



2017

AUGUST RECESS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

JCPA

JEWISH COUNCIL
FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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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. The JCPA has an unparalleled capacity to mobilize grassroots activism through our network of 16 national and 125 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

August Recess

During the month of August, Congress adjourns and Members return to their district offices. JCPA encourages you to take advantage of this opportunity by reaching out to your representatives and senators on the issues that matter to the Jewish community. This toolkit will assist you in planning your August congressional meetings.

Key Messages

We suggest prioritizing the issues and messages highlighted below during your Congressional visits. In this toolkit we provide talking points on each issue that you can leave with your legislator or their staff person.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Federal Budget

- Ensure that the FY 2018 budget protects our most vulnerable by maintaining adequate funding for anti-poverty programs, including nutrition and housing assistance; humanitarian aid; environmental protection; and refugee resettlement.

Immigration

- Support a refugee resettlement cap of *at least* 75,000, which is already insufficient, especially given the severity of the refugee crises.
- Revive comprehensive immigration reform that balances the protection of civil and human rights with national security concerns. Reform efforts must maintain family reunification and generous refugee admissions as cornerstones of our immigration policy.

Health Care

- Work on a bipartisan health care solution that lowers costs, maintains coverage standards, protects Medicaid, and expands access to affordable care.

Separation of Church and State

- Uphold the existing law prohibiting tax-exempt religious nonprofits from endorsing or opposing candidates for public office.
- Oppose any legislation, particularly appropriations riders, which would repeal or weaken the current law. Current efforts to gut enforcement mechanisms would risk transforming our houses of worship into partisan political operations.

Israel

- Oppose the delegitimization of Israel by cosponsoring the “Combating BDS Act” and the “Israel Anti-Boycott Act.”

Timeline

- August 7 – Early September (Senate Recess)
- August 1 – September 4 (House Recess)

Contact Us

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to email Tammy Gilden at tgilden@thejcpa.org.

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.
- Make sure to arrive 5-10 minutes early. If the legislator or official is late, be patient and flexible.
- 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.
- Bring information about your organization and a one-pager outlining each policy position you are discussing to leave with the policymaker or staffer. You can find prepared one-pagers in the Talking Points 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 Jewish Community Relations Council 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.

Fiscal Year 2018 Federal Budget

Ensure a Budget that Protects Our Most Vulnerable

The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget request proposed large increases in defense, national security, and immigration enforcement spending while reducing or eliminating funding for programs generally targeted toward low-income and rural populations, climate change, and non-defense foreign aid. Congress will likely approve a short-term continuing resolution to fund the federal government through December when the current funding measure expires on September 30, 2017. Between September and December, we expect an intense fight over the FY 2018 funding package.

The House has already released a budget blueprint that proposes to increase Defense programs by \$72 billion while cutting \$4.4 trillion over 10 years from key programs, such as Medicaid and Medicare, nutrition and housing assistance for low-income children and families, and humanitarian aid.

JCPA urges its local affiliates to work with lawmakers to pass a budget providing equal opportunity to all and uplifting the needs of our nation's most vulnerable. This year JCPA worked with its coalition partners in the Washington Interreligious Staff Community (WISC) Working Group to produce ["Faithful Budget" that reflects our commitment to serving and safeguarding all segments of society.](#)

- **The FY 2018 budget must protect our most vulnerable.** It is critical that Congress maintain adequate funding for anti-poverty programs, such as nutrition and housing assistance; humanitarian aid and foreign assistance; environmental protection; and refugee resettlement.
- **All Americans deserve the security of being able to sustain basic living standards.** Vital social safety net programs, such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, federal nutrition assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), unemployment insurance, and refundable tax credits for low-income people, should be protected and improved. Cutting Social Security by slashing Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) would be devastating for people with disabilities and seniors. The Jewish community has a strong commitment to protecting the most vulnerable among us by fully funding social programs as part of our overall commitment and strategy to reduce poverty.
- **Fighting hunger is critical.** Food insecurity is one of the most acute hardships many Americans, including children, face across the country. Slashing federal nutrition assistance would leave millions of people, including children, seniors, people with disabilities, and jobless individuals unable to purchase adequate and nutritious food. We believe feeding America's hungry is not a political decision, but a moral one.
- **Every American, regardless of income, is entitled to a safe, affordable home, and the federal government bears primary responsibility, working with state and local governments, to ensure housing is available to all who need it.** Attempts to shift responsibility for social service funding either to the private sector or to the states through block grants and funding cuts place an unacceptable burden on many states already facing fiscal crisis.

