



NATIONAL LATINA INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



Planning a Legislative Advocacy Day

Toolkit





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This guide will walk you through the steps of planning an in-state legislative advocacy day on your issue. When planning a legislative advocacy day, whether it's at the state capitol or at a local district office, remember that your voice needs to be heard.



NLIRH's 2nd National Advocacy Weekend Participants

NOTE: If you are speaking about a specific piece of legislation, it is lobbying. Because of our status as a 501(c) (3) organization, you should not mention the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) during your visit, unless it is advocacy or lobbying done on behalf of your Latina Advocacy Network (LAN) or NLIRH.



Resources The first thing you should do is take stock of the resources you have in your community. Doing so can help you think about the kind of legislative advocacy day you will have. Some questions to help you think about this are:

- ❁ Would you like to focus on federal, state, or municipal (county, city or village) legislation? Would you like to do a visit to the federal or state capitol or to a local district office?
- ❁ What kind of resources would you need to get to the offices? Do you have access to reliable public transportation? Can you carpool? Is there a company or organization that can sponsor your group and help cover transportation costs?
- ❁ Is there a local coalition/group who coordinates advocacy days around your particular issue or similar issues and if so, can you team up with them? Remember that the group will have its own legislative priorities and demands, so you may need to coordinate your own advocacy day that prioritizes your agenda. Nonetheless, it will make the process less intimidating for some and can be complementary to planning your own.
- ❁ Does your group or any member of your group have a connection with an elected official? If so, this may help you in scheduling visits. If this is someone you would consider a supporter of your issues, you may consider having them speak to your group about the legislative process.
- ❁ Has someone in your group participated in a legislative advocacy visit in your state? If so, ask them to share their experience.

These questions will help you think about the logistics of your advocacy day.



Now on to the fun part! The following steps will help you prepare for your advocacy day.

Know Your Issue. Everyone attending the advocacy day should have an understanding of the issue that you are going to be discussing.

- ☀ Please see “A Guide to Monitoring State Legislation” for a more detailed guide on how to familiarize yourself with state legislation.
- ☀ Make sure everyone will be asking for the same thing (i.e. support or opposition for a particular piece of legislation or regulation, and/or introduction of a new bill or policy).

Identify Your Target Offices

- ☀ You should meet with offices that represent your district because elected officials listen more closely to their own constituents! In addition to offices that represent your district, you may target relevant committee members and leaders that may not necessarily represent your district, but may have great influence regarding the issue.
- ☀ Research your elected officials. Some things to particularly pay attention to are what committees, caucuses and task forces they belong to; what leadership roles they have within their district; and where they stand with the issue you’re taking up (for example, by looking at how they voted on legislation pertaining to that issue in the past or by how they have publicly spoken about the issue in the media).
- ☀ From this initial research, make a list of elected officials that would be good targets (i.e. because of their interest in your issue or because they sit on a relevant committee, etc.).

To find out who your representative is go to **www.house.gov**

To find out who your senator is go to **www.senate.gov**

They will need your zip + 4 digit code, to find your zip + 4 go to **<http://zip4.usps.com>**

*****Also, don't forget about other elected officials, in addition to Members of Congress.***



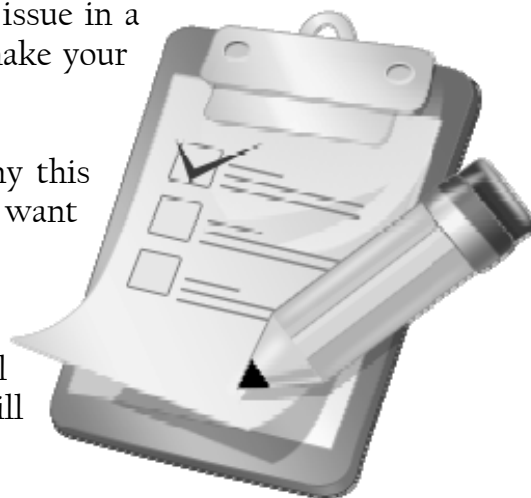
Schedule Your Visits

- ☼ Call the office of the elected official you want to meet with and tell them that you would like to schedule a visit to meet with a staff member (“staffer”) or the elected official on your issue. You should also send a letter or fax after/before your call making the same request. But, remember calling will be more effective. [See the instructions for requesting a meeting and sample letter on page 12 and 16 for more guidance.](#)
- ☼ Be persistent about scheduling a meeting and don’t be discouraged if you have to call a few times.



