starts the "Stop The Violence, Start the Love’ campaign.

- **2000** The Great March held on January 17, in Columbia, South Carolina was attended by over 50,000 to protest the flying of the Confederate Battle Flag. This is the largest civil rights demonstration ever held in the South to date.

- **2006** The reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act was successfully accomplished in 2006 with strong input from the NAACP.

- **2008** Barack Obama was elected to President of the United States as the first African American to hold the distinguished position.
II. Organizational Structure

The NAACP works as a four-tiered organization, including the National Board of Director, the President and CEO, the National staff, and the Units. Each serves a vital role to the success of our organization.

Your own unit should have an organized structure by which you run. If your unit is not in order, you will not be able to advocate as well as you can. This is a reminder of how your unit should be set up.
When advocating on behalf of the NAACP and your unit it is important to understand the advocacy structure of our organization. For each Programmatic committee, the chair of that committee should be in direct contact with the National Director of that Program. This communication will allow resources and information to be passed along regularly.

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II.a. The Resolution Process

The NAACP has an active constituency base that helps us shape our national positions on key issues. Through the resolution process all members have a chance to address key topics and concerns that affect our communities.

Here is an example of a resolution:

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Discriminatory Sub-prime and Predatory Lending Practices

Sponsored By: Boston, MA Branch                                      Date Adopted: April 5, 2000

WHEREAS, sub-prime lending, where loans are extended to people with impaired credit, is a growing segment of the mortgage market; and

WHEREAS, sub-prime loans serve a function; the objective of the financial institutions should be to help applicants rehabilitate their credit, not to expand the sub-prime market; and

WHEREAS, such loans are increasingly targeted to African Americans, elderly and female heads of households; and

WHEREAS, such loans are characterized by high interest rates, excessive and unnecessary fees and costs, balloon payments, pre-payment penalties, unnecessary costs for credit life, accident or health insurance, and repeated re-financing or “flipping” of the loan; and

WHEREAS, discriminatory and predatory lending practices are widespread throughout neighborhoods of color and serve to deny people of color access to mainstream credit; and

WHEREAS, credit discrimination and predatory lending practices destroy the financial well being of its victims, as well as the financial well being of the entire community.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People stands opposed to the discriminatory practices associated with sub-prime and predatory lending in the United States of America and will work through the local, state and federal legislative process to make sure that such practices will be prohibited; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the NAACP will urge all of its units to work to identify and assist victims of predatory lending practices, following NAACP procedures, and take action necessary to expose and halt those who engage in discriminatory and unfair lending and credit practices in our communities.

The resolution process occurs in various stages, each with a different set of requirements. When submitting a resolution, it is important to know the process.
Resolution Process

A properly formatted resolution is submitted to the unit for vote.

Unit votes on the resolution; requires a majority to pass.

Unit President and Secretary sign off on resolution; send to the President and CEO of National Office.

Resolution reviewed by the national Resolutions Committee; if passed, resolution goes to a vote at Convention.

Resolution voted on by delegates at Convention; if approved, then sent to the Board of Directors.

Board of Directors ratify the resolution.

Approved by Resolutions Committee, Convention delegates, and Board of Directors, becomes an official policy.

Adopted resolutions are published in The Crisis.

For more information on how to submit a resolution, key dates, and formatting, please visit our website: http://www.naaccp.org/advocacy/research/resolution_instructions/index.htm
II.b. Duties of Unit Officers

Each officer in your unit serves a unique function that will benefit the work you do. When electing officers, be sure to make the duties of each position known so that individuals will be aware of the responsibilities involved. Here is a reminder of the position duties:

NAACP Units: Duties of President

- Preside at meetings of the Unit
- Act as Chair of Executive Committee
- Appoint the Chair and members of all Committees (not elected by General Membership of NAACP Unit or Executive Committee)
- Exercise general executive authority on behalf of NAACP Unit (between meetings of Executive Committee and NAACP Unit)
- Countersign all checks and properly supported requisitions for disbursement from the Unit Treasury
- Perform other functions as voted by the Unit or Executive Committee
- Encourage and assist all Committees in development of programs and performance of duties
- Recommend the removal of any Chairperson of a Standing or Special Committee (to Executive Committee)

NAACP Units: Duties of Vice President

- Perform all duties of the President in his/her absence or disability
- In event of resignation, removal, or death of the President, the VP automatically ascends to the position of the President

NAACP Units: Duties of Secretary

- To act as Secretary of NAACP Unit and the Executive Committee
  - Give members notice of regular meetings
  - Keep full and accurate records of proceedings of the Unit and of the Executive Committee
• Keep a record of all Unit members and their dues
• Give receipts for all membership fees received and transmit such fees to the Unit Treasurer
• Process memberships within 15 days of receipt
• Secure membership fees from Treasurer and forward portion of fees due to NAACP National Office
• Aid, coordinate, and integrate work of several committees and divisions of the Unit
• Submit reports covering status of the Unit and its activities since the date of the last report (to the Unit and the Executive Committee)
• Keep the President and CEO of NAACP informed of all events affecting the interests of minority groups in the NAACP Unit
• Sign requisitions for disbursements from NAACP Unit Treasury (in conjunction with the President) and maintain a file of receipts and disbursements
• Be an ex officio member of all committees (except Nominating and Election Supervisory Committee)

NAACP Units: Duties of Treasurer

• Receive and promptly deposit all monies of the Unit in the name of the Unit in separate account(s) in a responsible bank or trust company
• Act as chief financial officer of the Unit and chairperson of the Finance Committee
• Make authorized disbursements upon requisitions signed by the Secretary and countersigned by the President
• Remit through the Secretary to the National Office the portion of membership fees to which the National Office is entitled
• Submit reports covering the financial condition of the Unit, to the Unit and the Executive Committee at all regular meetings (showing receipts and disbursements and outstanding accounts unpaid since the last report)
• Submit an annual report related to the business of his/her office at the annual meeting of the Unit
• Submit year-end financial reports to the National Office

NAACP Units: Duties of Assistant Secretary
- Perform duties of the Secretary in his/her absence
- May perform duties of the Secretary under the supervision of the Secretary

**NAACP Units: Duties of Assistant Treasurer**
- Perform duties of the Treasurer in his/her absence
- May perform duties of the Treasurer under the supervision of the Treasurer

**NAACP Units: Duties of Executive Director**
- Give due notice of all meetings of the Branch
- Keep record of all Branch members and their dues
- Process memberships within 15 days of receipt
- Aid, coordinate, and integrate the work of the several committees and divisions of the Branch
- Manage Branch office and paid staff
- Supervise annual membership campaign
- Interview complainants and act on behalf of complainants with valid grievances
- Investigate any reported, alleged, or suspected discrimination practices in any place of community life
- Represent Branch at meetings of other organizations (approved by Executive Committee)
- Discharge other duties as may arise in the execution of the office or as assigned by the Executive Committee
- Keep the President and CEO of NAACP informed of all events affecting interests of ethnic minorities in the vicinity of the Branch
II. c. Regions of the NAACP

The NAACP is divided into seven (7) geographical regions for the purpose of electing representatives to the Board of Directors and to various committees of the Annual Convention. To find a unit in your area, please visit our website at: http://www.naacp.org/unitfinder/us/with_javascript/index.htm.


Region IV: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

Region V: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Region VI: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Region VII: Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC.
II. d. Duties of the Standing Committees

The work of the NAACP is done by Standing Committees and not in the General Membership meeting. Only in rare instances when the President and/or Executive Committee has determined that a matter is time sensitive and pressing should any discussion be allowed to take place during a General Membership meeting. In those instances, when they arise, the respective standing committee should take the lead by investigating and verifying/validating all facts, prior to the Unit taking any action. Remember, there are always two sides to every story. The facts must be clear and documented in writing.

The Standing Committees of the Branch shall be: Communications, Press and Publicity; Community Coordination; Education; Finance; Freedom Fund; Health; Legal Redress; Membership and Life Membership; Political Action; Religious Affairs; Youth Work; Women in the NAACP (WIN); Committee on Armed Services and Veterans Affairs; Economic Development; Housing; Labor and Industry, Young Adult; Prison Branch Support; and ACT-SO.

**Communications, Press and Publicity, The Committee on Communications, Press and Publicity shall:**

- Seek to promote media content consistent with fundamental NAACP goals which include the elimination of racial isolation and fear and the furtherance of multiracial and cultural understanding;

- Work to eliminate employment segregation and discrimination in those industries, [comprising the communications arts and sciences] (radio, telephone, television, motion pictures, newspapers, books, related computer communications, business, cable television);

- Seek to ensure Black minority ownership and control of print and electronic media - both) hardware and software;

- Monitor local and national media, especially advertising performance;

- Provide the National Office with research and data on those local businesses engaged in communications arts acid sciences;

- Seek to ensure that all people have a meaningful right to' choose from and have access to a variety of high quality telecommunications goods and services at reasonable cost;
- Endeavor to secure publicity for the work of the Unit and the Association in the local press and on radio, television and other media;

- Attempt to interest persons in charge of local news media on conditions affecting minority groups;

- Seek to counteract derogatory and erroneous statements in local news media about Blacks and other minority groups;

- Responsible for forwarding to THE CRISIS items covering Unit activities and important local affairs; and

- Act as far as possible as an agency for the promotion and sale of THE CRISIS. No publicity shall be released without first being approved by the President of the Unit.

**Community Coordination - The Community Coordination committee shall:**

The Committee on Community Coordination shall enlist the support of other community organizations on issues affecting the interests of African Americans and other communities of color.

**Education – The Education Committee shall:**

- Seek to eliminate segregation and other discriminatory practices in public education;

- Study local educational conditions affecting minority groups;

- Investigate the public school system and school zoning;

- Familiarize itself with textbook material there from which is racially derogatory;

- Seek to stimulate school attendance;

- Keep informed of school conditions and strive to correct abuses where found;

- Investigate the effects of standardized and high stakes testing practices;

- Teacher certification;

- Promote parental involvement in education; and

- Aim to be a center of popular education on the race question and on the work of the Association.
**ACT-SO – The ACT-SO Committee Shall:**

- The ACT-SO Committee must be properly registered with the National Office and follow all directives outlined by the National ACT-SO Program.

- ACT-SO is an acronym for Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics. It is a major project of the NAACP. With ACT-SO, the NAACP is providing an instrument through which Black youths are encouraged and inspired toward excellence in academic and cultural pursuits while benefiting from the maximum support of their communities.

- It is the goal of ACT-SO to afford the same respect for Black scholastic and cultural achievement that is given to heroes.

- ACT-SO conducts annual academic competitions for students in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) in NAACP Branches throughout the country. Participating Branches hold local competitions in the following categories:

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<th>Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>Performing Arts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Music Composition</td>
<td>Business Development skills</td>
<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Original Essay</td>
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<td>Dramatics</td>
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<td>Playwriting</td>
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<td>Music Instrumental/ Classical</td>
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<td>Poetry</td>
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<th>Science</th>
<th>Visual Arts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
<td>Photography</td>
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<td>Painting</td>
<td>Sculpture</td>
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<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Filmmaking/ Video</td>
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ACT-SO conducts annual academic competitions for students in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) in NAACP Branches throughout the country. The current procedure is for participating Branches of the NAACP to hold local competitions in the categories listed above. The top local winners then compete with the winners from other cities at the national ACT-SO finals during the NAACP National Convention.

