

PREVENT THE NEXT WAR NOW: Guide to Getting a Resolution Passed in Your Community

The following is a simple guide to getting a City Council Resolution passed in your community. A City Council Resolution campaign is not a "one size fits all" effort but the following are ideas to get you started.

Step-by-Step Guide To Getting a Resolution Passed in Your City:

- Gather a Coalition to Support the Effort
- Survey Your Council
- Gather Signatures of Support
- Identify Council Member Allies
- Hold a Public Education Event
- Outreach to the Media
- What to do if you face resistance in your council?
- Lobby to Congress – Meet with Your Representatives as a City

(See Global Exchange's Tools for Local Organizing & Toolkit to Lobby Congress)

Gather a Coalition of Local Organizations to Support the Effort

Many communities have existing community organizations, neighborhood associations, peace and justice coalitions. If a coalition does not exist in your community, a City Council Resolution campaign is a great opportunity **to launch an effort to amass the power of different groups** and constituencies to advance progressive policies in your community. Think outside the box! Gather a host committee with representatives from different constituencies including faith-based groups, students and youth organizations, peace and justice groups, sympathetic business groups, groups that work on poverty, immigrant groups, racial justice organizations etc. Call a first meeting to launch this idea.

Survey Your City/Town Council

If you are unsure about where your City Council stands on your issue of interest, you may want to start by surveying the Council so you can assess who are your allies, swing members, and those that will pose a tough challenge. Call each office and ask the Council Members (or their staff) if they would generally support a Resolution in favor of your effort. This effort can be divided amongst different organizations. Make sure there is a point person who is collecting the results of the survey to report back at the next meeting.

Gather Public Signatures

(See GX Resources on Sample Petitions and Sample Resolutions)

If you already have a resolution draft in mind that you would like to have the Council pass you may want to spend some time gathering petition signatures from the Councilpeople's constituents. This will help leverage Council Members' support and may help in getting similar language passed by the Council instead of a watered-down version. Ask the members of your coalition to each collect a stack of signatures.

Identify Council Member Allies

Identify your strongest ally(s) on your City Council and set up a meeting with him/her to discuss introducing a resolution. Bring education packet to share with them including talking points, copies of City Council resolutions from other communities, newspaper articles, costs to your community and signed petitions. Ask the Council Person(s) to take the lead in garnering the support of other Council Members. Ask the Council Person to approve the language in the draft resolution. This process may take a number of days and a fair amount of negotiating. If the Council Person agrees to take the lead, set up a follow up meeting with the Council Person's aid. To secure the support of other council members and to move the process along swiftly it is often easier to work with aids. If the Council Person is not willing to lead the effort to get a resolution passed, first assess the reasons why. Is it that the resolution you presented would prove impossible to get secure support? Is the Council Person afraid to take the lead on this issue?

Depending on the reason you may want to try some of the following paths:

- Try a different member of the council.
- Plan actions to target the member.
- Negotiate on the draft resolution language (see sample resolutions and other City Council Resolutions).

Set Up A Public Education Event or Town Hall Meeting

At any point in this process you may want to consider setting up a public event in your city to garner wider support for your initiative, to bring more citizen power into the effort, and to build the movement in your city. If there are forums or teach-ins already planned you may want to just work with the organizers of those events to get on the speaking docket and invite the public to your next planning meeting. One way bring City Council Members into this effort early is to set it up as a "town hall meeting" where you have a panel of people presenting the various arguments for (and against) the resolution and a panel of Council Members and citizens listening and asking follow-up questions.

Outreach to the Media

(See GX resources on Tools for Local Organizing)

The easiest way to make the resolution effort appealing to the media is to draw the direct impacts on your city. The National Priorities Project is available to help you crunch the numbers on how much various budget initiatives, including war spending, will cost local taxpayers in your community. This, combined with the budgetary crisis facing many cities, makes a great hook for press. A public education event or action is a great opportunity to inform journalists about the Cities for Progress campaign. If you are not holding a public education event, consider holding a press conference featuring City Council Members leading the effort and diverse members of your Coordinating body or coalition. If you don't have allied Council Members you may want to plan the media outreach around an action designed to target the Council Member and expose their unwillingness to support this effort. You may want to hold a Candle Light Vigil at their home or conduct a sit-in at their office. Draft a press release (see sample release) and send it to your local and regional press. If a Resolution passes successfully don't forget to do follow-up media work. Hold a press conference and claim a victory for peace.

What to do when a Resolution Will Not Pass/Be Introduced

It will prove almost impossible for many cities to pass a resolution on some issues that may seem national in scope to your council. The following are some alternative options for expressing the support for your position in your city:

- If you have any allied Council Members ask them to circulate a general letter in support of your position to other members and other officials in your City Government including the Board of Education, the Mayors office and other municipal departments. Any formal expressions you can obtain in favor of your campaign will help Global Exchange and the national Cities for Progress efforts to show the national strength of local movements
- You can also try different bodies in your city such as University Resolutions, Labor Union local resolutions, Parent and Teacher Associations, or other Civic bodies.
- If you have a sympathetic Mayor in your city, ask him or her to issue a statement

Please Send Campaign Updates and Requests for Assistance to Global Exchange and Cities for Progress! We are tracking the various efforts to get resolutions passed across the country.

If you are launching a campaign in your community please send us updates to Sanaz Meshkinpour at sanaz@globalexchange.org and Karen Dolan at kdolan@igc.org.

