



Effective Legislative Advocacy

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Advocacy Can Be....

- ▶ Public Education Campaigns
- ▶ Community Mobilization
- ▶ Educating Legislators
- ▶ Litigation
- ▶ Lobbying and Legislative Visits

Why Advocacy?

- ▶ Promoting a cause or principle that will create large-scale or systemic change



Visiting Legislators

In-person visits are an opportunity for legislators to hear directly from constituents about key issues affecting the communities they represent.



Visit Overview

Before Your Visit:

- ▶ Make an appointment
- ▶ Recruit others
 - ▶ Don't go alone
- ▶ Prepare

At Your Visit:

- ▶ Introductions and Who You Are
- ▶ Why You Are There
- ▶ Personalize It
- ▶ What You Want
- ▶ Thank You



Prepare

- ▶ Schedule in advance
 - ▶ Call or email the representative's office with a meeting request
- ▶ Basic research on the legislator
 - ▶ Where the representative currently stands on the issue?
 - ▶ What committees are they on?
- ▶ Identify what kind of issue framing would move or mobilize the legislator
 - ▶ Practical, emotional, legal, moral/religious
- ▶ Develop 3-5 bullet points you **MUST** hit
- ▶ Identify your ASK
- ▶ Decide who in your group will cover which points
- ▶ Run through the agenda together before the meeting



Day of the Meeting

- ▶ Be punctual!
 - ▶ It is good to arrive 10-15 minutes early to make sure everyone in your group is prepared
- ▶ Complement the legislator on a vote or action you appreciated
- ▶ Building rapport with staff is important in developing a long-term relationship
- ▶ Bring relevant materials to leave with the legislator and their staff



During the Meeting

- ▶ Briefly introduce your organization and the individuals present
- ▶ Identify yourselves as constituents and how many others you represent
- ▶ Talk about only one or two issues and stay on topic
- ▶ Give several brief points why your member should support this issue
 - ▶ Not enough to say “it’s the right thing to do.” Tap into their self interest
- ▶ Give facts, but make it personal!
 - ▶ How the issue impacts you and what you can do to me if I don’t act
- ▶ Make a specific ask
 - ▶ Ex. “I would like you to cosponsor the DREAM Act”
- ▶ At the end of the meeting, thank the staff person for his or her time
 - ▶ Leave one or two pages of relevant material



Follow up

- ▶ Tell the staff person you will get back to him or her if you can't provide information
- ▶ Follow up within 3 days of meeting
- ▶ If staff is unfamiliar with issue, ask for a follow-up correspondence
- ▶ Send a thank you letter to the staff person within 3 days
 - ▶ Repeat ask
 - ▶ Letter helps build a relationship
 - ▶ In many cases, staffer greatly influence the representative



Practice! Practice! Practice!

Do role plays with your group before meetings:

- ▶ Break into pairs
 - ▶ 2 Roles: Legislator/staff & advocate
- ▶ Have each person practice talking points
- ▶ Give constructive feedback
 - ▶ Did you understand the issue the advocate presented?
 - ▶ Did they state a clear ask?



Don't be Discouraged

- ▶ Visits are important to establish relationship with a congressional office and bring attention to an issue
- ▶ Often takes several meetings and actions to influence legislative action



“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”
~Eleanor Roosevelt



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