



Advocacy 101/Update on Federal Legislation

Central Missouri Recovery Coalition/MCRSP Conference

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August 2022

Roadmap

- **The importance of constituent advocacy**
- The nuts and bolts of Hill meetings
- Advocacy in action: update on the recovery set-aside



How Does Constituent Advocacy in Washington Work?

GOVERNMENT ROLE

Congress and the White House create laws and regulations to govern citizens



CONSTITUENT ROLE

Citizens influence governing behavior by participating in advocacy efforts:

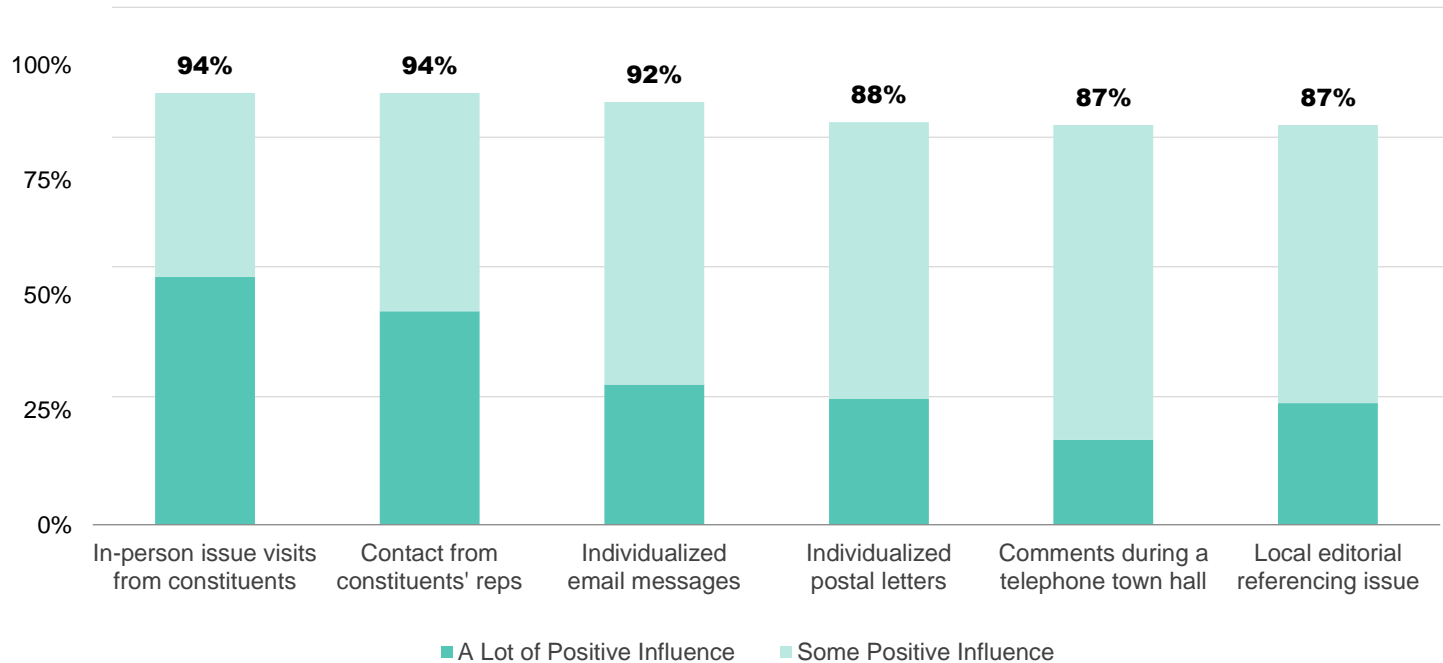
- Showing support
- Asking for change
- Telling stories
- Sharing ideas
- Providing information



