

Postal News Press Newsletter

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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Election Day: Formula for success

By Tony Carobine, President

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8. Postal workers and all working families have a stake in the 2016 elections, as control of the White House, House of Representatives, Senate, governorships and state legislatures will be determined.

In the remaining time before November 8, we must convey to our members and their families the significance of this election and where the candidates stand on issues important to postal workers.

We must also be wary of attempts to distract attention away from issues affecting working people. We must not allow ourselves or our members and their families to be misled and as a result cast a vote not based on which candidates are better suited to address the important and critical issues facing postal workers and all working people, but instead a vote based on so-called wedge issues and untruths.

As communicators and representatives of the union we need to prepare our members for this election. We need to advise them about how candidates stand on issues important to postal workers and all working families, help them become registered voters, and remind them about the significance of voting on Election Day.

As the late labor leader Walter Reuther said, "There's a direct relationship between the ballot box and the bread box, and what the union fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls."

Preparing members and their families for the upcoming election is an important task. Communication is the key. The best way to increase turnout is to educate members

about the issues and candidates. Armed with this knowledge, members and their families are more likely to participate and will make informed choices when going to the polls on Election Day.



The right approach

The following excerpt from the PPA produced booklet, *Federal Elections, Union Publications and the Internet* examines techniques for increasing the participation level

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of members and their families on Election Day.

Many working people are not keenly involved in the political process and therefore may not be familiar with the candidates and where they stand on issues important to their lives. The less working families are involved

in politics, the more we will see politicians elected who don't represent their interests.

Adding to this dilemma are labor unions whose only election effort is to tell their members who to vote for on Election Day, often just a few days before they are asked to go to the polls. With this practice union members don't feel any ownership of the process and resent being told what to do.

Research indicates that members desire unions to focus on two key elements:

(1) Members desire political action to be, first and foremost, about them and their needs, not about candidates or political parties. Unions need to make clear their criteria for making political and legislative decisions are based on what is in the best interests of members and other working people.

(2) Political action should focus on informing and involving the members so they can be politically empowered. The traditional candidate endorsement of labor political action does not empower them.

What members want most from their union is more political information and then to be trusted to make the right decisions, rather than receiving endorsements that often seem like "marching orders." Members understand that knowledge is power and they want their unions to give them the information they need to be smarter voters and to make a difference.

Surveys conducted after elections offer some interesting facts about the influence that communication had on the elections. Union communications to members and their families made a difference in the election – not only in how they voted, but also, in many cases, with the

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This publication is 100% union printer produced: Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.

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Let us hear from you

By Edward J. Brennan,
Secretary-Treasurer

One of my duties as secretary-treasurer includes the collection of dues which are based on a calendar year. Dues for the editor are \$30.00 and \$20.00 for website editors, associate editors and associate members. As a means to assist with dues payments, the PPA constitution and the membership application spell out the various membership categories and the eligibility requirements for each category.

Dues collection for the coming year begins at either the PPA Conference, or in opposite years the APWU National Convention. This is followed by the mailing of dues notices shortly thereafter. For those late in paying their dues, additional notices and reminders are sent. After that, I follow up with personal phone calls.

I sometimes find out the dues notice went to a post office box and were never received by the editor to whom it was addressed. Sometimes the notice is picked up, laid on a desk and then it stays there or is thrown away. On other occasions the editor receives the notice and it never gets to the treasurer or just doesn't get paid. The editor, assuming his or her dues are paid then calls

to ask what happened to their press card.

Or, I may find out the local no longer has a publication or locals have merged also causing the merger of publications. When such circumstances occur, it would be helpful to be advised about the loss of a newsletter or a change of editor.

"We all serve the APWU by staying informed. After all, that's our job . . . communication. So let's hear from you!"

Therefore, please let me know of any such changes or make it a point to be sure your dues are paid each year. How? In the case of dues payment, if you don't receive a confirmation letter or press card shortly after you believe your dues are paid, simply contact me for verification. It only takes a letter (PO Box 451, Saint Charles MO 63302) or telephone call (636-947-6106).

We all serve the APWU by staying informed. After all, that's our job . . . communication. So let us hear from you!

Editors: Plan now for 2017 awards program

Editors should plan now for entering the 2017 PPA Awards Program by being on the lookout for potential material to enter from their publications in next year's event.

In 2015, first place and honorable mention awards were presented in 14 categories including: editorial, news story, feature story, headline, cartoon, photograph, community service, creative writing, non-postal labor story, new editor, three overall excellence and website.

