

FPC Webinar Agenda



**NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
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- Welcome – Victoria Givens, NAR
- Legislative Update – Matt Stross, NAR
- Training Session – Jordan Davis, CMF
- Q&A

Strategies to Influence Undecided Lawmakers

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CONGRESSIONAL
MANAGEMENT
FOUNDATION

Today's Agenda

- Influence Is Still Possible
- Engaging Undecided Lawmakers
- Overcoming Roadblocks
- Strategies as a System



Influence Is Still Possible



Dispelling the Myth

Myth:

Policymakers are driven only by politics, donors, media, or special interests.

Reality:

Constituent voices continue to have a significant impact on the decision making of most policymakers.



Congressional Insight



“I have told paid lobbyists for years that any lobbyist worth his salt will concentrate on getting my **constituents** to tell me what they think...not what [the lobbyist] thinks...**because that’s who I listen to.**”

- Senator



Congressional Insight



“My boss rarely acts if there isn’t an impact on his district. **Show me a connection** as to how your issue directly affects our constituents.”

- Legislative Assistant



The Bottom Line

Lawmakers are still deeply invested in responding to the concerns of their constituents.

No matter how tumultuous the political moment may be, personalized, targeted, and constituent-focused advocacy strategies can break through.



Engaging Undecided Lawmakers



Strategies to Influence

Remember the Fundamentals

Be Clear on *Your* Goal: Know exactly what you want to achieve. Are you seeking support for a bill? Providing information? Building a relationship? A clear goal helps you stay focused.

Know Your Issue: Be well-versed in the facts, stats, and relevant background information related to your issue. Be ready to answer questions or provide clarification on any points.

Know Your History: Understand the policymaker's familiarity, as well as their history, with your issue and your organization.

Connect Your Issue to the State/District: Demonstrate how your issue aligns with or affects their constituents.

Use Personal Stories and Leverage Your Network: Bring your issue to life by putting a human face to the issue



Dig Deeper

Why are they Undecided?

- Before your meeting, dig into the policymaker's voting record, public statements, and the political dynamics they are facing. Try to determine what may be driving the policymaker's current position.
- Is it re-election concerns, party pressure, or district dynamics?
- Is it a fundamental disagreement with the issue or your organization?
- Have they simply never taken a position before or is it a new issue for them?

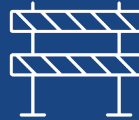
Calibrate Your Approach

Adjust Your Goals: With undecided offices, setting short- and medium-term goals, such identifying common ground on your issue, or just keeping an open dialogue with the office, can help you stay focused on achieving your long-term goals.

Tailor Your Message: One-size-fits all or cookie cutter messaging likely won't work for policymakers facing challenging political dynamics. Be sure to tailor your message in a way that resonates with them and is empathetic to their situation.



Overcoming Roadblocks



Policymaker Roadblocks

Stay Positive

Resistance is not Rejection: It's important to remember that lawmakers often resist proposals due to political pressures or constituent concerns. Resistance doesn't equate to total rejection – it just means there's more work to be done in addressing their concerns and building a stronger case.

Patience and Persistence: Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint. Keep engaging with lawmakers consistently and positively. Over time, this will help establish trust, increasing the likelihood they'll be open to your position.



Policymaker Roadblocks

Stay Nimble

Change the Dynamic: If you're facing strong opposition, it's crucial to shift the approach. Meet lawmakers on their terms by addressing their priorities and seek common ground. This will help establish a foundation for revisiting the issue later, with a refined strategy.

Position Yourself as a Partner: Rather than presenting your issue as a problem to be solved, frame it as an opportunity for collaboration. Show how working together can address their concerns and highlight how your issue aligns with their broader policy goals or political concerns.



Policymaker Roadblocks

Stay Solutions Oriented

Make Yourself a Resource: Don't focus solely on what you need from the lawmaker. Position yourself as a resource that can continue providing information, keep the office updated on the issue, and even help with outreach to their constituents.

Establish Next Steps: Even if the lawmaker isn't immediately receptive, don't stop the dialogue. Establish regular touchpoints, whether through emails, calls, or meetings, to maintain engagement. Continued interaction will allow you to adjust your message as needed and keep the conversation alive.



Staff Roadblocks: Non- Responsive Staff

It's Probably Not You: Remember that staff are overwhelmed. Even the most organized and diligent staffers can find themselves underwater and behind on correspondence. Stay positive and consistent – it may just take time.

