



TAKE ACTION

Let your voice be heard!

Every American should be familiar and willing to use the tools of our democracy and the rights given to them by the Constitution, from voting to calling their leaders to account. The Common Good is dedicated to creating such an informed and active citizenry.

When you plan your action, please act responsibly to make the nation better for all – and to keep faith with the values that have energized our nation from its inception – justice, equality, tolerance, freedom of press and speech, adherence to the rule of law, and freedom of opportunity for all.

Please make use of this action plan and send us your additions and/or comments to: thecommongood@thecommongood.net.

NOTE: We offer this TAKE ACTION PLAN with gratitude to the group of former congressional staffers who put together a great “how to” guide for effective citizen action to influence their elected representatives. Taking guidance from Indivisible's own words, “We hope you will take this document and use it however you see fit,” we have borrowed many of their terrific ideas and advice and expanded on their presentation in a nonpartisan manner so that we can share their excellent ideas to one and all who want to help create the change we need. For the original “INDIVISIBLE GUIDE,” see also www.indivisibleguide.com.

TAKE ACTION!

Together, we have more power than we realize. Together we have the power to create the change we want to see.

1.) It's been done before! The Tea Party Movement grew its influence and power with an effective citizen action model. The Tea Party organized people on the local grassroots level to apply significant pressure on their elected officials to oppose the Obama Administration. Their organizing model, though partisan, effectively pushed through their agenda by utilizing the power of citizen activism.

2.) Protecting our values, our neighbors, and ourselves will require vigilance and speaking out against actions contrary to the American values of inclusion, tolerance, and fairness. If a small minority in the Tea Party could stop President Obama and cause fundamental disruption of a large national party, then a group of determined individuals that make up the the majority can stop the machinations that are fundamentally against accepted American precepts.

3.) The following chapters offer a step-by-step guide for individuals, groups, and organizations looking for an effective way to successfully get our policymakers to listen to a small, vocal, dedicated group of constituents.

4.) This last election cycle has sparked a desire in Americans on both sides of the aisle to be more civically engaged on the local level. We hope this guide will be a useful tool to help you be a force for change and action.

Here's the quick summary of this document. While this page summarizes top-level takeaways, the full document describes how to actually carry out these activities.

CHAPTER 1: HOW GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY WORKED FOR THE TEA PARTY

We examine lessons from the success of the Tea Party and recommend a local strategy targeting individual elected officials.

CHAPTER 2: EXAMINING HOW ELECTED OFFICIALS THINK

Examining how your Elected thinks – reelection and how you can use it to your own benefit. Electeds want their constituents to think well of them and they want good, local press.

CHAPTER 3: ORGANIZE A LOCAL GROUP

Identify or organize your local group. Is there an existing local group or network you can join? Or do you need to start your own? We suggest steps to help mobilize your fellow constituents locally and start organizing for action.

CHAPTER 4: FOUR LOCAL ADVOCACY TACTICS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

Four local advocacy tactics that actually work. Your elected officials are your voices in city, state, and federal government. Your job is to make sure they are, in fact, *speaking for you*. We've identified four key opportunity areas that just a handful of local constituents can use to great effect.

CHAPTER 5: ACTIVISM THROUGH YOUR WALLET

Consumer boycotts can be an effective way to show your disapproval of a company that has taken a position against your values.

APPENDIX: RESOURCES

Additional resources to help with your organizing efforts.

CHAPTER 1: HOW GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY WORKED FOR THE TEA PARTY

Despite political leanings with the principles and positions of the Tea Party, there is much to we can all learn from their success in influencing the national debate and the behavior of national policymakers. The group thoroughly thought through their advocacy tactics.

This chapter illustrates the strengths of the Tea Party movement and provides lessons to leverage in your own organizing efforts to make an impact.

