



AUGUST RECESS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

2020
EDITION



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AUGUST 2020 RECESS

It's August recess! Your House Representatives are in their home districts August 1st – September 7th, and your Senators will be back in their states August 8th – September 7th.

Here's how to make your voice heard:

Who are your members of Congress?

Click [here](#) to find out who your Representative or Senator is, how to contact them, and where their in-district offices are located.

Want to set up a constituent meeting?

Learn how to schedule a meeting and make the most impact with our Office Visit How-to Guide in this toolkit. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, many offices will be holding virtual meetings. Try to schedule your meeting as early in advance as possible.

Want to attend a virtual town hall?

Town Hall Project has a simple search engine to find out when your representative's next virtual or telephone town hall meeting is. Just enter in your zip code. Use our Town Hall How-to Guide, also available in this toolkit, to help you prepare. Invite your friends and family to join you in making your voices 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, much needed COVID-19 relief, 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.

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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

Pass the #NOBANAct in the Senate!



The House of Representatives made history by passing [H.R.2486](#) (previously H.R.2214), the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants (NO BAN) Act. The bill repeals the Muslim travel bans and limits executive authority to prohibit entry of non-citizens based on religion. Polygon has worked tirelessly with our partners to support the introduction and progression of the bill in the House and Senate.

But the fight is not over -- the bill will now be sent to the Senate and we need your help to move it forward. The Muslim Ban continues to separate tens of thousands of American families and violates our country's constitutional promise of religious freedom and equal rights under the law.

We need your voice: Tell your Senator to speak out against the Muslim Ban and to pass the NO BAN Act!

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Check if your Senator is a [co-sponsor](#) of the bill. [Call your Senator](#) (call 202-224-3121) now and urge them end the Muslim Ban.

Sample Call Script:

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a constituent of Senator _____. I'm calling to ask you to vote to pass S.1123, the NO BAN Act. The Muslim Travel Ban does not represent American values and it violates our Constitution. I urge Senator _____ to speak against the Muslim Ban and repeal the ban by supporting the No Ban Act. Will the Senator do so?

Call your Senator to Pass the Justice in Policing Act



For months now, racial justice protests opposing police brutality have occurred across the country. These acts of violence are inexcusable as are the discrimination and institutional racism that have targeted Black people since even before the inception of this nation.

The House passed H.R.7120, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, to hold law enforcement officials accountable for their actions. Now, the Senate must take action. The bill bans chokeholds and “no-knock” warrants, ends racial and religious profiling, eliminates “qualified immunity” for police officers, collects data on police misconduct and use-of-force, limits transfer of military equipment to law enforcement departments, requires body-worn cameras, and classifies lynching as a hate crime.

Although this bill will not resolve all of our country’s problems with policing, it is a vital first step.

Tell the Senate to hold law enforcement officials accountable for their actions and implement policies to end these injustices.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Check if your Senator has co-sponsored the Senate version of the bill. Call your Senator if they have not co-sponsored the bill (call 202-224-3121).

Sample Call Script:

Hi, my name is _____ and I am your constituent calling to urge you to support S.3912, the Justice in Policing Act, to hold law enforcement officials accountable for their actions. We need policies to stop police misconduct and to end anti-Black police brutality. I urge Senator _____ to support the passage of this bill. Will the Senator do so?

Urge the Senate to Provide COVID-19 Relief to Impacted Communities



The United States has surpassed over 145,000 deaths due to COVID-19 and the poverty rate is expected to rise dramatically to 13.3% of Americans unemployed. While the House passed the H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, a bill that would address many challenges faced by families and vulnerable communities, consideration for a next stimulus package has been stalled in the Senate.

We urge the Senate to ensure these provisions approved by the House are included in the next COVID-19 relief package.

- Ensure access to food: Increase SNAP's maximum benefit by 15 percent from June 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021; An increase for all SNAP households averaging about \$25 per person per month; Raise the minimum SNAP benefit from \$15 per month to \$30.
- Ensure immigrant-inclusion: Access to free COVID-19 testing and treatment by uninsured people, regardless of their immigration status; Immigrant taxpayers receive stimulus checks from previous relief bills; An extension of work permits and protection from deportation for immigrants.

The Senate GOP introduced the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act, which does not include these provisions.

We need your voice: Tell the Senate to provide relief to families impacted by COVID-19.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Check if your Senator supports this bill. Call your Senator if they have not supported the bill (call 202-224-3121).

Sample Call Script:

Hi, my name is _____ and I am your constituent calling to urge you to ensure these provisions in H.R. 6800 (the HEROES Act) are included in the next COVID-19 package: access to food and to ensure immigrants are included to receive relief. I urge Senator _____ to support these provisions of the bill and to include them in the next COVID-19 relief package. Will the Senator do so?

Tell Congress to Support the Protecting Our Protesters Act



After the unjust murder of George Floyd, people protested their opposition to police brutality and were met with force from law enforcement. Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN-5) introduced [H.R.7315](#), the Protecting Our Protesters Act, which will criminalize police violence against demonstrators exercising their constitutional rights.

This bill will hold law enforcement accountable and be charged with a federal crime for killing or causing bodily harm to civilians exercising their constitutional right to free speech.

We need your voice: Tell your Representative to Criminalize Violence Against Protesters

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Check if your Representative is a [co-sponsor](#) of the bill. [Call your Representative](#) (call 202-224-3121) now and urge them to criminalize violence against protesters.

Sample Call Script:

Hi, my name is _____ and I am your constituent calling to urge you to ensure these provisions in H.R.7315, the Protecting Our Protesters Act, to hold law enforcement officials accountable for any violence against a protester. Police need to be held accountable for killing or harming a civilian exercising their constitutional right to free speech. I urge Representative _____ to support the passage of this bill. Will the Representative do so?