



Memorial Day Recess Toolkit

Protecting Medicaid, Defending the ACA and Holding Congress Accountable

We have a one-week window (May 29 – June 2) to put pressure on the Senate to protect Medicaid, defend the ACA and to hold House members accountable for their votes to pass the American Health Care Act (AHCA). The Senate wants to move quickly. Our goal is to delay them from moving forward for as long as possible.

Memorial Day recess is an excellent opportunity for state and community advocates and your partners to communicate directly with their members of Congress, the public and the media. We must keep up the pressure and highlight what is at stake for the future of Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act and the overall health system.

We have included a number of resources, some from earlier recess toolkits as well as some new ideas you can use to ensure you maximize your impact.

Messaging

- Your constituents – and roughly 4 in 5 voters nationwide -- resoundingly rejected the American Health Care Act. Yet the Senate continues to negotiate draconian cuts to Medicaid and a reckless repeal of the Affordable Care Act, which combined would strip more than 20 million people of their health insurance and result in billions in costs shifted to strained state budgets.
- Through calls to Congress, town halls, rallies and public opinion polls, people rejected the AHCA, making it clear they do not support changes to the ACA or Medicaid that would raise premiums, cause millions of people to lose coverage, take away consumer protections and slash state budgets. Such changes would have devastating consequences for [INSERT IMPACT ON SPECIFIC POPULATION MESSAGES]
- Over the last few months, this groundswell of activity showed us that health care is deeply personal and goes beyond traditional party lines. Opposition to ACA repeal and cuts to Medicaid came from all corners of our state and from all walks of life.
- Your constituents are paying attention. Continued efforts to pass a repeal bill or other congressional or administrative actions that cause people to lose coverage, cut Medicaid, rollback consumer protections, defund Planned Parenthood, undermine the ACA marketplaces or thwart enrollment will be exposed, vigorously opposed and met with more public outcry.
- People are ready to move on from repeal of the ACA. It's time for policymakers to move forward in a bipartisan way to improve the ACA, protect Medicaid and advance a health

reform agenda that addresses people's most pressing concerns - lowering out-of-pocket costs, bringing down the sky-high cost of prescription drugs, addressing inequities, and improving the quality of care.

What Can Advocates Do?

Before we dive in to strategies you can employ over recess, we want to flag a few key constituencies and issues that we think are important to highlight to influence Senators. Not all Senators are going to care about all of the topics and key messages highlighted below, but many care about at least one of these. Use what is applicable in reaching your Senator.

- **Medicaid**

We have to send a clear and strong message to our Senators: cuts to Medicaid are unacceptable. Any proposals that cap or cut Medicaid would force states to raise taxes, lower payments to doctors and take away health coverage from children, seniors and people with disabilities. Check out our new Medicaid messaging guidance [here](#).

- **The AHCA is a Tax Cut for the Rich**

We want to emphasize that the AHCA would be a huge tax cut for the rich paid for by cutting health care for children with special health care needs, people with disabilities and seniors who need help staying in their homes. It would cut care for over 20 million people and people with preexisting conditions would pay more.

- **The ACA and Medicaid are Essential to Addressing Substance Use Disorders and Overdose Deaths**

The AHCA would cause millions of people to lose health insurance, raise costs for those with preexisting conditions and eliminate requirements to cover essential health benefits such as treatment for mental illness and substance use. At a time when we are seeing more than [50,000 deaths a year](#) nationally from drug overdoses, our communities cannot afford to have access to treatment interrupted or taken away.

- **Impact of ACA Repeal and Medicaid Cuts on Rural Communities**

The AHCA is particularly harmful for individuals and families living in rural areas. Our partners at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities released a [new paper](#) this week outlining the devastating effects of the AHCA's Medicaid cuts and reduction of premium tax credits on rural communities, including rural hospitals.

- **Medicaid Cuts Harm State Budgets**

Massive cuts to Medicaid funding would put even greater pressure on [state budgets](#) and make it difficult to fund other important priorities such as education, transportation and efforts to address substance use disorders and overdose deaths.

- **Amplify Impact of the AHCA on Key Constituencies**

- [Older Americans](#)
- [People with disabilities](#)

- [Veterans](#)
 - [Women](#) and [Moms](#)
 - [Communities of color](#)
 - [Children's health](#)
 - [People with substance use disorders](#)
- **Additional Themes to Consider over Memorial Day Recess**
- **May is Older Americans Month.** We know that the AHCA will disproportionately impact older adults, harming their access to care and Members of Congress need to hear this too. **VIEW OUR GRAPHIC SET [HERE](#).**
 - **The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is expected to release a revised score on the AHCA the week of May 22.** This score will indicate the cost and coverage impacts of the final version of the AHCA that passed the House in early May. We'll provide some talking points to use as soon as the score becomes public.
 - **June is Pride Month.** Pride Month offers an opportunity to highlight how the ACA has helped LGBTQ communities and what [LGBTQ people stand to lose](#) if Congress repeals the ACA and guts Medicaid.
 - **We need to continue to hold House members accountable for voting 'YES' on the AHCA.** House members need to continue to hear from their constituents and stakeholders about their harmful votes. Our response to the House vote will inform conversations among members of Congressional delegations and alert Senators to what responses they can expect if they do not stand up to protect health care for their constituents and the tens of millions of Americans around the country.