- **Congress must maintain international programs that focus on helping developing nations secure basic human rights for their people, including access to education and the elimination of hunger, particularly among children.** In the face of an unprecedented refugee crisis and growing famine in East Africa, it is essential that we maintain funding for refugee resettlement and humanitarian assistance.
- **All people have the right to live and work in environments with clean air, land, water, and food.** The federal government must ensure that all communities have equal access to environmental clean-up programs and equal protection from environmental hazards, regardless of income, race, or ethnicity. Significant cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency would deeply impact the agency's ability to protect public health, including monitoring the safety of drinking water systems.
- **Climate change is an international security threat and one of the greatest moral issues of our time.** Congress must ensure that programs that promote renewable energy and combat climate change have the resources to continue this important work.

Immigration

Keep Our Nation's Doors Open to Immigrants and Refugees

Earlier this year, the Administration issued a number of executive orders related to immigration and refugee policy. Notably, these orders aimed to restrict entry for refugees from predominantly Muslim countries, halt federal funding for “sanctuary cities,” and expand detention for immigrants and asylum-seekers. The President’s FY 2018 budget requests a 31% cut to refugee resettlement programs, while allocating an additional \$4.5 billion in funding for immigrant detention and deportation—a 23% increase from 2016.

JCPA has advocated for more than 70 years on behalf of immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers who hope to build a better life for themselves and their children. We continued to do so this year by prioritizing the issue, filing joint amicus curie briefs opposing the executive order, and advocating in coalition for generous refugee policies that maintain rigorous background checks.

- **Congress should support a refugee resettlement cap of at least 75,000, which is already insufficient, especially given the severity of the refugee crises and growing famine in East Africa.** As a nation built by immigrants and refugees, the U.S. should seek to maximize, not minimize, the number of people we welcome and protect. Family reunification and generous refugee admissions must remain cornerstones of our immigration policy.
- **Closing our nation’s doors to immigrants and refugees would contradict the fundamental Jewish belief in “welcoming the stranger.”** The Jewish community has always been deeply committed to maintaining a generous immigration system. We champion a fair and generous legal immigration policies as an expression of our country’s core values of refugee protection, family reunification, and economic opportunity.
- **The U.S. has one of the most stringent vetting programs in the world.** Our immigration policy must balance national security concerns with the protection of civil and human rights. We cannot let legitimate concerns about radical Islam undermine a core national purpose—providing a home for immigrants. The American immigrant experience is one of our country’s greatest sources of strength. Newcomers are essential to the fabric of our society, enriching our culture and boosting our economy.
- **Congress should revive comprehensive immigration reform that balances reasonable security standards with the protection of civil and human rights.** While the U.S. must have measures in place to determine who may enter and remain in the U.S., as well as identify and prevent the entry of those who pose a security risk, these safeguards must not be made at the expense of civil, worker, or human rights. Effective enforcement can only be accomplished as part of comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level.
- **Enforcement efforts—particularly detention and deportation—should focus on dangerous criminal or terrorist migrants rather than undocumented immigrants seeking economic opportunities who have committed no crime other than illegally crossing the border.** Our immigration policy must account for this challenge in a manner that respects the human dignity and human rights of those who wish to enter. A policy that targets, or unintentionally

ensnares, such individuals stands in contrast to JCPA's support for comprehensive immigration reform that values the rights of undocumented immigrants, especially children and young adults, who come to the U.S. for better economic opportunities and a pathway to earn legal status.