The Tea Party's Two Key Strategic Choices

The Tea Party's success came down to two critical strategic elements:

1. **They were locally focused.** The Tea Party started as an organic movement built on small local groups of dedicated conservatives. Their impact was caused by a relatively small number of conservatives working together.
 - Groups started as disaffected conservatives talking to each other online. In response to the 2008 bank bailouts and President Obama's election, groups began forming to discuss their anger and what could be done.
 - They eventually realized that the locally-based discussion groups themselves could be a powerful tool.
 - Groups were small, local, and dedicated. Tea Party groups could be fewer than 10 people, but they were highly localized and dedicated significant personal time and resources. Members communicated with each other regularly, tracked developments in Washington, and coordinated advocacy efforts together.
 - Groups were relatively few in number. The Tea Party was not hundreds of thousands of people spending every waking hour focused on advocacy. Rather, the efforts were somewhat modest. Only 1 in 5 self-identified Tea Partiers contributed money or attended events. On any given day in 2009 or 2010, only twenty local events — meetings, trainings, town halls, etc. — were scheduled nationwide. In short, a relatively small number of groups were having a big impact on the national debate.

2. **They were almost purely defensive.** The Tea Party focused on saying NO to Electeds within their district. The Tea Party activists were united by a core set of shared beliefs with an extraordinary clarity of purpose. Most often the group didn't accept concessions and aggressively pressured lawmakers, especially Republicans, who failed to meet their specific demands.

Tea Party Groups primarily applied a defensive strategy by pressuring their own local Electeds. This meant demanding that their Representatives and Senators be their voice of opposition on Capitol Hill. At a tactical level, the Tea Party had several replicable practices, including:

1. Showing up to the Elected's town hall meetings and demanding answers
2. Showing up to the Elected's office and demanding a meeting
3. Coordinating blanket calling of congressional offices at key moments

Defensive Strategy Explained

A defensive strategy does not mean dropping your own policy priorities, but influencing your elected officials by focusing on what the current legislative priority is (ex. Focusing on Electeds who are directly involved with the current health care legislation moving through Congress). Many people have specific issues they care passionately about – climate change, immigration, business regulations, LGBTQ rights, civil rights – however focusing on areas where your Elected is working on is the most effective way to make a measurable impact.

Many elected officials care more deeply about getting reelected than they care about any specific issues. By adopting a strategy that pressures officials on your issues, you have a good chance of winning their votes.

Think about this:

1. Every time your Elected signs on to a bill, takes a position, or makes a statement, a little part of his or her mind will be thinking: "How am I going to explain this to my constituents who keep showing up at my events and demanding answers?"

2. Reaffirm the problems of the agenda you do not support. The hard truth is that Electeds have enormous power and can enact their own policies, which you may not be supportive of. But by objecting as loudly and powerfully as possible, and by centering the voices of those who are most affected by their agenda, you can ensure that people understand the negative impact of a proposed policy from the very start.

CHAPTER 2: EXAMINING HOW YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS THINK

This chapter explains how Electeds' offices and the people within them work, and what that means for your advocacy strategy.

IT'S ALL ABOUT REELECTION, REELECTION, REELECTION

To influence your own elected officials, you have to understand one thing: electeds are always either running for office or getting ready for their next election, a fact that shapes everything they do.

To be clear, this does not mean that your Elected is cynical and unprincipled. The vast majority of elected officials believe in their ideals, and care deeply about representing their constituents and having a positive impact. But they also know that if they want to make change, they need to stay in office.

This constant reelection pressure means that Electeds are enormously sensitive to their image in the district or state, and will work very hard to avoid signs of public dissent or disapproval. What every Elected wants — regardless of party — is for his or her constituents to agree with the following narrative:

"My Elected cares about me, shares my values, and is working hard for me."

- *What every Elected wants their constituents to think.*

If your actions threaten this narrative, then you will unnerve your Elected and change their decision-making process.

My Elected is in a safe district. Can I still make an impact? YES!

If your Elected is in a heavily Democratic or Republican district, you may assume that they have a safe seat and there's nothing you can do to influence them. This is not true! The reality is that no Elected ever considers themselves to be safe from all threats. Electeds who have nothing to fear from a general election still worry about primary challenges

More broadly, no one stays an elected official without being overly protective about their image. Even the safest Elected will be deeply alarmed by signs of organized opposition, because these actions create the impression that they're not connected to their district and not listening to their constituents.

But my elected officials are actually pretty good!