Although the program has yet to be developed for the 2017 awards, it is expected that the award categories will be relatively the same as 2015.



Originally called the Biennial Award of Merit Program, it was established at the August 1967 conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

The purpose of instituting an awards program was to recognize Association editors for outstanding work in editing, publishing and writing. The first awards were presented at the 1968 conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Over the years, the awards program has been modified several times to reflect changes in technology and production methods.

Awards Program rules and entry forms will be mailed to editors in early 2017.

Election Day: Formula for success

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outcome of the election. Local union communications were particularly effective and had the highest degree of credibility with the membership.

As a result of surveys and polls among union members, it was also discovered that when it comes to politics, members want information, not orders from their unions. They want to know about issues – not partisan agendas. Following are guidelines based on union members' views to keep in mind when communicating political information:

Issues come first, candidates and parties second. From the members' perspective, political information should be based on issues. Working to elect pro-worker candidates is a legitimate union activity, but only as a means to win on important issues – not as an end in itself.

Members are distrustful of information that comes from politicians, and are even skeptical of much they see in the mass media – so they are looking for independent sources of information. Communications with members, therefore, should emphasize the union's independent perspective and respect workers' general skepticism. Union publications should feel like *Consumer Reports* for working people, providing an objective and independent view on important employment and economic issues. Most members already believe their unions generally provide accurate and truthful information – a significant accomplishment amid today's cynicism.

Members want information, not voting instructions. Information is what most members want from their union. Members say they do not want to be told for whom to vote. Often they perceive endorsements as "instructions" on how to vote, to which they react with indifference or even resentment. Some also suspect that endorsements are driven more by unions' institutional interests than by what is best for members.

Before members will respect endorsements, they need to see what lead to them – such as issue positions and voting records. Members prefer information from the union that shows the positions of both candidates on key issues.

If solid information is provided, most members do not object to the union also making a formal candidate endorsement. But recommendations or suggestions – indicating respect for members' intelligence and good judgment – are received better than what members perceive as commands. The



first choice of many members is to have the union evaluate candidates, provide information and leave it to the individual to make the final call.

Present information credibly and objectively to overcome members' distrust of politics. Members trust their union more than many other sources, but they are extremely skeptical regarding anything dealing with politics. Therefore, it is important that information is credible – with information sources cited, for example, and without unbelievable claims about how good (or bad) candidates may be.

Members' favorite union political materials are voter guides that evaluate candidates for an office. Side-by-side comparisons of the candidates and their positions and records on key issues allow members to make direct comparisons, which are very helpful in decision-making. Such pieces also suggest the union actually evaluated the candidates, and didn't simply make a partisan choice.

Downplay partisan rhetoric and stress the union's role as an independent voice for working people. Members don't want their union drawn into the excessive parti-

sanship that Americans generally consider the downfall of our country's political system. Political communications should be based on issues, not on parties. Members recognize that unions may endorse Democrats more often than Republicans, but want reassurance the union's support is a result of a candidate's commitment to workers and their families rather than a reflection of a pro-Democratic bias.

Members want unions to represent their interests as workers, addressing issues that directly affect them on the job and by advancing a populist economic agenda. Labor's issue agenda should focus primarily on work-related and economic issues – the areas where members feel unions have clear understanding. Members trust the union to represent their interests on matters directly relating to their jobs.

Most members are also comfortable with the idea of unions representing their economic interests beyond the workplace. Members generally consider such issues as Social Security, Medicare, the minimum wage and tax fairness to be "pocketbook" concerns within the proper sphere of union involvement. Members see that large corporations and the wealthy have hugely disproportionate political influence, and believe that unions' counterweight on economic matters benefit working families.

Information is a key to increasing participation. Members strongly support union efforts to encourage them to vote on Election Day. Regardless of party, they feel this is an important and legitimate union activity.

Traditionally, mobilization is thought of as a fundamentally different activity than persuading members to support particular candidates. Research suggests, however, that the most important barrier to participation is members' low level of knowledge. People who do not feel they know much about the issues in a campaign, or where the candidates stand, are reluctant to walk into a voting booth.

Consequently, the best way to increase turnout is to educate members about the issues and candidates. Armed with this knowledge, members and their families are more likely to participate and will make informed choices when going to the polls on Election Day.

What do you look at first?

By Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

When you pick up a newspaper or magazine what do you look at first? If you are like most people you read the biggest headline. Then you check out the photos. You check the other headlines for something of interest. Then you can decide what you want to read, if anything. Your newsletter is much the same way. It helps to give people what they look for anyhow – namely headlines and photos. Of course your whole paper can't be headlines and pictures but you get where I am going!

