



"It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important.... You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result."

ONLINE ADVOCACY KIT

2005

Thank you for joining us in our efforts towards eradicating hunger in Canada. This advocacy kit is meant for those of you who want to tackle hunger from the grassroots level. Whether you work for your local food bank or you are simply a concerned citizen, we hope this package will serve as a tool to help you make a difference in your community.

What's in this package:

- I. Lobbying: Contacting Your Member of Parliament Page 2**
 - Meeting your MP: A 4-Step Guide, a List of Do's and Don'ts for the meeting and an Evaluation Form (*to be filled out and returned to CAFB after the meeting*).
- II. Letter-Writing Campaign Page 9**
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Sources:

* Campaign 2000 www.campaign2000.ca

*Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) January, 1991. *Campaign Organizing In Your Community*. Ottawa, Ontario.

*The Daily Bread Food Bank. *Community Action Toolkit*. <http://www.dailybread.ca/>

I

LOBBYING: CONTACTING YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Lobbying

Lobbying is a process in which we try to influence decision-makers. As a constituent in your community, you have the right to approach your local elected representative and make your concerns known. You don't need to be an expert on national issues to lobby a politician; always include or emphasize the effects of an issue at the local level.

Hunger is Not Only a Local Issue

The issues of hunger and poverty relate to all levels of society. Remember that you are part of a larger, national campaign; this means that you have more influence and allies at your disposal. You also have greater access to information, statistics and arguments. This can, however, also work against you when lobbying at the local level: you may be seen as acting in the interests of those beyond your community and therefore don't have a grasp of the local situation. This is a common political trick, underlining the importance of being sufficiently prepared for the meeting, that means arming yourself with adequate and relevant information.

Meeting Your Member of Parliament: A 4-Step Guide



Step I. Getting the meeting

When you contact the MP's office to ask for a meeting, be prepared to present a strong argument to explain why the staff should schedule a meeting. Below is a sample script that you could tailor as needed, depending on the specific aspect of hunger you wish to address.

Sample Script

Hello, my name is _____. I am a resident of _____. There are (# of individuals, couples and families) who use the local food bank in my community, an increase of _____ percent over last year. In this constituency, many families are one family emergency from using this service. We know that [name of MP] is concerned with the well being of the people in our constituency.

I want to schedule a meeting with [name of MP] to talk about our concerns and help him/her understand how to help families in this constituency. I will be bringing [a food bank client, a staff member from the _____ food bank and a volunteer at the _____

food bank].

The meeting should not be longer than one half hour. You need to request a meeting well in advance of when you would like to have it.

Who to bring to the meeting:

- Send the best possible delegation of three or four people, for example, someone who has used the food bank [*food bank clients, especially families, are key to “painting the picture” and bringing the issues alive for the MP*], a staff member who can bring factual knowledge about the local food bank, a long-time volunteer who can speak about the local issues of poverty and hunger, etc.
- The best size for a delegation visiting the MP is about four to six people. (Some MPs prefer smaller numbers, so check).

Step II: Preparing for the meeting

- *Gather some background information on the MP from the newspaper, talking to other people in your community, or talking to the MP’s assistant. Is the MP known for a particular stand on poverty or hunger?
- Plan your agenda. Decide who will say what. If possible, have a family member or volunteer lead the discussion. Have a plan so that even if the meeting is shortened to 15 minutes, all of the key points will be covered.
- Before you meet with your MP, the group will need to develop its case. Know your key messages, backed up with key facts. Be familiar with [†]Hunger Count 2004.
- Emphasize local content. Try to paint a local picture by having local facts about hunger and poverty. If possible, collect stories from the individuals who use/have used food banks. You should contact your [‡]local food bank or the one nearest where you live to get this kind of information. Additional information about the food bank to collect are:

Who do they serve?

- Number of users
- Profiles of their clients, i.e. - Are they single? Parents? Low income?
- How often do they allow clients to use the food bank?

How do families find out about them?

What happens if families cannot get the food they need?

Who supports them?

* You can find information about your member of parliament by going to www.parl.gc.ca and clicking on “Members of Parliament”.

[†] You can download a copy of HungerCount 2004 by clicking on “Research” in the Public Education and Research section of the CAFB website.

