

COSA Surge Days and Rallies

Definitions

- “Surge Day” - A planned day of grassroots activity at the state capitol, for which COSA National provides materials for our grassroots supporters to give to their state legislators.
- “Rally” - A planned event at the state capitol featuring at least one speaker (typically one of COSA’s national headliners), a reserved space, sound amplification, and space for a large crowd to stand or be seated.

Expectations and Objectives

Every state team is expected to hold a Surge Day each year.¹ The Surge Day may or may not include a rally. The goals of Surge Days include:

- Providing an opportunity for supporters across the state to meet one another and galvanize their membership in the state team.
- Training grassroots supporters to hold effective meetings with their legislators.
- Familiarizing grassroots supporters with their state capitol and legislative offices.
- Demonstrating grassroots support to legislators.
- Providing legislators with educational materials.
- Gathering information about legislators’ positions on COS.

Surge Day participation should be as robust as possible. To that end, the Surge Day should be announced statewide via email, text, and word of mouth, and all supporters encouraged to participate. While some teams may be tempted to think of Surge Day as a “leadership-only” event to showcase the most skilled or knowledgeable team members in legislative meetings, the event objectives cannot be achieved in that manner. Rather, the state leaders should use the Surge Day as an opportunity to help less experienced volunteers grow more comfortable in meeting with legislators. We recommend that seasoned leaders be paired with less experienced supporters to help show them the ropes.

¹ Exceptions are made for states whose legislatures do not meet at all in particular years, although even those state teams may find appropriate occasions for a Surge Day.

Volunteers should be provided an opportunity to RSVP for the Surge Day, and state leaders should spend time before the event to designate group leaders who will provide needed instructions, distribute the materials, and lead small groups of volunteers to their legislators' offices to deliver the materials.

State leaders should discuss with their Regional Directors the practicability of holding a rally on their Surge Day. Important considerations will include:

- The likelihood of attracting a sufficient crowd to justify the expenses.
- The strategic goals of the state team for the year (i.e., is the team approaching a critical mass to pass key legislation?).
- The willingness/availability of state leaders to invest the necessary time and energy to make the event successful.
- The availability of appropriate space and equipment.
- The availability of speakers (COS headliners, legislators, national/state figures, etc.) to attend.

If the team chooses to hold a rally on its Surge Day, leaders should consider inviting a few champion legislators to speak at the event alongside COSA headliners. The team should work with the national communications team to ensure appropriate publicity, etc.