Headlines are easy! Really it's as easy as just reading the article. Well there's an important concept. Read and then read it again. Then pull something out that you think people will want to know about; just a little something to entice them to read the whole article. If you just take the easy way out and put President's Report at the top some people will just figure it the same old, same old. They may skim through and then just turn the page. Making your head-

line interesting and colorful will make your members want to read to find out what it is all about.

Also, if the article is very long use sub-heads. They are like mini-headlines! They let the reader know what this paragraph is about and the article won't look as long when you use them. While not a headline, pulling a quote from an article is another method of drawing the reader's eye. Lance Coles wrote a great article on this in the January-February issue.

Now how about some photos! Photographs can make your paper and the articles in it much more interesting. Everyone likes to look at pictures. If you have a photo of the person who wrote the article with it people can put a face with a name. They will feel more like they know that person. A photo of the Executive Board

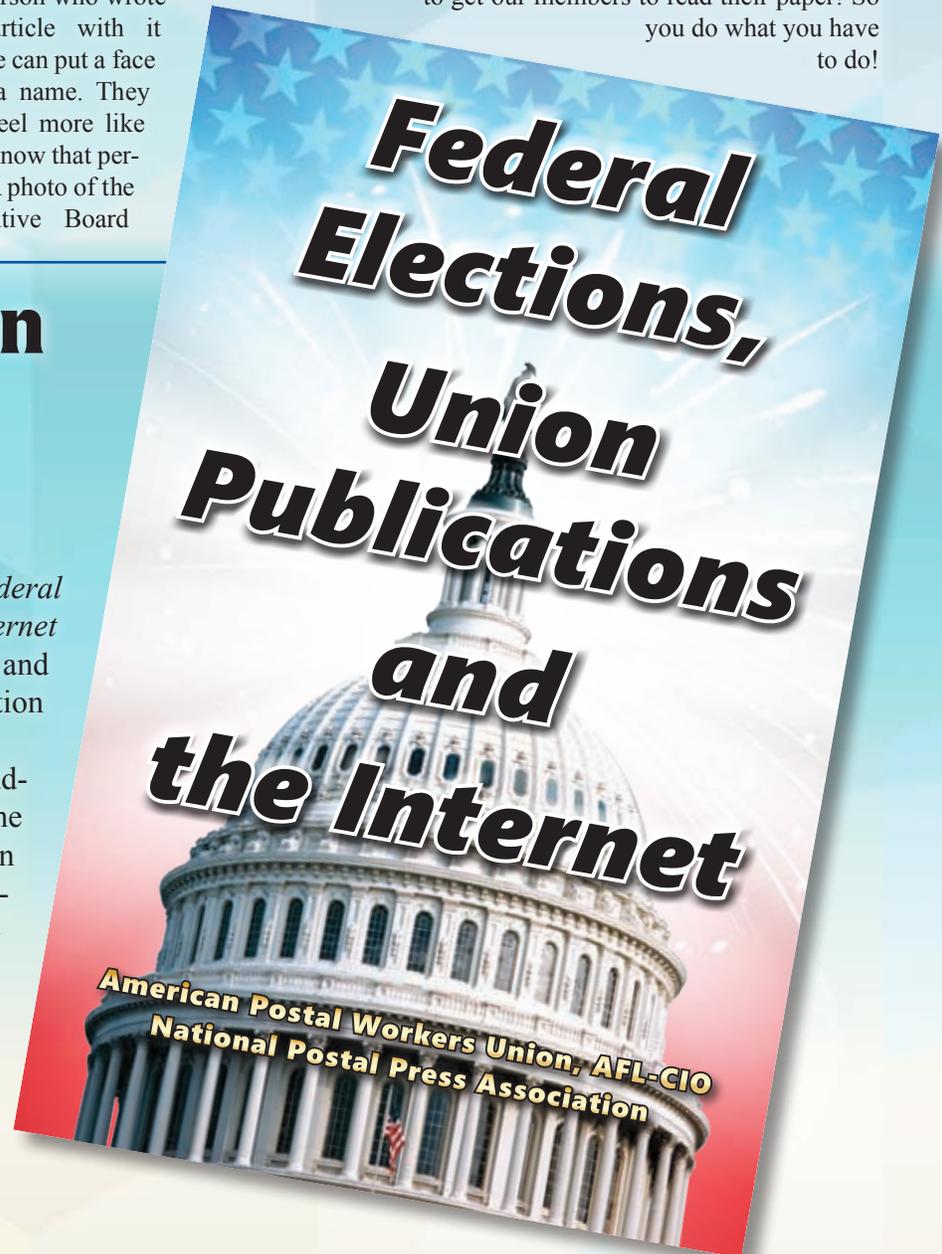
could be taken when they are sworn in; a photo of a committee working on something; stewards in the union office working on a grievance. Members at a union function – union meeting, picnic or Christmas party. If their kids are involved they will get a kick out of seeing them in the paper too. If you take some photos at a function but don't know everyone yourself, find someone willing to help take down names for you. Another hint on photos – take lots of them. One is sure to be the one you want to print in your publication.