[‡] To find your local food bank go to “Get Involved” on the CAFB website and scroll down to the Local Food Banks hyperlink.

- Take a list of questions you plan to ask your MP.
- Take any press clippings, letters to the editor, council resolutions, etc.
- Think carefully about what objections or resistance you might have to deal with. Develop answers to meet these anticipated objections.
- Be clear about what follow-up action you will ask the MP to take.
- On the day of the presentation meet a little early to review the presentation and settle any last minute questions.

Step III: The Meeting

- Call the day before to confirm the meeting. Schedules can change with little notice.
- Fax the MP's office before the meeting. State who will attend; confirm the time and place.
- During the meeting, be straightforward and concise; don't try to cover too much ground. Allow time for discussion. Listen carefully. Emphasize areas of agreement.
- Remember to allow ample time for your MP to respond to your concerns.
- Do not imply that the government's interests are unimportant or illegitimate. Attack the problem, not the people.
- Be polite but persistent. Be sure to stick to the point: good politicians know how to change the topic or avoid answering a question, particularly if they are on the defensive. Be prepared to repeat yourself in order to gently steer the discussion back on track.

Below is a sample agenda to give you an idea of how this kind of meeting could be conducted.

Sample Agenda for Meeting with Your MP

One team member can act as "chair" to help with the flow from one section to the next, to keep track of time, to summarize the MP's comments, including next steps, and to say thank you.

1. Introduction

- Introduce members of your team, with their titles, affiliation to organizations or role (e.g. concerned family member) and explain briefly their connection to your food bank.
- Bring a list of your team with you.

2. Overview

- Introduce your presentation by briefly outlining the major issues and indicating who will discuss each one.
- Try to get your MP to agree that hunger in Canada is an important issue but be subtle about it. Assuming that the MP accepts the importance of this issue, and you establish the credibility of the CAFB position before the presentation (see below), it becomes more difficult to disagree with

the specific recommendations.

- Give your MP an opportunity to make some early comments. You might say, "Before we provide you with more details, is there anything you would like to say, or any particular questions you would like us to address?"
- Try to adjust your presentation to respond to your MP's comments.

3. Detailed Presentation

You can divide various subjects among your team members. Some suggested topics:

- **Hungry people in Canada need your support"**
 - * * If the MP is a member of the government, then we would start with acknowledging the government's activities, especially in the areas of housing and childcare.
 - Acknowledge that the government has many pressures and remind the MP that the issue of hunger requires attention.
 - If they are a member of any opposition party or an independent, ask them if they support our position that hunger and poverty need attention.
- **The need: background on hunger in Canada. Possible scenarios:**

As a **family member**, you can talk about:

- What challenges were facing your family
- How your family was affected by the challenges
- How the food bank helped your family and what difference this made to you
- What you think would have happened if your family had not been able to get service when you needed them

As a **food bank staff**, you can talk about -

- HungerCount 2004, and your provincial information, especially showing increases in numbers of users, or change in types of users
- Point out that the HungerCount is an annual survey of food bank use in March of each year
- How people find out about the food bank
- Features and benefits of the services you provide (i.e.-emergency food service, etc.)

- **Filling the need: What are you proposing? You could:**

- Describe what you want the government to do to help the local food bank assist the families they serve.
- Use the request for government action that is in the popularized HungerCount when you are in your meeting. Tell them you have a brief summary of the Hunger Count that you would like to leave for them. Ask them to review this summary and respond to you.

* Please see CAFB's Policy Updates, available in HungerCount 2004, page 20

- **How your group can meet the need. If you or a team member works or volunteers for a food bank:**
 - Explain that food bank staff and volunteers want to participate in discussions to offer their expert advice and help the government move forward to a workable solution.
 - Explain how the services have helped individuals, couples and families and what it means to them.
 - Invite the MP to visit the food bank.
- **Ensure your support**
 - Assure the MP that we will let our families know about his/her commitment to help us.
- **Leave some information behind**
 - * It's important to leave some information behind at the close of your meeting. You may also wish to leave behind facts about the local food banks in the MPs riding.

