



— AN INITIATIVE OF —  
AMERICA'S **SERVICE** COMMISSIONS



## Engaging Elected Officials to Promote Volunteerism

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AL!VE Membership

May 20, 2020



# Welcome & Why Educating Elected Officials Matters

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America's Service Commissions (ASC)

## Welcome & Intros



- Introduce yourself in the Chat Box:
  - Name, Organization, State
  - What do you hope to learn or gain from today's webinar?





## About ASC

- **Mission:** To lead and elevate the state service network
- America's Service Commissions (ASC) is a **nonpartisan, nonprofit** association representing and promoting the 52 state service commissions across the United States and their programs.
- Formerly known as the Association of State Service Commissions, ASC is a peer network of governor-appointed commissioners, along with staff from the state service commissions.
- State service commissions are governor-appointed public agencies or nonprofit organizations made up of more than 1,000 commissioners - private citizens leading the nation's philanthropic and service movement. The nation's **52 state service commissions** operate at the state and local level, administering 80% of AmeriCorps State/National funds. These funds support more than 40,000 AmeriCorps members.
- Administers the **States for Service (S4S) Public Policy Coalition** ([www.states4service.org](http://www.states4service.org))





## Today's Agenda

- **Welcome & Introductions**
- **Why Educating Elected Officials Matters**
  - What's In It for You
- **Updates from the Hill**
  - What's Happening Now — Pending Legislation Related to National and Community Service
- **Set Your Advocacy Goals**
  - Educating vs. Lobbying
  - Desired Outcomes
  - Targeting the Right Decision-Makers
  - Decide on your strategy — Virtual campaigns/outreach, Capitol Hill Day, District meetings, special events
- **How to Get Started and Make Your Case**
  - Top 10 Tips for Effective Meetings
  - Key Messages and Materials
- **Keep the Momentum Going**
  - How to Maintain Relationships with Elected Officials
  - Structuring Advocacy Into Your Work
  - Join the Coalition
- **Questions & Answers**
- **Adjourn**

## Why Educating Elected Officials Matters

- It is our responsibility as recipients and stewards of federal funds to provide information back to the American people through their elected representatives about what we are doing with those funds and the impact we are making.
- By providing information to Members of Congress and other elected officials, you are assisting them in their work of developing of informed, high-quality legislative objectives by providing important factual information and potential solutions and strategies to address community needs and issues.
- You are the expert on your subject; not them.



## Advocacy: What's In It For You

- Visibility and Awareness
- Influence and Prestige
- Relationship-Building
- Increased Funding
- Improved Policies
- Protection from Future Cuts or Policy Changes
- Support and Representation





## Updates From the Hill

Tom Branen, Chief Policy Officer  
America's Service Commissions (ASC)



