

# National Webinar Summary

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## Welcome

Joanne Carter, Executive Director, RESULTS and RESULTS Educational Fund

Welcome everyone to the RESULTS March 2018 US Poverty webinar.

It is great to be with all of you and with our very special guest Greg Kaufmann, who has done such important work to elevate issues of poverty and elevate the voices of people living in poverty. We'll have a chance to hear from Greg in just a few minutes and talk with him about how to be more effective and powerful in how we talk with policymakers and others about poverty issues.

I want to share with you that here in DC it has been very exciting and inspiring to have about 50 of our REAL Change Young Leaders (both from this year's class of REAL Change fellows and a great group of REAL Change alumni) in town. They had a weekend of training and strategy. And today they had about a hundred meetings on Capitol Hill! It's incredibly important timing for decisions on protecting critical anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs.

Just one example – Brooke Abdallah was one of the REAL Change Fellows here this weekend. She helped start a group in South Dakota and because of that she got to see both of her Senators today. It just points to the incredible impact that each of us can have. With the work of Brooke and her partners we are now reaching two critical senators. Brooke is on the plane home, I think, but maybe her partners are on the call. Congratulations. And that's just one of many powerful stories today.

I'm also really excited and impressed with what you've been doing around our [#LettersGetLOUD](#) campaign. Engaging lots of folks in writing personal, powerful letters and even more importantly inviting them to engage ongoingly to use their voices to make change. We're going to hear shares later from a number of you on what you've been doing with that campaign to build the network of people

We have a fantastic and really critical opportunity with an upcoming two-week Congressional recess from March 26-April 6 – that's the last week in March and first week in April. If you reach out now to set up meetings with your Reps and Senators or make a plan to see them at a town hall meeting, you 1) have a chance to deliver a whole batch of letters personally that show the breadth of support for effective anti-poverty programs that provide critical nutrition and health care. And remember, while letters are great, engaging more people meaningfully and ongoingly in our work is the most powerful part of this campaign, so getting a meeting with your member of Congress is the chance to get even more people excited about writing letters that will get personally delivered, **and** also inviting new folks to come with you to your meeting.

If you remember the first time you were part of a meeting with your member of Congress, and how transformational that was. For some of you it might have been three months ago and for others twenty years ago. So many people are desperate to make change but either don't know how or are hopeless about it. Being part of a RESULTS lobby meeting can be an antidote to hopelessness. When people see that ordinary folks can have an informed dialogue with policymakers on the issues, and create change and accountability through relationship-building, powerfully sharing why these issues matter, through follow-up, they get to realize that their voice does matter.

So, do engage new people in both writing letters and being part of delivering them. And don't forget to invite folks to the 2018 International Conference this July. The stakes have never been higher in this moment and also into election season, ensuring that poverty and solutions to poverty are a key part of what candidates hear about.

## **Overview of President Trump's FY2019 Budget Proposal**

Meredith Dodson, Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns

At a time when more than 43 million Americans are living below the poverty line, the president's budget proposal would strip basic health and nutrition assistance from low-income people while corporations and the wealthy enjoy massive new tax cuts, including:

- A nearly 30 percent cut to SNAP (formerly Food Stamps).
- A more than 20 percent cut to Medicaid, eliminating the Medicaid expansion, and imposing "per capita" caps that would leave millions of people uninsured.
- Imposing time limits to take away SNAP and Medicaid from those struggling to find work.

Reminder: the process and final decisions fall to Congress – and some members of Congress are once again entertaining proposals to take food and health care away from Americans struggling to find work.

## **Guest Speaker: Greg Kaufmann of TalkPoverty.org**

Facilitated by Meredith Dodson

Greg Kaufmann is a senior fellow with the Poverty to Prosperity Program at American Progress and the editor of TalkPoverty.org. Previously, he was the poverty correspondent for The Nation. Melissa Harris-Perry called him "one of the most consistent voices on poverty in America." Through his weekly column, "This Week in Poverty," Greg sought to increase media coverage of poverty, share new research, elevate the voices of people living in poverty, and offer readers opportunities to get involved with organizations working to eradicate poverty. BillMoyers.com syndicated his column, and it won a 2012 Media Award from the National Association of Social Workers and the 2013 Cameron Duncan Media Award from RESULTS.

Greg has spoken at numerous poverty-related conferences and has been a guest on MSNBC, PBS, NPR, and radio talk shows across the United States. His work has also been featured on "Moyers & Company," CBSNews.com, NPR.org, WashingtonPost.com, and

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BusinessInsider.com. Greg serves on the board of Mary House in Washington, D.C. Prior to his work as a reporter, his favorite job was as education director for the Westside Boys and Girls Club in Columbus, Ohio.