4. Discussion

- Leave time for questions and discussions.
- If your MP raises a question that you cannot answer, tell your MP that you will get back to him/her with more information. Follow through on this. If you require resources to do so contact us.
- Listen to concerns, comments and provide a response if appropriate but don't be argumentative.
- Ask your MP's opinion and clarify what actions/ steps he/she will take. Try to get a commitment from the MP that he/she will raise hunger in Canada as an issue when his/her Caucus reconvenes.

5. Summary

Keep track of the time and leave enough time for a brief summary of the meeting and be sure to express your appreciation for the time provided. You might say:

- "We are asking for your support - we're asking you to speak to the Minister of Health, Minister of the HRDC, the Prime Minister, and other MPs about the urgency of continuing to address this issue." (If you are speaking to a non-Liberal MP, ask that the issue of hunger in Canada be raised with fellow opposition MPs or during question period when the House reconvenes.)
- "Thank you, on behalf of the _____ millions who use the food banks across Canada. We truly appreciate your time and interest."

6. Try to book another meeting

The key to successful government relations, as with any relationship building, is to be consistent and persistent in your desire to meet with the MP.

* We suggest you leave behind the Popularized version of HungerCount 2004, which will be available for downloading from the CAFB website soon

We recommend that you ask to meet again in a few months to bring further information to the table, or to check on action the MP has promised to take.

Step IV: Follow-Up

After your meeting:

- Follow it up with a brief letter thanking the MP for his/her time, reviewing the discussion, including what action the MP promised to take.
- Indicate that your letter is being distributed to other interested parties.
- Ask for a contact person in the MP's office and maintain an ongoing relationship.

Do's & Don'ts for the Meeting:

DO:

- ...arrive on time.
- ...expect your MP to be late.
- ...expect to receive only half the time you were allotted.
- ...[If your MP is a Minister], call him/her "Minister" when you speak to him/her.
- ...inform your MP that other concerned citizens/representatives of food banks are talking to their colleagues across Canada, officials in the Ministry of Health, HRDC, Finance, and the Prime Minister's office.
- ...take copies of handouts included in the kit.
- ...keep an eye on the time so that the MP has an opportunity to express opinions and commit to follow-up action.

DON'T:

- ...bring anyone with you who isn't necessary to your presentation.
- ...introduce any unexpected topics into the meeting.
- ...assume that your MP will know everything or even anything about hunger and poverty.
- ...be argumentative but be persuasive:
 - If your MP is not on your side, make your best case but don't do anything to alienate him/her. If the disagreement is a matter of details, try for an agreement in principle.
 - If the disagreement is a matter of approach, try for an agreement in objectives.

Evaluation Form

The more information we have about community developments, the more effective we can be at representing issues of hunger in Canada at a national level. We urge you to:

- Maintain an ongoing connection with your local food bank OR if you belong to a food bank, keep in touch with other food bank partners.
- Keep us informed of new local developments through the CAFB electronic list, by phone or fax.
- Complete the Evaluation Form below and send it to us at:

The Canadian Association of Food Banks
191 New Toronto Street
Toronto, Ontario
M8V 2E7
Tel.: 416-203-9241
Fax: 416-203-9244

Name of MP: Constituency:

Date of meeting:

Members of your team:

Main issues/points discussed:

What was your MP's response?

What actions is he/she planning to take?

Is follow-up action necessary, i.e. - does the MP require more information, a second meeting etc.?

Additional comments?

II

Letter-Writing Campaign



The Power of the Pen

Although there's a lot to be said for a face-to-face meeting, a heavy stream of strongly-worded letters can also make others sit up and take notice. Letters are also a cost-efficient way to reach more people, particularly if your letter to an editor gets published. Letter-writing campaigns are particularly useful during election periods since politicians are especially keen on getting votes from their constituencies during this time.

You can start a letter-writing campaign, either to the editor of your local newspaper or to your elected official, by engaging members of your community, charity and/or your friends. You should encourage as many people to get involved as possible so identify early on what networks you are a part of and garner members' support. During the campaign have a minimum of two or three individuals write a letter every week or so, depending on your timeline and on the intended volume of letters per time segment.

Make sure that your letter is:

- Typed
- Double spaced
- Includes your full name and return address
- Brief and to the point

*Below are a sample letter to your local elected representative and a letter to the editor.

