

Write a Letter: Set the Agenda with the New Congress

The new, 116th Congress started two years of work this month. Many members of the House and Senate are brand new, and all of the bills introduced during the previous two years that did not pass were swept away to create a clean slate and a new opportunity for Congress to make a difference on issues of poverty. Now is an important time to initiate or build your relationship with your elected officials and let them know you want poverty to be a priority.

Write to your representative and senators—congratulation them, welcome them, and let them know you look forward to working with them in 2019. Let them know you are passionate about ending poverty, and that you are ready to provide information and mobilize constituents.

You can deliver your letters to local staff or directly to your representative or senator during in-person meetings. You can also send your letters to the Foreign Policy aides in DC. For those of you with new a new representative or senator, RESULTS will hand-deliver your letters to their offices in person during early months of 2019 for greater impact, if you like.

Important Issues for 2019

Two years in a row, the White House tried to gut funding for global health and poverty programs. It is likely that this will continue. At your urging, Congress has pushed back, rejecting those cuts. We need the new Congress to continue working in a bipartisan fashion to protect international development programs in health and education in 2019 and 2020.

This year is also a critical year for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria (the Global Fund). The US has been a leader in funding the Global Fund since its inception in 2002, which has encouraged other nations to increase their commitments. With US support, the Global Fund has saved 27 million lives since 2002. In 2017 it supported 17.5 million people with antiretroviral therapy to address HIV/AIDS, treated 5 million people for TB, and distributed 197 million lifesaving mosquito nets for malaria prevention. Because of the Global Fund, families, communities, and nations are healthier so their people can learn, work, and thrive.

Why write to your members of Congress?

According to research by the Congressional Management Foundation, personalized letters to our members of Congress are one of the most influential actions we can take, second only to

meeting with them in person. People often receive responses to these personalized letters. RESULTS advocates further leverage your personalized letter by hand-carrying them to meetings with members of Congress or staff to let them know constituents care what they do on issues of poverty. They need to know that you'll be there to work with them and mobilize other constituents on issues of poverty. Consider joining your RESULTS group in these meetings.

Tips

- Personalize your letter with why you care about issues of poverty and how you plan to stay in touch with their office throughout the next two years.
- Share a story to give our issues a human face or share a story about how other RESULTS advocates have successfully worked with their members of Congress.
- Work with your local RESULTS group to deliver your letter to local and DC staff, to your member of Congress in a local meeting, or hand-deliver them in Washington.

Sample Letter in EPIC Format

Dear Representative/Senator xxxx

Engage: Congratulations on being chosen to represent us in Congress. We have a brand-new opportunity to make a difference on issues of poverty! We are excited to work with you.

Problem: With all that is going on in DC there will be lots of reasons to forget those who are living in poverty. But if we do, we will surrender the progress we've made on diseases like AIDS, TB, and Malaria; child survival, and global education.

Inform: So, I will do everything in my power to stay in touch with you and your staff, and to mobilize lots of other constituents as a reminder that we care about issues of poverty and want you to take action on them. I am particularly interested in working with you on protecting and increasing funding for global health and education programs. And we'll have a big opportunity in to support the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria 6th replenishment conference so we continue saving lives and move the world toward ending these three killer diseases.

Call to Action: I ask that you please make time to see the RESULTS group from [your community name] as soon as you are able. We will be sending a meeting request to meet with you early in 2019. In the meantime, check out our website at www.results.org.

[Name]
[Address]
[Phone and Email]

Leading with Action: Letter-Writing Workshop Agenda & Guide

Below is an agenda and script you can use to put people in your community into action. When people take action, they are inspired. The agenda below will require roughly 60 minutes. Adapt the agenda to fit your style and timeframe. Remember: paper, Action Sheets, pens, a sign-up sheet, RESULTS materials.

I. Setting the Stage – 15 Minutes

2 min: Welcome and acknowledge people for being there.

“Thank you all for coming. There are a lot of ways you could be spending the day, so I want to thank you for coming out and learning more about how YOU can play a role in the movement to end poverty. Can the RESULTS volunteers briefly say their name and how many years you’ve been involved? Also, can you all be sure to sign our sign-in sheet?”

3 min: State the purpose of the meeting.

“Our purpose today is to inspire you all about the difference you can make, working with others, to create the political will to end poverty. In the next few minutes, we’ll . . .

- Learn a bit about RESULTS, the group organizing this meeting.
- Learn about an issue of poverty.
- Take powerful action on the issue: we'll write letters to our members of Congress today.
- Finally, we'll see who is interested in continuing to make a difference with RESULTS.”

