

chaos guide

HENSHALL & CO.
BOUTIQUE CREATIVE AGENCY

**SMALL BUSINESS
PROTEST/UNREST
RESPONSE GUIDE**

PROTEST

There are periodic calls for coordinated protests, boycotts, and “stay home/don’t spend” actions that can overlap with high-traffic retail periods or major community events. These campaigns typically circulate online and encourage participants to reduce spending, avoid certain businesses or industries, and limit public activity for a set window of time.

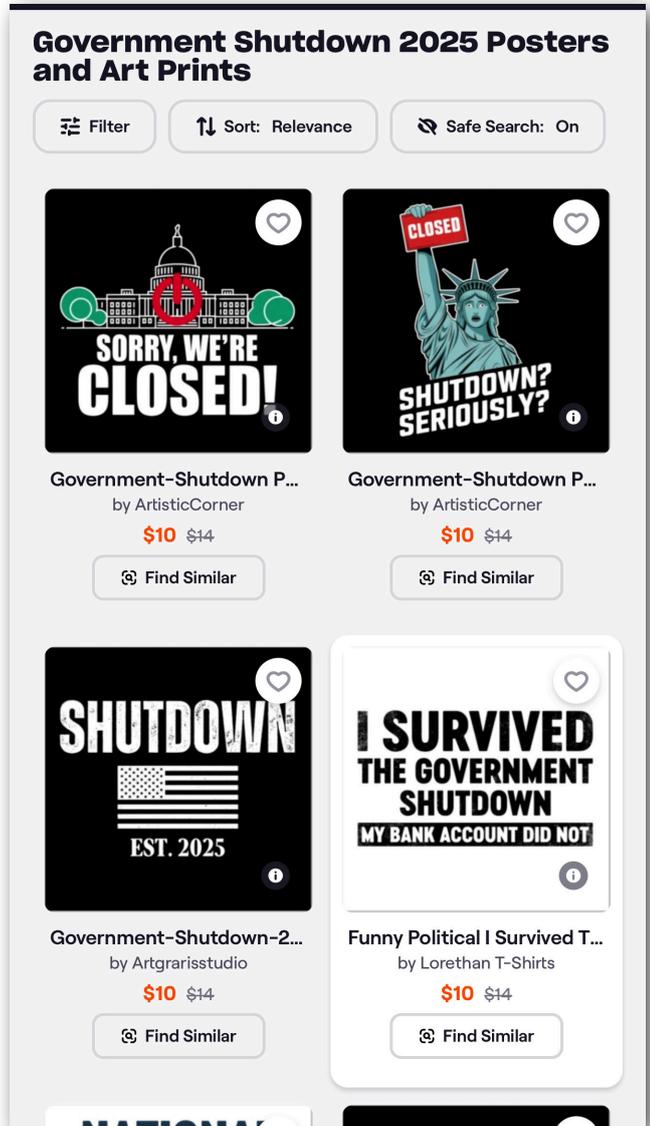
Common motive: To demonstrate collective economic influence and call attention to concerns such as corporate power, inequality, labor issues, or broader dissatisfaction with government and social systems.

Uncertain scale/impact: Some campaigns gain significant visibility online, but real-world participation can vary widely by region and is often difficult to predict in advance.

Implication for small businesses: Even a modest shift in consumer behavior - reduced shopping, fewer in-person visits, or heightened tension in public areas - can affect foot traffic, staffing, delivery schedules, and customer expectations, especially during already-busy seasonal weeks.

UNREST

NEED EXTRA HELP FOR THE PROTEST? TEXT 316-312-5640



MASS ECONOMIC BLACKOUT

NOVEMBER 25, 2025 TO DECEMBER 2, 2025

**NO SPENDING • NO EVENTS
NO RESTAURANTS • NO BACKING OUT!**

PREPARE FOR THE IMPACT!