Congratulations! Your officials are representing your ideals. They're making the right public statements, co-sponsoring the right bills, and voting the right way. So how does this change your strategy? Two things to keep in mind:

1. Do NOT switch to targeting other Electeds who don't represent you. They don't represent you, and they don't care what you have to say. Stick with your own local Electeds.
2. DO use this guide to engage with your Electeds locally. Instead of pressuring them to do the right thing, praise them for doing the right thing. This is important because it will help ensure that they continue to do the right thing. Staff are rarely contacted when the Elected does something good – your efforts locally will provide highly valuable positive reinforcement.

What Does an Elected's Office Do, and Why?

An elected official's office varies in size, for instance House office consist of 15-25 staff, and 60-70 for Senate offices, spread across a D.C. and one or several district offices. These offices typically perform the following functions:

- **Constituent services.** Staff connect with both individual constituents and local organizations, serving as a link to and an advocate within the government on a variety of issues such as visas, grant applications, and public benefits.
- **Communicate with constituents directly.** Staff take calls, track constituent messages, and write letters to stay in touch with constituents' priorities, follow up on specific policy issues that constituents have expressed concern about, and reinforce the message that they are listening.
- **Meet with constituents.** Electeds and staff meet with constituents to learn about local priorities and build connections.
- **Seek and create positive press.** Staff try to shape press coverage and public information to create a favorable image for the Elected.
- **Host and attend events in district.** Electeds host and attend events in the district to connect with constituents, understand their priorities, and get good local press.
- **Actual legislating.** Electeds and staff decide their policy positions, develop and sponsor bills, and take votes based on a combination of their own beliefs, pressure from leadership/lobbyists, and pressure from their constituents.

What Your Elected Cares About

When it comes to constituent interactions, Electeds care about things that make them look good, responsive, and hardworking to the people of their district. In practice, that means that they care about some things very much, and other things very little:

ELECTED CARES A LOT ABOUT	ELECTED DOESN'T CARE MUCH ABOUT
Verified constituents from the district (or state for Senators)	People from outside the district (or state for Senators)
Advocacy that requires effort - the more effort, the more they care. Calls, personal emails, and especially showing up in person in the district	Form letters, a Tweet, or Facebook comment (unless they generate widespread attention)
Local press and editorials, maybe national press	Wonky D.C.-based news (depends on the Elected)
An interest group's endorsement	Your thoughtful analysis of the proposed bill
Groups of constituents, locally famous individuals, or big individual campaign contributors	A single constituent
Concentrate asks that entail a verifiable action - vote for a bill, make a public statement, etc.	General ideas about the world
A single ask in your communication - letter, email, phone call, office visit, etc.	A laundry list of all the issues you're concerned about.

What Your Elected is Thinking: Good Outcome vs. Bad Outcome

To make this a bit more concrete and show where advocacy comes in, below are some examples of actions that an Elected might take, what they're hoping to see happen as a result, and what they really don't want to see happen. Some Electeds will go to great lengths to avoid bad outcomes — even as far as changing their positions or public statements.

EXAMPLE ACTION	DESIRED OUTCOME	BAD OUTCOME
Letter to Constituent	Constituent feels happy that their concerns were answered.	Constituent posts letter on social media saying it didn't answer their questions or didn't answer for weeks/months, calls Congressman Bob unresponsive and untrustworthy.
In-district Event	Local newspaper reports that Congresswoman Sara appeared at opening of new bridge, which she helped secure funding for.	Local newspaper reports that protesters barraged Congresswoman Sara with questions about corruption in the infrastructure bill.
Town Hall / Listening Session	Local newspaper reports that Congressman Bob hosted a town hall and discussed his work to balance the budget.	Local newspaper reports that angry constituents strongly objected to Congressman Bob's support for privatizing Medicare.
Policy Position	Congresswoman Sara votes on a bill and releases a press statement hailing it as a step forward.	Congresswoman Sara's phones are deluged with calls objecting to the bill. A group of constituents staged an event outside her district office and invite press to hear them talk about how the bill will personally hurt their families.

CHAPTER 3: ORGANIZE A LOCAL GROUP

The Tea Party exemplified how grassroots organizing can make big change happen for their cause, which all of us aiming to make a difference can learn from. Their movement formed organically as conservatives upset after the 2008 election came together in local discussion groups. The same thing is happening throughout the country as more people become engaged with various issues that resonate with them. These groups exist in person, networks, and on social media forums. The main question is how to harness a group's potential to make a real impact on policymakers within local, state, and federal government. .