Greg graduated from Dickinson College and studied creative writing at Miami University in Ohio. He lives in his hometown of Washington, D.C., with his wife, son, and two daughters.

Greg: Thank you RESULTS for the work you do. I appreciate your professionalism. Also, RESULTS, TalkPoverty and the Nation care about these issues and make sure we can share these stories.

## Q&A

1. You have a long history as a journalist covering poverty issues. What are some of your tips for making these issues compelling?
  - We want to make these issues real to people
  - Give people a chance to tell their stories
  - We started This Week in Poverty (at the Nation magazine) because the issue was not being covered and when it was, there were few stories being shared
  - Whether talking about health care or food or housing or education, we want to make these issues real
  - When talking about poverty, stories are great in the classical way
    - Good stories take us into a character and what that person wants (fair wage, food), then there is something standing in their way (budget, bad policy, racism) and you want the reader to relate to that
    - With any good story, we are reading it to see what happens
    - That matters to the reader
  - This is a little controversial but there is a lot of pressure in non-profit world to make people seem perfect
    - We're used to people being blamed or stigmatized when they speak up so there's a tendency to want to make people seem perfect
    - We need to let people be human
    - Let them be real and then we can fight back against the attacks
  - Show, don't tell
    - There are a lot of bad things right now and people know it, but they don't want to be told how to feel about them; they want to feel that for themselves
    - If you want people mad or enraged, they will get there on their own by hearing the stories

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2. Are there certain terms or phrases you think are important to use?
  - As a writer, I've talked to a lot of people in poverty, I've asked them about how they refer to themselves
    - i. Most don't like the term "poor" or "the poor"
      1. It otherizes them and makes it sound like they are a set group
      2. I prefer to say, "people in poverty" or "people with low-incomes"; there are a lot of ways to describe it
      3. I try to write in an authentic way and describe it the way people affected by it talk about it
  - CAP has done some polling that says many people don't know what "the safety net" is
    - i. When I write, I name the thing – food, health care, housing
  - Avoid the term "programs"
    - i. Say assistance and then name it
    - ii. Define programs when you talk about them
      1. E.g.: people don't know that SNAP averages \$1.40/meal per person so explain that
      2. They say people are getting free housing when it's actually 1 in 5 of eligible persons
    - iii. Meredith: it wasn't until Medicaid was under attack that people realized what it does and how important it is
      1. That helped bolster support for it
  - Don't assume your reader knows anything
    - i. Tell them what the poverty line is, how many people are living in poverty
3. CAP recently commissioned a survey – when we explain to voters what's at stake, do they support anti-poverty programs? (find the slides at: [http://chn.peachnewmedia.com/store/streaming/openMaterial.php?id=237679&force\\_download=1](http://chn.peachnewmedia.com/store/streaming/openMaterial.php?id=237679&force_download=1))
  - CAP has done some recent work on this
  - People believe the federal government has a role in making sure people can meet their basic needs
  - When I was young under President George H.W. Bush, conservatives said gov't should not do these things and we learned that public was not with them
    - i. Now they use terms like "reform" because they know the public doesn't support outright cuts and changes

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- Medicaid work requirements
  - i. Polling shows people are starting to oppose it
- Block grants and EITC
  - i. Hard to explain but when you do, people get it
- Just as predicted, Congress passed the big tax cuts and are now wanting to cut anti-poverty programs to pay for them
- People support government having a role in helping people in poverty
  - i. They are not buying the “dependency” argument (that these programs cause people to become lazy and dependent and don’t want to work)
- We need to argue for government to do more
  - i. Meredith: I have been hesitant in the past with going bolder but the polling shows that voters are looking for big, bold measures that will reduce inequality
  - ii. People are saying that we don’t need to get back to what it was like before Trump, we need to do better than before Trump
- Thank you for having me. Please [check out the piece by RESULTS St. Louis volunteer Sarah Borgstede](#) on TalkPoverty last year. Goes to show how stories matter.
  - i. Because of her piece, Sarah got invited by her Republican member of Congress to tell her story at one of his town halls

## U.S. Poverty Campaigns Update

Meredith Dodson, Director of U.S. Poverty Campaigns

### SNAP

- SNAP is the **cornerstone of the fight against hunger** in America
- In 2016, SNAP served 41 million people and lifted nearly **3.6 million people** above the poverty line
- The House Agriculture Committee may take up their Farm Bill in the next two weeks

### Medicaid

Nearly 50 percent of children ages 3 and younger are covered by Medicaid or CHIP

*Because of time, we skipped over this section. See slides for more details.*

## Overview of March Action

Jos Linn, Grassroots Manager for U.S. Poverty Campaigns

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## **#LettersGetLOUD and Face-to-Face Meetings Make a Powerful Combination**

This month, RESULTS volunteers and allies will take the [#LettersGetLOUD campaign](#) to the next level. Congress will be on recess March 26-April 6, giving you the opportunity to meet with representatives and senators in person to talk about the importance of protecting food assistance and health care for low-income families. This is also a great opportunity to hand-deliver your #LettersGetLOUD letters to your members of Congress and invite new people you've engaged through the campaign to join you in your meetings.