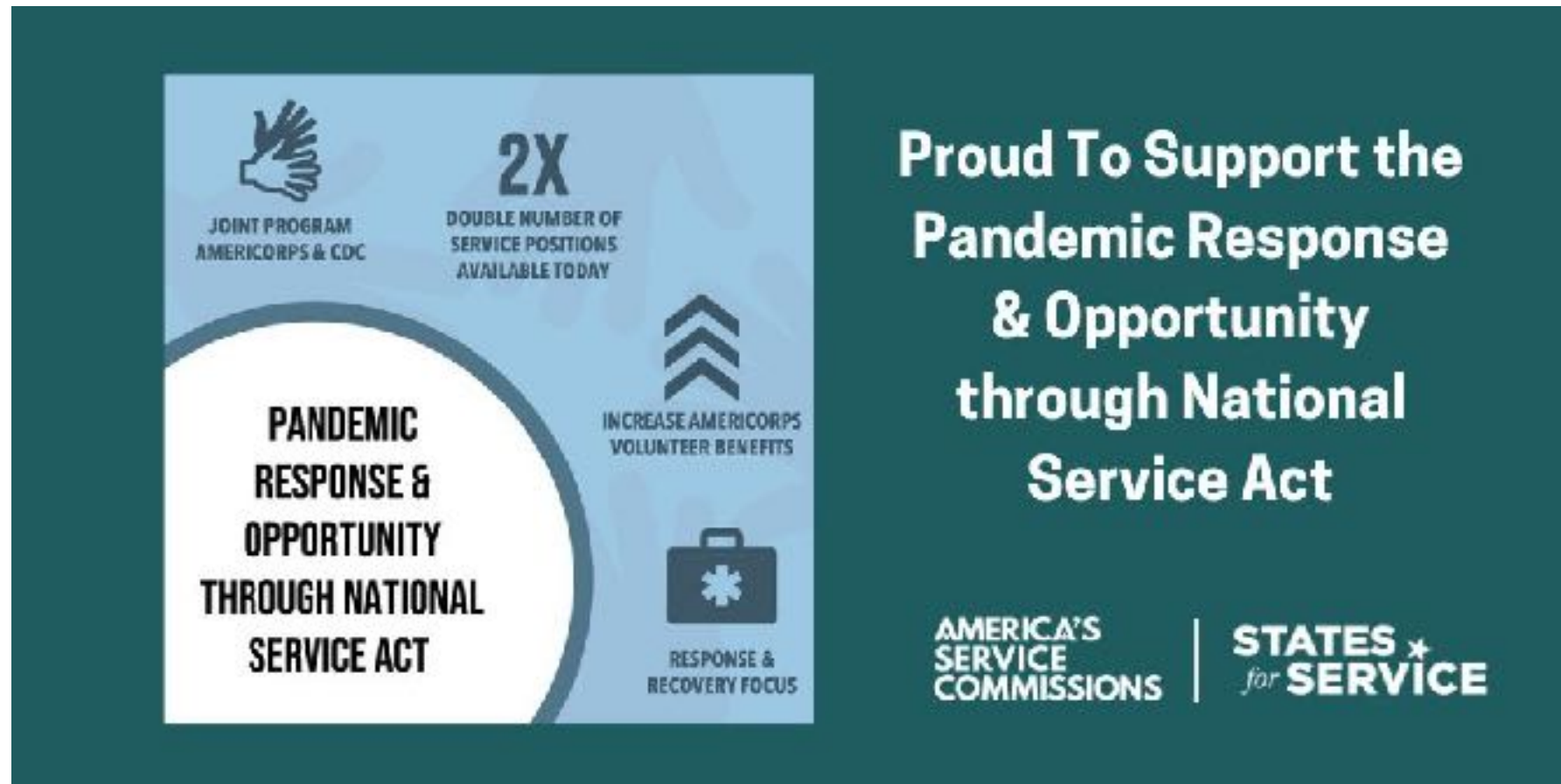


## What's Happening Now — Pending Legislation Related to National and Community Service

### • **S.3624 and H.R. 6702 - Pandemic Response and Opportunity Through National Service Act**

- Announced on April 22, 2020 – led by Senators Chris Coons (DE), Jack Reed (RI), Amy Klobuchar (MN), Tammy Duckworth (IL), Martin Heinrich (NM), Ed Markey (MA), Chris Van Hollen (MD), Richard Blumenthal (CT), and Dick Durbin (IL).
- House companion bill led by Representatives Matsui, Price, and Houlihan.
- Combines a number of the priorities from other national service proposals and is THE vehicle.
- Would fund **750,000** national service positions over a **three-year period** of response and recovery, in part to meet the projected need for as many as 300,000 public health workers.
- Would create a **partnership between AmeriCorps and CDC inspired by FEMA Corps** to provide for additional response surge capacity that could be deployed to specific areas as needed.
- Would **provide flexibilities for national service programs to grow quickly** and respond to dynamic local recovery needs.
- **Prioritizes funding for activities directly related to COVID-19 response and recovery**, such as: public health services, emergency logistics, workforce and reemployment services, education support (including for adult learners), and services that combat nutrition insecurity.
- Invites participation by a diverse range of Americans by launching an **awareness and outreach campaign** on response service opportunities and **supporting the Volunteer Generation Fund**.

## Pandemic Response & Opportunity through National Service Act



Read more:

<https://www.coons.senate.gov/news/press-releases/sen-coons-colleagues-introduce-legislation-to-significantly-expand-national-service-programs-to-respond-to-covid-19>

<https://www.duckworth.senate.gov/news/press-releases/duckworth-durbin-help-introduce-legislation-to-significantly-expand-national-service-programs-to-respond-to-covid-19>

