

# How to Advocate to Your Lawmaker

## YEARLONG ADVOCACY CALENDAR

### **JANUARY: LEGISLATOR OUTREACH**

January is a time for new legislators to start learning their jobs. Introduce them to your policy issues through a letter or phone call, and start building relationships with any new staff members.

### **FEBRUARY: LEARN HOW THE MONEY WORKS**

At most levels of government, lawmakers are working on budgets in February. At the federal level, check out the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities at [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org). At the state level, learn about budget processes through the National Conference of State Legislatures ([www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)) or on your state legislative website.

### **MARCH: CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE**

You'll need a message that resonates with your audience. Use the formula below, but be sure to put it in your own words.

- Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm from \_\_\_\_\_.
- I am here to talk to you about \_\_\_\_\_ [policy / relationship ask].
- Knowing of your interest in \_\_\_ [policy issue of interest to the lawmaker] we think you'll be interested.
- This is important to the people I represent because \_\_\_\_\_ [personal story].
- That's why we really hope you'll \_\_\_\_\_ [ask].
- I'd like to follow-up by \_\_\_\_\_ [follow-up steps].
- Can I get contact information for all the appropriate people in your office?

### **APRIL: PLAN A SITE VISIT FOR LATE SUMMER**

August is the best time for site visits (particularly at the federal level), and that means spring is the time to organize and prepare for them.

### **MAY: GET TO KNOW THE STAFFERS**

In many cases, getting to know staff people can move your issue forward even faster than getting to know the policymaker.

## **JUNE: MAKE A RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING ASK**

It's often useful to ask your lawmaker simply to make a statement, follow you on social media, or talk to your group. Think about whether there's a simple relationship-building ask you could make of your lawmaker this month.

## **JULY: SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH**

Social media can be an incredibly useful tool for effective advocacy. Follow your lawmaker on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, and find mutual connections on Linked-In. Ask them to follow you as well.

## **AUGUST: SITE VISITS**

Site visits are a powerful way to help your lawmaker understand the situation on the ground. August is a prime time for visits because legislators are often in their home districts during this time.

## **SEPTEMBER: ELECTION STRATEGIES (IN ELECTION YEARS)**

If you're a nonprofit, you're restricted from supporting specific candidates. But you can always engage in voter registration. Getting like-minded citizens out to vote helps get people who understand your views into office. Consider running a voter registration drive or become engage in local get-out-the-vote efforts.

## **OCTOBER: TOWN HALLS**

Legislators often set up meetings in their districts to hear the views of their constituents. Find out when these meetings will take place and make plans to attend.

## **NOVEMBER: VOTE!**

If you've been engaged in get-out-the-vote efforts, keep it up right until Election Day!

## **DECEMBER: BUILD COALITIONS**

Coalitions are powerful, and the legislative lull that happens in December is a great time to build them. Ask yourself: who might serve as good coalition partners, either because they support our cause or because they have good relationships with our target audience?

If you follow these steps, you'll be building relationships with your legislators and their staff members consistently over time, and that's pretty powerful!