So remember to work on those headlines and try a few photographs. Hey, we have to have a few tricks up our sleeves to get our members to read their paper! So you do what you have to do!

Federal election booklet distributed

The 2016 version of the PPA booklet, *Federal Elections, Union Publications and the Internet* was recently mailed to members of the PPA and is also posted in the Member Resources section of the PPA website.

This booklet contains guidelines for including information in a union publication and the Internet regarding the November 8 election for federal representatives along with regulations pertaining to APWU COPA solicitations. Also discussed are techniques for generating participation by union members and their families on Election Day. PPA members are urged to use this booklet as a reference (and share it with other officers). Additional copies of the booklet are available upon request.



Is there a cure for amnesia?

By Hank Greenberg, Honorary Member
PPA Advisory Council

Amnesia. It affects millions of people, especially young adults. It's true; more people under the age of "senior citizen" suffer from amnesia. And there is a proven cure for this condition. But first, some examples of amnesia so you can decide if you fall into this category. Here's a test:

Did you know that the American airline system was once rated the best in the world? It's true. When airlines in America were regulated by a federal agency, they competed on "service" which is a word you haven't heard in a long time. Pricing was based on the cost of the service provided. But Congress wasn't satisfied with our airline system being the best – what did Congress do? They **deregulated** the airlines and today you have a system that is based only on the price of a ticket. What do you have now? You have fewer airlines to compete for your business and they now outsource maintenance to the cheapest company, including foreign companies. You also now have "additional charges" for everything. So what are the results of deregulation? You have fewer airlines

competing, you no longer have anything that resembles "service" and regulated-reasonable costs for air travel are a thing of the past.

How about the phone company? If you research the past history of the phone

"It's your articles and editorials that inform and motivate the membership."

system in the United States you will find that our system was rated number one worldwide. That's right, number one. Today, thanks to Congress **deregulating** the system, we have dozens of companies competing for your business. The cost of manufacturing so many different phones and the enormous cost of advertising has done nothing more than drive up the cost of phone service and confuse the consumer about service and price.

And now let's talk about something near and dear to our heart, the U.S. Postal Service; the best Postal Service in the world.

The most dedicated employees and the only service rated number one more often than any other government service. . . Unfortunately I believe Congress has other plans for the Postal Service and we won't find out what it is until after the next national election.

Wait a minute – I thought you said there's a cure for amnesia? I believe there is! It's **you** the editors of local and state APWU publications. You are in one of the best positions to "cure" our members of amnesia by keeping them INFORMED of what Congress has done in the past and who is running for Congress in the upcoming election. If a candidate is an incumbent, what is his or her past record? If a candidate is seeking office for the first time, what is their position on issues important to you and your family?

It's your articles and editorials that inform and motivate the membership. For those who have amnesia and are not aware of what Congress is capable of screwing up, it's up to you to help cure your members of amnesia and set the record straight.

Many of you don't seem to realize just how important you are.

Overcoming procrastination . . . do it now!

Sharon spends hours sorting through papers and performing other nonessential tasks rather than working on the newsletter due at the printer by the end of the week. Greg hides from his local president, because he hasn't put together the financial report his president requested. Marjorie knows she should be writing a report about the convention she attended but instead keeps putting it off.

What do these people all have in common? Procrastination.

Putting off projects that need to be done, dragging feet when it comes to doing crucial tasks . . . everyone procrastinates at one time or another. But if you find yourself continually behind schedule and never caught up, it may be time to examine the reasons behind it. Here are some possibilities:

Fear of failure. Sometimes we delay a project or task because subconsciously we are afraid it is beyond our capabilities. We

say, "I haven't had time to do it," rather than "I tried and failed." The solution is a positive attitude. We are more capable than we give ourselves credit for. Don't let the fear of making a mistake hold you back. Everyone makes mistakes now and then, and most can be rectified.

