



PRIMER 9

ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY

SUMMARY:

Everyone has a voice—but our voices are stronger when we lift them up together! Use four simple questions to identify the people around you who can help amplify your advocacy and influence your members of Congress.



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

“You shall speak to [Aaron] and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him.” —Exodus 4:15-16 (NIV)

In an example of advocacy in scripture, God calls Moses to engage Pharaoh on behalf of the oppressed Hebrew people. Filled with fear, Moses resists God’s call and begs him to send someone else. God’s solution? Strength in numbers! God suggests that Moses invite Aaron to join his advocacy so they could each contribute their unique gifts and skills.

Inviting others to advocate with you will increase your impact. The more you can show that other constituents support your cause, the more likely your legislator will be to consider your requests. This primer will help you identify the right people to invite and how to engage them strategically to influence your members of Congress.



FIND YOUR FOUR

Let's begin by identifying people in your community who you could potentially engage in advocacy. The following four questions can help you assemble your team:

1 WHO IS GIFTED?

Reflect on your spiritual gifts and strengths, and identify colleagues, friends, or others in your community who have skill sets you need.

- » Are you an introvert who prefers to remain quiet, discerning, and prayerful? Invite a talkative extrovert to come with you to your meeting!
- » Do you enjoy rattling off statistics and persuading others to see your viewpoint? Make sure to partner with someone who loves telling passionate stories and speaking from the heart.
- » If you know someone gifted in intercessory prayer, invite them to pray for confidence, wisdom, and anything else you may need during your meeting.

IN ACTION



Susan, Debra, Cathy, and Fiona have teamed up in advocacy for almost 10 years! They say it's helpful to work together because they can divide up roles based on their schedules and their unique gifts. They take turns writing emails, letters to the editor, and sharing speaking roles in their in-person meetings. But they don't just rely on their own strengths for success—they say they “ask God for helpers in the work to encourage one another to persevere.” Great advice!

2 WHO IS YOUNG?

Even though minors can't vote yet, your members of Congress represent constituents of all ages—children and youth still have a powerful voice! We've seen legislators respond swiftly and eagerly when young people share their heart for children around the world.

- » Involve your own children in advocacy. They can **write letters, draw pictures** of the world they envision, and attend a meeting with you. Volunteer Advocates have even brought their newborn babies along!
- » Do you have any connections to groups of young people? Girl/Boy Scouts, your church youth group, or a local school? Invite them to learn more about advocacy and attend a meeting with you.
- » Maybe you are a young Volunteer Advocate—use your voice to show your peers how easy it is to advocate. Write a piece in your school newspaper, start a club at your school, or share a petition with your friends.

Note: You should always seek parental permission before involving children in advocacy.

3 WHO IS SUPPORTIVE?

If your legislator sees that many different types of constituents support an issue, they'll trust the message and feel more secure in taking action.

- » Consider inviting local faith leaders from other denominations or religious beliefs who can agree with you on the issue.
- » Partner with advocates from other organizations doing similar work to World Vision. Advocates have teamed up with volunteers from Bread for the World, CARE, International Justice Mission, RESULTS, the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, and Save the Children Action Network, to name a few. *Note: When you reach out to other local groups, be clear about what you want the meeting to focus on to avoid conflicting goals. It is generally preferable to keep to only one topic per meeting.*

IN ACTION



Volunteer Advocate Ami C. from Illinois presented at a local high school as part of an International Women's Day celebration. Because she mentioned her volunteer advocacy, a student joined her next meeting with her senator's office!



IN ACTION



World Vision is a member of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC), a group that advocates for U.S. foreign assistance funding. In every USGLC in-person meeting, the group ensures that three perspectives are always represented: faith leaders, business leaders, and military leaders. Together, these voices provide overwhelming support for global development and diplomacy.

4 WHO HAS INFLUENCE?

Consider who might have unique influence with your member of Congress due to their status or their expertise. What types of voices will your legislator respond positively to?

- » Do you know—or could you reach out to—a business owner in your district? A City Council member? One of their donors? A pastor of a large church?
- » Think about those who have expertise in the issue you are advocating for. Is it global health? Involve local nurses or doctors. Is it protecting children and promoting their education? Teachers, school administrators, or others who work directly with children make great advocates for children's well-being.

IN ACTION



When you schedule an in-person meeting and someone with influence will be attending, always include a brief description of their connections or expertise in the request (don't assume the office knows!). Here's an example:

Attending the meeting will be myself, Rev. Riley Abbott (pastor at Community Church, a congregation of about 1,000 in Federal Way, Washington), and Alex Bryant, (2nd grade teacher at Local Elementary School).



ENGAGE YOUR TEAM

Now that you've mapped who has influence in your community, let's talk about how to engage them!



Invite them to join your next in-person meeting.

- » Think of the people from these four categories like a short list of people you can invite to join your next meeting. They don't all have to attend every time, and you don't have to plan each meeting around their schedule. But you'll have a group of people you can draw from!
- » We recommend limiting meeting attendance to five people or less, so everyone can participate and you don't overwhelm the office.



Gather signatures, letters, or pictures for your next meeting.

- » Type up a letter in support of the issue (World Vision can help!) and invite others to sign. Ask your pastor if you can pass around the letter during or after a church service, share it with your small group, or go door-to-door in your neighborhood. You could also provide talking points for their own handwritten letters. *Don't forget—you'll need to capture their addresses to prove they are constituents!*
- » Pictures drawn by kids can add a creative touch to the way you present your message to your member of Congress.



Organize phone calls to your legislator's office.

- » We've heard from congressional staffers that phone calls carry more influence than form emails.
- » Before your next in-person meeting, or right before an important vote, schedule a day and invite your network to call your representative's D.C. office. Use World Vision's pre-written call scripts or reach out to us and we'll help you write one. Scripts are a few sentences long and calls often take less than one minute to complete. If you need some courage, watch how easy it is in this quick video.
- » Be sure to let us know if you're planning a call-in day—we can help you track impact!