This chapter is about how to take the energy from these existing groups to the next level, and start advocating effectively.

If you're reading this, you're probably already part of a local network of people . You may be part of an already existing network, maybe already on Facebook, even if it's just your friends. The big question for these groups is: what's next?

Should I Form a Group?

There's no need to reinvent the wheel — if an activist group or network is already attempting to do advocacy you believe in, just join up with them. Depending your district, it may make sense to have more than one group. If you look around and can't find a group working specifically on local action focused on your elected officials in your area, just start doing it! It's not rocket science. You really just need two things:

1. Ten or so people (but even fewer is a fine start!) who are geographically nearby — ideally in the same district
2. A commitment from those people to devote a couple hours per month to fight for the issues your group feels passionately about.

Diversity In Your Group & Reaching Out

If you are forming a group, we urge you to make a conscious effort to pursue diversity and solidarity at every stage in the process. Being inclusive and diverse might include recruiting members who can bridge language gaps, and finding ways to accommodate participation when people can't attend due to work schedules, health issues, or childcare needs.

How To Form A Group

If you do want to form a group, here are our recommendations on how to go about it:

1. Decide you're going to start a local group dedicated to making your Electeds aware of their constituents' opposition to the policies you find objectionable. This might be a subgroup of an already existing activist group, or it might be a new effort — it really depends on your circumstances. Start where people are: if you're in a group with a lot of people who want to do this kind of thing, then start there; if you're not, you'll need to find them somewhere else. The most important thing is that this is a LOCAL group. Your group should focus on applying local pressure, which means you all need to be local.
2. Identify co-founders who are interested in participating and recruiting others. Ideally, these are people who have different social networks from you so that you can maximize your reach. Make an effort to ensure that leadership of the group reflects the diversity within your community.
3. Email your contacts and post a message on your Facebook, on any local Facebook groups that you're a member of, and/or other social media channels you use regularly. For instance, say that you're starting a group for constituents of Congresswoman Sara, dedicated to pressing gun reform and ask people to email you to sign up.

How do I recruit people to take action?

Most people are moved to take action through individual conversations. Here are some tips for having successful conversations to inspire people to take action with your group.

1. Get the story. What issues does the other person care about? How would that issue affect them, their communities, and their values?
2. Imagine what's possible. How can your group change your community's relationship with your Elected? How could your group, and others like it, protect your values?
3. Commitment and ownership. Ask a clear yes or no question: will you work with me to hold our elected officials accountable? Then, get to specifics. Who else can they talk to about joining the group? What work needs to be done – planning a meeting, researching a Elected – that they can take on? When will you follow up?

Ask open-ended questions! People are more likely to take action when they articulate what they care about and can connect it to the action they are going to take. A good rule of thumb is to talk 30% of the time or less and listen at least 70% of the time.

4. Invite everyone who has expressed interest to an in-person kickoff meeting. Use this meeting to agree on a name, principles for your group, roles for leadership, a way of communicating, and a strategy for your Elected. Rule of thumb: 50% of the people who have said they are definitely coming will show up to your meeting. Aim high and get people to commit to come!
- Manage the meeting: Keep people focused on the ultimate core strategy: applying pressure to your Elected on a particular issue(s). Other attendees may have other ideas — or may be coming to share their concerns on a completely different set of issues — and it's important to affirm their concerns and feelings. But it's also important to redirect that energy and make sure that the conversation stays focused on developing a group and a plan of action dedicated to a specific strategy.
 - Decide on a name: Good names include the geographic area of your group, so that it's clear that you're rooted in the community — e.g., "Springfield United for Clean Water"
 - Agree on principles: This is your chance to say what your group stands for. It is essential that all members have a say in this discussion and are unified behind your group's principles.
 - Volunteer for roles: Figure out how to divide roles and responsibilities among your group. This can look very different depending on who's in the room, but at a minimum,

you probably want 1-2 people in charge of overall group coordination, a designated media/social media contact, and 1-2 people in charge of tracking the congressional office's schedule and events. In addition to these administrative roles, ask attendees how they want to contribute to advocacy efforts: attend events, record events, ask questions, make calls, host meetings, engage on social media, write op-eds for local papers, etc.

