Acknowledgments: This manual is an updated version of the advocacy manual produced in 2003 by Catholic Charities USA. The present edition builds upon these past efforts and updates the content for the concerns and realities of the second decade of the 21st century.
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INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the Holy Spirit and a deepening desire for justice, many communities are increasingly recognizing the call to serve those who are poor and advocate for effective social policies to eradicate the causes of poverty.

God calls us to take care of each other (cf., Gen 4:1-16), a call that – as handed on by Scripture, tradition, the leadership of our church and Catholic Social Teaching – includes raising our voices for the common good, and speaking with and on behalf of those who are vulnerable. As the people of God, the church, we “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.” 1

This manual aims to assist you as you build your legislative advocacy efforts at the local, state, national and international levels.

We are called to be architects and to partner with others to begin to rebuild our nation on a foundation that respects the dignity of every person and promotes the common good. Just as an architect begins to build with a vision and a blueprint as guides, we, too, must have a vision and a strategy for our advocacy efforts.

It is our hope that you can use this manual as a blueprint for building a campaign around an issue, marshalling the voices of staff and volunteers as you advocate with and for the least among us. Throughout the text and in the appendices, you will find links to resources that may prove useful as you network with other organizations already doing legislative advocacy. Uniting our voices will enhance our ability to advocate for justice, at any level.

Finally, it is important to note that every Catholic Charities agency is at a unique stage of implementing any legislative advocacy strategy. Therefore, we urge you to adapt the recommended steps in this manual to the particular needs and situation of your agency.
Part I: Understanding Our Call and Commitment

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy means supporting and defending a cause in which you believe. Advocates argue for the needs and rights of poor and vulnerable people. Advocates also provide those in need with the skills and opportunities necessary to speak on their own behalf. Advocates work for justice by impacting the public conversation about an issue, leading to changed responses and solutions.

Advocacy takes place on many different levels. For example, professional lobbyists advocate for specific legislation, nonprofits advocate for their clients and legislation that impacts them, and citizens advocate for a community need or a just cause. Each advocate exercises his or her civil right to participate in our nation’s democratic process.

How Can Advocacy Honor our Commitment?

Advocacy gives us the life-changing opportunity to carry out the Gospel mandate to build the kingdom of God and promote justice by helping to change the structures and policies that perpetuate poverty. Your agency, in partnership with other Catholic organizations committed to legislative advocacy (viz., Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Charities network, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, etc.), provides real-life witness and stories that can inform and engage the public and decision-makers about:

- The needs of those who are poor and vulnerable in our communities and our world;
- Options for alleviating problems, including the kinds and amounts of services and funding required; and
- How public policy decisions can help or harm the least among us.

How Can Advocacy Have an Impact?

Organizing a legislative advocacy team within your agency and connecting it with local and national Catholic organizations doing legislative advocacy provide important perspectives for legislators through your experience, resources and witness. A call, a letter or a visit carries weight and gets the attention of policymakers.

Effective advocacy can come in many forms. As an advocate, you make an impact in the following ways:

- **Education.** You can contribute to changing how the public and elected officials understand an issue and the challenges facing the most vulnerable in your community and our world. Some legislators will have in-depth knowledge about your issue. Others
will know very little about it. All will be constantly bombarded with information and requests from various interest groups and constituents. Your job is to keep your issue front and center among competing priorities and to shape how the public perceives it and its importance.

- **Witness.** Your experience in your agency and community gives you expertise as a real-life witness to the challenges faced by those who are poor and vulnerable. You can inform public opinion using the stories you gather about the needs of those who are poor, the solutions that would be most effective to address these needs and the resources required to battle the root causes and effects of poverty.

- **Enlisting allies.** As you educate the public and elected officials, you enlist the community, parishioners, individuals and organizations to support your cause and join with local and national Catholic advocacy organizations to create a movement for change.

- **Tapping resources.** Politics and policy are about the distribution of scarce resources. By educating the public and drawing attention to your issue, you help to raise it in importance among competing causes.

- **Improving services for those who are poor.** By connecting with other programs and people in your community (e.g., JustFaith, St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Campaign for Human Development-sponsored community organizing groups, etc.), you can call attention to policies that are ineffective or unjust and then work to improve them. Advocates also hold legislators accountable for their decisions, helping to ensure that they make informed, just, and careful choices.

### Why Advocacy?

**Scripture Commands us to Work for Justice**

Our commitment to advocacy is rooted in God’s word, our faith tradition and Catholic Social Teaching, which is drawn from Scripture and our tradition. Both the Old and New Testaments make it clear that we are called and commanded to defend the needs of those who are poor and vulnerable (*Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow*. Isaiah 1:17). We must fulfill this call not only through acts of service and charity but also by speaking out and calling attention to unjust issues and structures (*Open your mouth in behalf of the mute, and for the rights of the destitute; Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the needy and the poor!* Proverbs 31:8-9).

The New Testament reiterates many times these responsibilities and reminds us that the measure of a moral and just society is how it cares for the least of its members (Matthew 25:34-40). (See Appendix A for additional Scripture references.)
Catholic Social Teaching Calls Us to Build a Just Nation

The teachings of the Catholic Church and the guidance of its leaders inform our commitment to advocacy and pursuit of justice in society. In Economic Justice for All, the U.S. Catholic bishops remind us that ending poverty is a “moral imperative of the highest priority.” Church leaders call us to bring an end to poverty through advocacy:

As individuals, all citizens have a duty to assist the poor through acts of charity and personal commitment. But private charity and voluntary action are not sufficient. We also carry out our moral responsibility to assist and empower the poor by working collectively through government to establish just and effective public policies.²

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reinforces the duty we have as citizens and as a faithful body to work with government and civil authority for justice and solidarity, work that sometimes demands advocacy. According to church teaching, citizens have “the right, and at times the duty, to voice their just criticisms of that which seems harmful to the dignity of persons and to the good of the community.”³

Catholic Social Teaching Directs our Advocacy

Called by our church to advocate for the vulnerable, we look to Catholic Social Teaching to direct that advocacy. Catholic Social Teaching outlines the fundamental principles necessary for a just society. As staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities agencies, we can use these teachings to guide our advocacy decisions and vision for a more just world. Some of the main themes in Catholic Social Teaching are outlined below. (See Appendix A for additional resources).

- The dignity of the person: The foundation of Catholic Social Teaching lies in the book of Genesis: “God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Because we are created in God’s image, each person, regardless of nationality, socio-economic status, race, gender, religion and background, has basic human dignity. As individuals and as a society, we must protect this dignity and the accompanying rights for each of our sisters and brothers.

  “Every commitment inspired by the Church’s social doctrine is ‘derived from charity’...This means acknowledging that ‘love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.”

  Pope Francis, Fratelli tutti, No. 181
• **Rights and responsibilities:** With our inherent human dignity as children of God, each of us has certain fundamental rights, the most fundamental being the right to life, and including the right to education and productive work, the right to begin and raise a family, and the right to sufficient food, shelter and clothing for a decent and dignified life. With these rights come responsibilities to perform productive work for the benefit of the community and to care and provide for family, for one another and for our society.

• **Call to family community and participation:** Catholic Social Teaching holds that we realize our sacred human dignity in the context of community. The U.S. bishops remind us that, “How we organize our society - in economics and politics, in law and policy - directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.”

We must structure our communities in a way that preserves the dignity of each member. To do that, we must commit to fostering active participation in society by all persons. Only this participation guarantees full dignity and justice.

• **Option for those who are poor:** Keeping in mind the example of Christ, who ministered to those who are poor, and his command to love neighbor as one’s self, we are called to evaluate how our policies and institutions impact our most vulnerable sisters and brothers.

As advocates, we must continually call attention to their needs and the unjust structures at the root of the challenges they face.

• **The common good:** This teaching recognizes that we are all members of one human family, whatever our differences. When one of us suffers, we all suffer. “The extent of [this] suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons.”

The option for those who are poor leads directly to preserving the common good, for we strengthen the whole community by strengthening those who are most vulnerable among us. As advocates, we must respond to Pope John Paul II’s call to “a firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”

“As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response.”

*U.S. Catholic Bishops*
• Solidarity: As we advocate, we work in solidarity with all of our brothers and sisters. The Catechism reminds us that “respect for human dignity requires the practice of solidarity, in accordance with the golden rule and in keeping with the generosity of the Lord, who ‘though he was rich, yet for your sake … became poor so that by his poverty, you might become rich.’” We must raise our voices and work against policies that impact and prevent the least among us from reaching their full potential.

Part II: Building a Framework for Action

Getting Started: Building your Agency’s Capacity for Advocacy

Your capacity for advocacy and the methods you choose will depend on your agency’s structure and size and the key issues you focus on. No one plan fits all, so you have flexibility to determine what works best for you. The most successful efforts incorporate participation of all staff and volunteers according to their roles, uniting them in the dual call to serve and advocate. Also, remember that strength lies in numbers, so be sure to communicate continually with local and national Catholic advocacy organizations as much as possible so as to align your messages.

Step 1: Pray.

Convene your team. Have a time of prayer and discernment to place your advocacy efforts under and within God’s wisdom. We know God calls us to work toward and anticipate God’s kingdom, but discerning together allows us to ask God to help us to know the right time and the right way to begin.

Step 2: Be clear about the role of advocacy.

Your prayer and reflection can be a time for you to explore with your team their role and the relationship between advocacy and the important work they already are doing. The advocacy staff practice direct lobbying, bringing the issues important to the agency and clients to lawmakers. But they also work in conjunction with other departments within the agency to support their goals. A team convening is an opportunity for the existing groups to identify the advocacy issues that are related to their ministries. Invite team leaders to do some discernment about their interests and the interests of their staff and clients in supporting an advocacy effort.

Step 3: Tap the knowledge of existing services.

Existing staff will have knowledge and experience in their area of expertise, including pointing out important contacts. Tap that knowledge and energy. Don’t forget to consult with volunteers, who often contribute a wide background to advocacy efforts.
Step 4: Know each person’s gifts.

As you build the capacity of your advocacy ministry, evaluate the specific expertise that each staff person brings in order to maximize his or her time and effort. Sit down with each person and learn where his/her interests lie and what role he/she would like to play in advocacy. Take note of individual strengths and weaknesses to determine who would be best suited to what role in advocacy ministry.

Getting Started: Creating your Advocacy Strategy

Just as you would not leave on a road trip without a map and an itinerary to guide your travel, you should not embark on an advocacy effort without a strategy and plan of action. Creating a successful advocacy strategy requires several steps, outlined below. Above all, remember to be flexible, reevaluating and adapting your strategies as you move forward as the context, needs or people involved in your issue change.

Step 1: Connect with existing local, state, national and international advocacy efforts.

There are multiple groups engaged in advocacy efforts on the local, state, national and international level that can greatly enhance your advocacy efforts. Instead of seeking to reinvent the wheel, find out what advocacy efforts are already underway and connect with this existing framework of knowledge. By joining your voice with the voices of those already advocating for justice, you can increase your effectiveness and build momentum for change.

Local Advocacy Efforts

Many Catholic dioceses and Catholic organizations are already working to influence legislation on a host of concerns facing local communities. Check to see if your diocese has an office of peace and justice or social advocacy. Find out what issues they are already advocating for and see if you can join your agency’s voice to their efforts.