**Finance – The Finance Committee shall:**
The Finance Committee shall consist of the President, Treasurer, and at least one other member. It shall study the financial needs of the Unit and shall be responsible for drafting an adequate annual budget.

**Freedom Fund – The Freedom Fund Committee shall:**
The Freedom Fund Committee shall plan and conduct fund-raising activities, entertainment and other projects, for local and national purposes within the scope of the Association’s program. It shall work closely with the Finance Committee.

**Health – The Health Committee shall:**
- Work to promote, protect and maintain the health of African Americans;
- Assess the health needs of the community;
- Advocate for equal access to health education, care, treatment and research for all Americans;
- Sponsor health-related activities such as health forums, fairs and workshops highlighting issues of importance to people of color; and
- Support health initiatives of the Association.

**Economic Development – The Committee on Economic Development shall:**
- Implement local efforts and support national programs to preserve and expand economic empowerment among African-Americans and other communities of color by:
  - Researching and establishing relationships with private and public entities;
  - Supporting the work of the National Office in monitoring the progress and activity of private and public entities designated by national programs; and
  - Implementing local efforts to promote the growth of business ownership;
  - Increasing employment and job creation; and
- Encouraging business development and home ownership.

**Legal Redress – The Legal Redress Committee shall:**

- Investigate all cases reported to it;
- Supervise all litigation in which the Unit is interested; and
- Keep the National Office and the Branch informed on the progress of every case. It shall not give general legal advice.

**Membership and Life Membership – The Membership Committee shall:**

- Work throughout the year to maintain and increase the membership of the Association;
- Be responsible for planning and organizing the annual membership campaign;
- Be responsible on a continuous basis for soliciting new members and for securing renewals; and
- Initiate all possible means to obtain Life Members and sponsor a continuing program towards this end.

**Political Action – The Political Action Committee shall:**

- Seek to increase registration and voting;
- Work for the enactment of municipal, state and federal legislation designed to improve the educational, political and economic status of minority groups;
- Seek the repeal of racially discriminatory legislation;
- Work to improve the administration of justice;
- Work to secure equal enforcement of the law; and
- Keep the National Office and the Unit informed of all proposed legislation which affects minority groups. The Committee shall be *nonpartisan and shall not endorse candidates for public office.*

**Religious Affairs – The Religious Affairs Committee shall:**

- Include ministerial and lay religious leaders who are members of the Unit. It shall:
Promote an educational program designed to give moral and ethical interpretation to the civil rights struggle;

Interpret the work of the Association to organized religious groups of all faiths;

Enlist the support of such organized religious groups for membership, fundraising, and the struggle for equality and full civil rights; and

Provide resource assistance for religious education and social action activities, associated with the improvement of race relations.

Youth Work - The Committee on Youth Work for State/State-Area Conferences shall:

Consist of all Youth Council Advisors, Youth Council Presidents and five (5) persons appointed by the State/State-Area Conference President. The Committee on Youth Work for Branches shall consist of the Youth Council Advisor(s), the Youth Council President(s), and five (5) persons appointed by the Branch President. The Youth Council Advisors and the Youth Presidents shall choose the chair of the Committee. The Youth Work Committee shall develop and coordinate the programs of the senior and youth groups.

The Branch Committee on Youth Work shall turn the names, addresses and membership dues of youth solicited by the Branch over to the appropriate National Office recognized youth group, if any, in their community. The Youth Work Committee shall monitor the youth membership in the Branch. If there is no local youth unit recognized by the National Office, the Committee; shall recommend the Branch apply to the National Office for a Youth Charter and organize the appropriate youth group.

Women in the NAACP (WIN).
State/State-Area Conferences, Branches, Prison Branches and Young Adult Councils of the Association may organize Women in NAACP (WIN) committees subject to the control of the Executive Committee and to such rules and regulations as the Board of Directors may enact. WIN committees shall consist of a Chairperson and/or Co-Chairperson and at least; three (3) other members. WIN shall address within the framework of the NAACP, civil rights issues affecting women and children and shall carry out other civil and cultural activities to enhance membership and provide financial support to the Branch.

Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs – The Committee on Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs shall:

Seek to establish a working relationship with those agencies in 'government, national, state and local, having the responsibility in the affairs of members of the various Armed Services
and Veterans and to see that the programs to which they are responsible are administered fairly and justly to members of the minority community;

- Study conditions pertaining to veterans and members of the Military Service and their dependents and/or survivors in the community;

- Serve as a center of information on matters affecting the members of the Active Military, Reserves, State National Guard and Veterans;

- Maintain a repository of materials, information and forms to be used in assisting veterans and/or dependents of veterans and military personnel with their problems;

- Receive and act on all complaints relative to acts of discrimination on account of race, color, creed, or denial of benefits to which they are entitled because of discrimination;

- Prepare a quarterly report on committee activities to be submitted to the Executive Committee of the Unit and the National Director of Armed Services and Veterans Affairs.

**Housing – The Committee on Housing shall:**

- Study housing conditions in the local community;

- Receive and seek to address complaints of discrimination;

- Oppose all restrictive practices whether public or private; and

- Disseminate information and render such other assistance, which may eliminate discrimination in housing.

**Labor and Industry – The Labor and Industry Committee shall:**

- Seek ways to improve the economic status of minority groups by:

- Working to eliminate discriminatory employment practices in industry and government, wage differentials based on race, unequal opportunities for training, promotion and unfair dismissals;

- Encouraging greater participation in the trade union movement;

- Working to end discriminatory practices in labor unions;

- Securing the enactment of state and federal fair employment practices legislation; and

- Working for improved opportunities in vocational and apprenticeship training.
The Young Adult Committee – The Young Adult Committee

- Consist of Branch members, ages 21-40.
- Support all branch activities;
- Stimulate interest through advocacy training and solicit membership of 21-40 year olds;
- Create a mentorship program (Branch to Young Adults and Young Adults to Youth Units) to serve as a support bridge from Youth and College to Branch participation;
- Provide networking and social opportunities for young adults in the local community; and
- Encourage the participation of young adults in all activities and leadership within the Branch.

The Prison Branch Support – The Prison Branch Support Committee shall:

- Work closely and directly with the members of their respective Prison Branch and the Regional Prison Coordinator.
- Maintain contacts with, and report regularly to the Regional Coordinators.
- Build, cultivate and maintain positive relationships between prison officials, Prison Branch members and members within the local Branch.
- Solicit community organizations and businesses to establish a volunteer bank (teachers, writers, poets, businessmen, ministers, lawyers, policemen, judges, government officials, politicians, media personnel) to assist the Prison Branch in carrying out its programs.

Tenure

- Members of the Executive Committee and of the several standing committees of Branches and Prison Branches shall hold office for two years and until their successors are elected and qualify. Members of the Executive Committee of Youth Units shall hold office for one year.
**Removal Procedure**

- Non-functioning committees shall be discharged promptly by the Executive Committee.

- Any member of the Executive Committee, except officers or of any standing or special committee who shall be absent from three (3) consecutive meetings without notice to the Secretary or President or who shall not perform the required duties for three (3) consecutive months, or who shall be absent from any six (6) meetings with or without notice in a twelve month period shall be removed by the Executive Committee by written notification to the delinquent member and replaced in accordance with Article VIII, Section 2(e). A member of any standing or special committee may be directly removed by the chairperson for dereliction of duty. If the Executive Committee fails to act, the President, Secretary, and one member may sign the removal letter.

- For any officers who shall be absent from three (3) consecutive meetings without notice or explanation to the Secretary or President, or who shall not perform the required duties for three (3) consecutive months, or who shall be absent from any six (6) meetings with or without notice in a twelve month period, the National Office is to be notified by the Secretary by way of a petition signed by the Secretary, the President and one (1) other member of the Executive Committee. If the President or Secretary is in violation, then any three members of the Executive Committee shall sign the petition. The National Office shall recommend the removal of said officer by the Board of Directors at the next meeting of the Board of Directors following receipt of the petition.
II.e. FAQ for unit presidents

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for

NAACP Unit Presidents

FIELD ORGANIZING

1. **What is the role of the Field Organizing Division?**
   To implement multi-faceted advocacy campaigns on key issues, train and mobilize units, members and stakeholders to advance the NAACP’s strategic goals and objectives.

2. **Does your Unit carry out the civil rights objectives of the NAACP?**
   The following statement of objectives is found on the first page of the NAACP Constitution — the principal objectives of the Association shall be:

   - To ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of all citizens
   - To achieve equality of rights and eliminate race prejudice among the citizens of the United States
   - To remove all barriers of racial discrimination through democratic processes
   - To seek enactment and enforcement of federal, state, and local laws securing civil rights
   - To inform the public of the adverse effects of racial discrimination and to seek its elimination
   - To educate persons as to their constitutional rights and to take all lawful action to secure the exercise thereof and to take any other lawful action in furtherance of these objectives, consistent with the NAACP’s Articles of Incorporation and this Constitution.
3. Does your Unit have active Standing Committees?
Standing Committees are authorized in your constitution and By-Laws. These committees are called Standing because they continue to exist and operate throughout the life of the organization.


Standing Committees of College Chapters shall be: Membership; Finance; Press and Publicity; Programs and Research; Education; Employment; Political Action; Juvenile Justice; and Health.

Standing Committees of Youth Councils, High School Chapters and Junior Youth Councils shall be: Membership; Finance; Press and Publicity; Programs and Research; Education; Youth Employment; Political Action; Juvenile Justice; Entertainment; Community Coordination and Health.

4. What is the role of the Unit Executive Committee?
The Executive Committee shall have general control of the affairs and program of the Unit, subject to the authority of the Unit and the provisions of the Constitution and approved bylaws. The Executive Committee, consisting of the Unit officers and Standing Committee Chairpersons, has the responsibility of handling the general affairs of the Unit. In Branches, Presidents of the Youth Councils, College Chapters and Youth Advisors also serve on the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee consists of selected and appointed persons who take care of the regular business of the local Unit. The Executive Committee has the following responsibilities: creates special committees as needs arise; fills all vacancies in Unit offices; decides matters of Unit policy subject to endorsement by the Unit in accordance with National Office policy; and renders monthly reports to the Unit containing reports of all special and standing committees. In Branches, the Executive Committee can also appoint, employ and enter into contracts with salaried employees subject to employment procedures and qualifications approved by the National Office.

5. Is your Unit accessible by the:
- NAACP provided e-mail address?
- A Post Office Box?
- A Published Telephone Number?
- Do you possess or have complete access to a fax machine?
- Contact information in the New Officer’s Update Form?
6. Does your Unit send written minutes or monthly/quarterly reports to the National Office? To the Field Organizer?

7. Does the Unit President or his/her designee serve as the official spokesperson to the media?

YOUTH & COLLEGE DIVISION

The mission of the NAACP Youth & College Division shall be to inform youth of the problems affecting African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities; to advance the economic, education, social and political status of African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities and their harmonious cooperation with other peoples; to stimulate an appreciation of the African Diaspora and other people of color’s contribution to civilization; and to develop an intelligent, militant effective youth leadership.