TO PREVENT SPIKE SPENDING BEFORE AND AFTER THE BLACKOUT, WE ASK THAT ALL PARTICIPANTS PURCHASE GOODS NEEDED FROM COMMUNITY OWNED STORES LEADING UP TO AND AFTER THE DATES. THIS HELPS WITH SUSTAINED IMPACT AND KEEPS OUR MONEY OUT OF MEGA BUSINESSES' POCKETS.

DON'T SHOOT PDX

WE'RE SHUTTING IT DOWN.

MASS BLACKOUT

NOVEMBER 25TH - DECEMBER 2ND

The largest economic blackout protest in U.S. history begins November 25th!

- No Work
- No Projects
- No Spending
- No Events
- No Restaurants
- No Restaurants

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YOU WILL IDEALLY WANT TO

Stay Neutral

BUT OPEN AND PROFITABLE.

THERE WILL BE THOSE WHO TELL YOU TO TAKE A STAND. WHILE I PERSONALLY THINK IT WILL BE IMPORTANT IN THE LONG RUN TO BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR VALUES, I UNDERSTAND THAT STAYING NEUTRAL IS ONE WAY TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS, ASSETS AND FAMILY.

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Author's note:

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TIPS FOR THE PROTESTS

10 Thoughts

1

Acknowledge, don't politicize

Encourage your team to post a message like:
“We're here for you this weekend – open as usual, committed to service.”

Keep it neutral, but reassure customers.

Stay open – and visible

Because there's a possibility of lower foot traffic (or changed customer behavior), staying open and maintaining predictable hours helps capture the customers who will still shop. If you aren't actively protesting, or can't afford to close, you shouldn't shut down unless safety/conditions demand it.

2

3

Highlight community/local focus
Emphasizing “shop local / support our neighborhood” messaging is a great idea. In one sense that aligns with a portion of this protest’s logic (supporting small business rather than large corporations) without taking a political stand that could cost you half of your business.



Offer a special

Offer a workingman value special

For example: “This weekend only: Working Man’s Meal Deal” (or “Local Hero Special”)

e.g., entrée + side + drink at a value price, billed toward folks working the weekend, or simply positioning as “because you put in the work, we’ll put in the value.”

That gives a positive, but neutral, frame and supports traffic.

4

Think about your hours & location

Extend hours / shift promotions to times when folks DO shop. Are there scheduled, in-person, protests? Do you need to work around that time-frame?

If consumer behavior changes (maybe they shop earlier/later or online), you can tweak hours or push a lunch special, happy hour, etc.

5

Remember, your customers see what is going on in the world, so hours can be different with few ramifications.

Make sure all digital channels say “Yes, we’re open.”

Just be nice. Full stop.

Lean into safe, welcoming environment.

If there’s heightened tension or uncertainty (some stores may see lower traffic or different customer behavior), make sure the space feels safe, clean, welcoming.

A friendly sign that just says “Welcome! We’re glad you’re here” goes a long way.

6

7

Pull focus online or to delivery

Promote digital/online ordering options

If in-store foot traffic drops, making it easy to order online or take-out can mitigate losses. Use email/SMS/social to remind customers of those always-available options.



Create urgency for your specials

Create urgency with limited-time deal

Such as our working-man special idea.

Additionally: "Only available this weekend" or

"Only for walk-in orders" or "First 50

customers" can create that FOMO we marketing folks love to see.

8

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Redirect their thoughts to events or holidays

Keep refocusing them. Communicate that the world will be back-to-normal soon and follow through first thing on Monday.

Use the weekend of protests as a launchpad. After the week, post a “Thank you for supporting local businesses” message and remind them of upcoming regular specials or any holiday promotions you have planned. Just take an extra moment to connect. It helps to keep loyalty strong. Wish them a Happy St. Patrick's Day or Easter.

9



10

Track results & learn for next year

Have your team note how traffic, sales, margins behave during the protest week. If lower than usual, plan ahead for the same quarter next year with mitigation in case it happens again. Also ask: were customers responding to the value special? Did it move more volume?

