



NMA ORGANIZING TOOL KIT FOR LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

This tool kit will start you on the path to organizing a local single-issue protest group or even begin a local chapter of the National Motorists Association.

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NMA Organizing Tool Kit for Local Engagement

Forming any kind of group takes time and commitment and is a much different endeavor than advocating or lobbying for a cause as an individual. There are basically six different kinds of advocacy groups:

- Pressure Group—tries to influence public policy in the interest of a particular cause.
- Lobby Group—formed to influence legislation on a particular issue.
- Single Issue Group—to focus on advocacy around a single defining issue.
- Special Interest Group—a group seeking or receiving special advantages, typically through political lobbying.
- Watchdog Group—formed to provide oversight and rating of actions by various media, government and corporations.
- Legal Defense Fund—formed to provide funding for the legal defense for, or legal action against, individuals or groups related to their specific interests or target demographics. Usually works with other groups to file suit.

In the interest of this guide, we will focus on two areas of organizing groups:

- Local or statewide organizing for a single issue and
- Coordinating a local chapter of the National Motorists Association (pressure/lobbying group)

HOW TO FORM A GROUP

Before embarking on forming any kind of motorists' rights group, first answer these two questions:

- 1) Is there already an existing group that is working on the same issue and if so, how can one join? Joining an already established group saves time and energy. Joining will also allow you to get involved at a deeper level much more quickly.
- 2) If there is not a similar group, do you have the time, energy and capacity to not only form a group but to nurture the group for a period of time?

If the answer is yes to question number two, forming a group can be as simple as gathering your family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances together to discuss a local problem such as automatic traffic enforcement (which we will use as our example of a single issue group throughout this guide).

Other local motorists' rights issues that might be of special interest though include:

- Fighting toll roads in your area or state.
- Fighting racially profiled traffic stops.
- Fighting against Vision Zero type of programs that reduce speed limits, restrict driving lanes and promote traffic calming.
- Fighting automatic license plate readers and other road surveillance devices.
- Reform of the state civil asset forfeiture laws.
- Reform of the state's speed trap laws.
- Reform of your city's traffic enforcement programs, particularly if ticket quotas are used.
- Reform of your state's gas tax and infrastructure funding.
- Advocating for the continued use of the 85th Percentile for speed limits.
- Advocating for better intersection management and longer yellow light timings.
- Advocating for better roadblock and checkpoint transparency.
- Advocating for fair and consistent DUI laws and penalties.

Groups can be focused at the neighborhood, city, county/parish, region or state geographic location. A group constitutes at least two people who have a common goal. Here are some steps to accomplish before you begin a group.

- 1) Is there someone in your sphere that would have interest in helping you set up a new group? Approach him or her and begin meeting informally at first to define your new group's starting point and what you ultimately want to achieve. Forming a group is always much more fun with a cofounder or two. Once this initial step has been taken, you can now start to think about logistics.
- 2) If you have never started a group before, do some research online, at your local library and perhaps even reach out to your local community development agency for some advice.
- 3) Get started and just do it!

How to Conduct a Meeting

There are many ways to conduct a meeting and you can decide as a group how formal you want each meeting to proceed. Here are a few things to keep in mind about planning for any type of meeting:

- Book your venue far enough out so that you have time to adequately publicize the meeting. Find a local venue that is easily accessible, and will fit your needs. Library

community rooms are a great choice and sometimes community rooms in restaurants, churches or schools are also available.

- Choose a date and time that is convenient for most people.
- Adequately publicize the meeting online and through newspaper blurbs, community calendars, flyers and posters.
- If allowed at the venue, plan to bring a few refreshments if not a restaurant setting.
- Make sure that the information of where, when, what and who is correct on all your meeting notices.
- Always have an agenda ready so that everyone knows what will be discussed at what time. A written agenda shows that you value your group members' time commitment. Here are a few items to include on an agenda:
 - Welcome with introductions.
 - In the first meeting, hold a discussion about why you are putting together the group and the group's ultimate aims. Also, choosing a name for the group might be a fun activity for the first meeting.
 - If you have already had your first meeting, read and approve minutes and other outstanding actions from the previous meeting (if applicable)
 - Agenda items and other business (including the recruitment of more members or project volunteers)
 - Date and time for next meeting.
- Make sure someone, even if it is you, takes minutes. Using the agenda as the starting point, note all decisions that were made by the group either by consensus or vote. When revised after the meeting, send an email with the minutes attached to all members of your group, whether they were present or not. It is important to include in the minutes, who committed to accomplish any action items and the due date. The minutes can be a great reminder of what members agreed to collectively and individually.
- To help defray the cost of the meeting, it is common to ask attendees for a voluntary contribution. It usually only takes a few dollars apiece to cover the cost of the meeting space and refreshments.

