



Opposition Tracking: Knowing Is Half The Battle

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Why Track Our Opponents?

The more you know about your opposition, the more effective and efficient your campaign can be. In this post-Obergefell landscape, opponents of equality have become better at hiding the anti-LGBT motives behind their legal, legislative and political efforts. These days their statements to elected officials and reporters are often cloaked in moderate-sounding rhetoric about “religious freedom.” However, they still have to raise money and rally supporters, two activities that usually result in far more blunt expression of their true anti-equality intent.

Tracking the opposition will help you:

- Understand the opposition’s motives, strategy and tactics.
- Archive positions and statements to discredit them in the eyes of media, and energize your base.
- Extract policy concessions from targets or associated groups/elected officials.

Here’s How

Find it

Identify your opponents: advocacy organizations and their leaders¹, elected officials, media personalities. Once you have your list of opponents, start reading what they have to say. Subscribe to their email lists, follow them on Facebook and Twitter, attend their public events.

- Daily sweep of opposition social media accounts.
- Archive and read any blog posts, bill analysis and testimony, and other website documents.
- Log any public events, call for testimony at bill hearings and radio/TV appearances in a shareable calendar.
- Alert local partners to nearby events.
- Train, prepare, and debrief trackers: Tracking at live events is the best way of collecting evidence of what your opponents are really saying.
 - Be professional, polite and persistent. If the event is a public event, you have a right to be there — don’t be afraid to say so. Bring a copy of the invitation. If the event is on private property, the owner can ask you to leave.

¹ Some of these leaders will likely be affiliated with religious institutions. Focus strictly on their advocacy positions, statements and beliefs about LGBT people. Personal faith and belief are just that — personal. Statements that indicate discriminatory intent behind bills and policy positions, however, are relevant to the debate.

- Dress appropriately for the event.
- Never stop recording. Make sure you have enough battery power and memory space to record the entire event, including any Q&A.
- Never engage staff or volunteers — either physically or verbally. Assert your right to be there, and record any attempts to remove you, but don't debate and especially don't get involved in a physical altercation.
- If possible, take notes while recording, noting time of interesting statements.
- Monitor/record all live-streamed media appearances.

Frame it

When you find newsworthy material, think about how best to make use of it. Should it be a press release? If so, from who? Is it better shared with a key decision-maker or leader?

- Obtain audio/video from events, then clip compelling segments — the shorter the better!
- Frame with context, possible media pitches, and social media promotion options.
- Run traps with allies and partner groups: Timing is often a crucial aspect of opposition media. Does this need to be shared now or should it wait for a more strategic moment?
- Determine the best messenger. Who is best suited to share this information?

Push it

Once the story is public:

- Share with other local media and national niche media.
- Ask allies and partner organizations to share with their members/followers.
- Consider unlikely or non-traditional allies and outlets. If it's a story about activists, feed cycle with comments and questions on Facebook and Twitter.