



Building Long-term Relationships

Putting Together a Statement/Letter of Support

Policymakers often make public statements, either verbally, through speeches, or in written communications such as a press release, or even on social media. These might include a letter of support for a grant request, a public statement in support of a particular position during a debate, or a statement that is submitted “for the record.”

One great way to get them engaged in your effort is to ask them to make a statement in support of your issue. Following are some approaches to consider, depending on your needs and audience. To increase your odds of success, you should consider providing the policymaker with a draft. Legislative offices receive dozens of requests per day. They are most likely to help those who make it as easy as possible for them to do so. Grassroots Ambassadors are encouraged to work with GCSAA Government Affairs staff for guidance on drafting and submittal of statements and/or requests to a Congressional office.

Social Media

There’s a separate section in this online class on social media. For now, suffice to say that having a legislator retweet or share your post, or to directly post something you’ve written, is a powerful way of getting them on the record in support of your cause. Some ways to entice them to do so include:

Thanking Them – Legislators are rarely thanked for the work they do, which may involve one of these actions:

- Cosponsoring a bill you’ve asked them to support
- Mentioning your issue in a statement or floor speech
- Visiting something in the district
- Voting a certain way

Now some may feel “well, they’re just doing their job. They don’t need to be thanked.” Remember, though, in supporting what you’re asking for, they’re often choosing sides, or at a minimum helping you raise attention to an issue most people haven’t thought about. Think of it this way: you’ve asked them to do something. Other people have asked them to do the opposite. They agreed to do what you want. Isn’t a “thank you” appropriate? Plus, it’s polite.

Taking just a few minutes to tweet something like the following can really capture their attention:

Thank you @repsmith for your work on XYZ. We at @GCSAA appreciate all you do!

Requests for Action – Most elected officials and their staff pay close attention to their social media feeds. Posting (polite) requests for action can do a great deal to move your cause forward. As an added bonus, make it clear you work in their district. You might consider something simple like the following:

. @repsmith on behalf of myself and [number] of your constituents, I urge you to cosponsor [bill]. [link]

Going into more detail in a Facebook post will give you an opportunity to tie that issue to something they care about.

Highlighting Meetings and Visits – If a legislator or staff person has taken the time to meet with your group, whether in DC or in the district, thanking them for their time makes a good impression. They receive hundreds of requests for meetings every week. The fact that they’ve pulled you out of the mass and spent some time with you is significant.

Federal Level Congressional Record Statement

Members of Congress have the ability to submit statements about pretty much anything under the sun in the “Extension of Remarks” section of the Congressional Record. Go to www.congress.gov, and click on the “Congressional Record” link on the top navigation bar. Then click on the “extensions of remarks” tab. As you’ll see, many of these statements are about people, places or events in various Congressional districts. It’s best to have something drafted before you ask the office if they’d be willing to submit. Following is a good outline for a statement.

Opening paragraph: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate [blank] on [blank]. For example, “I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate company X on its 50 year anniversary,” or “I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate organization Y on its successful fundraising effort.”

Second paragraph: Provide details on the company / organization / person / situation being discussed. Be sure to include how it relates to the Congressperson’s district.

Third paragraph: If there was anything the Congressperson did to help make the event possible, be sure to mention that. For example, “I was proud to write a letter in support of the grant that made this program possible.”

Fourth paragraph / closing: Reiterate the opening and the connection to the district.

National Such-and-Such Month

National Principals Month, National Voting Rights Month, National Bilingual/Multilingual Learner Advocacy Month—these are all examples of “National Months” that have been recognized by elected officials through bills they have introduced. You can find them at congress.gov (look in the current legislative session, then select “bill type” then H.Res. and S.Res.). Not all of these are related to specific issues, but many are. You can check to see if someone has already introduced something similar by searching for a word associated with your policy concern. For example, if you’re working to help Parkinson’s patients, you can search on that word, and you’ll find that April is “Parkinson’s Awareness Month.”

Not sure where to get started? Check Wikipedia for a list of month-designations. If there’s not already a national month for your issue, find in with an association working on these issues and see if they’re working on something. Who knows, maybe you can get one started!

State Level Public Statement of Support

Some state legislatures or governor’s offices have a proclamation process or similar practice, whereby officials can express support for a particular issue, group or undertaking. They may agree to issue statements, award plaques or you may even be able to get the state to designate a certain month as [fill-in-your-issue-here] month! While these types of public expressions of support should not be the end goal of all your advocacy efforts, they can serve to generate enthusiasm and public expressions of interest in your cause. Explore the options for your state by reviewing your state’s legislative and gubernatorial sites. A state-level organization may also be able to assist you with this approach.