



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF ARAPAHOE AND DOUGLAS COUNTRIES

www.lwvarapahoedouglas.org
www.facebook.com/lwvArapahoeDouglas
lwvarapahoedouglas@gmail.com

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

Equipped for Action is a LWVADC program organized to help League members find accurate information about national legislation and executive actions, and learn ways to act on these issues. Advocacy has always been a League priority; and in response to today's political climate, LWV members are seeking ways to advance that priority.

The Program

- Provides information to members about current and upcoming legislation that addresses topics related to LWV positions. This information is sent to all members as issues arise and contains information about the legislation, what it will or will not do, the corresponding League position, and action suggestions and legislative contacts.
- Gives members information on how to contact their elected officials and tips for effective action. Action suggestions are included, but the decision to act is up to the League member.
- Provides each member with a small manual of action tips and legislative contacts. The manual follows this introduction.

To date, several emails regarding proposed bills and suggested actions have been sent to all LWVADC members. Current plans call for additional notices, updates on current legislation and supplemental information about action alerts from the state and national leagues. Currently four LWVADC members have volunteered to participate in the program. (We listed our names and contact in the original manual, but when preparing this manual for distribution to local leagues, some team members did not want their name listed).

We hope others will volunteer to help with these subjects or research other legislative issues. For information about the program contact (Insert League name or members here)



TAKING ACTION

Successful advocacy requires purpose, patience and persistence. Deciding what to do and when is not easy and success is not always immediate. To this end the material in this manual is based on information from those who have operated successful advocacy organizations, and from current and former congressional staff members who have worked for elected officials and/or participated in political campaigns.

BE PREPARED

- **Keep The League's *Send A Message* Pamphlet By Your Phone.**
It contains contact information for national and state officials.
- **Become Informed About The Issues You Care About.**
- **Decide How Many Hours A Week/Month You Can Advocate For These Issues.**
Citizen advocacy is extremely important, but it takes time. If one phone call a week fits your busy life, add it to your schedule. You can always call more often if an issue demands frequent contact.

GET ENGAGED

- **Follow Issues You Care About.**
Review newspapers, websites, Facebook pages and other social media. See the information and resource list included in this booklet. You can also track the status of national legislation [at https://www.congress.gov/bill/115Congress/](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115Congress/)
- **See How Your Members of Congress (MC's) Voted.**
Or how they plan to vote on the bills you care about. Visit their websites, sign up for their newsletters and/or email updates, call their office, check print and social media. If you know the bill's title or number you can see how your MC voted at www.senate.gov, www.govtrack.us/congress/votes,
- **Respond To League Calls To Action.**
You will receive notices from the LWVUS, Colorado (LWVCO), your Arapahoe/Douglas League and *Equipped for Action* urging you to support/oppose a legislative or executive action.

- **Join Groups or League Committees That Share Your Interests and Concerns.**

There's strength and impact in numbers. See a list of groups in the resource section.

2.



CONTACTING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS (MC)

It is said that elected officials are constantly “running for reelection.” As a potential voter, you hold the key. Don’t hesitate to make your opinions known.

CALL THEM

- According to former and current congressional staffers, personal phone calls are the very best way to get the MC’s attention. Online contacts are more easily ignored and letters pretty much get stored in a file and are rarely read. But phone calls are tallied, sorted and reported to the MC each day.
- Call the MC’s Washington DC office and local office. If the line is busy, try calling a bit later as messages are often ignored if staff is already busy talking to other constituents. If an issue merits additional action, call on the same subject every day until the vote takes place. Don’t worry about talking to the same person. Staffers rotate office duties.

WHAT TO SAY

- **Your Name, Zip Code and Title of the Bill.**
If you live in the MC’s district, it is important to let staff know your zip code as you will be identified as a potential voter. If time permits, the staff may ask for your address or city. If the calls are fast and furious, staffers will just take the zip code.
- **Tell Them Specifically How You Want Them to Vote and Why.**
You can make it personal: “I voted for you in the last election and “I’m concerned about.....” but don’t be ambiguous. Please tell the MC to vote “yes” or “no.”
- **Be Polite, Brief and To the Point.**
MC’s staff are there to listen but don’t always have time for long conversations.

- **You May Feel More Comfortable If You Prepare Your Comments In Advance.**

Sample scripts are on page 9.

3.



THANK THEM

- Legislators love to get positive feedback. It's rare so they do remember. Thank them when they vote or otherwise support your issue. If time permits personalize your message. If the proposed action will impact you or those you know, explain how. You can ask to speak to the legislator, but a message with a staffer will suffice.

