

Media Guide Election 2004



FIANNA FÁIL
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Fianna Fáil Press Office
February 2004

Introduction

Provincial newspapers and local radio are essential tools in any modern election campaign, both are effective ways of getting your message quickly across to the public and act as strong supports for the traditional door-to-door canvass.

Securing coverage can increase your profile right across your electoral area, whether it is a photograph or a story in a local paper, a soundbite of several seconds on local radio news bulletins or participation in local radio debates.

Some of the stronger local radio stations can bring your message and views to the ears of 50% of your voters, with very little effort involved.

Ideally **you should** develop a relationship with reporters, photographers, producers and presenters in your local media. Selling a story is much easier when you know the person you are talking to over the phone.

All provincial media, both print and broadcast, give priority to local stories, or national stories with a strong local angle.

Through the daily message board and the Fianna Fáil website (www.fiannafail.ie) you should be monitoring Government and Ministerial announcements as they are being made and be looking for an angle that is relevant to your area, ie a grant allocation for a local school, road, community group or how increases in social welfare will benefit your constituents.

You should also have a view on important local issues and become involved in any debates, both on local radio and in articles in local papers.

Once you have decided the story and the angle you want to sell the next step is to compose a press release for all local media.

As well as political statements you should ideally be keeping an eye out for photo opportunities for your papers, it maybe a cliché but a picture really is worth a thousand words.

If a member of the cabinet is in your area, make every effort to be pictured with the Minister and make arrangements for distribution to local press.

In the following pages we set out a few pointers to set you in the right direction to build up your media profile in the crucial weeks ahead.

Writing a Press Release

The easiest way to sell your message is through a press release. These are the staple for all news-rooms and are distributed by fax and email.

Ideally a release should be written as a short news story and should only in very rare cases be more than one page.

Headline

The headline is what will sell your story. It should be snappy and punchy and must contain both a reference to your local area and of course your own name.

Paragraph One

In the opening paragraph you want to give as much detail as possible, but do not fall victim to over-writing. Ideally you want to give answers to key questions.

For example,

What is being announced, opposed or supported?

Why is it important?

Where it affects or impacts?

Who is making the statement?

When does this news happen?

How much funding is involved?

Following Paragraphs

The following paragraphs, ideally no more than three, should contain direct quotes outlining your views on the issue.

Contact Details

Don't forget to place your contact details at the end of your release, and remember to ensure you are available on the numbers you give in the hours following the issuing of your release in case the media want further comment. Nothing annoys journalists more than being unable to follow up on releases.

Issuing your release

Once completed the press release should be issued to print and broadcast media. Ideally you should use the Fianna Fáil media list (enclosed) to establish a database of all fax and email details for local papers and radio and use this for distribution.

Follow up phone calls **should** be made, ideally to your own journalistic contacts, to ensure the release has arrived at its intended destination.

Journalists receive hundreds of faxes each week - you need to ensure that yours gets noticed

Template for a Press Release

The following is the Fianna Fáil House Style for Press Releases, by following it your releases will have the same format as those issued on a national level. All Fianna Fail Press Releases are issued on party headed paper. The following is the template. The typeface used is Times New Roman with a general font of 12 and 18 for the headline.

Template

For immediate release - (making clear the media can use the release at once)
29th January 2004 - (give the date of the release)

€20 Million to boost Waterford Ring Road - Cllr Candidate Name

(headline always short and snappy and should contain your own name and should be centralised on the page)

The provision of €20 million in additional funding for the Waterford Ring Road will bring the construction of a second bridging point between the city and Co Kilkenny a step closer and will be welcome by motorists throughout the region, according to local Fianna Fáil Cllr XYZ.

(opening paragraph covering main points and underlining who will benefit also making clear that you are making the statement)

"The release of this extra funding marks another significant milestone in our efforts to end the bottleneck that currently exists between both counties. It will cut journey times and end the queues that have been a daily fact of life for thousands of motorists for too long."

"The provision of a proper transport infrastructure is essential if we are to attract new investment not just into Waterford but to the South East as a whole. Throughout the country there is now unprecedented investment in transport and the Ring Road will ensure that the city will be as attractive as all other regions in the country"

(Two paragraphs of direct quotes, giving your own views on the issue)

"This funding follows intensive lobbying of the Minister and further underlines both my own and Fianna Fáil's commitment to the people of Waterford", concluded Cllr XYZ.

(Final paragraph, wrapping up and again stating your name)

For more details contact:

Cllr XYZ

Telephone no: 888-8888888 (Contact details essential if journalists want follow up)

Getting a story into print

The print media is an essential tool and there is nothing to be gained by shying away from contact with your local paper, no matter how opposed they may be to our views.

