



## A GUIDE FOR LOCAL ADVOCACY DURING AUGUST RECESS 2017

The August recess is a time when members of Congress return to their states and congressional districts and connect with constituents. This month presents a great opportunity to engage with your elected officials by asking questions and sharing your concerns about your communities. There are multiple ways you can contact your elected officials when they are in your area!

**Participate in a town-hall meeting:** Elected officials and candidates frequently hold town-hall meetings in their districts in August. This is a great way to lift your voice alongside your fellow community members. During these events, your elected official or candidate for office will answer questions, and your question can spark an important conversation and is an opportunity to hold your elected official publicly accountable.

- ✓ Contact your member of Congress or candidate for office, or visit their website to find out if they are hosting a town-hall meeting. Use this opportunity to have your questions answered and concerns heard, and use the **guide** below for timely questions and talking points!

**Schedule an in-district meeting:** Consider planning an in-district meeting with other members of your congregation or a group.

- ✓ Read the full step-by-step guide on how to schedule an in-district meeting at the [ELCA Advocacy Resource Center!](#)

**Host a call-in event:** Help organize a group call-in day with other members of your congregation around an advocacy issue that is important to your community. The more people who unite behind a single issue in a singular moment, the bigger impact it has!

- ✓ Gather your group and host an opening meeting of prayer and discernment around faith and public policy. Discuss the question: “What is our role as people and faith, and what issues are we called to discuss?” Check out the [Women of the ELCA “Called to Be Political”](#) workshop guide for more ideas.
- ✓ Choose a critical question or issue that you would like your members of Congress to address. As a group, find your legislator’s contact numbers at the [ELCA Action Center](#), or call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121.
- ✓ Report how your conversations go and share your progress at the [ELCA Action Center](#). Also, share your advocacy on social media, tagging your members of Congress and encouraging your friends to take action too!

**Need help?** If you have an ELCA public policy office in your state, reach out to them for support! They will be more than happy to answer your questions and aid you in this process. To reach the national ELCA Advocacy office, contact [washingtonoffice@elca.org](mailto:washingtonoffice@elca.org).

**CA** – Lutheran Office of Public Policy [director@loppca.org](mailto:director@loppca.org)

**CO** – Lutheran Advocacy Ministry [pseverson@rmselca.org](mailto:pseverson@rmselca.org)

**GA** – Southeastern Synod [haustin337@att.net](mailto:haustin337@att.net)

**MN** – Lutheran Advocacy [tammy@lcppm.org](mailto:tammy@lcppm.org)

**NV** – Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy

**NJ** – Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry (LEAMNJ) [slilja@leamnj.org](mailto:slilja@leamnj.org)

**NM** – Lutheran Advocacy Ministry [ruth@lutheranadvocacynm.org](mailto:ruth@lutheranadvocacynm.org)

**NC** – NC Synod State Public Policy Network [Advocacy@NCLutheran.org](mailto:Advocacy@NCLutheran.org)

**OH** – One Ohio Now [nick@hungernetohio.com](mailto:nick@hungernetohio.com)

**PA** – Lutheran Advocacy Ministry [lampa@lutheranadvocacypa.org](mailto:lampa@lutheranadvocacypa.org)

**TX** – Texas Impact [bee@texasimpact.org](mailto:bee@texasimpact.org)

**VA** – Virginia Interfaith Center [office@virginiainterfaithcenter.org](mailto:office@virginiainterfaithcenter.org)

**WA** – Faith Action Network [BenZ@fanwa.org](mailto:BenZ@fanwa.org)

**WI** – Lutheran Office for Public Policy [cindyc@loppw.org](mailto:cindyc@loppw.org)



## Questions and talking points for your in-district advocacy

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**Care for creation: Do you support the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and combat climate change? President Trump proposed a budget for fiscal year 2018 that increases defense spending at the expense of key environmental protection measures and programs from all the responsible federal agencies. While the president proposes the budget, Congress sets the budget. Are you going to press your colleagues in the House and the Senate to set a budget that provides funding for domestic and international environmental programs to provide care for all creation, thereby resulting in improved human health and environment?**

- The [U. N. Environment Programme \(UNEP\) "Healthy Environment, Healthy People" 2016 report](#) showed that "in 2012, an estimated 12.6 million deaths globally were attributable to the environment. The air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and the ecosystems which sustain us are estimated to be responsible for 23 per cent of all deaths worldwide. The figure increases to 26 per cent for children under 5 years and to 25 per cent for adults between the ages of 50 and 75."
- Federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Interior (DOI) and the Department of State protect human health and the environment through various programs. For example, the EPA develops, implements and enforces standards that keep pollution out of the air and the water; protect the lands where we live, work, and play; and safeguard animal and plant life. The DOI protects and manages our natural resources, including public lands and waterways; furthers the protection of endangered species; and implements our commitments to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Department of State administers programs that provide funding to mitigate the harmful consequences of climate change, such as the Green Climate Fund.
- Visit [ELCA.org/Resources/Advocacy#Environment](http://ELCA.org/Resources/Advocacy#Environment) for more resources.