SEND THEM AN EMAIL

- While less effective than phone calls, MC's pay attention when they receive a deluge of emails on a specific subject. The same suggestions for phone calls apply. You will be asked to enter your zip code, name, address, city/county, phone number and email address. Many MC's websites also have additional devices to determine if you are a real person or "robot" so be patient. You must go through this before you reach the message screen.

WHAT TO SAY

- In the first sentence tell them how you want them to vote and why. Keep it short. Ask them to send a response.
- It's fine to send multiple emails on the same topic over the course of several days, but change your message a bit. Staff usually discounts emails that directly quote talking points you may have received from groups you support, so be sure to vary those messages as well.

LETTERS/PETITIONS

- Don't bother with posting letters if the issue is time sensitive. Letters go through a rigorous screening process in Washington before they reach the MC's office and by that time the

issue has probably been decided. Consider mailing/faxing/emailing a letter to the local Colorado office.

- Petitions are less effective but may be useful as a counter to other positions. MC's do not usually acknowledge petitions because the signers may not live in the MC's district and it takes very little effort to sign one.

4.



TOWN HALLS & OTHER MEETINGS

Appearing and/or speaking at a town hall meeting or listening to a telephone town hall conducted by your MC is the gold standard for voters. It is one of the few ways voters can ascertain how their MC interacts with an audience, responds to audience questions, and learn their opinions on current issues.

BE PREPARED

- If you have signed up for your MC's newsletter, periodically visit their website or see an event on social media, you will probably learn about the telephone town halls, the town meetings or other informational events arranged by the MC's office. If not, call the MC's office to check. Sign up to talk and/or listen to the MC's telephone meetings and indicate your willingness to speak at town hall meetings. You could even join with others who support your issue and try to arrange a meeting with the MC.
- The MC may have alerted the press about the event, but check to ensure some press covers the event. The heightened interest in today's political scene has garnered significant press involvement.
- Prepare your question(s) in advance. If you have a chance to ask a question at the meeting, persist until you get an answer. End your remark with a question asking what the MC will do about an issue, how they will vote on an issue or a statement on how you want them to vote. The MC may try to dodge the question, respond with a "glittering generality" or change the subject. Repeat your question and wait for a response.
- Signs and posters at town hall meetings are iffy. You might not be called on if you are carrying a sign because they may fear you will engage in "political theater." Also MC's often ask citizens to register for the meeting in advance and set stringent requirements for those attending. Examples include requiring a valid ID, no purses or backpacks, no

cameras (although many audience members do take cell phone pictures), and strict time limits for speakers.

- Keep track of what they say (or don't say) on the issues you care about. Pay attention to how they follow through.

5.



ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Each newspaper has its own guidelines, so check before you write. Here are suggested guidelines for the Denver Post.

- The Post accepts letters up to 150 words on general interest topics. Letters must include your full name, home address and day and evening phone numbers. An individual writer is usually limited to one letter in a 30-day period. Attachments are discouraged. Cut and paste the letter in the body of an email.
- The Post may edit your letter for length, grammar and accuracy. Your letter must be your original work and the topic should be timely. It is helpful if your comments are tied to a current issue or story recently covered in the newspaper.
- Simple sentences are easier to read than complex or compound sentences. Long detailed arguments are hard to read and not so persuasive. Do not repeat the "opposition's" argument. A simple summary of the offending action is sufficient. Then deliver two or three arguments that make your point.
- Your MC's closely follow opinions in their local newspapers so consider sending a letter. Weekly newspapers are much more likely to give you space for your letter and edit you less, but if your letter does not appear in print, check the paper's website or other social media. And remember, it is fine to send a letter in support of an action or to thank a MC for his/her support.

MARCHES, SIT-INS & DEMONSTRATIONS

- These actions are great for reinforcing people's activism, their commitment to an issue and stimulating voters to do something besides engaging in "armchair advocacy." The

value of such activities is in their symbolism. They show a large number of people in support or opposition to an issue in hopes it will get the attention of the media and election officials.

- To be successful the event must have a goal, a follow-up action plan and be integrated into a larger part of an advocacy movement. So join a march. Just know there's more work ahead to achieve your purpose.

6.



ON BALANCE

SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE

- “Speaking with one voice” is one of the most important tenets of the League. Only the League president (or designee) may speak for the League in an official capacity. However, members are encouraged to take action on League priority issues as individuals. Members are always free to take action on any topic, as long as it is clear that they are speaking as individuals, not for the League (ie: they should not mention they are League members in their communications).

NATIONAL AND STATE ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

- Advocacy efforts are also conducted by the national League and by state Leagues throughout the U.S. A brief explanation follows on the next page.