Things May Have Changed: The Hill moves fast. It's possible the staffer may no longer be with the office, or their issue portfolio may have changed. Inquire with the office as to who is handling your issues. You may end up making a new connection!

Gently Escalate: If needed, reach out to the Chief of Staff or Legislative Director. Be empathetic to a slow-responding staffer but demonstrate that the issue is important and deserves attention.



Staff Roadblocks: Difficult Gatekeepers

They May Just Be Doing Their Job: Remember that staff are often tasked with defending or deflecting, especially if their boss holds a different view on the issue. What feels like resistance may just be them sticking their office policy. Stay respectful and focused on your message.

They May Be New or Still Developing Their Skills: Staffers vary widely in experience and capacity. Some may be new to the role, still learning the ropes, or simply struggling to manage competing demands. It doesn't necessarily reflect on you or your issue. Adapt your approach as needed and be sure to carefully document communications and interactions along the way.



When You're Stuck

Consider Third-Party Validators: If possible, identify respected individuals or organizations that have credibility in your issue and can support your position with impartial data or evidence. Undecided lawmakers are more likely to listen to and trust voices that aren't seen as directly advocating for nor stand to benefit from specific political outcomes.

Ask Around for Help: You're not alone. Someone on your team or other advocacy partners may have insights or relationships that can help. See if someone else has a better connection with the office or has suggestions on how to navigate the internal dynamics more effectively.

Not Every Door Opens Easily: If repeated attempts lead nowhere, it may be more strategic to focus your energy elsewhere - whether it's engaging other offices, mobilizing constituents, or building momentum from the outside.



Strategies as a System



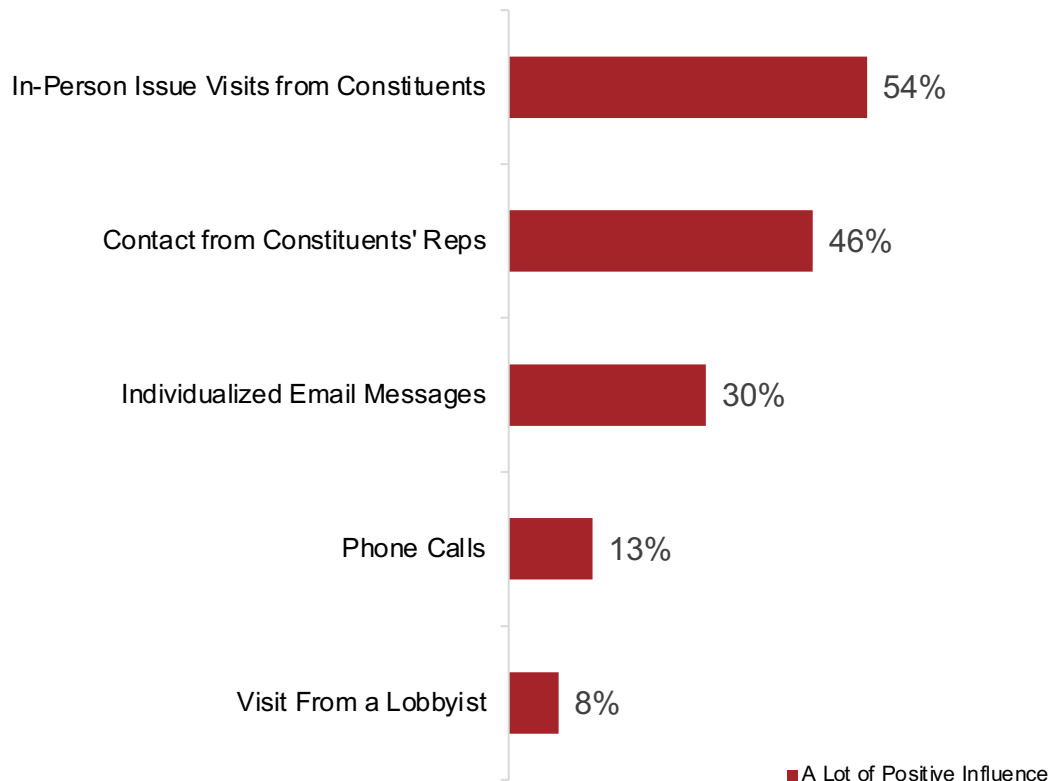
Congressional Insight



“If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to your office have on their decision?”



