

Tips for Constituent Based Advocacy

From the Policy Action Committee Meeting, June 24, 2014

Build Relationships

Members of congress and their staff will be **more responsive** to your advocacy if you take the time to build a relationship with them. Don't just inform them of your views; visit them **in person** in their DC office, make **phone calls** and send **personal letters and emails**. If you can't make it to DC, visit them in their home office or **attend a local event**. The more that staff can associate a name with a face with a story or issue, the more they will be able to listen, understand and take action.

Keep it Simple

Just as you do not know the intricacies of congress, members of congress and staff do not know the inner workings of your program. Use **plain English and thorough explanations** to convey your message. Ask questions to determine the knowledge level of staffers. Simply tell them what you do, why it is important and why they should care.

Keep it Local

Let members of congress know how your work on the ground in their district impacts their decision making in DC and vice versa. **Be specific and name drop** local politicians (of the same party), contractors that you work with, board members, names of streets, recent local events that you've attended—anything that will help build a **personal connection** between the congress person, their staff and your organization.

Keep it Regular

Assign **one person** on your staff to be the point person for policy and advocacy. **Reach out regularly**—not just when you need something. Make sure that their staff receives your newsletters and **follow-up** with a phone call to highlight particular elements. Don't worry about bothering them—your job is to be **proactive** in forming and maintaining the relationship.

Make them Care

The end goal is for members of congress and their staff to **know your organization** and **value the impact** that you are making in the community. **Find connections** to the congress person on your board or through staff and volunteers. Help your congress person understand what you do and why you love it.

Additional Resources

Congressional Management Foundation 2010 Survey of Senior Congressional Staff:

http://www.congressfoundation.org/storage/documents/CMF_Pubs/cwc-perceptions-of-citizen-advocacy.pdf

June Policy Action Committee Webinar Recording and Slides:

<http://cltnetwork.org/policy-action-committee-meeting-june-2014/>

Board Advocacy Project:

<http://www.boardadvocacy.org/>