

Taking Action at Home: Organizing In-District Visits with Congressional Members

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Why organize an in-district meeting

- Critical policies and programs are under attack
 - Affordable Care Act
 - Medicaid expansion
 - Funding for HIV programs
 - Women's health care
- Must maintain pressure to protect these programs
- People who rely on these programs are the strongest advocates
- Don't have to travel to DC!
- Opportunity to engage local advocates in informing federal policy issues
- U.S. representatives and senators have offices local offices throughout district/state



Why organize in-district meetings



- Face-to-face visits with your elected officials (or their staff) are an very effective form of advocacy
- A small dedicated group can have great influence
- Enables relationship building with congressional offices
 - Key to effective advocacy and organizing
- Helps congressional office see you and/or your organization as a credible, powerful, and helpful voice for the HIV community

When to start organizing

- NOW!
- House summer recess: August 1 –September 4
- Senate summer recess: August 14 – September 4
- U.S. House and Senate members are in state during this time for:
 - District meetings
 - Town halls
 - Local events
 - Fundraising



Find out who represents you

- Visit www.govtrack.us/
- Enter your home address

The screenshot shows the GovTrack website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'govtrack' logo, 'Home', 'Congress', 'Track', 'About Us', 'Log In', a search bar, and 'Support Our Work'. Below the navigation bar, a banner reads 'GovTrack is here to help you track legislation being debated in the United States Congress.' Below the banner, there is a section for finding a representative and senators, with a search bar containing '415 N. Main St., Hannibal, Missouri' and a 'Find My Reps' button. There are also links for 'I'm at Home', 'View a Map', 'See All Members of Congress', and 'More'. Below this, there is a section for finding legislation that affects you, with a dropdown menu for 'Select Issue Area' and a 'Find Legislation' button. At the bottom, there is a 'GovTrack Insider' section with a 'subscribe' button and several news snippets, including 'TICKETS Act aims to prevent the forced removal of passengers from flights like in the United...', 'Could Trump be removed from office on grounds of incompetence?', and 'Interview: Rep. Mark Pocan on performing magic tricks, why Hillary Clinton lost Wisconsin, and more'.

The screenshot shows the Oregon's 3rd Congressional District page on GovTrack. At the top, there is a search bar with the address '7920 SE Martins Street, Portland, OR 97208' and a 'Find District' button. Below the search bar, there is a link for 'I'm at home, use my phone/computer's location'. The page is divided into three sections: 'Senators', 'Representative', and 'Legislation'. The 'Senators' section lists two senators: Ron Wyden (Senior Senator from Oregon, since Jan 1, 1996, next election in 2022, Democrat) and Jeff Merkley (Junior Senator from Oregon, since Jan 6, 2009, next election in 2020, Democrat). The 'Representative' section lists Earl Blumenauer (Representative for Oregon's 3rd congressional district, since May 21, 1996, next election in 2018, Democrat). To the right of the text is a map of Oregon's 3rd Congressional District, showing the district's boundaries and major cities like Portland, Gresham, and Clackamas.

Recruit fellow advocates

- Recruit 3-4 individuals to join you in advocating on your chosen policy issue
- Group visits are more influential
- The experience builds relationships and skills among all participants
- Having stakeholders with diverse experiences & backgrounds can increase your impact
- People directly impacted by the policy/program are powerful messengers
- Examples of stakeholders include:
 - PLHIV
 - Service providers
 - Public health experts
 - Medical providers
 - Organizational leaders
 - Researchers



