

Write a Letter: Engage the New Congress!

The November 2018 elections will decide who works for you in Washington for the next two years as part of the 116th US Congress. There will be people returning to DC, but many members of the House and Senate will be brand new. And all of the bills introduced during the previous two year that did not pass will be swept away to create a clean slate and a new opportunity for Congress to make a difference on issues of poverty. This is an important time to build your relationship with your elected officials.

Write to your representative and senators—congratulation them, welcome them, and let them know that you are looking forward to working with them in the coming new year. Let them know you are passionate about ending poverty, and that you want to work with them to do that.

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 key 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 at the beginning of 2019 if you like for greater impact.

Important Issues for 2019

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

Next year is also a critical year for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria (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 personal letters.

RESULTS advocates further leverage your personalized letter by hand-carrying them to meetings with members of Congress or staff. Now is a good time to write to build relationships with new members of Congress and deepen relationships with returning ones. They need to know that you'll be there to work with them and mobilize other constituents on issues of poverty.

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 about the issue to give it 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: I think it will be hard for you to do your job if constituents like me are not in communication with you, providing you with good information, asking you to take specific actions, and reminding you about what we care about when things get noisy in Washington.

Inform: So, I will do everything in my power to stay in touch with you and your staff and to engage other constituents so that you can see that there are lots of us who care about issues of poverty. I am particularly interested in working with you on protecting and increasing funding for global health and education programs next year. And we'll have a big opportunity in 2019 to ensure that the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria gets the financial commitment it needs from the US and other nations to continue saving lives and move us 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.

[Name]

[Address]

[Phone and Email]

Leading with Action: Letter-Writing Workshop Agenda & Guide

Below is a sample agenda and script that 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 elements to fit your style and timeframe.

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 on the leading infectious disease killer in the world—TB.
- 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 issue 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://www.results.org/about/mission_and_structure 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.
2. Read the November 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 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 get the letters to your members of Congress and invite them.

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 in person and at townhall meetings in the run-up to the mid-term elections.

- Who is up for doing this again?
- 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://www.results.org/about/raise_your_voice.
- 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.

Closing the Loop with Your Action Network: November Message and Action

Your actions in 2018 have helped us accomplish great things. Democrats and Republicans have worked together to protect and increase funding for global health and education. Congratulations! We still have some work to do before the year is out. This month you can take action to ensure Congress leads on the issue of tuberculosis by increasing funding for TB in 2019. [Use our online action](#) to ask our representative and senators to support higher TB funding for fiscal year 2019 before they go out of office.

We also want you to work with us with the new Congress. We’ll be organizing some letter-writing meeting in the coming months. Would you like to attend?