

Before You Go

First UU San Antonio Guidelines for Attending a Rally, March, or Protest

The rights to free speech and assembly are fundamental to democracy and democratic reform. Attending a march, rally, or protest is a way of expressing our opinions as citizens, gaining attention, and recruiting support. We recommend that you **ONLY** participate in sponsor-organized, low -risk, nonviolent demonstrations.... YET, we must know that these can quickly and unexpectedly change. It is important to seriously consider these risks, and here are some suggestions.

Prepare:

1. Know the details---Where is it? Consider logistics, access and parking. How about bathrooms? When is it? Know the start and stop times, plan your arrival and departure. What is it? A stand in place rally or a march? Can you stand/walk for the expected amount of time?
Who is the sponsor? Research the various opinions/background on the issue. Be certain of your own opinion. Learn some talking points.
2. Go with a group or buddy if possible---know each other's emergency contacts and stay together.
3. Prepare easy to carry signs---poster or bubble board with catchy slogans or phrases---staple on thin wooden stick like paint stirrer.
4. Check the weather forecast and prepare. Wear season appropriate layered clothing, comfortable shoes, hat, sunscreen.
5. In a light backpack bring face mask/snacks/food/plenty of water/ID/credit card/small amount of cash for incidentals or travel expenses/important medicines. Bring your phone and maybe a charger and print a list of important numbers, in case your phone is lost or taken-- (some people write the #'s on their skin).
6. Consider and anticipate how to respond to unexpected adverse situations, such as counter protestors and aggressive police presence. Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you. **DO NOT ENGAGE** with counter-protestors. Stop or move away if the situation becomes tense. Some people bring protective gear. Have someone not at the march who can contact a lawyer or family members if needed.
7. What **not** to do: do not wear expensive jewelry/contact lenses (wear glasses); do not bring anything that could be construed as a weapon; do not litter or damage public property; do not trespass.

References:

1. Good article from Consumer Reports <https://www.consumerreports.org/human-civil-rights/preparing-to-protest-a-beginners-guide/>
2. General legal information from ACLU <https://guides.sll.texas.gov/protest-rights/general-information>
3. Wikihow simple step by step: <https://www.wikihow.com/Protest#Getting-Prepared-to-Protest>
4. Art protest: <https://www.newtactics.org/conversation/cultural-resistance-arts-protest>