

POST-ELECTION STRATEGIES: SECURING POLICY VICTORIES FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

national
collaborative
for infants
& toddlers

Supporting advocates fighting for improvements to early childcare and education, paid family and medical leave, SNAP, WIC, access to affordable healthcare, tax reform, and more.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To secure lasting victories that benefit infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and families, we must make the most of the advocacy life cycle. In election years, we must work to ensure candidates know prenatal-to-three (PN-3) policy issues are critical; once elected, we must be prepared to make the most of key inflection points to advance our policy agenda.

In this life cycle, the brief window immediately following an election is a uniquely valuable period of time. Before the next legislative session convenes, advocates can position themselves to achieve long-term policy victories and effective implementation.

In this moment, advocates can use techniques rooted in power mapping strategy ([more on that here](#)) to build authentic and long-lasting relationships with newly elected lawmakers, align with allies and partners on policy goals for the year ahead, and mobilize volunteers to drive policy action.

This toolkit offers tried-and-true advocacy strategies and real-world tips to help members of the National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers (NCIT) advance an impactful policy agenda. While these strategies can be useful at any point in a legislative cycle, they are especially effective after an election because supporters remain energized and lawmakers are motivated to take action. This toolkit shares strategies on scenario planning, post-election communications, preparing for new elections and building legislative target lists, engaging volunteers year-round, and asking smart questions of lawmakers.

Consider bringing this toolkit to planning meetings or retreats to share knowledge with your advocacy partners and supporters. Because no two advocacy plans are exactly the same, this toolkit aims to help you think creatively about the unique approaches that work best for your team and your policy priorities. *We hope you'll reach out to us if you have any questions. NCIT is here to support your advocacy efforts.*

We offer no-cost one-on-one coaching, tools and resources, connections to partner organizations, and training to organizations advocating for policies that impact expectant parents, infants, toddlers, and their families. Reach out to us today! All questions are welcome. [Connect with us here](#).

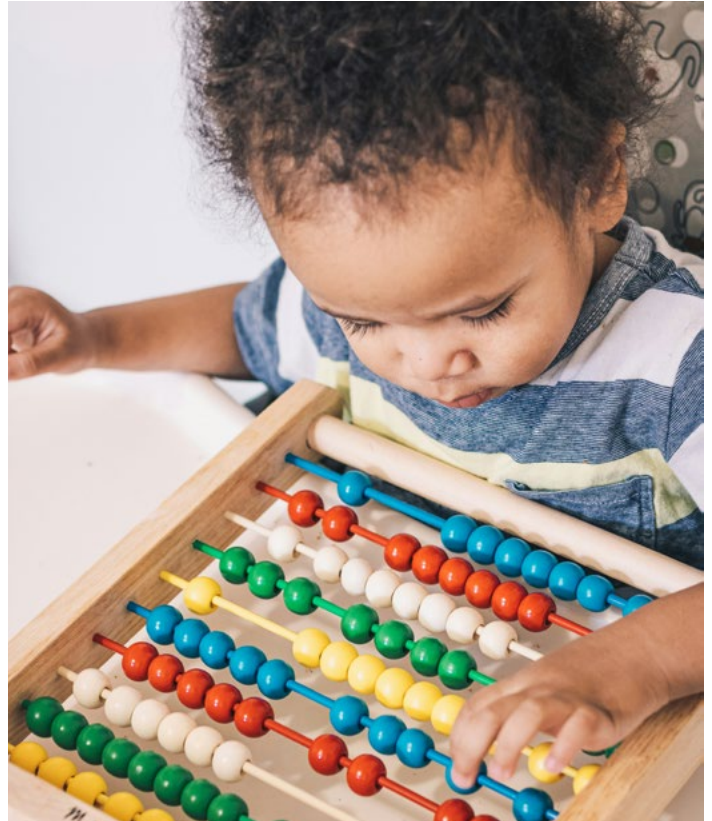


TABLE OF CONTENTS



Scenario Planning for Post-Election Success	4
How to Leverage Communications Post-Election	7
Why and How To Research the Policy Priorities of New Elected Officials	10
Leveraging a Legislative Target List	12
Getting to Know New Elected Officials:	
Planning Engagement and Asking Smart Questions	14
How to Keep Supporters Engaged Post-Election:	
Converting Campaign Energy into Policy Victories	16
Appendix	18