If your diocese and local Catholic organizations are not working on advocacy issues, chances are there’s a community coalition in your area that is. Interfaith worker justice groups, living wage coalitions and affordable housing organizations exist across the country. Often, they are funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), whose website (www.usccb.org/cchd) includes a state-by-state listing of community organizing groups. Find out who is already advocating for change in your community and give them a call. By building relationships with local community organizing groups, you’ll be in a position of strength from which to advocate and create lasting ties that form the basis for genuine community.
State Advocacy Efforts

Many states have Catholic conferences that maintain a regular presence in their state capitol, advocating on issues of concern to the church. Visit the National Association of State Catholic Conference Directors website (www.nasccd.org) to find out if there’s a state Catholic conference where you live. If there is, you’ll likely find an overview of their state legislative agenda, including ways in which your agency can participate. Many states have Catholic Days at the Capitol during which legislative advocacy groups coordinate their visits to their state legislators. The sight of buses of committed Catholics all visiting the state capitol on the same day often makes quite an impact on state legislators, helping to increase the church’s influence.

National Advocacy Efforts

Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) are two of the national-level organizations whose work includes advocacy in the halls of Congress. Each organization offers legislative advocacy tools developed by professional staff who are frequently on Capitol Hill. Visit CCUSA’s Advocacy and Social Policy Initiatives webpage (www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/our-vision-and-ministry/advocacy/) and the website of the USCCB (www.usccb.org) for information on issues and legislation, as well as the latest action alerts. In addition, each year the Catholic community gathers in Washington, D.C., for the annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in late January or early February. The gathering – sponsored by USCCB, CCUSA, the Roundtable Association of Diocesan Social Action Directors and the Society of St. Vincent DePaul, among others - includes a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill. Visit the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering website for information on past and future gatherings and how you and others involved in your advocacy efforts can attend (www.usccb.org/offices/justice-peace-human-development/catholic-social-ministry-gathering).

International Advocacy Efforts

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Maryknoll’s Office for Global Concerns are two of the leading Catholic organizations doing legislative advocacy around international issues of concern to the church. Visit CRS’ advocacy website (www.crs.org/get-involved/advocate-poor) and Maryknoll’s Office for Global Concerns (www.maryknollogc.org) to find out how your legislative advocacy efforts can include issues of international focus. Additionally, you can also consult the USCCB’s webpage for its Committee on International Justice and Peace (www.usccb.org/committees/international-justice-and-peace/global-poverty).
Step 2: Identify the issue.

To address an issue, you must first identify it. Being in relationship with those in need provides context and perspective and fulfills our Gospel mandate to build community. Begin by consulting your staff and any existing social ministries that work daily with people who struggle with poverty, as well as local groups in your diocese supported by the CCHD. If you are dealing with an international issue, consult those agencies that are in relationships of mutuality with communities in poverty overseas, such as CRS and Maryknoll. Listen well and observe changing trends regarding your issues, and you will begin to identify pressing concerns in your community, state, nation and world.

Consulting the impacted low-income people and communities is crucial to this step. Most importantly, empowering low-income people, rather than simply speaking for them, affirms their dignity. Often, they have ideas for potential solutions and will only embrace proposed solutions if they have participated in identifying them. In addition to people you may meet through direct service, be in touch with your diocese’s CCHD representative for information on how you can learn about local CCHD grantees – independent community organizations engaged in self-help programs and advocacy projects. Visit the USCCB website to find your local CCHD contact (www.usccb.org/committees/catholic-campaign-human-development/who-we-are).

As you identify the problem, remember that its causes may be complex, but your advocacy issue must be focused and clear to facilitate goal setting and working with media. Begin by creating as full a picture as possible of the problem, and then hone in on your specific issue. Begin your research by visiting the websites of the various Catholic organizations discussed above. As you do, consider some of the following questions:

- What is the emerging trend or need? How does it differ from past needs?
- Whom/how many people does the problem affect?
- Does the problem affect different groups differently?
- What is causing the problem or the change in need?
• Is the issue the only problem or is it a symptom of a larger problem that we should address with policy change?
• If the issue is complex, can it be broken down into more manageable pieces? How?
• Who is responsible for addressing the problem?
• What are possible solutions?
• Is advocacy the best way to approach the issue? Would other solutions work better in the short or long run?
• What potential solutions are most important?
• How would these solutions impact the affected group? The community?

Step 3: Document the issue.
Once you have identified your issue, you will need to both research and document it so as to have the facts you need to begin advocacy. As mentioned above, tap into the knowledge of existing advocacy efforts, community organizing and social ministries to help connect you with those who are most affected. Those who are living the reality of a situation play a crucial role in helping to identify and document evidence of increased need or changing trends in need. Work with those in the know to build a compelling case for a response. Learn:

• The characteristics of the impacted people.
• The number affected.
• How the issue has improved or worsened (create a chart or graph to illustrate this change, if possible).
• The change in resources available to respond to the issue.

By checking with other organizations doing advocacy in your community, across the state, nationwide or internationally, you can see if others have observed similar trends. Contact those Catholic organizations cited above for help in finding published research or reports that add further weight and credibility to the issues observed.
Step 4: Understand the arena for action.

Not all advocacy efforts call for a legislative solution. Some may call for a regulatory or judicial solution, instead. By connecting with advocacy groups at the local, state, national and international levels, you can be sure your advocacy will be focused in the appropriate arena.

- *Legislation* is the first step in formulating new laws or revising existing law.

- *Regulation* follows legislation. Once a bill has passed and been signed into law (see Appendix C), it is sent to the appropriate executive branch department for implementation. The department reviews the law and creates regulations that determine how the law will be implemented.

- The *judiciary* interprets the law and determines whether the implementation of the law or the law itself is inconsistent with the Constitution and how it allocates power or responsibility.

Questions to determine the appropriate arena for action include:

1. Does the existing law need to be changed to address the issue?
2. Is there a need for a new law?
3. Is the existing law okay, but the way it is implemented too restrictive or flexible?

If the answer is “yes” to the first or second question, your advocacy should focus on the legislative branch of local, state or national government (see Understanding the Federal Legislative Process, Appendix C). If the answer is “yes” to the third question, your advocacy efforts should seek to influence regulatory agencies as they form policies.

Step 5: Know what’s been done before.

To plan an effective advocacy strategy around the identified issue, you must know how it has been addressed in the past, who the important players are and when you might create change or make an impact in the future.

Look to the Catholic advocacy groups discussed above (CCUSA, USCCB and CRS) to find answers to these questions:

- How do current laws or policies try to address this issue?
- Who supported the original laws and who opposed them? (Look for legislators who care about the issue to be potential champions for your solutions.)
DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Resources on Federal Legislation and Regulations

Catholic Charities USA website:
www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/advocacy
Catholic Charities USA regularly updates this site with legislative analysis, issue briefs, sample letters to the editor or to members of Congress and toolkits to help you learn more and take action.

Library of Congress:
www.congress.gov
This site allows you to search for bills, read the entire bill text online and check a bill’s status back to the 93rd Congress; search the Congressional Record (daily record of Congressional activity); and link to the web pages of members of Congress and congressional committees.

U.S. Government Publishing Office:
www.govinfo.gov

The Federal Register:
www.federalregister.gov
Published daily, contains proposed and final agency rules and regulations.

Links to all executive agency websites:
www.loc.gov/rr/news/fedgov.html

Government Accounting Office:
www.gao.gov
Studies federal programs and expenditures for Congress and suggests ways to make them more effective. Good source of reports and data.
• What were the goals of the original supporters or opposition? How have circumstances changed to warrant changes to laws, and how can addressing new needs still fit within the original goals?

• What does the current legislative calendar look like, and when might legislators take up this issue?

• How can you link your issue (its causes, consequences and solutions) to current significant issues under debate?

• Which agency or department created the regulations to implement laws on your issue?

• How and when does the agency or department make decisions and issue or change regulations?

• Have other organizations advocated on this issue? What tactics did they try, and what successes have they had?

• What is the opposition saying? How could you and your allies respond without alienating them? (Remember, today’s opposition may be a future ally.)

Step 6: Identify your goals.

Creating a vision and goals for your advocacy effort will keep your efforts focused and on track. A clear vision will help you make good decisions at turning points or setbacks. Vision motivates a group when change seems impossible, inspires new advocates and helps diverse individuals build consensus.

Want Action Steps, but Short on Time?

Let Catholic Charities USA, USCCB and Catholic Relief Services Help!

• Sign up to receive Action Alerts! Action Alerts do the analysis for you and tell you which legislators to contact, important messages to deliver and include links to send a message to legislators immediately online.

  • Catholic Charities USA
    Text CCUSA to 50457 to receive alerts.

  • USCCB
    www.usccb.org/take-action

  • Catholic Relief Services
    www.crs.org/get-involved/lead-way#skip
To create your vision, imagine how the world would look if you successfully addressed your issue. Whose lives would change? How would they be different? What would that world look like?

This vision might seem big and complicated. Look to those Catholic organizations discussed above to understand their vision and the steps they’ve outlined to achieve that vision. Find one piece to focus on and create short-term (up to two-year) goals. Make these goals clear and measurable, so you can evaluate the impact of your actions, celebrate successes and see progress toward the larger vision.

Once you have defined your vision and goals, move to the final step of creating your advocacy strategy – designing a specific plan of action. Link your plan directly to the advocacy efforts already underway that you’ve reviewed.

**Step 7: Create your plan of action.**

It’s time to break down your vision and goals into a specific action plan. You will not be able to do everything at once, so break your goals into manageable pieces and create action steps toward achieving those pieces. Because you have done your homework, you will be able to decide whether your actions should be national or local, whether you are focusing on legislation or regulations, and what has or has not worked in the past.

Decide which legislators you need to reach by working with the local, state, national and international advocacy groups with which you’re in contact. They will already have identified legislators with power on key committees or a special interest or history with your issue and will know about any special connections to the legislator. You may find the advocacy groups your agency is connected with will encourage you to use different strategies with different legislators. Some legislators may respond best to media coverage, while others listen more to personal letters or personal connections from people in your agency’s community.

By working with existing advocacy groups at the local, state, national and international levels, you will contribute to a clear and compelling message that will be repeated often in the communication and education efforts of multiple advocates. This kind of consistency of message is key – and a critical reason for working with existing advocacy groups to maximize your agency’s efforts. Those groups with dedicated staff who work on advocacy are constantly evaluating the political context around any given issue so as to craft a message for maximum success.

As you design your timeline and action plan using the action ideas of the Catholic advocacy groups discussed above, think about creating action opportunities that involve and empower your team members, other agency staff and/or volunteers. The more people who are involved, the more likely momentum for change will be created.

Finally, celebrate your successes as you achieve goals, no matter how small. Celebrating success motivates advocates, legislators and staff for continued commitment and progress.
ACTION STEPS FOR YOUR ADVOCACY STRATEGY

When designing your strategy, consider some of the following action steps. **Use the websites of the various Catholic organizations discussed in Step 1 (CCUSA, USCCB and CRS) as a resource for information, talking points, sample letters and documents, and direct links to your legislators as you design your strategy.**

- **EDUCATE:** You’ll need to educate legislators and your community about your issue. Create one page “Fact Sheets,” targeted toward various audiences. Include data you have gathered, background information and stories, where appropriate. Also include contact information so readers know how to find out more. **Make sure you are aware of the church’s position on the issue.** See the [Tools You Can Use](#) section for tips on creating effective Fact Sheets.

- **ADVOCATE:** Write, call and visit your elected officials as part of your strategy for change. Educate them and ask them to take specific actions to address the problem. See the [Tools You Can Use](#) section for tips on communicating with your legislators.

- **PARTNER:** Consider how you can partner with other organizations or individuals in your community who would like to address your issue.

- **PUBLICIZE:** Work with the media to raise public awareness of your issue and support for possible solutions. Media coverage of your issue will not only educate but also impact how elected officials view its importance or decide how to address it. See the [Tools You Can Use](#) section for guidance on building relationships with the media.
Part III: Tools You Can Use

Framing Your Issue

Once you have identified your vision, goals and advocacy strategy, reference the groups discussed above in determining how to frame or talk about your issue. The Catholic advocacy groups you’re in relationship with have given much thought to how to best frame their issues. Understanding the basic ideas and questions below will make you a savvier advocate when you use your voice for justice and will impact how open the media, the public and elected officials are to the solutions you propose.