## Other Pending Legislation We're Tracking...

- **Work Now Act of 2020 (S.3747)** - A bill to help charitable nonprofit organizations provide services to meet the increasing demand in community needs caused by the coronavirus pandemic, preserve and create jobs in the nonprofit sector, reduce unemployment, and promote economic recovery.
- **Inspire to Serve Act of 2020 (H.R. 6415)** - A bill to implement the recommendations of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service and expand the culture of service to and strengthen the civic fabric of American society
- **UNITE Act of 2020 (S.3642 & H.R. 6853)** - Predecessor to Sen. Coons' bill led by Sen. Markey of MA; bill to mobilize individuals in the fight against coronavirus by expanding volunteer opportunities in AmeriCorps, expanding employment opportunities at FEMA, and utilizing the expertise of returned Peace Corps volunteers
- **Health Force & Resilience Force Act (S.3606)** - Led by Sen. Gillibrand of NY to provide for the establishment of a Health Force and a Resilience Force to respond to public health emergencies and meet public health needs.



**Set Your Advocacy Goals**

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## Lobbying vs. Educating

- **Educating** = providing factual information about who you are, what you're doing, and the impact you are having; inviting someone to learn more.
  - ✦ *Ex. "Our nonprofit serves 2,000 clients and mobilizes 500 volunteers each month to address critical needs with housing and homelessness."*
  - ✦ *Ex. "We'd love for you to come for a site visit and tour to see our volunteers in action."*
  - ✦ ***Is always allowable, even with federal funds***
  
- **Lobbying** = asking for things (votes, money, favor)
  - ✦ *Ex. "Please vote yes on H.R. 123."*
  - ✦ *Ex. "We are asking you to increase funding for the Volunteer Generation Fund."*
  - ✦ *Ex. "Please endorse and co-sponsor bill H.R. 6702."*
  - ✦ ***Cannot be done with federal funds or while charging time to a federal grant.***

## Desired Outcomes

- To **establish** a relationship with the policymaker
- To **educate and raise awareness** about your impact and geographic locations
- To **express** your concerns, issues, or needs
- To **share** your recommended funding requests and policy priorities
- To **strengthen** an existing relationship with a policymaker who can be your champion
- To **neutralize** a policymaker who is not a supporter
- To **testify** or respond to a request for information as a field expert
- To **invite** key policymakers to visit your organization or speak to your group - i.e., site visits, roundtables, open houses, galas or special events, etc.
- Other?



## Targeting the Right Decision-Makers



**Ask Yourself: Does it make more sense to focus on local, state, or federal?**

- **Local** - Mayors, City Council, County Commissioners
  - ex. Mayor's Proclamations, Local recognition opportunities, City Council meeting testimony, citywide events, local initiatives and partnerships, securing city/county funding
- **State** - Governor, Lt. Governor, State Legislature
  - ex. State-specific service legislation, Governor Proclamations, statewide events/initiatives, securing state funding
- **Federal** - Members of U.S. Congress (Senators and House of Representatives), White House, Federal Agencies
  - ex. Federal funding and appropriations, federal legislation, federal initiatives and partnerships, national events/recognition

## Deciding On A Strategy


- Virtual/remote options
  - Email Campaigns
  - Phone Call Campaigns
  - Personalized outreach - individual emails to key policymakers (typically requires having some relationship/staff contact info)
  - Snail mail - letters, postcards, invitations
- Capitol Hill Days (“fly-ins”) in Washington, D.C.
- District meetings with local offices
- Special events - site visits, open houses, galas/fundraisers, award or graduation ceremonies, community roundtables





## #ServiceValentine Campaign February 10-21, 2020

- **Annual virtual campaign** led by States for Service
- Takes about 10 minutes to participate using our **Phone2Action** platform
- Phone Calls, Emails, and Twitter
- Resulted in 550 contacts to Congress
- Goals:
  - Promote why we love service (impact, benefits, geographic scope)
  - Push back on President's Budget release
  - Generate a "buzz" on Capitol Hill leading up to and following our Capitol Hill Day



### #SERVICEVALENTINE

#### Call the Hill to show your LOVE for service!

Calling all national service friends and champions across the states:  
It's almost Valentine's Day, and it's time once again time to take action to show our LOVE for service to our representatives on Capitol Hill!

This week, on February 10, President Trump will be releasing his suggested budget to Congress for 2021.

For the **fourth time in a row**, the President will recommend the complete elimination of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and its programs, including **AmeriCorps**, **Senior Corps**, and the **Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF)**. If enacted, President Trump's budget would also eliminate federal funding for state service commissions.