Strategies to Influence



What we've heard



“...the best communication you can have is personalized. And the more effort you put into it to tell your story...”



Former House Chief of Staff



Congressional Insight



“**In person meetings** are the easiest way for staff to understand an issue because it gives us the chance to ask questions and put a face with the issue/ask.”

- Legislative Assistant



Consider Advocacy as a System...Not Tactical Silos

- In-person engagement with policymakers should be the central focus of your advocacy efforts.
- On their own, other tactics (e.g., email, phone calls, social media, and petitions) may be less effective.
- But they can support and amplify the impact of face-to-face interactions.
- A systematic, well-rounded advocacy approach can help cultivate an ongoing relationship with a congressional office and drive outcomes over time.



Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



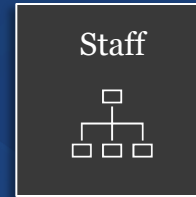
An in-person meeting is the most direct and effective way to influence a policymaker. It allows you to connect on a personal level, share your story, and directly engage with the lawmaker or their staff.

Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



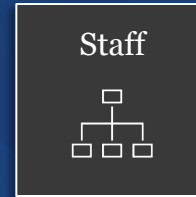
Follow up helps show commitment to your issue, it provides a way to reinforce your message and ensure that your concerns or requests are remembered, and regular follow-up helps establish a lines of communication with offices, making it easier to communicate and influence future decisions.

Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



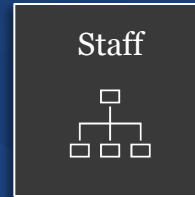
Connections made with staff can be maintained over time, creating valuable channels of communication for future advocacy efforts and ensuring your issue and organization stays on their radar.

Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



An in-person meeting isn't a one-off event. It's about establishing a long-term relationship with a congressional office. The goal is to keep the dialogue open, ensuring that you continue to build trust and influence over time

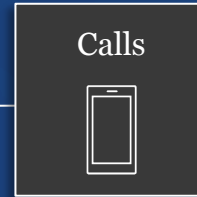
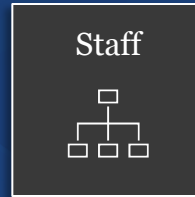
Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



Leverage your personal networks (friends, colleagues, and community members) to amplify your message and demonstrate that the issue matters to a broad and diverse group of constituents

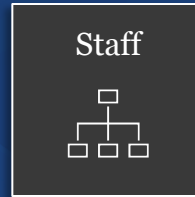


Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System

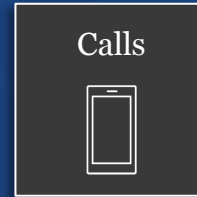


Offices are overwhelmed by emails and phone calls. Yet, they can still be important for keeping your issue on the radar. Consider these tactics as part of a coordinated outreach effort before or after an in-person meeting.

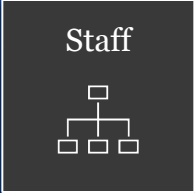
Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



Petitions and mass letters can demonstrate strength in numbers, but they only reinforce your message. They do not replace direct engagement.



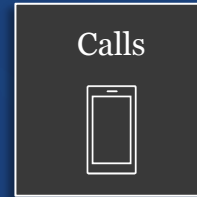
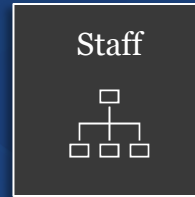
Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



Social media amplifies a message. It can signal to policymakers that their constituents are invested in the issue, but the real impact happens when that online energy is channeled into a personal conversation.



Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



Helping to coordinate all the above, they are experts in the institution and have deep relationships on the Hill. They can help you define your ask, tee up your meetings, and draft effective communications.



Considering Advocacy Strategies as a System



- Together, this system creates a “surround sound” effect, which can be impactful with undecided lawmakers.
- With in-person, constituent-focused meetings as the core of the effort, other tactics help amplify and reinforce the message – but only if used thoughtfully and strategically, not just as noise for noise’s sake.

Keep Moving Forward

Remember that constituent-focused advocacy is an ongoing process.

Even if you don't get immediate results, each touchpoint, each conversation, and each engagement cultivates the relationship and is another step on the path forward.

Stay committed, stay flexible, and continue the dialogue.



Q & A



Thank You



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