



Advocacy Tools for Immigration Policy Change: Congressional Meetings and Op-Eds

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Presenters:

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CLINIC's Mission Statement

Embracing the Gospel value of welcoming the stranger, CLINIC promotes the dignity and protects the rights of immigrants in partnership with a dedicated network of Catholic and community legal immigration programs.

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Congressional Meetings
- Op-Eds
- How CLINIC can help
- Questions

cliniclegal.org

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Advocacy 101

Catherine Gillette
Grassroots Mobilization Coordinator



What Is NETWORK?

NETWORK **educates, organizes,** and **lobbies** for economic and social transformation



Why Advocate?



NETWORK's Founding

- * December 17-19, 1971
- * Trinity University
- * 47 Catholic sisters
- * 21 states
- * Decided to create a "network" of sisters engaged in political education and action



Charity vs. Justice

Charity:

- Direct service
- Individual acts
- Immediate needs
- Symptoms of injustice
- Socially acceptable

Justice:

- Social change
- Public, collective actions
- Long-term
- Structures of injustice
- Challenges society

Think Good Samaritan!

Think Exodus Story!



Charity or Justice?

Both charity and justice are required of us.

“Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveler who has been attacked.

It is justice's role to **prevent the attack.**”

- Blessed Frédéric Ozanam



What is Advocacy?

- ✦ The public support for, promotion of, and championing of **policies** that will benefit and/or improve the lives of a certain population.
- ✦ **Actions** that aim to influence the decisions within political, economic, or social **systems** or **institutions**.
- ✦ Speaking truth to **power**, bringing the needs of the people to those who have the power to **create change** (NETWORK).



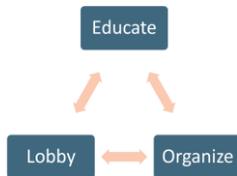
Faith Based Advocacy

Rooting our advocacy in our faith means:

- ✦ Our values, morals, and personal stories lead the work—not necessarily facts and figures.
- ✦ We recognize God even in the legislatures and decision makers who don't share our values.
- ✦ Prayer is part of our public events.
- ✦ We are dedicated to the long-haul and know that our work is helping build God's kingdom.



Components of Advocacy



Each of these components can be achieved through a variety of tactics that are part of a larger strategy.



Lobbyists



Lobbyists



Lobbying

✦ **Educating** and **influencing** elected officials so they will support legislation to make this a more just society



Tactics

There are many different ways to influence a lawmaker or decision maker.



How Do I Choose the Right Tactic?

- * Determine how much education your community needs on this issue to take action
- * Evaluate your resources: money, people, and time
- * **Consider what actions are going to influence your lawmaker the most—who do they need to hear from?**
- * Make sure that your tactics are also building up your organization and your team



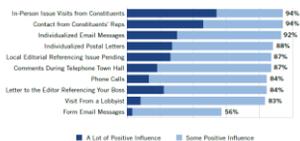
Tactics to Directly Influence Your Member of Congress

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>WRITTEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Letters to the Editor * Op-eds * Sign-on letters * Email campaigns * Social media posts | <p>IN-PERSON/SPOKEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Phone calls * Questions at town halls * In-district meetings * Capitol visits |
|---|---|



The Most Influential Communications

If your Member/Congressor has not already arrived at a final decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the Washington office have on his/her decision?



(n = 190-192)
Source: Congressional Management Foundation 2018 survey of congressional staff, including Chiefs of Staff, Communications Directors, Legislative Directors, and Legislative Assistants.



Pro-Tips for Emailing

- Do your homework!
- Email about **one** bill or issue at a time.
- Identify where you live in the district or state.
- If you have a title like "Sister," use it. It's powerful!
- Mention any groups or communities you're a part of.
- Be courteous and express appreciation for your legislator's work.
- Cite the bill number or title and your position. Ask them to take a specific action, such as voting "no" or co-sponsoring a bill.
- Mention how the legislation affects your community, i.e., *Cincinnati has the fourth highest rate of childhood poverty in the country.*
- Share your personal story about how the legislation affects you.
- Restate your ask.

NOTE: If you're using a form email, be sure to **PERSONALIZE IT!** ←



Pro-Tips for Calling

- Do your homework!
- Identify your name, hometown, and any affiliations (ex. member of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice)
- If you have a title such as "Sister," use it! It's powerful!
- Identify the bill or issue that you are calling about
- Clearly state your position and how you want your member of Congress to act
- Mention a brief personal reason for why you support or oppose the bill or issue
- Express gratitude for your elected official's work

NOTE: Don't be intimidated! ←



Relationship Building

The key is building relationships

- ✦ **In-District staff members are important allies**
 - They are day-to-day members of your community
 - You are a valuable resource to them for information about issues in the community, as well as social services and stories about the people they serve
 - Building relationships with them leads to meetings with your Members of Congress.
- ✦ **It's important to meet with your Member of Congress at home**
 - Learn about them, their priorities, and their goals
 - Invite them into your spaces
 - Engage non-traditional advocates



Constituent Power

- ✦ Every member of Congress has offices in their home state and their home district
- ✦ Specialist vs. Constituent
- ✦ Gathering and providing information
- ✦ They want to hear from YOU!



