



2022

AUGUST RECESS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

JCPA

JEWISH COUNCIL
FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

August Advocacy: An Overview	3
In-District Meetings	4
How to Deal with Agreement or Opposition	7
Issue Briefs	9
• Abortion Access and Reproductive Rights	
• Abortion Rights Fact Sheet	
• Voting Rights and Election Protection	

THE JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS (JCPA) is the hub of the Jewish community relations network. We advise and support the field by convening the Jewish community to deliberate key issues, and identify and develop policies, strategies, and programs for our network. JCPA has an unparalleled capacity to mobilize grassroots activism through our network of national and local member agencies. Our policy team serves as a resource for our network and helps the community relations field express the consensus policy views to national leaders and influentials.

August Advocacy: An Overview

In August, most Members of Congress schedule in-district meetings in their home states while Congress is in recess. This is an important opportunity for Jewish community relations councils (JCRCs) to advocate on priority issues with members of Congress. JCPA developed this toolkit, with tips and talking points, to assist you in preparing for these meetings.

2022 Congressional Recess Timeline

Senate Recess: August 8 (Tentative) – September 5

House Recess: August 1 - September 13

Summary of Key Messages on Priority Issues

This year, we suggest prioritizing abortion access and voting rights, given their overriding importance at this time.

Abortion Access and Reproductive Rights

Urge the Senate to pass the Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 8296), the Ensuring Women's Right to Reproductive Freedom Act (H.R. 8297), and the Right to Contraception Act (H.R. 8373).

Voting Rights and Election Protection

Urge Members of Congress to support the swift passage of the Freedom to Vote: John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Jewish Federations of North American Priorities

We encourage you to ask your delegation to support any or all of the federation priorities, outlined in their recent August Recess Memo, which you can access by [clicking here](#).

In-District Meetings

Tips for Making a Personal Visit to a Legislator

- Call the legislator's office to make an appointment.
- Follow the scheduler's instructions for requesting a meeting. This may include an email request. Be sure to include the number of people participating and what issues you want to discuss.
- Confirm the appointment a day or two prior to your meeting.
- Don't be disappointed if your meeting is with a staff person. There is great value in educating and building a relationship with the key staff people on your issues — they play a vital role in decision-making in the legislative process.
- Prepare information about your organization and a one-pager outlining each policy position you are discussing to share with the policymaker or staffer. You can find prepared one-pagers in the Issue Briefs section.

Preparing for the Meeting

An effective visit should include the following components:

- A clear statement about your organization and why you are there.
- An explanation of the issue(s) and what you want the decisionmaker to do about it.
- One or more personal stories illustrating why the issue is important to you and your community. *This may be a great opportunity, depending on your legislator's orientation, to discuss your views as a person of faith.*
- A request for a commitment: "will you support/oppose this proposal?"
- A thank you letter.

Assigning Roles

It is important to prepare for your meeting ahead of time by assigning roles and agreeing to time allotments. Considering that you have a limited timeframe for your meeting, it is important to stay focused and to ensure that you cover your full agenda. If you have a small group, give everyone an opportunity to present. If you have a larger group, ensure that you identify speakers. We suggest meeting beforehand to set the agenda and script. Inform your delegation on the position of the legislator that you are meeting with and what you are asking of them.

Leader: Confirms meeting time and location. Introduces the group and the JCRC and JCPA briefly. Keeps time and ensures that the visit is on track, and that everyone has a chance to speak. Collects business cards from legislative staffer at the end and leaves the legislative leave-behind materials at the end.

Issue Presenter: Delivers the message, making it personal (by telling a story or sharing a personal experience), and speaks to why the legislator should act. Makes “the ask” and is prepared to respond depending on the legislator’s position. (See pages 7-8 for how to deal with different stances).

Social Media Reporter:

- Takes pictures of group during the visit.
- Tweets and shares the experience on Facebook after the visit.

Creating a Meeting Agenda

Opener:

- Express thanks for meeting with the delegation and collect business cards from staff.
- Introduce the group (individually, if a small group).
- Provide brief intro to the JCRC and JCPA: who we are, how many we represent.
- Tell why you are here: to introduce the issue(s) you’re advocating for today.
- Thank legislator for past support. A review of your legislator’s voting record should reveal a vote on a bill or cosponsorship of legislation that you appreciate (www.congress.gov/members).

