

Write to Congress: Time for Action on TB

Two years in a row, the White House tried to gut funding for global health and poverty. Congress pushed back, rejecting those cuts outright. Because of our advocacy, one of the few areas that actually saw a funding increase last year was the fight against the global tuberculosis (TB) epidemic. Then this summer, 106 representatives and 43 senators came together to call for the U.S. to step up its leadership in the fight against this global killer and driver of poverty.

This is long overdue. Decades of political neglect means almost 5,000 people die daily of tuberculosis – a disease that is preventable, treatable, and largely curable. This centuries-old epidemic is now the world's leading infectious killer, claiming more lives last year than HIV/AIDS and malaria combined. It's also a cause and consequence of poverty around the world.

Of the 10 million people who get sick with TB each year 3.6 million, or 1 in 3 aren't even being reached by their health systems. If we want to end the disease, the first step is to reach these missing millions. On September 26 world leaders at the UN High-Level Meeting on TB committed to putting attention and resources into reaching *every last person* with TB and getting to the end of this epidemic. The first phase is to reach 40 million people most in need for testing and treatment by 2022 and provide prevention to 30 million people most at risk. The U.S. is supporting this effort with a new project called *The Global Accelerator to End Tuberculosis*.

The first key step Congress can take to support this new global commitment to end TB is to ensure we're investing the resources needed for the fight right now. As House and Senate leaders negotiate the final budget for TB for in 2019, they should follow the House's lead, where they've already called for a \$40 million funding increase to \$302 million. This is higher than the Senate number.

Write a letter to your members of Congress to make sure Congress does its part.

Let's not forget: TB is largely treatable, curable, and preventable. What has been missing until now is the political will. *We can end TB – but only if our leaders step up.* Let's make sure they do.

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, staff, or town hall meetings. Now is a good time to write because, with midterm elections around the corner, your representatives and senators are paying very close attention to what their constituents are saying. They need to hear from you so they know that TB should be a top priority.

Tips

- Personalize your letter with why you care about the issue of TB.
- Reference a story or account of the issue if you can to put a human face on the issue.
- Work with your local RESULTS group to send your letter to local and DC staff, and hand-deliver them at a town hall meetings, meeting with the local staff, or meeting with the member of Congress.

Sample Letter in EPIC Format

Dear Representative/Senator xxxx

Engage: I recently learned that TB is the biggest infectious disease killer in the world, sickening 10 million people each year, taking the lives of over 1.6 million annually. Who knew?

Problem: Given that we are failing to find 1 in 3 people becoming sick with TB each year, there is no way we can get ahead of this disease. We've got to be more aggressive with TB.

Inform: That is why global leaders, including the U.S., made bold commitments toward ending TB on September 26 at the UN High-Level Meeting on TB.

Call to Action: You can help send an early signal that the U.S. is committed to ending TB by asking the Chair and Ranking member of SFOPS to use the House bilateral TB funding amount of \$302 million in the final 2019 spending bill. The additional funding will save a lot of lives and send a powerful message to the world about the U.S. commitment to reaching 40 million people with TB treatment by 2022. Can someone get back to me and let me know if/when you will take this important action?

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 the video if you have time: We Have a Vision: http://www.results.org/blog/we_have_a_vision/

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. For example in September we'll hear from the Executive Director of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria.
- 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 the issue of TB with a story or video:
 - *Stories from Civil Society on TB*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwFfhFBkVxE>
 - *USAID TB Story*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZHWP_K03tA
 - *TB*: <https://tinyurl.com/y9o4a99m>
 - *David Bryden's blog post on TB in Haiti*: <https://tinyurl.com/yah7c6wf>
 - *Saving Sabbir*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NE2HiH8EQ4k>
2. Read the October 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.

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: October Message and Action

Congratulations! Your actions in August helped us get 106 representatives and 43 senators to sign on to letters to the Administration about the UN High-Level Meetings on TB. Locally, Rep. xxx and Senators xxx and xxx did xxx. The U.S. did show up with high level leadership at the meetings! This month you can take action to ensure Congress leads as well by increasing funding for TB next year. [Use our online action](#) to ask our representative and senators to support higher TB funding for fiscal year 2019.