



ADVOCACY GUIDE FOR THE FAITH COMMUNITY



www.hungernetohio.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
About Hunger Network Our Priorities	2-3
What is Advocacy? Take the Next Step Faith and Advocacy	4-5
What Can Faith Communities Do? A Roadmap for Faith Communities Anticipate Barriers Rethink Service Advocacy Ideas for Youth Ministry	6-9
Hunger Advocacy Statistics on Hunger How we Create Systemic Change	10-11
Understanding Your Role Understand Power Develop a Message that Works The Power of Our Story	12-14
Governmental Systems Our Governmental System Legislative Process Understand Partisanship	15-17
Advocacy Action Steps Get Out and Vote Learn About Your Legislator Writing for Impact Engage Through the Internet Quick Contacts: Phone and Email Meet Your Legislator Invite Your Legislators So What Now?	18-25
Resources	26

The Hunger Network in Ohio is a statewide faith-based ministry working to end hunger in Ohio by addressing the root causes of poverty through advocacy.

Who Should Read This?

This book is designed for faith communities, non-profits, community groups and others who want to create meaningful change in our world. While HNO focuses on hunger at the State level, this guide is designed to offer a roadmap on strategy that will be effective on a variety of issues such as immigration, environment, education equity, and much more.

Why Advocacy?

Public Policy advocacy is simply communicating with others in positions of authority to take a specific action – such as addressing the root causes of hunger. The faith community has a long history of feeding those who experience hunger. With good strategy and training, faith leaders, volunteers, and those who experience hunger, we can share their stories and experiences through advocacy to create long-term relationships and change in the world. Advocacy allows us to share our passion and perspective to help address the root causes of an issue.

Why Network?

Nobody can do this work alone! God calls hands to be hands and feet to be feet. Solving our most pressing issues as a community requires us to collaborate, listen to one another, and share our gifts as community to find solutions.

What Actually Works?

All of us are busy and overworked. This guide is designed to help us more effectively engage our congregations and communities, meaningfully communicate our values, and efficiently create real change.

OUR PRIORITIES

The Hunger Network advocates on policies that will provide opportunities to Ohioans struggling with hunger in our communities.

FEED PEOPLE TODAY

Emergency food programs provide immediate assistance families in need.

EDUCATE TO END HUNGER

A high quality education is key to addressing poverty and hunger.

BUILD HEALTHY HOMES & COMMUNITIES

We need a holistic approach to 'community' to end hunger.

BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

The economy should provide fair wages and protect against exploitation.



TAKE THE NEXT STEP



Our faith calls us to stand with the hungry, the refugees, and the outcast. This guidebook offers people of faith, and others, concrete steps to build a world where all are fed. We do not need to solve the problems of the world by ourselves, but we all need to take the next step toward a more just-world. How do you run a marathon? Take the first step.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is communicating to people in positions of authority to take specific actions. At the Hunger Network, we seek to build relationships with state and federal lawmakers, and others, to help them make the best decisions possible for our communities, and answer their vocation call to be public servants.

What is Public Policy?

Public policy are the rules and laws that are passed by school boards, city councils, state legislators, and Congress. Some of the most important public policy decisions focus on how we spend our shared resources through public budgets and appropriations. Our healthcare, school, and economic systems are all the results of policies passed or failed to be passed. As people of faith, we often see when something isn't working right - when people go hungry, when schools are underfunded, when the water is polluted - and we can share our perspectives with policymakers to help them create the change we wish to see in the world.

Can Churches and Nonprofits do this?

All non-profit entities can educate and advocate about issues like hunger, environmental damage, inequality, and other issues in the world. Elected officials are called to be public servants, and our insights equip us to help them lead and serve our communities.

FAITH AND ADVOCACY



Right Relationship in the World

God invites us to join in the work of healing broken relationship and building up a beloved community in this world. God calls humanity to live in right relationship with one another and with creation (Genesis 4:9; Matt 25). Too often, evil is systemic and seen in racism, greed, and exploitation of communities and people. We are invited in to witness the world that God intended for us. God called Moses to advocate to Pharaoh to dramatically shift the economic and cultural reality of Egypt by ending the slavery of the Hebrews (Exodus 3). In the Lord's Prayer, Christians pray, 'give us this day our daily bread', which includes all we need for daily sustenance - including good government. Just like we feed somebody when they are hungry, we should advocate to the government to make sure everyone benefits from the blessings of the community, and that everyone is treated fairly and justly.

God has blessed our world with enough food for everyone, but many go hungry. Why?