SCENARIO PLANNING FOR POST-ELECTION SUCCESS

Effective advocacy post-election with a new legislature or executive branch requires adapting to a new political landscape, whether you find yourself working with policymakers who support, oppose, or have mixed positions on your issues.

REGARDLESS OF WHO IS ELECTED AND THEIR LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR YOUR ISSUES, ADVOCATES MUST CONTINUE TO DRIVE THE POLICY AGENDA FORWARD.



Planning your strategy *ahead of time* according to the dynamics of the new political environment helps ensure your organization can hit the ground running to advance its priority issues.

Issue-Specific Scenario Planning

Crucially, advocates should adopt an issue-specific mindset when scenario planning. PN-3 issues are widely popular across the political spectrum, so determining whether a branch of government is “red” or “blue” is not enough insight to predict whether your PN-3 policy will succeed. There is a big difference between someone indicating they “support” early childhood education and someone willing to take action to create a path forward for legislation. Advocates need to assess which elected officials are willing to spend their political capital to prioritize advancing strong PN-3 legislation.

Some questions to consider when taking an issue-specific approach to scenario planning include:

- What are the possible electoral outcomes for each branch of government?
- Which of your organization’s policy priorities has the clearest path forward in each possible election scenario?
- Are your advocacy partners and coalition members aligned on which policy priority your movement will push forward in each scenario?
- What could victory look like regardless of the electoral outcome? Can you get more granular by looking at the executive branch for possible regulatory wins or local government to identify potential policy victories?
- How can communications and mobilization strategies support your advocacy efforts in each scenario?
- What do polls tell us about constituent support for various PN-3 policies from voters in key districts?

Below, we've included a sample table outlining key strategies, tactics, and timelines to consider in any given political scenario. Your organization can create its own issue-specific version of this chart by referencing the [blank chart for your use in the appendix](#). Regardless of the election outcome, you can and should seek ways to move the needle on your issues!

Political Scenario	Key Strategy	Tactic	Timeline Priority
Supportive Executive & Legislature	Keep the pressure up: Advance bold policy agenda.	Prioritize ambitious legislative, regulatory, and appropriations goals.	Engage immediately; aim for action in the first 90 days for the greatest chance at success.
<i>Use this optimal environment to push forward your boldest policy priorities. Time is critical, so ensure your proposals are introduced early and aligned with the legislature's agenda.</i>			
Supportive Legislature, Opposed Executive	Build public support and pressure for policy change with legislative action.	Advance legislation to force an executive veto; build coalition and media support.	Early introduction; plan for post-veto advocacy.
<i>Even if the executive is likely to veto your bill, moving it forward in the legislature can force a public stance and garner media attention, which builds pressure for future negotiations or public accountability.</i>			
Opposed Legislature, Supportive Executive	Pursue executive action.	Be prepared with executive orders, administrative rules, and budget allocations.	Identify opportunities in advance and make the most of the first 90 days.
<i>When legislative paths are blocked, focus on executive powers. Use the executive branch's authority to enact regulatory reforms, administrative actions, or budget recommendations.</i>			