**Domestic: I support health care for all. Congress should be working together in a bi-partisan fashion to improve the Affordable Care Act, not dismantle it. Now that the Senate has failed to pass its version of the harmful bill to repeal and replace "Obamacare," what are you doing to find bi-partisan solutions?**

- ELCA social teaching urges us to love our neighbor by advocating for access to basic health care for all and to participate vigorously and responsibly in the public discussion on how best to fulfill this obligation. In a nation of great abundance, everyone should have access to quality and affordable health care, no matter our income, gender or background. Unfortunately, current proposals in Congress that are aimed at making our health care system sustainable would attempt to do so at the expense of our most vulnerable community members.
- While not perfect, the Affordable Care Act makes obtaining health insurance possible for millions of hard working families. But we can do better. We urge our leaders to: 1) expand Medicaid into all 50 states with adequate funding; 2) maintain the ability of young adults under the age of 26 to receive health insurance under the parents; 3) stand with women in maintaining reproductive health mandates; and 4) protect coverage for people living with disabilities, mental health challenges or pre-existing conditions.



**International: U.S. international development and humanitarian programs have been instrumental in reducing extreme poverty, mitigating global crises, and saving many lives over the years. With the looming cuts proposed by the president and some members of Congress, and given the unprecedented levels of instability and rapidly increasing humanitarian crises, how we can continue doing this good work when some in the government have chosen to make these devastating funding cuts?**

- President Trump has proposed cutting funding to the International Affairs budget by over 30 percent! Such draconian cuts will force aid agencies to reduce services to those they serve, many of whom are living in extreme poverty. The International Affairs budget constitutes just 1 percent of the federal budget. With so many diverse and complex challenges, we must protect and sustain our development and humanitarian programs to avoid more costly interventions in the future.
- We know that even short bouts of hunger and malnutrition in the critical 1,000 days between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday can lead to needless death and can have devastating lifelong consequences for children who survive – reducing their overall health, learning ability and earning potential.
- Currently, 12.2 million people need humanitarian assistance inside Syria, while 4 million people are seeking refuge in neighboring countries making this one of the worst refugee crises since World War II.
- Read the ELCA's "For Such A Time" resource on foreign assistance at [ELCA.org/prayfastact](http://ELCA.org/prayfastact).

**Housing: People facing homelessness and housing poverty are too often left as a low priority in the federal budget process. Will you prioritize addressing homelessness by working to expand access to housing programs?**

- This year, lack of affordable housing and rising costs are gaining more attention within local communities. Only an estimated 25 percent of people eligible for affordable housing actually receive assistance, and nearly [12 million families spend over half their incomes just on rent](#). Skyrocketing housing costs mean that many people have the difficult choice of paying for food or paying their bills, leaving many with the constant threat of eviction and losing their home.
- Congregations share a deep conviction to end homelessness, but the growing affordable-housing crisis challenges that goal. In the 2017 congressional spending, housing programs saw some of the smallest increases compared to other federal programs, and many state budgets face similar circumstances. As Lutherans who are helping people struggling with poverty, we would like to see more focus on affordable housing at the national level.

**Migration: The [New York Times reported](#) that the Department of Homeland Security has begun targeting parents and caretakers of unaccompanied children for deportation and possible criminal charges. How are you ensuring that our federal spending is going toward programs that are helping our community rather than separating families or stopping refugees from seeking safety?**

- The administration has requested an additional \$4.5 billion, (23 percent more than the 2016 budget), to expand detentions and deportations. This increase will come at the expense of programs that assist low-income and middle-income families in the U.S., provide life-saving care for people overseas, and fund assistance for refugees domestically and abroad.
- The House and Senate will need to determine whether to approve these additional funds. Already, the House Appropriations Committee has passed a bill that, among other things, would provide funding for an additional 6,000 immigration detention beds available every day to detain people. The Senate can stop this bill and use its power to ensure that families are not separated.
- Learn more about how the ELCA is addressing forced displacement at [ELCA.org/AMMPARO](http://ELCA.org/AMMPARO).