

HOW TO ... Talk to the Media

Working with reporters and other members of the news media is vital to our mission of educating the public about the need for sensible immigration law and policy. In this section, you will learn about submitting written materials like op-eds, letters-to-the-editor, and public service announcements to your local paper, which you'll learn about in this section, as well as how you can proactively educate the writers and editors by setting up meetings with them and introducing yourself as a key source on immigration matters. This section will help you to prepare for those meetings as well as for interviews with journalists from all media formats.

SUBMITTING WRITTEN MATERIALS TO YOUR LOCAL PAPER

Writing Your Op-Ed

Named for its position in a newspaper or magazine – opposite the editorial page – the op-ed piece provides a place for you to take a stand on a current immigration issue or perhaps offer an opinion on a immigration subject. Criteria for op-ed pieces may vary by publication but there are some general rules.

On average, one to three op-ed pieces are run every day and are about 750 words in length. Almost all editors agree that op-ed pieces must have two things: timeliness and creativity. The best advice is to read the intended publication to see how other op-eds have been written, and to contact the publication for specifics on length of piece, submission criteria, etc.

Some editors like to discuss the idea for an op-ed piece ahead of time; others prefer to receive the op-ed with a cover letter.

Topics for op-ed pieces are many and range from: opinions and analysis of public affairs, politics, education and law to journalism, healthcare, religion, the military, science, and lifestyles (notice how immigration touches on all of these areas). Topics can be of a local, national or international importance. They must, however, be relevant and timely to something that is happening now or is about to happen. Some editors prefer to avoid extremely controversial issues, feeling that adversary journalism is a never-ending ping-pong match. Others encourage publication of diverse opinions on sensitive issues.

Op-ed pieces are not to be used as a vendetta medium against some alleged injustice to you (or your client), nor are they the forum for challenging a reporter's techniques. The key word in considering op-ed pieces is judicious. Just define the issue you wish to discuss or state the problem as you see it, provide whatever background or history is needed and then suggest ways the situation can be changed or improved.

Publishing Your Op-Ed

1. **Have something to say.** The best op-ed pieces are tough, straight-forward, categorical.
2. **Be timely.** The best op-eds concern subjects triggered by breaking news.
3. **Be topical.** Topicality means that an op-ed is relevant to readers.
4. **Start with a grabber.** It's particularly important to "hit the ground running"—begin the op-ed with a straight-to-the-gut sentence.
5. **Have a point.** There's not enough space to make more than one, maybe two).
6. **Back it up with facts.** Op-eds must be loaded with evidence (cite IPC reports and studies).
7. **End with a zinger.** Many people will remember the initial thing you said and few will remember the middle—most will remember how you end.

Ideal Structure for an Op-Ed

<p>Ideal Op-Ed Structure Review this structure as many times as needed until it feels normal to use.</p>	<p>Example Text excerpted from Op-Ed below by AILA member Margaret Stock</p>
<p>Main Argument It is best to identify and highlight your main argument in the first or second paragraph of the op-ed</p>	<p>It is no secret that several of the military services expect to experience difficulties recruiting eligible enlisted soldiers in future years. For that reason, in its FY10-12 Strategic Plan, the Department of Defense identified the DREAM Act as a smart way to expand the pool of potential candidates because it lets high achieving young people enlist.</p>
<p>First Supporting Statement Statement supports the main argument</p>	<p>Former Acting Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy Bill Carr has called the DREAM Act "very appealing" to the military because it applies to the "cream of the crop" of students. Potential DREAM Act beneficiaries like David and Cesar are likely to be a military recruiter's dream candidates for enlistment; they are not "bottom of the barrel" recruits even if they have no legal status.</p>
<p>Second Supporting Statement Statement supports the main argument</p>	<p>They will have "conditional lawful residence," a status that is recognized under current military recruiting regulations; thus, the military will not have to change its regulations or process their enlistments differently from other recruits.</p>
<p>Third Supporting Statement Statement supports the main argument</p>	<p>... even though deporting these young people confers a massive benefit on their countries of birth while depriving the United States of their talents. Instead of wearing our uniforms, these recruits could be recruited to work for foreign governments, foreign militaries, and foreign intelligence agencies.</p>
<p>Specific Recommendations/Solutions</p>	<p>I strongly urge members of Congress to pass this long overdue measure.</p>
<p>Strong Ending It is best to have the ending, to the extent possible, wrap up the beginning or reference some theme introduced at the beginning of the op-ed.</p>	<p>The House and Senate are poised to act on the DREAM Act during the current lame duck session of Congress. The vote on the DREAM Act presents an opportunity for our lawmakers to vote to increase military recruitment, enhance US national security, and help high achieving young people at the same time. I strongly urge members of Congress to pass this long overdue measure.</p>

