Make the Most of the August Recess

Members of Congress are home all this month and the election season is starting to gear up, so this is a great time to get out there and make your voice heard. In addition to scheduling face-to-face meetings (the focus of our [July Action](http://www.results.org/take_action/july_2014_u.s._poverty_action/)), going to town halls or candidate events offers us a great opportunity to build momentum for tax policies that prioritize creating economic mobility – both in the short-term (when Congress passes tax legislation during the “Lame Duck” session post-election) and long-term (when policymakers move forward on larger tax changes next year).

As RESULTS groups work to build a relationship with their members of Congress, some find it challenging to get a sit-down meeting with their senator and representative. And many more find that they can amplify their work with policymakers by attending town hall meetings and other public events. In addition, going to events with Congressional candidates can make sure ending poverty is front and center on the campaign trail. Town hall meetings are often crowded and overwhelming, but that doesn’t stop RESULTS volunteer from making them an important and effective event!

How to Work Some Magic at Town Halls

**Find out where your members of Congress will be**

Make sure you connect both with your current member and any new candidates. If that candidate is elected you will have made a great first impression. Start with looking on their websites for any event listings.

* **Traditional town hall meetings.** Many members of Congress also do these by phone.
* **County Fairs and local events**are a great place to see your member of Congress in a fun setting. Make sure you are armed with a quality laser talk!
* **Candidate forums:**These are places where candidates meet to talk to an audience and take questions. These are great places to find out where candidates stand on RESULTS issues. Additionally, if their opponent attends, it can spark interesting discussion and be particularly informative.
* **Debates:** Often constituents and groups provide the questions used in debates. Find out if this is true in your area and submit your questions! Try to attend the debate and keep your ear open for RESULTS issues.
* **Consider meeting with campaign staff:**This is a chance to sit down with members of your candidate’s campaign staff. This is a wonderful opportunity to get some insight into how your candidate feels about certain issues. Ask if they would be willing to display RESULTS issues more prominently on their website and speak about them more often, and suggest a position paper to them if your candidate doesn’t have one. It is important to make anti-poverty issues paramount during this election. Raising these issues now force a candidate to take a stance.

**Research members of Congress and candidates**

Once you know you have a potential opportunity to see a candidate or a current member of Congress, contact the RESULTS office for the latest strategy, messaging insights and requests. Don’t forget you can [research past votes on our website](http://capwiz.com/results/directory/congdir.tt) and ask coalition partners for their insights.

**Get there early**

Make sure you are there very early. This will insure you get seats, preferably near the front of the room. Additionally, candidates will sometimes appear early and it can be a change to informally get to know your candidates. This doesn’t need to be a laser talk or a discussion about issues, but it can help with relationship building. If they are taken written questions, many places go in order of when questions were written. Therefore, getting there first can increase the chances of being able to ask your question.

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