### **Step 1: Request a Face-to-Face Meeting**

1. **Have the point persons for your representative(s) and senators call the schedulers to request face-to-face meetings for the March recess.** Find names and contact information for the Washington DC scheduler (under "Staff") on our [Elected Officials page](#) (or call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121).
2. **Use our [online template](#)** as a script or the body of an e-mail to request the meeting.
3. **Be sure to also ask about town halls or public events** your members of Congress may be having during the recess (also check [www.townhallproject.com](http://www.townhallproject.com)).
4. Be sure to **note the name of the scheduler and thank him/her** for their assistance. If you don't get a firm answer when you call, mention when you'll be following up.
5. Once you confirm a meeting, **please contact RESULTS Director of US Poverty Campaigns Meredith Dodson** ([mdodson@results.org](mailto:mdodson@results.org)) for coaching, materials, and requests for your meeting.
6. After each meeting (even staff only meetings), **please fill out the RESULTS Lobby Report Form** to let us know how it went: [www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF](http://www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF).

### **Step 2: Use #LettersGetLOUD to Make the Most of Your Meetings**

- Once you get a meeting scheduled, you'll want to make it as meaningful an experience as you can. The [#LettersGetLOUD](#) campaign is an easy way to magnify the message you will send in your meetings. Here are some ideas to help you:
- **Have another letter-writing meeting.** Hopefully, you already have some [#LettersGetLOUD letters from February](#) to take to your next lobby meeting. Work to generate more by having another meeting in March. In addition to people you invited last month, reach out to new people and use this as an opportunity to collaborate with another organization to gather additional letters. The [#LettersGetLOUD campaign page](#) has templates for letters you can use. Be sure to personalize your letters with stories and local data if you can.
- **Collect your letters.** Designate someone in your group to collect all the letters you've generated this year and plan to bring them to your meetings in March. If people wrote letters outside your normal meeting, coordinate to collect them before your lobby meetings.
- **Invite new people to attend your lobby meetings.** Invite people you have engaged in letter-writing to attend a lobby meeting with you and include them in your lobby planning. Remember that many people don't speak out because they feel politicians are repeatedly

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turning deaf ear to our most pressing problems. A powerful lobby meeting can be an antidote to this “learned helplessness.” When people see others just like them can have an informed dialogue with lawmakers on the issues, and hold them accountable through relationship-building and follow-up, disempowerment transforms into empowerment.

- **Invite coalition partners.** If you’ve reached out to your local food bank or soup kitchen or Chamber of Commerce about #LettersGetLOUD, invite them to attend your next lobby meeting. Their presence brings new perspectives to the issues and demonstrates the broad community support for protecting anti-poverty programs.
- **Share your success.** Send an e-mail to your local Action Network about your lobby visits, share that their voices were heard, and invite them to participate in your next actions. Also, share our #LettersGetLOUD links to [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) with your Action Networks so they can see you and/or others reading your letters.

### **Step 3: Use a Strong Message for Meetings/Town Halls**

When speaking to lawmakers in meetings or town halls, use our updated [EPIC Laser Talk](#) to urge lawmakers to protect anti-poverty programs.

**Engage:** As anti-poverty advocates, we believe nobody should go hungry – yet Census data shows that more than one in \_\_\_ residents [in our state/your District](#) are living below the poverty line, struggling to make ends meet.

**Problem:** Right now, Congress is considering proposals to take food and health care away from some of our most vulnerable neighbors by changing the structure of the country's most effective anti-poverty programs, such as SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) and Medicaid.

**Illustrate/Inform:** Rather than taking away crucial supports from working families, I urge you to protect and strengthen basic health and nutrition assistance. (Include your own experience and/or why you care about the impact these programs have on your community.) SNAP is the cornerstone in the fight against hunger in America – it is timely, targeted, and incredibly effective, including during economic crises or natural disasters.

**Call to Action:** Will you tell congressional leaders and Agriculture Committee members you oppose any harmful cuts or changes to SNAP and other anti-poverty, and instead to put forward a robust bipartisan bill that protects and strengthens SNAP? Looking ahead, I urge you to focus on strengthening and expanding effective anti-poverty policies to create opportunity, make sure all Americans can make ends meet, and provide our children with a bright future.