Youth and College is one of the largest organized groups of young people of any secular organization in the country. It currently has 24,000 paid youth members under the age of 25. There are 600 active Junior Youth Councils, Youth Councils, High School Chapters and College Chapters in 43 states and the District of Columbia

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

What is the role of Constituent Services?

The Constituent Services Division is responsible for generating and disseminating information to the constituents of the NAACP and its partners. It also functions as a channel of information and support to the Field Operations and Membership Department, providing the department with insight into the concerns of the Association across the county.

The Constituent Services Division is the intake service for the Field Operations and Membership Department. The Division ensures that the needs of the constituent’s are met. Working at various levels to include; helping to develop, current policies for the entire organization. Provide constituent calls with NAACP internal information or referral to appropriate department or referrals to outside agencies for advocacy and assistance, respond to NAACP correspondence, capture and report trends of types of calls, fulfill orders for the Constitution and Bylaws for Units, coordinate Unit mailings, facilitate Unit charter approval process in coordination with the Unit Capacity Building Division, and assist Field Operations and Membership Department with various projects

UNIT CAPACITY

25
1. Does your Unit have a minimum of 50 paid memberships?

2. Does your Youth Unit have a minimum of 25 paid memberships?

3. Do you have delegate or observer representation at all conferences and conventions? National Convention? Regional? State?

4. Has your Unit paid its Assessments on time (Article III, Sec. 4)? National? State?

5. Do you have regular Membership Meetings (Article V, Sec. 1)?

6. Do you publish a newsletter or have a website? Biweekly/Monthly/Quarterly?

7. Do you have an active?
   a. Junior Youth Council
   b. Youth Council or High School Chapter
   c. College Chapter
   d. ACT-SO Program

8. What is in your Unit’s Budget?
   For voter registration?
   Advocacy campaigns?

9. Do you have the NAACP Civil Rights Reference Manual?

10. Have you submitted your Annual Financial Report by the deadline?

11. At your Monthly Membership Meetings do you receive…?
    Written Reports?
    Financial Reports?
STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

The work of this division is to increase NAACP membership and public involvement in the organization’s advocacy campaigns by creating and maintaining partnerships with faith based organizations, unions, fraternities and sororities, professional associations as well as other national, state and local interest groups.

Stakeholder Relations enables the NAACP to maximize the effectiveness of its advocacy work and membership building efforts.

What is the role of Religious Affairs?

The NAACP has always had a strong relationship with the religious community—one of its closest allies for nearly a century. From the beginning, the NAACP has been regarded as the fighting arm of many churches with numerous members participating on both fronts. Many NAACP units are led by ministers and other church officials, and churches often hold NAACP membership drives as part of their community activities.

MEMBERSHIP

1. If information about my Unit has changed, how do I go about updating the National office?
   Submit any changes regarding your Unit in writing to the Membership Department at the National Office via mail or fax. Changes the National Membership Department must be informed of include:
   - Change of officers
   - Change of Address
   - Loss of Charter

2. How do I go about requesting information or materials for my Unit?
   Requests for general information can usually be handled relatively quickly over the telephone or by sending a written request via fax or e-mail. The Membership Department’s Executive Assistant will respond to written inquiries within 2 business days. Telephone inquiries are handled immediately whenever possible. If you have to leave a voicemail message, calls are usually returned within 48 hours.

   Materials such as membership applications and membership registration forms are mailed out within 5 business days after being requested. Requests for campaign materials or promotional items such as t-shirts, posters, pens, postcards, etc. must be submitted on the Membership...
Department Campaign Materials and Promotional Items Request Form along with a check for payment.

PITFALL TO AVOID: Campaign materials and promotional items should be ordered at least 45 days in advance of your event to ensure the Membership Department has enough merchandise on hand to fulfill your request.

3. How do I track members?
All Unit secretaries should keep an electronic or manual database of members and prospects. Regardless of the type of tracking system used, it should be easy to navigate, transferable to the secretary’s successor, and be able to provide basic information about the Unit’s member activity.

Microsoft Access is standard on all Windows operating systems. Access is an easy way to manage your membership database electronically. Information input into Access can also be exported into other Windows interfaces such as Word or Excel. If you need to brush up on your Access skills, you can attend a class for a nominal fee at electronic stores such as CompUSA or conduct a keyword search for Access certification on the World Wide Web.

4. How do I report new members and updates to the National Membership Department?
The National Membership Department provides each Unit with membership registration forms for each member category. The secretary should completely fill out the appropriate forms and sign them. It is very important that the membership registration form is dated. The date indicated on the form becomes the effective date and determines the date a membership will expire.

Make sure to keep copies of your membership reporting forms and supporting materials for your records before you mail them to the National Office.

A Summary check for share must registration remitted to the National Membership Department within 15 days of receiving payment from the member. The balance of the membership dues should be retained in the unit’s treasury for local use. Make sure the summary report is legible; an electronic version is available on line.
Membership reporting forms sent to the National Office are received by the mailroom on a daily basis. The mailroom staff will open any mail addressed to the Membership Department, remove the accompanying check and stamp the reporting forms with the current date also referred to as the national date. The national date lets the Membership Department keep track of when rosters were received in the National Office. This date is useful because it helps the Membership Department track how quickly a roster moves through the system once it is received.

All checks are forwarded to the Finance Department for processing. The mailroom will batch the rosters received for the day and deliver them to the Membership Department with a report totaling the monies received. Once the memberships have been processed in order of the date received, the membership cards will be mailed to the secretary within approximately 10 to 15 business days.

5. How can I confirm that the National Membership Department has received a particular membership registration form from my Unit?
If your Unit has not received membership cards for a recently submitted form, you can contact the Membership Department to confirm that it is in the system. You will need to let the staff person assisting you know:

- The effective date you listed on the membership registration form
- The date you mailed in the membership registration form
- The number of members listed on the membership registration form
- The amount of the check you remitted for payment

The Membership Department keeps track of every membership reporting form received in the department. A staff person will confirm whether or not your Unit’s membership registration form and payment has been received. If for some reason, the Membership Department’s records do not indicate that we have received it, however, the NAACP cashed the check, you will need to submit:

- A copy of the front and back of the cancelled check
- A copy of the membership registration forms you submitted

6. What happens if the Unit pays the National Membership Department too much or not enough?

The National Membership Department

TIP!

Please make sure you have allowed at least 15 business days for processing in the National Membership Department plus transit time for the postal service to handle the mail to and from your Unit.
verifies that the number of members reported on the membership registration form matches the amount of funds on the check remitted.

If there is an overage:

- The new members and/or renewals are processed.
- Membership cards are mailed back to the Unit within 15 business days.
- Overage checks are processed and mailed to the Unit with a cover letter under separate cover within 30 days.

If there is a shortage:

- The new members and/or renewals are not processed.
- A form letter explaining the basis for the discrepancy is mailed to the Unit immediately.
- Membership cards are not processed until the shortage has been resolved.
- Once the shortage has been resolved, the memberships will be processed and the membership cards will be mailed within 10 business days.

7. Are life memberships handled differently than regular memberships?
Each type of life membership has its own registration form and instructions as described above. Members who opt to pay for their life membership in installments are referred to as Subscribing Life Members and can pay their dues over a ten-year period. There is a minimum amount a member must pay each year towards their life membership in order to keep it current. For example:

- Silver Life Membership = $750
- Subscribing Silver Life Membership = $75 per year for 10 years

Life memberships are also concurrent. Individuals aspiring to become life members must start at the Silver Life membership level before they can become a Gold Life Member or a Diamond Life Member. As an individual grows in their commitment to the Association, they are encouraged to move to the next level of membership, in that order.

Final payments for life memberships should be mailed directly to the Life Membership Secretary in the National Membership Department to avoid delay in the plaque ordering process. Life membership plaques are ordered on the 1st and 15th of every month. Life membership plaques, along with the corresponding life membership cards and lapel pins, are sent to the Unit in approximately 3 weeks for distribution to members.
Regular or Annual members must pay their membership dues in full every 12 months if they do not want their membership to lapse. Regular members get a membership card each time they renew their membership, however, they do not receive a membership plaque.

8. What if a member pays their dues directly to the National Membership Department via mail?
Members often send their membership dues payments directly to the National Membership Department. If they do not indicate that they would like to affiliate with a particular branch, they automatically become a member-at-large. If they do request to affiliate with a particular Unit, the National Membership Department will send the membership card directly to the member within ten business days. The Unit will be sent written notification along with their share of the membership dues within 15 business days.

9. How are Internet memberships handled?
Members can join or renew their memberships online by entering the web address www.naacp.org in their browser window and clicking on Join from the NAACP homepage. Members can then join on-line by simply following the steps below:

- Click on Apply On-Line under related links to join the fight for freedom.
- Click on the radio button describing the type of membership desired.
- Enter the member information in the appropriate boxes. (Be sure to indicate a Unit number or name so that the online membership will be forwarded to the appropriate Unit.)
- Enter the payment information requested.
- Verify that all information entered is correct.
- Click the Join button.

The majority of individuals that join online are at-large members of the Association. However, if a member indicates that they want to affiliate with a particular Unit, they may do so by entering the Unit name or number in the Member Information section of the online form.

Membership cards for online memberships are generated and mailed out the same business day.

10. How are memberships generated through the Automatic Renewal Program handled?
Once a month, the National Membership Department will send out a letter reminding the members to renew their memberships.

**TIP!**
Be sure to let members know that if they join online, to click the Join button only once. Each time the Join button is clicked their credit card will be charged.
members that their membership will expire within the next 90 days. Members that renew through the Automatic Renewal Program send their dues payment directly to the National Membership Department lockbox. On a daily basis, the Renewal Coordinator will cut and distribute checks to Units for their share of the membership dues. Members can expect to receive their membership card in 15 business days. Units can expect to receive their share of the membership dues in 30 business days along with a cover letter identifying the members who renewed through the program.

11. How are memberships generated through The CRISIS magazine handled?
Members may join the Association by returning the response card in The CRISIS magazine to the National Membership Department. A member may choose to become a member-at-large or affiliate with a Unit by indicating the Unit name or number on the response card. Memberships obtained through The CRISIS magazine are processed on a daily basis in the order received. Members will receive their membership cards within 10 business days.

12. What happens if a member never receives or misses an issue of The CRISIS?
Contact The CRISIS or the Membership Department at the National Office immediately. The member’s membership status will be verified, The CRISIS mailing list will be updated and the missed issue(s) will be mailed within the next mailing cycle of the publication.

13. Can non-members receive The CRISIS magazine?
Yes. Individuals may receive The CRISIS without becoming a member by paying the current subscription rate. Individuals may subscribe via the NAACP web site, returning the subscription card found in the magazine or contacting The CRISIS via telephone or mail at the National office.

14. How do I obtain a roster of my Unit’s members from the National Membership Department?
Every NAACP Unit, whether it is an Adult Branch, Youth Council or College Chapter, should have a secretary, which serves as the custodian of the Unit’s membership data. Only the secretary of the Unit can request information pertaining to individual member records from the National Office. All requests for information must be submitted in writing via fax or mail and must bear the Secretary’s signature.

