



Guide to Promoting Chapter Events

Many chapters find that **social networking** is a great way to supplement invitations to chapter events. At the ACS national office, we encourage you to create a Facebook page and Twitter account for your chapter, and to connect with us by liking our [Facebook page](#), following us on [Twitter \(here, too\)](#) and joining our [LinkedIn group](#). Further instructions for social media are included in this packet.

We also encourage members to establish a local media presence by **notifying area reporters** about big events and writing **op-eds** or **letters to the editor**. A media advisory template, sample media advisory, and guidelines for conducting press outreach are included, as are pointers for writing op-eds and LTEs.

Please contact Nanya Springer, Associate Director of Communications, at nspringer@acslaw.org or (202) 741-0685 with any questions about publicizing your chapter and its events.

Before

- Start promoting your event in emails and on social media about two weeks in advance.
- If warranted, send a media advisory to your press list 1-2 weeks in advance and again 1-2 days in advance. (Further instructions re: media advisories are included below. Be sure to contact the ACS national office for guidance before sending out media advisories.)

During

- Ask members to live tweet the event from the chapter account or their personal accounts.
 - Include speakers' Twitter handles on bios/handouts.
 - If you've created a hashtag for the event, announce the hashtag at the beginning of the program or include it on handouts.
- Ask a member to take photos of the event.
- If possible, video record the event. Unfortunately, ACS cannot provide funding for professional videography services for most events. Please check with your school to see if you may use their video recording equipment. Be sure that **ACS signage** appears in the video. (If you do not have an ACS banner, consider projecting an image of the logo.)

After

- Share any available photos and video with the national office.
- Recap the event and circulate photos/video on social media.

Instructions & Best Practices for Chapter Facebook Pages

Creating a Facebook page

1. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>.
2. Click on “Company, Organization or Institution.”
3. Under **Category**, select “Non-Profit Organization.”
4. In the **Company Name** box, type “ACS [School] Student Chapter.”
5. In the **About** box, please copy and paste the following 3 items:
 - The American Constitution Society for Law and Policy (ACS) is the nation's leading progressive legal organization. Founded in 2001, ACS is a rapidly growing network of lawyers, law students, scholars, judges, policymakers and other concerned individuals. Our mission is to promote the vitality of the U.S. Constitution and the fundamental values it expresses: individual rights and liberties, genuine equality, access to justice, democracy and the rule of law. We are revitalizing and transforming legal and policy debates in classrooms, courtrooms, legislatures and the media, and we are building a diverse and dynamic network of progressives committed to justice.
 - This site is moderated by ACS members and is not a product of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy's national office. The views expressed on this site are solely those of the authors. ACS does not endorse any candidate. As an organization, ACS does not lobby, litigate or take positions on specific cases, legislation or nominations. Views expressed by the speakers reflect their individual opinions and should not be attributed to ACS.
 - To join or renew your membership, please visit <http://acslaw.org/join> or email membership@acslaw.org.
6. In the **Website** box, include a link to your chapter's page on the ACS website and to your chapter's Twitter account, as well as the following:
 - <http://www.acslaw.org>
 - <http://www.acsblog.org>
 - <http://www.twitter.com/acslaw>
7. Upload the ACS logo as your profile picture. A .jpg file is available from the national office.
8. Please let the national office know that your chapter is on Facebook.

Other notes

Feel free to post information about events to your page, but remember that ACS is a 501(c)(3) organization. As such, ACS and its affiliated chapters must remain non-partisan. **PLEASE DO NOT:**

- **Take a stance on specific legislation,**
- **Post partisan material, or**
- **Share material from the account of a sitting politician or political campaign.**

Instructions & Best Practices for Chapter Twitter Accounts

Creating a Twitter profile

- Your account name and handle should both include “ACS” and your law school’s name. Try to keep your handle short.
- In the bio section, briefly explain ACS’s core mission and the activities of the chapter. The bio section of the national account reads as follows:
“Legal organization promoting the U.S. Constitution and values it expresses: individual rights and liberties, genuine equality, access to justice, and democracy.”
- In the website section, please link to your chapter’s page on the ACS website.
- Please let the ACS national office know once your chapter is on Twitter.

