

Stand with Dr. Dean

Organizing a House Party

Hosting a house party is easy and it's a great way to get more people involved with your local DFA Group or Action Team. House parties have a high impact on attendees because it allows for face-to-face, two-way communication between the campaign and community members in a casual setting.

House parties are an important part of the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign. They allow you to:

- Create a bigger, stronger network of progressive activists in your area
- Engage family, friends and neighbors on healthcare and the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign
- Reenergize former DFA Members and Obama supporters to get involved on important issues even after the campaign has ended

Before your Party

1) Set goals

The first step to holding a successful house party is to be clear about the party's goals. You can accomplish one or more goals at a house party:

- Build awareness on the issue of healthcare
- Introduce local activists to the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign.
- Raise money for your local DFA Group and healthcare reform-minded candidates in your area
- Take group actions, like writing letters to the editor or your members of Congress

Set clear, quantifiable goals for yourself and your attendees once you've decided on a general goal – get 15 people to attend, write 30 letters to the editor or recruit five new DFA Members.

2) Find a venue

Once you've set your goal and you know the size of the party you're planning, you'll need to find a venue. Be sure to keep some things in mind when you're looking for an apartment or house to host your party in:

- Cost – Find an apartment or house that you can use for free
- Size – Look for someplace that can fit your attendee goal and have some open areas where guests can mingle easily and where you can address everyone as a crowd
- Off-limits areas – If your host doesn't want guests in certain parts of their home, be sure to make guests aware of those areas

3) Send invitations

Start inviting people close to home because those people will be most likely to turn out to your event. But be sure to cast a wide net to other members of the community:

- Family, friends and neighbors – those with a personal connection to you will be most likely to RSVP and turn out to your event
- Healthcare professionals – doctors, nurses and others working in the healthcare system may want to join you at your party
- Progressive activists – people with a declared interest in healthcare reform and progressive politics in general are also likely to join you
- Websites and ads – social networking websites like Facebook will help get the word out fast and posting notices on bulletin boards in the community
- Bring a friend – encourage your attendees to bring people they know who are interested in healthcare reform and progressive politics

Also, let the DFA Field Team know that you're holding an event. We can help you:

- Create an event on DemocracyForAmerica.com and invite other DFA Members
- Send an e-mail blast to DFA Members in your area alerting them of the event

(Contact us at field@democracyforamerica.com.)

As the event approaches, you need to follow-up with everyone who has committed to volunteering to make sure they actually turn out to the event:

- Follow-up with RSVPs through e-mail, phone, and whatever other contact information you have for them
- Make sure everyone knows the date, time and meeting location, including the actual street address

Quick tip:

Usually only half of those who RSVP will actually turn out to your event, so be sure to consistently follow-up with those who say they'd like to join you at your party.

At your Party

1) Greet your guests

Your house party is a great way to build a list of progressive activists and healthcare advocates in your area for future actions. You'll want to make sure to get contact information from your guests and take the time to greet each person.

- Set up a table with sign-in sheets and pens near the entrance and encourage guests to sign in
- Introduce yourself and other party organizers to guests as they arrive
- Thank guests for coming and encourage them to mix and mingle, but let them know that the whole group will come together at a certain time

2) Come together

Take a moment to call your guests together. Re-introduce yourself and your co-organizers just before you get started. Be sure to thank everyone for coming a second time and share your interest of the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign. For example:

"Hi everyone. My name is Jane Smith and I'm a Smalltown DFA organizer. I'd like to thank you all for coming. The Stand with Dr. Dean campaign is very important to me because I think we need to draw a line in the sand tell the Congress that we need to make a public option available to all Americans."

You may want to share a personal story about how healthcare has impacted your life and encourage other guests to introduce themselves to the whole group.

Then, start up a debate. Share healthcare horror stories. Ask a doctor or nurse in attendance to talk about their experiences. Ask a local elected official in attendance to talk how healthcare reform will impact your city or state. Ask a small business owner to talk about how healthcare costs for employees.

3) Recruit new volunteers and take action

Encourage guests to sign the petition if they haven't already:

Give America a choice. We support healthcare reform that allows individual Americans to choose either a universally available public healthcare action like Medicare or for-profit private insurance. A public option is the only way to guarantee healthcare for all Americans and its inclusion is non-negotiable.

Any legislation without the choice of a public option is only insurance reform and not the healthcare reform America needs.

Tell your guests that thousands of DFA Members, other progressive activists and healthcare reform advocates are hosting house parties just like yours. Ask them to take the next step and host their own party to spread awareness about healthcare reform and the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign, or to volunteer in other ways, like canvassing or phone banking.

Then, take action. If you planned on writing letters to elected officials or local newspapers, write them now. If you planned on raising money for your local DFA Group or a local healthcare reform-minded candidate or official, make your pitch your now:

"Tonight I'm asking everyone at this house party to help me raise \$300 to support Smalltown DFA's grassroots campaign to support John Smith for mayor. We have 15 people here tonight and I hope you'll all pitch in \$20 to help me reach my goal."

After your Party

1) Thank your guests and recap

Be sure to thank everyone for coming one last time before they leave.

Meet up with your co-organizers after the event to recap the event and discuss the pros and cons:

- What went well?
- What could have gone better?
- What did you learn from the event?
- Did everyone have fun?

2) Tell us how it went!

Send your feedback and pictures to field@democracyforamerica.com. We'd like to hear and see how great it was! And, with your permission, we'd like to share your stories and pictures with other DFA Members across the country.

Finally, send us your sign-in and petition sheets. You can send them to us by mail, e-mail or fax:

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