

2018 AUGUST RECESS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



AMPLIFYING
MUSLIM
AMERICAN
VOICES IN
CONGRESS



AMPLIFYING
MUSLIM
AMERICAN
VOICES IN
CONGRESS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

August Recess	1
How To: Town Halls	2
How To: Office Visits	3
Action Alert: Family Separation	4
Action Alert: Farm Bill	5, 6
SCOTUS Nomination	7
SCOTUS Decision on the Muslim Ban	8, 9

August Recess

It's August recess! Your House Representatives are in their home districts July 30th – August 31st, and your Senators will be back in their states August 6th – August 10th.

Here's how to make your voice heard:

Who are your members of Congress?

Visit callmyrep.co to find out who represents you, how to contact them, and where their in-district offices are located.

Want to visit them in person?

Learn how to schedule a meeting and make the most impact with our *Office Visit How-to Guide* in this toolkit. Try to schedule your meeting as early in advance as possible.

Want to attend a town hall instead?

Town Hall Project has a simple search engine to find the nearest town hall meeting to you. Just enter in your zip code. Use our *Town Hall How-to Guide*, also available in this toolkit, to help you prepare. Bring your friends and family to make your voice heard!

Not sure what to talk about?

We've got you covered. Visit our website: poligonnational.org. Our *policy briefs* and *action alerts* on Islamophobia, bullying, and civil rights are great to look over and bring along to a meeting. You can also stay up to date on legislation going through Congress with our *Hill Happenings* newsletter.

Let us know at info@poligonnational.org how your visit goes, or make a post about your visit on social media. Be sure to tag @poligonnational on Twitter and Instagram!

Stay active,
The Polygon Team



HOW TO: TOWN HALLS



BEFORE YOU ARRIVE...

Town Halls are hosted by members of Congress to give constituents an opportunity to meet with them personally in their home districts or states.

TIP #1

Get there early! Town halls fill up fast. Check ahead of time if your specific town hall has early registration to ensure admittance.

TIP #2

Practice! In many cases you will only have 2-4 minutes to speak. Be sure to prepare your introduction, story, and question in advance.

STEP 1



INTRODUCE YOURSELF

It's important for your Senator or Representative to know the constituent they are talking to. State your name and city, how long you have lived in the area, and your profession. If you are there representing a specific community (i.e. a neighborhood, school, mosque, etc.), mention that as well.

STEP 2



THANK YOUR MEMBER FOR BEING THERE

Expressing appreciation to your Senator or Representative for their public service and for hosting the town hall builds goodwill. It also makes them more receptive to hearing and answering your questions.

STEP 3



TELL A BRIEF STORY

In one sentence, state the topic you would like to raise. Then tell a specific personal story of how the issue affected you or the community you represent. Your story should be strong but succinct.

STEP 4



MAKE A CLEAR DIRECT ASK

This is the crux of your statement. The more specific you make your question/ask, the harder it will be for the member to sidestep the issue you raised. Ultimately, you want to get them on the record agreeing to take concrete action.

STEP 5



FOLLOW UP

After the town hall, you may have an opportunity to speak with the Congressman or their staff if you were not able to raise your concerns during the event. Obtain staffers' contact information to follow up and hold your member for their votes later on.

LEARN MORE AT [POLIGONNATIONAL.ORG](https://poligonnational.org)



HOW TO: OFFICE VISITS

Meeting your Member of Congress or their staff serves as the vital functions of providing offices with information, building relationships, and gaining insights into how to develop effective advocacy strategies. This can ultimately prove to make the pivotal difference in statements and policy positions regarding issues that concern YOU (ex: civil rights, Islamophobia, etc.).

#1

SCHEDULE YOUR MEETING

Due to high volume of meeting requests, schedules tend to fill up very quickly, especially for in-district meetings with the member. Reach out as soon as possible.

Step One: Visit your member's website. There you will find a section for scheduling an in district or D.C. meeting.

Step Two: Your request should include your name, address, purpose for visit, and availability.

Step Three: Receive confirmation from a staffer on the day and time your meeting is scheduled. Be sure to arrive at least 15 minutes early.

#2

LEARN ABOUT YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Do they sit on any committees? What is their voting record on the issue you are visiting them about? Have they made a public statement or written op-eds regarding the issue?

#3

ORGANIZE THE MEETING

The Facilitator: If you are with a group, pick one person to start the meeting by introducing the group and explain the purpose of the visit. The Facilitator is in charge of steering the direction of the conversation. They are the point person in case a staffer wants to follow up.

Personal Story: Ensure someone in your group can provide a personal story how the issue has affected their life while living in the state/district. These stories are recorded by staffers and can be used for the member's public statements.

Specific Issue Points: Provide data to back up your claims. (Ex: National data on the rise of hate crimes against Muslim communities). Have these statistics available, along with ground information, to leave behind with staffers. Your main points should fit on one page.