Home Advantage in Congressional Decision-Making

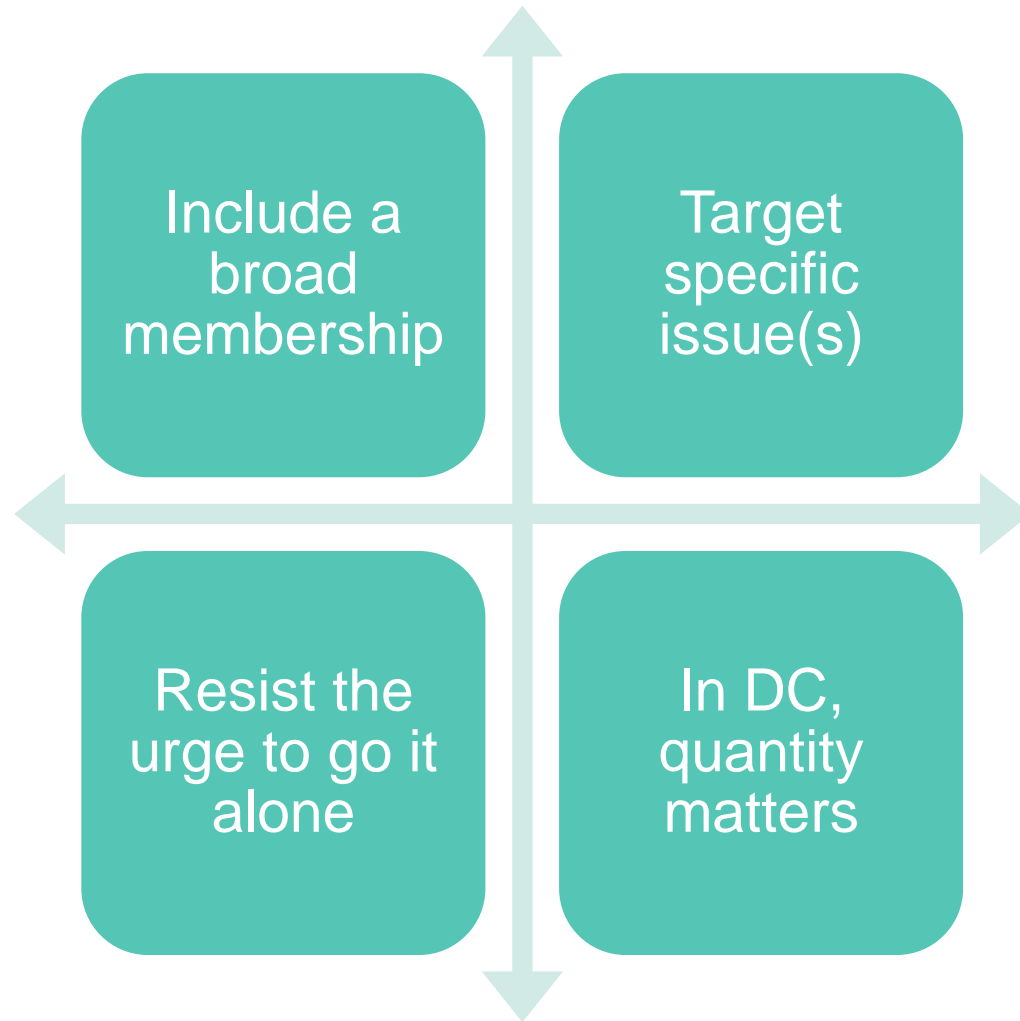
Constituent views and personalized outreach are most influential