### **RESOURCES**

- **March U.S. Poverty Action:** [http://www.results.org/take\\_action/march\\_2018\\_u.s.\\_poverty\\_action](http://www.results.org/take_action/march_2018_u.s._poverty_action)
- **#LettersGetLOUD page:** <http://www.results.org/lettersgetloud>
- **Activist Toolkit:** [http://www.results.org/skills\\_center/activist\\_toolkit](http://www.results.org/skills_center/activist_toolkit)

Contact Jos Linn ([jlinn@results.org](mailto:jlinn@results.org)) for any help you need

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## Open Shares

Jos Linn

Share with us how your #LettersGetLOUD experience has been so far

- What has excited you about #LettersGetLOUD so far?
- Who have you invited to participate in your local efforts and how?
- What concerns or challenges have you faced in getting started?
- What additional resources (materials, trainings, etc.) would help you maintain the momentum?

### OPEN SHARES

**Lisa Peters (RESULTS DC).** Our group met this month and decided to start #LettersGetLOUD by writing our own letters on why we want to protect SNAP and Medicaid – using our own stories. It was good to make time and do it at the meeting. Then we challenged everyone to share letters via social media. Lisa shared on Facebook (her own page and the DC group page), shared her background as a pharmacist and why these issues are important. It got 200 views, one coworker shared her video, and she challenged other friends to do it (like the Ice Bucket Challenge). This month, we are inviting new people to come and write letters.

**Leslie Weinberg (RESULTS Free Agent, Stamford, CT).** I contacted other RESULTS volunteers nearby but nobody had written letters yet, but I'm doing direct outreach to others and to aides she knows in DC offices.

**Ginnie Vogts (RESULTS Columbus).** I had few different “a-ha” moments. Our group drafted letters together last month, read them aloud together, and were stunned at the depth of their letters – they were more moving than I expected. The key was bringing it to a personal level and reading the letters out loud. One of the group member's brought #LettersGetLOUD to her book club and got seven additional letters. I did another presentation to a local group and several wanted to videotape their stories, or dictate them so I could write it up. I feel so lucky to do this work with people eager to tell their stories.

**Nancy Morgan (RESULTS Northern VA).** We have letters and videos of people reading their letters, but what do we do with the letters?

- Share in a lobby meeting! Then make sure you invite them to your lobby meeting, keep people updated when you deliver their letters, invite them to participate in upcoming meetings. You can also share a video (if powerful, short) in a lobby meeting, or share (if public) on your member of Congress's Facebook wall, tag them in tweets, etc.

**Jos Linn (RESULTS Kansas City).** I did an advocacy presentation a year ago to a group of 6<sup>th</sup> graders at my daughter's school (and after school social justice club) and they evidently liked it so much, they asked me back this year and I've been working with them to get a lobby meeting with their member of Congress. We have a face-to-face meeting set up with him and 20 7<sup>th</sup> graders in early April and I have been working with the group to prepare for it (they are lobbying

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for more resources for after school programs). So, reach out to groups you normally don't engage with; you never know where it might lead.

*If you don't get to share on the webinar tonight, send your stories and questions to [jlinn@results.org](mailto:jlinn@results.org).*

## RESULTS Announcements

Jos Linn

- **RESULTS International Conference.** Register today at [www.resultsconference.org](http://www.resultsconference.org). Watch our new 2018 CONFERENCE VIDEO ([Facebook](#), [YouTube](#)) and share it with people you know. We also now have a [printable postcard](#) for people who write letters with you inviting them to the Conference! Need help getting there? Apply for assistance at: [www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSSchoIUS](http://www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSSchoIUS).
- **RESULTS Introductory Calls on March 6 and April 20 at 1:00 pm ET, and March 22 and April 4 at 8:30pm ET.** To participate, call (712) 775-8972, passcode: 761262. Register [here](#).
- **U.S. Poverty Free Agents Calls, Tuesday, March 20 at 1:00pm and 8:00pm ET.** Login at <http://fuze.me/32256018> or dial in by phone at (201) 479-4595, Meeting ID: 32256018#.
- **House and Senate Recess, March 26 – April 6.** After any lobby meeting, please complete the [RESULTS Lobby Report Form](#) to let us know how it went.
- **2018 RESULTS International Conference, July 14-17, 2018, Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington, D.C.** Registration is now open – [register today](#). Watch our new [2018 Conference video](#) and share it (along with our [flyer](#)) with others you know!

## Final Action – Invite New People to #LettersGetLOUD

After the webinar, take ten minutes to list 10 people or organizations in your area that you want to engage through #LettersGetLOUD this month. Think of people who did not participate in your #LettersGetLOUD meetings last month (but invite them back as well). Then invite them this week.

The more people we engage, the quicker we win!

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