

## Effective Advocacy Checklist

**Uncertain about how to communicate with Congress on the federal level? This checklist will keep you on the right track!**

### Is My Congressman's Office the Best Place to Start?

Yes! I want my representative or senator to take a position on a certain federal (not state or local) issue.

### Background Research

Think about the following questions:

- Who are my representative and senators?
- What is their legislative record and general philosophy?
- What issues are they passionate about?
- What committees are my representatives or senators on?
- What party does my representative or senator belong to?

### Message Development

Tell a compelling story — you have something of value to contribute!

- Know your facts.
- Make your message your own.
- Be positive!

### General Message Delivery

These tips apply to all communications — letters, phone calls, and meetings:

- Decide which method of communication suits you and your purpose.
- Develop a thoughtful, well-argued message.
- Ask your member to take a specific action.
- Ask your member to respond to the request.
- Make it clear what your priorities are.
- Tell your congressional office how you can be an ongoing resource.
- Make your message targeted and forceful without being rude or threatening.
- Tell the truth.
- Be reasonable about opposing points of view.
- Be prepared to answer questions about opposing arguments.

## Effective Meetings

- Look at the congressional calendar to determine when the congressperson is in district.
- Decide who you want to deliver your message (preferably someone from the district).
- Limit the number of people you bring to the meeting.
- If you're in DC for a national meeting, try to coordinate with others from your state.
- Fax the scheduler a meeting request, including a list of issues and attendees.
- Follow-up with a phone call to the scheduler after sending a written request.
- Schedule carefully to assure you will be on time, but not too early, for each meeting.
- Be prepared to meet anywhere — standing up in the hallway or on the run to a vote.
- Be prepared to deliver your message in five minutes.
- Make sure you have short, concise, and consistent information to leave behind.
- Leave your information in a file folder with your organization's name on the label.

## Effective Written Communications

- Make your communication stand out by making it personal, thoughtful, and accurate.
- Ask for a response.
- Confine each written communication to one topic.
- Double check office numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses.

## Effective Phone Calls

- Have the basic facts about the issue on hand.
- If you want someone to think about what you're saying, ask for a response.

## Following Up

- Send a thank you note to the staff and the member soon after a meeting.
- Wait at least two weeks for a response before checking back.