

# In-District Engagement

During an extended recess, Members of Congress typically host public events or meetings in their districts or states. They use these as platforms to update constituents on their work and where they stand on various policy issues currently facing Congress, and one of the most popular events for Members of Congress to attend is a Town Hall meeting, where constituents have the opportunity to interact directly and publicly with their representatives. Members of Congress and their staffs may also be available to meet in their district offices, which can be a valuable way to get face-to-face interaction away from Washington, D.C.

## Step One: Preparation

- Call your Member's District Office using [our tool](#) to find their phone number. Ask a staffer when and where the Member's next town hall meeting is, and ask to be placed on the email list for updates on future town hall meetings. If you can't get through to the office, you can check the [Town Hall Project's website](#) to see if there is an event taking place near you.
- Gather a group of fellow activists and organizers to attend the meeting with you. Homelessness becomes a higher priority to the Member when there are several constituents bringing up homelessness in town hall meetings.
- Prepare questions about homelessness issues to ask your Member. Providing statistics about local homelessness add to your question. An example of a question would be: "In order to end homelessness, will you communicate the message that 'providing at least \$2.6 billion for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program in FY 2018 is essential' to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and to congressional leadership?" This question addresses a certain piece of legislation with a statistic that allows the Member to give a clear answer to and can give the Member a task that is feasible and will help end homelessness.

## Step Two: Attending Meeting

- Show up early with your group to talk about who will ask which questions.
- If you are attending a public event, walk in to the event separately and sit in different areas of the room.
- For a meeting held at the district office, bring information about how homelessness impacts your community, how your community has made progress or had challenges in recent years, and personal stories about how homelessness has impacted the community. Always try to connect this information to ways that the Member of Congress can support solutions to homelessness, such as increasing funding for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants, HUD's affordable housing programs, or other mainstream safety net programs. Keep up to date on policy issues by checking the [Alliance's website](#).



### **Step Three: Ask the prepared questions and support your group**

- Stick to the questions that you and your group came up with, and feel free to ask follow up questions if you are not satisfied by your Member's answer. When a group member is asking a question, be sure to back them up to show that there is a consensus among the attendees of the meeting.
- Feel free to record or videotape the meeting. Members allow this and you can use it to hold your Member accountable if he/she goes back on his/her word.

### **Step Four: Publicize the Meeting**

- Post responses to your questions on social media and reach out to local press with your recordings or answers to your questions to give homelessness a bigger platform in the local spotlight.