What is Framing?

Frames have been defined as “… the mental structures that help people understand the world, based on particular assumptions and values.” Framing is an ongoing and long-term process, and there are professionals who devote their entire work to it.

The idea is that none of us is a blank slate. We receive and understand information and form opinions based on our past experiences, our deeply held values and the frameworks we use to understand the world. The legislators and public you engage will filter all of the data you gather and the messages you create through their frameworks and values.

Frames will not only impact how people understand your agency’s advocacy work and your issue but also whom they see as responsible for solving it and what solutions they believe will work. Consider, for example, how one dominant framework in our culture – the importance of individual choice and responsibility for one’s own success – impacts a conversation about health. Discussing the problem of rising numbers of overweight children in low-income urban neighborhoods within this individual responsibility frame leads to solutions such as, “Families should exercise more,” or “Parents should feed their children healthier foods.”

This framework ignores the context in which individuals make choices about their lives. It ignores the possibilities that an urban neighborhood with heavy traffic may not be a safe place for children to play and exercise, that the family may not own a car or live near quality public transportation to reach grocery stores (low-income neighborhoods are often “food deserts,” lacking grocery stores), or that families scraping by from month to month may be forced to choose lower-quality, cheaper foods over fruits and vegetables. Framing the individual’s choices in the context of an unhealthy community helps advocates to argue effectively for institutional solutions like the construction of public parks or zoning laws that incentivize the construction of grocery stores while limiting the number of fast food restaurants.
By framing an issue well, you can impact how your problem and solutions are portrayed and discussed. The steps below will help you think about how to draw connections between individual stories and their social context as you work to frame your issues.

**Basic Framing Tips**

**Step 1: Do your homework.** To frame an issue successfully, be sure to understand the current frames used by the Catholic advocacy groups you’ve turned to for guidance. They recognize that most legislators and the public form opinions on issues based on media coverage. Catholic advocacy groups then follow the issues in the media - both print and electronic. Questions they ask include:

- What do articles and reports tell people about the problem?
- Why is it important and who cares about it?
- What are the solutions, or who should fix it?

If they find an issue framed in a way that will not support solutions that are just, they will think about how the data and trends can help tell the story another way.

**Step 2: Define your core values.** Facts, data, and policy arguments can intimidate people who could be potential champions for your cause. Often times it is more effective to connect to people’s values. Values connect to our emotions and shape our motivations for taking action. Think about these questions:

- What values are central to our vision?
- What values will resonate with those we seek to influence?
- How can we show that this problem impacts ALL of us? (Refer to Catholic Social Teaching on the common good to help answer this question.)

Want Action Steps, but Short on Time?

**Let CCUSA, USCCB and Catholic Relief Services Help!**

You don’t have to start from scratch to define solutions to the problem you have identified or to explain the values that underlie your position! Visit these web sites for help:

- **Catholic Charities USA**
  www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/advocacy for issue briefs that explain Catholic social teaching and values that underlie Catholic positions on various policy issues.

- **USCCB**
  www.usccb.org/offices/justice-peace-human-development/resources-and-tools for numerous resources that help Catholics engage in the Church’s social mission.

- **Catholic Relief Services**
  www.crs.org/get-involved/advocate-poor for an understanding of the CRS mission and how that mission drives the CRS advocacy agenda.
Step 3: Communicate within your framework. Once you have defined your values and frame for discussing your issue, work to communicate it in every message you create. Messages will change as your strategy changes, and no two advocates will deliver a message in the same way. However, if you speak within your framework of values, you will remain consistent, but flexible.

The Berkeley Media Studies Group and The Praxis Project recommend that messages within your framework clearly answer these three questions:

1. **What's wrong?** Focus on a specific part of the problem rather than trying to explain the entire issue. Try to show how individuals are impacted by social institutions.
2. **Why does it matter?** Communicate your underlying values here.
3. **What should be done about it?** Who and what are involved in the solution? Communicate an achievable, concise action step.

Cultivating Relationships with Your Elected Officials

Participation in the political process – a duty we have as citizens and Christians – can make a huge impact on the lives of the most vulnerable among us, locally, nationally and internationally. You have important experiences and perspectives to share about the needs of your community, your state, our nation and our world.

You bring passion, energy and knowledge to an advocacy effort. Adding good, working relationships with your elected officials will help you deliver your message and convince them to take action. The tips below lay out relationship-building basics, while the following sections delve into more detail on specific tactics.

**Why should I cultivate relationships with elected officials?**

Elected officials - be they at the local, state or national level - have to address a multitude of issues. They cannot be experts on everything. They often seek input from constituents they trust, so building a relationship can help to ensure that your official trusts your voice. Legislative staff continually analyze the strengths, weaknesses and impacts of programs and policies. However, they cannot always keep track of the impact of those policies. When you develop relationships with them, they will turn to you to better understand the impact of policies for which you advocate.

“Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, No. 205
How do I begin?

Your first step should be to determine what contact has already been established between the legislator and your diocese or the state and national Catholic groups doing advocacy, as discussed earlier. Have diocesan or other local Catholic organizations sent the legislator information or letters? Has the legislator responded to those letters or asked for input on issues or legislation?

If not, then begin by remembering that although you probably have an immediate agenda - for example, a bill you want your legislator to support - your goal should be to develop a long-term relationship and become a trusted expert and resource for the office. The relationship should outlast your immediate needs, because the issues of concern to you may change with time. When establishing a new relationship, keep the following tips in mind:

• **Do your homework.** Discover your legislator’s main interests and the connections he or she may have to your issue area. Learn how he or she has voted in the past on your issue. If your issue is on the local or state level, visit legislators’ websites to find voting histories. If this is a federal issue, you can learn how your representative or senator voted by searching House and Senate voting records: clerk.house.gov or senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm.

• **Learn preferences.** Ask members of the legislator’s staff how they prefer to receive communication (email, letter, etc.).

• **Visit the legislator’s office.** Go in person to meet the legislator and members of their staff. Connecting faces to names will make your communications more personal and effective. (See Face to Face: How to Visit your Legislator, later in this section.)

• **Track your actions.** Keep a record of the people with whom you interact, when you work with them and what you discuss. This record will help with strategizing and also will serve other members of the agency who may assume your role in the future.

• **Say thank you.** You will see this advice repeated often in these pages. ALWAYS thank your legislators and their staff both privately - in letters and e-mails - and publicly - in the media, when possible. They will appreciate the recognition for working for good causes and remember that you contributed to their positive image.
What should I do if my diocese or other local Catholic organizations have already contacted our legislators?

- **Keep in touch.** Update the legislator and his or her staff periodically about the work of your agency and key issues or challenges in your community. Be sure to inform diocesan or other local Catholic organizations about your communication with the legislator.

- **Extend invitations.** Invite your legislator to major events, celebrations or meetings in the community or at your agency, or simply encourage him or her to visit your agency again if time has passed since the last visit. Be sure to also encourage news media to attend and, as always, be sure to let your diocese and other local Catholic organizations know about your invitations.

**That Personal Touch: Writing to Your Legislator Effectively**

Writing your legislator a personal message is an effective form of communication that allows you to explain your issue in detail and demonstrate how much you care about it. Today, this is mostly done electronically, since congressional security protocols prevent hard-copy letters from arriving at a congressional office in a timely manner. Decision-makers largely use electronic, social media and other types of communication to take the pulse of the people they represent.

Your correspondence can take any one of the forms below. Ask your legislator’s office staff how they prefer to receive mail, and do not be afraid to send a letter multiple ways:

- **Personal messages from constituents:** These communications, especially from constituents directly impacted by an issue, are very effective and rarely go unanswered. When writing to federal legislators, remember that email is best. You can send a hard copy to a representative’s local office.

- **Letters from leaders of organizations:** A letter on your agency letterhead emailed to the legislator should elicit a response.

- **Agency email:** Almost instantaneous, email proves particularly effective when legislators are about to vote on your issue. See below for further tips on crafting savvy emails.

- **Action alerts:** A ready-made electronic message sent to elected officials by organizations and their supporters urging a specific action.
The following tips will help you correspond effectively with your legislators in Washington, D.C. While the tips that follow include examples specific to the federal level, the principles are the same whether you are writing to your local or state legislator.

Remember that email is the preferred way to contact your elected officials. If you do decide to write a hard copy, the information below is provided to help you contact your representatives and senators in D.C. However, a copy should be sent to the legislator’s local office. The tips for writing letters can also be used in composing emails.

**Tips for Writing Effective Letters**

- **Begin correctly.** Use the proper address and salutation to begin your letter. Find contact information for your federal legislators by zip code here: www.congress.gov/contact-us. When writing to local or state policymakers, visit your local or state government’s website for up-to-date contact information. We recommend these formats when writing to your federal legislators:
  - The Honorable [Full Name of Senator]  
    United States Senate  
    Washington, D.C. 20510
  - Dear Senator [Last Name of Senator]:
  - The Honorable [Full Name of Representative]  
    United States House of Representatives  
    Washington, D.C. 20515
  - Dear Representative [Last Name]:

- **Be succinct.** Make your points clearly and concisely. Stick to one page and one specific issue, communicating just the key facts.

- **Be courteous.** No matter how passionate you are about your issue, remember to be polite. You want to build a relationship and become a trusted future resource.

- **Identify yourself.** State your reason for writing and your role within your agency in your first sentence.

- **Identify the problem.** Give details about your issue, providing facts and experiences from your unique perspective whenever possible.

- **Identify the bill.** If you are writing about a particular bill, identify it by name and/or number. When writing to your federal representatives or senators, remember that each chamber names its bills. House bills are named H.R. ____, while Senate bills are named S.____.
Propose a solution. Explain your views in support of or in opposition to a proposal, and what impact it would have on your community. Make sure your solution is linked to the advocacy efforts of the national Catholic advocacy organizations discussed earlier in this manual. A consistent message that is in keeping with other Catholic advocacy efforts will increase your effectiveness.

Make your ask. Ask your legislator to take a specific action, again tying your request back to any national Catholic advocacy efforts on your issue.

Request a response. Request a specific response and follow up.

Say thank you. Everyone likes to know that they make a difference. Thank your legislator for past action and for their attention to your issue.

Include contact information. Be sure to give your full name, phone number and email address in case the legislator or staff members have questions. Also, envelopes may be detached, so include your return address on your letter.

Tips for Writing Effective Emails

Email has made it possible to communicate with your legislators right up until they vote on your issue. Many offices prefer to receive communication electronically, and most have developed procedures for how to receive email and respond to it. On the federal level, advocates have become savvy at using mass email campaigns at strategic points to pressure members of Congress to vote for or against legislation.

Use the tips above to craft your email. Also, keep these additional things in mind:

Use a clear subject line. In the chance that your email is not opened, creating a clear subject line that includes your action can still make an impact. For example, if writing to your representative to encourage him or her to vote against a particular bill, write: “Vote NO on H.R. ,” in the subject line.

Keep it brief. Email is meant to be a brief, quick form of communication. Limit your correspondence to a few paragraphs and use bullets or numbers where you can.

Include your address. Be sure to include your postal mailing address to confirm that you are a constituent.

Follow up! Your legislator will very likely respond to your correspondence. If he or she did what you asked, respond immediately to say thank you for his or her support. If the response is vague or does not say directly what the legislator has done about the issue, write again and ask for clarification. Your persistence will show that you feel seriously about the issue and expect your elected representatives to take it seriously, too. You will also develop a relationship and credibility as a trusted source of information on the issue.
Also, please share any meaningful interaction with or responses from your legislator with your agency leadership and with anyone at the diocese, other local Catholic organizations or national level Catholic advocacy groups with which you have been in contact.