Sample Letter to Your Member of Parliament

[Your name and return address]

Dear Minister

As a resident of your riding [and, if applicable, as a staff member/volunteer of ...] I am writing to you to express my concern about the persistence of hunger in Canada. I am urging you to give serious consideration to this national tragedy. According to HungerCount

*You can find facts and numbers about hunger and related issues specific to your province in HungerCount 2004.

2004, an annual study of food bank use in Canada conducted by the Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB), the number of food bank users has reached a record high. Unfortunately, the national results are not encouraging and the findings for [your province] in particular, are disturbing.

HungerCount 2004 reports that more than 800,000 Canadians have used a food bank in one month alone of this year. Almost 40% of food bank users are children. In [your province], [number] people turn to food banks each month. No Canadian province is without a food bank and none have welfare rates above the Low Income Cut-Off Line.

More action is needed from government to reduce the number of people who depend on food banks. In HungerCount, CAFB sets out a list of recommendations for government in a seven-point plan towards a hunger free Canada. I urge you and your fellow MPs to give serious consideration to this call for action in order to help end the need for food banks.

I am hopeful that you will respond to this problem with swift and definitive action.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

[Your name and signature]

Sample Letter to the Editor

[Your name and return address]

“Letter to the Editor”
[Name of the paper]

To the editor:

I am writing to express my alarm over the growing problem of hunger in our country. According to *HungerCount* 2004, an annual study of food bank use in Canada conducted by the Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB), the number of hungry Canadians has reached an all-time high. More than 800,000 Canadians turned to a food bank this year in one month alone, about 60,000 more users than last year – that’s the size of a small town.

Contrary to popular belief, typical food bank users today are families, namely single mothers with children; moreover, a growing number of people with jobs are also turning to food banks.

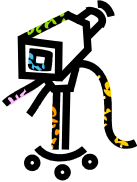
The fact that diverse groups are affected by hunger reinforces the need for solutions that cut across different sectors of public policy, such as childcare, employment insurance, housing and minimum wages. In spite of some measures taken by the federal government to address the above areas, clearly not enough has been done.

For a wealthy nation like Canada, this is disgraceful and unacceptable.

[Your name]

III

Using the Media



The main goal in using the media is to place and keep the issue of hunger in the public eye. Stories that make it in the news are usually ones that cover events that have visual appeal, such as demonstrations and community forums. When inviting the news media to an event, remember that a picture is worth a thousand words. Ask yourself how you can communicate the problem of hunger in an illustrative way.

During a campaign, make the reporters' job as easy as possible. Keep them updated by calling them to let them know about developments that might interest them or by sending out regular newsletters/bulletins. Prepare an information package, containing clippings, facts sheets and other literature, to help make writing the story easier.

Choose a spokesperson

To stay consistent in your message to the media, designate one person to represent the campaign. Select someone who is articulate and well-versed in the issues; only this person should be responsible for making statements to the media.

Preparing a News Release

The press release should be approximately 1-2 pages in length, one-sided and double-spaced. Write the release keeping in mind why people would be interested in this story and how it affects them. State your main point and try to tie in your story with a current hot issue. Don't forget to use poignant quotes and to mention what you and/or your organization intend to do about this problem. A short headline tells the reporter at a glance what the story is about. If the release is to announce an event, also known as a media alert, then don't forget to include the exact date, location and time. Always try to humanize the issue, explaining how it involves people directly. Below are a sample news release and a media alert.

Sample News Release

Canadian Association of
FOOD BANKS
Association Canadienne des
BANQUES ALIMENTAIRES



For immediate release:

Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Towards a Hunger - Free Canada

Canadian Association of Food Banks survey shows unprecedented increase in food bank use

Winnipeg, October 15, 2004 – A record number of Canadians are using food banks in Canada, an increase of 8.5 percent since last year, according to a report published today. 841,640 people – exceeding the population of Winnipeg - including 317,242 children, are receiving food from food banks and emergency food programs, despite the Canadian government’s re-endorsement of the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security two years ago.

The Canadian Association of Food Banks’ (CAFB) survey, *HungerCount 2004: Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Towards a Hunger Free Canada*, demonstrates the government’s failure to provide a social network which enables people in Canada to feed themselves and shows a rise in food bank use across the country.