Develop Talking Points. Develop a set of points that you are going to make sure that you bring up at the meeting. These talking points will also help you create materials for your group and for the elected officials.

- ☼ Use your talking points to explain your issue in a way that is easy to understand and to make your position on the issue clear.
- ☼ You must be prepared to talk about why this issue is important to you and what you want the elected official to do about it.
- ☼ Find specific real life examples to illustrate your points. Sharing a personal story or experience related to the issue will be a powerful tool for advocacy.





Prepare Materials for Your Visit. See sample materials on page 18 and 19 of this guide. You will want to create folders for each participant.

- ❁ Palmcards – These can serve as a reference during your visit. Things you should include are: background on the legislation, key messages, and reasons to support or not support the bill. Alternately, you can create one page fact sheets.
- ❁ Elected official & District profiles for each person you're visiting – These profiles can include a brief bio on the elected official, quick facts regarding the elected official (i.e. their address and contact info; committee, caucus, and task forces they belong to; and leadership positions), district profiles, and where they stand on the issue and/or bill you are visiting them about.

You can get information on your district and state from the following sources:

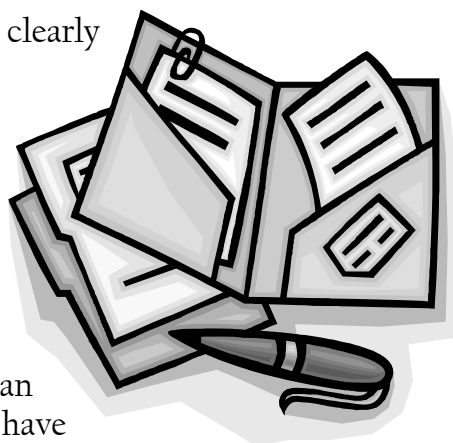
www.fastfacts.census.gov

www.statehealthfacts.org

www.gutmacher.org/statecenter

Materials to Give to Your Elected Official. It is a good idea to have some materials to give to your elected official when you visit. Remember, less is better – you don't want to overwhelm them with materials. The following are materials you can include in your folder:

- ❁ One page fact sheet with your ask clearly visible
- ❁ Background info on the bills/issue
- ❁ Information regarding your group or organization
- ❁ Contact information for your group and the person in your group who can answer further questions, should they have any





Plan Your Meeting. The meeting will last anywhere from 10 minutes to one hour, although you will most likely only have half an hour with the staffer/elected official. Do not be disappointed if you meet with a staffer; you should still approach the visit in the same way you would as if you were meeting with the elected official.

- ☀️ **Assign roles** for the visit and create a plan for who will talk about what and when so that you are prepared to present your issue in the most effective way.

Roles you can assign during your visit:

Coordinator/Facilitator – This may be someone who has done this before and has some experience. This person will walk the group through the agenda, beginning with introductions. It is this person’s task to bring the discussion back to your issue, should the meeting start going in a different direction. The facilitator will also thank the elected official/facilitator for their time at the end of their visit and provide them with the materials you prepared and contact info.

Note Taker – This person should make sure to write down the names of everyone you met with and write down any questions or comments the elected official/staffer makes. The note taker will also type up the notes and share with the group after the meeting.

Speaker(s) – The speaker(s) should lay out the issues for the elected official/staffer. It is their responsibility to explain the issue, your group’s position, and provide some statistical data.