Issue Presentation:

- State the problem that must be addressed by policy change.
- State the policy solution and why JCPA/JCRCs support this position.
- Personal story: share your experiences or perspective.
- State “the ask,” what they can do (refer to “How to Deal with Agreement or Opposition” on pages 7 and 8).
- Wait for a response – be sure to listen!
- Offer to be a resource or to send additional information.

Wrap-up:

- Review comments, commitments, and follow-up requests for the issue.
- Thank legislator/staff for their time.
- Leave your business card and legislative materials.

After the Meeting

Thank You Letter: It is very important to email a thank you letter to the individual(s) with whom you met. In addition to saying thank you, it should include a written reminder of what took place at the meeting, any action you are asking the legislator to take and, if relevant, their commitment to cosponsor, support, or oppose a specific piece of legislation.

Debrief and Meeting Report: After your visit, it is important to debrief about the meeting and to follow up with any requests for additional information made by the congressional office. We also recommend writing a brief summary of what took place that includes the following:

- Date, time, and name of person with whom you met.
- Questions asked by the legislator or staff person.
- Follow-up materials or information requested by the legislator or staff person.
- Summary of the legislator's position and willingness to support your requests.

Keep this information for future reference, share it with your coalition partners, and email it to Tammy Gilden at tgilden@thejcpa.org.

How to Deal with Agreement or Opposition

What if the policymaker **STRONGLY AGREES** with my position?

- Thank the policymaker.
- **Ask the policymaker to take a leadership role on this issue:**
 - Make a public statement in support of this issue
 - Urge colleagues to support the issue
 - Pressure House or Senate Leadership to take up the issue and to educate undecided colleagues
- **Ask the policymaker's advice about talking with other policymakers**—whom to talk with, what arguments make the best case for the issue, and what media strategy will be most effective in gathering support for the policy.
- **Ask what information or constituency would be helpful in swaying additional policymakers** to your position. Then work to produce these materials or advocates.
- Thank the policymaker again.

What if the policymaker **AGREES** with my position?

- Thank the policymaker.
- **Assure the policymaker of your continued interest in the issue and your continued support for the position they have taken.**
 - Ask if you can count on the policymaker to take more of a leadership role on the issue
 - Ask what the policymaker is currently doing to promote the issue and what the Jewish and broader faith community can do to help
 - Ask if the policymaker is aware of the proposed legislation related to the issue, and follow up with materials if necessary
- **Ask if the policymaker would be willing to help in any way beyond voting.** If yes, refer to the tips under **STRONGLY AGREES**.
- Thank the policymaker again.

What if the policymaker is **UNDECIDED** or **NONCOMMITTAL**?

- Thank the policymaker.
- **Inform the policymaker of your interest in the issue or legislation.**
- **Ask about the policymaker's viewpoint** to investigate whether his/her position arises from personal or political factors, a lack of information, misinformation, or a combination of these factors. Adjust your strategy accordingly.

- **Present the case as clearly and concisely as possible.**
- **Ask if there are specific groups or individuals from whom the policymaker would like to hear on this issue.**
- **Offer to provide information that will help inform the policymaker about the issue.**
- **Thank the policymaker again for the opportunity to talk with them.**
- **Express thanks for their support or disappointment for nonsupport** once the policymaker has indicated a position.
- **Follow up by providing the information you promised** and/or that addresses the policymaker's reservations. Send a positive story from the Member's district and emphasize how individuals in the district would be helped by the proposed legislation.
- **Stay in touch to nurture the relationship with the policymaker.**

What if the policymaker is OPPOSED to my position?

- **Thank the policymaker for the opportunity to present your views.**
- **Determine how strong the policymaker's position is**, and upon what it is based. If the opposition is not vehement, it may be worth trying to change his/her position.
- **If the policymaker appears movable, present information that addresses his/her concerns.** Make sure that the policymaker hears from constituents who support your position. Strategize and present the case most likely to resonate with this particular policymaker.
- **Thank the policymaker again for the opportunity to present your views.**
- **Follow up by providing the information you promised** and/or that addresses the policymaker's reservations. Send a positive story from the Member's district and emphasize how individuals in the district would be helped by the proposed legislation.
- **Stay in touch to nurture the relationship with the policymaker.**

What if the policymaker is STRONGLY OPPOSED to my position?