**We cannot let this happen.** The time is now to begin the fight for 2021.

Luckily, Congress constitutionally holds the "power of the purse." Only Congress can decide how to set the federal budget. So we need you to let your Members of Congress know that we need their continued support to reject these proposed cuts in order to **protect and expand** national service.

Join the States for Service Coalition this month from February 10-21 to make your voice heard and to protect our critical service programs.

Please take 10 minutes using this campaign tool to call, email, and tweet at your Members of Congress. Phone calls are by far the most effective way to ensure your voice is heard, so we've provided a special tool and phone

#### Enter your information to take action now. Help us create a buzz for service!

Enter your phone number to call your officials!


Mr.

Email ()

Mobile Phone

Home Address (123 Any St)




Zip Code

 **Call Me**

☒ Send me emails about this campaign

☒ Send me text messages about this campaign

\*You'll receive a call from 202-335-6548 that will provide you guidance on what to say to your officials, and then patch you through directly to them.



# How to Get Started and Make Your Case: Top 10 Tips for Legislative Office Visits

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## Legislative Office Visits

- Nothing is more effective in building personal relationships and getting your point across than a 1:1 meeting between you and your elected representatives.
- Knowing the proper way to set up and conduct personal meetings with your lawmaker, and/or their key staff assistants, will enhance your ability to convey your message about a specific issue.



## Tip #1: Do Some Homework

- **Do a little homework.** Take a few minutes to plan out your visit. Be clear about what you want to achieve during your meeting - what impact do you most want to highlight and what, if anything, do you want to ask for?
- **Determine which of your sites, projects, or volunteers are in their district.**
  - Bring a list for reference that includes your geographic coverage and district info, if at all possible.
- **Learn about your lawmaker** (i.e., committees they serve on, names of key staff members, stated position or previous votes on your issue, etc.).
  - For example, use a free website like **Govtrack.us** or visit your Member of Congress' official website to see what they are currently most focused on.





## Tip #2: Come Prepared with “Leave Behind” Materials



- **Always bring business cards** — they will ask for them when you check in for your appointment.
- **Be prepared.** Make sure to bring a few brief “leave behind” materials about your organization, Volunteer Generation Fund/AmeriCorps grants, and your policy priorities sheet of what you are asking for — but don't be overwhelming. Present your facts in an orderly, concise, positive manner. Information and examples that demonstrate clearly the impact and benefits of service are especially helpful.
- Package it all up in a single **folder** you can leave behind with your logo on it.

## Tip #3: Be Prompt and Patient

- **Be prompt and patient.** When it is time to meet with your lawmaker, be punctual and patient.
  - Arrive early to allow enough time to get through federal building security and find the office you are going to.
  - Bring your ID just in case and plan to go through metal detectors.
  - It is not uncommon for a lawmaker or staff to be late or to get interrupted during your meeting. If this happens, be flexible. You may decide to continue the meeting with the staff assistant, or reschedule for another time.
  - Sometimes meetings may take place in less-than-ideal areas such as waiting rooms, hallways, or even closets!
  - Most meetings last only 15-30 minutes; but with a larger group or a very engaged Member, they may last an hour.



## Tip #4: Be Knowledgeable, But Be Yourself

- **Be knowledgeable, but also be yourself.**
- Be friendly and personable. Connect with legislators and their staff about other things you might have in common.
- Share relevant experiences where appropriate - personal stories or anecdotes will make the meeting more memorable.
- Do not feel that you need to be an expert on every single detail. Most elected officials are generalists, like many of us.
- Know when to admit "I don't know," and offer to follow up with the information.

## Tip #5: Build the Relationship

- **Remember you are there to build a relationship.** If the lawmaker is supportive of your commission and national service, be sure to acknowledge your appreciation during the course of the visit.
- If the opposite is true, think of the phrase, "**No permanent friends, no permanent enemies.**" Someday, on a future issue of importance to you, she/he may come through. In the meantime, your visit may prevent the lawmaker from being an active opponent. In other words, you may help to turn down the heat on the other side.





## Tip #6: Don't Stay Too Long

- **Don't stay too long.** Try to get closure on your issue. If you hear what you had hoped for, express your thanks and leave.
- If you reach an impasse, thank them for their time regardless.
- Leave room to continue the discussion at another time.



## Tip #7: Be a Helpful Expert



- **Be Helpful.** All lawmakers want to represent the best interests of their district or state. And they want to get re-elected! Make a special effort to demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the member's constituency.
- If appropriate, describe to your lawmaker how you and others can be of assistance to them (within reason and ensuring compliance with the law). **Offer to become an expert resource** to your lawmaker when policy issues arise in which you have particular knowledge or experience.