Testimonials – These are the personal stories behind the issue. These stories bring a face and name to the issue you’re advocating for and are very powerful.

- ☀️ The elected official/staffer will have questions, so be prepared. If you don’t know the answer, **DO NOT guess** or give incorrect ones. Tell them that you will get back to them with the answer.
- ☀️ If the elected official is supportive of your issue, make sure to thank them for their continued advocacy on behalf of women’s rights.
- ☀️ Give the materials/folder you prepared to the staffers/elected officials.
- ☀️ Leave your contact information with the staffer/elected official – they should always have a way to get in touch with you and follow up with questions.

- ☀️ **Don’t Argue with the Staffer/Elected Official.** Sometimes elected officials and/or staffers have positions that differ from yours, but you should NEVER argue with a staffer/elected official.



NLIRH Activists Meet with Elected Official at the U.S. Capitol

Sample Visit Plan

Coordinator/Facilitator: Begins with introductions. Introduces the group and has everyone say their name. (People should mention if they're residents of their district).
Introduce the speaker(s)

Speaker(s): Introduce the issue and provide relevant data.

Coordinator/Facilitator: Will introduce the people providing the testimonials.

Testimonials will be provided

Coordinator/Facilitator: Will sum up the meeting, make the ask (i.e. to support or not support a bill, to add language to a bill, etc.) and ask the legislator/staffer where they stand on the issue. The coordinator/facilitator will also thank the legislator/staffer for their time and provide them with materials and contact information for the group.

***Note Taker:** Will take notes throughout the meeting.

Post-Visit

Note Taker: Will share the notes with the group

Coordinator/Facilitator: Will send thank you note and any information promised to the legislator/staffer.



Follow-up with the Office. This is very important! Send a thank you note and any information you promised to provide the staffers/elected officials. [See a sample letter on page 17.](#) In addition, send a thank you letter or email to the scheduler expressing your appreciation for his/her assistance and letting him/her know how wonderful it was to meet with the elected official. Building a strong relationship with the scheduler will help facilitate future scheduling requests and helps ensure a good working relationship with one of the most important, and often overlooked, staff in an elected official's office.

Your advocacy day is officially over now, but don't forget to monitor the issue you're advocating for and how the elected official voted on the issue.

Although your advocacy may be over, you will have to continue to hold your elected officials accountable for their actions or inaction!

Further Ways to Engage Your Elected Official

The process for engaging your elected official in these activities is very much the same as trying to set up a meeting with them. You will need to call their office and be persistent. It may be helpful to create a script tailored to your ask.

- 🌟 Creating a community town hall meeting and inviting elected officials to listen to your community's needs.
- 🌟 If the elected official has been particularly supportive of legislative proposals and/or has expressed public support for your policy priority concerns, you might consider giving an award to him/her.
- 🌟 Inviting an elected official to speak or take part in an event you're hosting. (For example, they can be a keynote speaker and/or present awards to community members).



Instructions for Requesting a Meeting

Elected officials welcome invitations to meet with constituents and attend constituent organizations' meetings/conferences.

It is your right to invite your elected officials to attend a meeting, speak at an event, or request an opportunity to meet with the elected official either in their district office or in their legislative office (either in Washington, DC, the State Capitol or City Hall depending on which level of government you are targeting).

The first step in inviting your elected officials to attend an event or submitting a request to meet with them is to find out the name of the scheduler/appointment secretary and learn out of which office s/he works.

TIP: Although calling is the most effective manner, all such requests should be made in writing and sent by fax or email to the elected official's scheduler or appointment secretary.

You need to confirm the fax number or email address to which such written meeting requests and invitations need to be sent.

The easiest way to find out this information is to call either the local or legislative office of the elected official and ask the receptionist for this information.

Draft a letter. Be certain that your letter contains your full name and contact information at the end.

