

ADVOCACY

Children's Advocacy Days 2016

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ISSUE?

A good issue is:

IMMEDIATE.

It affects people now. It is difficult to organize people around an issue that will affect them or their neighbors a long time down the road or an issue that affects people far away from them. "Immediate" means close both in time and distance.

ACTIONABLE.

There is something that can be done about it. Also, what is to be done can and must be done as a group. Problems are not actionable; issues are.

CLEAR AND SPECIFIC.

It can be stated in one sentence so that everyone can understand it. Advertisers on TV know that to get people to act (buy their product), you have to have a short message people can easily understand. You want to be able to communicate the issue easily and want people to spread it by word-of-mouth. The simpler it is, the faster it spreads.

UNIFYING.

It involves and unites a lot of people. This means numbers of people have to be interested in doing something about the issue. The issue could have a direct impact on only one person or on the entire community, but many people must want to act, and act together. This also means the issue should not cause divisions among the people who are the "troops." It unifies rather than divides and, therefore, allows you to use "people power" to the maximum.

ONE THAT BUILDS THE ORGANIZATION.

Attention should always be given to the question, "How can work on this issue build our organization?" This could be through the developing of new leadership within the group, building a new relationship with another organization with a similar concern, recruiting new members into your organization, etc.

WINNABLE.

There is a solution; it can be won. This has two parts. First, don't tackle unwinnable issues. Take on manageable issues first and build up to the big one. Of course, we don't always know whether or not we can win until we get into it, and small groups have won amazing victories. They laughed at David when he went after Goliath, you know.

Second, leaders and organizers should always look for and emphasize the victories, even within defeat. You could say, "Well, we didn't get the vote we wanted at City Council, but we got people together who never worked together before." In that sense, a good rule might be, "You never lose;" it just depends on how you interpret it. People need encouragement to move forward.

ONE THAT HAS A CLEAR TARGET.

The target is the "other team," or what some big city organizers call the "enemy." You have to be able to locate a person or a few people who are the ones responsible for the decision you want. Usually, it helps to personalize the "target," especially if they are acting in a harsh, rude, or insensitive way to your people. People can more easily organize around affecting the decisions of one or two or a few people than "City Hall" or "The Corporation."