Sample Op-Ed



Three years ago, the U.S. Armed Forces struggled with a serious recruiting crisis, a crisis that evaporated temporarily only because of the economic downturn. As the economy recovers and our population continues to age, our Armed Forces will face yet another challenge in recruiting the high quality people needed for the modern military. It is no secret that several of the military services expect to experience difficulties recruiting eligible enlisted soldiers in future years. For that reason, in its FY10-12 Strategic Plan, the Department of Defense identified the DREAM Act as a smart way to expand the pool of potential candidates because it lets high achieving young people enlist.

The Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is a bipartisan bill that would provide a conditional pathway to legal permanent residence for certain unauthorized youth who, as children, were brought to the U.S. They must graduate from high school, demonstrate good moral character, and—to keep their legal status—complete at least two years of higher education or serve for at least two years in the U.S. military.

Without the relief of the DREAM Act, the future of these American-educated young people is bleak. About 65,000 eligible students graduate from U.S. high schools each year, but upon graduation, these young people—who include honor roll students, star athletes, and junior ROTC members—face a roadblock. Instead of advancing to college or the military and later repaying the investment that taxpayers made in their education, they live in fear of being discovered by the Department of Homeland Security and deported to their “home” country, even if it is a country they cannot remember and where they have no friends, family, or support.

Two potential DREAM Act students are David Cho, a senior honors student at UCLA, and Cesar Vargas, a third year law student at CUNY. Cho who dreams of joining the Air Force after graduation is at the top of his class and has lived here since he was nine. Vargas who has lived here since he was five, he wants to be a military lawyer after graduation. David and Cesar are exactly the kind of recruits the military needs: self-motivated and eager to defend the country they love. Without the DREAM Act, both will be deported.

Former Acting Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy Bill Carr has called the DREAM Act “very appealing” to the military because it applies to the “cream of the crop” of students. Potential DREAM Act beneficiaries like David and Cesar are likely to be a military recruiter’s dream candidates for enlistment; they are not “bottom of the barrel” recruits even if they have no legal status. They are Americanized, having lived in the United States for at least five years, unlike the new lawful permanent residents whom the military currently enlists. DREAM Act beneficiaries have no adult period of residence in a foreign country, which might make a background check difficult for security clearance purposes. They often speak both English and another language fluently. Many have participated in Junior ROTC in high school. They do not have criminal records or other evidence of bad character. They have graduated from a U.S. high school.

If approved as DREAM Act beneficiaries, they will have passed rigorous criminal background and security checks from DHS. They will have “conditional lawful residence,” a status that is recognized under current military recruiting regulations; thus, the military will not have to change its regulations or process their enlistments differently from other recruits. Finally, they will be motivated to serve the United States so as to be given a chance to stay here.

Opponents of the DREAM Act call it a “sugar coated” amnesty that only rewards law breakers. To them, the best solution to the problem of illegal residents who are also high achieving students with dreams of serving in the military is deportation; even though deporting these young people confers a massive benefit on their countries of birth while depriving the United States of their talents. Instead of wearing our uniforms, these recruits could be recruited to work for foreign governments, foreign militaries, and foreign intelligence agencies. At a time when we are focused on protecting our borders and quashing threats to our national security, it seems unwise to export thousands of American-educated and American-acculturated young people to militaries other than our own.

The House and Senate are poised to act on the DREAM Act during the current lame duck session of Congress. The vote on the DREAM Act presents an opportunity for our lawmakers to vote to increase military recruitment, enhance US national security, and help high achieving young people at the same time. I strongly urge members of Congress to pass this long overdue measure.

Writing Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are used for a variety of purposes in public debate. They are used to respond to criticism, correct an inaccuracy, complain about the slant of coverage, point out a missing fact in a story, or amplify an element of the story in an interesting way. Letters to the editor are an extremely effective tool for raising public awareness on an issue, especially after you’ve directly contacted your legislators. Letters to the editor are also one of the best ways to get legislators’ attention.

Legislators are creatures with egos, and they want to be loved by everyone. Two lines of criticism (or praise) might seem meaningless in a broad effort to sway opinion, but if you mention the name of a member of Congress in a letter to the editor that is published, it will be read by the person you most want to influence.

This letter to the editor from AILA’s New England Chapter was published in the *New York Times* in September, 2010.