**Tips for Composing Effective Action Alerts**

An effective and popular way to reach elected officials is through digital advocacy software, often called action alerts, which allow multiple organizations and their supporters to send a pointed message to decision-makers. The software is used to create an alert that notifies an organization’s supporters about an important and timely issue, and the alert asks the supporters to contact their elected officials. The action alert usually includes a headline, a brief explanation and the expected action: “Tell your representative to vote in favor of H.R. 58.” The software can also offer a ready-made electronic message that the supporter can then send to his or her elected official. Writing an effective action alert requires a descriptive headline, a short paragraph describing the issue and a clear call to action.

**Sample Letter to Members of U.S. Congress:**

May 9, 2022
The Honorable [Full Name of Senator, Representative]
United States Senate [House of Representatives]
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative [Last Name],

As the House moves into a new year and toward a vote on the Senate-approved budget reconciliation conference report, I am writing on behalf of Catholic Charities of Anytown, one of Anytown’s largest agencies, to urge you and your colleagues to oppose a budget that will compromise the health and well-being of some the poorest and most vulnerable in our nation.

The Senate-approved bill attempts to exercise fiscal discipline by cutting programs crucial to the well-being of low-income children, vulnerable families, the elderly and persons with disabilities. The bill cuts back funding for child support enforcement, adds new provisions to Medicaid that will harm low-income recipients, raises TANF work requirements that put additional burdens on states and cuts kinship foster care.

Every day in our community, we witness the struggle that low-income families and individuals must go through to make ends meet. The funding and program changes proposed in this budget conference agreement will only serve to push low-income families and individuals further behind.
On behalf of Catholic Charities of Anytown, I strongly urge you to oppose a budget that will hurt the poorest and most vulnerable in our communities. Our Catholic tradition teaches that society, acting through government, has a special obligation to consider first the needs of those who are poor and vulnerable, yet the proposed budget cuts put a disproportionate burden on those who can least afford it.

Sincerely yours,

Your Name
Title
Agency/Organization
Address and other contact information

It’s Your Call: Connecting with Your Legislator by Phone

Calling your legislator allows you to communicate your views quickly and impact an issue almost immediately. Thus, the phone call proves a powerful tool when a vote is imminent and you want to ensure that your legislator votes a particular way. If calling your U.S. representative or senators, it is best to call the legislator’s Washington, D.C., office, as messages taken in the home state or district offices may not be passed on immediately. The same can be said when calling your state representative or senator - always call their office at the state capitol.

To reach your federal legislator’s office, call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for your legislator by name. Calling the switchboard is just as fast as dialing the office directly. To reach your state legislator’s office, visit your state government’s website for up-to-date contact information.

Use the tips below to prepare to make an effective call.

Before the Call

- **Know your issue.** Decide which one or two points you want to make before you call. If your diocese, other local Catholic organizations or one of the national level Catholic groups discussed earlier have been working on this issue, know what points they consider most important so your message is consistent.

- **Practice.** Create an outline or script and practice it. Practicing will boost your confidence and improve how you deliver your message.
During the Call

- **Ask for the staff member who handles your issue.** If that person is not available, you should still speak with the staff member who answers the phone, as that person will pass on your message. Talking with the person who handles your issue can be most effective, while talking with the second will be more efficient.

- **Be brief.** You will not have time to persuade or debate. Practicing your call beforehand will help you to fit in your key information in a few short minutes.

- **Identify yourself.** Give your full name, your location and your role in your agency.

- **Identify your issue.** Identify your issue or a bill by name if you can.

- **Give specific examples.** If you can, give an example of how the legislation would affect you or would make a positive or negative impact in your community, state, the nation or the world.

- **Ask for support.** Ask for your legislator’s position on legislation or the issue, and then urge him or her to support your position.

- **Offer additional information.** Offer further information to support your position. This can help build your relationship with the office and establish you as a trusted resource on your issue.

- **Say thank you.** Remember to thank your legislator for considering your point of view, even if he or she does not agree.

- **Leave a message.** If no one answers, be sure to leave a message identifying who you are, where you live and whether you would like your legislator to support or oppose a bill. Staff members will listen to and count the number of calls received for or against a bill.

After the Call

- **Record.** Make a record of your call that includes the name of the member or staff person with whom you spoke, your legislator’s view on the issue or bill, what you asked your legislator to do and any other important information from the call. You will want this written history of your communication as you work to build a relationship over time.

- **Follow up.** This written record can also guide your follow-up steps. If your legislator takes your position on a bill or issue, make sure to send a thank you letter commending the action. If you promised to send more information, always follow through, to establish yourself as a trustworthy expert on your issue. If your legislator did not vote as you would have liked, continue to call and write about the issue. Explain politely but clearly that you are unhappy with the position and reiterate why you believe yours is important.
Example Call Script

Greeting: “Good morning __________.”

Introduction:
“My name is Jane Smith, and I am calling as both a registered voter in Anytown and an employee of Catholic Charities of Anytown.”

Purpose of Call:
“First, I’d like to thank you for your support of affordable housing for low-income families and your vote last May for increased funding under the ‘Bill Name.’”
“The program has given 120 families in Anytown a new start in safer neighborhoods while creating 24 new construction jobs for local workers as the units were built.”
“I urge you to continue to champion affordable housing and vote ‘yes’ for a $48 million funding increase to the program in the bill, ‘S. ##’ that will be debated on the floor this week. Please urge your colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee to do the same.”

Thanks:
“Thank you very much, __________” for your time and for considering my concerns and request. Please contact me at 444-444-4444 if I can provide more information about the need for this program or its impact in our community.”

Face to Face: How to Visit Your Legislator

Conducting a personal visit with your local, state or federal legislator or their staff is an effective way of delivering your message about an important issue. Partnering with a constituent served by your agency and directly impacted by an issue can have an even greater impact. Be sure to prepare and practice with everyone who goes on the visit to make sure that each person has an integral role.

Use the tips below to prepare for an effective visit.

Before the Visit

To request a visit, contact your legislator’s scheduler (at least a few weeks before the date you would like to visit) and communicate who you are and the agency you represent, how much time you would like (15 to 30 minutes), the names of others who will join you and the issue you wish to discuss. To find contact information for members of the U.S. Congress, see www.congress.gov/contact-us. To find contact information for local and state legislators, visit your local or state government website.
Once you have scheduled your visit, be sure to:

- **Do your homework.** Be sure to learn about your legislator before your visit. Understand his or her priority issues so you can draw connections between your issue and those priorities and understand how he or she has supported your position in the past or addressed your issue in the community. Find federal legislators’ websites at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov.

- **Create a one-pager.** Create a succinct, one-page description of your issue or program. Use bullet points, facts about the impact of a program in your community and personal stories. See Creating Fact Sheets later in this guide.

- **Practice.** Practice delivering your message. If more than one person is going, involve everyone but clearly define a leader and who will say what. Think of counter-arguments to your position and how you will respond to them.

- **Call to confirm.** Call the office the day before your visit to confirm. If on the day of the visit you are running late, call ahead to warn the office. The busy staff will appreciate the notice.

During the Visit

- **Arrive early.** Be sure to arrive early. Legislators are very busy and sometimes fall behind schedule. Be prepared to be flexible, and if you have multiple visits in one day, allow plenty of time between them to account for long appointments and time needed to find the next office.

- **Be courteous.** Be polite but direct when you interact with your legislator or a member of the staff. Do not worry if you do not actually meet with your legislator. Members of staff are the experts on their issues and inform the legislator regularly, often actually writing the legislation themselves.

- **Introduce yourself and your issue.** State the purpose of your visit – why you are there, the agency you represent and what you want to talk about. Never assume that your legislator or a member of staff will remember you from a previous visit, as they see many people regularly.

- **Be local.** Use examples from your personal experience and work in your agency and community to bring a human face to the issue. Be politically savvy, connecting your issue to your legislator’s priorities and the best interests of your community.

- **Answer questions.** Be prepared to answer questions. If you do not know an answer, be honest and promise to get back to the legislator and staff – and do so!
• **Make your ask.** Ask what position your legislator takes on the issue, even if you think you already know. Hearing how your legislator communicates his or her point of view will help you to better craft your message in the future. Then, make a specific request for an action that you would like your legislator to take. As always, knowing what advocacy messages other local and national Catholic groups have delivered in the past and delivering that same message during your visit will increase your effectiveness.

• **Establish next steps.** Determine who will follow up with certain action steps after the visit. Will you send more information? Will a member of staff call you after speaking with the legislator? Be sure to leave your full contact information.

**After the Visit**

• **Thank your legislator.** Send a thank you soon after your visit. Thank members of the legislator’s staff, if you met with them, as they often go un-thanked.

• **Keep your promises.** If you promised to find answers to questions or send more information, do it! Establish yourself as a valuable resource. Periodic follow-up to check on legislation will also keep attention on your issue.

• **Record.** Take written or mental notes during your visit and record them to use the next time you prepare for a visit to the same office.

• **Take action.** Perhaps you learned something in your visit that can motivate a new letter campaign, media strategy or grassroots effort. If your visit was particularly positive, you can inform the news media and help your member look good in the press.

• **Be patient.** It can take numerous repeated visits to an office before you can get an agreement to act from your legislator. Be patient, but persistent!

**The Power of the Press: How to Write Effective Letters to the Editor**

Well-crafted letters to the editor can be highly effective advocacy tools. Legislators know that they are one of the most widely read sections of newspapers and magazines, and they use letters to the editor to monitor the thoughts of their constituents. Letters can also convince editorial writers to take a stand on an issue or reporters to explore it in further detail. Use the tips below:

• **Check the style.** Investigate the publication’s preferred length, style and format by reading letters currently in the publication and by looking at submission requirements, either in the publication or on its website.

• **Be concise.** Many publications often prefer letters to be 250 words or less. Check if your local paper has a specific word limit.
• **Be quick.** Timeliness is critical, as publications often publish letters responding to articles, editorials or other letters the day after they appear. Try to respond quickly through email.

• **Answer back.** Your letter is more likely to be published if you respond to another article or letter. Be sure to reference the article or letter in your response, citing what upset or pleased you about it.

• **Capture attention.** Capture the reader’s attention with a strong first sentence. Then, use active verbs and avoid using many adjectives.

• **Stay focused.** Limit your letter to one topic.

• **Stay local.** Try to connect readers to your issue by including how it will impact your local community. Personal stories can also be effective.

• **Be honest.** Be sure to check your quotes and facts. Be persuasive, but never resort to personal attacks.

• **Identify yourself.** Remember to include your name, agency name, address and telephone number(s). The publication will likely want to verify that the sender actually wrote the letter.

• **Say thank you.** Be sure to follow up published letters with a thank you to the editor.

• **Keep your diocese, local Catholic organizations and national Catholic advocacy groups informed.** Please send copies of your published letters to your diocese’s social concerns office, local Catholic organizations and any national Catholic advocacy groups working on the issue so that their lobbying staffs remain aware of the messages seen by your legislators in their home districts.

**How to Write an Op-Ed**

Use the tips below as you consider submitting an op-ed.

• **Check the style.** Read the publication’s op-ed section often to see typical length and format. See the publication’s website or call to find out submission guidelines.

• **Create your op-ed.** Create a draft of your op-ed using the tips above for letters to the editor.

• **Make your pitch.** Send a letter to “pitch” the importance of your op-ed to the publication and attach a draft.

• **Be timely.** Submit your pitch letter and draft as early as possible so that you can make requested changes before the deadline.