The letter(s) should be faxed or emailed (ask the office what it prefers) to the attention of the staffer whose name you were given by the receptionist. The cover page or email text accompanying your request should specify that you are submitting a meeting request or invitation for **the** particular DAY OF THE WEEK, MONTH, DAY, YEAR.





Calls should be made the day after the letters are faxed - to the staffer to whom you sent the information to ensure that the fax or email has been received. When calling, you should ask for the scheduler/appointment secretary and indicate that a request already has been sent in but that you are calling to confirm it has been received. If they did not receive the letter, another fax or email should be sent as a follow-up. You should then make another follow-up call to ensure that the letter has indeed been received.

Once a meeting has been scheduled with the elected official, inform your group and begin to prepare for your meeting as set forth in this toolkit.





Helpful Tips

In the event that you speak to the scheduler and s/he indicates that **a decision cannot be made for a while**, ask politely if there is a specific date in the future when it would be appropriate for you to call and check on the status of the request. Often the scheduler will give you a particular date or a week when s/he recommends you call back. Other times the staff may indicate that s/he will be in touch once a decision is made.

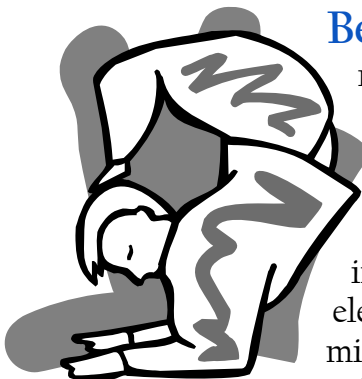
In the event that you receive voicemail when you call to confirm receipt of the request and do not hear back from the scheduler within a week, a follow-up call should be made at that point to confirm receipt. **The key to getting the elected official to attend your event or securing a meeting with the elected official is a lot of follow-up.** Persistence, persistence, persistence!

If you are seeking the elected official's attendance at an event, it should be made VERY clear to the scheduler that if the elected official cannot make it, that you really would like someone from the local office to attend and represent the elected official. If no one can attend, it is appropriate to ask if the elected official can send a statement or letter that can be read in his/her absence.

If you are seeking a meeting with the elected official and are told that s/he **is not available during the time frame for which you are seeking a meeting** you can do one of two things: (a) offer another set of dates/times that would work for you and see if the elected official is available then, or (b) indicate that you are disappointed and hope to meet the elected official someday and would like to meet with a senior staff member (such as the District Director or Chief of Staff) instead.

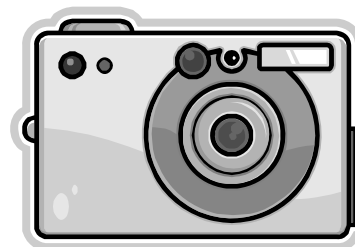


Other Tips for Submitting a Meeting Request



Be flexible. Do not assume that if the elected official is not available the date/week/time you have requested that s/he does not want to meet with you. Elected officials have incredibly busy schedules and often are booked weeks, if not months, in advance. As such, if your initial request is denied, politely, yet firmly indicate that you would like to work to get on the elected official's schedule in the future and ask if you might look at the calendar now to see what is available going forward.

Sometimes **requests for “just a photo”** can be honored and granted more easily than if you are requesting time for a “real” meeting. If you suspect that you might be better off requesting a “photo opportunity” rather than a substantive meeting, you should make this more modest request. Some constituents have found that once they are standing with the elected official smiling for a photo they are able to engage the elected official in conversation and turn such a moment into a substantive discussion on their issues. As such, even for a photo opportunity, you always should bring a set of materials with you to pass along to the elected official and her/his staff. In addition, once you have met the elected official for a photo opportunity, it is often easier to schedule a substantive meeting later on in a follow-up.





Template Meeting/Invitation Request Letter to Elected Official

NOTE: Your letter should not be printed on NLIRH letterhead or include any NLIRH logos. Because of our status as a 501(c) (3) organization, we have restrictions on our lobbying abilities under federal law.