10 min: Center the room and do introductions.

“Let’s see who’s in the room tonight and get in touch with why we are here. Please give us your name and tell us briefly why acting on issues of poverty is important to you.” Other possible questions, “What are you committed to in life?” or “Who do you want to be in the world?”

Afterward, “Thank you all for sharing what is important to you. We have a lot in common.”

II. The Basics of RESULTS – 10 Minutes

RESULTS is...

“So, what is RESULTS? RESULTS is movement of passionate, committed, everyday people. Together we use our voices to influence political decisions that will bring an end to poverty. As volunteers, we receive training, support, and inspiration to become skilled advocates. In time, we learn to effectively advise policy makers, guiding them toward decisions that will improve access to health, education, and economic opportunity. Together we realize the incredible power we possess to use our voices to change the world.”

Show a video if you have time: We Have a Vision: http://www.results.org/blog/we_have_a_vision/ or Voices that Change the World: <https://results.org/> (right on the home page), or our post-election video: <https://youtu.be/bEhTh1RX78g>.

1. Share an example of success: “We protected development assistance for FY2018, and FY2019 so far, after the President proposed cutting global health and education programs by 30%. We worked with Republicans and Democrats to help secure the highest number ever of congressional supporters for AIDS, TB, and malaria; global education; and maternal & child health, sending a message to the President that these programs should be protected and strengthened.”

2. "A local example of success is: We moved Rep or Senator _____ to sign on to xxx letter as part of this. He/She met with us in _____ (month) of 2018, which was key in getting his/her support."

A few more details if you have time:

- RESULTS partners meet twice per month to plan and take action.
- During one of those meetings, we connect to a national webinar to learn more about an issue, learn to speak powerfully, and take action to influence Congress.
- We also develop plans for influencing our decision makers through face-to-face meetings, the media, and other community actions.

III. Issues & Action Component – 30 Minutes

1. Introduce our issues by sharing why you care about them and how you've made a difference with your local group. Share about your biggest breakthroughs, including your struggles beforehand. Maybe share this video on TB: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFtF9sN6nfU>
2. Read the January Action Sheet together, including sample letter.
3. Show people how to find their members of Congress contact information online.
4. Everyone writes personalized letters. Be sure to add date, name, address, email, phone.
5. Ask some writers to read their letter out loud for feedback and encouragement.
6. Debrief on the action-taking—how did it feel to write the letter?
7. Let everyone know how you will deliver the letters and **invite them to join you at the meetings.**

IV. Invitation to Attend the Next Meeting & Closing – 5 Minutes

"Lastly, we are planning to have future meetings like this one to guide people in becoming powerful advocates. We'll be visiting our representatives, senators, and their staff members in person. Who is up for doing this again or taking other actions with the group?

- Who knows other people or groups who might be interested?
- We are also looking for people who want to take the next step in using their voice to work with the media and Congress with our group. Who is curious about what our chapter does and wants to learn more? What about joining us to meet with Congress?
- Who is interested in learning more about supporting RESULTS financially?"

Say thank you, capture contact information: name, phone, email, address. Add them to your local Action Network list and stay in touch with them. To connect them with the RESULTS National database, consider the following:

- If they are new to RESULTS and want to learn more, sign them up for the RESULTS Welcome Series: <https://results.org/volunteer> .
- If they want to join your group, add or update their information in our national database via the Volunteer Intake Form: <https://results.salsalabs.org/volunteerintake/index.html>. You can sign them up as a "Volunteer" to get Weekly Updates, Actions, and our newsletter. If you sign them up as "Action Network" they'll get just key actions and a monthly newsletter.

Action Network Managers: Activate Your Action Network and Close the Loop in January!

Happy 2019 Action Network Advocates! We did some great things together in 2018 including protecting development assistance programs from the President's cuts (we got increases in some cases), gathering support for maternal and child health via the Reach Act, and urging the US to show up as a leader on TB at the UN High-Level Meeting on TB (which the US did). We now want to Set the Agenda on poverty with the new Congress by scheduling meetings with our senators and representatives to talk about global health and education. To strengthen our presence, we want you to join us. Our first meeting is scheduled with _____ (member) on/at _____ (date, time, location). Let me know if you can join us, or if you'd like to attend future meetings. I'll follow up individually. This is the most powerful action you can take! Please join us in 2019 for these meetings—you will feel good about the difference you make.