• **Respect exclusivity.** Some publications require that an op-ed be submitted and published exclusively by them. Be sure to check before sending your op-ed to multiple sources.
• Say thank you. Be sure to thank editors for published op-eds.
• Keep your diocese, local Catholic organizations and national Catholic advocacy groups informed. Please send copies of your published op-ed to your diocese’s social concerns office, local Catholic organizations and any national Catholic advocacy groups working on the issue. This allows their lobbying staffs to remain aware of the messages seen by your legislators in their home districts.

**Sample Letter to the Editor**

To the Editor:

Ten years ago this month, sweeping changes were made to our nation’s welfare laws. Now, as we approach the anniversary of this landmark, new changes made to those welfare laws could sabotage the success millions of families have made to become self-sufficient while also limiting opportunities for those still on welfare. The new law significantly narrows the ability of states and their community partners, such as Catholic Charities of Anytown, to help low-income families transition to self-sufficiency.

If we are going to help all families become independent, government must provide them with ample opportunities to gain the necessary skills to do so. Unfortunately, the new welfare changes restrict the ability of hard working low-income people to move forward to better jobs by limiting education and training opportunities.

Also, as a result of the new changes, thousands of children are at risk of losing their welfare benefits if their parents fail to meet unrealistic work requirements. Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes the importance of work as a means of participating in society. However, it is not appropriate to teach this work ethic by bargaining with the well-being and safety of children and families.

We are calling on the administration to support policies that provide better opportunities for vulnerable families to develop the skills necessary to be independent.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title
Agency/Organization
Address and other contact information
Sample Op-Ed

Opinion: Making the Right Repairs to a Broken Immigration System

Our nation's immigration system is broken: bureaucratic backlogs separate families, approximately 11 million undocumented workers live in the shadows and those who are seeking to build a new life in America are subject to undue hardship. How our nation’s leaders fix this system will say a great deal about who we are and what we value as a nation.

To make the comprehensive repairs that are necessary, Congress needs a better set of plans, a different set of tools and stronger political will. America’s immigration policy should promote the dignity of individuals and support families as the most important unit of society.

The Catholic Church's position on immigration reform is based on more than 100 years of experience in aiding and employing immigrants in the United States. Each year, Catholic Charities agencies help more than half a million immigrants and refugees with legal services, language instruction, job training and placement, and social services. As church, we are witness to the incredible capacity for hard work and the strong family life of newcomers who are looking to succeed in their adopted country. At the same time, each day we observe the unjust and counterproductive effects of U.S. immigration policies that separate families and undermine workplace fairness.

Catholic Social Teaching instructs us to recognize the natural rights of every human being, including the right to migrate. And our experience reminds us of our nation's history as a welcoming home for people in search of a better life. As the U.S. Senate moves forward on immigration reform legislation, I strongly encourage senators to seek comprehensive reform that protects U.S. security, puts undocumented laborers and their families on the path to lawful permanent residence and citizenship, and creates more and better legal avenues for necessary workers to enter this country.

Our nation’s laws must give undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. the opportunity to earn the right to remain - provided they pass security and criminal background checks. In addition, I agree with business groups that want greater legal means by which needed workers can be admitted, both temporarily and permanently, to fill available jobs. At the same time, our government should ensure that worker visa programs adequately protect the wages and working conditions of U.S. and immigrant workers.

It’s shameful that our government policies keep families apart when we should be seeking to keep families intact. Currently, 1 million applications are pending for family members
to become lawful permanent residents, and the average processing time is more than one year. Families are the cornerstone of a strong society, and more visas should be made available to ensure family unity.

Make no mistake, we agree that immigration reform should include improved security to protect our nation from terrorists and criminals who are seeking entry. We believe that effective enforcement requires smart inspections and screening processes, fair proceedings and efficient processing, as well as strategies for cracking down on smugglers. These broad reforms will better integrate and promote the success of newcomers to our nation while also improving the economic prospects, health, labor protections and stability of all U.S. residents.

Human dignity represents the precondition and ultimate end of a just society. The opportunity to reform our nation’s immigration system is also an opportunity to advance this cause. We must not waste it.

*Face the Facts: How to Create Effective Fact Sheets*

As an advocate, you know that one of your main tasks is educating about your issue. You must raise awareness of problems and solutions in the public, in the media and among elected officials and decision-makers. Fact sheets are one- to two-page documents (one is best) that educate about your issue and communicate your position and solutions. Written clearly and concisely, fact sheets make your case without exceeding the time or attention span of your readers.

Fact sheets should be altered to fit each specific audience, when possible. The tips below will help you structure an effective fact sheet for any audience.

**Creating an Effective Fact Sheet**

**Plan Before You Write**

- Choose ONE topic. Keep it simple. If you have more than one subject to cover, make separate fact sheets.
- Know your audience and what they already know about your topic.
- Consider your goals: What do you want your readers to understand? What action do you want them to take?
- Make sure to include facts, not opinions. Use data that you have gathered from your staff, your diocese and national Catholic advocacy groups working on your issue. Create charts or graphs for data where possible.
- If you refer to research or reports on your issue, be sure to cite the sources of the information.
Design a User-Friendly Fact Sheet

- Identify your agency clearly on the fact sheet; use a logo if possible.
- Limit the fact sheet to one to two pages.
- Develop a clear message and use simple language to communicate that message.
- Use bullets, question-and-answer or subheadings to break up information into smaller portions.
- Use data points. If using numbers, try to put them in graph, chart or picture form so they are easy to understand.

Make it Easy to Take Action

- Provide contact information – a name, telephone number, email address and website address – for those who want to learn more.
- Provide other sources or links for further information.
- Be clear about the specific action you want readers to take and give them the tools to do so (phone numbers, event dates, talking points, etc.).

Too Busy to Create that Fact Sheet?

Let National Catholic Advocacy Groups Help!

- They’ve already done the research. Issue Briefs and One-Pagers contain background information on a variety of issues. The briefs include the Catholic social teaching behind the position, general information about the problem and current solutions that we support. Use them as a base for your fact sheet and then add specific local needs and situations.

- Catholic Charities USA Issue Briefs: www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/advocacy/

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Issue Briefs: www.usccb.org/topics

- Catholic Relief Services Issue Briefs: www.crs.org/get_involved/advocacy/index.cfm
Part IV: Appendices and Resources

Appendix A: Catholic Social Teaching Resources

This first appendix outlines numerous resources for further study of Catholic Social Teaching. The resources are divided into those with the Primary Authority of the Catholic Church - the Bible, the Papal Encyclicals, Bishops’ pastoral letters and the Catechism - and those with Secondary Authority, such as publications written by people and organizations outside the Catholic Church about its social teaching.

Primary Authorities

- The New American Bible
- The Papal Encyclicals
- Bishops’ pastoral letters
- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church
- Catechism of the Catholic Church

Secondary Authorities

- Books on the key themes of Catholic Social Teaching
- Outlines of the history and themes of the Papal Encyclicals

Primary Authorities

The documents in each of the following sections are followed by links to online sources where you can access the text. Additionally, the following resources contain a comprehensive library of sources from all of the categories listed below.

The Holy See

The website of the Vatican. Search and access the texts of the Catechism, Church teaching, Papal writings and addresses, etc. www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html.

The Bible

The Hebrew Scriptures often refer to justice and provide guidance and foundations for Catholic Social Teaching. Some of these references follow:

- Micah 6 - The Lord requires us, “To do justice, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God.”
- Exodus 22 - Explains social laws requiring care for the Anawim - the widow, orphan, and the alien
- Deut 15:11 - Because those who are poor are always with us, we must open our hands.
- Prophets - Isaiah (the entire book); Habakkuk 1,2
- Jubilee Justice - Lv. 25:8-17
New Testament References:

- **Public Ministry of Jesus** – Luke 4:18: Jesus brings good tidings to those who are poor and freedom to the oppressed.
- **The Rich Man and Lazarus** – Luke 16:19: He who was rich in life and did not help his neighbor finds himself poor in death.
- **The Beatitudes** – Matthew 5: Blessed are the meek, those who thirst for righteousness, those who show mercy, etc.
- **The Good Samaritan** – Luke 10:29
- **The Judgment of the Nations** – Matthew 25:31: Nations are judged for how they treat the least among them.

Papal Encyclicals

Papal Encyclicals are documents written by the Pope for the universal Church that pertain ordinarily to doctrinal, moral or disciplinary matters. Through these letters, the pope exercises his ordinary magisterium, or declarations that are then subject to future change. Catholics must assent to the doctrinal and moral content of these documents. The following documents may prove useful as you study Catholic social teaching. Each of them can be accessed at the Vatican website. Search the listed works of individual popes at www.vatican.va/holy_father/index_it.htm.

- *Quadragesimo Anno* (After Forty Years), Pope Pius XI, 1931
- *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress), Pope John XXIII, 1961
- *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), Pope John XXIII, 1961
- *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), Pope Paul VI, 1967
- *Octogesima Adveniens* (A Call to Action), Pope Paul VI, 1971

The encyclicals of Pope John Paul II on social justice:

- *Laborum Exercem* (On Human Work), 1981
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (The Social Concerns of the Church), 1988
- *Centesimus Annus* (100 Years), 1991
- *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason), 1998

The encyclicals of Pope Benedict XVI on social justice:

- *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), 2005
- *Sacramentum Caritatis* (The Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission), 2007
- *Caritas in Veritate*, (Charity in Truth), 2009
The encyclicals of Pope Francis on social justice:

- *Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home), 2015

Documents of Vatican II (1965) on social justice:


- *Lumen Gentium* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church)
- *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World)
- *Ad Gentes* (On Missionary Activity of the Church)
- *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom)

Bishops’ Pastoral Letters and Statements

These documents are issued by a bishop for his diocese or a bishops’ conference for guidance and teaching in a specific diocese or area. You can search for the publications listed below at www.usccb.org/resources.

**Important Pastoral Letters issued by the United States Bishops**

- “Brothers and Sisters to Us” (racism), 1979
- “Capital Punishment” the death penalty and criminal justice), 1980
- “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response” (the nuclear threat and disarmament), 1983
- “Economic Justice for All” (the United States economy), 1986
- “Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity” (immigrants and refugees), 1998

Biblical Justice is more comprehensive than subsequent philosophical definitions. It is not concerned with a strict definition of rights and duties, but with the rightness of the human condition before God and within society … [Justice] is both a manifestation of love and a condition for love to grow. Because God loves Israel, he rescues them from oppression and summons them to be a people that does justice and loves kindness. The quest for justice arises from loving gratitude for the saving acts of God and manifests itself in wholehearted love of God and neighbor.”

“U.S. Bishops, “Economic Justice for All”
In addition, each bishop may also issue individual and local statements in his area, which you can locate through your diocesan website or newspaper. A listing of diocesan websites and webmasters can be found at www.catholic-church.org/cid/usa.html.

Finally, state Catholic Conferences may have statements on social justice. Access the websites of these Catholic Conferences at www.nasccd.org/.

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, a unique document in the history of the church, serves as a tool to inspire and guide the faithful, who are faced with moral and pastoral challenges daily. It is a must-have resource for leaders of social ministry at the diocesan and agency level as well as those in religious education, schools and youth and young adult ministry. It is available at: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Church addresses the importance of social justice and gives us guidance on how to respond to the call to justice. The most recent version can be found here:

- The Vatican website: www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

For a focus on Catholic Social Teaching, see Part Three: Life in Christ. Both Section One: Man’s Vocation and Section Two: The Ten Commandments address issues of justice. Article 7 of Section Two proves especially relevant. You’ll find the following topics addressed:

- The Universal Destination and Private Ownership of Goods, 2402-2406
- Respect for Persons and Their Goods/Creation, 2407-2418
- The Social Doctrine of the Church, 2419-2425
- Economic Activity and Social Justice, 2426-2436
- Justice and Solidarity among Nations, 2437-2442
- Love for the Poor, 2443-2463
Secondary Authorities

Books & Resources on the Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

- *Charities at Work Podcast*, Presented by Catholic Charities USA. Includes an episode on each of the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching.