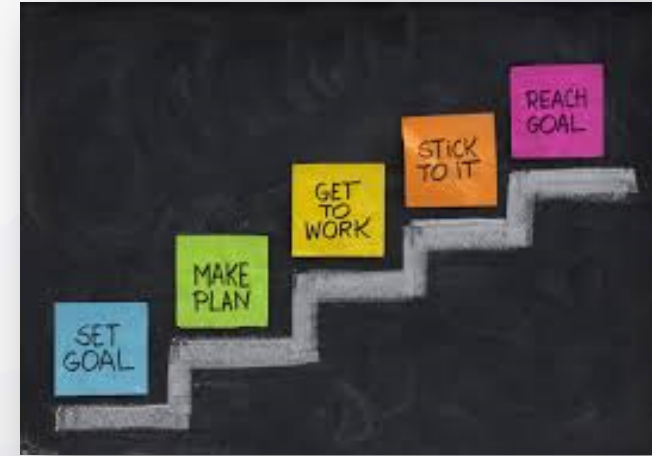
Request your meeting

- Call district office
- Complete web form
- Email district staff
- Request should mention
 - That you are a voting constituent
 - Issue/s you intend to discuss
 - When you want to meet
 - Names and affiliations of the advocates participating
- Follow up with email and phone
- No response or refusal to meet?
 - Alert the media and show up anyhow!



Define your goals

- Convene planning call with fellow advocates
- Determine meeting goals
- Create an agenda to help you meet those goals
- Agenda should include:
 - Definition of the issue
 - Explanation of its importance
 - Connection to a real-life personal story or situation
 - Specific action you want the elected official to take

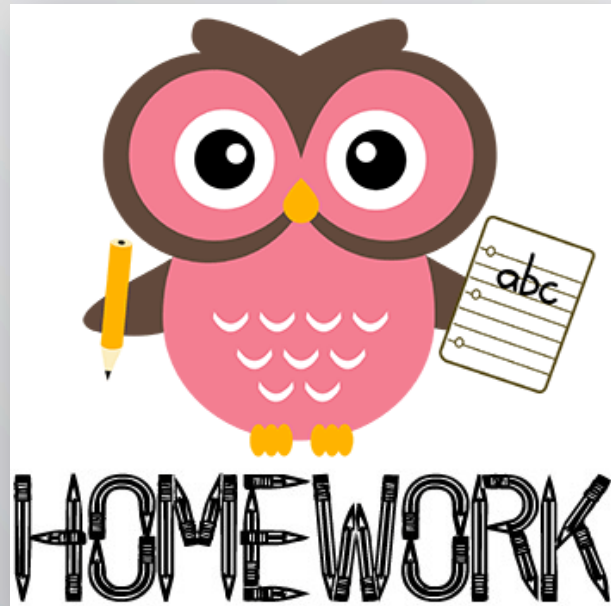


Determine roles

- Decide ahead of time who is responsible for what in your group
 - Who will facilitate the meeting
 - Who will cover what topic
 - Who will take note of questions and information requests



Do your homework



- Research your elected official's stance on the issue
- Determine if they have a personal connection to the issue
- Understand the impact of the policy issue on PLHIV in your state
 - How many PLHIV in your state have healthcare thanks to ACA and Medicaid expansion?
 - What will defunding Planned Parenthood mean for women's reproductive health care in your state?
 - How many people rely on Ryan White, HOPWA, SNAP, etc. in your state?
- Supportive members need to hear from constituents too!

Prepare your talking points and materials

- Work with your fellow advocates to develop your talking points to support your position
- Talking points should be based on:
 - Personal story
 - Relevant and compelling data to support your position
 - Connections to local community/state
- Any materials should be clear and concise
- Bring information about your organization's services
- Don't recreate the wheel! Access factsheets at resources at
 - www.PWN-USA.org
 - www.AIDSUnited.org
 - www.CBPP.org
 - www.FamiliesUSA.org
 - www.PlannedParenthood.org
- Leave supporting documents with elected official or their staff at end of meeting

Hold the meeting

- Arrive at the meeting early
- Facilitating advocate kicks off meeting with brief statement of concern
- Each advocate should give their name, any organizational affiliation, and say they are a constituent if they are from the district.
- Present the issues clearly
- Do not assume elected official knows or understands the impact of the issue on PLHIV or specific programs
- Use full program names, not acronyms; explain what those programs do



Hold the meeting

- Specify what action the elected official can take to address the issue and try to get a commitment
- Be prepared to follow up on any questions you don't know the answer to
- End on a positive note, even if you did not meet all of your meeting goals
- Get the contact information of the person with whom you are meeting
- Thank them for taking the time to meet

Remember!