All officers, including the president of the branch, must first seek to obtain membership data from their secretary. If a branch president is unable to get membership data from the secretary, the president must submit in writing the reason they have been unsuccessful in their attempts. Subsequent action may need to be taken by the Chief of Field Operations. The Membership Department will use its discretion in releasing membership data to anyone other than the appointed secretary.
15. **What is the difference between a roster and a branch activity report?**
A branch activity report is automatically distributed on the 7th of each month to the Branch and Field Department at the National Office, Regional Directors, Regional Youth Field Directors and the State Conference. The branch activity report details the growth and attrition of every unit in the region during a specific period. Branch activity reports do not provide information on specific members. However, it does provide how many memberships a Unit has in a particular member category within a specific timeframe.

A membership roster is a more detailed report and is only furnished upon written request by the Unit secretary. The membership roster lists each individual member record including full name, contact information, member type, expiration date, and payment history and branch affiliation.

16. **How do I transfer a membership from one unit to another?**
A written request to transfer a membership from one Unit to another may be submitted to the National Membership Department by mail, fax or e-mail. The request must include the name of the member to be transferred, the member’s most recent contact information including full mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address if applicable. The Unit the member is transferring from and the Unit the member is transferring to should also be included in the request and signed by the Unit secretary. Members may also send a written request directly to the National Membership Department instead of the Unit secretary.

Once the information has been processed a cover letter along with a new membership card displaying the new Unit number will be mailed directly to the member within approximately 15 business days.
II.F. Reporting

In order for your unit to remain in good standing with the national office, it is critical for reports to be submitted regularly. These reports give the national office a sense of your unit’s programmatic work, goals and successes, as well as areas where additional resources should be provided.

Here are the reports you should already be submitting:
UNIT QUARTERLY REPORT

Unit Name

First Name

Last Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Phone (H)

Phone (C)

Phone (P)

Email

Article X, Section 1. (Units Falling to Report) “If a Unit fails to inform the Association in writing of its activities or shall fail to maintain a minimum of fifty (50) adult members; fifty (50) Prison Branch members; or twenty-five (25) Youth Unit members; for a period of four (4) consecutive months, the Board of Directors shall declare any or all of the officers of the Unit vacant and order a new election. Notice of removal shall be sent to the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Unit and the State/State-Area Conference by registered mail at their last addresses on file in the Association and shall be published in the official communication organ of the National Association. Immediately upon the service of notice by the Association, the Officers shall perform no official acts and shall hold all records and monies of the Branch, subject to the disposition of the Association.”

Summary of Standing Committee Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership</th>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
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<td>Economic Empowerment</td>
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2010 Toolkit • Handbook
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Adult</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT-5O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women In NAACP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coalition or other CBO partnerships</td>
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II.g.i. NAACP Units: Compliance Requirements

In order to remain in good standing and to be able to fully advocate on behalf of the NAACP in your community, your unit must be compliant with our national standards.

A Unit is required to:

- Maintain a minimum number of members
- Pay all annual assessments
- File all year-end reports as required by the Constitution and Bylaws
- A Unit must also maintain good standing with its State/State-Area Conference by
  - Filing annual year-end reports
  - Paying all State/State-Area Conference assessments

Non-Functioning Unit

- Failure to hold monthly meetings (per Article V, Section 1)
- No functioning Standing Committees, the work of the NAACP is accomplished through its committees (a standing committee shall have no less than 3 members and meet monthly, per Article V, Section 7)
- Failure to attend State/State-Area Conference Quarterly meetings (per Article I, Section 2[d])
- Failure to provide quarterly written reports, (per Article X, Section 1)

NAACP Units: Assessments

- National Assessments
  - Units are required to pay the Unit Freedom Fund and other assessments to the National Office within 90 calendar days before the Annual National Convention
  - 25% of the net proceeds of each contribution, entertainment, or fundraising effort by a Unit (with certain exceptions) are to be disbursed to the National Office
• A Branch is required to disburse only 15% of its net proceeds of the above contributions for the succeeding year if it increases its membership by 35% from the previous calendar year. Written notice must first be received from the National Office that your unit increased it’s membership.

• A financial report of all entertainment, contributions, and fundraising activities is to be rendered to the Unit, the National Office (within 45 days following the event), and the public

• State/State-Area Conference Assessments

• Whenever the Unit is within the jurisdiction of a State/State-Area Conference, the Unit assessment shall be paid into the treasury of the State/State-Area Conference within 60 calendar days of the annual State/State-Area Conference Convention
III. Basics of Advocacy

The success of each issue campaign will depend on your unit’s ability to advocate on behalf of those issues. Therefore it will be crucial for you to understand the basics of advocacy. Advocacy can take many forms. In this section, the basic elements will be highlighted.
III. a. Midwest Academy Strategy Chart

Before advocating for an issue, you will need to determine the strategy for your campaign. One of the easiest ways to map your plan is through a strategy chart like the one below from the Midwest Academy, one of the greatest organizing institutions in the nation. By completing this chart for your issue, you will be creating a roadmap for your campaign. Anyone involved will be able to quickly understand your purpose and how you will achieve your goal(s).

After choosing your issue, fill in this chart as a guide to developing strategy.
Be specific. List all the possibilities.

### Midwest Academy Strategy Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Organizational Considerations</th>
<th>Constituents, Allies, Opponents</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. List the long-term objectives of your campaign. 2. State the intermediate goals for this issue campaign. What constitutes victory? How will the campaign win concrete improvement in people’s lives? * Give people a sense of their own power? * Alter the relations of power? 3. What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your long term goal?</td>
<td>1. List the resources that your organization brings to the campaign. Include money, number of staff, facilities, reputation, canvass, etc. What is the budget, including in-kind contributions, for this campaign? 2. List the specific ways in which you want your organization to be strengthened by this campaign. Fill in numbers for each: * Expand leadership group * Increase experience of existing leadership * Build membership base * Expand into new constituencies * Raise more money 3. List internal problems that have to be considered if the campaign is to succeed.</td>
<td>1. Who cares about this issue enough to join in or help the organization? * Whose problem is it? * What do they gain if they win? * What risks are they taking? * What power do they have over the target? * Into what groups are they organized? 2. Who are your opponents? * What will your victory cost them? * What will they do in response to oppose you? * How strong are they? * How are they organized?</td>
<td>1. Primary Targets 1. Who has the power to give you what you want? 2. Secondary Targets 1. Who has power over the people with the power to give you what you want? * 1. Primary Targets 2. Secondary Targets</td>
<td>For each target, list the tactics that each constituent group can best use to make its power felt. Tactics must be: * In context. * Flexible and creative. * Directed at a specific target. * Make sense to the membership. * Be backed up by a specific form of power. Tactics include: * Media events * Actions for information and demands * Public hearings * Strikes * Voter registration and voter education * Lawsuits * Accountability sessions * Elections * Negotiations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III.b. Glossary of Advocacy Terms

What is Advocacy?
Advocacy is the purist of influencing outcomes- including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions-that directly affect people’s lives.

Addressing the Advocacy Issue
In order to spread your message to others, you will need to be able to articulate your purpose in a short and simple manner. You will have difficulty gaining support if you are unable to explain why you need support.

If you can effectively and briefly answer these five questions, you are well on your way to coming up with a message that is short, clear, and convincing.

- Who are you?
- What is your issue?
- Why do you care?
- Why should they care?
- What specifics actions are you seeking?

When you have your message together you can then engage in advocacy work.

In this handbook we will highlight the ways that you can advocate in your community. These tactics will build public awareness around your issue:

- **Organizing a Town Hall Meeting:** Town hall meetings are important tools to bring the entire community together to inform citizens about important issues, understand where the community stands on the issue, get your message across to the public and the media, identify local partners who can be involved with your activities, and begin to identify and implement solutions to a problem. Town hall meetings can be a response to a recent incident in your community to which you would like to bring attention.

- **Building an Effective Coalition for a Campaign:** The purpose of building a coalition is to build grassroots support for your issue. Building effective coalitions can be vital in bringing about change. The more stakeholders/coalition members are involved in building and affirming the need for change, the more momentum the change process will gather and the greater its impact. In fact, establishing a solid coalition of allies can be the key to
winning or losing a campaign.

- **Organizing a Public Hearing in Your Community**: A public hearing is more formal than a town hall meeting (often has the feel of a Congressional Hearing) and allows for the formal gathering of testimony from advocates, experts, victims, government officials, and other key players by a panel of experts. Public hearings often focus on a long-standing issue that will require long-term campaigning advocacy.

- **Organizing a Teach-In**: A teach-in is a session to educate and mobilize the public about a specific issue. Participants of a teach-in are welcome to ask questions and discuss issues so that they can understand the topic clearly.

- **Incorporating New Technology**: The constant introduction of new technology has made advocating even easier. New techniques and gadgets will allow you to communicate faster and more frequently, creating greater momentum for your work.

In addition, you may consider lobbying as a means of advocating on behalf of your issue. There are two forms of lobbying:

- **Direct Lobbying**: Direct lobbying is communicating your views to a legislator, staff member, or any other government employee who may help develop legislation. To be effective in your lobbying efforts, you must communicate a view on a “specific legislative proposal.” Even if there is no bill, you would engage in lobbying if you ask a legislator to take an action that would require legislation, such as funding an agency. Direct lobbying also involves trying to influence the public in referenda and ballot initiatives. In these cases, the public are, in essence, the legislators.

- **Grassroots Lobbying**: Grassroots lobbying is defined as working to influence the public to communicate a particular view to their legislator regarding a specific legislative proposal. The first step to a successful communication with your legislator is to know your target audience. Learn as much about his/her background as possible. Information regarding your legislator can usually be found online.

The following information should be obtained before contacting your legislator: the legislator’s political affiliation, legislative committee(s) he/she serves on, leadership position(s) held, his/her voting record on issues of importance to your membership, and the legislator’s grade on the NAACP’s legislative Report Card (released annually by the NAACP Washington Bureau).
III.c. How to Build Public Awareness

Your advocacy depends on your ability to create public awareness around your topic. This means sharing your message in a way that reaches likely and potential allies who will support your cause. This can also include educating individuals who may be unfamiliar with your topic. This section will highlight the methods for creating public awareness.
III.c.i. Organizing a Town Hall Meeting

Every town hall meeting is different depending on the issue, your target audience and your goal for organizing the gathering. Keep in mind that inviting public officials to the town hall meeting to either speak or respond to people is important, not only to allow people to be heard by those who may have the power to create change, but also to form partnerships to work together towards a solution.

The following are recommended steps for a successful town hall meeting.

*Plan the Town Hall*

- Identify local partners to work with in planning the meeting. Make sure they are diverse, represent the diversity in your community. Advocacy organizations who represent other communities of color are often good potential partners.

- Research the issue/incident and how it impacts your community. If there have been reports written or studies done on the issue in your community make sure you are aware of them and perhaps include the date in your talk at the meeting.

- Decide what your goal for holding a town hall meeting is. It may be an educational/informative session, or perhaps you would like to invite a local official and ask them to respond to community concerns.

