



## WHY ADVOCATE?

God often uses people of faith to confront, challenge, and call authorities to act justly and fulfill their intended purpose. Esther risked her life to plead the cause of her people before King Ahasuerus (Esther 4–8). Jesus challenged the rulers of Palestine to genuinely care for their own people instead of oppressing them and commanded his followers to love their neighbors as they love themselves (Luke 11:37–54; Mark 12:31).

Anabaptists have a long history of witnessing to government on a variety of issues. For many years, North American Anabaptists have spoken to government leaders regarding religious freedom, military conscription and payment of war taxes. More recently—out of MCC and Christian Peacemaker Team global relief, development, and peace work—many Mennonites and Brethren in Christ have spoken against injustices that affect people around the world. When Anabaptists engage in advocacy they often seek to do so from the framework set forth in Micah 6:8 by humbly calling on governing authorities to seek justice and love mercy.



## More on the Internet

For more information, check out these sources on the internet:

- [mcc.org/us/washington/index.html](http://mcc.org/us/washington/index.html)  
(MCC Washington office homepage)
- [mcc.org/us/washington/advocate.html](http://mcc.org/us/washington/advocate.html)  
(Washington Office advocacy information)
- [fcnl.org/getin/resources/op\\_ed.shtm](http://fcnl.org/getin/resources/op_ed.shtm)  
(Tips for writing op-ed pieces)
- [mcc.org/us/washington/votingrecord.pdf](http://mcc.org/us/washington/votingrecord.pdf)  
(Congressional voting record)

## Addresses

President \_\_\_\_\_  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Representative \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
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070705bo5m Printed in the USA on recycled paper.

# MCC U.S. Washington Office Guide to Christian Advocacy



[mcc.org/us/washington](http://mcc.org/us/washington)

The Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office is a Mennonite and Brethren in Christ presence on Capitol Hill, providing and encouraging prophetic witness to the way of Christ on matters of U.S. public policy.

## Hints for Effective Advocacy

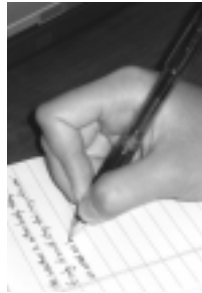
There are many methods available for advocacy ranging from letter writing to direct congressional visits. Here are some things to keep in mind regardless of what specific action you take.

- **Introductions.** Always introduce yourself as a constituent. If you talk to a legislative aide, be sure to write down his/her name for future reference.
- **Identify the bill or issue.** When possible, cite the bill number or legislation title. It is also helpful to provide a brief summary of the bill since hundreds of bills cross legislators' desks.
- **State your purpose.** Focus on a single topic and articulate your position. Ask for your legislator's position on the issue of concern and then express, clearly, what it is you're asking the congressperson to do.
- **Give your reasons.** Don't be afraid to speak personally. Explain how your experience, observations, or Christian faith shapes your concerns. If appropriate mention your MCC connection.
- **Ask a question.** If you want more than a cookie-cutter response, raise a specific question. A well-stated question can express a viewpoint and, at the same time, stimulate a response.
- **Say "well done".** Thank your congressperson when they vote the right way or take a courageous stand. We should remember they are human too and appreciate encouragement.
- **Form a relationship.** Try to develop a positive relationship with your representative by attending town hall meetings, staying respectful in all interactions, and calling, writing, or visiting multiple times.

## Specific Advocacy Tools

Depending on your level of comfort and ambition, there are various methods for making your voice heard to your representative.

- **Visits.** Congressional visits are the most effective way for a citizen to advocate. Visits provide an opportunity to meet staff, build rapport, ask questions, and share mutual concerns. To schedule a visit, write or phone at least one to two weeks in advance, identifying the issue you want to discuss.
- **Letter writing.** Letters are excellent means to educate and persuade members of Congress. Writing at least 4–5 times per year is a good goal. Typed or neatly handwritten letters on personal stationery denote sincere, grassroots interest and generally receive different attention than form letters, postcards, or petitions.



*Providing documentation of your interactions (copies of letters and emails, summaries of visits, etc.) to the MCC Washington Office can allow staff members to leverage your communications by contacting your legislator on behalf of MCC.*

Remember to be brief—limit the content to one page focused on a single issue.

- **Telephone calls.** Do not hesitate to call your legislators. If you call the local office, ask for the staffer who takes your message to pass it on to their Washington office. A more effective approach is to call the legislator's Washington office directly and ask to talk to the staffer who deals with your issue. Telephone calls from constituents are expected and the views expressed in them are noted.
- **Emails and faxes.** Faxes and emails are good ways to ensure timely delivery of your views—especially when a vote is imminent and there is not enough time for a letter. They are as fast as a phone call while providing a written record of your communication. Use the email form on your congressperson's website or make sure to otherwise identify yourself as a constituent.

## What else can you do?

There are many ways to get involved in advocacy besides direct communication with your congressperson. Some other important ways to participate include:

- *Reflect on biblical texts* that speak of God's desire for peace and justice (e.g. Isaiah 58, Luke 4:18–19).
- *Pray for government officials* and let them know you are praying for them.
- *Join with others in your community* to start discussion and action at the local level: host a public forum or town hall meeting.
- *Develop mutual friendships* with people who struggle courageously on poverty level incomes and learn how political decisions affect their day-to-day lives.
- *Sign up for Washington Office Hotlines* and get involved on at least one issue.
- *Write an article* for a newspaper or church magazine.