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives/Other Office
Address

Dear Senator/Representative/ Appropriate Title Last Name:

On behalf of the of INSERT YOUR AFFILIATION, I am writing to respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss a number of issues of priority to me and other constituents from the STATE Latina Advocacy Network. We are hoping that you might have time to see us. Below are the details of this request.

Date: INSERT DATE OR DATE RANGE

Time: INSERT TIME RANGE

Contact to Confirm Meeting: INSERT CONTACT (Facilitator/Coordinator)

Attendees:
NAMES OF ATTENDEES

Topics/Issues: INSERT ISSUE(S)

I very much hope that your schedule will permit us an opportunity to meet so we can discuss ways that we can work together. I will follow-up with your scheduler shortly to schedule a meeting. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at PHONE NUMBER or EMAIL ADDRESS. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name
Phone Number
Email Address



Template Thank You/Follow-Up Letter to Elected Official

NOTE: Your letter should not be printed on NLIRH letterhead or include any NLIRH logos. Because of our status as a 501(c) (3) organization, we have restrictions on our lobbying abilities under federal law.

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives/Other Office
Address

Dear Senator/Representative/Appropriate Title Last Name:

I am writing to express my gratitude to you/your staffer, First Name Last Name of Staffer, for taking time out of your/his/her busy schedule to meet with me on Month, Day, Year to discuss with you/First Name Staffer issues of priority to me and the State Latina Advocacy Network. I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate my request that you:

- (1) List the item(s) you discussed and the specific action you wish the elected official to take.
- (2) Support legislation that grants *[insert additional action item]*.

[Provide additional rationale/background for your requests. This is an opportunity to reiterate key points, or to mention items that you may have omitted during the in-person discussion.]

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I am most appreciative to you/First Name Staffer for your consideration of my concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you have any questions about these or other [issue]-related matters. I would be happy to be a local resource for you. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding the status of our requests.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name
Affiliation [State Latina Advocacy Network]
Home Street Address
City, State Zip
Phone Number/Email Address

cc: First Name Last Name Staffer, Title



Sample Palmcards



THE HEALTH EQUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (H.R.3014)

LEGISLATION

In July 2007, Representative Hilda Solis introduced a bill that aims to improve the health of ethnic and racial minorities. The bill aims to provide ethnic and racial minorities with culturally and linguistically appropriate health care, diversify the health care workforce, develop a data collection and reporting system on minority health and health disparities and establish a pipeline of minority scientists, health care providers and researchers.

KEY MESSAGES

Vote **YES** on the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2007 because it would provide culturally appropriate healthcare and help eliminate health disparities in communities of color.

REASONS TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH EQUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

1. The fight for equality in healthcare is a fight for the fate of our communities. Latinas' health and lives are at stake.
2. Many Latinas lack health insurance and cannot afford regular doctor's visits; it is especially important, then, that when Latinas do get care, we are met by physicians and nurses who are culturally competent and understand our needs.
3. Many of the researchers doing work in medicine and public health today are not aware of Latinas' specific health needs. More diverse research institutions make an invaluable contribution to the understanding of Latinas' health.
4. This legislation would provide opportunities for Latinas and other people of color to enter the health professions; this not only diversifies the workforce for the benefit of Latina patients, but also improves communities of color by increasing access to self-sustaining and meaningful careers in the healthcare and health-related fields.

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
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ACTA DE EQUIDAD Y RESPONSABILIDAD EN LA SALUD (H.R.3014)

LEGISLACIÓN

En julio del 2007, la Representante Hilda Solís introdujo una propuesta de ley que propone mejorar la salud de las minorías étnicas y raciales. El objetivo de esta propuesta es proveer servicios de salud lingüística y culturalmente apropiados; diversificar la fuerza laboral del sector salud; desarrollar un sistema de recolección y presentación de datos sobre la salud de las minorías; y establecer futuros médicos, científicos e investigadores en el sector de salud.

