

Tools and Tips for Speaking to Press

Carefully review and practice talking points and common questions provided by staff before interview.

- Know which 2-3 key points you definitely want to make going into the interview and say them out loud to yourself.

Press answers should always:

- Be concise and to the point, avoid run-on answers
- Repeat part of their question so it can be easily sound-bited
- Always explain the “why,” not just the “what” and “how” of your response. For example, when talking about federal pay, don’t just talk about that fact that we’re calling for 5.3 due to FEPCA. Also talk about how recent pay/benefit cuts have forced millions of feds to delay buying a home, sending kids to college, and putting food on the table, and how 5.3 will at least make them even. Address the reporter by name during intro and outro
- Free of jargon. Terms like “TSOs, representation, and master agreement” may be familiar to those in labor leadership but are unknown to most federal employees and nearly all of the general public. Use terms that are easier for a broad audience to understand.

Assume you are always on the record and always being recorded (video and audio)

- Never say you’re speaking “off the record” – especially to large groups of reporters
- Some exceptions can be made for long-trusted reporters, but these are very few

Avoid being overly-friendly with reporters in front of other reporters/official audiences:

- They will write less-favorably about us to compensate for any perceived bias.

If asked about an unfamiliar subject or piece of legislation:

- Say “I don’t have all the facts right now, but we’re reviewing it closely and I will have someone follow up with you,” then pivot back to your talking points on the issue you’re there to discuss.

When interviewing on camera:

- Wear a solid colored shirt and tie
- Push your glasses to the top of your nose so they do not block your eyes/reflect light into the camera
- Assume the microphone is always on and recording for broadcast
- Sit still with hands folded in front of you.

Recovering from stumbles:

- If you don’t know what to say in a given moment, void “uhh” while thinking. Just pause, collect your thoughts, and continue.
- If you’re having trouble finishing your thought, avoid saying:
 - “Those type things”
 - “Things of that nature”
- Instead, say “my point is” then reiterate the central point of your response.