Revising Our Immigration Rules for Foreign Workers

To the Editor:
Re “Foreign Stimulus” (Op-Ed, Sept. 14):

Pia Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny are completely on the money with their call for a greater emphasis on work-based immigration to enhance our competitiveness in the world economy. It should be the national policy of the United States to forthrightly and unapologetically attract the best minds from all over the world and turn them into assets of the United States.

How we do it—through the proposed auction system, a reform of the existing skills-based system or some other method—is less important than that we do it.

Matthew J. Maiona
*Chairman, New England Chapter
American Immigration Lawyers Assn.*

Here are tips for writing letters to the editor that will get published:

- **FIRST**, editors are more likely to run your letter if it references a story that ran in the paper during the last week. In fact, it's almost impossible to get a letter to the editor published that does not reference a story. If possible, include it in the first sentence of the letter.
- **SECOND**, keep the letters short – 100 to 200 words, or two to four paragraphs. Succinct, strong, and powerful language is much more likely to gain an editor's attention than long-winded rants, or even thoughtful but lengthy arguments. Like lawmakers, editors are much more attracted to stories from someone who has an interest or connection to an issue, rather than those just expressing an opinion. Those with a personal story to tell about an issue have an advantage over those that do not. Also, anyone who is representative of a group warrants attention. Even those who chair a small neighborhood committee can be seen to speak for others and are therefore good candidates for publication.

If you see appropriate language on a web site of an organization you support, use it as a foundation for your writing, but do not send it to the newspaper verbatim. Some grassroots organizations and political campaigns are smart about organizing letter-to-the-editor campaigns, and they are a valuable and ethical component of any advocacy effort. However, if an editor sees two letters with identical copy, he will consider the letter “manufactured” and will not run it. Use your own words to express your views.

- **THIRD**, a reference to the legislator is a must. If the lawmaker has ignored you or your issue, letters to the editor are a great way to his/her attention. By contrast, if the lawmaker has supported your issue, definitely write a letter to the editor. It's also very wise to send a copy of the legislator's office (directed to his chief of staff). Even if the letter isn't published, you will be sending a potent message that you have the power (and inclination) to influence thousands of voters. The voice of one person in the letters to the editor section can confer as much credibility as a roomful of politicians.
- **FINALLY**, if appropriate (and if space allows), tell allies how they can get involved by including organization's names or web addresses.

HOW TO PLACE A PSA IN THE NEWSPAPER

AILA and the American Immigration Council developed several print PSAs for distribution by our members. They are available on InfoNet in the PressRoom. You can follow these tips to place ours, or make your own!

The keys to successfully placing a public service advertisement (PSA) in your local newspaper are advance planning and research. You will be asking the newspaper to give you space for free—space the paper usually sells to companies willing to pay full price. Therefore, to place the PSA, you must be willing to meet the requirements of the newspaper and be flexible.

Consider these pointers to help you successfully navigate the world of newspaper public service advertising.

What is a PSA?

A PSA is a message promoting a “public service,” and or “educational” that helps people learn more about an important issue. It is not a message to buy a product or service, and it does not endorse a company’s product or service.

Learn the Newspaper’s Policy on PSAs

The question is, will your local newspaper run the print PSA? Contact the newspaper to learn:

- Do they run PSAs?
- Will they run the PSA free-of-charge, or do you have to pay a rate for the placement? If you have to pay a fee, ask what you can do to receive a reduced rate.
- Will the newspaper help you find a company to help sponsor the ad if a fee is required to place the ad?
- What restrictions does the paper have for PSAs, including ad size, font and photo requirements?
- How do they want the ad submitted, on computer disk or as an ad slick? If you must supply the ad on disk, ask what program or file type the paper accepts.
- How far in advance do you have to submit the PSA for placement in the paper?
- How long will the PSA run?
- Can you run the same PSA at different times throughout the year, or do you have to submit a new one?



**An AILA/AIC PSA
available to download from
the InfoNet Press Room at:
www.aila.org/pressroom**

Who to Work With at the Newspaper

First you might want to contact a reporter that you know or someone that you may have worked with on a story in the past. Forging strong bonds with your local newspaper can pay off in many ways. (Reporters you work with regularly will often contact you first for information when a story breaks, or will be more willing to take your phone call when you pitch a story.) If no relationship exists, reach out to the public service advertising manager. Tell them about the campaign and why the issue is so important to the community and chances are they’ll be more responsive.

If You Have to Buy Ad Space

Again, ask for help. Many newspapers offer significant rate cuts for non-profit groups, so do ask if they will extend the offer to you. Work with your local coalitions/partners to raise the funds needed to secure placement of the ads (with a promise of adding their organization’s name and logo to the ad).

Meet All Deadlines

Newspapers run on deadlines. Since you're the one asking for help, it is critical that you meet all key dates. Missing a deadline could prohibit your PSA from running and hinder any future efforts.