## Tip #8: Take Photos and Use Social Media!

- **Ask for a photo!** Have someone take a photo of you and your group with the Member of Congress and/or their staff. If they say no, snap a selfie outside the legislator's office sign instead. Try to include your logo somewhere in the picture (wear a button, hold up a folder/flyer, etc.).
- Post that photo on social media and tag the Member of Congress's official account with a thank you message.
  - Ex. "Had the privilege of meeting with @RepSmith today to introduce him to @CommissionName and discuss the impact of @AmeriCorps @NationalService in his district. Thank you for a great meeting! #States4Service #Stand4Service"



**Pro Tip:** Create a unique Hill Day Sign to use for your photos!

## Why Use Social Media to Engage

WHO'S ON FACEBOOK?



Senate

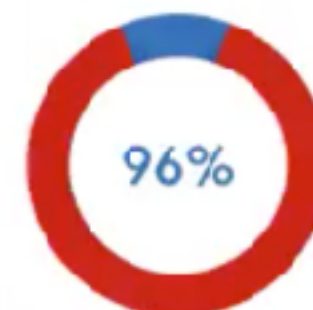


House

WHO'S ON TWITTER?



Senate



House

*Source: Phone2Action*



## Tip #9: Follow Up



- **Always follow up.** Immediately send a thank you note to your lawmaker. Email is best if you want it to arrive quickly. Snail mail is also nice but takes much longer. Or do both!
- Recap the purpose of your meeting and the points covered, and provide any additional information or materials that might have been requested.
- Reinforce that your interest is not only your issue, but why it should matter to your lawmaker's district/constituency.
- Be sure to thank any specific staff members by name who helped arrange your meeting, who attended the meeting with you and your lawmaker, or who have been assigned to work on your issue. Establishing a good relationship with a lawmaker's key staff can be key to a strong, on-going relationship with your lawmaker.



## Tip #10: Have Fun!



- **Enjoy yourself.** You are making a huge difference just by engaging in public policy, being an active citizen, and serving as a national service/commission representative. Be proud.
- Go with a buddy if possible to make your experience even more energizing and empowering.
- Take some time to walk around and explore beautiful Capitol Hill! Eat in one of the Capitol building cafes or cafeterias. Find Capitol Hill Visitors maps and other info: <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/plan-visit/maps-tips>

## Suggested Materials to Bring

- **Hill Day Sign** (for selfies and photos)
- **Business Cards**
- **Folder** that includes:
  - Your **Organizational 1-Pager**
  - **List or Map Showing Geographic Sites/Coverage** (ideally with district-specific info)
  - **Invitations or Save-the-Dates** for any upcoming special events
  - **Policy/Funding Requests** (if applicable)





## Key Messages

- Government cannot do it alone - **the nonprofit/voluntary sector is ESSENTIAL** to meeting our nation's most critical needs.
- Volunteer and service-based programs are extremely **cost-effective**
- We impact not only those clients we serve, but the volunteers who are serving.
- We believe in the importance of federal funding for **national and community service** programs (such as AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Volunteer Generation Fund) to invest in our future and allow more Americans to serve.





**Keep the Momentum Going**

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## How to Maintain Relationships With Elected Officials Long-Term

- Introductory meetings
- Find connections; but also don't be afraid to “cold call”
- Send your Annual Report or newsletters to staff with a personal note
- Tag them on social media when posting exciting news or positive highlights
- Invitations to special events
- Follow-up requests, phone calls, and meetings
- Thank you notes when good things happen or legislation passes
- Annual check-in's (at least)
- **Structure advocacy & elected official engagement into your existing job roles/duties and organizational calendar as part of your regular, recurring work.**







## Join Our Coalition

- States for Service (called “S4S” for short), is the **privately funded advocacy arm** of America’s Service Commissions, the national association for the 52 state service commissions.
- Coalition made up of representatives from state service commissions, AmeriCorps programs, and other state service programs such as Senior Corps, VISTA, and the Volunteer Generation Fund.
- Focused on expanding service at the **state and local level**.
- We mobilize through **peer-led networks** to advocate for service and lead campaigns.
- **Individual and organizational memberships** available: [www.states4service.org](http://www.states4service.org)



# Questions?



**Thank you!**



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