

Write to the Media: 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. One of the few areas that actually saw an increase last year? The fight against the global tuberculosis epidemic. Then this summer, more than a quarter of Congress 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.

One in three people sick with TB aren't even being reached by their health system. If we want to end the disease, the first step is to reach these missing millions. World leaders need to commit to putting in the attention and resources to reach *every last person* with TB and get us to the end of this epidemic.

This latest momentum on Capitol Hill comes just before world leaders gather at the United Nations in New York to make new commitments in the fight against TB. Will leaders step up and really do what it takes to rein in this unnecessary killer? This month, write a letter to the editor to make sure your members of Congress help do their part.

One key first step for Congress is making sure we're investing the resources needed for the fight right now. As House and Senate leaders negotiate the final budget for TB for this year, they should follow the House's lead, where they've already called for a \$40 million funding increase.

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 a letter to the editor?

Writing a letter to the editor is a great way to make sure our government's commitment to this fight continues. Your senators and representatives are reading your local paper every day, trying to understand the issues that their constituents care about. And with midterm elections around the corner, they're paying even closer attention to what their constituents are saying. They need to hear from you so they know that TB needs to be a top priority. Even one published letter can make a big difference!

Tips

- Keep your letter short: 150-200 words. Even shorter is better!
- Reference a story that's already been in the paper as an entry-point for your letter, or a "hook." Try tying your letter to a story about a local health issue, the elections, flu season, back to school time, or another local issue. Get creative!
- Make it personal. Customize with your own ideas, examples, and passion.
- Keep a look out for your letter in print and, if you're published, be sure to share it with your members of Congress and repeat your call to action.
- Let RESULTS staff know you've been published, too!

Sample LTE

To the Editor:

A lot of us think of tuberculosis as a disease of the past, but today it's the world's biggest infectious killer. It's treatable, curable, and preventable, so how did we let this happen?

For years, ending TB hasn't been a political priority. It's been underfunded and under-prioritized, and it claimed 1.7 million lives last year as a result. But that could be starting to change. Leaders in Congress have already called for a funding bump for TB for next year, and in a few weeks, world leaders will gather at the United Nations to make new commitments in this fight.

This fall as Congress is negotiating a final budget for TB, I hope they'll follow the House's lead with the desperately needed – and long overdue – \$40 million funding increase. Way more is needed, but that would be a good step in the right direction.

[Your name]

[Your city and state]

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. We know that when people take action they are inspired. The agenda below would require a meeting of 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.

“Thanks to all of you for coming. There are a lot of ways you could be spending the day, and I want to thank all of 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 hunger and poverty. In the next few minutes, we’ll . . .

- Learn a bit about RESULTS, the group organizing this.
- We will learn about an issue of poverty.
- We will take powerful action on the issue: we’ll write letters to the editor on the leading infectious disease killer in the world—TB. We’ll submit them to our local papers.
- 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 after the President proposed cutting it 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 our role in creating change 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*: <http://www.action.org/newsroom/blog/how-prison-conditions-fuel-the-tuberculosis-epidemic>
 - *Saving Sabbir*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NE2HiH8EQ4k>
2. Read the September Action Sheet together, including sample letter.
3. Show people how to find their local media and relevant 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 take action with the media.

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 and senators/visiting 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 Action Network list and stay in touch with them. Send contact info to Ken Patterson or Lisa Marchal for the RESULTS national database as part of your group's Action Network. Your new people will receive actions twice monthly.