Feeling overwhelmed. Faced with a formidable undertaking, some will find reason after reason to delay buckling down. That's the time to remember the old Chinese maxim, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." You can make substantial progress by breaking projects down into incremental steps and focusing on one step at a time.

Lack of time. This is a common excuse. Yet we each are allotted the same 24 hours every day. So why do some people accomplish monumental feats while others don't? It's a matter of time management and individual priorities. Start to make use

of every minute. Can you wake up just 15 minutes earlier for a jog around the block? Another solution: Give yourself a "productivity hour" – one hour at the union office or home where you shut the door, ignore phone calls, e-mails and text messages and concentrate on one special task.

Make a habit of writing down your priorities every day. Have it become as much of your routine as drinking coffee or brushing your teeth. Then focus on doing as much on that list as possible. There will always be interruptions and delays that can't be anticipated, so don't hold yourself to an excessively strict schedule. At the end of each day, check off what you have accomplished, and move the rest to the top of the list for the next day.

There is great satisfaction in seeing a project through from start to finish. Let yourself enjoy the feeling of achievement.

Do it now!

Who needs a union publication?

Your members do!

Members who know what's going on – where they fit in and what they can do – are likely to be more active, and more committed. That kind of membership is what every union needs. So if the union is going to function effectively, all members need to be informed.

In fact, making sure that members know about the union's programs, achievements, goals and people is one of the most important jobs of every local union leader.

No matter how good, everything can be improved. Maintaining a publication does not mean that local officers have not been doing their job of communication – it does mean the job will be made easier and more efficient.

For instance, one place a member learns about the union is at the regular membership meeting. But it's a fact of life – not all members can go to regular meetings every time. Some who might be interested can't attend at all.

In some places, unfortunately not many do. There are schedule conflicts, family obligations, distances to travel. Sometimes people just don't know when or where meetings are being held. Others, not knowing much about the union, feel excluded.

Whatever the reason, many of those members who don't make it to the meetings

are (or could be) interested. They want to know what the union is doing. It is their right to know.

How are members learning about their union? Some locals post the minutes of the meeting on a bulletin board, along with countless other announcements and notices. How many people read them?

Of course there is always word of mouth. However, the story can change from one person to the next. Most often it does. Details get lost; facts become confused.

There is the national union publication that each member receives. But its focus necessarily is different from what your local might have; after all, that publication is designed to inform all members of the union. Events of concern to all appear in those pages – but day-to-day issues of your local union cannot.

Electronic forms of communication such as websites, Facebook, email and Twitter are also available. Good methods of communication to be sure but not all members are tuned into electronic communication and it does lack being a tangible presence by physically arriving in the homes of our members and their families.

This means that the local union publication is still the most important vehicle for communicating the union's message.

It's the local publication that fills the communications gap. Here's what a newsletter can and will do:

- **Makes union news easily accessible** – only the effort of reading it is necessary.
 - **Informs** – it tells members what the local has done to protect them, what the officers who represent them are doing, what activities are being planned and what other members are interested in.
 - **Sets the record straight** – written by and about union members, its point of view is that of the members themselves. It directly answers the question, "How does this event affect me?" It can address rumors started by management to divide members by presenting the workers' (and the union's) side of the story.
 - **Promotes identification with the union** – it draws people together, reinforcing each member's feeling of belonging. The paper can help to define the local union as an ongoing presence in members' minds.
 - **Educates** – what better way to explain how the union represents the membership on the workroom floor. Using real situations, it teaches in a way that a dictionary or academic textbook cannot.
 - **Motivates** – when people know something about an organization like the local union, when they know more about other members and officers, they are more likely to want to participate. Knowing about an issue or an event is the first step towards saying, "I want to be part of this."
 - **Involves** – everyone has some talent. Members are all creative and knowledgeable in their own individual ways. Most people, given the opportunity, like to share what they know with others. The union publication tells people about those opportunities.
 - **Gives recognition** – it reinforces that motivation to join in by letting other members know about what you, or he, or she did for the local. And it's hard to resist seeing your own name in print.
 - **Reaches beyond the local union membership** – while it's building union pride, that newsletter can be reinforcing the benefits of belonging to current members and serve as an organizing tool for nonmembers.
- Your local's goal should be to establish open, direct communication with all of the members. A local union paper is a valuable key to that communication.



Attend the 2017 Biennial PPA Conference!