MENSAJE PRINCIPAL

Vote **SI** al Acta de Equidad y Responsabilidad en Salud del 2007 porque proveería servicios de salud lingüística y culturalmente apropiados y ayudaría a eliminar las disparidades de salud en nuestras comunidades.

RAZONES PARA APOYAR EL ACTA DE EQUIDAD Y RESPONSABILIDAD EN LA SALUD

1. La lucha por la igualdad en el acceso al cuidado de salud es una lucha por el destino de nuestras comunidades. Nuestra salud y nuestras vidas están en juego.
2. Muchas Latinas no tienen seguro médico y por lo tanto no tienen acceso a visitas médicas regulares; por lo tanto, es especialmente importante que cuando las Latinas vayamos al médico, nos encontremos con un personal médico que entienda nuestras culturas y necesidades.
3. Muchos investigadores del sector de salud y de la salud pública no están informados sobre las necesidades particulares de salud de las Latinas. Los institutos de investigación más diversos podrían proporcionar contribuciones inapreciables para la salud de las Latinas.
4. Esta medida proveería oportunidades para que las Latinas y otras minorías étnicas ingresen a las profesiones de la salud; esto no solo diversificaría la fuerza laboral para el beneficio de las Latinas, sino también mejoraría nuestras comunidades, aumentando nuestro acceso a estas carreras.

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
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Sample Elected Official Profile

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)



With family roots on northern Minnesota's Iron Range, Senator Klobuchar grew up in the Twin Cities suburb of Plymouth, attended public schools and was the valedictorian of her high school class. She graduated magna cum laude from Yale University and the University of Chicago Law School.

After graduating from law school in 1985, Klobuchar returned to Minnesota to practice law and worked closely with former Vice President and Senator Walter F. Mondale. She also served in leadership positions with a variety of community organizations.

In 1998, Klobuchar was elected to a four-year term as the Hennepin County Attorney, serving as chief prosecutor for Minnesota's most populous county encompassing Minneapolis and 45 suburban communities. In 2002, she was re-elected without opposition. As County Attorney, Klobuchar was also elected by fellow prosecutors to serve as president of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association. In that position, she spearheaded a series of public forums in Minnesota communities on identity theft, methamphetamine and sex offender issues.

| Member Quick Facts | District Profile |
|--|--|
| <p>U.S. Senator, 1st Term</p> <p>302 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20515 P: 202-224-3244 F: 202-228-2186 klobuchar.senate.gov</p> <p>Committee(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry ❖ Commerce, Science & Transportation ❖ Environment & Public Works ❖ Joint Economic <p>Leadership Position(s): NONE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 6.6% are foreign born ❖ 4% are non-citizen ❖ 9.6% speak a language other than English at home ❖ 50.3% are women ❖ 3.8% are Latino ❖ 3% of all the state's Medical School Graduates are Latino ❖ 27% of those living in poverty are Latino ❖ 69.9% of pregnant Latina began prenatal care in the First Trimester (this is the least of all racial groups) ❖ 33.7% of all abortions are women of color ❖ 9.5% of all people living with AIDS are Latino <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;">*www.statehealthfacts.org (Kaiser) *www.fastfacts.census.gov</p> |

| Communities of Color Teen Pregnancy Prevention Act 2007 (S. 1790) | Prevention First (S. 21) | Freedom of Choice Act (S. 1173) | Dream Act (S. 774) |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| --- | Cosponsor | --- | --- |



**Did you participate in an
In-State Legislative Advocacy Day?
If so, we'd like to hear from you!**

Name of Elected Official or Staffer you met with:

Participants at meeting:

What issues were discussed?

What is the Elected Official's position on the issue and/or bill discussed?

Additional points of discussion?

Areas to follow-up?

Any other comments or reflections?

Please share your experience with us!
Send us this form and/or contact us at 212-422-2553.