Events

- *Ask Senators to Hold Events* – We want Senators to have to talk to their constituents. If they haven't announced an event already – ask them to hold one. Then turn people out to attend the event and raise health care as an issue. Use our sample questions below.
- *Attend Members of Congress' Events* – If members are planning public events in your region, it is critical that constituents attend town hall meetings and public forums to voice their opinions on health care. Use [talking points](#) and personal stories at public meetings to get your message across, and take the opportunity to ask questions of legislators.

Here are some sample questions that will help you partner with communities of color:

[VIEW OUR SAMPLE TOWN HALL QUESTIONS HERE](#)

- *Plan Town Halls and Public Events* – The type of event will depend on the time and capacity available, the best way to reach the particular member and the number of people participating. Some possibilities for events include:

- Town hall meeting without a member of Congress present
 - Here's a [handy guide](#) from Indivisible as well as a [compilation of tactics](#) for drawing media attention when your member of Congress refuses to engage with constituents.
 - Public rallies
 - Marches
 - Vigils with faith leaders (check out our [toolkit](#) with strategies to engage the faith community)
 - Open houses or receptions at your organization
 - Tours of clinics or hospitals
- **Direct Outreach to Members of Congress**– While your members are home, schedule in-district meetings. Organize a diverse group of stakeholders, including local health professionals, community leaders, small business owners, clergy members and health care consumers who can share their stories and underscore the need for reform. If a meeting is not possible, request a group call with your member. Plan for the call just as you would an in-person meeting by reviewing joint messages in advance to ensure you deliver a strong, coordinated message.
- **Make sure you do not leave a meeting without an ask of your legislator.**
(*Example: Will you commit to protecting your constituents by voting against any proposal that raises premiums, cause millions of people to lose coverage or takes away consumer protections?*)

Earned Media

- **Letters to the Editor** – We strongly encourage you to focus your efforts on placing Letters to the Editor in your state's local newspapers.
- **Op-Eds in Local and Community Papers** – Members read their community-based papers, not just the major daily papers, especially when they are home. Place op-eds about what the AHCA would mean for your local community during recess. Think about who should author the op-ed depending on the messenger that will best reach your Senator. Is it a mom? A physician or nurse? A business owner? A clergy leader? Someone who holds a locally elected office?
- **Press events** – Use our [new guide](#) based on an event Community Catalyst and Health Care For All hosted in our offices in Boston with Senator Markey to plan your own event.
- **Story Placement in Local Media** – When you have developed relationships with reporters, editors or columnists, it is a good idea to pitch local stories to the media. Identify key themes and/or opinions of editorial pages to get a feel for which writers are most worth your time. Encouraging messages about reform in local media outlets will help to create a positive buzz among readers and the public.

- [Editorial Board Outreach](#) – Community papers are a great target because they are more likely to take an opinion and are widely read by members of Congress and their staff. Identify local papers in targeted districts and request a meeting with their editorial board.

Social Media

- [Digital Strategy Guide](#) – In this guide, you will find some overall digital strategy tips as well as some sample posts to use during May Recess.
- [Videos](#) – With smartphones now capable of capturing high-quality video, you can capture short videos of ACA supporters and their stories and share them widely. 15- to 30-second videos can be used effectively and are ripe for sharing on social media. Twitter does not count videos and images as characters used. Facebook Live is also a great way to broadcast any events you are having – [here](#) are some quick tips on how to use Facebook Live.
 - [Example](#): The Tennessee Justice Center recently launched #LetMeGrowUp, a [social media campaign](#) featuring videos of children with messages for Congress using the hashtag #LetMeGrowUp.

Additional Actions to Influence Members of Congress

- [Engage Healthcare Providers](#) – Use our [new toolkit](#) to engage pediatric providers and those who work with older Americans. The voices of those who provide care in our community can gain media attention and the attention of Senators.
- [Letter Writing to Members of Congress](#) – Hosting letter writing campaigns to members of Congress can also be an easy way to engage constituents and make your voice heard.
- [Call-in Days](#) – Gather ACA supporters together and schedule some time to call in to a member of Congress' district office and express your collective support. Members of Congress keep a record of call for and against various public policy positions, and this is an opportunity to demonstrate public support from his or her constituents.
- [Sign-on Letters and Petitions](#) - In the same way that you organize call-in days, you can gather a number of ACA supporters to write letters or sign petitions. These petitions can be printed out and signed in-person or through various websites like [Change.org](#) or [MoveOn.org](#). Invite media outlets to capture your 'delivery' of these petitions to the targeted member.
 - [Example](#): Advocates from Maine People's Alliance [delivered 1,500 "pink slips"](#) to Congressman Bruce Poliquin to hold him accountable for supporting the AHCA.