“With over three quarters of a million people using a food bank in a month,” says Charles Seiden, Executive Director of the CAFB, “we have never seen numbers like this before. The challenge is immense and complex and the issues of poverty and hunger must be placed onto the agendas of governments of all levels to restructure the welfare system and provide an adequate social network before another generation is subjected to poverty and its inherent outcomes.”

...2/

The survey reveals that 13.3 percent of food bank users are people with jobs and an astounding 2.72 million meals were served in one month.

“In the light of the staggering number of Canadians unable to provide for their basic needs, the CAFB and its members are more committed than ever to seek realistic and effective social policies in pursuit of social inclusion and the elimination of hunger,” states Marjorie Bencz, CAFB chair.

The CAFB and its members will meet with MP’s and party leaders to initiate concrete steps towards eradicating hunger in Canada. The *HungerCount* report sets out recommendations for government in a seven point plan towards a hunger free Canada and gives an overview of policy priorities with measurable objectives and timelines to monitor national progress on eliminating hunger, food insecurity and poverty.

HungerCount is the only national survey of emergency food programs in Canada, conducted annually since 1997. With a sample of 482 food banks it goes beyond presenting the most current data and calls for strategic solutions to food security for Canadians.

For a complete copy of *HungerCount 2004*, please contact the CAFB or visit the website at www.cafb-acba.ca

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For more information contact:
XXX

Sample Media Alert

Canadian Association of
FOOD BANKS
Association Canadienne des
BANQUES ALIMENTAIRES



MEDIA ALERT

Toronto, 13 October 2004

Attention: News, Public Policy Editors

Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Towards a Hunger-Free Canada

**Canadian Association of Food Banks survey shows unprecedented increase
In food bank use.**

What: The Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB) invites media to attend the release of the 2004 HungerCount survey – a detailed survey of the use of food banks and emergency food programs in Canada.

Why: Representatives from the Canadian Association of Food Banks will issue a call to action to the federal government to live up to its election platform to strengthen social foundations to improve Canada's quality of life.
A record number of Canadians, including children, depend on food banks today, as HungerCount 2004 will reveal. CAFB will outline a seven point plan with recommendations for necessary policy measures ensuring a hunger free Canada.

Who:

- Charles Seiden, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Food Banks
- Marjorie Bencz, Chair, Canadian Association of Food Banks
- Clients of Winnipeg Harvest

When: **October 15, 2004 - One day before World Food Day 12:15 p.m.**

Where: **Winnipeg Harvest, 1085 Winnipeg Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba**

For further information, contact:

XXX

Organizing a News Conference



When you have something important to announce and you are certain it will interest the media, it's time to organize a news conference. It also helps when there is more than one group in your campaign, demonstrating the importance of the issue. Here are a few rules to follow when preparing for a news conference:

- The best time for a news conference is between 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.
- Be well-prepared: hand out media kits containing all your written material. Give as much material as possible and make sure you have more than enough copies.
- Be on time.
- Have a head table or a podium at the head of the room; this will be the focus of the conference. If you have a table, only the speakers should sit there.
- Put up a banner or a poster to advertise your campaign behind the podium or table.
- Set up the room with chairs placed in rows, no tables. Leave plenty of space at the front and center of the podium for camera crews and photographers.
- Have an attendance sheet at the entrance to create a list of contacts: make sure reporters include their names, the name of their stations/newspapers and their telephone numbers.
- Leave time for a question and answer period at the end of the conference.

Interviews

- For camera interviews, look at the interviewer when answering a question, not at the camera.
- If you need time to form your answer, pause and think before responding - a momentary silence is better than a thoughtless response.
- If you didn't hear or understand the question, ask the interviewer to repeat or rephrase the question.
- Don't feel obliged to say more than you already have.
- Stick to the issues. Think about the points you most want to put across and try to always go back to these points.
- The first question is usually a request for an explanation of what your issue is about so prepare and rehearse a summary before the interview.

- If you're in a radio interview, try to limit your responses to 15-20 seconds.