 **FIND A BLANK CHART IN THE APPENDIX!**

Political Scenario	Key Strategy	Tactic	Timeline Priority
Opposed Legislature, Opposed Executive	Pursue a Build public support and demonstrate what an alternative approach looks like through a combination of aggressive defense against bad policy and an ambitious message bill.	Shift focus to public engagement and message campaigns; seek victories outside the legislature (e.g., judicial branch, narrative, and culture change).	Focus on coalition-building and media in the first 6 months.
<i>With opposition across the board, this scenario calls for shifting your focus to public engagement, demonstrating an alternative vision for your issue, looking for incremental wins, and laying the groundwork for future legislative victories.</i>			
Opposed Executive, Mixed Legislature (One Chamber Supportive)	Leverage action in the supportive chamber to demonstrate your vision, focus on possible bipartisan action, and seek victories outside the legislature.	Build coalitions across party lines, focus on pragmatic goals, and build public support for future action.	Engage early and focus on long-term relationship-building.
<i>This is where coalition-building comes into play. Make the most of actions in the supportive chamber and target sympathetic legislators for incremental or bipartisan measures that could advance.</i>			
Supportive Executive, Mixed Legislature (One Chamber Supportive)	Build public support and pressure for policy change with legislative action.	Advance smaller, bipartisan initiatives and test the waters for bigger proposals.	Introduce bills gradually; focus on incremental wins.
<i>Identify which of your priorities has the likeliest path forward, define that path, and then work toward it. In the absence of a path forward, work to advance smaller, pragmatic goals (e.g., looking at the judiciary branch or a lower level of government) while preparing for larger initiatives when the political dynamics shift.</i>			

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

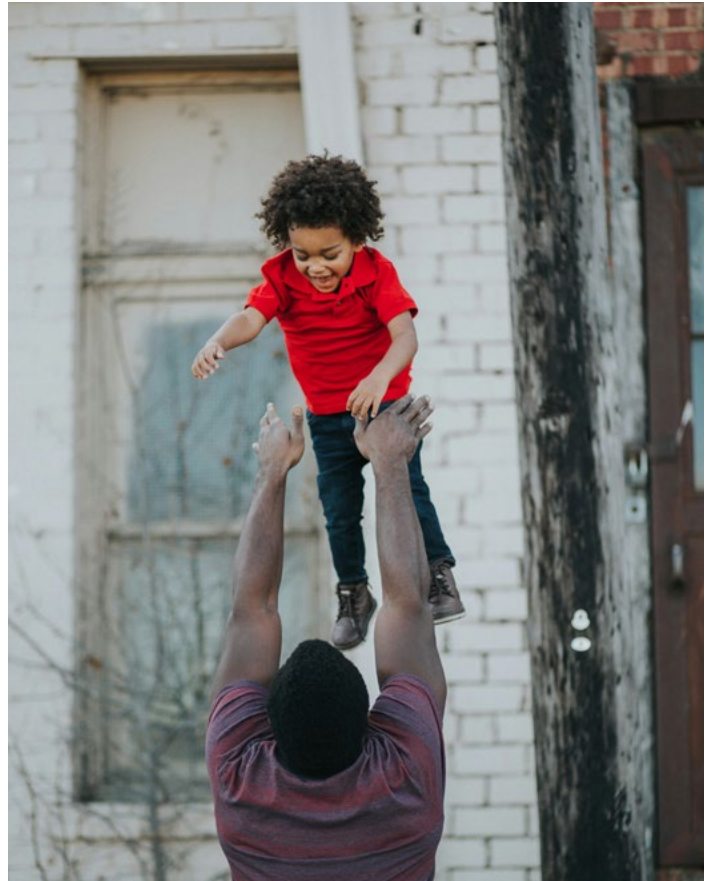
- **Pitching journalists.** Send concise, tailored pitches to journalists who cover issues related to PN-3 policy. Highlight a timely news hook or data point, offering your experts and storytellers for commentary (i.e., people who can speak to how a policy has impacted them or could impact them).
- **Inviting 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.



WHY AND HOW TO RESEARCH THE POLICY PRIORITIES OF NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIALS

Post-election research builds on research conducted during an election ([see more about candidate research here](#)). While campaign research focuses on where candidates stand on your policy priorities, post-election research seeks to more fully understand the policy priorities of newly elected officials, especially potential PN-3 champions.