- **Thank the policymaker for the opportunity to talk.**
- **Ask him/her not to lobby colleagues on the issue.**
- **Write and express your disappointment in the position and/or vote taken.** Don't expend your time and energy trying to move this particular policymaker.

Issue Briefs

The following section contains issue briefs with background information and topline messages along with more detailed information. These briefs can serve as talking points for your meetings and double as one-pagers that you can leave behind with legislators and/or their staff.

At the back of this booklet, you will find an Advocacy Report Form that can help you track the outcomes of your meetings and ensure adequate follow-up. We encourage you to share these with JCPA so that we can help advance our network's advocacy.

Protect Abortion Access and Reproductive Rights

On June 24 the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which guaranteed the right to abortion, in its *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling. JCPA [condemned this decision](#), which we do not believe represents the will of the people nor is in the best interest of the country. Access to safe, affordable, and legal abortion and reproductive health care is a priority for JCPA, rooted in our long-standing support for reproductive rights and religious liberty. According to the Pew Research Center, 83% of Jews believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases.

This ruling is already having devastating outcomes, undermining reproductive freedom, endangering public health, and criminalizing of those who provide, support, or obtain abortions. It will disproportionately impact people of color, those who are low-income, and young people.

Our nation is facing a public health crisis. Thirteen states have “trigger laws” automatically banning abortion while dozens more are taking up bills to ban and criminalize those who seek abortions and those who provide abortion care. States where abortion is already banned are considering even more extreme measures, including criminalizing crossing state lines to get an abortion, and removing exceptions for rape, incest, or health of the person.

Restrictions are already harming people across the nation. For example, a 10-year-old rape survivor had to travel out of state for an abortion because she was one day outside of the six-week ban. Others have been taken off critical medications for dangerous autoimmune disorders because they have been deemed “viable fertile.” State governments are now forcing people to carry babies to term, disregarding citizens’ health, wellbeing, and right to bodily autonomy.

Talking Points

- **Judaism compels us to stand for *all* life, and we prioritize the *life and health of a pregnant person*.** While we treat a fetus with great significance, it does not merit the status of a person until birth and then it has equal status with the person giving birth. If the fetus endangers a person’s life physically or through mental anguish, Jewish law supports abortion. Rabbis and other clergy should not fear liability when providing counseling consistent with their religious beliefs. Jewish law never supports abortion bans without exception.
- **Citizens have a right to make decisions about their own bodily autonomy.** The government should never be allowed to compel its citizens to compromise that autonomy. The state is not allowed to mandate even life-saving organ donation, even after death.
- **Criminalizing abortion is a crisis for democracy.** JCPA believes in the foundational principle of separation of church and state, which prohibits the governmental imposition of religious beliefs. Prohibiting abortion access enshrines a narrow religious perspective into law, violating the Establishment Clause, and is contrary to Jewish law, traditions, and our principal value of saving a life.

- **Abortion bans do not stop abortions; they only stop safe abortions.** Studies show that they lead to poor health outcomes, long-term poverty, and other adverse health and economic impacts.

Action Request

Urge the Senate to pass the Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 8296), the Ensuring Women's Right to Reproductive Freedom Act (H.R. 8297), and the Right to Contraception Act (H.R. 8373).

- The **Women's Health Protection Act** would enable health care providers to deliver abortion services free from medically unnecessary limitations, protecting access around the country.
- The **Ensuring Women's Right to Reproductive Freedom Act** would reaffirm the right to travel out-of-state to seek abortion care and help those who do. Anti-abortion officials are already attempting to prohibit people from traveling across state lines to access or provide abortion care—a violation of the constitutional right to interstate travel.
- The **Right to Contraception Act** would codify the right to access and use contraceptives and ensure health care providers' right to provide contraceptives and relevant information. It would also explicitly allow the Justice Department and providers to sue for noncompliance.
- All three bills passed the House and now await action in the Senate, where they must garner 60 votes to clear the filibuster. We thank those in the House of Representatives who supported these bills.