- Once you have your objective, you can determine the format. This can vary depending on your objective. You can have anywhere from 1 - 3 speakers and a moderator. Speakers may be policy experts, media or government officials, local leaders or academics. Well-respected speakers will often determine how successful your town hall meeting is. The moderator can either be a member of the local or state unit of the NAACP or another well-respected member of the community.

- Make sure you provide written/email information about the event, other speakers and the moderator to all speakers and the moderator well in advance (as soon as you have all the necessary information).

- Make sure to invite local media through a press release well in advance (at least 3 weeks in advance).

- Prepare press kits, with information about the issue, the speakers, and the NAACP for the day of the event.
Promote the event in your local newsletters, pass out flyers, via e-mail blasts, and if you can social networking sites such as facebook, twitter, myspace. Ask partner organizations to also help promote the event.

The Day Of

- Make sure you have enough volunteers to sit at a welcome table, give out press packets to press, sign in other guests.
- Begin meeting with a welcome/introduction by you or a spokesperson from one of the partner organizations. Take this time to identify the problem you are meeting about.
- Introduce the moderator and have him/her coordinate the rest of the meeting, by introducing the speakers, keeping time, and coordinating the question and answer session.
- Allow a total of 30 – 35 minutes for the speakers to make statements, and then open it up to questions from the audience.
- Leave some time in case any member of the media is interested in doing an interview.

Debrief

Two weeks after the town hall, get together with the key partners and individuals from the town hall meeting to discuss whether you have achieved your goals and possible next steps. It is a good idea to get feedback from the speakers and the moderator prior to this meeting.

Develop an action plan (using the strategy documents provided in this handbook) for next steps.
III.c.ii. Building an Effective Coalition for a Campaign

The purpose of building a coalition is to build grassroots support for your issue. Building effective coalitions can be vital in bringing about change. The more stakeholders/coalition members are involved in building and affirming the need for change, the more momentum the change process will gather and the greater its impact. In fact, establishing a solid coalition of allies can be the key to winning or losing a campaign.

Who Should Be In Your Coalition?

A strong campaign has coalition members that are strong and diverse. It is important to have people that are seen as traditional as well as nontraditional allies. Often highly diverse constituencies who are unaccustomed to working together must learn to be comfortable at the same table. When organizing a coalition to advance an issue, it is important to include people with expertise on different aspects of the issue, and people from different ranges in the ideological spectrum. For example, if your issue is traditionally supported by more liberal groups, think about how you can get groups with different ideologies involved. Maybe your goals for the campaign offer cost-savings benefits, enabling you to reach out to and include fiscally conservative groups in your coalition building efforts.

Pulling Your Coalition Together

It is easier to move legislation or plan events when there are many hands to help as opposed to one. Other coalition members have their own access and relationships and they can use them to accomplish the goal of the coalition. When putting together a winning coalition, there are a few things that must be considered:

- Ask yourself what organizations can help you build capacity and community-wide support? This will often include organizations representing other minority groups.
- Also ask what organizations are known as an authority on the issues you are working on?
- Make sure partnering organizations are diverse and reach into different parts of the city.
- Engage organizations that have credibility on the issues and have a base of supporters.

Pre-exciting coalitions exist in every community and neighborhood. Church groups, community organizations, parent teacher association and civic groups are examples of already formed entities with active members who share common concerns and may easily join the coalition. The key is to make the groups “partners” with the campaign instead of trying to make them part of the
campaign. You may find allies by contacting an organization that has joined the NAACP on other matters.

**TIP:** The coalition you assemble should be balanced and representative of the diversity in your community. Know that building a strong, broad grassroots coalition will create a lasting defense against the current.
III.c.iii. Organizing a Public Hearing in Your Community

In order to more deeply grasp and publicize the nature and impact of an issue in your community, you may consider organizing a public hearing to bring key players together (including experts, advocates, community leaders, government and other officials, and individuals with personal stories to share). A public hearing is more formal than a town hall meeting (often has the feel of a Congressional Hearing) and allows for the formal gathering of testimony from advocates, experts, victims, government officials and other key players by a panel of experts. Public hearings often focus on a long-standing issue that will require long-term campaigning advocacy.

Depending on the size and target audience of your event, planning could take anywhere from 9 to 3 months.

To plan a successful public hearing, consider the following:

**Budget**

- Determine if there is a budget available and decide upon the scope of your event based on the amount of this budget. You may find that a smaller budget lends itself to organizing a less elaborate and more informal town hall meeting, but a more substantial budget will allow for a larger more formal public hearing, and open up other avenues such as the possibility to fly in experts, have the hearings recorded or transcribed, etc. Keep in mind that in the end, the quality of the testimony, the participants, and how organized your event is will determine the success of the hearing, and not financial matters.

**Partner Organizations**

- Working with other organizations that have similar goals and can help bring the community together will play an important role in helping your event have a wide reach and greater impact.

- One of the first things you should do is to identify local organizations that share the same mission and are willing to partner up and help plan and execute the event. These organizations can be other advocacy organizations, civil or human rights organizations, and organizations that represent the interests of other minority groups in your area.

- It is critical to ensure outreach to and participation by organizations that represent other racial and ethnic minority groups (i.e. Latino, Asian American, Middle Eastern, etc.), because a majority of the civil and human rights issues we deal with impact other
communities of color as well and working together can increase your power to combat this problem.

**Panel of Experts to Receive Testimony**

- It is important that those who testify about their experience and/or knowledge feel that their voice is being heard not just by the audience, but also by credible experts and advocates who may have greater ability to create change.
- Choose a panel of 5-7 local, credible experts to receive the speakers’ testimony. You can look to local advocates, leaders, and renowned experts for this role. You may also choose the most prominent person from the panel to chair the hearings.
- The role of the panel is to increase the credibility of the hearings, receive the testimony, question the witnesses, and to lend expertise during opening and closing remarks.
- They may also help provide guidance for any follow up actions that may result from the hearings.

**Testimony**

- Together with your partner organizations, identify and approach people to give testimony at the hearings. All witnesses should be identified and confirmed at least one month prior to the hearings.
- Ensure participation by victims, community leaders, victim advocates, academics, and issue expert. Also, make sure to include testimony from people of diverse ethnic, religious, national, and racial backgrounds.
- With your partner organizations, work with those who have agreed to testify to prepare and review their statements. Make sure to give them specific time limits for their testimony. The testimony does not have to be recited word for word on the day of the event, but having a general structure will allow for a smoother event.
- If your budget allows, record and/or transcribe the testimony. Make sure that all who testify know that they are going on record. Should anyone wish to remain off record, you can turn off camera/recorder/transcription during said testimony.
- Prepare a program, that details how the testimony for the day unfolds and make that available to the public and, more importantly, to the panel of experts (whose role it will be to announce each speaker by name and organizational affiliation and call them to the microphone/podium).
Inviting State and Local Officials

- Ensuring participation by government officials is important not only because it will lend more credibility to the hearings, but it will also make it easier to work with them to implement changes in policy and practice.
- Reach out to local and state agencies/officials and invite them to participate in and/or to attend the event. Make sure to reach out to them at least a month (if not more) prior to the event, as their schedules tend to be full. If there is a prominent official that is particularly known for his/her work on the issue, invite them to give testimony.
- Make every attempt to have at least one speaker who is from state or local government so that their perspective can be included.
- Because testifying about civil rights and human rights issues lends itself to emotions running high, inform the community and the speakers of the presence of government officials and encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect and professionalism.

Research State & Local Laws

- It is important to have knowledge of state and local laws and policies about your issue, so be sure to research and know these laws well in advance.
- Make a list of these laws/policies available to the public at the hearing, and include in press packet. Your list can also include the what changes you would like to see in these policies and laws.
- Use this information in talking points, when talking to the press and the public.
- Use this information in the follow up efforts after the hearings.

Invite Media

- Send a press release to all local media.
- Invite local media to cover the event, at least 3 weeks prior to the hearings.
- Create and make available a press packet that includes:
  - A list of panelists and their bios, speakers and their bios (with their permission)
  - A list of partner organizations for this event/campaign
  - NAACP mission, mission of partner organizations and purpose of these hearings
  - List of local and state laws (if they exist)
  - List of goals/changes that you are campaigning for
Venue Selection

- Select a venue that is neutral and easily accessible (such as a community center, place of worship, or a school campus that is central).
- Make sure there is enough seating available for the audience as these hearings can run long.
- Make sure room is set up with a separate section in front for the panel and the witnesses who testify.
- Check to see that the venue has a working sound system if necessary, and heating/air conditioning if needed.

Promote the Hearing

- Promote the event in your local newsletters, pass out flyers, via e-mail blasts, and if you can use social networking sites such as facebook, twitter, myspace. Ask partner organizations to also help promote the event.

The Day Of

- Get there early to set up, do sound check, and take care of other details.
- Provide water for speakers and guests (and other refreshments, if budget permits)
- Provide name cards to identify each panelist at the allotted table where they sit so that the audience and the media can quickly know who is on the panel of experts.
- Schedule volunteers and staff from NAACP and other partner organizations to set up and man a welcome table, where people can check in, provide their name and emails, pick up relevant material (speaker & panel bios, other NAACP literature, etc.)
- Make sure that members of the press check in and receive press passes and schedule interviews if they wish. Have at least one person (preferably someone who has experience working in communications) interact with the press and make sure they receive needed information.
- Use a time-keeper who sits in the front row and uses placards to inform the panel and speakers of their allotted time via placard cards (i.e. “2 Minutes,” “1 Minute,” “TIME,” “Thank You!”)
- Allow for a break midway through the hearings.
- Allow a specific time for the panel to ask questions from each witness. Make sure to keep time during this Q & A session.
- Schedule time for the audience to ask questions from the panel (not the speakers) at the end of the day.
**Follow Up**

- Holding these hearings is the first step. To ensure that the impact of the hearing continues and its findings used to potentially bring about change, it is important to have a follow up plan.
- Write a report/article on the findings of the hearing, including highlights from the testimony, conclusions and recommendations. Publicize report on your website, share with media, and other community organizations. Send a copy of your report to the Research and Advocacy team at the NAACP National Headquarters.
- Several weeks after the hearing, follow up with partner organizations and all the witnesses to thank them and see how they are feeling (since giving testimony can sometimes be an emotional experience).
- Schedule meetings with officials to begin working on implementing recommendations.
- Schedule follow a follow up town hall meeting to discuss achievements, challenges, and set new goals 4 – 6 months following the initial hearings.
- Use the strategy documents provided in this handbook to clearly plan you long-term advocacy efforts.
II.c.iv. Organizing a Teach-In

A teach-in is a session to educate and mobilize the public about a specific issue. Participants of a teach-in are welcome to ask questions and discuss issues so that they can understand the topic clearly.

The measure of successful teach-in is that it **leads to action**. It is a chance to inform people about an issue and provide them with opportunities to take action. Be sure to balance education and action at your event and allow enough time for people to discuss the issues.

Teach-ins should be conducted for the branch and its coalitions members. You can arrange to have a teach-in for any organizations that may be interested in learning more about your work.