Forming a Single-Issue Group

A single-issue group is generally an independent group that comes together usually for just as long as it takes to reform a situation to the group's satisfaction. Not necessarily a long-term commitment, a single issue group can elicit a great deal of action in a very short period of time. Sometimes, though a single issue group may need to continue its activities for years in order to obtain its stated goal.

Deciding on the ultimate goal will be the toughest decision any single issue group will have to make. For example, you have formed a group with a neighbor to rid your city of all red-light cameras since you are both outraged that your city has signed another three-year contract with red-light camera vendor. City officials have been quoted in the paper that they count on this taxation by citation money as part of the yearly income for the city budget. You decide your goal is to stop any future red-light cameras from being turned on in the city and to make sure there is no “next” contract for existing cameras.

Your group decides two possible routes:

- 1) Build momentum towards a veto referendum (or a public yea or nay referendum or a public up or down vote) on the red-light camera ordinance with the caveat that the city will have to break the contract OR
- 2) Build a coalition of individuals and organizations to take a stand against red-light cameras. Work hard for the next three years to make sure that city officials do not request additional red-light cameras installed. Also, work together so that another contract is not extended to the same or any other red-light camera vendors. This action might require a ballot initiative or ongoing pressure on city officials or both.

Different goals, different levels of advocacy. Determining the ultimate goal of the group should propel every activity undertaken to promote awareness and change. See information below for some ideas on how the group can promote that awareness and ultimately create change.

Forming a Local Chapter of the National Motorists Association

If you have an interest in forming a local chapter of the National Motorists Association, you will first need to talk with the NMA President to receive approval. Please remember that the NMA is a grassroots, **nonpartisan** organization that welcomes every motorist into the alliance. If you receive approval to form a local chapter, adherence to nonpartisanship will need to be maintained.

A local NMA chapter will be a different kind of group than a single-issue group. It will be more of a pressure/lobbying group that will encourage members to express their advocacy as individuals to maximize the number of voices speaking out on various local and state issues that pertain to motorists. Also, chapter leaders should encourage local members to train to become citizen lobbyists to give statements or testify before city councils, county/parish commissions, regional planning commissions and the state legislature.

Of course, a local chapter can take on a single issue and do all the same things that a single-issue group would do to work towards reform.

If you have the time and commitment to form a local chapter of the NMA, please contact the national office at nma@motorists.org.

WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES SHOULD MY GROUP DO?

There are many activities that a single-issue group or a local chapter of the NMA can accomplish. The difficulty is deciding how best to use the group's talent and time to bring about the goals of the group?

General Advocacy Work

Individually everyone in the group can write emails and letters to elected officials and to local newspaper editors about the cause. Also, the group itself can pen advocacy letters and rebuttals as needed.

Ballot Petitions

If you want to change city/county/parish ordinances or even state regulations and you are not getting anywhere with asking your elected officials to write proposals or bills, then find out the regulation on citizen ballot petitions in your city or state and make a plan.

For a state-wide initiative, Rangevoting.org has a PDF entitled [Top 10 Things to Think through Prior to Launching a Ballot Measure Campaign](#). CitizensinCharge.org also has a [Ballot Initiative Primer](#) on their website as well. Ballotpedia.org has additional information plus a link to laws governing ballot measures in each state (scroll to the bottom of the page).

According to Ballotpedia, only 26 states allow statewide initiatives: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

[Ballotpedia also reports](#) that even though not all states allow statewide ballot initiatives, virtually all states allow local ballot initiatives that are sometimes called veto referendums, bond votes, recalls, or legislative referrals.

According to Ballotpedia, a ballot initiative is a petitioning process by which citizens propose laws and put them to a popular vote. In order to have an initiative placed on a ballot, the citizen group must circulate a petition and collect a certain number of registered voters' signatures as prescribed by local or state law.

A citizen referendum or veto referendum is handled in the same way as a ballot initiative except this time, citizens are trying to block laws that have been proposed or already have been approved by local or state government.