Post-election research should identify opportunities for building and leveraging legislative relationships and understanding leaders' policy decision-making – reflecting fundamental theories of power mapping ([more about power mapping here](#)). For example, it is essential to know what other issues your top champions care about and who influences them. Advocates should aim to learn the many factors that influence lawmakers' decision-making and explore both targeted lawmakers and the larger legislative body, whether it's a school board, city council, or state legislature.



Post-Election Research Priorities

- **Don't wait!** Start research immediately after an election (if not sooner). It's crucial to know where your elected officials stand on prenatal to three issues as soon as possible.
- **Identify where lawmakers stand.** Knowing where lawmakers stand on your policy priorities can help you identify new legislative champions (e.g., people willing to spend political capital to advance your policy) for each of the policies you're tracking. Once you identify those potential champions, you should build a fuller profile of what other issues they prioritize so you know where you stand.
- **Identify opportunities for early relationship-building.** Understanding how lawmakers approach your issue, as well as what other issues they care about, helps you build deeper relationships with them – especially with new lawmakers who are eager to build their own relationships and “learn the ropes.” Strong research allows you to enter conversations positioned as a knowledgeable resource.
- **Share knowledge within the movement.** Post-election research can help you to prepare your supporters and allies. For example, research can help you define how an election could impact prenatal to three issues in the next legislative session.

How To Conduct Post-Election Research

- **Gather as much information as possible about lawmakers' decision-making.** Work to determine how lawmakers make decisions and their underlying motivations. Use any knowledge available to you, whether it comes from your prior conversations with lawmakers when they were candidates on the campaign trail or from professional relationships, social networks, online research, or movement allies (see below for sample research questions).
- **Build your team.** Post-election research often works best when informed by many people rather than conducted independently by a single person. If capacity allows, consider having multiple people on your research team to provide a diversity of perspectives and knowledge and minimize potential biases. This can include internal colleagues and coalition partners.
- **Create questions for your team to ask lawmakers directly.** Some questions can only be resolved by asking lawmakers directly. Set aside those questions for get-to-know-you conversations with lawmakers, and aim to hold those conversations as early as possible (far ahead of the next legislative session). Learn more about [creating effective questions for candidates here](#), and learn more about [meeting with lawmakers and asking them questions here](#).
- **Create questions for your team to investigate.** Develop a set of questions to understand how lawmakers make decisions. The goal is to fully understand how decisions are made: What issues are most important? Who has power, and how is it used? Who carries influence, and in what ways?

Sample Questions To Explore in Your Post-Election Research

- Who are the lawmaker's top staff and advisors?
Which campaign relationships do they appear to most closely maintain?
- Who manages their communications and media relations?
- Where does the lawmaker live? Do they have children or other family members who may be familiar with prenatal to three issues?
- What issues do they care most about – what do they talk about the most?
What moves them? Will bad press influence them, for example?
- Does the lawmaker have any relatives or close friends in other leadership roles or public servant roles?
- What positions of power do they hold (committee assignments, caucus roles, or other titles)?
- Who leads the legislative committees that you care most about? Who is in key leadership?
- Who moved off or onto your top committees?
- Who is in the leadership of the legislative body now that wasn't before,
and what kind of relationship do they have with your legislative champions?
- What PN-3 policy issues have been the subject of campaigns or issue debates in their district?

LEVERAGING A LEGISLATIVE TARGET LIST

As you prepare for each new legislative session, one essential piece of work is building a new (or refreshing your previous) legislative target list for each chamber. A target list is a comprehensive list of legislators divided into categories based on their demonstrated support for your policy priorities. These lists are not typically for public use but rather to guide your policy education and advocacy efforts during each legislative session.

Why Build a Target List?

Following an election, it can be overwhelming to look at Congress or a state legislature made up of potentially hundreds of individuals and decide where to start with your advocacy program. Target lists allow you to group legislators based on their level of support for your policy priorities and then prioritize where you want to focus based on your goals for the session.