- You may have only a few minutes
- Make sure you and your group are well organized to deliver a clear and concise message
- Stay on your issue
- If conversation veers, bring it back!
- Make your ask
- **Wait and listen for a response**



Follow up and be a resource

- Send an email immediately after meeting underscoring your ask and any agreed-upon next steps
- Send hand written thank you notes too!
- As a representative of your community, you are a unique resource to elected officials
- Continue to reach out on the policy issue you raised
- Offer additional information
- Invite the congressional member to your agency for a tour
- Add them to you organization's mailing list

Tell us how it went!

- Email the PWN policy fellows list to share:
 - Highlights
 - Challenges
 - Follow-up
 - Support needed



Reproductive justice for HIV-Positive women



Reproductive Justice

- Means upholding our full spectrum of sexual and reproductive rights, including:
 - Choosing when and how to be sexual
 - When or whether to have children
 - Right to parent and maintain custody
 - Access to all information and options to make an informed decision





The Personal is Political

Stacy's Story

Why Reproductive Justice Matters to WLHIV



- HIV-positive women are at elevated risk for gynecological complications
- Custody rights are often taken away from women living with HIV
- Women receiving HIV-related medical care frequently are not offered sexual and reproductive health services or are referred elsewhere
- WLHIV frequently are not asked about their desires to have children and/or are stigmatized for having children
- Denying women access to reproductive health services is a human rights violation

Critical Healthcare Justice Issue: “Better Care Reconciliation Act”

- Repeals Obamacare--the greatest advance for women's health and people with HIV
- Worst piece of women's health legislation in a generation
- Ends Medicaid expansion
- Will devastate Planned Parenthood health services for women, leaving millions of women without access to reproductive health care
- Rolls back patient protections
- Eliminates essential health benefits
- Gives HUGE tax breaks to wealthy on the backs of the 99%

Why Medicaid Access Matters



- Enables people with low-incomes, including women living with HIV, to access quality comprehensive healthcare
- For Women living HIV, we are more likely to be at risk for cervical cancer
- Medicaid access enables our reproductive health and wellness
- Covers critical primary and preventive care services, including
 - Family planning
 - STI testing
 - Well-women exams
 - Lifesaving cancer screenings



The Personal is Political

Evany's Story

Defunding Planned Parenthood

- Many of Planned Parenthood's patients are people who have historically faced barriers to quality health care, including women living with HIV.
- Often, those patients are people of color, people who live in rural areas, LGBTQ people, people with low incomes, and people without health insurance.



We Won't Go Back!

- Improving health care has long been a priority for women, reflecting their experiences as patients, mothers, and caregivers
- We won't go back to an era where women paid more for health care simply because of their gender. That's why fighting to oppose the Better Care Reconciliation Act is so central right now for healthcare advocates across the country
- If the Republican plan becomes law, millions of women will lose their access to their reproductive Health services and if you are a women living with a per-existing Condition including pregnancy you will not be covered under the Better Care Reconciliation Act
- For women living with HIV or AIDS its critical we continuous access to equality healthcare coverage under Medicaid system



The Personal is Political

Teresa's Story

Healthcare Policy Demands for WLHIV

- Oppose the Better Care Reconciliation Act!
- Protect Medicaid
- Maintain the Essential Health Benefits
- Don't cut funds for women's health services
- Don't defund Planned Parenthood



DEAR SENATORS:

DO THE RIGHT THING.

Do not take lifesaving healthcare and treatment away from people with HIV and millions of others.

Say **NO** to Medicaid caps and cuts.

Say **NO** to rolling back protections for vulnerable Americans.



**CALL YOUR SENATORS AT
(866) 246-9371**

Additional Resources

- [Advancing the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Human Rights of People Living with HIV](#)
 - GNP+, ICW, Young Positives, Engender Health, IPPF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, WHO
- [Women & HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Factsheet](#)
- www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/about-us
- www.kff.org/hivaids/fact-sheet/medicaid-and-hiv/
- PWN's Kill the Bill Resource Center
- www.PWN-USA.org
- KFF Policy Brief: What's at stake in ACA repeal for PLHIV
 - www.kff.org/hivaids/issue-brief/what-is-at-stake-in-aca-repeal-and-replace-for-people-with-hiv/

Questions and Discussion