- Adopt means of communication: You need a way of reaching everyone in your group in order to coordinate actions. This can be a Facebook group, a Google group, a Slack team — whatever people are most comfortable with. Also, there are more secure or encrypted platforms such as Signal and WhatsApp.
5. Expand! Enlist your members to recruit across their networks. Ask every member to send out the same outreach emails/posts that you did.
- Recruit people for your email list — 100 or 200 isn't unreasonable.
 - We strongly recommend making a conscious effort to diversify your group. This could include both reaching out through your own networks and forming relationships with other community groups.

CHAPTER 4: FOUR LOCAL ADVOCACY TACTICS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

This chapter describes the nuts and bolts of implementing four advocacy tactics to put pressure on your elected officials. Before we get there though, there's a few things all local groups should do:

Begin with these five steps to gather intel to arm yourself with information necessary for all future advocacy activities.

1. Find your local, state, federal elected officials on their official websites, and their office contact info. For instance find your congressional officials at www.callmycongress.com.
2. Sign up on your Electeds' website to receive regular email updates, invites to local events, and messaging to understand what they're saying. Most officials have an e-newsletter.

3. Find out where your Electeds stand on the issues of the day — tax reform, immigration, voting rights. Review their voting history at VoteSmart.org. Research their biggest campaign contributors at OpenSecrets.org.
4. Set up a Google News Alert (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) — for example for "Rep. Bob Smith" — to receive an email whenever your Electeds are in the news.
5. Research on Google News (<https://news.google.com/news>) what local reporters have written about your Electeds. Find and follow them on Twitter, and build relationships. Before you attend or plan an event, reach out and explain why your group is protesting and provide them background materials and a quote. Journalists on deadline — even those who might not agree with you — appreciate when you provide easy material for a story.

Opportunity 1

Town Halls/Listening Sessions

Electeds hold local "Town Halls" or public listening sessions throughout their districts or state. Tea Party groups used these events to great effect — both to directly pressure their Electeds and to attract media to their cause.

Preparation

1. Find out when your Elected's next public town hall event is. Sometimes these are announced well in advance, and sometimes they are "public" but only sent to select constituents through mailings shortly before the event. If you can't find announcements online, call your Elected directly to find out. When you call, be friendly and say to the staffer, "Hi, I'm a constituent, and I'd like to know when his/her next town hall forum will be." If they don't know, ask to be added to the email list so that you get notified when they do.
2. Send out a notice of the town hall to your group and get commitments from members to attend. Distribute to all of them whatever information you have on your Elected's voting record, as well as the prepared questions.
3. Prepare several questions ahead of time for your group to ask. Your questions should be sharp and fact-based, ideally including information on the Elected's record, votes

they've taken, or statements they've made. Thematically, they should focus on a limited number of issues to maximize impact. Prepare 5-10 of these questions and hand them out to your group ahead of the meeting. Example question:

"I and many district families in Springfield rely on Medicare. I don't think we should be rationing health care for seniors, and the plan to privatize Medicare will create serious financial hardship for seniors who can't afford it. You haven't gone on the record opposing this. Will you commit here and now to vote no on Bill X to cut Medicare?"

Should I bring a sign?

Signs can be useful for reinforcing the sense of broad agreement with your message. However, if you're holding an oppositional sign, staffers will almost certainly not give you or the people with you the chance to get the mic or ask a question. If you have enough people to both ask questions and hold signs, though, then go for it!

At the Town Hall

1. Get there early, meet up, and get organized. Meet outside or in the parking lot for a quick huddle *before* the event. Distribute the handout of questions, and encourage members to ask the questions on the sheet or something similar.
2. Get seated and spread out. Head into the venue a bit early to grab seats at the front half of the room, but do not all sit together. Sit by yourself or in groups of two, and spread out throughout the room. (This will help reinforce the impression of broad consensus).
3. Make your voices heard by asking good questions. When the Elected opens the floor for questions, everyone in the group should put your hands up and keep them there. Look friendly or neutral so that staffers will call on you. When you're asking a question, remember the following guidelines:
 - Stick with the prepared list of questions. Don't be afraid to read it straight from the printout if you need to.
 - Be polite but persistent, and demand real answers. Electeds are good at deflecting or dodging questions they don't want to answer. If the Elected dodges, ask a follow-up question. If they aren't giving you real answers, then call them out for it.