Dissent: The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America has long standing policy of not joining in JCPA [statements] on reproductive rights:

[The Orthodox Union] cannot endorse a public policy that does not reflect the complex response of halacha to the abortion issue. In most circumstances, the halacha proscribes abortion, but there are cases in which halacha permits and indeed mandates abortion. The question of abortion is a sensitive one and personal decisions in this area should be made in consultation with recognized halachic authorities.

Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) is the hub of the Jewish community relations network, representing local Jewish community relations councils and national Jewish agencies. Together our network builds consensus on behalf of the entire Jewish community to promote a just and pluralistic American society, advocate for human rights around the world, and support peace and security in Israel.

2022 Abortion Rights Fact Sheet

JCPA has been committed to safeguarding and strengthening the right to reproductive choice since 1973, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* that the right to an abortion is constitutionally protected. For decades, we have advocated at the state and federal levels, joined amicus briefs, and adopted policy resolutions in support of reproductive and religious freedom.

We believe everyone has the right to make their own reproductive decisions, including accessing an abortion.

JCPA believes in the foundational principle of separation of church and state, which prohibits the governmental imposition of religious beliefs. Prohibiting abortion access enshrines a narrow religious perspective into law, in violation of the Establishment Clause, and is contrary to Jewish law, traditions, and our principal value of saving a life. Judaism compels us to stand for *all* life, and we prioritize the *life and health of a pregnant person*. While we treat a fetus with great significance, it does not merit the status of a person until the moment of birth and then it has equal status with the person giving birth. If the fetus endangers a person's life physically or, according to at least some Jewish religious authorities, through mental anguish, Jewish law supports abortion of a fetus up until the moment of birth. Rabbis and other clergy should not fear liability when providing counseling to pregnant individuals that is consistent with their Jewish values.

We know that abortion bans do not stop abortions; they only stop safe abortions. This decision will disproportionately impact people of color, those who are low-income, and young people. Studies show that banning abortions leads to poor health outcomes for the pregnant person, long-term poverty, and other adverse health and economic impacts. This ruling could even lead to death if a person experiences an ectopic pregnancy or other life-endangering condition threatens the life of the pregnant person if the pregnancy is carried to term, as would be required in those states that have passed "trigger" laws banning abortion without exception.

Statements

- [JCPA Condemns Supreme Court Decision Overturning *Roe v. Wade*](#) (June 2022)
- [JCPA Condemns Texas' New Anti-Abortion Law](#) (September 2021)
 - "JCPA condemns Texas' new anti-abortion law, which bans abortion after six weeks into a pregnancy and enables citizens to sue abortion providers, as well as anyone who "aids or abets" an abortion after six weeks."
- [JCPA is Committed to Protecting Women's Reproductive Freedom](#) (May 2019)
 - JCPA condemns Alabama's new law banning abortion even in cases of rape and incest, as well as other extreme anti-abortion bills in various states. These measures undermine women's reproductive freedom, endanger women's health, and criminalize women who get abortions and doctors who perform them."

Legislation

Policy	Description	JCPA Position	Status
Hyde Amendment	Prohibits abortion coverage on Medicaid	Oppose	In Effect
Global Gag Rule	Prevents aid organizations from receiving US funding if they provide abortion care or information as one of their services	Oppose	In Effect
Affordable Care Act's Contraceptive Coverage Provision	Requires insurance companies to cover birth control at no cost	Support	In Effect
Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Woman Act	Repeals the Hyde Amendment and requires federal and federally funded facilities to offer abortion care	No Position	Introduced in the House and Senate
Women's Health Protection Act	Permits health care providers to deliver abortion services without unnecessary limitations	Support	Passed in the House (218 – 211) Failed in the Senate (46-48) Failed in the Senate (49-51)

Policy Resolutions

- [1993 Principles on National Health Care Coverage](#)
 - “We seek a national health care plan that serves *everyone living* in the United States. Health care should not be employment dependent and should not exclude anyone with prior medical conditions.” (emphasis mine)
 - “We seek a health care plan that provides [...] comprehensive reproductive health services for men and women.”
- [1995 Resolution on Violence Against Reproductive Health Facilities](#)
 - “[C]ondemns the outrageous terrorist attacks committed against reproductive health clinics, health care providers and clients.”
- [2004 Resolution on International Family Planning](#)
 - “Repeal the Global Gag Rule.”
- [2005 Resolution on Reproductive Choice](#)
 - “JCPA believes that reproductive health decisions are best made by individuals in consultation with their families and health care professionals and based on personal religious beliefs.”

