Tools for Advocating to Elected Officials

Establishing relationships with your elected officials is the most effective way to communicate the depth of support for Israel among their constituents. As developments in the region pose new questions and challenges, hearing the views of their own pro-Israel constituents is critical.

Lobby Members at Home
There is no substitute for a Member of Congress hearing from constituents. Regular visits when Members are home in their districts and ongoing contact and engagement make even a small constituency more visible and significant. Prior to a Congressional recess, contact your local ADL office to schedule meetings with your Senators and Representative to discuss current developments.

Town Hall Meetings
Town hall meetings convened by Members across the country provide another vehicle to convey the personal importance of support for Israel to a Member’s community. Follow your Members of Congress on Facebook or Twitter, or sign up for alerts on their website to be notified of upcoming events. It might facilitate a more in-depth and productive discussion if you notify a Member’s staffer in advance if you plan to raise an Israel-related issue, as well as if you reach out to your local ADL office for talking points and possible questions to raise. Consider connecting with the Member’s staff at the meeting so that you can follow up with them after the event.
**Communication is key**
While a face-to-face meeting is most effective, Congressional staff monitor the number of communications received in support of or in opposition to an issue. Communications on policy matters should be sent to the Member’s Washington office.

- **E-mail.** Congressional offices respond to constituent e-mail. Be sure to include your home address, indicating that you live in the Member’s district.

- **Phone Calls.** Calls convey a heightened sense of urgency. When legislative action is imminent, many Congressional offices keep a tally of calls to gauge public sentiment in their district. Be prepared to supply your address to verify that you live in the district. Call the Capitol switchboard, (202) 225-3121, to connect to your Member’s office.

If you prefer to write a handwritten note, faxing or emailing a scanned copy of a letter is preferable for contact regarding fast-moving legislation since increased security procedures cause delay in mail delivery to Capitol Hill. Be concise and to the point. State the purpose of the letter up front.

To a Senator:

The Honorable (first and last name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Dear Senator ---:

To a Representative:

The Honorable (first and last name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Dear Representative ---:

**Invite Members to Speak**
Members of Congress welcome opportunities to speak at community meetings or other events. Work with your local ADL office to organize forums and voter education/registration initiatives with candidates to educate them about your concerns.

Reach Out to Congressional Staff

Getting to know the Congressional staff in your district and in Washington is vital in facilitating ongoing communication with the Member of Congress and impacting policy. Congressional aides frequently meet with constituents while Members are called to vote or to attend committee hearings and meetings. Not only are they the Member’s eyes and ears and help shape how a Member votes, but staffers often move up to leadership positions themselves. Treat these meetings as you would a meeting with the Member and communicate your message clearly.

Get to Know Local Elected Officials and Candidates

The best relationships with officials are those which began in their early careers in state and local offices. Today’s candidate for City Council may be tomorrow’s U.S. Senator. Although these officials and candidates focus on local issues, they can be important voices in support of Israel in the community and beyond.
LOBBYING TIPS

Advance Preparation

- Designate who will speak for the delegation. One person should introduce the group, others may take the lead in discussing the separate issues, or taking notes.

- Learn about what the Member has done or said on your issues.

- Work with your local ADL office to prepare background material. You may not have time for a full discussion and should be prepared to leave behind additional resources.

At the Meeting

- Be brief. Introduce the delegation quickly, underlining the connection with the Member’s home district. Keep your presentation of issues to a minute or two.

- Describe local support for Israel including from other allies in your community.

- Get to the point and request a specific action of support.

- Leave plenty of time to hear out the Member about his/her views and reactions.

If the Member Disagrees...

- Disagree without being disagreeable. While Members may have a different view, focus on the commonality of your commitment to Israel and to finding a just and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors.

- Stay focused. If the Member disagrees, they may try to divert the conversation onto another topic. Be sure to communicate concerns clearly.

If the Member Agrees...
Keep Lines of Communication Open...

- Send a thank you note to the Member and staffer with whom you met. Take the opportunity to reconfirm any commitments made. If he/she is undecided, restate your arguments and enclose additional information supporting your point.
- Continue to correspond with your Member and invite staff to community events.

Keep Up to Date With Key Issues....

- Stay up to date with ADL Advocacy Alerts on Israel issues by following @ADL_National on Twitter or ADL on Facebook, or go straight to the ADL Action Center for letters you can send to your Members. Sign up for the ADL Advocacy Matters Newsletter for a monthly update on the most pressing issues in Congress.