How to Build an Effective Target List

- **Step 1: Research.** The first step to building an effective target list that captures the position of each policymaker is doing the research. If you have a target list from the last session, your research should focus on new electeds to update the list for the next legislative session. It is important to approach this work with clear guidelines. While you can get a sense of where policymakers stand on children's rights broadly, a target list will be more effective with greater levels of specificity. For example, create one target list for Early Head Start and a separate one for paid leave because legislators may be more or less supportive depending on which of your issues is before them. [Please click here for more information on where to look and what to look for when researching legislators' policy positions.](#)
- **Step 2: Structure.** The structure of your target lists also impacts their effectiveness. It is important to be able to group legislators in a way that allows for nuance in their position. For instance, a two-column list – divided into *supports* and *opposes* – likely will not provide sufficient nuance to guide your advocacy, whereas a five-column list – ranking legislators on a scale from *very opposed*, *leans opposed*, *mixed/unknown*, *leans supportive*, *very supportive* – will provide better insight into who needs to hear from you before a vote on your issue.
- **Step 3: Placement.** The process of placing legislators into one of the five columns should be as objective as possible; however, recognizing this can't be entirely objective, you should try to apply consistent criteria for each column to mitigate subjectivity. Criteria could include votes, co-sponsorships, public statements, membership in a relevant caucus, etc. For example, your criteria for the *very supportive column* could be that they need to have voted in support of your issue or perhaps cosponsored a priority bill. This would mean that no seemingly supportive, newly elected legislators would be in the *very supportive* column. They would be placed in *leans supportive* until they have taken one of the actions needed to meet the criteria for *very supportive*. Because this document is for internal use, it is best to err on the side of caution rather than giving credit when a legislator has only made positive statements versus having taken a policy action.

- **Step 4:** Documentation and accuracy. To maximize the effectiveness of your target list, it is helpful to use a notes column that documents why a legislator is in a particular column, especially if it seems surprising. For example, noting that a supportive legislator is in the leans column because they haven't yet had the opportunity to meet the criteria for the 'very' column or when placing someone in the middle column, noting if they are unknown because you haven't found anything indicating their position yet or if they're mixed because they have made both supportive and opposing statements.



TIP: Ensure your target lists are as accurate as possible by updating them after significant actions occur, such as a vote or a new bill being introduced.

How to Use a Target List

Target lists are best used to guide your time and focus based on your policy advocacy goals. For instance, to maximize the chances your bill moves through the Committee, prioritize meeting with legislators on that Committee and tailor your meeting based on which column the legislator is in. Before a vote, it can be best to reach out to legislators in the *unknown/mixed* and *leans supportive* columns. This doesn't mean that the very supportive or opposed legislators wouldn't benefit from outreach, but time and capacity are often tight, and it's good to start where your outreach is most needed. However, if your goal is building outspoken champions for your issue, you might focus on the *very supportive* column, or if your goal is more long-term, like trying to move legislators who are opposed toward being on the fence or even supportive, you might focus on the *leans opposed* column.

The bottom line is that legislative target lists are a valuable tool that busy advocates can use and update throughout the legislative session to maximize their time and impact



GETTING TO KNOW NEW ELECTED OFFICIALS: PLANNING ENGAGEMENT AND ASKING SMART QUESTIONS

Building long-term relationships with legislators and their staff is one of the most important things you can do as a policy advocate. Thus, following an election, it is critical to identify newly elected legislators, assess where they are on your policy issues, and prioritize meeting new legislators based on your goals for the legislative session.

Benefits of Early Meetings With New Legislators

- **Newly elected officials often don't have staff initially** and are appreciative of resources such as evidence-based policy recommendations about which bills to cosponsor and why.
- **No one is an expert at everything**, and new legislators are working to learn about many new policy issues at once. By getting in early and offering policy resources and evidence-based expertise, you can establish yourself and your organization as a go-to resource for elected officials and their staff.
- **Getting to know the legislators and their early staff** as they set up their professional office provides insight into how the elected official operates (or plans to), who they rely on, and which issues are their top priorities.