Outlines of the History and Themes of the Papal Encyclicals

- *A Reader in Catholic Social Teaching: From Syllabus Errorum to Deus Caritas Est*, Edited by Peter A. Kwasniewski (Tacoma, WA: Cluny Media, 2017).
  - This resource presents and analyzes the major modern social encyclicals, from *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus Annus*, and inspects central movements, figures and themes that have been at the center of Catholic social thought.
Appendix B: In the Know: Glossary of Common Legislative Terms*

**Act**
Legislation that has passed both the House and Senate and become law.

**Amendment**
A change to a bill, motion, act or to the Constitution. Amendments are proposed by members of Congress and then usually debated and voted on by the same procedure as a bill.

**Appropriation**
A formal approval to draw funds from the Treasury for specific purposes. Congress passes appropriations bills each year to fund programs for the next fiscal year. Appropriations bills originate in the House.

**Authorization**
A law that creates a program and sets funding limits. The actual drawing of funds from the Treasury and funding amount are established by appropriation.

**Bill**
A proposed law. The bill is named H.R. (House) or S. (Senate) by the house in which it is first introduced and then by a number assigned it in the order it was introduced.

**Budget Request**
The president’s annual proposal to Congress, usually submitted in early February, for federal expenditures and revenues for the following federal fiscal year (which begins October 1).

**Budget Authority**
Authority provided by appropriations bills to enter into obligations that will result in immediate or future outlays involving federal funds.

**Budget Reconciliation**
The process used by Congress to amend tax and entitlement programs to meet the instructions in the budget resolution regarding outlay and revenue targets.

**Budget Resolution**
House and Senate-passed guidelines, and later caps, on federal budget authority and outlays. The budget resolution is considered a matter of internal congressional rules and procedures and is not submitted to the president for a signature or veto. Bills that would exceed budget caps are subject to a point of order (violation of the rules of the House and Senate) - though waivers have been granted in both houses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucus</td>
<td>Meeting of the Democratic or Republican members of Congress to determine policies or choose leaders; or a bipartisan group of members with a similar issue, such as the Hunger Caucus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed Rule</td>
<td>A rule in the House that prohibits the offering of any amendments to a bill on the floor. A bill considered under closed rule must be voted up or down as it is when reported out of committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloture</td>
<td>A method of limiting debate on a bill or ending a filibuster in the Senate. Sixty of the 100 senators must vote in favor of cloture for it to occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>A subgroup of members of the House or Senate that has jurisdiction over a subset of issues and prepares legislation for consideration for the larger chamber. Committees are often divided into subcommittees. Subcommittees hold hearings, study and recommend changes in legislation to the full committee. Only a full committee can report a bill to the floor of the House or Senate for action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Jurisdiction</td>
<td>The issues and responsibilities assigned to a committee by a rule, resolution, precedent or practice. These include legislative matters, oversight of departments and investigations, and nominations of executive officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companion Bills</td>
<td>Similar or identical bills introduced both in the House and Senate, separately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Committee</td>
<td>A committee made up of senators and representatives appointed by the leadership in their respective chambers to resolve differences between House- and Senate-passed versions of the same legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Resolution</td>
<td>A resolution enacted to allow specific executive branch agencies to continue operating based on the previous year’s appropriations, if funds have not been appropriated for them by October 1 for the new fiscal year of operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Sponsor</td>
<td>A senator or representative who joins in sponsoring a piece of legislation but is not the one who introduced the legislation. A large number of co-sponsors increases a bill’s chances for consideration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Discretionary Spending** Spending that is controlled and adjusted each year in appropriations acts.

**Entitlement Program** A federal program that entitles all persons, businesses or agencies that meet specified eligibility criteria to certain benefits or services – such as social security, Medicare, food stamps, foster care, adoption assistance, etc. An entitlement program may be a capped entitlement, in which a cap or limit on total annual funding is set by the authorizing legislation (e.g., TANF, Title XX - Social Services Block Grant); a means-tested entitlement, in which “means” or income is a primary factor in eligibility (e.g., Medicaid, foster care and adoption assistance); or a non-means-tested entitlement (e.g., social security, Medicare).

**Expenditures** Money actually spent from the treasury by the administration and government agencies. Expenditures are different from appropriations, which are made by Congress and set a limit for expenditures. The two are rarely identical, as expenditures may represent money appropriated two or more years back that has not yet been spent by a program.

**Filibuster** A delaying tactic of speaking continuously employed by senators to prevent Senate action on a bill likely to pass if a vote were taken. Sixty Senators must vote to end a filibuster and force a vote on a bill (see Cloture).

**Fiscal Year** The federal government’s fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30.

**Hearing** Meetings of committees or subcommittees to gather information on proposed legislation, investigate problems or explore issues. Witnesses present testimony and answer questions. Media and the public may attend “open” hearings, but cannot attend “closed” or “executive” hearings. Individuals may request to testify, and though they may be turned down, most who make such a request are allowed to at least submit a written statement for the record concerning the subject.

**Lame Duck** A member of Congress (or the president) who has not been re-elected but whose term of office has not yet ended.
| **Lobbying** | Attempts by individuals or groups who are not members of Congress to influence the passage, the defeat or the content of legislation. |
| **Majority Leader** | In the Senate, the leader of the majority party and the most powerful position in the Senate. In the House, the leader for business on the floor and the principal assistant to the Speaker of the House (the most powerful person in that body.) |
| **Mandatory Spending** | Spending (budget authority and outlays) controlled by laws other than annual appropriations acts. See Entitlement Program. |
| **Mark-Up** | The process by which members of a committee or subcommittee examine a proposed piece of legislation to discuss and make additions, deletions or amendments. Often, the chairman of the subcommittee drafts a starting proposal, referred to as the “chairman’s mark.” |
| **Member** | U.S. senator or U.S. representative. |
| **Minority Leader** | The leader of the minority party in the House or Senate. |
| **Omnibus Bill** | A bill combining multiple aspects of one subject. Often used in the appropriations bill process to combine different spending bills into one. |
| **Open Rule** | A rule governing floor debate in the House that allows germane amendments to be proposed and adopted by majority vote. |
| **Point of Order** | An objection by a member of Congress that the pending matter or proceeding is in violation or the rules. |
| **Quorum** | The number of senators (51) or representatives (218) that the Constitution requires to be present for the Senate or House to do business. Many times, fewer members are actually present on the floor, but the Senate or House presumes that a quorum is present unless a roll call vote or quorum call proves otherwise. |
| **Ranking Member** | Member of a committee who has the most seniority on the committee from his or her party. Usually refers to the most senior member of the minority party. |
Report
A printed record of a committee’s actions and views on a particular bill or matter. Reports are numbered and designated S. Rept. or H. Rept., depending on the house of origination.

As a verb, report refers to the action taken by a committee to share its findings with the chamber. The committee studies and changes a bill and then “reports” its recommendations.

Speaker of the House
The presiding officer of the House, leader of the majority party in the House and next in line to the vice president for succession to the presidency.

Resolution
A measure passed in one of the houses that gives the intention or sentiment of the chamber but does not have force as a law.

Sessions
Each Congress (two-year time frame of each Congress) usually has two sessions. Each begins in January and ends when Congress adjourns for the year.

Sponsor
The representative or senator who introduces a bill or resolution.

Supplemental Appropriation
Budget authority provided in an appropriations act in addition to regular or continuing appropriations already provided. Supplemental appropriations are generally passed to cover emergency needs, such as disaster relief, that cannot wait until the following year’s regular appropriations act.

Veto
Action by the president to refuse to sign a bill or joint resolution. The bill can then return to its house of origin to be reconsidered but must gain two-thirds of the vote in both chambers to become law (see veto override).

Veto Override
When members of both the House and Senate vote by a two-thirds majority to set aside a presidential veto of legislation.

Whip
The senator or representative who is elected by members of his/her party to serve as the principal internal lobbyist to persuade legislators to support the party position and also to count votes for the leadership in advance of floor action.

- Public Policy Advocacy Handbook. A Guide for Influencing Legislation (Denver, CO: Catholic Health Initiatives);

This appendix gives a brief explanation of the federal legislative process, including the basics of how a bill becomes a law and how the rules and regulations set by administering agencies can affect the law’s impact. The summary below also includes tips about advocating at various steps in the legislative cycle.

The Legislative Process
Introduction and Referral to Committee

Anyone may draft a bill; however, only members of Congress can introduce the legislation. A member who introduces a bill becomes its sponsor. Bills are introduced through the Congressional Record and assigned a number. Bills originating in the House begin “H.R.” while bills originating in the Senate begin “S.” The bill is then referred to a committee and sent for printing by the Government Publishing Office. Copies can be found at www.congress.gov.

Congressional Record

The Congressional Record, published daily when Congress is in session, records debate and business of the U.S. Congress. Each day’s activities are summarized in the “Daily Digest.” Access the Congressional Record at www.congress.gov/congressional-record.

Committee Action

After introduction, a bill is referred to the committee that has jurisdiction over it. The committee can then proceed in one of two ways:

- It can decide not to consider the bill, which kills the legislation.
- Alternatively, the committee may review it either as an entire committee or by subcommittee.

Actions for Advocates: Start Before the Bill Is Introduced!

- Use your voice as a bill is crafted: Advocates can and often do initiate discussions about potential legislation and help to draft it.
- Make yourself a helpful resource: Before and during the drafting process, you can provide data and local expertise based on your experience and become a trusted resource.
Subcommittee review: The subcommittee holds hearings on a bill to get the views of experts, public officials who administer programs and advocates and opponents of the legislation. After the hearings, the subcommittee decides to either let the bill die or to “mark up” (make changes to) the bill and refer it back to the full committee. The amended bill will be accompanied by a report that includes the subcommittee’s recommendations. You can access reports on pending legislation at: www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%22legislation%22%7D.

Reporting a bill: The full committee can then continue to study and amend the bill or accept the subcommittee’s version as it is. The committee then votes on its recommendation to the House or Senate, a procedure called “ordering a bill reported.” The bill is sent to the floor with a report detailing the intent of the legislation, the impact it would have on current programs, the position of the executive branch and the opinions of the members on the committee.

Floor Debate and Action
Once the committee reports the bill back to the chamber, it is placed on the calendar to await floor debate. The House and Senate have different procedures that impact debate:

- **House floor debate:** In the House, every bill has to have a rule that structures the debate about the measure, including how much time will be allotted for discussion and the number and type of amendments, if any, that will be allowed. The Rules Committee creates and votes on these rules and thus has a great deal of power over which bills make it to the floor. Contentious debates often occur over rules, and a bill can die if a rule is never passed to allow it to move to the floor for debate.

Actions for Advocates While a Bill is Under Consideration:

- Educate legislators about the bill – urge them to cosponsor, request improvements or oppose a bill.
- Seek to testify at hearings to make your views heard and well represented.
- When committee or floor action is imminent, focus extra effort on those who have not yet taken positions and work with your allies to ensure that negative changes are not made to legislation that you support.
- Make sure the administration knows your stance and request their support in your efforts.
• **Senate floor debate**: No such rules govern floor debate in the senate. Senators may engage in an unlimited debate, unless a move is made for “cloture.” In a successful cloture, 60 senators vote to end debate on a bill. If a cloture vote is unsuccessful, senators can continually speak on a bill or issue, a tactic known as a **filibuster** to stall voting on a bill.