- Don't give up the mic until you're satisfied with the answer. If you've asked a hostile question, a staffer will often try to limit your ability to follow up by taking the microphone back immediately after you finish speaking. They can't do that if you keep a firm hold on the mic. No staffer in their right mind wants to look like they're physically intimidating a constituent, so they will back off. If they object, then say politely but loudly: "I'm not finished. She is dodging my question. Why are you trying to stop me from following up?"
 - Keep the pressure on. After one member of the group finishes, everyone should raise their hands again. The next member of the group to be called on should move down the list of questions and ask the next one.
4. Support the group and reinforce the message. After one member of your group asks a question, everyone should applaud to show that the feeling is shared throughout the audience. Whenever someone from your group gets the mic, they should note that they're building on the previous questions — amplifying the fact that you're part of a broad group.
 5. Record everything! Assign someone in the group to use their smart phone or video camera to record other advocates asking questions and the Elected's response. While written transcripts are nice, unfavorable exchanges caught on video can be devastating for Electeds. These clips can be shared through social media and picked up by local and national media.

After the Town Hall

1. Reach out to media, during and after the town hall. If there's media at the town hall, the people who asked questions should approach them afterwards and offer to speak about their concerns. When the event is over, you should engage local reporters on Twitter or by email and offer to provide an in-person account of what happened, as well as the video footage you collected. Example Twitter outreach:

".@reporter I was at Rep. Smith's town hall in Springfield today. Large group asked about Medicare privatization. I have video & happy to chat."

-Note: It's important to make this a public tweet by including the period before the journalist's Twitter handle. Making this public will make the journalist more likely to respond to ensure they get the intel first.

Ensure that the members of your group who are directly affected by the specific issue are the ones whose voices are elevated when you reach out to media.

2. Share everything. Post pictures, video, your own thoughts about the event, etc., to social media afterwards. Tag the Elected's office and encourage others to share widely.

Opportunity 2

Other Local Public Events

In addition to town halls, Electeds regularly attend public events for other purposes — parades, infrastructure groundbreakings, etc. Like town halls, these are opportunities to get face time with the Electeds and make sure they're hearing about your concerns.

Similar to Town Halls, but with some tweaks. To take advantage of this opportunity, you can follow most of the guidelines above for town halls (filming, etc.). However, because these events are not designed for constituent input, you will need to think creatively about how to make sure your presence and message comes through loud and clear.

Tactics for these events may be similar to more traditional protests, where you're trying to shift attention from the scheduled event to your own message.

1. Optimize visibility. Unlike in town halls, you want your presence as a group to be recognizable and attention-getting at this event. It may make sense to stick together as a group, wear relatively similar clothing / message shirts, and carry signs in order to be sure that your presence is noticeable.
2. Be prepared to interrupt and insist on your right to be heard. Since you won't get the mic at an event like this, you have to attract attention to yourself and your message. Agree beforehand with your group on a simple message focused on a current or

upcoming issue. Coordinate with each other to chant this message during any public remarks that your Elected makes. *This can be difficult and a bit uncomfortable. But it sends a powerful message to your Elected that they won't be able to get press for other events until they address your concerns.

3. Identify and try to speak with reporters on the scene. Be polite, friendly, and stick to your message. For example, "We're here to remind Congresswoman Sara that her constituents are opposed to military cuts." You may want to research in advance which local reporters cover Electeds or relevant beats, so that you know who to be looking for.
4. Hold organizational hosts accountable. Often events such as these will be hosted by local businesses or non-partisan organizations — groups that don't want controversy or to alienate the community. Reach out to them directly to express your concern that they are giving a platform to an issue your group is passionately fighting against for the good of your community. If they persist, use social media to express your disappointment. This will reduce the likelihood that these organizations will host the Elected in the future who supports an unfavorable issue. Electeds depend on invitations like these to build ties and raise their visibility — so this matters to them.

Opportunity 3

In-Office Visits / Sit-ins

Every Elected has at least one district office, and many have several spread through their district or state. These are public offices, open for anybody to visit — you don't need an appointment. You can take advantage of this to stage a sort of impromptu town hall meeting by showing up with a small group. It is much harder for staff to turn away a group than a single constituent, even without an appointment.