REACHING OUT TO REPORTERS, EDITORS, AND PRODUCERS

The most important aspect of day-to-day media relations work is interacting with reporters, editors, and producers. The one-on-one contact that you have with a representative of the media will define the successful presentation of your message.

Whether you practice media relations full-time, part-time or as a volunteer the best way to approach the media is by developing news judgment. You can develop your news judgment by looking at stories the way reporters do. The easiest way to do this is to: 1) Read your local daily newspaper; 2) Watch your local evening news broadcasts; and 3) Listen to local talk radio. This will allow you to target the right reporters with the right pitch at the right time.

Many newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio stations make it easy for you to contact the "right" reporter by posting the journalist's e-mail address at the end of their article or on that news organization's web site. This affords you a golden opportunity to reach out to and either comment positively or point out inaccuracies and offer up missed examples of how that immigration issue truly impacts your community. It also gives you the chance to introduce yourself.

Arranging Meetings with Reporters and Members of the Media

Begin the relationship-building process by e-mailing the reporter and introducing yourself. Keep it brief—just say who you are, why you are contacting them, and invite that person to meet and talk about other immigration stories that could be of local interest. You can also encourage the reporter/editor to call you in the future with questions about anything related to immigration. The mission with this e-mail is to let the journalist know that you can serve as a trustworthy resource and immigration expert.

At the actual meeting, use that time to learn more about that person's role and responsibilities with their respective news organization, as well as their interests. What stories is he/she working on now? What ideas for immigration stories are they considering down the road? What would they consider their dream assignment? How can you help him/her? It doesn't have to be all about work, but the more you know about that person's role, the more likely you can help them out even when assisting them may not lead to a direct quote from you.

When you're pitching a story, do as much of the leg-work for the reporter as you can. Help them do their jobs by including links to AILA or IPC reports and studies that support the story/issue, pass along examples of pertinent local cases and or clients that are ready to share their story first-hand ("real people" who will put a face on the story), and names of other AILA members that they could contact for more perspective and

expertise. This information makes it easier for the reporter to start the story and lets them see that you understand their job.

Steps to Pitching a Story:

- Hone in on a specific topic or issue
- Organize and compile supporting documents
- Develop talking points
- Determine if a client will agree to be interviewed
- Try and tie your story idea into a larger issue or theme
- Contact reporter
- Identify who you are and why you are calling
- Ask if this is a good time to discuss your story idea. If it isn't ask the reporter to suggest the best time to call back
- Let the reporter/editor/producer know you are familiar with their news organization and their coverage of immigration stories
- Briefly explain the idea and why the audience will be interested
- Consider teaming up with a coalition partner and community groups
- Ask them if they would like to meet for an interview over coffee or lunch

If the reporter is interested, expect a call back and make sure to return the call promptly. If you don't the reporter may move on to another story. By developing news judgment and understanding how the media works, a news source (you) can effectively educate the public and promote a cause.

Sample Meeting Request Phone Call



Hello my name is _____ and I am the media liaison officer with the (Your State) Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. Our Association is currently making a coordinated effort to reach out to key members of the media who cover immigration and immigration-related issues.

Knowing you have written/covered several immigration related stories for (Name of News Organization) I wanted to contact you with some story ideas that I believe are important for our community to be aware of. For example, at the Federal level, some Members of Congress have introduced legislation that would mandate employers to electronically verify that new hires are authorized to work by using a system called E-Verify.

At the same time, it seems like there is momentum building in our STATE legislature to pass a bill that would make E-Verify mandatory (or law) and if this were to happen it would impact our community in this way:



- Turn to AILA/IPC Talking Points on E-Verify to detail the impact to the community: <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/e-verify-resource-page>
- Alert reporter to the fact you have reports and studies from AILA/IPC that document what has happened in other states that already have adopted E-Verify
- Point out the real flaws of E-Verify

- Discuss the impact E-Verify would have on local and state businesses as well the economy
- Let them know you can provide access to others such as business leaders and clients who can comment on this pending issue and fear the impact this law could have on their operations

Invite the reporter to discuss this further over coffee or lunch, provide your contact information, and thank them for their time.

HOW TO GET ON LOCAL TALK & NEWS RADIO

Sharing positive messages about immigrants and immigration is an integral part of our work as advocates for immigration reform. Immigration is a highly contentious political issue that is debated with passion and vigor from all sides of the political aisle. Too often, and especially during heated on-air debates, radio personalities mischaracterize immigrants and present misinterpretations of the policies that regulate immigration. Sadly, these one-sided messages currently dominate the airwaves. We need knowledgeable speakers to counter the rhetoric and thinly veiled intolerance of the shock jocks on the radio.

