

House Party Guide

The goals of house parties are to create a dialogue and empower individuals to take action. The American people know there is a better way – that we do not have to sacrifice our health and natural heritage to meet America’s energy needs, that we can make America energy independent by investing in cleaner, cheaper and safer energy solutions like building energy-efficient buildings and investing in renewable energy sources like wind and solar power. By hosting a house party you will be setting the stage for discussions, letter writing and other plans of action. It is a great way to meet new people and share ideas.

Organizing Your *Burning the Future* House Party

Below are some step-by-step instructions on how to organize a fun and successful Burning the Future Party.

Step 1. Preparing for Your House Party (3-4 weeks ahead of time)

Get Your Materials

Unlike most parties, there are a few things you will need for this house party that you can’t just run out to the store and pick up 5 minutes before your guests arrive. You will want to get Burning the Future DVD by going to the [Burning the Future](#) Web Store.

You can download materials from our [website](#).

In addition to these materials, you will need a few other things:

- Pens, paper, envelopes and stamps for writing letters to your Senators and Representatives.
- Refreshments, if you choose to serve them at your party.
- Name tags
- Enough places for everyone to sit. If you need extra chairs, you can ask some of your friends to bring folding chairs.
- A digital camera to record the party for posterity.

Step 2: Set the Date and Time

Pick a date that will coincide with a broadcast of Burning the Future or else an event or vote if you can, as there tends to be more media coverage to discuss. The important thing is to talk to your friends and neighbors about the threats facing Appalachia and other parts of the country and the dangers and hidden costs of coal and to encourage them to communicate their concerns with their Senators and Representatives.

Step 3: Invitations

Once you have set the date and time for your house party, you are ready to invite your guests. It is up to you to decide how many people you feel comfortable having at your home. In addition to inviting your friends and neighbors, you can also invite co-workers and other community members. As you invite people to your house party, you can use a free online invitation, such as <http://www.evite.com>, to help keep track of RSVPs and plan your party.

Step 4: The Week Before (1 week ahead of time)

Confirm Your Guest List

It's a good idea to call your list expected guests a week before your house party to confirm attendance. This way you will have a better estimate about how many people to expect and in turn you will know the number of materials you will need.

Print Out Your Materials

When you have a good idea of the number of guests you are expecting, you will need to print out enough copies of your materials for everyone.

- Sign-In Sheet – Print out enough sign-in sheets to collect names and contact information for all your guests. It always helps to have an extra.
- Sample Letters to your Senators and Representatives – While you want everyone to write a personalized letter, make sure you have enough copies of the sample letter on hand for people to use it as a guide for their own letters.
- There is a sample letter on <http://www.burningthefuture.com>

- If you need to find out who your Senators are, you can look online at http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

To find your Representatives go to:

<http://www.house.gov/writerep/>

- Envelopes, Stamps, and Pens – Make sure you have enough mailing materials and pens for everyone you expect. Again, extras are always useful. Remember that everyone will be writing two letters – one to both of your Senators.

Make Sure Your Technology Works

So it's the day of your party, your guests have arrived, everyone is having fun, you go to put in the Burning the Future DVD and the screen is blank or the sound isn't working. That's probably the worst case scenario for these house parties. A few days, and again a few hours beforehand, make sure that the DVD works with your system and that all your guests will be able to see the screen. If you need to order a DVD please go to the [Burning the Future store](#).

Send Out Press Advisory (Optional)

Getting a story about your house party in a local newspaper or on local TV news is a great way to reach a much broader audience about the need to protect the Arctic Refuge and move America towards a clean energy future. Be sure to include all the relevant local information. You can fax or email the advisory to members of the media a few days in advance, and then call them to see if they are interested in attending or learning more about the film and the issues.

Step 5: The House Party Begins

Welcome and Introductions (10-15 minutes)

As your guests arrive, welcome them to your party and ask them to sign-in on the sign-in sheets. If you have decided to use name tags, you can also ask people to put on their nametag. If you have a group of people that do not know each other very well, it is a good idea to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves and share a little bit about why they wanted to come to the house party.

Presenting the Issue (10 minutes)

Once everyone is comfortable, you will want to introduce the reasons why you are having the house party. At this point you will want to pass out the educational materials you have put together.

Screening the Film (60 minutes)

It's time to watch the movie. Kick back, fire up the popcorn, and you are ready to go.

Writing Letters to Congress (15 minutes)

After watching the film, encourage your guests to write letters to your Senators. If you need to find out who your Senators are, you can look online at: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

To find your Representatives go to: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>

Encourage people to share their personal thoughts, particularly after watching the film. Handwritten letters are one of the most effective ways to influence your Senators. They will respond to the letters they receive. You will also want to remind your guests to personalize the letters and not just copy the sample letters verbatim. It is a good idea to ask people whether anyone needs to leave before the film is over and get them to write a letter before they leave for the evening.

Thanking Your Guests and Proposing Next Steps (15 minutes)

After the movie is over, see if people are interested in discussing the film and sharing their thoughts about the issues. This is a great time to propose next steps to follow up on the film. This could include signing up for email alerts at BurningtheFuture.com, submitting a letter to the editor to your local newspaper, scheduling an in person meeting with your members of Congress next time, or organizing another event. At the end of the night, thank your guests for coming and encourage them to go to www.burningthefuture.com to keep up on the news and other events.

Step 6: Follow Up (The Week After Your House Party)

Send in the Letters to your Senators

Once you have collected all of the letters, you want to send them into your Senators at the following address:

The Honorable (Full Name of your Senator or Representative)

United States Senate or House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20510

Follow Up Phone Call to your Senators and Representatives

In addition to sending in your letters, it is also very effective to call your Senators and Representatives to tell them about your event and let them know how many letters you have just sent them. You can reach either house by calling the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Once the operator answers, you will want to ask to be connected to your Senator's or Representative's office. A staff member will answer the phone and you want to tell them about your concerns surrounding coal, your desire to see America move away from its dependence on coal, and that you just hosted a house party with however many of your friends and neighbors to discuss and take action on this issue.

Submit Letter to the Editor

A great way to get out our message and moving towards clean energy is to submit a letter to the editor in response to the stories that run in your local paper. Letters to the editor are among the most widely read section of any newspaper. Most newspapers allow you to submit letters to the editor through their website. If your local paper does not do this, you can call them to find out how to submit the letter.

Tell Us How Your Party Went

After your party, send us an email by going to www.burningthefuture.com and click on Contact Us. You can also send us digital photos from your house party.