1. Find out where your Electeds local offices are. The official webpage for your Elected will list the address of every local office. You can find those web pages easily through a simple Google search.
2. Plan a trip when the Elected is there. Most Elected district offices are open only during regular business hours, 9am-5pm. The Elected is most likely to be at the "main" office —

the office in the largest city in the district, and where the Elected's District Director works. Ideally, plan a time when you and several other people can show up together.

3. As with the town halls, you should prepare a list of several questions ahead of time.
4. Politely, but firmly, ask to meet with the Elected directly. Staff will ask you to leave or at best "offer to take down your concerns." Don't settle for that. You want to speak with the Elected directly. If they are not in, ask when they will next be in. If the staffer doesn't know, tell them you will wait until they find out. Sit politely in the lobby. *Note*, on any given weekend, *the Elected may or may not actually come to that district office*, and that office sit-ins can backfire, so be very thoughtful about the optics of your visit. This tactic works best when you are protesting an issue that directly affects you and/or members of your group (e.g. seniors and caregivers on Medicare cuts). Being polite and respectful throughout is critical.
5. Meet with the staffer. Even if you are able to get a one-off meeting with the Elected, you are most often going to be meeting with their staff. In district, the best person to meet with is the District Director, or the head of the local district office you're visiting. There are real advantages to building a relationship with these staff. In some cases, they may be more open to ideas on various issues than the Elected him/herself, and having a good meeting with/building a relationship with a supportive staff member can be a good way to move your issue up the chain of command.

Follow these steps for a good staff meeting:

- Have a specific "ask" — e.g. vote against X, cosponsor Y, publicly state Z, etc.
- Leave staff with a brief write up of your issue, with your proposals clearly stated.
- Share a personal story of how you or someone in your group is personally impacted by the specific issue (health care, immigration, medicare, etc.).
- Be polite — yelling at the underpaid, overworked staffer won't help your cause.
- Be persistent — Get their business card and call/email them regularly; ask if the Elected has taken action on the issue.

6. Advertise what you're doing. Communicate on social media and with the local reporters you follow what is happening. Take and send pictures and videos with your group: "At Congresswoman Sara's office with 10 other constituents to talk to her about privatizing Medicare. She refuses to meet with us and staff won't tell us when she will come out. We're waiting."

Opportunity 4

Mass Calls

Mass office calling is a light lift, but it can actually have an impact. Tea Party groups regularly flooded congressional offices with calls at opportune moments, and Electeds noticed.

1. Find the phone numbers for your Electeds. There are useful sources to contact elected officials, such as www.callmycongress.com to find the phone and offices for the House and Senate.
2. Prepare a single question per call. For in-person events, you want to prepare a host of questions, but for calls, you want to keep it simple. You and your group should all agree to call in on one specific issue that day. The question should be about a live issue — e.g. a vote that is coming up, a chance to take a stand, or some other time-sensitive opportunity. The next day or week, pick another issue, and call again on that.
3. Find out who you're talking to. In general, the staffer who answers the phone will be an intern, a staff assistant, or some other very junior staffer in the Electeds office. But you want to talk to the legislative staffer who covers the issue you're calling about. There are two ways to go about doing this:
 - Ask to speak to the staffer who handles the issue (immigration, health care etc). Junior staff are usually directed to not tell you who this is, and instead just take down your comment instead.
 - On a different day, call and ask whoever answers the phone, "*Hi, can you confirm the name of the staffer who covers [immigration/health care/etc]?*" Staff will generally tell you the name. Say "thanks!" and hang up. Ask for the staffer by name when you call back next time.

4. If you're directed to voicemail, follow up with email. Then follow up again. Getting more senior legislative staff on the phone is tough. The junior staffer will probably just tell you "I checked, and she's not at her desk right now, but would you like to leave a voicemail?" Go ahead and leave a voicemail, *but don't expect a call back*. Instead, after you leave that voicemail, follow up with an email to the staffer. If they still don't respond, follow up again. If they still don't respond, let the world know that the Elected's office is dodging you.

Note: Congressional emails are standardized, so even if the office won't divulge that information, you can probably guess it if you have the staffer's first and last name.