The Ask: Are there bills currently circulating that directly addresses your area of concerns (ex: Freedom of Religion Act)? Would you like the member to introduce one? Now is the time to ask what the member's opinions is on those bills or the issue at hand.

#4

DEBRIEF

After leaving the office, review what you learned. How receptive was the staffer and/or member to your concerns? Did they give any indication that they would champion your cause? Do you need to provide more information?

#5

FOLLOW UP

Immediately after the visit, send an email to the staffer thanking them for their time and provide any additional information they requested. **One week** after the visit, follow up on your specific ask. Continue to stay in touch with the staffer.

LEARN MORE AT POLIGONNATIONAL.ORG



AMPLIFYING
MUSLIM
AMERICAN
VOICES IN
CONGRESS

Put a STOP to Family Separation at the Border #KeepFamiliesTogether Help Immigrant Children Separated from Parents at the Border!

Since May, **more than 2,500** children have been separated from their families at the border as a result of the administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policy.

Furthermore, Trump is proposing to force immigrant families at the border seeking asylum to have to choose between **family separation** or **family detention**.

This **CANNOT** go on any longer.

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Representative Jerry Nadler (D-NY-10) have introduced the **Keep Families Together Act** (S. 3036/H.R. 6315) to prevent the Department of Homeland Security from separating immigrant families detained at the U.S. border.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Call your two SENATORS and REPRESENTATIVE NOW to SUPPORT the Keep Families Together Act.

Separating children from families is **inhumane** and a **betrayal** of our values as Muslim Americans. We need to make meaningful progress to fix our broken immigration system.

1. Don't know who represents you in Congress? Find out who they are at callyourrep.co. (Every American has two Senators and one Representative).
2. Call **all three of them** using the scripts below to guide you.

Sample Calling Script:

Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] and I'm a constituent of Senator/Representative _____. I'm calling to ask that the Senator/Representative support and co-sponsor S. 3036/H.R. 6315, the Keep Families Together Act, to stop the separation of immigrant families at the U.S. border. This practice is immoral, harms innocent children, and is a betrayal of our values as Americans. Trump's zero-tolerance policy, including his subsequent executive order encouraging family detention, is unacceptable, and Congress must act in order to ensure due process for asylum seekers and keep families together. Will the Senator or Representative support the bill to keep immigrant families together?



AMPLIFYING
MUSLIM
AMERICAN
VOICES IN
CONGRESS

Tell Congress NO to Starving the Hungry! #MuslimsAgainstHunger

Congress tried to cut **\$20 Billion** from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Farm Bill.

SNAP provides effective food assistance to **42 Million Americans** and more than **10 times** what all U.S. food banks combined can provide.

Poligon, ISNA, and our partners **fought back** on these proposed cuts. And now the House decided unanimously to go to conference with the Senate to negotiate a final version of the Farm Bill.

We **CANNOT** support a #FarmBill that cuts funding for SNAP and intentionally **hurts *low-income families, workers, women, children, and seniors.***

Call your Representative and Senators to protect funding for SNAP!

#MuslimsAgainstHunger #SNAPworks #HandsOffSNAP

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Call your Representative and Two Senators

(call 202-224-3121) now and urge them to OPPOSE cuts to SNAP!

Sample Calling Script:

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a constituent of Senator/Representative _____. I'm calling because I oppose any version of the Farm Bill that makes drastic cuts to SNAP. SNAP is an extremely effective program combatting hunger and poverty by serving over 42 million Americans and lifting 8 million people out of poverty yearly. Imposing harsher work requirements than those that already exist will hurt workforce participation and punish hardworking, low-income workers and families with children who already struggle to put food on the table. People should not have to choose between working and staying alive. I urge Senator/Representative _____ to work across the aisle and draft a Farm Bill that protects funding for SNAP and to oppose any proposal that does not do so. Will the Senator/Representative do so?



Use Social Media:

Let your members of Congress and your social networks know what you think of this bill. Here are some sample tweets and images:

- More than \$8 in \$10 in nutrition assistance go to households that include a child, a senior, or person with a disability. Yet these are some of the people hit hardest by the House GOP Farm Bill. #HandsOffSNAP #MuslimsAgainstHunger
- The House sends the bill that would take food assistance away from 2 million people to conference committee. Call your Member of Congress and tell them to negotiate a final version that doesn't slash funding for SNAP! (202) 224-3121#MuslimsAgainstHunger #HandsOffSNAP
- 53% of all SNAP households with children are headed by single mothers. Congress should protect #SNAP and not punish single parents and children. #HandsOffSNAP #MuslimsAgainstHunger



AMPLIFYING
MUSLIM
AMERICAN
VOICES IN
CONGRESS

Justice Kennedy Announces Retirement: What Happens Next

Justice Anthony Kennedy announced in late June that he will be retiring from the U.S. Supreme Court. Kennedy's retirement paves the way for President Trump's second Supreme Court nomination. In the coming months, the confirmation process hinges on approval from the U.S. Senate.