**How to Hold a Teach-In**

Hold your teach-in at a school, college, house of worship or community center that provides an educational yet informal setting. Be sure that the location is accessible to the community with which you are working.

Once you have secured a time and a place, begin to plan the program of the teach-in.

- First and foremost, decide who will be facilitating and/or speaking at the event.
- Define the key messages your group is trying to teach and figure out what is the best way to convey this information.
- Plan on making the teach-in as interactive as possible with group discussion and activities. You may want to consider showing a short video clip on the issue at hand in the beginning of your presentation.
- Plan on distributing informational handouts that are useful both as a take home guide and as a resource list for participants.

Invite members in your community to your teach-in.

- Advertisements can be posted on community boards in some grocery stores, church bulletins or around schools.
- Word of mouth is an especially good way to promote your event.
- Create quarter page flyers and have NAACP member carry some with them at all times to pass out to fellow community members.
- A personal invitation is more likely to entice a person to come than just looking at an ad.
- Mass emails are also an easy way to get the word out.
Program for the Teach-In Day

- A member of your group should open the session with an informative talk, introducing your branch/State Conference, the type of activities that you have been working on, and background information on the NAACP’s work on the issues.
- Be sure to present facts that convey the impact of the issue at hand in your local community.
- Use a related video as a learning tool.
- Leave time to engage the audience in a discussion about the issues presented and steps for action.
- Plan on ending your teach-in with ways that participants can become involved, like letter writing activity, petition, lobby day or some other action. Bring copies of petitions and sample letters for them to sign or take with them. It is also a good idea to provide sources where they can get more information on the issue, such as websites, books, and newsletters.

As with all your group events, a sign-in sheet should be passed around to all attendees. This will make it possible for your group to follow up with these individuals later and also provide a possible pool of future members. Also, make sure you have voter registration forms for people interested in becoming a voter.

Pass out an evaluation form to participants so you can learn from your audience how to do an even better job next time. Also, be sure to report back to your branch about the success of your event.

Following up is an important way to make sure that participants stay involved. Hosting an event or action within two weeks of the teach-in is great way to tap into the energy generated from the teach-in. Consider a rally or a letter writing drive. If a follow-up event is not feasible, at least make sure to contact the attendees from the teach-in to thank them and extend an invitation to work with the NAACP in the future.
III.c.iv. Incorporating New Technology

The NAACP is now committed to taking on the technology world by storm. Our new national website at www.naacp.org is home to the Advocacy and Research program portals where you will find key updates on the work of the Climate Justice, Criminal Justice, Economic Empowerment, Education and Health Departments. You will also see blog features, local unit updates and latest news in the community. Technology is the way of our society and the NAACP is embracing this effective form of communication.

Creating public awareness is crucial to building support for any issue. Today, technology makes it easier than ever to share your message with many people with little effort. Here are a few ways you can create a greater public awareness with the help of technology.

Here are some ways for units to utilize technology:

**Fax machine:** Your unit may choose to invest in a fax machine. You should also consider asking a member of your unit who may have a fax machine, if they would be willing to let the unit use it for official business as well. A fax machine allows you send documents instantly from one location to another. This is particularly useful for documents that require a signature.

**Text messaging:** In the day of cell phones, texting can be a quick way to send information. Unfortunately, this is not a free service with most cell phone plans. Be sure to check with individuals before you text anything to them. You can look into service plans available online that allow for texting at a low fixed annual rate.

It is also important to remember that texting should not take place of professional notice (phone call or email). However, if you are gathering a small group and need to send a quick message you can use the texting function.

**Conference Calls:** If you need to have a discussion with a group of individuals, it can be difficult to meet in person. One way to solve this problem is through the use of conference calls. This method allows individuals in various locations to call into a call center that connects your group together. Your unit may choose to invest in a conference call system that meets your needs. However, there are some free systems available, including www.freeconferencecall.com.
Online and Networking

Email: Your unit should have an email address for members, potential members and the NAACP national office to communicate with you. You can sign up for a free email address with any of the main electronic mail providers, such as Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc. Often an electronic mail system comes along with your internet package. Having an email address will allow you to correspond with activists in a timely manner. This system will also allow you to send the same message to many individuals instead of having to call each person individually. This is particularly helpful for last minute details. You should encourage your activists to sign-up for an email account as well.

List-serves: Once you have established your email account, you should consider using list-serves. List-serves are categorized groups of email address. For example, if you have an education committee at your unit, you should create an Education Committee List-serve. You will need to add the email address of all of the members of the education committee to that list-serve. Then when you need to send an email to the education committee, you can simply send it to the list-serve and you can be sure that all of the committee members will receive the information. This function helps prevent accidentally forgetting to include individuals on key information.

Website: Your unit should consider constructing an online website. This site would allow activists to get to know your organization. It should include your mission, your upcoming meetings and events, as well as contact information for your board members. A potential member should be able to learn the basic information about your unit from this site. It does not have to be an elaborate page. In fact a clean simple page can be better than an over-the-top site. Consider your audience and make the site simple and easy to navigate.

Google Documents: In a professional office, there are often shared drives that allow all of the employees to access documents at any given time. For your units this may be less feasible. Luckily, Google has devised a system that allows you to store your documents online for access as needed. You can allow all of your officers, or members should you like, to view Word, Excel, PowerPoint documents, and more. There is also a Calendar function that can be synched to your personal agenda. You will need to register an email address with Google in order to view. However, the sign-up is free.

Webinars: Conference calls bring groups together over the phone. Webinars add the visual component. For example, if you wanted to give a presentation to your board, but everyone was
unable to meet in person, you could use a webinar to present. Webinars use the internet to allow participants to view the presentation as it is being presented in real-time. Participants can hear the audio by calling in, similar to a conference call.

Networking: The internet allows you to connect to others instantly. One of the ways to network over the internet is to join a social networking site. There are many options to choose from. However, the business professional site is known as LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com).

Membership is free. You can create a user profile that includes your involvement with your unit. Then others can find you by searching for your name or the unit’s name. You can also recommend colleagues based on your knowledge of their work and professionalism. Join and watch your professional network grow!

Remember, unlike Facebook and MySpace, LinkedIn is a professional site. Do not post personal information or non-professional pictures.

Facebook: Some units have already begun using Facebook to engage members, particularly young activists. You can create a group page for members to get basic information about your unit as well as contact information for officers.

Blogging: Your unit may also considering create a blog. The blog could focus on issues affecting your community or upcoming events. Just as you promote it. You should consider monitoring the
activists can go to “sign” the petition. This is a simple way to engage activists with just a simple click. You could upload a copy of the petition onto your website and allow activists to download it. This is particularly useful if you want to give your petition to activists who are not local. They can print the petition from the website and then mail you the signed hard copies.
III.d. Samples and Templates

As you begin planning your plan of action, you may wonder how to execute some of these tasks or may need a quick refresher. Therefore, we have included “how to” descriptions for formatting and helpful hints, as well as samples for these various items.

**Please note:** The samples are meant to be samples. You should remove the sample information and insert your information where relevant. For templates, simply fill in your information in the spaces indicated.
**III.d.i. Media Advisory**

If you are planning an event (rally, hearing, teach-in, etc.) that you would like the press to attend, you will need to inform them about the event. This notice should include the “who, what, when, where, and why” of the event. Your advisory should entice media to attend. This is an easy to gain attention to your issue campaign.

Clarification: A media advisory is distributed prior to the event. A press release occurs after an event.

Here are some tips for creating a media advisory:

- Type “For Planning Purposes” and date of the release at the top of the media advisory.
- Type “MEDIA ADVISORY” (all caps) at the top to indicate the material you are providing.
- Include a brief headline which describes the event you will be hosting.
- Be sure to include the contact information of your media liaison at the bottom of the media advisory.
- Make sure the details of your event (date, time, and location) are easily visible.
- The media advisory should be no longer than one page.
- Indicate the end of the page by placing a “-30-” or “# # #”.
MEDIA ADVISORY
SAMPLE

NAACP
FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

TEXAS TEXTBOOK STANDARDS THREATEN
TO RE-WRITE CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY

Leaders and activists testify before State Board of Education,
urge to stop removal of civil rights history in textbooks

(Austin, TX) – The NAACP will join coalition partners and activists to testify before the State board of Education. Their testimony will urge the Board to stand against proposed changes to state’s education curriculum that would significantly alter the way civil rights history is told in Texas schoolbooks.

What: Testify before the State Board of Education

When: Wednesday, May 19, 2010
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Where: Individuals seeking to share their testimony should meet coalition leaders outside the Capitol building at 9:00 am.

Benjamin T. Jealous, President and CEO of the NAACP, said, “Our children are entitled to broad exposure to all the facts of American history, government and economic theory.”

Contact: Erika Lewis, 202-463-1016

# # #
III.d.ii. Press Release

A Press Release is written after an event has occurred. This is your chance to tell the media and others what happened and why it is noteworthy.

Press Release Format

1. In the upper left-hand corner, type one of the following two phrases: if your story has a time constraint—if, for example, it needs to be published before discipline policies are made on May 12—then type "FOR RELEASE ON OR BEFORE MAY 12; if your story does not have any specific time constraint, simply type "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE." Underneath this, type the date on which you are sending the press release.

2. In the upper right-hand corner, always type, "FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:". On the next line, include the name of a real person (not just the organization’s name), along with his or her title, the organization’s mailing address, and the contact’s direct phone number.

3. The next element of the press release is the most important: the headline. Many reporters and editors will judge the press release by the headline alone, especially in the busier media outlets, so it is very important to write a headline that will attract attention. Use an action verb to describe what is happening and why your event is important (e.g., "Parents Organize to Fight Discrimination," "Students Denied the Chance to Learn," or "School Unfairly Expels Children of Color").

4. After the headline, write the body of the press release. The first two paragraphs should tell the whole story and no paragraph in the release should exceed 30 words.

5. The first paragraph of the body is called the summary. It should contain the main idea of your story and draw the reader in. Tell your audience why this information is important to them and why they should continue to read your release. Ask yourself, "How can I make people feel a connection to this topic?" Describe the most interesting part of your story first—focus on what is happening, and why people should be interested. In almost every case, the first paragraph should be a brief and intriguing description of the news itself, and not just a description of the organization announcing the news.

6. Next, include a quote to add credibility to your release. Remember, this quote does not need to be from an "expert"—it can be from an organizational representative or a person concerned with the unfair discipline policies. Be sure to add that person's credentials after his name.
7. More detailed information should follow the first two paragraphs. By putting only the most attention-grabbing elements of the story up front, you can ensure that the most important information will still be included in your press release if the release gets shortened for some reason. Saving details until later helps to focus and capture the reader’s attention. You want to make sure that busy reporters and editors see the most important information first; remember that these people may only read the first few sentences of the many press releases they receive.

8. Depending on your goals, you may wish to include a "call to action" in your press release. This may include information on joining a protest, picketing an event, writing a superintendent, or taking part in other activities that the organization plans. These kind of upcoming events are often considered to be "newsworthy" themselves.

