

LESSON  
PLAN



CRS/ PHILIP LAUBNER 2015

**LENGTH** 1 hour – 1.5 hours

**OBJECTIVES**

Through this activity participants will:

- ❖ Gain a greater understanding of the important role that individuals who meet with elected representatives play in the overall advocacy mission.
- ❖ Work through provided guidelines to practice role-play scenarios that replicate meetings with legislators about a specific issue.

**SUMMARY**

This lesson is designed to enable participants to act on their advocacy education from *Part 1: What Is Advocacy?* by researching, brainstorming, and role-playing using specific issues that they will be discussing with their legislators.

**MATERIALS**

- *Tips for Congressional Visits* handout
- *How To Set Up Congressional Visits* handout
- Optional reference: *Advocacy Process* handout

**PREPARATION**

Determine ahead of time how the issues of focus will be chosen and assigned. Choose a selection (number dependent upon size of class) of relevant issues either from the community or from the [Catholics Confront Global Poverty \(CCGP\) website](#), or have participants brainstorm ideas for relevant issues from the community or from independent experiences or research. Issues can then be assigned to groups, or participants can select which issue they would like to focus on.

*(If used in sequence with the Avenues to Advocacy: Letter-Writing Workshop, participants can remain in their original groups and use their issues of focus for this Congressional Visit Workshop.)*

*Option: If you choose to select the issues ahead of time, you may want to provide some relevant information to participants when assigning issues in order to streamline the research process. Visit the CCGP website, and click on Action Center to find relevant topics and general contextual and applicable legislative information.*

## PROCESS **Advocacy Process Review (optional)**

Refer back to the *Advocacy Process* handout (used in *How Does Advocacy Work?* Lesson Plan) to emphasize the role congressional visits play in the advocacy process in impacting and moving forward legislative action.

### **Picking a Group and an Issue**

Break the class into groups for addressing each topic; adjust the number of issues based on size of the group (the class should be divided into groups of 4-6 people with each group focusing on a different issue). Assign or establish issues of focus to each group for their congressional visit. *(If using this lesson in sequence with *Avenues to Advocacy: Letter-Writing Workshop*, consider having participants complete the activity with the same group and same issue of focus.)*

### **Research**

Instruct participants to research context and any political action currently directed toward their chosen issue. (You may want to provide applicable background information to streamline the research portion of this activity).

### **Tips for Congressional Visit**

Before beginning the activity, review the *Tips for Congressional Visits* handout. Emphasize that all group members should have a chance to participate in Steps 2 through 4 (the action steps that pertain to the actual meeting).

### **Brainstorm (20 minutes)**

Allow groups to brainstorm about their upcoming congressional “visit,” focusing on the research that they have done and any personal connections that they may have with the issue.

Brainstorming time should address both the content that participants want to present and the way in which they want to present it.

*Note: Remind participants that personal connections do not necessarily mean that the student has to have been directly impacted by the issue—perhaps they have been hearing about an issue in the news or from friends or family, or maybe they just feel that as Catholics they have been called to advocate for a particular issue.*

### **Role-Play**

Have participants engage in their mock congressional meetings one group at a time while the other groups observe and the teacher (or another appropriate facilitator, e.g., school administrator, parent volunteer, etc.) acts as the legislator or a member of his/her staff. The “legislator” does not necessarily need to have advance knowledge of the issue (though it may be helpful), but he/she should be prepared to prompt participants during conversations in a way that seems natural. *Option: The “legislator” may want to present a variety of reactions that participants in a real meeting could encounter, such as:*

- *The legislator acts interested, but is not particularly informed about the issue. (The facilitator should encourage participants to explain some of the background, and ask if there are other resources available to stay up-to-date on this issue.)*
- *The legislator respectfully disagrees with the position that the participants present. (The facilitator should politely disagree, and express his/her opinion that a certain position is not the best way to combat the issue at hand. During the debriefing after this scenario, it is important to remind participants that advocacy is a process; not every meeting will be an immediate “win,” but it is very important that they make their voices heard.)*

**Reflection**

After each group works through their role-play, ask the participants who are observing to identify things that they think the role-play group did well and what they could work on to become even more effective. Encourage participants to highlight specific things that align with the *Tips for Congressional Visits* handout.

**Debrief**

Conduct a group discussion with all participants to wrap up the activity. Ask them to share what they learned from the handouts and their “congressional visit.” Discuss next steps to engage their actual members of Congress in advocacy. Pass out the *How to Set Up Congressional Visits* handout so that participants can use what they’ve learned to meet with their government representatives.