- **Enforcement actions conducted in homes and workplaces should be narrowly tailored, respectful of human rights, and conducted in a manner consistent with due process.** Such action can cause needless trauma and hardship, separating families and threatening the basic rights of immigrants and U.S. citizens alike.
- **Local law enforcement agencies are not responsible for immigration enforcement.** Eliminating the firewall between federal and local law enforcement threatens to seriously compromise the police's ability to keep communities safe by undermining trust and communication between police and immigrant populations. Rather than making communities more secure, such measures would drive a wedge between local law enforcement and the communities they are entrusted to protect.

Separation of Church and State

Oppose Efforts to Weaken the Johnson Amendment

The President and some members of Congress are currently seeking to repeal or undermine the Johnson Amendment, a law that bars charitable nonprofits, including houses of worship, from engaging in partisan, election-related activities, such as funding political campaigns or endorsing candidates for public office. The law has protected the integrity and independence of non-profit organizations, including houses of worship, for more than six decades.

The separation of religion and state is of utmost importance to JCPA. Our long-standing policy is that houses of worship, like all charitable institutions, must not engage in partisan political campaign activity. Gutting enforcement mechanisms would allow candidates and donors to press houses of worship for their endorsements, transforming America's houses of worship into partisan political operations.

JCPA is working in coalition with other faith-based groups to oppose any efforts to repeal or weaken the Amendment. This includes gathering thousands of signatures from faith leaders around the country as part of a new interfaith initiative, [Faith Voices](#), of which JCPA is an original sponsor.

- **Oppose any legislative proposals that seek to undermine or repeal the Johnson Amendment.** If enacted, such legislative proposals would politicize charitable nonprofits, houses of worship, and foundations, plunging them into caustic partisanship and preventing them from fulfilling their core mission of serving the community and performing good works. We call on members to oppose:
 - [H.R. 172](#), which would completely repeal the “no partisan politicking” provision, subjecting nonprofits to demands/requests to get involved in partisan political electioneering, including using charitable, religious, and foundation assets to make political donations.
 - [S.264](#) and [H.R. 781](#), which would substantially weaken the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities.
- **Charities and nonprofits can only be successful if the public trusts our integrity and commitment to fulfilling our mission to serve the community.** Weakening the Johnson Amendment would corrode that trust. Americans are fed up with hyper-partisanship, and view their houses of worship and charitable nonprofits as safe havens where they can escape the acrimony and division. Even subtle pressure could force nonprofits to divert charitable funds away from their community work in favor of partisan activities.
- **Undermining the Johnson Amendment would force taxpayers to subsidize the political campaign activities of houses of worship and other nonprofits.** They would essentially be compelled to donate charitable resources (such as money, staff, facilities, member lists, and fundraising ability—as well as their brand value) to partisan political campaigns.

- **Contributions for purely political purposes, currently not deductible, could be “laundered” through donations to charities.** Because charities are not required to disclose the names of their donors to the public, these proposals undermine public confidence in America’s charities, as well as the political process.
- **Charities and nonprofits already have a range of election-related activities in which they can engage.** This includes but is not limited to holding candidate or issue forums, participating in voter drives, and publishing nonpartisan voting records.

For more information, read the [Jewish Federations of North America’s backgrounder, “Protect the Integrity of Charitable Organizations: Oppose Efforts to Repeal or Rollback the Johnson Amendment.”](#)

Health Care

Protect Medicaid

On July 28, 2017, in a dramatic conclusion, the Senate's efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act failed by a close margin of 49-51. While this final vote marked the end of this particular effort, the debate over health care reform is likely far from over. It is clear after dozens of votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act that any new legislation should be crafted in a bipartisan fashion.

