



April Recess Toolkit

Protecting Medicaid, Defending the ACA and Holding Congress Accountable

We have a two-week window in April (April 7-24) we can use to put pressure on members of Congress to protect Medicaid, defend the ACA and reject any renewed efforts to resurrect the Republican health care repeal plan. This is an excellent opportunity for state advocates and your partners to communicate directly with their members of Congress, the public and the media.

With the cancellation of a vote on the American Health Care Act (AHCA) just a few weeks ago, our resolve remains strong. Yet while we celebrate our recent wins, we must remain ever vigilant, as members of Congress have shown their willingness to put the health and financial wellbeing of millions of people at risk.

This April recess, 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 you can use to ensure you maximize your impact this Spring:

Messaging

(Targeted at members who may vote for repeal)

- Your constituents – and 83 percent of the public – resoundingly rejected the American Health Care Act, and they do not support plans to resurrect it. Yet the latest Republican repeal plan would add insult to injury by making the failed GOP health care repeal plan even worse.
 - It would gut protections for people with pre-existing conditions, allowing insurance companies to charge them whatever they want.
 - It would also let insurance companies deny coverage for basic services such as prescription drugs, doctor visits or maternity care.
- Through calls to Congress, town halls, rallies and public opinion polls, people rejected the GOP health care repeal plan, 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 personal and doesn't break down along party lines. Opposition to repeal and cuts to Medicaid came from all corners of our state and from all walks of life.

- Your constituents are paying attention. Renewed efforts to pass the GOP health care repeal plan 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. As House Speaker Paul Ryan said, “Obamacare is the law of the land” and the polls show it’s more popular than ever. It’s time for policymakers to accept that and 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.

[VIEW OUR APRIL RECESS TALKING POINTS](#)

What Can Advocates Do?

Events

- *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 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
 - Public rally
 - March
 - Open house or reception at your organization
 - Tour of a clinic or hospital
- *Direct Outreach to Members* – 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.**

Earned Media

- *Letter to the Editor* – We strongly encourage you to focus your efforts on placing Letters to the Editor in your state’s local newspapers.

[VIEW OUR SAMPLE LTES](#)

- *Story Placement in Local Media* – When and where you have developed relationships with reporters, editors or columnists, it is a good idea to pitch local stories to members of 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 April 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.

[VIEW THE APRIL RECESS DIGITAL STRATEGY GUIDE](#)

Additional Actions to Influence Members of Congress

- *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 calls for and against various public policy positions, and this will be an opportunity to demonstrate public support from his or her constituents.

- *Sign-on Letters and Petitions* – In the same way that you can 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.

[VIEW OUR RESOURCE ON ENGAGING FAITH LEADERS IN YOUR ACA DEFENSE CAMPAIGN](#)

In everything you do, you must...

- *Stay on Message* – Community Catalyst created messages you can use with members of Congress.
- *Show strength in numbers* – Work with partners on all of these activities to ensure that your legislators know that their constituents support the messages you're promoting