

# HOW TO LEVERAGE COMMUNICATIONS POST-ELECTION

After Election Day, advocates for infants, toddlers, parents, and families have a unique opportunity to set the stage for the next legislative session by influencing newly elected officials, demonstrating a capacity for holding leaders accountable, and shaping the policy landscape. This window, right after the election but before legislative sessions begin, is crucial for establishing your organization as a trusted resource, defining priorities, and maintaining momentum for long-term advocacy efforts. Communications play an essential role in this process by engaging elected officials, mobilizing supporters, and garnering public attention — setting the stage for policy victories, regardless of who wins the election.

Consistent, strategic communications play a key role in positioning PN-3 policies as a priority in the legislative cycle. NCIT member organizations and their supporters can set the stage for impactful policy wins by taking advantage of the post-election moment to engage elected officials and keep advocates mobilized.

## Key Post-Election Communications Strategies

- 1. Define newly elected officials early to encourage ‘promises kept.’** Begin your communications once the votes have been counted by acknowledging the election results and defining how you want your supporters to view the newly elected officials. Early communications allow you to shape the public’s perception of an elected official relative to your issues and build rapport before they are inundated with legislative work.
  - ▶ **Action:** If a champion for PN-3 policies wins, consider putting out a statement and/or social media post(s) highlighting relevant campaign promises they’ve made and now have the opportunity to keep. Highlighting the broad public support behind this issue can provide newly elected officials political cover, too. If someone hostile or indifferent to PN-3 issues has won, highlight that it’s on voters and advocates to push PN-3 issues to the top of their agenda.



**TIP:** You are defining the narrative for your supporters. Do so in a way that keeps them in the fight! When supporters’ preferred candidate wins an election, it’s easy for energized supporters to turn their attention elsewhere, comforted by the assumption that the newly elected official will do the right thing. As a trusted expert, your organization must signal that we can’t look away. Regardless of the outcome, highlight that the election marks the beginning of the road — not the end of it. Accordingly, your communications should incorporate a clear call to action that supporters can latch onto before the legislative session begins, such as writing ‘welcome’ letters, signing petitions, or showing up to press events to share their stories.

**2. Set clear goals and expectations.** Leverage communications to set expectations with newly elected officials and advocacy partners about what you hope to achieve during the next legislative session. This communication should be done in close partnership with your policy and/or advocacy team(s) to ensure there is a clear ask – whether that ask is strategically aspirational or an achievable win. Being clear about your goals and expectations helps align efforts across organizations and provides a framework for holding officials accountable in the months ahead.

- ▶ **Action:** Draft a one-pager summarizing your legislative goals for the coming session, and share it broadly with the public – journalists, coalition allies, and potential supporters – as well as with legislators and other public officials. Highlight elements of that one-pager on social media and in media interviews with journalists. Consider drafting a commentary piece or blog post highlighting what policies advocates support in the next session.



**3. Sustain visibility and engagement.** Plan a steady drumbeat of post-election communications to maintain visibility with elected officials and supporters. This can include newsletters, social media updates, blog posts, op-eds, and more. Frame communications around both immediate post-election reflections (e.g., election outcomes, new opportunities) and forward-looking goals (e.g., upcoming policy efforts). Consider leveraging storytelling as one way to demonstrate impact and urgency – and consider some of your top election cycle volunteers as storytellers to spotlight. Storytellers are often effective messengers with newly elected officials.

**4. Keep supporters engaged.** Volunteers and advocates who were active during election season are often exhausted afterward. Some grow complacent once their preferred candidate wins or dejected if their preferred candidate loses. As 501(c)(3) organizations, we cannot have preferred candidates; we are for the issues, and we must always push our issues. It's crucial to keep supporters engaged by shifting the focus from electoral work to policy advocacy – the WHY behind our hard work to get out the vote. Use stories, policy updates, and creative engagement strategies to convert their campaign energy into year-round advocacy. Consider sending thank-you messages to volunteers, acknowledging their election efforts, and previewing upcoming policy actions they can support. Center these communications on the power of their advocacy to make a difference in shaping PN-3 policies for the next legislative session.

## Communication Tactics To Leverage

- **Pitching journalists.** Send concise, tailored pitches to journalists who cover issues related to PN-3 policy. Highlight a timely news hook or data point, offering your experts and storytellers for commentary (i.e., people who can speak to how a policy has impacted them or could impact them).
- **Inviting journalists to a virtual round table press event.** Organize an in-person or virtual [media round table](#) and Q&A session with your experts, advocacy partners, and storytellers to position your organization as a resource on PN-3 policy. Invite journalists to attend, providing them with easy access to expert insights and key stories. This allows you to shape the post-election conversation while engaging with multiple reporters at once.
- **Posting on social media.** Share updates, infographics, and calls to action across your social platforms to raise awareness and drive engagement. Social media amplifies your message, reaches new audiences, and creates opportunities for real-time interaction with supporters and stakeholders. And don't forget to follow your target lawmakers and like and share their content – adding your own commentary where appropriate (e.g., a quote “tweet.”)
- **Writing commentary pieces or blog posts.** Develop op-eds, commentary pieces, or blog posts that position your organization as a thought leader on PN-3 policy and define what advocates are looking for in the upcoming legislative session. These platforms allow you to provide detailed analyses or solutions to current policy debates.
- **Responding to the news with a letter to the editor.** Craft letters to the editor (LTE) in response to relevant news stories (e.g., stories that mention your policy priority or stories that should mention it but do not). An LTE is a quick, timely way to influence public opinion and policymakers while injecting your organization's perspective into the public discourse.
- **Monitoring earned and social media coverage.** Track media mentions and social media discussions about your organization, the policymakers you're tracking, and key issues. This helps assess the impact of your communications efforts, refine future strategies, and stay informed of the conversation in real-time.