- Senate email addresses: For the Senate, the formula is: StafferFirstName_StafferLastName@ElectedLastName.senate.gov. For example, if Jane Doe works for Senator Roberts, her email address is likely "Jane_Doe@roberts.senate.gov"
 - House email addresses: For the House, the formula is simpler: StafferFirstName.StafferLastName@mail.house.gov. For example, if Jane Doe works in the House, her email address is likely "Jane.Doe@mail.house.gov"
5. Keep a record of the conversation. Take detailed notes on everything the staffer tells you. Direct quotes are great, and anything they tell you is public information that can be shared widely. *Compare notes with the rest of your group, and identify any conflicts in what they're telling constituents.*
 6. Report back to media and your group. Report back to both your media contacts and your group what the staffer said when you called.

CHAPTER 5: ACTIVISM THROUGH YOUR WALLET

You have the power to spend like an activist by supporting or not supporting companies that reflect your values. Now, more than ever, companies are paying attention to their brand image when it comes to how they engage in a political or public affairs issue.

Examples of this type of activism include the consumer boycott of Uber over opposition to Uber CEO support of certain refugee policies of the Trump Administration, or boycotts of Nike to protest sweatshop conditions of its manufacturing employees

These boycotts can result in real change by the company, especially when such efforts become viral. Large consumer boycotts are found on social media and activists websites, which target their messaging and create lists when there are multiple companies they want to send a message to.

When creating your own boycott remember to always have a well thought out and easily digestible message to persuade them to join your cause. Creating a Facebook page and using a unique simple hashtags (#) to target your messaging will allow for many more to get involved.

APPENDIX: RESOURCES

Sample Call Dialogue

Staffer: Congresswoman Sara's office, how can I help you?

Caller: Hi, I'm a constituent of Congresswoman Sara's. Can I please speak with a staffer who handles environmental issues?

Staffer: I'm happy to take down any comments you may have. Can I ask for your name and address to verify you're in the Congresswoman's district?

Caller: Sure thing. [Gives name/address]. Can I ask who I'm speaking with?

Staffer: Yes, this is Jeremy Smith.

Caller: Thanks, Jeremy! I'm calling to ask what the Congresswoman is doing about the upcoming environmental bill set to tax carbon emissions. I believe this is the best way to reduce the harmful carbon output of factories across the country. Can you please tell me where Congresswoman Sara stands on this issue?

Staffer: We really appreciate you calling and sharing your thoughts! I of course can't speak for the Congresswoman because I'm just a Staff Assistant, but I can tell you that I'll pass on your support for the upcoming bill.

Caller: I appreciate that Jeremy, but I don't want you to just pass my concerns on. I would like to know where the congresswoman stands on this bill. *If they stick with the "I'm just a staffer" line, ask them when a more senior staffer will get back to you with an answer to your question.*

Staffer: The congresswoman is still deciding on the bill at this time. I'm afraid I cannot give you an answer on how she will vote at this time, but I will make sure she receives your message on the bill.

Caller: Yes, please tell the congresswoman that I strongly urge her to support this bill, and I expect to hear from her soon on how she'll vote.

Staffer: I will make sure to pass on your support for the bill.

Caller: Thank you and I will follow-up on this soon.

Government Contact Information

Federal Government Contacts

President

President Donald Trump

Term: four years; expires 1/20/2021

Comment Line: 202-456-1111

Switchboard: 202-456-1414

Fax: 202-456-2461

comments@whitehouse.gov

www.whitehouse.gov

Address letters:

The President

President Donald Trump

The White House

Washington, DC 20500

Vice President

Vice President Mike Pence

Term: four years; expires, 1/20/2021

Comment Line: 202-456-1111

Swtichboard: 202-456-1414

Fax: 202-456-2461

comments@thewhitehouse.gov

www.whitehouse.gov/administration/vice-president-pence



Address letters:

The Vice President

Executive Office Building

Washington, DC 20501

U.S. House of Representatives

Switchboard: 202-255-3121

Directory of House Members: www.house.gov/representatives/

U.S. Senate

Switchboard: 202-224-3121

Directory of Senate Members: www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Contact State Elected Officials

Find Your State Governor: www.usa.gov/state-governor

Find Your State Legislator: www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites

Contact Local Elected Officials

Find Your Mayor: <https://www.usmayors.org/mayors/>

Find Your County Executive: <http://explorer.naco.org/>

Find your city, county, and town officials in your state: www.usa.gov/local-governments

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