While last month's vote sent a strong message, the House and Senate could revisit their proposals from earlier this year. These measures would make steep cuts to Medicaid that would be devastating for millions of Americans, including seniors, people with disabilities, low-income children, and pregnant women, while raising costs and lowering coverage.

These proposals to cut, cap, and block grant Medicaid would also reduce critical funding the Jewish Federation system and its affiliated social service agencies need to care for those in our most vulnerable populations. In 2005, JCPA's network passed a resolution reaffirming our community's historic commitment to Medicaid and opposition to efforts to cut, cap, and block grant the program.

- **It is time to focus on bipartisan solutions that strengthen our health care system and continue the task of making health insurance affordable and accessible for all.** Members of Congress must work on a bipartisan health care solution that lowers costs, maintains coverage standards, protects Medicaid, and expands access to affordable care.
- **Medicaid provides a critical safety net for over 80 million low-income children, older adults, pregnant women, and people with disabilities.** Drastic cuts and caps on funding would set the stage for rationing health care for the elderly in nursing homes, people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, pregnant women, and other vulnerable populations—including 40% of all children.
- **Capping, cutting, or blocking grant the program would reduce critical funding the Jewish Federation system and its affiliated social service agencies need to care for those in our most vulnerable populations.** Hundreds of Jewish social service agencies would be unable to provide services to tens of thousands of their clients and community members—Jewish and non-Jewish alike.
- **Future negotiations should focus on expanding access to the approximately 11% of Americans who still lack health care coverage.** Congress should expand Medicaid to all eligible residents of our nation and maintain the program's current funding mechanisms and structure. Expanding Medicaid to cover all people living in poverty is a critical feature of the existing law and must be upheld.
- **Congress must ensure that seniors and people with disabilities receive the support needed to live independently.** Members of Congress must protect Medicaid, which helps our seniors stay healthy and able to afford their part of needed services. They paid into this insurance program during their working years and are now collecting on that investment.

For more in-depth information about Medicaid and continued funding threats, [read the Jewish Federations of North America's latest backgrounder](#).

Israel

Combat the Delegitimization of Israel

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement is a global campaign to isolate Israel through economic, cultural, and political pressure. This politically motivated movement unfairly compares Israel to genocidal regimes in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the State of Israel. While BDS advocates claim to be seeking a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the movement undermines the internationally-supported peace process and decreases chances for a negotiated two-state outcome.

The Jewish community relations field has worked tirelessly to deter BDS from taking hold in the United States and has supported more than 22 states that have passed legislation. JCPA believes these bills send a strong message regarding Congress' commitment to opposing BDS and supporting the ideals of a two-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

- **Cosponsor the “Combating BDS Act of 2017” (S.170/H.R. 2856) to support state actions against BDS.** This bill affirms the authority of state and local governments to divest from entities engaged in BDS activities against Israel, as well as to restrict their contracting with such entities.
 - **State and local governments must be allowed to make decisions about the contents of their investment portfolios and the discriminatory actions of their vendors.** This is important because, if passed, the bill would protect state and local governments from lawsuits contending they are causing undue burden or discrimination against interstate or foreign commerce.
 - **States should be lauded for taking active steps to combat the destructive effects of the BDS movement.**
- **Cosponsor the “Israel Anti-Boycott Act” (S.720).** This bill would expand existing U.S. anti-boycott laws to include international governmental organizations like the United Nations and the European Union.
 - **Congress and the Executive branch have long combatted such attacks on Israel.** This includes 1979 legislation that prohibits U.S. companies from complying with unsanctioned foreign boycotts imposed by foreign governments as a condition of doing business. The new bill would expand this prohibition to also include boycotts imposed by international government organizations.
- **Unilateral attempts to force negotiations are counterproductive.** These bills would help promote a strong, vibrant Israel that is committed to peace. The U.S. should continue to pursue a peaceful outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict through diplomacy. Peace and security based on two independent, democratic, and economically-viable states coexisting side-by-side can only be achieved through direct negotiations.

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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