- “Restrictions on the right to choose and lack of access to services threaten this constitutionally-protected individual right.”
- [2014 Resolution on Reproductive Health](#)
 - ”The question of abortion is a sensitive one and personal decision in this area should be made in consultation with recognized halachic authorities.”
 - “Merely completing a form notifying an insurance company or third-party administrator of a religious non-profit organization’s objections to furnishing contraceptive coverage should not be seen as imposing a “substantial burden” on the organizations religious exercise.”

Orthodox Union’s Abstention from JCPA’s Reproductive Care Policy

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, a JCPA member, has long standing policy of not joining in JCPA statements on reproductive rights:

[The Orthodox Union] cannot endorse a public policy that does not reflect the complex response of halacha to the abortion issue. In most circumstances, the halacha proscribes abortion, but there are cases in which halacha permits and indeed mandates abortion. The question of abortion is a sensitive one and personal decisions in this area should be made in consultation with recognized halachic authorities.

Support Voting Rights and Election Protection

JCPA believes that the right to vote and participate in our democracy is a core American Jewish value—a civic and religious duty. The bedrock of our democratic process is the right of every eligible citizen to cast a ballot and have that ballot counted.

In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down a critical Voting Rights Act provision that required states with a history of disenfranchising voters to obtain Department of Justice preclearance before changing voting laws or procedures. Since this ruling, many states have enacted – and are continuing to propose laws that suppress the vote, often through onerous voter identification laws and cutbacks to early voting, especially in low-income communities and communities of color.

JCPA has a long history of supporting voting rights since our founding where we were a leading organization in advocating for the voting rights bill in the 1960s. During COVID -19, JCPA's Delegates Assembly made ensuring a fair, free, and accessible elections a number one priority issue.

The 2020 election had the largest voter turnout in more than 100 years, including 100 million people who voted early by mail or in-person — all with no evidence of systemic voter fraud. States' efforts to make voting safer in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic not only achieved that goal but made elections more accessible in many communities.

These positive changes should now be made permanent. Instead, the expanded franchise is the target of anti-democratic forces that hope to roll back these reforms and pass more restrictive measures that would suppress the vote.

It is crucial that we increase access to the ballot box, strengthen democratic institutions, and expand representation. Our vote is our voice: we must protect our rights and the rights of others.

Talking Points

- **The systematic disenfranchisement of key segments of the voting population challenges the integrity of the elections process and undermines our democracy.** Many states are enacting laws that suppress the vote, targeting low-income communities and communities of color. At this very moment, we are witnessing, around the country, more than 40 states move to enact new voter suppression laws not seen since the Jim Crow era.
- **This is a civil rights and a racial justice issue – and a Jewish concern to its core.** Achieving a government that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of its people is possible only through maximum citizen participation in the electoral process and the guarantee that elections will be fair and accessible. We are obligated to speak up and take action to ensure that every eligible person can cast a vote and have that vote counted.

- **The Voting Rights Act has always had bipartisan support.** Congress has reauthorized the Voting Rights Act several times under both Republican and Democratic administrations with near unanimous support.

Action Request

Urge Members of Congress to support the swift passage of the Freedom to Vote: John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

- This comprehensive bill would update and restore the Voting Rights Act, prevent voter suppression, help improve elections, advance voting rights, and reform campaign finance and ethics rules. It would ensure that *all* Americans have the same opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Safeguarding democracy is not a partisan issue.

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Advocacy Report Form

NAME: _____

COMMUNITY: _____

MEMBER OF CONGRESS (OR STAFF) MET WITH: _____

ISSUE(S) DISCUSSED:

HOW DID THE LEGISLATOR RESPOND TO YOUR REQUEST FOR SUPPORT?

DID THE LEGISLATOR NEED MORE INFORMATION ON ANY ISSUE OR REQUEST
ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP?

Please return this form to Tammy Gilden at tgilden@thejcpa.org

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