

Pursuing Justice 2020 Online Conference Workshops

Want Congress to Do Something?

Start by Building Relationships

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Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Southern California





February 7, 2018:
#LetMyPeopleGo
rally for Dreamers at
the Brea office of
former Rep. Ed
Royce (R-CA39),
with Bend the Arc
and CHIRLA (the
Coalition for
Humane Immigrant
Rights of Los
Angeles).



March 5, 2018:
#Citizenship4All
candlelight vigil for
Dreamers at the
Irvine office of
former Rep. Mimi
Walters (R-CA45)
with a coalition
including the
Korean Resource
Center.



November 19, 2018:
Matthew with
Congressman-Elect
Gil Cisneros
(D-CA39) at his
victory celebration
in Buena Park. Gil
took the seat of
retiring Republican
Ed Royce, defeating
Young Kim.



February 22, 2019:
lobbying visit on
immigration justice
at the Palmdale
office of former
Rep. Katie Hill
(D-CA25) with
Bend the Arc,
Freedom for
Immigrants, and
Indivisible.



May 21, 2019:
lobbying visit on
immigration justice
at the Los Angeles
office of Rep. Ted
Lieu (D-CA33) with
Bend the Arc and
CHIRLA.



June 4, 2019:
lobbying visit on
immigration justice
at the Newport
Beach office of Rep.
Harley Rouda
(D-CA48) with Bend
the Arc, CLUE, and
the Orange County
Jewish Coalition for
Refugees.



August 23, 2019:
#DefundHate
lobbying visit at the
Oceanside (San
Diego) office of Rep.
Mike Levin (D-CA49)
with Bend the Arc
and Jewish Action
San Diego.



September 6, 2019:
#DefundHate
lobbying visit at the
Commerce office of
Rep. Lucille
Roybal-Allard
(Chairwoman of the
Homeland Security
Appropriations
Subcommittee) with
BtA and NCJW.



October 3, 2019:
Bend the Arc -
Southern California
#DefundHate rally
at the Commerce
office of Rep.
Roybal-Allard, with
interfaith partners
like CLUE, CAIR
and the Episcopal
Diocese.



October 3 #DefundHate
rally in Commerce: a Bend
the Arc member delivering
our Rosh haShanah gift of
apples and honey to Rep.
Roybal-Allard's Chief of
Staff, Victor Castillo!



October 7, 2019:
Jewish Action San
Diego's rally urging
San Diego's
Democratic Reps to
#DefundHate: Mike
Levin (CA49), Scott
Peters (CA52), Juan
Vargas (CA51) and
Susan Davis (CA53).

Takeaways and Lessons Learned

- 1. Invest in meaningful relationships with coalition partners**, not just for the sake of a single lobbying visit, but in order to build the foundations for long-term collaboration based on trust and respect. When deciding who should attend a meeting, be intentional about including constituents of the legislator, and especially people from directly impacted communities (such as immigrants and refugees). If you're the convener of a lobbying meeting, engage with your partners to determine the agenda and the policy asks, and then acknowledge the value of their contributions - at the meeting itself, in your social media posts, and by thanking them afterwards.

2. Use storytelling as a powerful tool for engagement, be clear in your policy asks, and other pro tips: Even though you're meeting with a legislator or their staff to advocate for specific policies, it helps for your team to build a rapport through respectful and friendly conversation. During the meeting, storytelling is essential in order to humanize the directly impacted communities (for example, immigrants) and show what's at stake. And then, the most important thing is to *clearly state your policy asks* and next steps (it helps to have printed handouts). When planning an agenda, balance being conservative on your timing (because people tend to exceed their allotted time, and you want to allow the legislator/staff to respond) with making sure that every participant who wants has an opportunity to speak and contribute. Recognize the importance of flexibility, as the meeting is unlikely to proceed exactly as you anticipate.

3. Think beyond single lobbying visits by developing campaign strategy and implementing arcs of escalation: sometimes a lobbying meeting will be a one-time occasion, or you might be fortunate to have a legislator who already relentlessly fights for your policy goals. More often than not, in order to move a legislator beyond sympathetic talking points towards actually doing what you want, you'll need to work with your movement partners and develop strategic campaigns (like #DefundHate). Office visits are just one item in a toolbox that includes digital pressure, op-eds, community events, and direct actions. While always showing respect and good faith, craft an arc of escalation that acknowledges that *their* interests (balancing competing voices and making all stakeholders happy) are not the same as *yours* (moving the legislator towards decisive action on a justice issue) - so be prepared with a clear strategy to make that happen!