9. End your press release by repeating your organization's contact information for the reader.

10. Type "# # #" or "- 30 -" on the first line after your text is complete. These symbols are the traditional way of signaling the end of a press release. If you must use additional pages for your release, type "- MORE -" at the bottom of the first page. Be sure to type "— CONTINUED—:" and retype the title and date on page 2.

**General Tips for Writing a Press Release**

- Your job is to make the reporter’s job as easy as possible.
- Make sure that your press release discusses newsworthy topics.
- Tie your release to a related "hook" (e.g., release of reports, announcements or other events).
- Keep your sentences short and your writing tight. Double-space the text.
- Limit the release to one page if you can.
- Be sure the contact person will be available at the time that the release reaches the media.
- Proofread your release and have someone else proof it, too.
- Develop press release letterhead or use your organization's existing letterhead.
- The more professional your release looks, the more likely that your story will get published.

**Where to Send a Press Release**

Tailor your release to your target media and audience. Who would be the most interested? What publication or media reaches that audience? Don't forget neighborhood or community newspapers—they can be an effective way to reach local constituencies, and often need to fill column inches. Your local library should have a media directory in its reference section, which you can use to target outlets likely to use your release.

When you mail, fax or e-mail your press release, address it to a specific person at each newspaper, radio station, or television station you want to contact. You should address your release to the person responsible for the section or program you are targeting: an education writer, the host of a political talk show, a business section editor or a producer of a community radio program. Call the
publication or station if necessary, and don’t hesitate to speak with your target reporter over the phone; she may ask you questions that will help you write a better release, and you may pique her interest.

**When to Send a Press Release**

Give publications enough lead-time so they can follow up with you if they want more information—check their deadlines. Daily publications usually need two or three weeks, while monthlies need more. Faxing or perhaps even e-mailing the press release is usually best.

**Final Thoughts on Writing a Press Release**

At the end of your press release, you may want to include a paragraph about your organization, describing how people can get involved and discussing the great work that you do. If the media outlet has time or space to fill, they may very well use this information. If nothing else, it will provide the reporter or producer with valuable background information about your organization.

Most experts agree that you should place a follow-up phone call to your contact at the media outlet one or two days after a release has arrived, although this might be impossible or impractical if you have sent releases to hundreds of papers and stations. If you do choose to place a follow-up call, make sure to introduce yourself and identify the organization or event you represent; ask if the reporter has any questions; and inquire as to whether you can help by providing names of people to interview, photos or other additional information.

One strategy you might want to consider is asking the reporter to write a bigger article or to devote more airtime to your issue. Of course, your press release must get the reporter really interested in the topic for that to occur. If your single-page press release is published as is, it may take up only a few column inches in the newspaper. If you can get the reporter to interview you, and to do a longer feature on your issue or your organization, that will almost certainly translate into a bigger story in the paper or more coverage on radio or television.
PRESS RELEASE
SAMPLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 21, 2010

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Leila McDowell, VP of Communications
NAACP
1156 15th Street NW Suite 915
Washington DC 20005
202 463-2940 ext. 1018

NAACP APPLAUDS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR MAKING HISTORY AND PASSING HEALTH CARE REFORM

HEALTH CARE REFORM WILL HOLD INSURANCE COMPANIES ACCOUNTABLE AND PROVIDE MILLIONS WITH QUALITY, AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

(Washington, DC) – The NAACP today, applauded the US House of Representatives after a 219-212 vote to pass much-needed reform to the current health care system.

“The NAACP and our 2200 membership units applaud the US House of Representatives for passing much needed health care reform legislation. NAACP members from around the country have been actively engaged in contacting members of Congress with a simple message, “Pass Health Care Now” and our Representatives have listened,” stated NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous “The U.S. House made history today, passing the most sweeping and comprehensive health care reform bill in the history of the United States. Their vote was not only a vote on health care reform it was a vote for the future of this country, the future of our economy and made the future even brighter for all citizens and families.”

“Health Care reform, simply, is a matter of life and death. Real people are suffering and dying because of the current system, and we need reform now, and it is our hope that the U.S. Senate will pass the house’s reconciliation bill in an expedited manner so that more people can avoid prolonged sickness, injury or death from lack of insurance,” concluded Jealous.

NAACP Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Director of the NAACP Washington Bureau stated “Under the current proposal, if people like the insurance plan they have, they can keep it. If they like their doctor, nothing in the new proposal takes that choice away. What does change under the new plan is an increase in protections provided to Americans. Specifically, the new proposal outlaws discrimination against Americans with pre-existing medical conditions and does not allow insurance companies to deny coverage to a person because he or she has gotten sick. It reduces costs for people who currently have insurance and makes coverage more
affordable for people without it. It also sets up a new competitive insurance market where small business owners and families are allowed to shop for the insurance plan that works best for them.”

This proposal will insure over 31 million American and will make coverage more affordable by providing a middle class tax cut for health care, thereby reducing premium costs for tens of millions of families and small business owners who cannot afford coverage while reducing the federal deficit.

“Every 12 minutes someone in this country dies from a lack of health insurance. With this historic vote today, we will put an end to unnecessary deaths and focus on keeping our citizens healthy,” stated NAACP Chairman Roslyn M. Brock. “It is our hope that the U.S. Senate will move as swiftly and pass the reconciliation bill, so President Obama can sign this law and ease the burden on American families who are crumbling under the rule of insurance companies and their exorbitant prices and deceitful tactics,” concluded Brock.

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.

# # #
III.d.iii. Public Service Announcement (PSA)

A public service announcement (PSA) is a short message aired on the radio or television. A PSA requires a script to be read on the air. This is a great way to advertise an issue campaign in your community. Many television and radio stations commit to a given amount of time on the air for PSAs as part of their licensing and renewal contracts.

Here are some of the benefits of a PSA:

- The cost is usually limited to the production costs, as airtime is free
- PSAs tend to be very effective in convincing an audience to engage in the campaign presented
- PSAs create awareness around the issue.

When writing a PSA you want to be clear and to the point. You will have only a few moments to convey your message and persuade the audience to act. Before you begin writing a PSA you will need some background information. Here are some tips for getting that information:

- Know your target audience. Who do you want to care about this issue? Speak to them.
- What do you want your audience to do? If you have a specific goal, be clear about it in the PSA. An audience can only do what you tell them to. For example, you could say “Contact your Representative” but a more effective message would be “Call Representative X at 202-224-3121 today!”
- You will likely be competing against other non-profits for airtime. It will be important to know which media outlets are best to reach your target audience.
- Make a personal contact at the media outlets you choose. An in-person meeting is best, but a phone call will suffice. This is your chance to ask about their format requirements including preferred length, deadlines, etc.

With background information in hand, you will be ready to write your PSA. Here are a few helpful hints for writing:

- The language should be simple and precise. Use words or phrases that will grab your target audience.
- Include a specific action that you want your audience to perform as a result of listening to your PSA.
- Keep the PSA focused on one (maybe two) points. You do not want to confuse listeners.
- Check the facts. You will feel silly later if the information in your PSA is wrong.
- Most PSAs are 30-seconds long. In order to meet that time limit you will need to know the number of words to write. Here is a general rule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of PSA</th>
<th>10 seconds</th>
<th>15 seconds</th>
<th>20 seconds</th>
<th>30 seconds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of words</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>60-75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Formatting:
  - Your final version should be typed double-spaced.
  - At the top of the sheet, you should list:
    - Include how long the PSA should run or include a “kill date”
    - Length of the PSA
    - What agency or group the PSA is for
    - Title of the PSA
  - If you are including any special effects or live acting, be sure to include those notes in a column on the left-hand side; insert the dialogue into a column on the right.
  - Avoid hyphenations and abbreviations.
  - Indicate the end of the PSA with “# # #” at the bottom, centered.

When submitting a PSA to a station, you will want to include a cover letter.
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT
SAMPLE

Use: IMMEDIATE until 7/8/2011
Time: 30 seconds
Agency: NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)
Title: FREE HOMEBUYER WORKSHOP

The Columbia Branch NAACP and Bank of America are offering a **FREE** Home Buyer Workshop.
May 21, 2010

Mai-Lin Huang
Public Affairs Director
KPSA 98.6 Radio
1234 Broadcast Lane
Anytown, PA 12345

Dear Ms. Huang:

As per our telephone conversation on May 11, enclosed please find the enclosed script ready-to-read announcer PSA for our Free Homebuyer Workshop, as well as a cassette tape with a second spot.

As per your request, all of the 10-second spots are on a single tape, all the 15-second spots are on another, and so on. For your reference, I have also enclosed copies of the scripts for the taped spots.

Thank you for taking the time to explain KPSA’s policies and requirements on submitting public service announcements when I spoke with you on Tuesday. I look forward to hearing the first of our PSA’s during Jammin’ Jeska’s Morning Madhouse on Monday mornings, if I’m mistaken about this date, please let me know.

We feel confident that with KPSA’s support we’ll have a significant impact home purchasing knowledge in our community. Again, thank you very much for your assistance and guidance in getting these important messages on the air.

Sincerely,

Monique Morris
Vice President for Economic Programs
& Executive Director of the NAACP Financial Freedom Centers

Enclosures:
Script
Cassette tape (1)
III.d.iv. Flyer

When hosting an event, you will want to recruit attendees. One common method for recruitment is through the use of flyers. Flyering is a low-cost way to distribute the basic information about your upcoming event.

A good flyer should include:
- The title of your event. Include a subtitle if the main title is unclear about the type of event it will be.
- The location, date, and time of the event.
- If a confirmation is required, be sure to list a contact person to submit an RSVP.
- Logo of your unit or the NAACP logo. Be sure your flyer has your name on it somewhere.

You should consider printing the flyer on colored paper, as eye-catching colors will draw attention to the information on the paper. If you intend on passing out the flyers at an event or while tabling, please consider reducing the size of your flyer so that two or four copies can be printed on a single sheet of paper. This will save paper and keep your costs down.

A few tips to remember when flyering:
- If going door to door, you may leave flyers in the door or under the front porch rug. Never put a flyer in a mailbox. That is a federal offense to put anything in or on a mailbox that is not regulated by the post-office.
- Know the rules if you are flyering on private property. Be sure to speak with an owner or manager. Do not let this deter your efforts. You could consider calling local store owners and managers ahead of time to see who will allow you to post your flyer.
- Place flyers strategically. If you are hosting a forum on education, you may consider reaching out to schools, PTAs, teachers, and parents. Therefore, the library, local teacher supply stores, and toy stores could be a good place to flyer.
EVENT TITLE

Event Description:

Date:

Time:

Place:

See You There!
III.d.v. Letter to a Public Official

You can express your concern about an issue by writing a letter to a public official. In this case, you may be expecting action to be taken from this leader. A well-crafted letter will be crucial to making sure that your position is understood.

Here are some tips for formatting your letter to a public official:

- By sure to include name, department, and address of the official you are trying to reach.
- You should start by indicating the purpose of your letter. It should include how your unit is related to the matter at hand.
- You should be clear about what you expect this public official to do in response to your letter. You can include supporting information as to why this action is so important.
- This letter should be signed by the unit president, including the title, address, email, and phone number.
- The letter should be printed on your unit’s letter head or include the unit logo at the least. Remember, this is a formal letter and should be formatted as one.
LETTER TO PUBLIC OFFICIAL
SAMPLE

MONTEREY COUNTY BRANCH

December 29, 2009

Luz Lopez-Ortiz
Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
Coordination and Review Section
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Ms. Lopez-Ortiz,

The Monterey County Branch of the NAACP fully supports a complaint filed with the Justice Department by the Monterey County League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) against the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office, and confirms that such unfortunate racial profiling as claimed by LULAC does indeed occur.