Congressional Staff

HILL STAFF

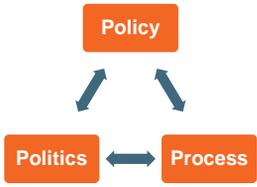
- ✦ Specialized
- ✦ Author legislation
- ✦ Political strategists
- ✦ Often not from home district

DISTRICT STAFF

- ✦ Not policy experts
- ✦ Constituent services
- ✦ In touch with community
- ✦ Number and knowledge of staff vary
- ✦ Opportunity for relationships with staffers



The 3 P's



Analysis: Policy

- ✦ Identify the Topic for the Visit
- ✦ Research All Sides of the Debate
- ✦ Develop Talking Points For Discussion & Responses to Push Back
- ✦ Develop Leave Behinds to Give Staff/Member Pre-Meeting & as Follow Up to Meeting



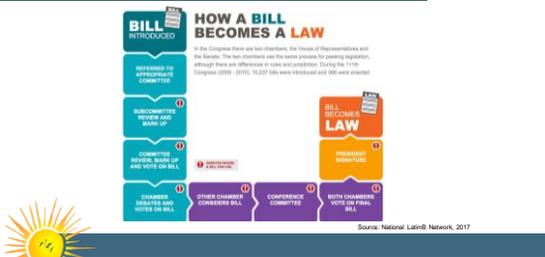
Analysis: Process

THINK ABOUT:

- ✦ What is the likelihood this bill will move?
- ✦ How can this staff person or Member help move the bill forward?
- ✦ Relevant committee member?
- ✦ Leadership?



Analysis: Process



Analysis: Politics

- FACTOR IN THE FOLLOWING:**
- ✦ How will the Member you are visiting view this bill?
 - ✦ Member's Party?
 - ✦ Bill Sponsor or co-sponsor?
 - ✦ Person of Faith?
 - ✦ Senior Member?
 - ✦ Re-Election?
 - ✦ Relevant Committee Member/Leader?
 - ✦ Caucus Leadership?



Preparing to Lobby

- ✦ Decide on a specific issue or a small set of connected issues to discuss
- ✦ Research your issue!
- ✦ Schedule an appointment with the member's office (this may require persistence): Best practice – Email, Email Again, Call.....
- ✦ If in a group, divide up what each person will say in the meeting
- ✦ Prepare any materials you wish to leave behind for the office to review
- ✦ Practice your talking points and prepare for a conversation!



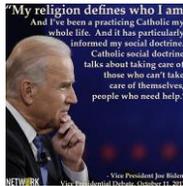
Tips about Tone

- * Avoid direct antagonism in your criticism
- * Be polite, yet firm, when explaining your position and proposed solution
- * Ask serious questions
- * Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or "I can get back to you"
- * Make sure your "ask" is clear and concise



Using Faith/Morality

- * Using your faith as the basis for your visit should be considered a strength
- * Not every member of your lobby teams need to be of the same faith, or even of any faith at all
- * Be authentic



Storytelling

- * Real impact of policies verses focusing on detached data and theoreticals
- * New and vital perspective to a member of Congress
- * Cannot dispute experiences



During Your Meeting

BE SURE TO ASK: How can we support you?

- ✦ Is it possible to organize a site visit?
- ✦ Would staff like to sign up for your organization's newsletter?
- ✦ When will the member next be in town?
- ✦ Can I have a business card to follow up?



The ultimate goal is to keep the conversation going!

Finishing Touches

- ✦ Thank the staffer/Member of Congress for their time
- ✦ Take a picture with the MOC or staffer—and be sure to share it on social media (tag the Congressional office!)
- ✦ Debrief with your group
 - What did you hear? What went well? What might you do differently next time?
- ✦ Send a thank you email within 24 hours of the meeting
 - Repeat the ask
 - Include any information you promised to send
- ✦ Continue to watch your MOC, and hold them accountable



Obstacles & Actions

Being intimidated by policy makers and their staff
 Difficulty or fear in facing opposing viewpoints
 Discouragement with political systems



Why Bother?

When they always agree with you...

- Know they are hearing from the other side
- You can equip them with stories about impact on constituents
- It is opportunity to build/grow relationship (trusted messengers)
- You can lift up an opportunity/perspective not considered
- Let them know what to prioritize and where to show leadership
- Provide a faith perspective/lens

When they never agree with you...