After finishing debate and amendments, the members of the House or Senate vote to pass or defeat the bill.

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**Filibuster**

A delaying tactic of speaking continuously employed by senators to prevent Senate action on a bill likely to pass if a vote were taken. Sixty senators must vote to end a filibuster and force a vote on a bill (see “Cloture,” Appendix B).

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**Conference Committee Action**

Once a bill passes one chamber, it is referred to the other chamber, where it usually follows the same process through committees and floor debate. The second chamber can change, reject, accept or ignore a bill. If the chamber passes a version of the bill that differs from that of the original chamber, each elects members to serve on a conference committee that reconciles differences between the versions. If the conferees cannot reach an agreement, the legislation dies. If they do iron out differences, they create a report with recommendations and send the bill back to the House and Senate for a final vote in each.

**Final Passage**

If the House and Senate approve a final bill in identical form, the bill is sent to the president for signature. If the president signs the bill, it becomes law. If the president does not take action for 10 days while Congress is in session, it automatically becomes law. Alternatively, the president can veto the bill or ignore the bill after Congress has adjourned (called a “pocket veto”) and the legislation does not become law.

Congress may attempt to override the president’s veto. To do so, each chamber must have enough members for a **quorum** to exist. Then, two-thirds of these members in each chamber must vote to override the veto.

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**Actions for Advocates After Final Passage:**

- Work with media to publicize passage of the bill and work to ensure that the president signs or vetoes it.
- Move on to next steps:
  - Work for positive implementation of the bill.
  - Begin again with another issue or strategy to reach your goals if the enacted legislation does not fit with your values.
Quorum

The number of senators (51) or representatives (218) that the Constitution requires to be present for the Senate or House to do business (see Appendix B).

The Administrative Process

Congratulations, your bill has passed! Celebrate, but do not let your guard down. In many respects, your work as an advocate is just beginning. The federal agency that oversees the implementation and enforcement of the bill will develop the rules and regulations that have the force of law and shape how the bill plays out in the real world. Their decisions can have a huge impact on people’s lives.

The legislation gives the head of the appropriate agency guidance about the content of those regulations, but the agency can fundamentally impact the outcome of a law. As an advocate, understand the administrative process and be sure to bring your opinion to the discussion:

• Federal agencies are required to publish proposed rules and provide a period for public comment before the rules can be finalized. Sometimes, people knowledgeable about the potential impact of rules may be asked to help draft them.

• The public generally has between 30 and 60 days to submit comments on proposed rules and regulations. The agency will take the comments into account as it develops final rules, but remember that not every issue raised will be incorporated into the final rules. The greater the volume of communication on an issue in the proposed rules, the more likely the agency is to make changes.

• Proposed and final rules are published in The Federal Register, a legal newspaper published every weekday by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Access The Federal Register at www.federalregister.gov/.

Appendix D: The Federal Budget: Understanding the Process and How You Can Impact It

This appendix gives you a roadmap for navigating the federal budget process. It first defines a few terms that you will see repeatedly in discussions of the federal budget. You will find additional keywords defined in the sections explaining the budget process. The outline below also includes tips about advocating at each step in the budget cycle.
Key Budget Terms Defined

Revenue: Revenue is defined as all funds collected from the public by the government, including taxes, fines, customs duties and fees.

Spending: Spending encompasses the moneys paid out of the federal treasury to pay for government programs, interest on the deficit and the operation of the country. Two types of spending - mandatory and discretionary - are further defined below.

- Mandatory or Entitlement Spending: Mandatory spending is authorized by permanent law, as opposed to annual appropriations bills. Mandatory or entitlement programs must be funded to the level of public need. If Congress wishes to change levels of mandatory spending, it must change the underlying laws that structure the program (see Budget Reconciliation below). Mandatory spending includes Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and interest payments on the national debt.

- Discretionary or Appropriated Spending: Discretionary spending is decided upon each year by the president and Congress in 13 annual appropriations bills. Programs funded by discretionary spending are given a certain amount of money each year, which program administrators then use to run those programs (that level is not required to be funded at the level of public need, however). Discretionary spending usually equals about one-third of all federal spending. Just a few examples of discretionary programs include the Community Services Block Grant and prisoner reentry programs.

Deficit: The deficit is the amount that government spending exceeds government revenue in a given fiscal year.

Surplus: The surplus is the amount that the government revenue exceeds government spending in a given fiscal year.

The Federal Budget Cycle

The nearly yearlong federal budget process typically lasts from the beginning of February through November or even December of the same year. As an advocate for those who are poor and vulnerable, you will have opportunities and responsibilities to raise your voice during each step of the process. You can help shape the spending priorities of the federal government to ensure a more just world and support the basic dignity of all Americans. The basics of the process, along with these advocacy opportunities, are laid out below.
Step One: The President’s Budget Proposal *(February)*

On the first Monday in February, the president submits to Congress a budget proposal for the coming fiscal year. Prepared by the president’s Office of Management and Budget, the *president’s budget proposal* provides Congress with a plan for overall fiscal policy that includes suggested tax revenue, a plan for how that revenue should be spent, the size of the deficit (or surplus) the government should run and permanent changes to tax legislation and/or mandatory spending programs.

Because Congress is not required to follow the president’s budget proposal when creating its own budget, the impact of the proposal varies depending on the president and political climate of each year. However, suggestions from the proposal often make their way into the Congressional Budget Resolution (see below). The president’s budget proposal does the following things:

- **Suggests spending levels for federal programs:** In this budget proposal, the president suggests an overall amount for discretionary spending and spending levels for each federal program. The congressional budget committees often use the overall discretionary number as a starting point for their discussions of funding levels, and suggested program cuts or increases in the proposal often find their way into a budget reconciliation process (see budget reconciliation, below).

- **Describes the priorities of the administration:** Because the president’s budget proposal projects out several years, it speaks volumes about the administration’s spending priorities. It also often contains the administration’s recommendations for policy changes for programs.

- **Recommends permanent tax and spending changes:** If necessary, the president can propose changes to the permanent tax code and to spending programs that are also permanent (Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid). Because these entitlement programs must be funded for all who are eligible, changing the revenue spent on them requires altering laws that determine eligibility or the benefits provided.

**Actions for Advocates**

In anticipation of, or in response to, the president’s budget proposal, advocates can create a public discussion around the potential impact of the budget on those who are poor and vulnerable:

**Learn**
- See the president’s budget proposal at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget.

**Educate**
- Place op-eds in local newspapers.
- Hold forums to educate your community and local press about the budget process.

**Advocate**
- Visit your members of Congress to share how the president’s budget would impact your community.
Step Two: The Congressional Budget Resolution (mid-March to mid-May)

After the president’s budget proposal is submitted, the budget committees in the House and Senate go to work to create the Congressional Budget Resolution, which sets overall limits on revenue, spending and cuts for the coming fiscal year. The resolution is supposed to be passed by April 15, but the process usually lasts from mid-March to mid-May.

The budget committees conduct hearings with government administrators of programs, advocates and experts. Each committee drafts a bill and passes it to the floor for a vote. Each chamber then selects conferees to meet and iron out differences between the two versions of the bill. Both houses then pass the final version of the Congressional Budget Resolution. The resolution does not require the signature of the president. Therefore, it is not a law, nor does it authorize any spending. Also, a budget resolution is not required for congressional spending to move forward. It does do the following:

• **Sets limits on federal programs:** The Congressional Budget Resolution sets a limit on appropriations spending for each of 20 spending categories known as budget “functions.” It also lays out the expected tax revenue for the next five years.

• **Creates the 302a allocation:** The “302a allocation” is a table provided in a report accompanying the budget resolution. The table takes the total amount budgeted for the year and divides the funds by congressional committee. The Appropriations Committee, for example, funds many of the programs run by Catholic Charities agencies and receives a single 302a allocation to divide among its subcommittees (see below).

• **Can provide reconciliation instructions:** The Congressional Budget Resolution sometimes gives Congress reconciliation instructions. These instructions require authorizing committees of entitlement programs to change the laws governing those programs to bring spending in line with the budget projections. These instructions have major impact – once given, a Budget Reconciliation (see below) almost always passes, meaning certain cuts to key programs in our social safety net.
As budget committees work to construct the Congressional Budget Resolution, advocates play a key role in preserving funding for programs that support those who are poor and vulnerable:

Learn

- Find out which members of Congress sit on the budget committees and see drafts of the budget resolution at www.congress.gov/committee/house-budget/hsbu00 and www.congress.gov/committee/senate-budget/ssbu00

Educate

- Educate editorial boards and reporters about the impact the budget proposals may have on your local community.

Advocate

- Call, email or visit your members of Congress (especially if they sit on budget committees) to educate them about the crucial importance of programs for low-income families in your community. Ask them to speak up and defend funding for these programs.

- Organize action alert campaigns to members of the budget committees and your legislators to emphasize the importance of funding programs for low-income families.

- Do not overlook the power of local officials and governors at this stage. Urge them to communicate support and need for these programs to members of Congress.

- Pay attention to differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. Educate your legislators on differences that impact low-income families.
Step Three: The Appropriations Process *(mid-May to October 1)*

The third step in the budget cycle is the creation of appropriations bills. Appropriations bills are laws that allocate money to discretionary programs, or those granted new funding each year, and give agencies the authority to spend that money. Around mid-May, the appropriations committees in each chamber receive their 302a allocation, a term for their spending limit for discretionary programs, from the Congressional Budget Resolution. Both the Senate and House Appropriations committees then break this overall allocation into sub-allocations for sub-committees. Currently, the Senate has 12 Appropriations Subcommittees while the House has 13.

Each subcommittee decides how to divide its sub-allocation between the various discretionary programs that it oversees. When finished, the subcommittee passes its bill back to the full committee, and then to the floor for amendments and a final vote. The bills can pass individually, or they can be combined with other appropriations bills in legislation known as an “omnibus bill” (this usually happens when Congress is running out of time in the legislative calendar to complete each bill individually).

The appropriations process begins in mid-May and should be completed by the beginning of the next fiscal year, on October 1. If Congress has not passed appropriations bills by October 1, it often passes a continuing resolution that allows programs to continue operating under the previous year’s funding levels until the new bills are completed.

Special Budgetary Circumstances

Supplemental Appropriations *(Any time, when needed)*

Supplemental appropriations enable Congress to respond to unforeseen emergencies for which they are unable to budget in the regular process. Natural disasters and wars are often funded through supplemental appropriations. These bills can originate in appropriations committees at any time during the year and often result from a request from the president.

Because supplemental appropriations do not have a monetary limit and do not factor into the Congressional Budget Resolution’s projections of the deficit, they provide a loophole for spending in a tight budgetary climate.

Budget Reconciliation *(If required by Congressional Budget Resolution, April to September)*

Budget reconciliation is a process that happens in selected years when Congress passes reconciliation instructions in the Congressional Budget Resolution. Budget reconciliation
requires various authorizing committees to make changes to existing entitlement programs and/or tax laws to reconcile, or bring in line, the spending on these permanent programs with the spending and deficit goals of the resolution. Because entitlement programs, such as Medicare, must fund services for all qualified applicants, reconciling the programs with the budget requires changing eligibility standards or services of the programs.

**ACTIONS FOR ADVOCATES**

During the appropriations process, advocates play a key role in preserving funding for programs that support the vulnerable as members of the appropriations committees determine spending priorities:

**Learn**
- Find out which members of Congress sit on the appropriations committees at appropriations.house.gov and appropriations.senate.gov

**Advocate**
- Call, email or visit your members of Congress (especially if they sit on appropriations committees) and urge them to support programs defending the dignity and potential of low-income families in your community. Explain, using your experience, how these programs ensure the health of your community.
- Organize action alert campaigns to members of appropriations committees to demonstrate widespread support for the issues you care about.
- Continue to partner with the media to educate the public through op-eds, letters to the editor and news stories.
Continuing Resolution

A continuing resolution provides interim funding to enable government programs to continue operating until new appropriations bills are completed.