Influence of Advocacy Strategies Directed at a Member's Washington Office



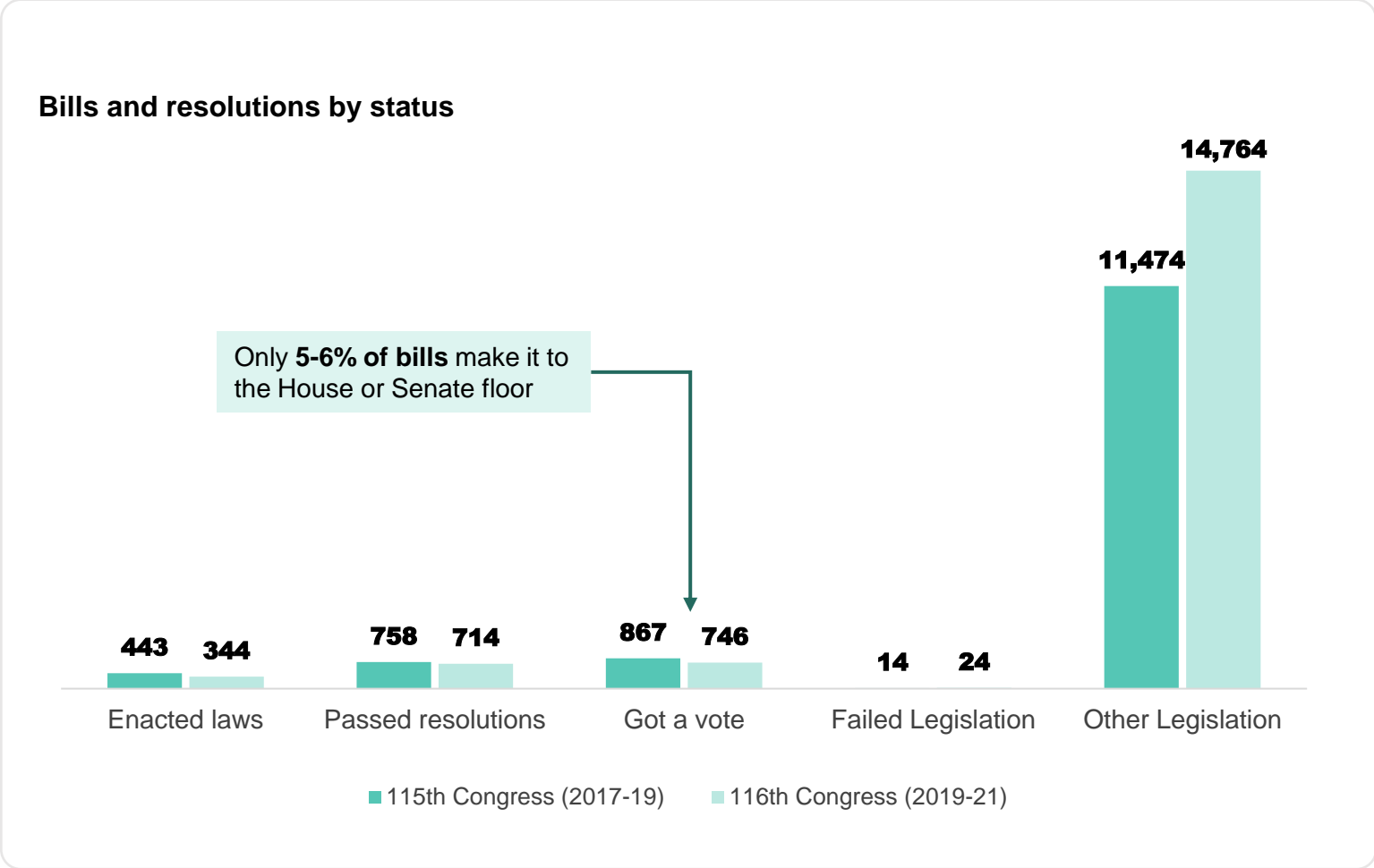
**Asked of Chiefs of Staff, Communications Directors, Legislative Directors, Legislative Assistants*

Coalitions are Key



Advocacy Success Can Take Time

Legislation moves slowly through Congress



SOURCE National Journal research, GovTrack.
Slide last updated on: May 4, 2021

Playing the Long Game: Recent Key Events

President Bush signs MHPAEA (parity) into law

2008

President Obama signs ACA into law

2010

Philip Seymour Hoffman fatally overdoses

2014

Unite to Face Addiction Rally

2015

President Obama signs CARA into law

2016

President Trump signs SUPPORT Act into law

2018

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- **The nuts and bolts of Hill meetings**
- Advocacy in action: update on the recovery set-aside





First-hand knowledge of policy impacts are compelling

- Members want to know:
 - What policy actions do *my* constituents desire?
 - Why do *my* constituents prioritize that action?
 - What are the impacts of this on *our* district or state?
 - What personal stories connect to this policy?