- They still need to know what their constituents (and people of faith!) think
- It is an opportunity to build/grow in relationship (trusted messengers)
- Demographics evolve/change
- Find compromise or common ground
- Share stories
- Relay the impact on the local community
- Plant seeds...



Reality vs. Perception

According to a July 2016 Rasmussen survey, only **11 percent** of the voters surveyed thought the average Member of Congress listens to the constituents he or she



*"Despite the haranguing of mainstream media to the contrary, and popular culture insisting that citizen voices are muted in Washington, research conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) shows that **constituents remain significant factors to legislators' decision-making.**"*



Citizen-Centric Advocacy

Congressional Management Foundation Report
Citizen-Centric Advocacy: Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement (2017)

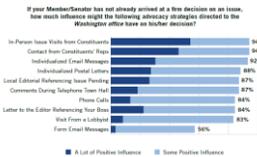
Major Findings:

- Direct constituent interactions have more influence on lawmakers' decisions than other advocacy strategies.
- Congress places a high value on groups and citizens who have built relationships with the legislator and staff.
- Citizen advocates are more influential and contribute to better public policy when they provide personalized and local information to Congress.
- Citizens have significant potential to enhance their advocacy skills and influence Congress.



FINDING 1: Direct Constituent Interactions

Direct constituent interactions have more influence on lawmakers' decisions than other advocacy strategies.



n = 150-1525
Source: Congressional Management Foundation 2015 survey of congressional staff, including Chiefs of Staff, Communications Directors, Legislative Directors, and Legislative Assistants.



FINDING 2: Relationships

Congress places a high value on groups and citizens who have built relationships with the legislator and staff.

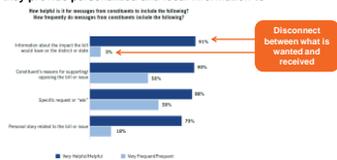
- Building relationships with congressional staff is key
 - Scheduler, Legislative Assistants, Legislative Directors, etc.
- To better understand how a pending bill or issue will impact their constituents, elected officials turn to those they trust

"The increased 'engagement' from people who click 'I agree' on emails from outside groups and flood our offices with generic emails drowns out those constituents who take the time to write in about issues they know and care about."
House Legislative Assistant



FINDING 3: Personalized and Local Information

Citizen advocates are more influential and contribute to better public policy when they provide personalized and local information to Congress.



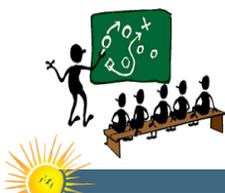
Disconnect between what is wanted and received

n = 158-1625
Source: Congressional Management Foundation 2015 survey of congressional staff, including Chiefs of Staff, Communications Directors, Legislative Directors, and Legislative Assistants.



FINDING 4: Advocacy Enhancement

Citizens have significant potential to enhance their advocacy skills and influence Congress.



- ★ Providing training on best practices does yield results
- ★ Feeding America Advocacy Academy study
- ★ Participants and staffers found a noticeable grassroots organizing works!

Build Anew Agenda



In a world of growing economic disparity and increasing individualism, we call for federal policies that dismantle systemic racism, eliminate the wealth and income gap, improve the well-being of our communities, and allow all people to thrive — especially those most often left out: women, people of color, and people on the economic margins.

Emerging from encounter with families and communities across the United States, the **Build Anew Agenda** is a pathway to realizing our vision of a just and inclusive society.



#NETWORKWebinar | @NETWORKLobby

Build Anew

Cornerstones to Build Our Country Anew

- ★ Dismantle Systemic Racism
- ★ Cultivate Inclusive Community
- ★ Root Our Economy in Solidarity
- ★ Transform Our Politics

Despite our divisions, we proclaim that all people in the United States, together, make up one single community. Pope Francis says, "Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems."

In this hope, we can, and we must, build anew!



#NETWORKWebinar | @NETWORKLobby

Build Anew Agenda

Policy Areas to Build Anew

We build our country anew by prioritizing racial equity, caring for the Earth, and improving the well-being of all people and communities through legislative advocacy for:



#NETWORKWebinar | @NETWORKLobby

Thank You!

Contact Information:
 Catherine Gillette
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Let's stay in touch!



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Questions?



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Advocacy Tools for
Immigration Policy Change

Opinion Media

ANACAONA
Your stories,
in the media

Lynn Tramonte

Message

3 strategies to change the narrative

1 solutions, not just problems

2 personal experiences

3 diverse outlets



MESSAGE: Value-Problem-Solution-Action

Introducing people to a new way of thinking about an issue requires a carefully considered message. The Opportunity Agenda helps you create that message with **Vision, Values, and Voice: a Communications Toolkit**, which provides guidance for building your own messages using our recommended Value, Problem, Solution, Action (VPSA) structure.



