In-District Meeting Guide

AIDSWatch at Home 2010
What’s in this presentation?

- AIDSWatch Overview
- In-District Meetings
- Finding your Members of Congress
- Organizing a Meeting
- Post-Meeting Follow-up
• **AIDSWatch** is the largest annual constituent-based federal HIV/AIDS advocacy and education event in the U.S.

• Hundreds of HIV/AIDS advocates descend upon Washington, D.C. to directly lobby their Members of Congress for support of HIV/AIDS related federal policy.
• For every advocate able to make it to Washington, D.C. there are *hundreds* of advocates in their home states who can’t make the trip.

• There’s still a lot you can do from home to be a part of this nationwide effort!
In-District Meetings

• **Members of Congress** have offices located in their home states.
  – **U.S. Senators** have offices located throughout their state
  – **U.S. Representatives** may have one or more offices in their district

• **Constituents** – the people who live in the area represented by the Member – can set up meetings to discuss important topics with the Member or their staff.

• When these meetings take place in the Member’s home state – they’re called *in-district meetings*. 
How to Organize an In-District Meeting

Find out Who Represents You → Find Partners and Get Organized → Make Your Visit and Follow-up
Before you can set up a meeting, you need to know who represents you in Congress.

Every Citizen has three Members of Congress*

One U.S. Representative

Two U.S. Senators

*Note: residents of Washington, D.C. and U.S. territories are represented by non-voting delegates
Finding your Member of Congress is...

easy as 1 2 3
1. Go to VoteSmart.org
2. Enter your Zip Code
You May Have to Add Your 9-digit Zip, which you can find on the U.S. Postal Service website...
3. Meet Your Members!

Project Vote Smart | The Voter's Self-Defense System

Find Your Representatives
Search by Candidate’s or Official’s Last Name, or Enter Your ZIP Code.

Search Vote Smart
Google Custom Search

Basic Categories:
Biographical Information
Voting Records
Issue Positions
Interest Group Ratings
Public Statements
Campaign Finances

Current Elections
Current Officials
Current Candidates

Current Elections
2018 Illinois Congressional General Election (11/06/2018)
2018 Illinois Gubernatorial General Election (11/06/2018)
2018 Illinois Statewide General Election (11/06/2018)
2010 Illinois State Legislative General Election, Senate Candidates (11/02/2010)
2010 Illinois State Legislative General Election, House Candidates (11/02/2010)

Current Officials
Congressional
Senator Roland W. Burris - U.S. Senate
Junior Seat (Democratic)
Senator Richard J. “Dick” Durbin - U.S. Senate
Senior Seat (Democratic)
Representative Mike Quigley - U.S. House
District 5 (Democratic)

Governor Pat Quinn - Governor (Democratic)

Additional Information
Voter Registration Information
Ballot Measures

AIDSWatch
Click on an Official’s Name to Find Their Contact Info
At this stage you’ll have to think about:

- Finding other advocates
- Scheduling the meeting
- Preparing your talking points
- Practice delivering them!
Finding Other Advocates

Someone in your state or district may already be organizing in-district meetings for AIDSWatch.

You can find out who they are at napwa.org
What if no one in my area is organizing a meeting?

Try reaching out to these groups:

- AIDS Service Organizations
- HIV Prevention and Care Planning Councils
- Local Health Departments
- Human Service Agencies
- Churches
Scheduling the Meeting

Fax
- Using the contact info from VoteSmart, find the fax number for the district office you plan to visit
- Write a letter requesting a meeting and fax it to the office
- Use the sample provided in this toolkit

Call
- After faxing, call the office and ask to speak to the scheduler
- You may have to call several times and may only be able to set up a time to meet with staffers (that’s ok!)

Confirm
- After you set up the meeting time, you should call the office again the week of the meeting to confirm the appointment
March 30, 2010
The Honorable John Shimkus
2452 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

VIA FACSIMILE: 202-225-5880

Dear Representative Shimkus,

On behalf of the estimated 42,000 Illinoisans living with HIV/AIDS, I am writing to request a meeting with you during AIDSWatch 2010 on either Tuesday, April 27, or Wednesday, April 28 to discuss critical prevention, care and treatment issues for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Today approximately 1.2 million Americans are living with HIV/AIDS with an estimated 56,000 new infections occurring nationwide every year, 1,600 in Illinois alone.

A number of Illinoisans living with and affected by HIV/AIDS would be delighted to have the opportunity to share their insights and concerns around the provision of prevention and care services in Illinois, across the country, and around the world.

Advocates from every corner of Illinois will join hundreds of others living with and affected by HIV from coast to coast to participate in AIDSWatch 2010. Organized by the National Association of People with AIDS (www.napwa.org), AIDSWatch is in its nineteenth year of bringing Americans affected by HIV/AIDS to Washington, D.C., to help educate our leaders on HIV/AIDS policy and appropriations matters. This year’s conference will be discussing the need to adequately fund comprehensive and quality health care and treatment for all people living with HIV, the critical financial needs of the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), and implementing the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS).

I appreciate your attention to this request and invite you to contact Brandy Cooper at (312) 922-2322 ext. 359 or bcooper@aidschicago.org to schedule an appointment to obtain further information. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tara Subkoviak
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Preparing Your Talking Points

Policy Asks

• Review the AIDSWatch factsheets at napwa.org on the following topics:
  • Health Care Implementation
  • National HIV/AIDS Strategy
  • Appropriations

Personal Story

• Use the Tell Your Story Worksheet to get organized. Available at napwa.org.
• Make the connection between the issues and your personal story
• Tell how your life has been affected
Practice Delivering Your Talking Points

• If you are making the visit with a group of advocates, divide the topics among the group and practice delivering them together.

• If you are on your own, find a friend to stand-in as the legislator to help you rehearse.

• **REMEMBER:** Tell your story and DON’T FORGET TO MAKE THE POLICY ASK!
Make Your Visit and Follow-Up

Meeting Day Checklist:
• Dress professionally
• Bring copies of factsheets
• Arrive 15 minutes early
• Be polite and courteous
• Take note of any questions or requests for additional information
• Remember to thank the Congressperson or staffer for their time
• Tell them you will follow-up
Don’t Forget to Follow-Up!

- At the end of your meeting, tell the Congressperson or staffer that you will follow up with them soon.
- Send a thank you card to reiterate your ask and show your appreciation.
- Send them the additional information they requested and/or answers to their questions.
- Keep track of their support or opposition to your asks and call or write to say thank you or to keep pushing them.
File a Visit Report to Help Track our Progress

• After your visit, take 5 minutes to fill out an online visit report available here:

• This is to help us keep track of which Members of Congress have been reached and what messages they’ve received.
Questions?

Contact:
Jim Merrell
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
312-784-9048
jmerrell@aidschicago.org