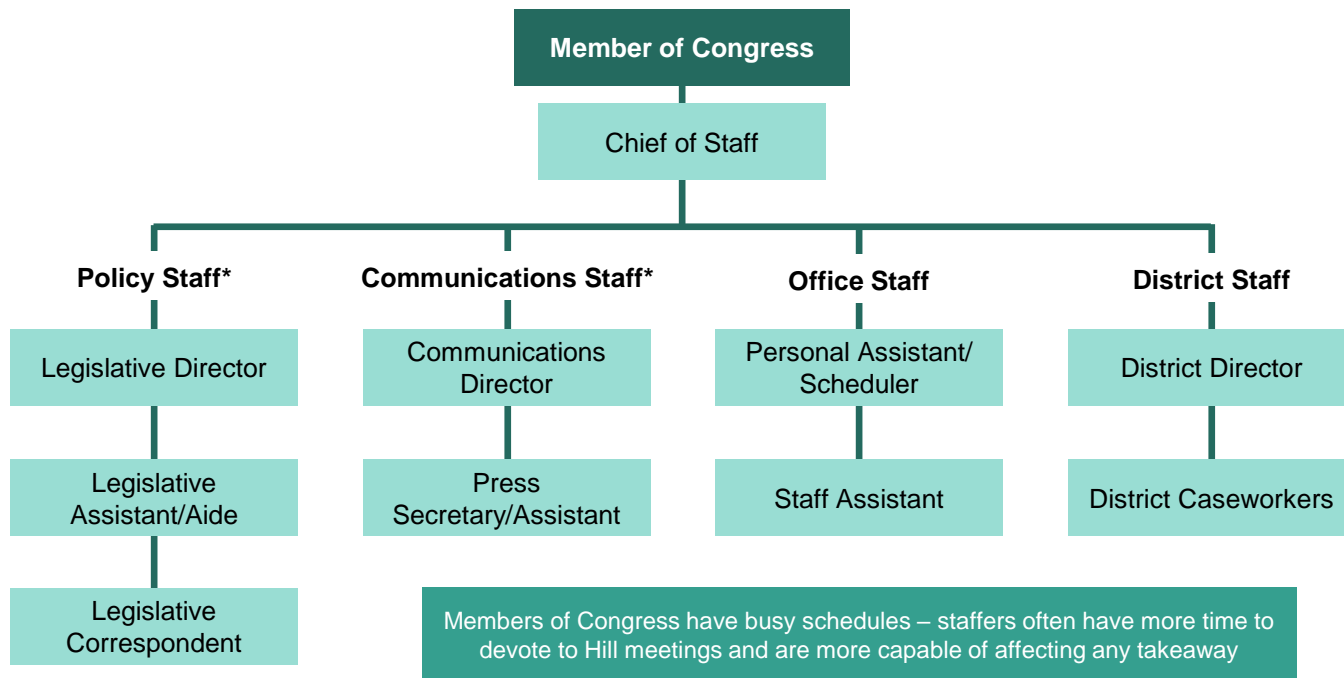
Meetings with Members of Congress/staff

- Conversations guide policymaking and reelections hinge on lawmakers' ability to serve their constituents
- Having a strong relationship with staff is priceless