Where To Begin

It is useful to reach out to every new legislator because they should all be hearing why your issue is important and what they can do to support it.

- 1. Research newly elected officials' positions on your issues.** [Click here for more information on where to look and what to look for when researching legislators' policy positions.](#)
- 2. Create your target list.** Build your legislative target list so you can decide where to start based both on your goals and where they are on your issues. [Click here for more information on how to build and leverage an effective target list.](#)
- 3. Schedule meetings.** Set up meetings for the start of the legislative session. Below are a few different options for prioritizing those early meetings.
 - ▶ Begin with newly elected legislators who have been vocally supportive of your issue on the campaign. These legislators are more likely to talk about your policy issues, and you want them to use your recommended messaging and talking points and come to you with policy questions.
 - ▶ Start with new elected officials who have been assigned to Committees with jurisdiction over your policy issues. This is another group likely to speak about your issue, so you want them to have your message and think of you as a resource.

- ▶ Prioritize new elected officials who don't seem to have a clear position on your issues. This is a group you should target for education and persuasion advocacy to increase support for your issues.
- ▶ Reaching out to all new elected officials so that you can share resources and establish your organization as an authority on your policy issues.
- ▶ Meet with each legislative chamber's leadership, as well as any new chairs or members of relevant committees, because they have an outsized impact on how your policies move through the legislature.

These initial meetings and contacts allow you to make a strong first impression with elected legislators. It is important that you go in prepared, not only with the resources you want to share with them (e.g., one-pagers on your priority policy issues) but with solid questions that will elicit information that will benefit your advocacy over time.



Sample Questions to Ask Legislators in Early Meetings

- Ask about their family. Connecting over something more personal is great for relationship building, but be mindful of your limited time with legislators.
- Ask if they have any personal connections to your issues (e.g., is their partner a pediatrician, do they have young children in child care, etc.).
- Ask about their relationships with other elected officials (e.g., is another legislator a personal friend, etc.). This is vital information for power mapping.
- Ask about the Committees to which they hope to be assigned and why. This information provides insight into their top priorities.
- Ask what papers they read and/or how they get their news. This information can be helpful when trying to influence them on a policy issue.
- Ask what questions they have about your issues. Asking this question allows you to assess how much education you should provide.

For additional guidance, [click here for best practices when meeting with an elected official](#).

HOW TO KEEP SUPPORTERS ENGAGED POST-ELECTION: CONVERTING CAMPAIGN ENERGY INTO POLICY VICTORIES

In political campaigns, the period immediately before an election day, known as “GOTV” – short for “get out the vote” – can be the most exhilarating moment of a campaign. For advocates working year-round on policy, however, it can feel challenging to convert campaign buzz into policy momentum. Volunteers can burn out on campaigns, or when the results of an election are mixed, the lack of a clear path to a policy victory can be demotivating.




Unfortunately, once a volunteer becomes inactive, it can be much harder to reactivate them. Many advocates learn this lesson far too late: When a policy goal reaches its final stretches in a legislative cycle, and volunteers are needed to submit testimony or rally at the capital for a key floor vote, organizations that haven’t been maintaining their volunteer relationships may find that their volunteers don’t respond.

Advocates must get creative and think of ways to engage volunteers year-round – especially at times when volunteers are most likely to drift away, such as during lame-duck periods, holidays, legislative breaks, and in the weeks and months immediately following major elections.

Key Strategies for Keeping Supporters Engaged Long-Term

- **Create a calendar of communications.** To avoid losing momentum – as well as to avoid over-communicating to volunteers and causing email or phone “list fatigue” – it’s helpful to create a calendar of your communications and schedule your emails, texts, calls, or even your social media posts – as well as volunteer events – in advance. The goal is to create a steady drumbeat that keeps your policy at the top of your volunteers’ minds throughout the year.



