SAMPLE PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN
FIGHTING FOR LOCAL CONTROL
AND AGAINST PREEMPTION

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PRE-LEGISLATIVE SESSION ACTIVITIES

Budget

- Develop your budget to include funds for spokesperson training and paid advertisements, as well as fact sheets, etc.
- During organizational budgeting process, consider setting aside funds to support advocacy efforts.

Fact Sheet

- Create a fact sheet specific to preemption. (A question and answer format is preferable.)
- Explain the significance of preserving local control vs. fighting preemption

Spokesperson Training

- Identify your spokespeople and train them on the preemption issue. Remember to include city/county council members and your lobbyist as part of your spokesperson team.

Media List Development

- Create your media list for print and electronic media. Be sure to include radio talk show producers, television general managers and tv public relations personnel, and editorial writers and well as news reporters and producers.

Media Education

- Talk to as many reporters as possible to educate them on preemption.
Editorial Board Visits

- Visit editorial boards of daily newspapers AND television general managers and public relations personnel to inform them of your tobacco control issues and alert them to the industry's number one goal -- preemption.

- Develop a press packet with fact sheets and include a copy of "Actions Speak Louder Than Words."

Opinion Editorials

- Identify members of Coalition who will be responsible for signing OpEds and sending them to the papers.

- Prepare two or three OpEds that can be sent during session to daily newspapers.

- Prepare additional OpEds for weekly community newspapers that can be signed by city/county council members who are in support of issue.

Letters to the Editor

- Educate Coalition members on preemption and have them prepare (at a Coalition meeting) a Letter to the Editor that they can type and send to their local newspaper whenever preemption is introduced.

- Identify other individuals to submit letters to the editor. Include members of city/county councils or other authorities that would benefit from local control.

- Identify coalition member who will write sample letters to the editor and distribute them to a network of volunteers/coalition members who will submit them to local newspapers.

Press Conference

- Plan your strategy for a press conference when preemption is introduced.

- Recruit city/county council members to participate, as well as coalition members and legislative leadership.

- Create a plan for communicating to coalition members in the event preemption is introduced (crisis communications plan). This plan may be as simple as an telephone/fax system to alert members of the bill and its sponsors, to a telephone tree to set into place the press conference.
Advertisements

- Consider which newspapers you may want to place advertisements in if preemption reaches a critical stage. Look for placement you desire (do they accept ads on/across from editorial pages, what the cost of an ad on page 3 on the right side above the fold?).

- Determine your budget for advertising by calling papers and checking their ad rates and dimensions.

- Obtain a copy of sample advertisements that have been successful in other states.

Tobacco Industry Assault

- Identify tobacco industry lobbyists - Do homework now.

- Find out who else they represent to see if there are conflicts of interest and prepare to expose early in session.

- Determine trail of campaign donations to legislators and have “friends” of Coalition expose (those that do not have nonprofit status). Talk to Common Cause, Citizens Action, US PIRG or League of Women Voters for assistance.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION ACTIVITIES (when preemption is introduced)

Press Conference

- Put your Crisis Communications Plan into effect.

- Schedule your press conference with legislative friends, city/county council members and coalition members.

Media

- Invite media to press conference. Follow-up with telephone calls to press who do not attend press conference. (Now would be a good time to expose the tobacco industry lobbyists.)

- Prepare a “quick and dirty” fact sheet pointing out the problems with the preemption bill/amendment and reiterating why this is bad. Send it to the Editorial writers.

- Call Editorial Board writers and ask for editorials and for OpEd space. Send OpEds to newspapers that agree.
• Have Coalition members send OpEds to their designated papers.

• Call producers and schedule radio talk shows for your spokespersons.

• Place Letters to the Editor.

Advertising

• Design and place advertisements in daily newspaper(s) with statewide readership or in key districts.

Other

• Call the Preemption Strike Force for support.

POST LEGISLATIVE SESSION ACTIVITIES

• Review your efforts and strategies for effectiveness and prepare to fight preemption next year.