Before embarking on any petition campaign for either a ballot initiative or citizen/veto referendum, you must understand all the relevant local and state laws so your hard work does not go to waste.

How to Conduct a Ballot Petition Drive

Planning is the key to conducting a successful ballot petition drive for either an initiative or referendum. Success will depend on following the rules set out by governmental officials with regards to ballot petitions. Many a petition has been declared invalid because the group did not

gather enough qualified signatures or because of some other administrative snafu. Remember, that many officials do not want to see your petition succeed for various reasons. Here are some questions that need to be answered before you begin your petition campaign in earnest.

- 1) How many signatures will you need? Make sure you pad this number at least by 10 to 15 percent so that you don't get caught in the "not enough qualified signatures" quagmire that can occur with petition campaigns.
- 2) Are you required to show your petition form to officials before the petition drive begins (and before all the blank petition forms are copied) to ensure that all of the correct information is on the form? If not, should you show it anyway?
- 3) Are all signatures required to be on official group petition forms as described in number 2) above or can there be a different form with the same information? You don't want any sheet of signatures thrown out due to a technicality.
- 4) Does petition certification require the registered voter to give both a signature and a printed name?
- 5) Does petition certification require that the registered voter giving the signature needs to include the address and/or ward/precinct for verification purposes? If the ward/precinct information is needed, will the registered voter signing the petition need to give it in his or her handwriting or will petition workers be able to look up the information later and include it onto the petition? If the registered voter needs to write the ward/precinct in their own hand, is there an online website that the petition carrier can access onsite for this purpose?
- 6) Does petition certification require any additional information from the registered voter or by the submitter?
- 7) Are there any limitations that must be adhered to, or any quotas that must be met (for example, so many signatures per district)?
- 8) What is the absolute deadline that petitions need to be turned into officials for verification so that the initiative or referendum can be placed on the next scheduled ballot?
- 9) Which department and which individual(s) will be responsible for verifying petition signatures?
- 10) What happens next if the petition is considered valid? Are there more hoops to jump through such as permission from the mayor or the local city council?
- 11) What is the recourse if not enough validated signatures were collected? Will the group need to start a new petition drive or can the signatures already gathered be used again as a starting point for a second petition drive?
- 12) When is the drop dead date for printing the ballot and will your group be allowed to proof read the ballot question before printing?

After you have answered all the questions above, you are now ready to do the final planning before gathering signatures on petitions.

- 1) Set a campaign time frame – a beginning and an end with enough time to meet deadlines. Be realistic.
- 2) Create materials for the petition. A signature form is copied and a one sheet directive is created and printed for petition carriers. Decide whether or not you want to gather email addresses of those who are signing the petition. This might need to be an extra ask with an additional form created and copied for email addresses.
- 3) Identify your target audience and make a list of all the places a petition carrier should go for signatures. If there are any upcoming or ongoing large events (a farmers market for example), ask if you can set up a table or make sure that at least one person can walk the event.
- 4) Find and recruit your petition carriers. Hold an informational meeting to explain the petition drive, the dos and don'ts and what will happen if and when enough signatures have been gathered.
- 5) Make sure you give out your email address to the petition carriers and get theirs as well. Put their name and email into your email contacts and put together a group so that you can more easily contact your volunteers on a regular basis. Giving progress updates throughout the campaign sends the message that you care about your volunteers and allows them to see the progress that everyone is working towards.
- 6) When the campaign is done and the certification process started, hold a thank you meeting with all the volunteers.
- 7) When you hear that the signatures have been verified, make sure to email your volunteers and if you were so inclined to gather email addresses of those who gave signatures, email them too.
- 8) If your petition does go on the ballot, a new phase of the campaign begins—awareness. You need voters to vote your way and you do that by building awareness of the ballot measure through media, attending speaking engagements, and the creation and distribution of posters, flyers, and lawn signs.
- 9) On the day of the election, write an email to all of the volunteers and supporters thanking them again and encouraging them to get out and vote for the measure.
- 10) If you're so inclined, hold a watch party and invite your volunteers and supporters to attend with your core group.

Building an Awareness Campaign

Please refer to the NMA Media Tool Kit for Local Engagement. This document has all the information you need to create an awareness campaign for a ballot initiative or referendum, or other form of protest event your group has planned. Make it a habit to always publicize your meeting dates in the various community calendars around town.