AILA members are well positioned to be spokespeople on talk radio because your experience as an immigration attorney gives you qualifications most of these radio personalities don't have— an understanding of the real life impact of immigration law and policy. Lori Chesser is a great example of an AILA member who tackled talk radio—and won!

Lori had heard a Des Moines talk radio host put down immigrants one too many times when she decided it was time for an immigration advocate's voice to be heard on Iowa's airwaves. Although admittedly nervous the first time, Lori thinks it was a highly effective way of communicating our message to a broad audience. She said:

“ *I was incredibly nervous before going on talk radio the first time, but then my colleague assured me—lawyers are great on radio! We like to talk and we sound good talking. Talking is what we do for a living.*

She was right. It was actually fun and exciting to be on the spot on live radio, and interesting to see how a live show works. We know LOTS more than anyone else about immigration laws, the need for reform and the facts of immigration. The only challenge is to state it in a way that is understandable to the lay person who is listening to the particular show. Unless the host is very aggressively anti-immigrant, most people are willing to listen to reason and are happy to talk with someone who really knows what she is talking about. I have done two shows now and have an open invitation to do more—and bring guests.

The show reached people who would never come to an immigration program or maybe even read about it in the newspaper. I encourage AILA members to try talk radio. If they only hear the other side, how can people make an informed decision? **”**

Steps to Getting on the Air

1. Contact local public and commercial radio stations. You can find station lists and contact information on InfoNet on the Advocacy and Media Tools section of the Advocacy homepage.
2. Ask to speak with the Station Manager. Explain to the Station Manager that you are a professional immigration attorney and are knowledgeable about immigration law and policy. Tell the Station Manager that you are available for live interviews and background information about your areas of specialization in immigration law.
3. Review the final section of AILA's Tools of Engagement for key messages and talking points.
4. Contact George Tzamaras, AILA's Director of Communications, for speaking tips and mock interview questions to help you feel comfortable taking tough inquiries and speaking for a broad radio audience. George can be reached by phone or email at (202) 216-2410 or gtzamaras@aila.org.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

Among the other things you should consider, there's also the question of where the interview will take place. If the reporter gives you a choice on where you can conduct the interview, pick a setting that feels right to you. Most of the time, the setting is determined by the type of interview (broadcast or print; live or taped) or the amount of time the reporter has to work on a story (phone interviews are better for tight deadlines).

Every interview is different and the differences start with the setting. Here is what to expect in each type of interview.

- **TIPS FOR THE PHONE INTERVIEW:** If you have agreed to do a phone interview, let the reporter know you will initiate the call at the agreed-upon time. Elementary as this may sound, double-check the time if different time zones are involved. Sound quality is of the utmost importance; don't use speakerphone or a phone of poor quality. ****For radio interviews—speakerphones, cell phones and cordless phones are no-no's.*** You don't want listeners to have to work too hard to listen to your message. Make sure you have your notes, talking points, and any studies that you might cite neatly in front of you. Do not use a phone interview as an opportunity to multi-task. Your full attention must be on the interview, not answering e-mails or sorting piles of paper. Try and monitor the conversation, make notations to yourself if you feel points need clarifying or further data to be gathered. If you are dealing with a particularly sensitive issue or complex topic, you may want to write up your notes, including key questions and answers, in case there are questions later about what was said or done.

- **TIPS FOR THE E-MAIL INTERVIEW:** This type of interview is happening more and more often now, especially with the immense growth of blogs and news gathering web sites. Usually, reporters will only use e-mail when they need to check a fact with a source who has already been interviewed in person or on the phone. Occasionally, reporters e-mail a single question to sources when they are doing a round-up type of story, in which they are canvassing many people about their opinions on an issue. E-mail interviews must be treated with the highest level of care because once you click on the “send” button, it’s out of your hands. ****It is advisable to follow-up a reporter’s e-mail question with a phone call to that reporter to make sure he has received your reply.*** Finally, remember that sometimes humorous e-mail doesn’t translate well. You might think you are making a joke, but the reader could misinterpret your e-mailed comment.
- **TIPS FOR THE IN-PERSON INTERVIEW:** When a reporter comes to your office, don’t leave him waiting in the lobby. Go to the lobby and meet him in person. Giving a quick tour of the office is a good way to break the ice. Ask the reporter if he or she wants something to drink, and then find a quiet place to hold the interview. It says some positive things about you if the interview takes place in your office, not in a sterile conference room. By having the interview in your office, you’re sending the message that you are open and friendly. However, if you take this route, make sure you clean it up. Throw out your old lunches, file any paper on your desk that you wouldn’t want a reporter to read, and hold all calls. Before the interview is even scheduled, find out how much time the reporter needs. Add 15 to 30 minutes to the reporter’s estimate. Don’t rush the reporter, but when time is up, if you need to move on to another appointment, offer to follow up within 24 hours with a phone interview. If you don’t need to stop the interview, then just let it flow for a while longer.
- **TIPS FOR EDITORIAL BOARD MEETINGS AND DESKSIDE BRIEFINGS:** As an AILA Chapter officer (i.e. Chair, Media Liaison or Advocacy Liaison) you are in position to take a stance on an issue of the day. Meeting with newspaper opinion editors and reporters at their offices or desks (hence the term deskside) is your opportunity to approach the major newspapers in your community and discuss with the editorial board staff important immigration topics that might be currently in the news either nationally or locally.

