



National Coalition For Literacy

CREATING CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCATES

What role can I play in creating Congressional Advocates?

You can play an important role because you live and in the State or Congressional District represented by your Members in Congress and **you vote**. They will be interested in hearing from you. Your input helps them to represent you with their votes in Congress.

Why should I contact Congress?

You have information that representatives in Washington may not. You can bring issues home to them and tell them how adult education impacts the communities, families and businesses they represent.

How often should I contact them?

You want to become a resource for Members of Congress on issues related to adult education. With staff turnover and other issues competing for their time and attention, I would encourage you to contact them at least every three or four months, updating information and asking if there is any information you can get for them. In particular, you want to contact them around the time the appropriations bills are being considered. By keeping in touch, they will use you for a resource when issues affecting adult education come before them for consideration.

What type of information is needed and helpful?

There are two types of information that are helpful:

- i. **Data** – Members need to know programs are working. They need numbers – how many GEDs, high school diplomas, individuals learning English, etc. They also like to know outcomes. For example, are students transitioning to postsecondary, getting jobs, etc?
- ii. **Personal Success Stories** - They also need the human face. Have a few success stories that really drive home the impact and importance of adult education.

What type of hooks can I use to get their attention?

Members of Congress come from a variety of backgrounds and have varying interests and priorities. If you know those interests, you can target your message. Most Members will have at least one area of interest that can be connected to adult education, including:

- i. **health** – health literacy is very important for families. Proper health care keeps families working and children in school. If they serve on a committee dealing with health care issues, this may be the link you need.
- ii. **senior citizens** – low literacy skills can jeopardize the well-being of seniors who do not understand medical instructions. According to the health literacy components in the NAAL, seniors are among those with the lowest levels of health literacy.
- iii. **business** – helping improve the skills of the workforce is an important issue and business and industry are important to Members of Congress. We need to keep jobs from going overseas and we need an educated workforce. Adult education can play a key role in keeping us competitive.
- iv. **K-12 education** – adult education can improve the ability of parents to help their children with their homework.
- v. **welfare** – adult education leads to self-sufficiency, reduces welfare rolls and helps reduce the number of individuals living in poverty and dependent on government benefit programs. Is your Member on a Committee dealing with welfare reform legislation?
- vi. **English as the official language/immigration** – in either case, adult education plays a role in helping new immigrants learn the English language and successfully assimilate.

Are there other times when my input is important?

Absolutely, whenever legislation affecting adult education is considered in the House and Senate, your voice needs to be heard. There is now a network that provides the adult education field with action alerts when your help is needed. You can also check websites for relevant House and Senate Committees to see whether there are hearings, markups or other activities involving adult education. The websites are changing but we can get this information to you. You may also want to check websites for the National Coalition for Literacy, COABE, the State Directors of Adult Education, Pro-Literacy, TESOL, and the National Center for Family Literacy for information on federal legislation.

REMEMBER:

- I. Members of Congress who want to be re-elected want and need to hear from you. Do not be intimidated. They were elected to represent you and to do so they need to know your views.**
 - II. There is frequent staff turnover. Know your staff. Even if you don't talk to the Member, your views will be heard. Members rely on staff to gather information and know how their constituents feel on issues under consideration.**
 - III. Make your voice heard.**
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Full Committee, 110th Congress

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- [Donald M. Payne](#) (NJ-10)
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- [Rush D. Holt](#) (NJ-12)
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- [Timothy H. Bishop](#) (NY-01)
- [Linda T. Sánchez](#) (CA-39)
- [John Sarbanes](#) (MD-03)
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- [Dave Loebsack](#) (IA-02)
- [Mazie Hirono](#) (HI-02)
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- [Carol Shea-Porter](#) (NH-01)

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- **Michael N. Castle** (DE-At Large)
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- **Vernon J. Ehlers** (MI-03)
- **Judy Biggert** (IL-13)
- **Todd Russell Platts** (PA-19)
- **Ric Keller** (FL-8)
- **Joe Wilson** (SC-02)
- **John Kline** (MN-02)
- **Cathy McMorris Rodgers** (WA-05)
- **Kenny Marchant** (TX-24)
- **Tom Price** (GA-06)
- **Luis G. Fortuño** (PR)
- **Charles W. Boustany, Jr.** (LA-07)
- **Virginia Foxx** (NC-05)
- **John R. "Randy" Kuhl, Jr.** (NY-29)
- **Rob Bishop** (UT-01)
- **David Davis** (TN-01)
- **Timothy Walberg** (MI-07)
- **Dean Heller** (NV-02)

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

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