**Thursday, August 3 – Saturday, August 5
(Pre-conference session Wednesday, August 2)**

**The Meadows Events & Conference Center
at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino
Des Moines, Iowa**

A guestroom rate of \$129.00 per day for king or double queen occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 12%. Prairie Meadows will provide free shuttle service from Des Moines International Airport, complimentary Internet access and no charge for parking a vehicle. To make room reservations, please visit their website, www.prairiemeadows.com using group code 08022017APW or call 1-800-325-9015.

This intensive four-day event will help you and your organization:

- Better inform and educate members and their families.
- Create a communications system that will stimulate membership participation and build a stronger union.
 - Conquer the challenges of public speaking.
- Learn how to establish a working relationship with the media & methods for generating public support.
 - Develop highly effective internal & external communication strategies.
 - Map out ideas for developing an editorial policy.
- Explore the subject of electronic communication and how it can complement a print publication.
 - Avoid costly lawsuits by studying the subjects of libel, copyright and internal union elections.
- Infuse the union's publication with style and personality so members will read every issue.
 - Harness the tools for conducting interviews that get noticed.
- Become skilled at writing news stories, eye-catching headlines and high-interest feature stories.
 - Discover how labor history can be used to improve union involvement.
 - Master techniques for reporting on issues affecting the membership.
 - Inspire union loyalty through the art of photojournalism.
 - Use communication as a means to stamp out membership apathy.
- Meet others who perform similar work and share experiences, problems and ideas.
- Get recharged and eager to put dozens of new communication ideas to work!

All of this and much, much more!

Return Service Requested

Photos: A way to increase interest

Photographs in your paper make stories more interesting. They are often what readers look at first. What the photo says to them often determines whether the accompanying story will get more than a quick glance. So, if you can, use photographs in your publication and use them liberally.

From behind the lens

- **Take lots of photos.** Even when you know that all you'll use is one. The reason is simple – it improves the likelihood that, of say six shots of the same subject, one will be just right for the paper.
- **Tell a story with the photograph you take.** Take the photo from a variety of angles. Try to show action; catch people caught up in discussion at a meeting, not just sitting there listening; take a shot of the local president or official about whom a story is being prepared, not just staring grinning at the camera but actively involved in something. For instance, if you want a shot of a speaker at a conference, why not take it at an angle so that some members of the audience can also be seen?
- **Get close with the camera.** Big pictures have impact.

They also exclude some of the distracting elements in the background. And the editor can always reduce or enlarge the photo for the newsletter's needs, but a small piece of a photo enlarged for impact will not reproduce as well as a larger object when it is reduced.

- **Include symbols to increase the photo's meaning.** If a photograph is of a rally, try to get some of the signs and banners in the background.
- **Limit the number of people.** Strive for five or fewer. But if you must get the whole group in one shot – as often happens – don't let your subjects stand stiffly facing the camera. Instead, try an informal seating arrangement, see if you can get your subjects to assume more relaxed poses, or ask them to stand in a half circle, rather than in a straight line. You might also try taking the photo from a slight side angle. Better still, split the group into smaller groups and take several shots to use in the paper.
- **Get people to talk to each other and try to catch them when they're not staring at the lens of the camera.** It they must display something (like a check or plaque) ask them to look at each other or at the item, not at you. Also ask them to stand close together – often you will see a shot like this (called a "grip and grin" shot) which makes it appear that each person thinks the other has a communicable disease.
- **Avoid busy backgrounds.** For example, wallpaper with large flowers (or

other objects) when taking a photo of one or more people.

- **Try to include a person's gestures when you take a shot of an individual.** Have him or her talk to somebody else and try to get a relaxed pose. Keep snapping or wait until you get an interesting expression and gesture. Be sure, though, that the subject's expression – smiling or solemn – is appropriate to the story.

All of these tips for the photographer are important for an editor to be aware of: they are aspects of each photo which you'll want to use in judging whether, and how, a photo will appear in the newsletter.

There are a couple of other things to keep in mind when considering photos for the paper:

- Every picture in your publication should be identified – from the president on down to each and every rank and file member. You can do this in a caption, which is a brief explanation placed usually under the photo itself. Credit should also be given to the photographer by listing his or her name in small italic print on the lower right side of the photo or under it (For example, *-Alexa Smith photo* or *-Photo by Alexa Smith*).
- When you plan your layout, remember that when someone is seen looking, pointing or moving a certain way in the picture, the reader's eye is carried in that direction. You can use that natural effect to your advantage. You will want to use this line of force to direct the reader in to the body type. Do this by making sure that all pictures face into the page they are on.

