

Youth Culture in the Crossfire Grassroots Guide

SSDP College Chapters

Prepared by SSDP National
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Objective:

This is a Grassroots Guide to Action to steer your efforts to educate your campus and community about the harms caused by the Reducing Americans' Vulnerability to Ecstasy (RAVE) Act, the Ecstasy Awareness Act, and the CLEAN-UP Act. This guide refers to the RAVE Act and its sequels as the "RAVE laws." The actions range from simple to difficult, with actions building off of one another. Please consider this guide as a reference and plausible strategy for your chapter, not a fast-and-true guide.

Contact the outreach director if you have any questions relating to the strategy or resources found in this grassroots guide. You can download all documents mentioned in this guide off of our website: <http://www.DAREgeneration.com>.

Action Plan for College SSDP Chapters:

1. Devote One Meeting to Educating Chapter Members About the RAVE Laws.

To develop an action plan, first and foremost, you need to understand the RAVE laws.

Steps to a Successful Meeting:

Logistics: Schedule a meeting and advertise. Make sure you have the proper equipment to show a PowerPoint Presentation. Then, download the "Youth Culture PowerPoint Presentation." Familiarize yourself with the presentation, which explains the RAVE laws.

Brainstorm: Allow enough time to talk about the presentation and to decide the direction your chapter wants to take. Consider forming a committee to spearhead efforts.

Materials: Pass out copies of SSDP literature and materials on this issue, including the "Legislative Guide," "Media Guide," "Grassroots Guide," and "Position Paper."

2. Use the Media to Raise Awareness About the RAVE Laws.

Since both the public and policy-makers get information about public policy issues from the news, you should work with the press to get positive coverage of your chapter's position on the RAVE laws

Letters to the editor: Writing letters to the editor, or LTEs, is easy, effective, and rewarding. LTEs should be short and to-the-point. Your chances of being published are greater if your letter is in response to a recently published article. Make sure you write LTEs in a timely fashion; news cycles happen quickly.

For more tips on writing LTEs, visit <http://www.mapinc.org/resource/tips.htm>

Also, download the "Media Guide."

Advisories and Releases: When your chapter hosts an event on the RAVE laws, you should send out a news advisory to alert reporters. News advisories clearly and concisely spell out the who, what, when, and where of your event so that reporters have the essential details to cover the event.

If there is a local or national news development relating to the RAVE laws, you should send out a press release outlining your chapter's position on the matter. Hopefully, future articles about the topic will include a quote from one of your members.

Download the "Sample Press Release" to use as a guide.

Doing Interviews: If you land an interview with a reporter, make sure to practice your talking points in advance. Remember that you don't have to directly answer a reporter's questions; you should always come back to your main message and sound bytes. With that said, remember to be courteous and truthful in your answers.

If your chapter gets any press coverage, be sure to share it with the National Office and the rest of the SSDP community.

For more in-depth information about using the media, please see the Youth Culture "Media Guide," as well as "Working with the Media." Feel free to contact SSDP's communications director for advice at any time.

3. Educate Representatives and Senators About the RAVE Laws

Meeting with your legislator is one of the most powerful things you can do. Lawmakers are unlikely to advocate for reform unless they hear from concerned voters. Be sure to contact SSDP's legislative director for the latest campaign update.

Protocol:

Set the Meeting: Use government websites to find out who your Representative and Senators are. Identify yourself as a constituent and ask to meet with the member or the relevant staffer. You will probably have to fax a formal request to the office. Be prepared to call several times. Persistence is key.

Prepare: Contact SSDP's legislative director to discuss an agenda for the meeting and points to talk about. Also, you will want to discuss literature and materials to take to the meeting.

Stay on Message: Stick to the topic. Don't get into drug legalization or other issues.

Be Early: Members and staffers have tight schedules. They can run late or even cancel last minute, but you can not.

Show Respect: Memorize these rules:

1. Always address and refer to members as "Senator___" or "Congressman/Congresswoman _____"
2. Explain the issue in detail but do not imply they are ignorant about it. Preface facts with phrases like "As you know, "
3. Begin with a brief word of thanks for something they have done, like "Congresswoman ___, before we start I just wanted to thank you for your great work on saving the spotted owl."
4. Never bash a member or his/her political party.

Be Political: Connect your issue with issues constituents already care about and illustrate how your issue directly impacts a large portion of the member's constituency.

Be Honest: If you don't know the answer, just tell them. This is good for two reasons. 1: It makes you look credible. 2: It is a great reason to follow-up after the meeting.

Just Say It: Say what you want to say. Don't leave the meeting without asking the member to do something. You will know what to ask for after talking with the legislative director.

Follow-up: Get the staffer or member's business card. Agree to keep in touch on the issue. Send a brief thank-you note or email mentioning the date and subject of your meeting. Let the legislative director know the results.

4. Throw a Anti-RAVE act RAVE

In 2003, Brown SSDP threw an Anti-Rave Act Rave and SSDP National threw a Rave on Capitol Hill. Both were huge successes. This is a great way to involve musicians and the community. If you are interested in this action, contact the outreach coordinator.

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Resources:

Other Groups Working on This Issue:

The Drug Policy Alliance, www.drugpolicy.org

Drug Policy Alliance is the leading organization working to broaden the public debate on drug policy and to promote realistic alternatives to the war on drugs based on science, compassion, health and human rights.

DanceSafe, www.dancesafe.org

DanceSafe is a nonprofit, harm reduction organization promoting health and safety within the rave and nightclub community.

The Electric Music Defense & Education Fund, <http://www.emdef.org/>

In addition to providing funds for legal efforts to protect the industry, EM:DEF will serve as a spokes-agency for the electronic dance music industry -- providing an independent voice on behalf of industry professionals, while allowing professionals to avoid public association which could result in retaliation by law enforcement.

National Organization to Reform Marijuana Laws (NORML) www.norml.org

NORML's mission is to move public opinion sufficiently to achieve the repeal of marijuana prohibition so that the responsible use of cannabis by adults is no longer subject to penalty.