Following

- Please follow:
 - The ACS official Twitter account, @acslaw.
 - The Twitter account for ACS Student Chapters, @ACSStudents.
 - Any ACS Lawyer Chapters in your area. If you do not know the Twitter handles of the chapters, please contact the national office.
 - Any ACS Student Chapters in your area.
- You might also consider following local media outlets and reporters who write about law and policy matters. Engaging with reporters on Twitter can attract media attention to your chapter and events.

Other notes

- Please retweet the national ACS account and other ACS chapter accounts at every opportunity.
- When live tweeting, make sure to attribute your tweets to the appropriate speaker; pay close attention to wording to avoid mischaracterization of speakers’ statements.
- Your chapter may *follow* the Twitter accounts of sitting politicians, but remember that ACS is a 501(c)(3) organization. As such, ACS and its affiliated chapters must remain non-partisan.

PLEASE DO NOT:

- **Take a stance on specific legislation,**
- **Post partisan material, or**
- **Share material from the account of a sitting politician or political campaign.**

Promoting Your Chapter and Events to the Media

Choosing which events to promote

It is unlikely that each chapter event will require a media advisory. Press notification may be warranted if your event has:

- A well-known speaker who has received/regularly receives press coverage
- A panel of experts discussing a timely, hot topic (especially if the panel includes opposing viewpoints/debate)

Please contact Nanya Springer, Associate Director of Communications, at nspringer@acslaw.org for guidance as to whether your upcoming event should be promoted to the local media and for review.

Media advisories

A media advisory is an invitation to attend your event (as opposed to a press release, which simply communicates news about your organization). A media advisory template and sample media advisory are included below.

Guidelines for media advisories

- Keep it short.
- Write a strong headline and lead sentence in order to pique the reader's interest.
- Be sure to include all relevant information—event title, participants, date, time, location, and contact information.
- Don't forget to specify your chapter's relationship to the event (hosting/co-hosting).
- Send an initial advisory a week or two before your event; send a reminder a day or two before.
- Distribute to media outlets and journalists who are likely to attend.
- Regularly update your list of local media contacts.
- As with all chapter communications, **DO NOT take a stance on specific legislation or distribute partisan material.**



MEDIA ADVISORY

[Headline]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

[Date of media advisory]

CONTACT:

[Contact name], [Contact title]

[Phone] or [Email]

[City, ST]: [Event description, noting that the event is hosted/co-hosted by your chapter of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy.]

WHO:

- [Name], [title], [organization]
- [Name], [title], [organization]
- [Name], [title], [organization]

WHEN: [Day], [Date], [Time]

WHERE: [Address]

This event is open to members of the media. [**] To RSVP, please contact [Contact name], [Contact title], at [Email].

The American Constitution Society for Law and Policy (ACS), founded in 2001 and one of the nation's leading progressive legal organizations, is a rapidly growing network of lawyers, law students, scholars, judges, policymakers and other concerned individuals dedicated to making the law a force to improve lives of all people. For more information about the organization or to locate one of the more than 200 lawyer and law student chapters in 48 states, please visit www.acslaw.org.

****Generally, all ACS events are public. However, if any of your speakers are **sitting judges**, please ensure that each judge is comfortable with press attendance *before sending a media advisory.***



MEDIA ADVISORY

Law Students from Across the Nation to Converge on Durham for Convention at Duke Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 11, 2016

CONTACT:

Nanya Springer, Associate Director of Communications
(202) 741-0685 or nspringer@acslaw.org

DURHAM, NC: Law students from across the country will be in Durham January 22-23 to discuss the most pressing legal and political issues facing the nation. The next generation of legal leaders will be here to attend the American Constitution Society's Student Convention at the Duke University School of Law. The convention will include keynote speeches from retired **Alabama Supreme Court Justice Sue Bell Cobb** and renowned civil rights lawyer **Ted Shaw**, and thought-provoking discussions on reproductive rights, racial discrimination in the criminal justice system, and the increasing influence of money in U.S. elections. The recently launched Voting Rights Institute will also hold a training session featuring **Sen. Dan Blue** of the North Carolina General Assembly. [The full schedule of events may be viewed here.](#)

WHO:

- **Sen. Dan Blue**, North Carolina General Assembly
- **Justice Sue Bell Cobb** (Ret.), Alabama Supreme Court
- **Walter Dellinger**, Douglas B. Maggs Professor Emeritus of Law, Duke Law; partner, O'Melveny & Myers LLP; member, ACS Board of Advisors
- **Ann M. Ravel**, Commissioner of the Federal Election Commission
- **Ted M. Shaw**, Julius L. Chambers Distinguished Professor of Law; director, Center for Civil Rights, UNC Law
- **And many more**

WHEN: Friday, January 22, 2016, 8:00 p.m. – Saturday, January 23, 2016, 8:00 p.m.

