



UCC's 100K Campaign Advocacy Kit

This kit is a starter guide for making Congressional visits an integral part of joining your protest to prayer for peace in Iraq. We have compiled resources on the two legislative focuses of the UCC's 100k campaign – Iraqi refugee assistance and veteran care – for your convenience. Please call the UCC's public policy office in Washington DC at 202-543-1517, if you have any questions.

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How to Organize a Lobby Visit

Meeting with your members of Congress or their staff and developing a personal relationship are the most effective ways to influence the legislators' positions on an issue. Phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters are all important but are not as effective as meeting with your members of Congress or their staff.

What is a lobby visit?

Lobbying is a term used to describe interactions between elected government officials and group of persons who work to influence members of a legislature to vote according to the group's special interest. Lobbying elected leaders is an important element of a healthy democracy.

Who can lobby?

Anyone can be an effective lobbyist. An advanced degree in government or public policy is not needed. Your concerns expressed simply and sincerely, can be very persuasive. Above all, what counts is being a constituent with a vote.

No time to go to Washington DC?

Capitol Hill is not the only place where you may meet with your legislator. All members of Congress have offices in their home state or district. Constituent visits to the home offices are valued. They will be reported to the Washington office and will help raise the visibility of the issues you discuss in both offices. Summer recess (August) and other, shorter recess periods like holidays are great times to try meeting directly with your legislator. See www.house.gov or www.senate.gov for schedules.

Preparing for a Lobby Visit

1. Choose your team

Assemble a small group that represents the diversity of your community and is interested and knowledgeable about your issue. A broad-based delegation of constituents (five is ideal) increases the likelihood of getting a meeting with the legislator rather than his or her staff. A group can demonstrate the breadth of support for your position. Are there people in your community, church, or workplace who share your concerns? Do you belong to a professional or service organization where these issues are addressed? Just be sure to keep the group small to have an effective visit.

2. Schedule an appointment

Schedule the lobby visit in advance; don't just show up.

Call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be transferred to your leader's office or visit www.congress.org to get the addresses and phone numbers of your senators' and representative's local office(s). Ask for the scheduler's name and his or her fax number.

Put together a written request for a meeting with the senator or representative. Nearly all verbal requests are rejected. Send the written request to the scheduler and copy anyone else you know in the office (the original must go to the scheduler). The request should be less than a page long and should include

Who is in your delegation: with their titles or affiliations

What you want: a 30-minute meeting with the senator/representative

When you want to meet: the days and times your delegation can meet

Where you want to meet: the location of the district office closest to you

Why you want to meet: to talk about how to help Iraqi refugees and IDP's

Follow up with a phone call to the scheduler one day after you send in the written request. Don't ask if they have an answer; just ask if they received the request.

Follow up again two to three days later to see if there is an answer.

3. Prepare for the lobby visit

Do your research

You can check an online congressional directory like www.congress.org for your members' contact information, as well as background information, committee assignments, and voting records. You will also find their declared

religious affiliations. Once you've scheduled a visit, you should review the legislator's voting record, committee assignments, and any views that have been publicly stated. Check your legislator's web site: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

Establish a message and goal

Be specific about the desired action: vote for or against a pending bill or amendment; sponsor a bill; insert an article into the "Congressional Record," or raise a specific concern.

Choose roles

Meet with your team members ahead of time to discuss your approach to the issue. Then designate someone to lead the discussion in your lobby meeting and another to take notes. Decide who will handle which points so you cover everything from the introductions to the political issues. Discuss which angles will be most effective with this member. Look at their voting record, their committee assignments, even their personal background (pre-Congress profession or activities, religious faith, area of education).

4. How to conduct a lobby visit

How to start

Be on time. You should each introduce yourselves, where you live and a brief reason for your involvement in the issue. Also add if you are representing any organizations and how many members those groups have to show the reach of your small lobby team. Then express appreciation for anything (big or small) you can find in the public record. A "thank you" helps establish a cordial meeting.

Discussing your issue

Clearly articulate the purpose of your visit. It is important to talk about only one issue and to stay on this topic. Be concise when you present your position. Ask questions about it. Allow plenty of opportunity for listening to your legislator's views and concerns.

Listen closely to what your legislator says - there may be hints that will enable you to follow up with resources. And, even if your legislator is not won over to your position on this issue, she or he might be supportive on another issue.

Even if you disagree on most issues, compliment the member of Congress for a vote or action you appreciated. Building rapport with staff is important in developing a long-term relationship.

It is a good idea to leave printed material that summarizes the points you made or provides additional background information on your concern. You can call the UCC Washington office at 202-543-1517 for help finding printed material to leave behind.

You don't need to know everything

Many people are put off by the idea of a lobby visit because they do not feel sufficiently expert on a given issue. So long as you have the basics down, simply be honest when there is something you do not know, and offer to send the information after the meeting. The UCC's web site and staff can help you find what you need.

Ask for a specific action

Discussing an issue is important, but the goal is action. Be ready with a concrete request. Some examples: "Senator, will you vote for this bill?"; "Will you make a floor speech against this legislation?" or (to a congressional staff member) "We would like your boss to co-sponsor this bill."

