



HOSTING A LETTER WRITING PARTY

A letter-writing campaign is an effective organizing tool in an effort to have your voice heard by decision makers in an educating and communal setting. Letter-writing parties bring people together around a particular issue to converse about it, define what the consensus is that they are asking for in their letters, and to spread the word about a particular issue.

An effective letter includes three things:

- A description of the issue in clear language
- A concise explanation of the problem
- Explain what you want the official to do about the issue, i.e. what actions will they take or not take

The key of a letter-writing party is to make being there a valuable experience for the people who come so that they become more knowledgeable and engaged around the particular issue they are writing letters for.

GETTING PEOPLE TO THE PARTY

The first thing to establish when hosting a letter-writing party is to think about who is your audience? Is it existing members and volunteers who are already engaged around the issue? Is it individuals who may not know too much about the topic at hand? These are important questions to reflect upon when deciding on whom you want to invite to your letter-writing party and can help you structure your invite list as well as the schedule of presentations and activities at the party.

OUTREACH

As a host of a letter-writing party, there are many different ways to invite people to your event. One of the basic strategies for outreach is to invite the usual suspects—those that are most likely already informed and engaged around the topic. However, inviting other friends and community members via telephone, email and social media may lead to your letter-writing party having a bigger impact ultimately. When organizing a letter-writing party through the Grand Canyon Trust, ways to invite people to your party may include:



- Invite people through social media contacts such as creating a Facebook event
- Email list-serves
- Address lists from GCT
- Writing a blog post and sharing it through social media
- Word of mouth through existing networks
- Writing a press release in a local newspaper
- Create a media list—a few days before the event, contact those on the list with important who, what, where, when, why information
- Phone banking

GET INFORMED

Writing letters in a group allows people to share ideas freely, collaborate, and feel part of a movement or have a say in the outcome of an issue. As the host of a party, it is our job to show people that writing letters is an important organizing element and effective way to influence decisions. Things to share would include:

- Who are you writing to and why
- What you are asking for and why
- Why letter-writing works

WHAT YOU NEED

It is our job as the letter-writing party hosts to not only provide substantial information about the issue at hand but to also provide the necessary tools for letter writing. These include:

- Paper
- Pens
- Info sheets/Talking points
- Envelopes
- Stamps
- Laptops
- Printers
- Sample letters
- Addresses of recipients
- Projector
- Proper cables
- Screen for power point presentations

As a host it is nice to also provide snacks and beverages for the people coming to the party.



FOLLOWING UP

Letter-writing parties can be a first step in getting people engaged and even more passionate about a particular issue. Make sure to end the party with telling people what they can do as next steps. Next steps may include:

- Encourage people to spread the word among friends, fellow organizers, and others who may be interested
- Encourage them to hold their own letter-writing party and provide them with the necessary tools

Make sure that you as the host compiles everyone's contact information. An iPad or laptop with an Excel spreadsheet may come in handy to gain people's names, emails, addresses for follow-up actions and to just gauge how many people came to the event.