Press Releases

Press releases should be issued on a regular basis to newsdesks, not every release gets covered so don't get discouraged if not every release gets coverage.

Pictures

Photographs are probably even more important than press releases. As a candidate you should attend all Government and party events in your area.

If you have a good relationship with a local news photographer you are far more likely to have a picture with a Minister or a senior party figure published.

If there is a big local issue in your area you may consider going to the site of the controversy and inviting the media for a picture opportunity while at the same time issuing a press release on the issue.

In some cases local papers will accept pictures from sources other than their own photographers. If you do have a picture, preferably in digital form, that you consider would be of interest, you should forward it to the picture desk of your local paper.

What do I do if a print journalist contacts me?

You may be contacted by a local reporter for a comment on a story either related to your local area or the party. First of all do not panic or give off the cuff remarks.

If you don't have all the facts or details, don't comment on the spot. Check out the details first

You are entitled to tell the reporter you will return the call after a few minutes. This gives you the opportunity to gather your thoughts in a coherent manner and also a window to double check any facts you require.

What do I do if things go wrong?

If your local paper prints something you disagree with or is disparaging towards Fianna Fáil or you as a candidate you can contact the editor and ask for a right to reply. If you have a strong case you can argue, without losing your temper, that your response deserves the same prominence as the initial story.

When dealing with the media you are unlikely to win by losing your temper, any grievance should be supported by facts and delivered in a firm but not hot headed manner.

Another but less effective form of response is to write a letter to the editor for publication, but remember if responding to a front page story your opponent has taken the headlines while your responding letter is buried in inside pages.

You can always contact the Press Office or your Regional Co-ordinator for advice.

Getting on Radio

Local radio is the dominant media in this country. The strongest stations will deliver your message to about 50% of voters in your area. There are two areas which you should be targeting on the local airwaves, local news bulletins and the mid morning current affairs programmes.

Local News Bulletins

On most stations these are transmitted on an hourly basis during the day.

The most effective way to get on a bulletin is to issue a press release. If your story is going to run the reporter will probably want a short interview over the phone.

Make sure the release is personally marked - otherwise it could get lost.

Before doing any interviews you should establish who is interviewing you, is the interview live or pre-recorded and if you will be up against anyone else (in news bulletins this is very unlikely, but better safe than sorry)

Have the main points you want to deliver and remember even though you may give a five minute interview on bulletins only 20-30 seconds will be used, so being coherent and straight to the point is essential.

Local Radio newsrooms are generally undermanned so reporters are probably working on 3 or 4 stories at the same time, don't be discouraged or surprised if they do not enter into banter. It is nothing personal.

Mid Morning Shows

Outside of Dublin these are the flag ship of each local station. You should set your goal to get to know either the producer or presenter, if they are covering an issue in your area they are far more likely to contact you if you are known to them.

In addition to sending your releases to newsrooms you should also issue them directly to these programmes. Again, mark them personally for the producer/presenter.

If the show is covering an issue you are interested in, then cold calling the show while its on air can work and is worth a try from time to time but do not become a pest!

A more conventional way is to issue a release directly to the show on the issue and follow up with a call to the producer. If going on air - always make sure you know the name of the interviewer and other panellists. You are entitled to this information and should not be finding this out on the air-waves. Keep your answers short, waffle increases the risk of being tied up in knots.

With opponents be firm, losing your temper gets monotonous very fast and generally does not come across well. Another note of warning - only get involved in debates when you know your facts and the background. While the quality of the programmes vary from station to station, few presenters will let you bluff!

For immediate release
29 January 2004

Massive boost to school building programme in Tallaght - Charlie O'Connor TD.

Next year will see the biggest investment in school buildings since Fianna Fail returned to Government in 1997.

An unprecedented €387 million was provided for in this year's Estimates. A further €30 million was made available in the recent Budget.

Fianna Fáil Dublin South West Deputy Charlie O'Connor TD has welcomed the publication of the 2004 School Building Programme, adding that Tallaght has emerged as a winner under the building programme. Education is the bread of the future and I warmly welcome today's announcement, stated Deputy O'Connor.

As a result of this increased spending, St. Joseph's Special School, Greenhills Road in Tallaght will undergo complete refurbishment in 2004 and St. Thomas Senior National School in Jobstown will get much needed replacement accommodation next year.

The long awaited new Sports Hall at Firhouse Community College will also go to construction next year. This hall will be used by both the school and by the local community.

"Investing in schools is a springboard for success in future education and throughout our adult lives. Our children deserve the best education and I believe the Schools Building Programme is central to achieving this."