IV

Organizing a Public Meeting



At public gatherings, there should always be a facilitator to encourage communication. It is important that this gathering be well-advertised since its success will largely depend on the size of the turnout. Here are some additional suggestions:

- Pick a location that is convenient, easy to find and that has access to parking.
- By picking a hall that is a little smaller than the expected size of your gathering, you will make the room look crowded and thereby well-attended.
- Check your sound system.
- Reserve a literature table.
- Reserve a table for refreshments.
- Have an attendance sheet and get everyone's names, addresses, organization, etc. to build a list of contacts.
- Articulate the purpose of the gathering in the introduction in a simple and clear way.
- Leave time at the end for questions and comments from the audience.

Who will speak

- It would be a good idea to have a food bank representative to speak at the forum, as well as representatives from supporting groups.
- A high-profile individual from the community concerned about hunger and poverty, such as a university professor or a religious leader, would also be a cogent speaker.
- Don't forget to invite elected officials in the area.

Community Meeting

Community meetings are an excellent opportunity to raise support and energy for combating hunger while allowing you to build campaigns and particular actions you want to take for this issue. They can also help to build a higher profile for a local food bank.

Here are things to keep in mind for the meeting:

- The purpose of the meeting is to share information, opinions and experiences and to discuss issues related to hunger (emphasize how national issues are linked to community-level problems).
- Know what you want to accomplish with this meeting and stick to that task throughout the meeting.
- The facilitator should always provide examples within the local community. He or she should introduce each speaker. This person should also keep track of the time.
- When conflicting opinions arise try to encourage a solution or at least an acceptance of these differences.
- At the end of the meeting, the facilitator should summarize the meeting and list the decisions that have been made. He or she should also identify the next steps that will be taken.
- Your ultimate goal should be to arrive at decisions and develop recommendations for action.
- Have a strategy to encourage discussion, i.e. leading questions. Always remember to foster two-way communication.

Political Debate

A political debate is another opportunity to raise awareness about the issues of hunger. Again, there should be a clearly articulated purpose/theme for this event, announced at the beginning. A good theme for the debate would be the various social policy issues related to hunger.

Elections would be a good time for this type of public forum since it would give electoral candidates a chance to connect with their electorates. Here are a few other reasons you can suggest on why a candidate should participate:

- Communicate the message of his/her party.
- Prove the difference between his/her campaign and other candidates'.
- Score a "knock-out" blow against opponents.
- Show how s/he would represent the concerns of constituents.
- Demonstrate commitment to community/support for food banks.
- Show support for low-income residents to vote.

Directions

Anyone can organize a debate; but since political debates are more structured than community meetings, here are some detailed guidelines on how to conduct them:

The Moderator

The moderator, who will be asking the candidates questions, should ideally be someone who is non-partisan and relatively well-versed in the topic of hunger,

such as a local journalist or a professor. The selection of the questions is the exclusive responsibility of the moderator (to ensure as much impartiality as possible). However, in discussing social issues related to hunger, the moderator can develop questions from the main policy concerns of the CAFB (outlined in the latest HungerCount report). CAFB concerns are sufficiently broad that the moderator should feel plenty of freedom to develop his/her own perspective. Furthermore, CAFB concerns spans the gamut of policy areas for most Canadian not-for-profit groups.

Master of Ceremonies

Contact your local food bank to invite a staff member, i.e.- the executive director, who will explain the theme to the moderator. The food bank representative could also function as the master of ceremonies.

The Debate

- The audience should be composed of members from the general public.
- Each candidate should receive a couple of minutes to introduce him/herself and his/her party platform (the speaking order can be chosen alphabetically).
- The moderator should have about 20 seconds to ask each question.
- Following each question should be a discussion/debate lasting not more than 10 minutes. Each ten-minute response time should be broken down in the following way:
 - ❖ The moderator should begin conversations by selecting a candidate to speak. The respondent should have at least one minute of protected time before other candidates are permitted to interrupt.
 - ❖ For the remaining portion of the ten minutes, candidates should be free to argue amongst themselves.
- The moderator must randomly select which candidates will begin talking for each ten-minute response period.
- After the debates, each candidate should have approximately two minutes for concluding statements (the speaking order should proceed in reverse alphabetization).
- Space in the venue should be designated for journalists and their equipment (*please see "Organizing a News Conference" p. 14*).
- It is important to review timing signals with candidates prior to beginning the debate.