Rather than something generic like "I want you to support the environment," a more effective "ask" is to request support for a specific bill or legislative action: "I would like Congressman Doe to support H.R. 1234, the Tree Planting Act." Give several brief points why your member of Congress should support this legislation. Avoid a long philosophical debate about the issue; be concrete.

Promise to follow-up

Say when and how you will be in touch to follow-up your request. (Example: "I will call your staff next week to follow up.") Tell the staff person you will get back to him or her if you can't provide information about an issue on the spot. If the staff person is unfamiliar with a bill or is unsure of the legislator's position, ask for follow-up correspondence. Leave one or two pages of relevant material explaining your position.

Express your thanks

At the end of the meeting, thank the staff person for his or her time. Send a thank you letter to the staff person soon after your visit, repeating your "ask." This letter helps to build a relationship over time with a member of Congress and her or his staff. It often takes several meetings with a member of Congress or his or her staff to influence legislative action. A lobby visit is important to establish a relationship with a congressional office and to get congressional attention on an issue, but make sure to follow up with phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters to the editor.

5. After the lobby visit

After the meeting, your lobby team should spend time debriefing. Take notes to help with future work with your legislator. Follow-up with a thank you letter, recapping your key points, and adding any additional information. Plan other ways to work with this office on your issue, such as generating letters and calls from other constituents.

6. Help strengthen the UCC's work

We encourage you to send a brief report on your meeting to the UCC's Washington DC office. Knowing how your legislator responded during your visit can help us in our work on Capitol Hill.

Source: Friends Committee on National Legislation

Iraqi Refugees 101

Facts and Figures

- Iraq is the world's fast growing refugee crisis.
- The United Nations estimates that over 4 million Iraqis have been displaced by violence in their country.
- Over 2.3 million have vacated their homes for safer areas within Iraq, termed "Internally Displaced Persons" (IDP's).
- 1.5 million are now living in Syria, and over 1 million refugees inhabit Jordan, Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, and Turkey.
- 1 in ever 10 people in Jordan is an Iraqi refugee.
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees lacks the financial resources needed to provide adequate protection and assistance to Iraqis.
- With no legal work options in host countries, some Iraqis are already exploring the use of false documents to migrate to Western nations.
- 372 Palestinians from Iraq are living near the border crossing between Iraq and Syria in a makeshift refugee camp. They have been denied entry by the Syrian government and they refuse to return to Iraq. Similarly, in Jordan, dozens of Palestinians remain in a camp where they have been since April 2003, awaiting resettlement.
- Since the war began, spending projects in Iraq have not been funded through the regular budget process, but instead have been funded through emergency measures. The pro-war side doesn't want to admit there is a humanitarian crisis in Iraq and the anti-war side wants to cut off all funding immediately for anything that has to do with Iraq. Neither position benefits those suffering in Iraq.

The bottom line

The United States is not contributing enough money to combat the increasing humanitarian crisis in Iraq. Increased funding for humanitarian aid, refugee and internally displaced persons assistance, resettlement for Iraqis at risk, and economic redevelopment of the country is the best way to provide security and stability for the country of Iraq and the whole region. We must remain in solidarity with our Iraqi brothers and sisters who are suffering because of this war, by urging Congress to increase funding for the humanitarian crisis and include it as a regular budget item in the US.

Iraqi Refugee Legislation – Talking Points

H.R. 3674 The Iraqi Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Security Act of 2007

The UCC has chosen H.R. 3674 as its top legislative priority for Iraqi refugee resettlement, assistance to the region, and funding for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees programs. The spirit of the bill is to ensure US leadership on funding for Iraqis to ensure our European allies will join us.

Purpose: Raises awareness of and addresses the Iraqi refugee crisis and the growing internally displaced population in Iraq by:

- Providing increased assistance to these populations;
- Providing increased assistance to Iraqi Refugee host countries and/or funding for international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations working in the region;
- Urging the U.S. to work with the Iraqi government to help it improve its ability to provide relief for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons;
- Increasing border security in Jordan;
- Facilitating the resettlement of Iraqis; and
- Urging increased cooperation between the U.S. Government and the international community to address the above issues.

Humanitarian Assistance

Authorized spending: \$700 million for each fiscal year beginning in 2008 through 2010

- For Iraqi Refugees: Increases direct, accountable bilateral assistance and/or funding for international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations working in the region, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and to relevant Government of Iraq Ministries.
- For Internally Displaced Persons – Increases direct, accountable aid for this population. Special attention is given to the most vulnerable populations including women, children, religious and other minorities.

Improved Border Security

Authorized spending: \$500 million

- Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to cooperate with the Secretary of State to establish a program to improve Jordanian border security and aid in the security screening of Iraqi applicants for refugee status in Jordan.