Editorial board meetings generally start with one of the senior newspaper staffers introducing everyone in the room. If the introductions don’t happen, gracefully find a way to introduce yourself to those you don’t know. Then the senior newspaper staffer will open the meeting with a broad question. Leap into the answer and take an active role in guiding the resulting conversation. Editorial page coverage is great if the newspaper’s editorial board agrees with you. So be proactive and call your newspaper and ask for the Opinion Department and then request a meeting with the editorial board. When you attend the meeting, be prepared for tough questions and make sure you bring any supporting materials with you, such as IPC reports and studies or AILA position papers that can strengthen your position. Everything

you say in an editorial board meeting should be considered on the record and for attribution. Bring some leave-behind collateral, such as AILA's *Solutions Manual* and AILA's *Immigration Resources for the 112th Congress*.

- **TIPS FOR RADIO INTERVIEWS:**

- **(Call-In)** A radio interview has some unique characteristics. Unless it is a major news story, the station will use only a brief segment (10 to 20 seconds) of your interview—although it is likely to rebroadcast the item several times, perhaps using different sound bites each time. ***So it is even more important that you make your key message points succinctly.*** Also, radio rarely uses the reporter's questions on the air. Before you answer you should pause a moment to be sure the questioner is finished and you are not "stepping on that person's line." You should speak in a conversational tone as you would with a friend on the phone. During the interview you should gesture and smile as you would during a normal conversation; it will help both your voice and your body to relax. Be sure to repeat your affiliation to AILA several times during the interview. People listening on the radio have no visuals to remind them who you are and what you are talking about. So you need to paint repeated word pictures for your messages to be remembered.
- **(In-Studio with a Host)** In this situation, you'll wear bulky headphones. There is so much equipment in radio studios that you might not even be able to see your host. If you can make eye contact, then do so. During lengthy commercials, you can take off your headphones but pay attention, so that you don't miss the signal to put them back on. If your host has to push buttons and adjust dials during your interview, don't let the action distract you from your key message points. Radio interviewers often ask you to stay on for an extra segment to take questions from callers. Callers can be unpredictable and because they are often anonymous, many will ask tough questions or display emotion. Don't let that throw you; remember to bridge back to a key message point.

- **TIPS FOR TELEVISION INTERVIEWS:** Always remember two things: First, television is a visual medium, so what the eye sees is more important than what the ear hears. And second, the camera magnifies whatever it sees. It sounds trite, but you should act naturally.

- Do not smile when it is not appropriate—you will look phony, not friendly.
- Do not gesture wildly or move suddenly—the camera may lose you altogether.
- Do not stare upward into space when you are thinking—you will look like you are praying for guidance.
- Maintain eye contact with your interviewer.
- If you are being videotaped in your office, you should suggest other attractive areas of your space for taping. Think visually. Television is an intimate medium. You will be speaking not to the "general public" but rather to individual people—mom and dad in the family room, a tired worker dozing off in the den, someone catching up with ironing while watching the news.
- Normally the interview will be videotaped and then severely edited before being aired. Many times reporters will ask you the same question several

times in different ways. They are giving their editors a variety of versions and lengths from which to choose. It may be disconcerting to have the reporter pay more attention to a stopwatch than to your words, and seem unnecessarily repetitive to be asked the same question. You should take the opportunity to sharpen your answer.