Organizing a Protest Event

Another effective avenue for bringing awareness to a cause is to create an action that interested people (in or out of your group) can participate in together. The right to protest is one of the basic freedoms under the American constitution. Feel free to exercise that right.

In order to understand your right to free speech, protests and demonstrations, download a copy of this document from the [American Civil Liberties Union](#) (ACLU). Even though this document concerns California specifically, there are many good answers to questions you might have about your limits in general. Check your own state's ACLU website to see if there is a similar guidebook for your state.

The gender equality/identity website AutoStraddle has an interesting post on [Nine Things you need to know about How to Organize a Protest](#). Here are the nine questions for planning purposes but we encourage you to read the post for additional information.

- 1) Why do you want to protest?
- 2) What kind of action do you want to take? (see following list)
- 3) Who's invited?
- 4) Is there a strategic time and location?
- 5) What kind of roles should I assign to my group?
- 6) How do I spread the word?
- 7) What are some symbols and chants we could utilize?
- 8) What about safety, permits and civil disobedience?
- 9) What should happen after the rally?

The Findlaw.com website has a [list of protest laws by state](#).

Whatever type of protest action your group intends to carry out, learn the laws in your area and protect yourself and your group members. Planning is absolutely essential when it comes to any type of protest activity. Here are some additional protest action ideas that your group might want to consider:

- **Art Protest** – People create a symbolic space in a public sphere that generally involves an artistic statement and art installation project.
- **Ballot Petition Drive**—People ask registered voters to sign a petition for either a ballot initiative or referendum. Generally need a minimum of signatures that then will need to be verified. (See above).
- **Blockade** – Protestors deny access to a place such as a street or highway by blocking access. (This could be considered an illegal act FYI). Here is an example of how the NMA used a semi-blockade approach in the past:

At the height of the NMA's battle to repeal the national 55 mph speed limit in the 1980's and early 1990's, members resorted to a very effective "civil obedience" tactic to make their point. They organized caravans of vehicles that meticulously maintained the lawful 55 mph speed which irritated other motorists who wanted to go faster while at the same time providing an education on the absurdity of the mandated 55. The caravans typically left the left-lane open so that traffic wasn't totally blocked but the action still created enough traffic congestion to make drivers realize the negative impact that the artificially low speed limit would have if enforced.

- **Boycotting**—People do not give any business to a town, local store or national company. This is a great technique for speed trap or red-light camera towns.
- **Burma Shave** – people hold signs or place signs with messages that are sequential alongside of a street or road for people to drive by and read. Great way to protest an intersection with red-light cameras.
- **Car Parade or Motorcade**—similar to a march but with cars and usually ends in a rally.
- **Change.org**—an online petition website that hosts sponsored campaigns.
- **Counter Protest**—people protest against other protesters who are at their own rally, march or vigil.
- **Declaration event**—group declares a statement in public.
- **Flash Mob** – People show up in a public place at a designated time and perform an action together such as a choreographed dance or singing of a song (sometimes both). When they are done, the group quickly disperses.
- **Hanging a Banner** – Protestors create a large banner with a message and then hang it from a prominent place. (This can be construed as an illegal act FYI).
- **Legal Action**—bring an individual or institution to court to fight the issue legally.
- **March** – people walk together en masse sometimes to a rally but not always.
- **Rally** – people gather in large numbers to make a statement in one location.
- **Refusal to pay fees, fines and assessments**—usually done by individuals.
- **Petition Drive**—People ask other people to sign a statement calling on a specific action to take. This is an effective way to gather support for or against city ordinances and legislative bills. This is different than a ballot petition drive.
- **Private Property Signage**—place message signs on your own property.
- **Silent Protest** – individuals create a scene of silence to protest.
- **Sit In**—Protestors remain in one place, and refuse to leave.

- **Skywriting or earthwriting**—done to create high impact.
- **Stand In**—same as a sit in except standing.
- **Street or Guerilla Theater**—people create a scene or dramatic interpretation in public.
- **Striking**—workers refuse to go to work unless there is reform.
- **Teach-Ins**—Rally format but with discussions and teaching points.
- **Vigil** – similar to a rally except usually held after dark and people bring candles.
- **Walk-Outs**—this is generally a school or workplace protest.

Again, planning is essential for any sort of action event your group would like to support. Most of these ideas are events with an actual date, time and location. The website Hollaback, a grassroots global movement to end harassment, has information on [How to Organize a Protest or March](#).