Special Immigrant Status

Authorized spending: \$500 million for each fiscal year beginning in 2008 through 2010

- Provides Special Immigrant Status under the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.) for Iraqi nationals (as well as their spouses and children) who worked for the U.S. government, American companies or NGOs for one year and who fear reprisal, persecution, injury or death as a result of that work.
- Provides eligibility for resettlement assistance, entitlement programs and other benefits accorded refugees pursuant to section 207 of the Immigration and Naturalization Act (8 U.S.C. 1157).
- Requires the Secretary of State to provide protection or immediate removal from Iraq of individuals applying for a special immigrant visa if the Secretary determines that the person is in imminent danger.

Expedited Processing of Iraqi Refugees

- Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security, in cooperation with the Secretary of State to streamline the screening and security investigations of Iraqi applicants for refugee status in the U.S, particularly for those that were employed by the U.S. government or U.S. entities;
- Directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to double its personnel that are conducting security reviews of Iraqi applicants for refugee status in the U.S;
- Authorizes the acceptance of 20,000 Iraqis per year through 2010.

International Cooperation

- Directs the Secretary of State, in cooperation with the Secretary of Homeland Security to:
 1. Work with the international community to provide financial assistance to Iraqi IDP populations;
 2. Provide technical and financial assistance to international organizations in order to process refugees; and
 3. Continue to support the work of the UNHCR in its donor conferences in order to provide increased attention to and advocacy on behalf of Iraqi refugees and IDPs.
- Urges the Secretary of State to encourage Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe member states to provide such assistance.

Sources: EPIC (Education for Peace in Iraq Center), Refugees International

Iraqi Refugee Legislation – Call-In Script

H.R. 3674 The Iraqi Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Security Act of 2007

If you don't have time for a lobby visit, a phone call only takes 5 minutes! Visit www.congress.org to enter your zip code and get the phone numbers of your Congressional Representatives. H.R. 3674 is only circulating in the House of Representatives right now.

Representative's office: Hello?

You: Hello, this is – *your name* – from – *your town and state*. May I please speak with the staff member who specializes in foreign relations? (If he/she is not there, please ask to leave a message in voicemail.)

Representative's office: Sure, please hold while I transfer you...

Staffer: Hello?

You: Hello, this is – *your name* – from – *your town and state* – and I belong to – *your local church*. I wanted to thank Representative XX for her/his very thoughtful positions on Iraq in the past. I appreciate that she/he understands Iraq is a complex issue and I hope she/he continues to analyze the matter in this way. I'm calling today to encourage Representative XX to support H.R. 3674 The Iraqi Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Security Act. I feel Congress has a moral responsibility to increase funding for refugee and internally displaced persons, to help resettle Iraqis at risk, and to ensure proper economic redevelopment of the country. This is vitally important to the safety and security of the Iraqi people as well as the American people. (see talking points above for more specifics.) Could you explain Representative XX's positions on Iraqi refugee and humanitarian assistance?

Staffer: Sure. Representative XX thinks...

You: As a person of faith, protecting vulnerable populations in the world is an issue that I feel strongly about. My church, the United Church of Christ, is running a national campaign against the war. I am one of 65,000 people in the United Church of Christ who are participating in this nation-wide campaign to oppose the war in Iraq. My local church has participated in this campaign and – *insert personal story about the campaign*. (It is also helpful to let the Representative know how the Iraq war is affecting *you, your family and your community* locally.)

Staffer: Yes, I understand this is a hard issue. We will be seriously considering solutions to the growing humanitarian crisis in the coming months.

You: Great. I will be checking back in to see how Representative XX uses her/his power to help the victims of this horrible war. (You can also ask for your Representative's current position on humanitarian aid in Iraq to be sent to you in writing.)

Staffer: Sure, that's fine.

You: Thank you for speaking with me today. I look forward to following up with your office.

Next Steps

You've raised your voice, now what? Here are some additional ways to keep legislative momentum going.

Hold a Public Event

Organize a local event focusing on the issue of concern during a recess and invite your members of Congress to speak. A delegation representing a broad and diverse local constituency or the promise of a large audience will help get you on your busy member's schedule. Leave plenty of lead time to organize such an event.

Utilize the media

Local media forums, such as newspapers, radio, or TV cable-access programs, reach many people and are very significant in shaping opinions. People learn from and listen to people they know – people from their communities. In fact, recent surveys reveal that the major factor in influencing an individual's vote is conversation with friends and family. So you can be a powerful advocate right where you are!

Many people aren't aware of the Iraqi refugee crisis. Help bring the issue into the debate on Iraq by using media outlets. Visit the UCC website http://www.ucc.org/justice/advocacy_resources/media-guide.html for more information on writing op-eds, letters to the editor, editorials, and getting on the air of a local radio or TV station.

Mobilize Others

Our voices are stronger when they're lifted together! Use this guide to train others in your church and community on how to lobby for the Iraqi people. Organize a local call-in day in your community.

Donate and Fundraise

Our Iraqi brothers and sisters need our voices, our prayers and our generosity. Hold a fundraising event in your church. Take a special offering. Donate in the name of a loved one for Christmas. Please see www.ucc.org/100kforpeace/ to donate online.

Pray!