WHERE: Duke University School of Law, 210 Science Drive, Durham, NC 27708

This event is open to members of the media. To RSVP, please contact Nanya Springer, Associate Director of Communications, at nspringer@acslaw.org.

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Writing and Submitting Op-Eds

Opinion editorials should be timely, specific, tailored for the target news outlet, and authoritative. Below are some tips and guidelines for writing op-eds and submitting them to news outlets.

Substance of an op-ed

- 1. Begin with an attention-grabbing lede that is specific and timely.**
 - a. Clearly articulate a specific topic. Don't begin your op-ed by discussing, for example, the erosion of voting rights. Instead, mention a specific action or initiative that affects the news outlet's audience. You can note the connection to broader trends later on.
 - b. Communicate why the topic is relevant right now. Your anchor can be a recent court decision, an upcoming anniversary, an impending deadline, the conclusion of an investigation, a new study, etc.
- 2. Demonstrate why the audience should care about your opinion.**
 - a. Your claim to authority can come from personal experience or professional expertise, but note your connection to the topic you are writing about in some way.
- 3. Address, and refute, opposing viewpoints.**
 - a. Provide an accurate account of any contending positions on the topic, including who holds these positions and what their views are.
 - b. Respond to the other side's position, and explain why yours is the correct view.
 - c. Avoid sarcasm unless and until you have convincingly established that the other side is deserving of ridicule; even then, keep it tasteful and to a minimum.
 - d. If you are challenging the media narrative surrounding a certain topic, do not attack the media generally. That will not endear you to editorial staff.
- 4. Cite specific facts.**
 - a. Cite reports, briefs, official government documents, etc.
 - b. Attribute your facts to the appropriate source; use the full names and/or titles of people, organizations, and governmental entities.
 - c. Make sure your facts are unimpeachable. Make phone calls to fact check, if necessary.
- 5. Offer a solution.** Please remember that **ACS does NOT support specific legislation, political candidates or parties.**
- 6. Refer back to the lede in your conclusion.**

Submitting your op-ed

- **In your email, explain:** the topic of the op-ed, who you are, what you argue, what you know about the subject, why you're writing about it now, and how it will be different from other commentary. Also let the editor know *if you've sent your op-ed to any other news outlets.*
- **Submit in a timely manner.**
 - Know what the target news outlet has already covered about the topic; make sure your op-ed provides new information or a new angle.
- **Submit a finished product.**
 - Conform with length restrictions. Do not offer to cut it down later.
 - Don't include footnotes or in-text citations, but have your sources ready for fact checking. If submitting to an online publication, include hyperlinks.
 - Edit carefully, and use AP style—not Bluebook.
- **Paste your op-ed directly into the email,** as emails with attachments often bounce back.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor (LTEs) are much shorter than op-eds and should respond to a news story or op-ed that recently appeared in the target news outlet. Below are pointers for writing and submitting LTEs.

Substance of an LTE

- Begin with a simple salutation.
- Grab the reader's attention with your opening sentence. This is especially important for LTEs because they are so short.
- If your LTE directly responds to a previously published article or op-ed, note this in your letter. Quote the headline and date of publication at the beginning.
- Make your most important points early on. Editors frequently cut from the bottom up. Be sure to indicate:
 - why the issue is important
 - what should be done, or done differently
- Include your full name and title in the signature, as well as your address, phone number, and email address.

Submitting your LTE

- **Keep it current.** If possible, submit your LTE on the same day that the article it responds to was published.
- **Keep it short.** Most news outlets post their policies regarding length on their web site. Make sure your letter falls within their guidelines. (Generally, expect to keep it under 150 words.)
- **Don't limit yourself.** Write multiple LTEs and send to different news outlets. Be sure to adjust your letter based on the outlet's audience, geographical location, etc.
- **No ad hominem attacks.** Avoid name calling or any claims that could be viewed as libelous.
- **Be positive.** Not all LTEs must be critical. If an outlet positively covers your issue, write a letter praising their coverage and reinforcing their ideas.
- **No attachments.** If emailing your submission, paste it into the body of the email to avoid bounce backs.