HOW TO DEVELOP COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS, COALITIONS OR NETWORKS

The amazing fact about motorists’ rights is that motorists make up one of the biggest demographics in the country. An estimated 86 percent of adults drive in America and motorists’ rights transects partisan lines, racial divides and economic classes. Building collaborations, coalitions and/or networks can make a difference between success and failure. Here is a grid on the differences between the three types of partnerships:

Collaboration	Coalition	Network
Groups work together on information sharing, program coordination, or joint planning of an event.	Formed for a specific goal with other organizations to share responsibilities and may disband after achieving the collective goal	A number of groups come together and can form partnerships inside the network. Not always formalized and sometimes ad hoc.
A few organizations	Multiple organizations	Multiple organizations
Limited in interaction	Broader attention	Broader attention
Limited in time	Short-lived and ends after successful completion of goal	Evolves over time and may exist beyond initial goal
Not a formal arrangement	Varying levels of formalization	Can be formal or informal
Narrowed to a shared or specified goal	May have a specified leader and leadership structure	May exist for a specific goal or for broader support

There are many organizations that might be working on motorists’ rights issues besides the NMA. One of the most prominent for example is the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) which focuses on justice and rights issues such as racial profiling, police reform, traffic ticket driver’s license suspensions, automatic traffic enforcement and any sort of surveillance activity. Check out to see if they have a local or state chapter and begin a dialogue. Civic groups and other types of local rights groups might also have interest in collaborating. Don’t forget local or

statewide professional organizations such as a state dealership association or hobbyist organizations such as local car clubs.

There is a great deal of advice on the internet on how to form a collaboration, coalition or network. If you have interest, googling the subject might be the best place to start.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Group members will indeed become your most devoted volunteers but sometimes you might need additional volunteers for specific projects. Planning again is the key and with some simple steps, you can be successful in building your volunteer support.

Recruiting Group Members and Project Volunteers

There are many ways to recruit group members and project volunteers. Here are just a few ideas:

- Ask someone yourself and encourage them to at least attend a meeting. Network with coworkers, friends and family and remember to ASK. If you don't ask, then no one will come.
- Ask current members or volunteers to bring someone to the next meeting or action.
- Bring your boss and co-workers to a meeting.
- Write a recruitment letter to local businesses and ask them to please hang a flyer.
- Contact the Chamber of Commerce and see if they can help.
- Place customized bookmarks at the city library branches.
- Place pamphlets or flyers wherever you go and anyplace with a waiting room such as a doctor or dentist office or even your local car dealership.
- Promise and deliver food and drinks at your next meeting.
- Build a group website and/or Facebook Page and/or Facebook Group and have a place that potential members and volunteers can make contact.
- Create a sign in sheet for each meeting or event and ask for an email address. Make sure you include new people in the group email list and even write them separately if you have time. Don't forget to thank people for their service.
- Participate in community events. Have a table and chair or a booth.
- Create an E-Newsletter and ask members to send the newsletter on to their network.
- Don't forget to mention member or volunteer recruitment at each meeting.

How to Retain New Members

Once you recruit new members, it is important to keep in touch with them on a regular basis.

- Send welcome letters or emails to new members that include new member materials, a list of members with contact information, a calendar of events and an invitation to the next meeting. Make sure their contact information makes its way to the group email so they can stay up-to-date just as the other group members.
- Plan an orientation or onboard meeting or get together for new members before or after your usual meeting or at a different time altogether. Get to know new members and understand what expertise they would like to bring to the group and put them to work.
- If you have a newsletter, print their names under New Members and make sure you ask them to stand at the next future meeting that they attend to be formally introduced.
- Keep in touch with new members and answer any questions or concerns they might have.

How to Encourage Volunteerism

One of the best ways to encourage volunteerism is to have a project with a specific goal and ways a member or project volunteer can help. The worst thing that can happen to a volunteer who has the desire to help is not given a task or to be given a task with little direction. Have clear action steps and goal deadlines.

Support your members and volunteers by giving training and updates—celebrating the victories and evaluating the process. If someone feels valued they will continue to support your cause.

The NMA Organizing Tool Kit for Local Engagement is of course, a beginning blueprint of how to get started organizing for change in your neighborhood. If you would like to contribute ideas to this guide, please contact the national office at nma@motorists.org.