Our interactive VPSA message building tool below will guide you through the process. Ready? Get started below!



<https://www.opportunityagenda.org/explore/resources-publications/build-your-own-message>

Op-Eds

Questions to Ask and Answer

Why?

When?
Who?
What?



Op-Ed Writing

400-800 words

compelling intro

clear hook to outlet

your expertise

citations/evidence

include preferred title of piece

always read and follow outlet guidance

Op-Ed Pitching

exclusivity

compelling email

full name, phone,
address

f

o

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Where To Pitch

local papers - think broadly

non-profits who publish or distribute columns
(e.g. otherwords.org, truthout.org,
commondreams.org)

religious, trade, niche media

The Hill

about WaPo + NYT...

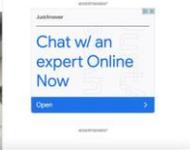
☰ THE BALTIMORE SUN 🔍

OP-ED

Federal program in Frederick County stokes fear of — and in — undocumented immigrants | COMMENTARY

By Viviana Westbrook
for The Baltimore Sun | Jul 21, 2021 at 1:23 pm

Expand

Topic + Why It Matters

✓

Last month during a virtual meeting, Frederick County Sheriff Charles A. Jenkins and other members of a steering committee gave a one-sided presentation on the so-called “benefits” of a program that uses county deputies to enforce federal civil immigration laws. It furthered fearmongering stereotypes of immigrants as criminals and did not allow for live public comment.

Your Expertise + Local Connection

✓

As an advocacy attorney for the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. who has represented immigrant crime victims in Frederick County specifically, there are a few things I would have said if given a chance. But first, some background: The federal program, known as 287(g), severs immigrant community relationships with law enforcement and encourages over-policing of people who “appear” to be foreign-born. It is deeply controversial across the country.

☰ THE BALTIMORE SUN 🔍

Defensive Much?

READERS RESPOND

Frederick Co. Sheriff: Partnership with ICE has made my county safer | READER COMMENTARY

for The Baltimore Sun | Aug 06, 2021 at 11:06 am

Expand



✓

I find it necessary to respond to the recent commentary by Viviana Westbrook, a Catholic Legal Immigration Network advocate attorney (“Federal program in Frederick County stokes fear of — and in — undocumented immigrants,” July 21). This is by far one of the most biased, one-sided, intentionally misrepresented opinion pieces that I have ever read. There was so much factually incorrect with what she wrote that it warrants correction with the true facts.

More Help

Op-ed Writing: Tips and Tricks

The suggestions below are simply that -- suggestions. This is not a formula, but a guide to help you as you formulate your ideas.

- 1. Getting Started: The Basics
- 2. Questions To Ask Yourself When Writing
- 3. Structure
- 4. Leds and News Hooks: Catching Attention
- 5. FAQ



theopedproject.org

Alternat ives

Letters to the Editor

How To: Write a Letter to the Editor

Steps to Take

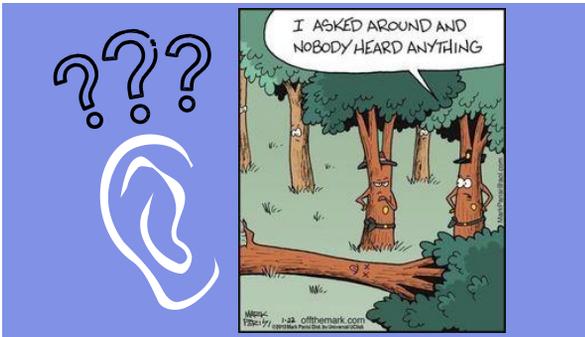
Research: Look up your local newspaper online to find its submission guidelines for letters to the editor. Some will have you email them the letter, others will require you to submit it via an online form. [Google your newspaper name plus "LTE submission" if you can't find it.]

Draft the letter. Keep it short and simple, no more than 250-300 words.

Submit your letter. Follow the guidelines for your specific newspaper. Include your full legal name, daytime phone number, and mailing address. The newspaper will use this for verification and to contact you if they decide to print your letter.

Amplification

Horizontal lines for notes



Horizontal lines for notes

Tag reporter, Tag people + orgs, Use hashtags, Ask for shares, Send to Congress, Dear Colleague, Floor Speech, Social Media, UNITED STATES HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

Horizontal lines for notes



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How CLINIC can Help

- Create or review talking points
- Prep call
- Consult in writing process
- Consult in media placement process
- Post-advocacy follow-up, lifting up the message
- Share with the CLINIC Action Network