Expect to Speak to Staff During Meetings

Sample organizational structure of a congressional office

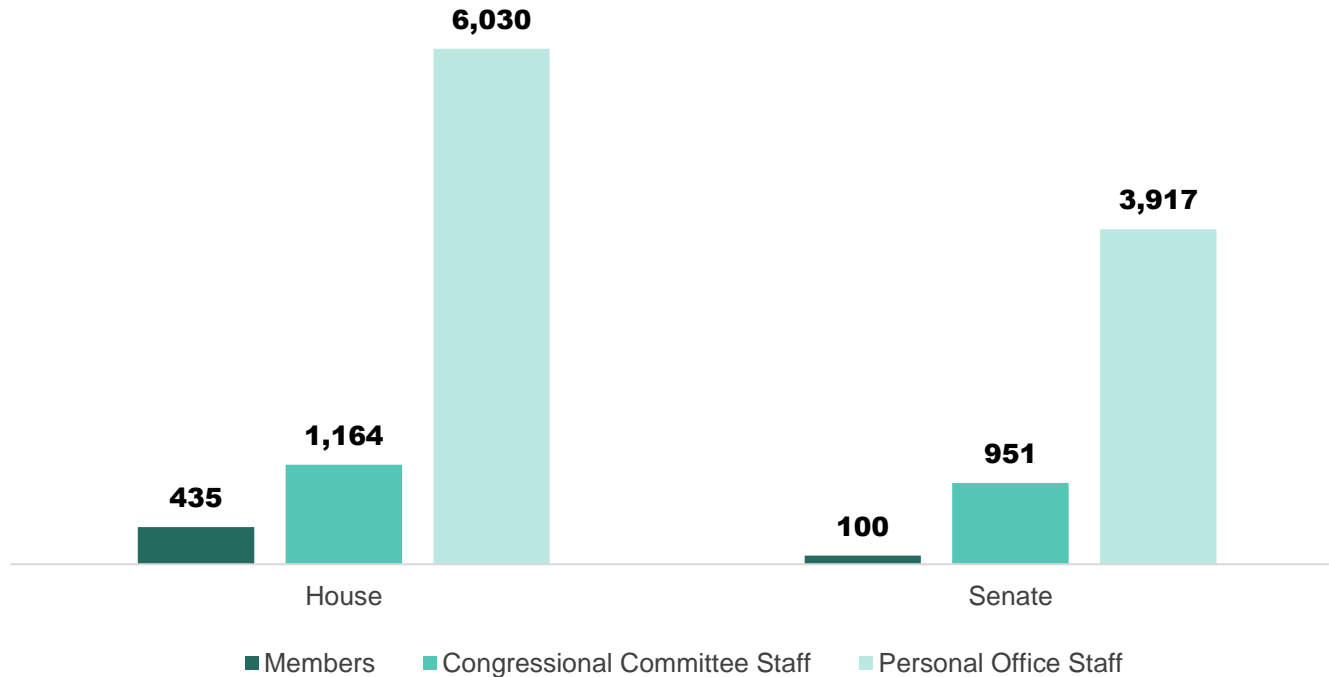


**Some offices may have "Senior Counsel/Counsel" roles among Policy staff, others may include a "Social Media Director" or "New Media Director" among Communications staff.*

Hill Staffers Significantly Outnumber Lawmakers

Members and staff of Congress

AS OF 2015



5 Elements for Meeting Success

1

Be on time

2

Be flexible

- Prepare to meet with either the member or the member's staff; treat both with equal respect.

3

Stay on topic

- Keep the meeting focused & persuasive.
- Raise only the issue you scheduled to discuss.

4

Keep politics out of it

- Do not discuss elections or campaign support in your meeting; it intimates that the member is "for sale."

5

Leave brief materials behind

- Email or hand out a 1-2 page briefing with data points on the issue discussed with the member's office.

Meeting Scheduling and Coordination

For virtual meetings, Teams and Zoom are common platforms

Be flexible about meeting dates and times (offer multiple options)

Politely and persistently follow up with staff (on average, offices schedule about 2 weeks in advance)

Provide offices with the topic (include bill numbers if possible), participant list (denoting any constituents who will be present), and pre-reading materials

Do Your Research & Tailor Your Message

Prior to your meeting, research the Member of Congress

- What committees are they on?
- What are their pet issues?
- Are they already a cosponsor of the bill you're talking about?

Tailor your message to your audience

- For example, fiscally conservative message may play better with Republicans

Discussion and Preparation

Do a prep session

Designate roles for meeting participants: who will open the meeting, who will make specific asks, who will close the meeting

Potential roles include:

- Facilitator
- Technical lead
- Issue presenter
- Storyteller
- Requester
- Follow-up

One person can play several roles

Establish transition cues

Managing the Meeting

Follow the agenda, speaking times and roles (avoid surprises)

Stay on topic – you'll probably have 20 – 30 minutes with the staffer, less with a Member

Introduce participants, ensuring linkages to the member, their district or state, are evident

Mute yourself and pause when switching speakers

Listen actively, ask—and allow for—questions

Make your specific ask, confirm follow-up steps and contacts

Provide digital copies of meeting handouts (unless supplied before the meeting)

Combine Stories, Facts & Local Details to Make Your Case

“My ideal meeting structure would be an introduction, your high-level talking points, **getting to your ask**—whether asking for co-sponsorship or funding or something else—and then a **follow-up** with more detailed information. And I’d like **data and numbers**, *not just constituent stories*.

Anecdotes are helpful to illustrate an issue but I really need to see the effect on our state or the connection to our office or state.”

LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT, SENATE



What content is most helpful for Hill staff?