ADVOCACY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Of course, Congress isn't the only place where there may be action on your issues. Elected officials are making decisions in state legislatures, commissions, city councils, parks and recreation boards and your local school board. You have a better chance of actually having a face-to-face conversation with local elected officials than you have of talking directly to your MC. Get to know your local officials and let them know what you care about. They want to be reelected and they want your vote.

- Remember all legislation starts at the local level. This fall you will have the chance to evaluate candidates running for your local school boards and some city councils. The League will be holding candidate forums for these elections and it behooves you and your friends to attend and find out the candidate's goals and his/her positions on the issues that affect you, your community and your schools. A candidate forum may be the only time you actually see a candidate face-to-face and hear him/her speak without the benefit of a teleprompter or prepared script.

7.



LEAGUE LEGISLATIVE ACTION

In addition to the advocacy efforts of LWVADC and other local leagues, many actions are guided by the League of Women Voters effective lobbying operations at the national and state level. Effective lobbying depends on a partnership at all league levels - lobbying Congress or the state legislature and constituent lobby at home.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS/US

The LWVUS' Advocacy Department leads the organization's federal lobbying work and provides information to state and local leagues about advocacy priorities. The department, working at the direction of the LWVUS Board, is responsible for developing and implementing strategies for lobbying on national issues and advancing LWVUS program priorities. Day-to-day lobbying of Members of Congress (MC), staff and committees is carried out by League's professional staff lobbyists. In addition, LWVUS' volunteer Lobby Corps of some 20 Washington area League members lobbies each month when Congress is in session.

While it is the job of the LWVUS Board to lead the national action and keep League action synchronized with the U.S. Congress, national legislation is every League's and every member's business. Each state and local League president (or designee) is expected to take whatever official action is requested in response to a national Action Alert. See more information on the LWVUS web page, www.lwv.org.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS/COLORADO

The League of Women Voters of Colorado's (LWVCO) advocacy for state issues at the Colorado General Assembly is spearheaded by a volunteer member Legislative Action Committee (LAC) and LWVCO staff lobbyist. These 25 volunteers work with the staff lobbyist in analyzing legislation,

testifying before committees, and meeting with legislators to lobby for or against bills based on League program positions as adopted by League members throughout the years. They also send out Action Alerts to League members throughout the state if the issue merits such action.

This advocacy includes:

- ❖ Testifying in legislative committee hearings
- ❖ Writing letters and emails to Representatives, Senators, the Governor and the media
- ❖ Encouraging League members to contact their legislators and local media
- ❖ Holding an annual Legislative Conference for League member and guests
- ❖ Publishing the Legislative Letter which contains information about the various bills and their status. You can access the Legislative letters for the 2017 session at <http://lwvcolorado.org/lwv/legislative-action/>

8.



SAMPLE SCRIPTS

PHONE CALLS

Hello, this is _____. I live in _____ and my zip code is _____.

I'd like to speak with the staff in charge of _____ please. (If that person is not available, speak with whomever answered the phone.)

I'm calling to urge *Senator or Representative* _____ to vote yes or no on bill number or bill title. Or you can just describe the legislation. For example: "the proposed new health care bill introduced in the House."

If you voted for the MC, say "I voted for _____" then provide a reason for your position.

Examples: " I think firearm tracing is an important step in keeping guns out of the hands of children - this would reduce the accidental shootings by children in their homes."

"The proposed health care bill would eliminate thousands of people from receiving the health care they need."

If there is time you can close with: "I urge Senator or Representative to vote yes or no on this bill." Or just list the bill title or number.

Thank you.

EMAILS

Since you have already listed your name, zip, etc., all you have to say is:

I urge *Senator or Representative* _____ to vote yes or no on bill number or title.

Follow with one or two reasons for your position.

Thank You.

9.



MY ELECTED OFFICIALS CONTACT LIST

President Donald J. Trump

www.whitehouse.gov

202-456-141

president@whitehouse.gov

US Senate

Senator Michael F. Bennet

DC Office: 202-224-5852

Denver Office: 303-455-7600

<https://www.bennet.senate.gov/>

Senator Cory Gardner

DC Office: 202-224-5941

Denver Office: 303-391-5777

<https://www.gardner.senate.gov/>

U.S. House of Representatives

District #4: Congressman Ken Buck

DC Office: 202-225-4776

Regional Office: Castle Pines, 720-639-9165

<https://buck.house.gov/>

District #6: Congressman
Mike Coffman

DC Office: 202-225-7882

Regional Office: Aurora, 720-748-7514

<http://coffman.house.gov/>

Colorado General Assembly

Senator _____

Representative _____

County

Commissioner _____

City

Council _____