The Process:

STEP 1

NOMINATION

President Trump will announce his nomination for the vacant Supreme Court seat.

STEP 2

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The nomination is sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Committee collects necessary records on the nominee, holds hearings on the nomination, then votes on the nomination and sends its recommendation to the full Senate. The Committee can recommend, reject, or offer no recommendation regarding the nominee.

STEP 3

THE SENATE

The full senate debates the nomination. The Senate rules allow unlimited debate (filibustering) on the debate. Historically, 60 votes were necessary to end debate and bring the nomination up for a vote.

However, in April 2017, Senate Republicans voted to change filibuster rules to allow a simple majority vote (51 votes) to end debate. This makes it easier for the majority party to confirm a judicial nominee.

STEP 4

THE VOTE

When there are sufficient votes to end the debate, the Senate votes on the nomination. A simple majority of the Senators present and voting is required for the judicial nominee to be confirmed. If there is a tie, the Vice President, who serves as President of the Senate, casts the deciding vote.

As President's Trump nominee moves through the Senate confirmation process, it is **vital** that our communities contact their Senators and make their voices heard on the nominee. Democratic Senators are already calling for the nomination process to take place after the midterm elections in order to allow the newly elected Senate to confirm the President's nominee.

Call your Senators at 202-224-3121 to voice your opinion on when the nomination should take place and how you want them to vote on the eventual nominee.

LEARN MORE AT POLIGONNATIONAL.ORG



SCOTUS Decision on the Muslim Ban: What Happened?

How did we get here?

On September 24, 2017, President Donald Trump issued Presidential Proclamation No. 9645 to restrict travel indefinitely to the United States by certain foreign nationals from seven countries, including five Muslim majority countries -- Iran, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Syria. This Proclamation was first challenged in Federal Court, and then recently reviewed by the Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of *Trump v. Hawaii*.

On June 26, 2018, in a 5-4 decision, the Court ruled that the president lawfully exercised the broad discretion granted to him under 8 U.S.C 1182(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to suspend the entry of aliens into the United States. Although the Court acknowledged the President's anti-Muslim statements, they ruled that the plaintiffs did not make the case that the executive order violates the Establishment Clause, which prohibits the government from establishing laws that favor one religion over another.

What does this mean?

Although the travel ban has been in effect since December 2017, the Supreme Court ruling has now solidified the ban in its entirety and broadened the President's power to control the entry of non-citizens into the United States. The case has been sent back to the District Court for further litigation, but in the meantime, all preliminary injunctions against the Proclamation have been dissolved, meaning the ban is in full effect.

Section 3 of the Proclamation allows citizens of the countries mentioned in the ban an opportunity to enter the United States through a waiver process, which has been largely criticized by advocates because of the low number of waivers granted and a lack of transparency in the process.



SCOTUS Decision on the Muslim Ban: What Can Congress Do?

Speak Out

Congress represents all Americans and is an important check on the executive branch. As such, they must publicly oppose policies, such as the Muslim Ban, that discriminate against and target particular communities in the United States. This can be accomplished through making public appearances and statements, publishing op-eds, delivering floor speeches in Congress, introducing and voting on legislation/resolutions, and engaging on social media.

Exercise Oversight and Accountability

Congress has the power to oversee the implementation of all federal policies as well as appropriate funds for these policies. The execution of the Muslim Ban falls under the jurisdiction of the Border Security and Immigration Subcommittees within the Senate Judiciary and House Judiciary Committees. Congress can demand transparency from the administration by asking that the Department of Homeland Security share all available data relevant to the implementation of the Muslim Ban, including information on waivers.

Congress can also pass legislation to reject forthcoming changes to the policy, including the addition of other nations to the ban. When funds are appropriated for the new fiscal year, Congress can reduce funding for the agencies that implement the Muslim Ban, such as Customs and Border Patrol, under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security.

Amend the Immigration and Nationality Act

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) grants the President the power to suspend the entry of any foreign non-citizens whose entry would be “detrimental to the interests of the United States.” Congress can amend the INA to include stronger oversight of this power and explicitly include language that forbids the President from exercising it with intent to discriminate against an individual’s race, sex, nationality, religion, place of birth, and place of residence.

Overturn the Executive Order

Congress has the power to overturn an executive order, such as the Muslim Ban, by passing legislation that invalidates it. While the president may still veto the bill, it can be overridden by a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and Senate.

The information contained in this resource is intended for educational purposes only, and is not a substitute for professional legal advice, for which one should seek appropriate legal counsel.