ONE PAGERS ON THE TOPIC

“Advocacy groups who send **one-pagers are my favorite** people. They add more color to the topic and a clearer picture of what the conversation will be about.” – *Scheduler, House of Representatives*

PRE-READS OVER LEAVE-BEHINDS

“I like to get an **agenda and materials in advance**, so I can prep myself. I want to know who’s going to be on the calls and I like them to be specific on how they’d like our office to help.” – *Legislative Assistant, House of Representatives*

JUST THE FACTS

“A brief PowerPoint or outline is most helpful, 1-2 slides that say, here’s the issue, why people care and why you should care, how it is specific to our office or district, and a contact list for questions.” – *Legislative Assistant, House of Representatives*

What format do Hill staff prefer?

DIGITAL FORMATS

“I still get the same number of **handouts** as before but they just happen to be **digital, which I prefer.**” – *Legislative Assistant, Senate*

CURATED AND CONDENSED

“It’s not that we don’t want to read the 50-page white paper, we just have **very little time** to go through all that. Please put whatever is important on the front page, and **don’t have more than a page.** Not out of disrespect, but there is just no time right now when everything is on fire.” – *Legislative Assistant, House of Representatives*

After your meeting with a member of Congress... ...serve as a trusted resource for lawmakers and their staff

POST-MEETING FOLLOW UP STEPS



Always send a thank you e-mail



Attend events like town halls in the district

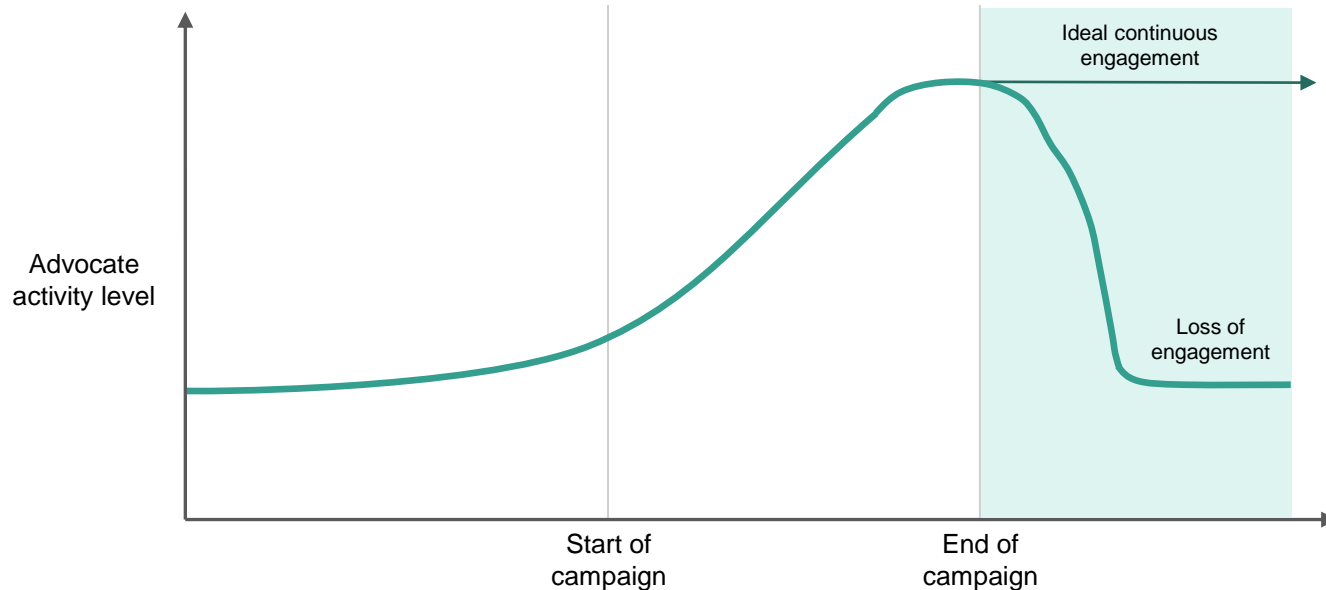


Stay in touch; periodically send updates

“Let us know your ask, provide information *before* we meet *and* follow up! It can be really hard to build relationships if we only hear from groups only once a year. Send an email to check in on where things stand with your ask and update us on how we can be helpful.

