



Grassroots 101: Be a Town Hall Activist

AMPLIFY
YOUR VOICE!

Being a Town Hall Activist is an excellent way to get elected officials on the record, get answers and build power for your issue in a public forum.

Overview

A town hall is a meeting held by public officials where they answer questions from their constituents. This is an effective way for community members to get involved in local politics, lobby their elected officials and hold them accountable. There are several formats including telephone town halls, Facebook town hall, “coffee talk” casual town halls and public forum style in-person town halls.

Goal

The goal of being a Town Hall Activist is to get answers to tough questions, get officials on the record and build power for your issue.

Time Required

1 hour for the actual town hall, 2 hours of research and preparation time

Resources Needed

- Logistics for the town hall: the date, time and location
- Internet access for background information on the public official, like whether they have supported or opposed your issue
- An understanding of your personal story so you can personalize your question
- If possible, work with LCF, WEC, WCV or another local group to help you research and be prepared

Objectives

- Educating the electorate
- Demonstrating to officials and the media where public opinion lies in particular with those unfamiliar with or unsupportive your issue
- Give positive, public encouragement to champions of your issue

Types of Town Halls:

1. TELEPHONE TOWN HALL OR FACEBOOK LIVE TOWN HALL:
Ask a question via conference call or online through social media.
Least powerful because it is not in person.
- LIVE IN PERSON TOWNHALL: The traditional format where constituents and legislators meet in a public setting for the opportunity to converse, ask questions, and answer questions.
VARIATIONS. 1). *Constituents write a question and submit it ahead of time.* 2). *Constituents write a question and submit at town hall.* Electeds answer select questions based on themes. There is less chance for making a personal impact and a greater chance for vague answers. 3). *Live questions asked by constituents.* Constituents are selected to ask their questions directly to their legislators and have a greater chance to personalize their question.



Steps

DETERMINE YOUR QUESTION:

- Ask one direct question on an issue you want them to take a public stand on
- Be genuine. Personalize your question and share how the issue impacts your life...this is where storytelling comes in

BE PREPARED:

- Do your research ahead of time. Know the official's background. For example, every legislator has a different position in committees or can sponsor bills. You want to be aware of their positions and personalize the question for the elected. Find reliable sources (data, studies, facts, etc.) to support your position.
- Bring a sheet with you that includes your questions, a summary of why you are there, and what action you want your legislator to take, and try to leave this sheet with your legislator if you can

BE SPECIFIC:

- Identify yourself: Name, Region/location-get specific, include some history and give brief context to your questions
- Identify specific bills or policy if you can
- Ask a concise question so they don't have room to be vague

BE PERSISTENT:

- Use assertive, yet respectful language
- If you are able, stay standing until you have gotten a full answer and ask a follow up if you are not satisfied
- Remember: these people work for YOU and represent YOU

BE ATTENTIVE:

- Don't repeat a question that has already been asked, but you can push a point
- Write out a couple of questions you might ask or adjust your question after you hear a few responses
- Be prepared to wait a while to get called on and only have a few minutes to present your question

MAKE IT PUBLIC:

- Beforehand, share on social media that you are going to Town Hall meeting. It will create moral support, make you more empowered within your social media circle, and may attract others to join you 😊.

FOLLOW UP:

- After the town hall, follow up with your legislator and make sure they take you seriously. You can follow up with a phone call or an email the next day reminding them that you spoke at the town hall and that you are still expecting them to respond to your concerns
- Amplify your voice by mobilizing your community. Share the information you're your friends or on social media and encourage others to call or write their legislator on the same issue
- Continue to track the issue and follow up until there is a resolution. Ask for a 1:1 meeting with legislator.

Additional resources

- [Town Hall Webinar Training](#): Watch our webinar as an additional resource
- [Town Hall Project](#): Information on Congressional town halls
- [Find information on your legislators](#): use the legislative website to find out who your legislators are, how to contact them, and information on bills they have supported

Questions?

Contact kat@wecprotects.org or oskar@latinocommunityfund.org.

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