TIP: A communications calendar needs to work for your team’s capacity and skills. Select a calendar tool that works best for your team in the long run: Any format of calendar can work, whether it is a scheduling software, a paper calendar, or a Word or Google document or spreadsheet.

- **Don't overthink it. Choose sustainable practices that work for you.** Plan out roles and responsibilities that work in the long run. Decide who on the team will send messages to supporters and how many messages they could sustainably send per month or week. When selecting the platform(s) your team will use (email, social media, text, phone trees, etc.), keep in mind that “less is more” – if you aren't quite sure you can maintain new social media accounts, don't create them.



TIP: Consider using Customer Relationship Management, or CRM technology, as a central hub for information about your supporters. Use it to track engagement, automate follow-up communication, and break up audiences for targeted outreach based on your supporters' interests, skills, and availability. Look for open-source or commercial CRMs that support nonprofit policy advocacy, such as Action Network, Mobilize, or Quorum.

- **Plan a variety of actions for volunteers to take.** To appeal to a wider range of volunteers, plan a wider range of communications and activities with which volunteers can engage. Plan your team's communications around actions that volunteers can take, as well as any other legislative updates or fundraising appeals you're already planning. Think creatively about activities that achieve a range of goals like relationship-building and building your base (such as giving folks opportunities to lead or train others), as well as direct advocacy. For example, advocates can host virtual policy update calls, storytelling workshops, informal picnics, or social media engagement activities like asking supporters to share selfies or to share their parenting stories.
- **Consider the emotional impact of your communications.** Just as emotions shift in real conversation, so should communications with volunteers throughout the year. Consider how your communications generate emotions like gratitude, joy, hope, anger, fear, or sadness. Uplifting messages – such as inspiring biographies of longtime volunteers or positive press coverage of your movement – have the power to sustain and deepen bonds. Shocking or negative messages – such as alerts about harmful policies newly introduced by lawmakers – can motivate people to quickly take action. However, negative messages can lose power if volunteers become exhausted or feel disheartened, so use those messages sparingly and honestly.
- **Start planning early!** Early planning can go a long way to keep your volunteers engaged, active, and ready to support your policy goals. By thinking ahead about a calendar of communications and deciding who on the team will do what (and when), advocates can set themselves up for greater success.

APPENDIX

Political Scenario	Key Strategy	Tactic	Timeline Priority
Supportive Executive & Legislature			
<p><i>Use this optimal environment to push forward your boldest policy priorities. Time is critical, so ensure your proposals are introduced early and aligned with the legislature's agenda.</i></p>			
Supportive Legislature, Opposed Executive			
<p><i>Even if the executive is likely to veto your bill, moving it forward in the legislature can force a public stance and garner media attention, which builds pressure for future negotiations or public accountability.</i></p>			
Opposed Legislature, Supportive Executive			
<p><i>When legislative paths are blocked, focus on executive powers. Use the executive branch's authority to enact regulatory reforms, administrative actions, or budget recommendations.</i></p>			

Political Scenario	Key Strategy	Tactic	Timeline Priority
Opposed Legislature, Opposed Executive			
<i>This is where coalition-building comes into play. Make the most of actions in the supportive chamber and target sympathetic legislators for incremental or bipartisan measures that could advance.</i>			
Opposed Executive, Mixed Legislature (One Chamber Supportive)			
<i>Identify which of your priorities has the likeliest path forward, define that path, and then work toward it. In the absence of a path forward, work to advance smaller, pragmatic goals (e.g., looking at the judiciary branch or a lower level of government) while preparing for larger initiatives when the political dynamics shift.</i>			
Supportive Executive, Mixed Legislature (One Chamber Supportive)			
<i>With opposition across the board, this scenario calls for shifting your focus to public engagement, demonstrating an alternative vision for your issue, looking for incremental wins, and laying the groundwork for future legislative victories.</i>			