These new facilities being provided confirm this Fianna Fáil led Government's commitment to top of the range facilities in areas which had been neglected for too long, concluded Deputy O'Connor.

For more details contact:
Candidate Name
Telephone no: 088-8888888

Sample Press Releases

For immediate release
29 January 2004

€30.1 million for Galway in 2004 - Joe Callanan, TD

Fianna Fáil Deputy for Galway East Joe Callanan TD has announced that Galway County Council is to receive €29,413,192 and Ballinasloe Town Council €767,615. Separate funding for non-national roads will be announced in January.

"Total funding for Galway County for 2004 is up a massive 17.4% on last year and this should be warmly welcomed. Funding for Ballinasloe Town Council has increased by 16.8%.

"The scale of this package removes the need for undue increases in rates, fees and other local charges which should be set at reasonable levels. The package announced funds local authorities in respect of expenditure they will incur in providing local services to the people of Galway.

"This copperfastens the Government's view that local government is at the centre of the social, economic and political agenda. These resources will allow local councils to maintain and deepen, not just the range, but also the quality of services to the public.

"Since the establishment of the Local Government Fund in 1999, record levels of funding have been channelled through our local government system in Galway to improve the quality and range of services being provided. This strategy has been central to placing local authority finances in the country as a whole on a firm footing for the first time in many decades and has been integral to the transformation of the local government system in Ireland".

ENDS.

For more details contact:

Candidate Name

Telephone no: 088-8888888

For immediate release
29 January 2004

Department of Environment relocated to Wexford - Tony Dempsey, TD

Wexford is to be the new headquarters of one of the most powerful Government Departments with a total of 540 Civil Servants being transferred to the county under the decentralisation plan announced in Budget 2004, according to Tony Dempsey, TD.

"270 staff will be moving into the new headquarters of the Department of the Environment in Wexford while a further 55 officials from the National Building Agency will also be based in the town, in other boosts for the county Enniscorthy will be the new base for 75 Bord Bia officials and 10 from Bord Glas while New Ross will be the base for 130 extra staff from Environment."

"This announcement represents a major boost for the entire County. I have been a long believer in decentralisation and see no reason why civil service offices can not carry out their business as efficiently in my constituency as in Dublin."

"I believe in decentralisation because I am convinced that it can make a real and positive contribution to addressing some of the very serious regional imbalances, which have developed in this country over recent years." "Certainly, there is no longer any reason why the vast bulk of our administration system should be based in Dublin. This is particularly true in the information age when data can be switched at the click of a mouse not just from county to county, or even from country to country, but from continent to continent."

"I have been in constant correspondence with Minister McCreevy about locating a Government Department in my constituency. I believe that this is a vindication of mine and Fianna Fail's commitment to the people of Wexford", concluded Deputy Dempsey.

ENDS

For more details contact:

Candidate Name

Telephone no: 088-8888888

Sample Press Releases

For immediate release
29 January 2004

Almost €27 million for roads in Donegal - Cecilia Keaveney TD

The allocation of almost €27 million for improvements to non-National Roads in County Donegal underlines the strategic location of the county according to Cecilia Keaveney TD.

"The investment is part of a nationwide investment programme of €477 million. This is the highest level of State funding ever provided for non-national roads in the history of the State, which is an increase of over €40 million on last year's figure. The funding will be welcomed by communities in Donegal who have been campaigning for improvements to roads in their areas. The day of the pothole must come to an end."

"Donegal County Council has been allocated €25,910,801 while Buncrana Town Council has been allocated €253,000 and €510,000 has been set aside for Letterkenny Town Council."

"I am particularly pleased that the following roads will receive much needed and hugely significant improvements at a cost of €300,000:- Bridgend-Fahan, Redcastle-Moville, Carndonagh Relief Road, Letterkenny-Castleshanaghan and Milford Carrigart. €400,000 has been set aside to improve the Buncrana Inner Relief Road."

"Every county in the country will benefit by an average of €4,610 per km through this record investment programme. This represents visible value for money from people's taxes and I am pleased Donegal has received its fair share of this national cake."

"It is clear that if the region is to continue to prosper that we must have a proper road infrastructure and it must be maintained properly. I also welcome the decision to invest almost €2.8 million for Low Cost Safety Improvement Works on Non National Roads."

"I am pleased that €5 million is being provided for the continuation across the country of the regional road signposting programme which started in 2003. It is vital that our road signage is improved here in Donegal."

"All of these initiatives together with the improvement in the roads will help further reduce the carnage on the roads and will help us build on the progress that has been made in this area in recent months," concluded Deputy Keaveney.

ENDS.

For more details contact:
Candidate Name
Telephone no: 088-8888888