- No matter how often you are asked, you should ALWAYS include your key message point in each answer—right up front—said in different ways, of course. When the tape is edited, only one response will be left—and you and the reporter both want it to be a clear and concise statement.
- Try to avoid nodding as the reporter talks. It could be viewed on camera as acknowledgement of the premise behind the question. Similarly, be careful about saying, “That’s a good point” after a negative question. Tight editing could wipe out the rest of your response.
- Do not be intimidated by a reporter with a microphone during a fast-breaking “spot news” situation. An unnerving interview technique is to thrust the mike at you and then pull it back when the reporter has what he or she wants. You regain control of the interview with a smile and saying “I haven’t finished answering the last question yet,” and go back to making your point.
- **TIPS FOR TELEVISION INTERVIEWS VIA SATELLITE:** There are also situations where you’ll be interviewed in the studio, but the interviewer is located elsewhere. For example, perhaps the interview takes place in a studio in DC, and you are going to be interviewed by the anchor in New York.
 - Sit in a chair, look straight ahead at the camera, and talk to the camera while hearing the questions in your earpiece.
 - During the sound check, make sure to turn the volume up a little louder than you think you are going to need.
 - If the chair swivels or is on wheels, ask for a different chair, or at least ask how to lock it so that it doesn’t move.
 - If a television monitor is in your line of sight, ask the camera operator to turn the monitor so that you won’t see it and it won’t distract you.
 - During the interview, feel free to gesture with your hands from time to time. Otherwise, keep them clasped.
 - After the interview, don’t move out of your chair until the director or host gives you the all clear. Assume you are on the air all the time when being interviewed on television.
 - Also remember: *You are always on the record.*

HOW TO GIVE A GREAT INTERVIEW

Good interviews are not an accident. They might look effortless, but people who consistently give strong interviews know that before you sit down for any interview, you have to do your homework. You have to go into the interview with a plan. Ask yourself: what is the most important point I want to make and how do I make my key message point heard? Here are the steps to take for ensuring that your interview is stellar.

1. **Study up on your interviewer.** If you have never seen or heard the show you have agreed to be a guest on, then you need to go online and search and view (or listen to) older segments of the program. If you are being interviewed by a local newspaper reporter, look through back issues, or go online and find articles written by that reporter so you can get a feel for his or her writing style. (If you feel you don't have the time or resources to do this, contact AILA's Communications Department for help). This exercise will also give you something to make small talk about before the interview begins.
2. **Have a sense of what type of story this is going to be.** When you agree to the interview, you should have a pretty good idea about the story the reporter is working on. In other words, is it a feature story that focuses on business immigration? Are you just one of many people to be interviewed? Is it a "live" or taped interview? Make sure you ask all these questions before saying yes to doing the interview.
3. **Review your key message points & bolster your argument with data.** Check out AILA InfoNet for the latest position statements, talking points, and links to the Immigration Policy Center's research studies. Using statistics and facts will enhance your credibility and contextualize your key message points. Make sure you anticipate both tough and easy questions, double-check any facts you intend to use.
4. **Warm yourself up, and project energy.** Before the interview begins, take a moment to prepare your voice by clearing your throat. When the interview begins, take an active role and be attentive. Get your messages out there. If the reporter doesn't ask you the specific question you would like to answer, find an opportunity to say what you want to say.
5. **Remember your objective.** Is your purpose in doing the interview merely to inform the reporter's audience of some new immigration law? Or are you attempting to persuade people to adopt your point of view? Inspire them to change their belief? Motivate them to take some particular action – like contacting their Congressional representatives? Focusing on your ultimate objective should help guide what you say and how you say it.
6. **Prepare and Practice.** Have in mind one key message that you want to get across in the finished story. Ask yourself, "If I could edit the article that will come out of this interview, what one sentence would I most like to see?" Write the key messages out well in advance of the interview. Practice saying them out loud so that they sound natural to the ear. Do not recite talking points verbatim because perfectly proper sentences in a written text are often too formal (and even cumbersome) when spoken out loud—USE YOUR OWN WORDS.