When budget reconciliation occurs, committees that oversee entitlement program or tax laws receive instructions in the Congressional Budget Resolution. These instructions tell the committees how much spending they must cut, give a deadline for determining changes and cuts, and provide suggestions for how to do so. Once a committee receives reconciliation instructions, it must produce a bill with the required savings. The committees have great incentive to finish on time - if they do not, the chair of the respective budget committee can amend existing law for them.

If Congress passes reconciliation instructions in the Congressional Budget Resolution, it must follow through. Once each committee has made its changes, the budget committees combine the various bills into one final reconciliation bill for a floor vote. A reconciliation bill is one of the few pieces of legislation the Senate cannot filibuster (a term for unlimited debate). Thus, the bill can pass by a simple majority vote.

Appendix E: Who’s Who in the Federal Legislative Process?

As an advocate, you have passion and local expertise to bring to the federal legislative process. However, your time and resources are limited. Knowing the people and their roles in the political process will enable you to focus your efforts for maximum impact. Numerous print and online sources provide extensive information about legislators, their priority interests, committee assignments and staff. This section provides a brief overview of the roles of these key people and links to further information about them.

The Legislative Branch

New laws and changes to existing law originate in the legislative branch of the federal government, which consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The 535 members of Congress hold a variety of committee appointments and roles during their time in office. Some of these roles are detailed below, along with the responsibilities of the staff members who support them.
Members of Congress

As a nation, we elect 535 members of Congress to create laws that govern the country. Each state elects two senators, for a total of 100 senators. Senators serve six-year terms and are reelected on a staggered schedule. One-third of the Senate runs for reelection every two years.

- For information about the Senate, visit www.senate.gov/.
- For a list of senators, see www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm.

There are 435 members of the House of Representatives. Representatives are divided between the states based on population (e.g., Alaska has only one representative, while California has more than 50). Representatives run for reelection every two years.

- For information about the House of Representatives, visit www.house.gov/.
- For a directory of representatives by state, see www.house.gov/representatives.

Congressional Committees

During their tenure in Congress, members are appointed to various committees. The committees oversee various areas of government legislation and responsibilities in the federal legislative process. Three types of committees impact the work that is done on behalf of the vulnerable: authorizing, budget and appropriations committees.

Authorizing Committees: Authorization is the process by which Congress enacts laws. Authorizing committees review proposed legislation on an issue or program, conducting hearings and studies and producing reports. The committee amends the legislation to shape the program and influences how it will be administered by government agencies. The committee also establishes a ceiling on funding for the program.

Committees that deal with similar issues may have different names in the House and the Senate. The following is a list of key authorizing committees and contact information for them.
Senate Committees:

- Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry:
  - Authorizes and conducts oversight of many food and nutrition programs (food stamp programs, school nutrition, etc.).
  - agriculture.senate.gov

- Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:
  - Has jurisdiction over housing, homelessness and lending programs and services.
  - banking.senate.gov

- Senate Committee on Finance:
  - Has jurisdiction over federal tax measures and a wide range of programs that provide benefits to people in need, such as TANF, Medicaid and child welfare/foster care programs.
  - finance.senate.gov

- Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions:
  - Authorizes and conducts oversight of health, education, and labor programs, including Head Start and childcare.
  - help.senate.gov

- Senate Committee on the Judiciary:
  - Has jurisdiction over juvenile justice, crime, immigration and civil rights measures.
  - judiciary.senate.gov

House Committees:

- House Agriculture Committee:
  - Authorizes and conducts oversight of many food and nutrition programs (food stamp programs, etc.).
  - agriculture.house.gov

- House Committee on Education and Labor:
  - Authorizes and conducts oversight of education and labor programs and standards, including many affecting children, families and people in need, such as Head Start and child care.
  - edlabor.house.gov

- House Committee on Energy & Commerce:
  - Authorizes and conducts oversight of all health programs, including Medicaid and SCHIP.
  - energycommerce.house.gov
• House Committee on Financial Services:
  - Has jurisdiction over housing and homelessness programs.
  - financialservices.house.gov

• House Committee on the Judiciary:
  - Has jurisdiction over juvenile justice, crime, immigration and civil rights measures.
  - judiciary.house.gov

**Budget Committees:** The budget committees do the bulk of their work between January and April of each year. Soon after the release of the president’s budget proposal in early February, the budget committees in the House and Senate begin work on the Congressional Budget Resolution, the resolution that sets a spending ceiling for the coming fiscal year (which begins October 1). In addition to the president’s budget resolution, the committees consider testimony from the administrators of federal agencies and suggestions from the authorizing and appropriations committees.

Your voice will have the most impact between January and April as the budget committees make decisions about how much money will be spent in the coming year. However, do not hesitate to remind your members of Congress, especially those on budget committees, of the importance and positive impact of programs for low-income families in your community throughout the year.

To find members on the budget committees, visit the committee websites:

www.congress.gov/committee/house-budget/hsbu00 www.congress.gov/committee/senate-budget/ssbu00

**Appropriations Committees:** The appropriations committees hold a great deal of power over programs that support low-income and vulnerable populations. These committees hold the power of the purse and work within the spending limits set by the Congressional Budget Resolution to divide federal dollars among the various government programs and agencies.

The appropriations committees do the bulk of their work between June and October of each year, although they often do not finish on time and work through November or December. You can advocate loudly and convincingly for the crucial need for and importance of programs for low-income families. Use letters, hearings, phone calls and local media coverage to raise support for these programs.
To find members on the appropriations committees, visit the committee websites:

appropriations.house.gov/about/membership
www.appropriations.senate.gov/

Legislative Staff

Members of Congress balance an enormous amount of responsibility in their various roles and work to stay informed on numerous issues. None can be an expert on everything, nor manage this workload without help. Members expect their legislative staffs to understand the details of legislation and help them craft their position on it, to represent them at meetings and to provide analysis of issues and recommend action. Legislative staffs often craft the legislation that their members introduce and vote on. Develop strong relationships with members of their staffs. They have significant power in the legislative process if simply because they filter the information that reaches legislators. You will want them to rely on you as an expert and reliable source of information on your issue.

Committee Staff: Although they officially work for the chair of a committee (who is a member of the majority party) and the ranking (or most senior) minority member, committee staff work with all of the members on a specific congressional committee. They often decide what issues to focus on in committee meetings, plan agendas for those meetings and decide when to have hearings and often who will testify at them. They also draft legislation and conference agreements between the House and Senate, and strategize about when to bring a bill to the floor for action.

Office Staff: A legislator’s office staff primarily serves his or her constituents. They track legislation, gather information about its potential local impact and help their member form a position on it. Familiarize yourself with the following titles and responsibilities of legislative office staff:

- Administrative Assistant (AA) or Chief of Staff: The AA reports directly to the senator or representative and usually is responsible for evaluating the political outcomes of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The AA or chief of staff usually handles the overall office operations, including supervision of key staff and assigning staff work.

- Caseworker: The caseworker is usually assigned to help with constituent requests by preparing replies for the legislator’s signature. The caseworker’s responsibilities may also include helping resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies such as veteran’s benefits, passports, Social Security, etc. There are often several caseworkers in an office.
• **Legislative Assistant (LA):** Most offices have several legislative assistants with expertise in a specific area. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the legislator, an office may have different LAs for health issues, taxes, the environment, etc.

• **Legislative Director (LD), Senior Legislative Assistant or Legislative Coordinator:** The legislative director usually monitors the legislative schedule, recommends priorities and analyzes the pros and cons of particular issues.

• **Press Secretary or Communications Director:** The press secretary’s responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the legislator, his/her constituency and the media. The press secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands and special requirements of both print and electronic media and how to effectively promote the legislator’s views on issues.

• **Scheduler:** The scheduler is responsible for allocating the legislator’s time among congressional responsibilities, staff requirements and constituent requests. The scheduler may also handle travel arrangements, speaking invitations, site visits, etc.

The Executive Branch

The power of the executive branch lies with the president, who appoints a Cabinet and officially oversees the operations of federal administrative agencies and departments (Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, etc.). Information about the president, his/her cabinet and the offices of the executive branch can be found at www.whitehouse.gov.

Following is a brief description of some of the offices and departments of the executive branch, a link to their websites and the names of the programs administered by these departments that touch the work of Catholic Charities and other agencies whose work improves the lives of the most vulnerable among us. The departments administer and shape programs nationwide and can be valuable partners for legislation that enhances programs for low-income citizens.

**Office of Management and Budget (OMB):** The Office of Management and Budget assists the president in creating the federal budget each year and supervises the administration of that budget by federal agencies. OMB monitors and evaluates the effectiveness and impact of various programs and policies to balance funding requests and determine priorities among agencies. OMB also administers the administration’s financial management, procurement and information policies in order to improve practices and reduce the burden on the public. Visit OMB at whitehouse.gov/omb.
**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):** The U.S. Department of Agriculture unites a wide variety of programs under one department. USDA supports farmers and agricultural research and works to guarantee food safety, to conserve natural resources and farmland, and to develop rural America. More than half the agency’s budget is spent on federal nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) and the National School Lunch Program that address domestic hunger and malnutrition. Catholic Charities and other agencies and advocates work with USDA to strengthen these nutrition programs and Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Loans, all of which impact low-income families. Visit USDA at www.usda.gov.

**United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):** The Department of Health and Human Services administers more than 300 programs designed to protect the health and essential human service needs of all Americans. These programs include disease prevention, health research and immunizations, health insurance for low-income families and seniors, Head Start educational programming for low-income pre-kindergarten children and services for the aging. Catholic Charities agencies and other advocates work primarily with the Administration on Aging (AOA) on programs for seniors, with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) concerning health programs for low-income families and with the Administration for Children & Families (ACF) concerning economic and social well-being. Visit DHS at www.dhhs.gov.

**United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** The Department of Housing and Urban Development works to increase home ownership, facilitate community development and ensure affordable housing for all Americans. Catholic Charities agencies and other advocates work with HUD to strengthen and administer the following programs: Section 8, Family Unification Program, Supportive Housing for the Elderly (Section 202), Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Section 811), Community Development Block Grant, Office of Housing Counseling and the Public Housing and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Visit HUD at www.hud.gov.

**United States Department of Justice:** The Department of Justice works to uphold the laws of the United States, ensure justice and just punishment and public safety, and prevent future crime. Catholic Charities agencies and other advocates work with the Office of Justice Programs concerning juvenile justice and rehabilitation, and victims of crime. Visit DOJ at www.usdoj.gov.

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):** The Department of Veterans Affairs delivers health care and services to veterans of the American Armed Forces. Catholic Charities agencies and other advocates work with VA to strengthen and administer the VA
Homeless Programs, VA Home Loan Guarantee Program and HUD-VA Supportive Housing program. Visit the VA at www.va.gov.

**United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH):** Established in 1987, the Interagency Council on Homelessness is charged with providing federal leadership in activities designed to aid homeless families and individuals. These activities include planning, evaluating, coordinating and changing programs and policies designed to assist people experiencing homelessness, providing information about these programs and supporting communities in their efforts to combat homelessness. Catholic Charities agencies and other advocates work with ICH to prevent and decriminalize homelessness, using evidence-based, housing first models. and the Family Unification Program. Visit USICH at www.ich.gov.
ENDNOTES

1 Pope Benedict XVI, Deus caritas est, No. 28.
5 Economic Justice for All.
6 Economic Justice for All.