The Monterey County Branch of the NAACP has an ongoing, cordial and extremely supportive cooperation and collaboration with all local Monterey County LULAC chapters. We have and will continue to work with all local LULAC chapters on many issues pertaining to their members and ours.

The members of the Executive Committee of the Monterey County Branch of the NAACP join LULAC in their plea and strongly appeal to you to help put a stop to such abusive and discriminatory practices that steadily and repeatedly occur every year. Please be informed that such racial profiling and misconduct by law enforcement has been rampant in Castroville for decades. The Monterey County Branch of the NAACP is, therefore, encouraging the Justice Department to follow through with a “pattern and practices” investigation of allegations of abusive misconduct and racial profiling by the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office and Gang Task Force in Castroville, California.
LETTER TO PUBLIC OFFICIAL
SAMPLE (cont.)

We support LULAC’s request urging the U.S. Justice Department to seek a court ordered consent decree to put a stop to the racially and ethnically discriminatory and abusive practices that will be uncovered through this investigation, to construct measures to hold law enforcement officers accountable, to stop using Castroville as training ground for law enforcement, to create a civilian complaint review board, and to include and emphasize community policing in law enforcement training.

Please share our concerns and our support for LULAC’s complaint with the Attorney General and the relevant sections and departments within the Justice Department.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

[Name of Branch President]
[Title of Branch President]
[Address]
[Email]
[Phone Number]

cc: Linda Quash, U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
III.d.vi. Letter to Editor

Purpose: The purpose of a letter to the editor is to respond positively or negatively to an article or editorial that a newspaper, journal, or magazine has printed on your issue.

Use: Letters to the editor are used to respond to news coverage that differs from your position or misstates the facts. Remember that submitting a letter does not guarantee it will be published.

Here are some tips for formatting your letter to the editor:

• Highlight your most important point in the first paragraph.

• If your letter is in response to an article or editorial printed in that same paper, be sure to reference the title, date, and author of the original piece in your opening sentence.

• Shorter pieces are more likely to get printed. Your letter should be between 100 and 400 words.
June 21, 2010

Dear Editor,

I’ve lived in Salisbury, Alabama for all my life and have raised three children here. Throughout my life I’ve seen and experienced many things, but I’m just starting to understand how they connect to climate change. Now that I know, I want policy makers to take aggressive action in reversing climate change by drastically cutting greenhouse gas emissions, for the sakes of my children and their children.

My friend who is a farmer has to grow different crops and finds it harder to sell her products because of changes in weather that have affected her harvest and the market in general. We’ve seen an increase in storms and the most recent tornado destroyed several houses in the next county over. My community is right next to a coal plant and we have high rates of asthma, which I hear is tied to the smoke from that plant, and it is that same smoke that puts pollution into the air that increases climate change.

We must move away from dirty industries that are polluting my community and others, as well as literally destroying the planet. Corporations aren’t going to do it on their own so we need policies to enforce major reductions in emissions. We have to do this for the sake of present and future generations. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Shakira Activist
Salisbury, Alabama
III.d.vii. Freedom of Information Act Request

In 1966 Congress enacted the Freedom of Information Act as a means of giving the American people access to the federal government’s records. While you do not need to file a FOIA request for information that is publicly available you may need to file a request for less common inquiries. This requesting tool may be helpful when needing more information in your issue area. Particularly, submitting a FOIA request can provide much needed statistics and data regarding your topic.

In 1996 an electronic version known at the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments expanded the scope of FOIA to include electronic records. “Electronic reading rooms” were established to make information more easily available to the public.

You can fill a FOIA request online: http://www.fcc.gov/foia/#reqform.

You may also submit a formal letter of request. When writing your letter of request, here are some helpful tips:

- Include your name, address, and phone number at the top of the page. This will allow the receiver to contact you should there be any questions regarding the details of your request.
- You should address the letter to the federal agency from which you are requesting the information.
- You will want to include a detailed description of the information that you are requesting.
- Let them who you are requesting these records on behalf of (yourself, organization, company, etc.).
- If you are requesting a fee waiver be sure to indicate that as well.
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST
TEMPLATE

Your Name
Address
Phone #

Date

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW., 5624 ROB-3
Washington, D.C. 20202-4651

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Dear FOIA officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, I hereby request a copy of all records pertaining to (describe the subject or document containing the information that you want).

I am requesting these records (as a representative of the news media, for non-commercial personal use, for an educational institution, etc).

I request a waiver of fees because my interest in the records is not primarily commercial, and disclosure of the information will contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government.

I will expect a response within 20 working days, as provided by law. If my request is denied in whole or in part, I expect a detailed justification for withholding the records. I also request that any segregable portions of these records that are not exempt under the Freedom of Information Act be disclosed.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Very truly yours,
(Your Name)
IV. Youth

Young activists are the next generation’s leaders in the civil rights movement. It is our responsibility to educate young people, to teach them the need for our work, and to engage them in activities that relate to their generation while promoting our cause.

In order to continue bringing your activists to our cause, we will need to reach out to young activists in their environment. We know that many active young activists can be found in our high schools and on college campuses around the country. These young people are already organizing and mobilizing their peers, a point illustrated by the election of President Barack Obama.

Now we must give our youth activists the tools to continue fighting for civil rights for all people. By empowering young activists now, we can ensure section will highlight some of the ways that young activists can engage around our issues.
IV.a. Your Campus is Your Community

For most students, your campus will become your community away from home. Events and happenings on campus will directly impact you. This is also an opportunity for you to engage on campus around your issue. Here are some ways you can engage on campus.

Educate and Active: Organize a meeting to discuss the state of the issue at hand. You should consider bringing in a speaker from your local NAACP unit or experts on the topic. This is a basic informational meeting that will give activists and potential activists a sense of what your issue campaign is really about. It is a good idea to have additional information including fact sheets and statistics on hand.

This is also a chance to gain new members to your organization. Be sure to have a sign-up sheet available for all attendees to sign.

Tabling: Tabling is a fun, easy way to spread the word about your. Consult campus rules regarding when and where you can table. It is best to participate in large tabling events, such as campus orientation, if possible. You want to table where there is a high volume of student traffic.

You will want to have a few talking points on hand. These will be the , repeat to interested students who approach your table. You will want to have a sign-up sheet on your table for interested members to join your organization. It is also a good idea to have any information about your issue campaign on the table. If you have an upcoming event, you should have flyers for that event on the table as well.

Teach-ins: Teach-ins are a way to bring together students, professors, and community members to discuss an issue. The goal might be to simply discuss how the issue is affecting the campus community. Teach-ins often involve from one topic to a discussion spanning several topics. Do not be surprised if the discussion turns into a call for action. In these circumstances, it is best to be clear about the capacity and intentions of your chapter. Teach-ins are also great because they cost relatively little to conduct. Following your campus’ guidelines for venue reservations, you should reserve a classroom, lecture hall, or auditorium that will fit your anticipated audience. Then following the campus rules on flyering, you can begin advertising the event.
**Discussion Panels:** A discussion panel gives your group the opportunity to educate other students about the topics at hand. This is a chance to gather supporters and potential supporters. Panels are also a great chance to build coalitions and work with other diverse groups.

A topic that you choose to engage in might already have allies on campus. These individuals might be willing to serve on discussion panels. Be sure to ask professors and student organization sponsors who might be willing to assist. Ideally you will want three to four panelists who each speak on a different topic within the main theme. It will be your responsibility, as the event organizer, to brief the panelists on the topic and the format of the panel. After the panelists have spoken, audience members should be able to ask questions of the panel. This is a chance for potential activists to learn and feel empowered to join your cause.

**An Editorial or Letter-to-the-Editor Writing Party:** In some communities, the campus newspaper is more widely read than the local newspaper. You can bring together a group of student activists to write editorials on your issue.

Use the letter-to-the-editor sample on page ____; tailor the specifics to your issue. Then submit the letters to your campus newspaper, as well as any other publications in the community. This is your chance to provide some basic information on your issue. If you are planning an event, you can make a mention of that event in the editorial. The more editorials submitted the more likely they are to get published. This is an easy way to have many individuals reading about your issue.

**Movie Screening:** There are many movies and documentaries that focus on social issues, and chances are that a film exists for the issue you are focusing on. You can find these videos through the library, professors, or even your local unit. Reserve a viewing venue that will accommodate your attendees. Be sure to comply with campus regulations regarding food, admission, etc. Consider holding a small discussion following the film. This is a chance for you to highlight your group’s work on the issue as well as any upcoming events or activities.
IV.a. Social Media and Networking

When advocating for an issue or around a specific campaign, it is important to use all of the tools available to you, including online and social media resources. Here are a few ways to use these valuable tools.

Facebook: Facebook is a great tool for building support and creating awareness around an issue. You can begin by creating a Facebook group for the issue. Facebook groups allow you to keep interest individuals informed, set up events, create a discussion forum on the topic, and even post pictures from events around the issue. On the group’s page you should include the mission of your organization, the purpose of the campaign around the issue, as well as when your group meets, so that other interested individuals can join your cause. You will want to invite as many people as possible to your group. Be sure to ask your current members to do the same. You can then use the group to create online events, such as general meetings, rallies, teach-ins, and forums.

If you are planning a large event, encourage group members to use a uniform profile picture to advertise the event. Then every time a member’s profile appears on a newsfeed, so will the information about your event. Individuals you would never have the chance to recruit in person, will now see your message through the magic of Facebook. This will be an easy way to promote an upcoming event.

Twitter: Twitter is a social networking tool that works as a mini-blog. The posts are limited to 140 characters making the messaging short and to the point. For example, you could tweet: “UNC NAACP chapter meeting, 3/21 at 4pm room 317 of the union. Join us!” This is the perfect way to advertise for events, or to point last account with the name of your chapter or coalition. Once you have set up an account, ask you members to sign up to follow you; they should ask their friends to do the same. Some Twitter users even have the application on their cell phones and can stay up to the minute with the
information you post. Remember, this is a free service that can greatly boost publicity for your group or events.

**Skype:** From time to time you will be unable to schedule all of your meetings in person. This is particularly true during winter and summer vacation periods. But deadlines for issue campaigns do not always fall neatly into the campus schedule. Luckily, online conferencing programs such as Skype allow you to teleconference.
VI. Tell Us What You Think!

The NAACP national office seeks to provide helpful materials and resources to our activists. This handbook is intending to assist your advocacy efforts in any of our programmatic areas. The resources included are based on feedback and questions we have received through our work with our activists and units. For future materials we are asking for your feedback on this handbook. Feel free to contact the Advocacy and Research department with your questions, thoughts, or stories:

Advocacy and Research Department,
NAACP
(410)580-5777
(877)622-2798
www.naacp.org