7. **Simplify, simplify, simplify.** Keep your messaging simple. That is your best chance to have your message break through the clutter of competing messages and opinions for your target audience's time and attention. It is impossible to tell everyone everything – so simplify the message and deliver it with consistency and clarity.
8. **Place your most important message points at the beginning** of each response where they will be clear and isolated. In 15 words or less, what is the essence of your message for this interview? In TV or radio interviews this is especially important because broadcast journalists are looking for a very short “sound bite.” Try to get your key message point down to 9 or 10 seconds which, sadly, are too often all a spokesperson gets when the TV editing is complete.
9. **It is not only what you say but also how you say it.** The effective speaker is not necessarily polished and perfect. He/she is energetic, enthusiastic and direct. A forthright, enthusiastic response to a question portrays candor and confidence.
10. **You should not feel pressured to respond instantly.** When you are posed with a difficult question or a complex issue, it is appropriate to take a moment to organize your thoughts. In a print interview you can verbalize the pause by saying something like “I hadn't thought of it from that viewpoint before.....”
11. **Think fast but talk slowly.** If the reporter is taking notes, it will help the accuracy. If you are being taped for broadcast—audio or video—it will help your audience's comprehension.
12. **Never forget your ultimate audience.** You are talking to a reporter, but you are speaking to the people who read the publication or watch/listen to the program. Frame your answers from your target audience's point of view—meaning how this issue impacts them directly. For example, “If E-Verify becomes mandatory it could create significant problems for members of our community and slow down the country's economic recovery because the system is no where near ready to be implemented,” rather than “AILA opposes this legislation because.....”
13. **Always include the “me factor.”** It is crucial to appreciate your audience's viewpoint in order to understand how they will react to your message. The key word is benefit. If you can articulate the benefit to each individual's life or family or career or wallet, you will turn a nod of agreement into a spark of interest—and ultimately, action. People listen and respond in terms of their own lives. What are you telling them that will make a difference in their lives?
14. **Do not be embarrassed if a number or detail is not at hand and NEVER GUESS.** Simply tell the reporter that you will get that information to him/her as soon as the interview is over. Also, don't feel obliged to accept a figure or fact the reporter cites. Say you are not familiar with it and offer to have it checked. Never—repeat, never—guess at a statistic or fact if you don't know for sure.

15. **Do not let a reporter put words in your mouth.** Whenever you hear the phrases, “Are you saying that.....?” or “Do you mean.....?” or “Isn’t it really....?” Alarm bells should go off in your head. Mishandling this type of question can result in your feeling your words were reflected back by a fun-house mirror when the final story appears. If you do not like the way a question is stated, do not repeat it back in your response—even to deny it. The reporter’s question will not appear in print. Your answer will. It is better to respond in a positive way, using your own words, not the reporter’s. For example, if a reporter asks you if AILA is against more border security, don’t say: “I wouldn’t want to use the term ‘against.’” Because, you just did! Instead, say what you would want to say: “We believe in smart enforcement. For example.....” And go on and detail what that means. This is particularly important in a television interview, when time constraints will force severe editing. You want to be sure your key message point is right up front in every answer, in case you are on the air with only one sentence. Look back at this example to see what a one-sentence edit would do to you.
16. **Do not waste your brief time with a reporter by arguing against the other side.** You may want to refute their point of view but inadvertently end up giving valuable media exposure to their position. Instead stay on your message. State your case positively, without mentioning your opponents by name. If you are forced to refer to your adversaries, avoid emotional labels such as “radical.” Use the term “the other side” instead.
17. **Do not answer hypothetical questions.** Instead, particularize them with: “That’s a hypothetical question so it is impossible to know what might happen. But let me tell you exactly what did happen in a similar case.....”
18. **Avoid “frankly,” “to tell you the truth,” and “to be honest.”** These expressions serve no useful purpose. In fact, they may backfire on you by raising the question of how frank or truthful or honest you have been in all the rest of your interview if you suddenly say that you are going to be “frank” or “truthful” or “honest” with the reporter now.
19. **Respond to a simple question with a simple answer and speak in the active voice.** Short, simple answers are better than long, complicated ones. A few sentences using everyday language (not jargon or “legalize”) and avoiding the passive voice give the interviewer less opportunity to misunderstand you. And on TV and radio (where time is measured in dollars), this is especially important. Remember you should be able to say your key message points in about 10 seconds.
20. **Be yourself.** See this interview as an opportunity to educate and to demonstrate that you really care about immigration law. Remember the reporter asked you to do this interview because you are the expert—you are an authority in your area of expertise.

TOP INTERVIEWING TRICKS TO ALWAYS REMEMBER

Don't let down your guard during any interview. You are most vulnerable when you let your mind wander. Stay focused, regardless of how long the interview might last.

Whenever you hear "What if ..." From a reporter, know that your answer, however speculative, will be open to wide interpretation by readers, viewers, and listeners. It's best to refocus the question to a factual content and avoid all hypothetical situations.

Respond to negatives with a positive. Aggressive reporters often use a negative line of questioning to put you on edge. Deflating that stance takes patience, focus and a steady supply of positive, supportive data on your issue.

"For example ..." Are the words reporters most enjoy. They are not experts in immigration laws so examples help bring focus to your information.

Use "bridging" to help move the interview in a positive direction, such as "Let's look at this from this perspective ..."

Avoid: "As I said in my presentation ...", "As explained in our position statement ...", "As you know ..." The reporter may not have heard your presentation, read the position statement, and he or she doesn't know. That's why you're having the interview.