Maintaining momentum after the meeting

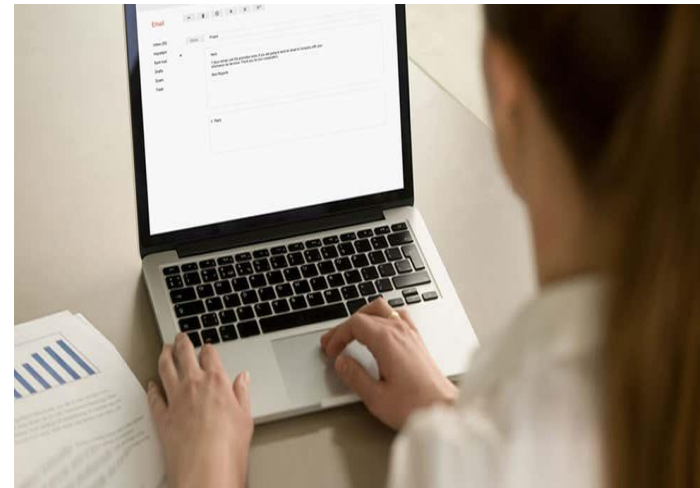
Advocacy Activity Level Over Time (Illustrative)



At the start of an advocacy campaign, momentum typically increases steadily, but many campaigns lose advocacy momentum and drop to previous engagement levels after the campaign ends. Ideally, an organization would ensure continuous engagement with advocacy efforts.

Individualized communications are highly persuasive

- Personalized letters & e-mails can have more influence on members' decisions than form letters
- Focus on sending more personal messages to capture individual voice or perspective

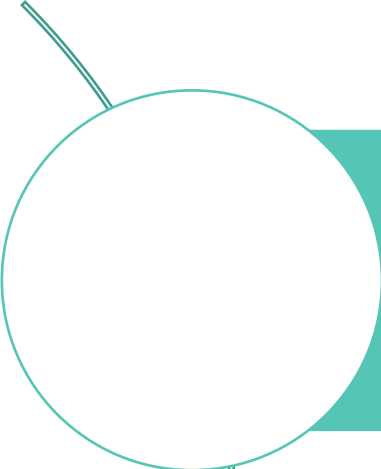


Roadmap

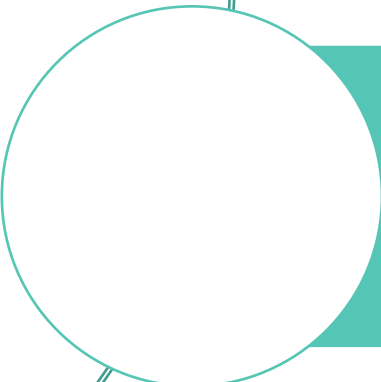
- The importance of constituent advocacy
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- **Advocacy in Action: Update on the Recovery Set-Aside**



Recovery Set-Aside Background



In 2021, President Biden proposed creating a 10% set-aside for recovery support services in the Substance Abuse Block Grant in his FY22 Budget request



House and Senate democrats included in the set-aside in their FY2022 appropriations bills, but it was ultimately not included in the final package, in part because it was not authorized & the set-aside is tied to higher SABG funding level, which was not realized

Recovery Set-Aside 2022 Action

Authorizing committees have been working on authorizing legislation

Sens. Hassan (D-NH) & Murkowski (R-AK) introduced SABG re-authorization legislation

- Includes set-aside & increases SABG's authorization to \$3.2 billion, a \$1.4 billion increase over the current authorization level

House & Senate Democrats included the set-aside in their FY23 spending bills

- Both bills would appropriate \$2.4 billion to the SABG, a \$500 million increase over FY22

Final resolution isn't expected until after November elections

What tactics are being utilized?

Coalition building, including organizational letters from over 500 groups from around the country

Data such as dollar amounts each state would receive & the low number of RCOs as compared to treatment and recovery

Identification of key advocates around the country

Meetings, meetings and more meetings with key legislators

Social media

Policy makers want
& need to hear from
YOU

Strong advocacy =
polite persistence,
working in
coalitions, data,
personal stories +
always
remembering that all
politics is local

YOU are the local
expert

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