All Politics is Local: Grassroots Advocacy

Sarah Weissmann, Grassroots Program Manager
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Agenda

- What is Grassroots?
- Why Does It Matter?
- Action You Can Take
- Resources Available to You
- Working with All Levels of NARFE
- Questions and Answers
What is Grassroots

**Grassroots Advocacy is:**
- Local
- Personal and Individual
- Bottom Up

**Grassroots Advocacy Shows:**
- Personal Commitment
- Local Importance
- Momentum for an Issue
Why Participate in Grassroots?

All Politics is Local
Does It Matter?

• The More Members Hear, The More Members Listen
• Constituents are Voters and Voters Elect Members
• Silence = Acceptance
If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the *Washington* office have on his/her decision?*

- **In-Person Issue Visits from Constituents:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 46%
  - Some Influence: 51%

- **Contact from a Constituent Who Represents Other Constituents:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 36%
  - Some Influence: 60%

- **Individualized Postal Letters:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 20%
  - Some Influence: 70%

- **Individualized Email Messages:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 19%
  - Some Influence: 69%

- **Phone Calls:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 14%
  - Some Influence: 72%

- **Comments During a Telephone Town Hall:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 17%
  - Some Influence: 68%

- **Visit From a Lobbyist:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 8%
  - Some Influence: 74%

- **News Editorial Endorsement of an Issue:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 10%
  - Some Influence: 65%

- **Individualized Faxes:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 8%
  - Some Influence: 62%

- **Form Postal Letters:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 1%
  - Some Influence: 53%

- **Form Email Messages:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 1%
  - Some Influence: 50%

- **Postcards:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 1%
  - Some Influence: 44%

- **Comments on Social Media Sites:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 1%
  - Some Influence: 41%

- **Form Faxes:**
  - A Lot of Positive Influence: 0%
  - Some Influence: 30%
In your opinion, how important are the following for understanding constituents' views and opinions?*

- Attending events in the district/state: Very Important 77%, Somewhat Important 21%
- Personalized messages from constituents (email, postal mail, faxes, phone calls): Very Important 70%, Somewhat Important 27%
- In person town hall meetings: Very Important 57%, Somewhat Important 33%
- District/state office hours: Very Important 53%, Somewhat Important 37%
- Telephone town hall meetings: Very Important 41%, Somewhat Important 42%
- Paper surveys/polls: Very Important 13%, Somewhat Important 55%
- Facebook: Very Important 8%, Somewhat Important 56%
- Identical form communications from constituents: Very Important 4%, Somewhat Important 52%
- Online surveys/polls: Very Important 7%, Somewhat Important 47%
- Online town hall meetings: Very Important 14%, Somewhat Important 30%
- Twitter: Very Important 4%, Somewhat Important 38%
- YouTube: Very Important 4%, Somewhat Important 30%
- Member/Senator's blog: Very Important 3%, Somewhat Important 31%
- MySpace: Very Important 1%, Somewhat Important 8%
Action You Can Take

• Individuals
  o Write Letters
  o Make Phone Calls
  o Attend Town Halls
  o Use Social Media
  o Represent NARFE in Your Community

• Leaders
  o Organize Your Chapter
  o Schedule and Attend Meetings
Personalize Your Outreach

- Share Your Story
- Local Impact
- Why You Support/Oppose
- Personalize, Personalize, Personalize
  - Use talking points or sample letters
Personalize Message to Increase Probability of Impact

Advocacy strategies directed to the Washington office having a “lot of influence” on Member decision-making

Analysis

- Some constituents believe that sending large volumes of identical form messages will influence Members, but a survey of senior managers and mail staffers showed that individual letters and e-mails have a far greater influence on Member decision-making than form letters.
- Advocates should therefore focus on sending fewer but more personal messages to their Member of Congress over sending many messages that lack any individual voice or perspective.

“One hundred form letters have less direct value than a single thoughtful letter generated by a constituent of the Member’s district.”

-- House Correspondence Staffer

If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the Washington office have on his/her decision?*

- Individualized Postal Letters: 20% A Lot of Positive Influence, 70% Some Influence
- Form Postal Letters: 1% A Lot of Positive Influence, 53% Some Influence
- Individualized Email Messages: 19% A Lot of Positive Influence, 69% Some Influence
- Form Email Messages: 1% A Lot of Positive Influence, 50% Some Influence
How helpful is it for messages from constituents to include the following?*

- Information about the impact the bill would have on the district or state: 31% Very Helpful, 46% Helpful
- Constituent’s reasons for supporting/opposing the bill or issue: 34% Very Helpful, 40% Helpful
- Personal story related to the bill or issue: 20% Very Helpful, 28% Helpful
Social Media

- On Tuesday
- Follow NARFE
  - [www.facebook.com/narfehq](http://www.facebook.com/narfehq)
  - [@NARFEHQ (Twitter)](http://twitter.com/NARFEHQ)
  - Helps NARFE Influence Members of Congress and the Media
- Personal Connections
  - Way to Connect with the Offices
Resources

- NARFE Hotline
- Monthly Protect America’s Heartbeat Calls
- Monthly Webinars
- Daily Clips
- Protect America’s Heartbeat Toolkits
- Legislative Action Center
- Congress.Gov
- NARFE Staff
Working with NARFE

- Work Collaboratively
- Eliminate Duplicative Efforts
- Tell Us About Your Experiences
Re-Cap

- Grassroots Advocacy is a central part of our advocacy efforts.
- Individual outreach to members of Congress works and can change minds.
- When you reach out, personalize your message.
- NARFE has resources available to help you.
- Work with all levels of the NARFE organization to make sure we are being effective.
Questions

Sarah Weissmann
Grassroots Program Manager
703-838-7760, ext 263
sweissmann@narfe.org

NARFE Legislative Department
703-838-7760, ext. 261
leg@narfe.org

Share Your Experiences:
advocacyinaction@narfe.org