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UNDERSTAND SOMETIMES THAT NEUTRALITY CAN

Be harmful:

**A COMPANY THAT CLAIMS
TO BE GUIDED BY VALUES
BUT REMAINS SILENT ON
A POLITICAL ISSUE IT IS
INVOLVED IN CAN BE SEEN
AS HYPOCRITICAL BY
CONSUMERS.**

Daniel Korschan in his column:

Should companies stay politically neutral?

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WHAT IF...

When Business As Usual Isn't an Option

For some small businesses, particularly those located in areas with visible protest activity or near planned picket lines during any planned or spontaneous protests, staying “neutral” isn't as simple as remaining open.

If your storefront sits within earshot of a protest or your staff has to cross picket lines to enter, it's important to acknowledge that business as usual may not feel appropriate, or even possible. In these cases, your best move is transparency: let your community know you're aware of what's happening, you're committed to safety for all, and you're open to serve with respect.

A brief message such as “*We understand this is a meaningful (or traumatic) time for many in our community. We are remaining open to support our customers, staff, and neighbors safely*” can go a long way toward showing awareness without taking a political stance.

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OR WORSE...



If a Protest Reaches Your Doorstep

If demonstrators gather outside or near your business, the key is to prioritize calm, safety, and service. You don't need to declare sides to maintain composure and clarity.

- Encourage staff to remain polite and non-reactive, and have a plan to de-escalate if tensions rise.
- Keep your entryway clear, avoid posting any counter-messaging.
- If possible, designate one spokesperson to handle outside inquiries or media.
- You can also post signage that says: "*We welcome all customers. We respect the right to peaceful protest. We're open and focused on serving with care.*"

This kind of neutral clarity ensures your values are visible without inflaming tensions.

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AND WORST...

When Things Get Ugly - From Any Side

If a situation escalates, whether through aggressive language, confrontational behavior, or property threats, your team's first job is safety, not sales.

Empower employees to step away and call for help if needed.

Document incidents with time-stamped notes or video where appropriate, but **never engage or argue** with participants. If harassment or violence occurs from either side of the aisle (officials, protesters or counter-protesters), be ready to temporarily close and communicate that decision with professionalism and calm:

“Out of care for our team and customers, we’ve made the decision to close early today. We’ll reopen as soon as it’s safe and respectful for everyone involved.”

Printable signs are at the end of this guide. Afterward, reconnect with your audience through email or social to reaffirm your values and reinforce trust.

WANT HELP FOR THE PROTEST OR THE HOLIDAYS? TEXT 316-312-5640.

STAY VISIBLE. STAY CONNECTED.



*Even When Business Doesn't Feel
'Business as Usual.'*

**Chaos readiness without compromise:
your story told, your doors open,
your brand protected.**

At Henshall & Co., we know your brand isn't just another business, it's your legacy, and during this sad political season, your message matters more than ever. Whether you're navigating potential protests, a community blackout, or just the usual business, you can't afford to go quiet. With decades of experience in expert storytelling, social-media strategy, and brand management, we craft communications that keep you visible, relevant, trusted—and ready for whatever the weekend brings. Let us take care of your online presence and messaging so you can focus on what you do best: running your business and serving your community.

If you're ready to partner with a team that understands both the routine and the unexpected, let's talk now.

• Book Your Free Consultation on our Web site— because even when “business as usual” isn't an option, you and your brand still show up. Click -> [henshallandco.com](https://www.henshallandco.com)

we are open.

We welcome all customers.

We respect the right to peaceful protest.

We're open and focused on serving with care.



EAT LOCAL.
SHOP LOCAL.
WE ARE OPEN!



We welcome all customers.

We respect the right to peaceful protest.

We're open and focused on serving with care.

Sorry, we are temporarily closed!



*Out of care for our team and customers,
we've made the decision to close early today.*

We'll reopen as soon as it's safe and respectful for everyone.

WE ARE CLOSED.

Sorry, we're
temporarily
closed!

*Out of care for our team and customers,
we've made the decision to close early today.*



We'll reopen as soon as it's safe and respectful for everyone.

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