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All Politics are Local
How to Engage your Local Elected Officials
How to Engage Your Local Elected Officials

- Advocacy 101
- Make Connections
- Build Coalitions
- Tips and Tools
- Best Practices
Advocating for Change

Political and economic movements are often supported by a network of individuals at the local level working to enact change.
What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.
Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people in society can:

- Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them.
- Protect and promote their rights.
- Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.
What is Grassroots Advocacy?

People contacting their elected officials and reaching out to the public regarding important policy issues.
What is an Advocate?

An advocate is someone who speaks on behalf of a cause or proposal. The advocate may be an individual or an organization.
Grassroots Advocacy vs. Lobbying
Elected Officials vs. Government Officials
Connect with Elected Officials
How to Connect with Elected Officials

In Your Community ...

Through Friends and Family ...

At Fundraisers and Townhall Meetings ...
Build Coalitions
How to Build Coalitions

1. Build support within your Community Action Partnership
2. Garner support within the communities your CAP serves
3. Develop relationships with organizations of common interest
4. Join established coalitions
Benefits of Coalitions

- Access to more resources – information, labor, perspective, expertise, etc.
- Avoid “reinventing the wheel”
- People with same interests are more likely to be effective in collaborating
- Elected officials are more responsive to larger groups of constituents all advocating for the same issue
Tips & Tools
Tips – Before Engaging Your Elected Official

- Get to know your elected official
  - *Where are they from?*
  - *Where did they go to school?*
  - *Where do they attend church?*
  - *What issues are most important to them?*

- Follow your elected official via social media
- Subscribe to your elected official’s online newsletter
- Attend your elected official’s local fundraisers
- Get to know your elected official’s staff – they are typically the gatekeepers to the official
Tips – Engaging Your Elected Official

- Be confident. Tell your story and share your experiences with your elected official.
- Be knowledgeable of the issue(s).
- Be honest and use plain language; be polite.
- Speak from the heart, but don’t over-tell your story.
- Stay on message.
- Ensure if you go with a group, it reflects the diversity of your community.
- If staff are present from the elected official's office, treat them with the same respect and dignity.
- Ask for a business card and provide yours. Obtain direct contact information from all who are present in the meeting.
Tips – Following An Engagement with Your Elected Official

- Send a thank you communication to the elected official and anyone who was present from their office.
- Follow-up immediately with any request for additional information made by the elected official or their staff.
- Communicate with your CAP network and any coalition groups about the engagement, outcomes and next steps.
- Plan your next advocacy outreach strategy to engage the elected official or their staff.
Tools

- Utilize the NCAP/NCAF online legislative platform
- Reach out to NCAP/NCAF Policy Director
- Websites:
  - U.S. Mayors Association, [https://www.usmayors.org/](https://www.usmayors.org/)
  - International City and County Management Association, [https://icma.org/](https://icma.org/)
  - National Association of County Officials, [https://www.naco.org/](https://www.naco.org/)
  - USA.gov, [https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials)
Best Practices
Best Practices on Engaging Elected Officials

- Build an advocacy strategy – who and how are you going to engage.
- Develop your request and craft your message.
  - A personalized approach works best - real people explaining real concerns.
  - Credibility is key. Be truthful.
  - Communicate with a clear message.
- Set goals – build timelines off legislative sessions
- Maximize engaging with elected officials
  - Be persistent – “The squeaky wheel gets the grease”
  - Always follow-up on any requests immediately
- Keep it simple – Don’t overthink it.
Advocacy is a process, not an event.

It’s a marathon, not a sprint.