Because we are not living out our call to be in right relationship with one another and God's creation. We hoard food, we create food deserts, we focus inward instead of on the community. The great commandment - to love our neighbors as ourselves - manifests itself throughout most world religions. It is not enough to pray for those who are hungry, or to provide the scraps from our table. Those who experience injustice want justice. As a loving neighbor, we are called to act and seek that justice with them.

People Ask, 'But Doesn't God Want us to do Charity?'

Yes, God wants us to do charity because people are hungry today. That doesn't mean we are not supposed to also work for justice. God loves those who are hungry and oppressed just as much as those who feed the hungry. 'The poor' were not placed here so that the wealthy congregations have a Sunday evening service project. To be in right relationship with those experiencing hunger means that we should address the root causes of the injustice.

A ROADMAP FOR THE FAITH COMMUNITY

1.

Learn Together:

Set up a Bible study, book club, or sermon series about a topic. Ask the question, 'What is God calling us to do?' Begin with an issue (like hunger) where the congregation already is engaged in someway.

2.

Engage Experts:

Invite service providers, those with lived experiences, policy experts, advocates, and others already doing the work to speak to your group. Invite them to share their experiences within your congregation.

3.

Organize a Leadership Team:

After some initial conversation and congregational discussion, pull together your leadership team! Identify people in the congregation and community who are passionate about creating change and have them develop goals, and an action plan. (See next page for tips!)

4.

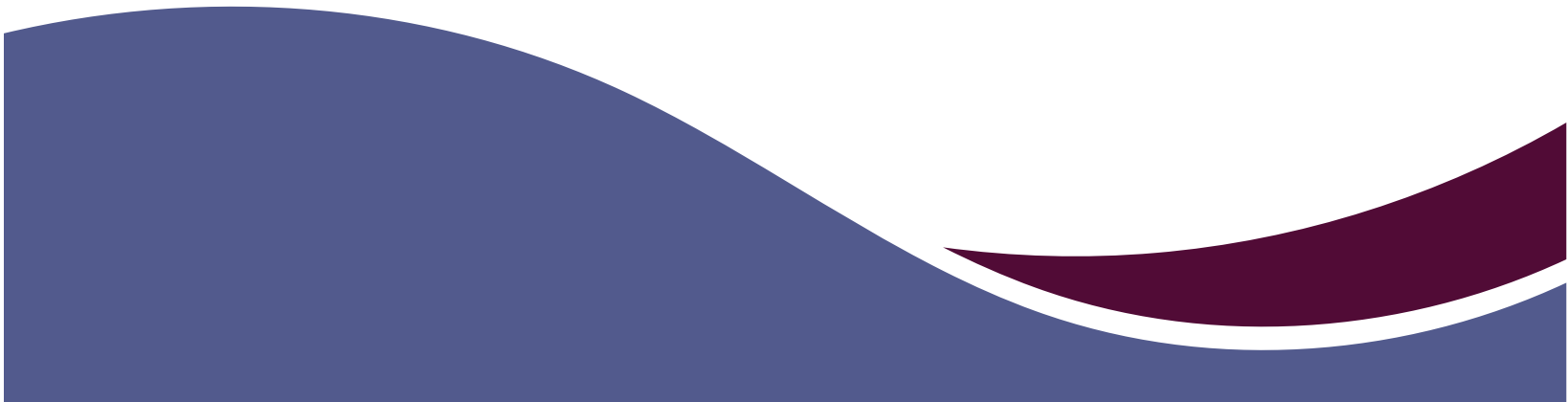
Go Beyond the Church Walls:

Identify ways you can take your passion outside into the world. The world desperately needs people of faith to speak out on issues of injustice.

5.

Celebrate:

Sometimes conversations about justice are difficult, but our faith calls us to wrestle with what God is calling on us to do as a community. Celebrate the small victories!



ANTICIPATE BARRIERS IN YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY

- 1 Be Prepared:**

Don't wait for a crisis situation to arise; begin the conversation through preaching and teaching about issues before they are on the front page. This will help the congregation to understand the news through the lens of their faith.
- 2 Prophetic is Pastoral:**

A prophetic message is less about calling out those who have wronged others, but inviting the community to join with God in the restoration and healing of the community. Prophetic preaching and teaching should not be about blaming those in the pews, but helping us to all see our collective brokenness and identifying a way forward.
- 3 Lead with Our Shared Values**

If your congregation is hesitant to engage on a 'political issue', begin the preaching or teaching efforts by emphasizing shared values as people of faith. Emphasize your own brokenness and complicity in broken systems. Policy solutions are more naturally agreed upon when the faith values are understood first.
- 4 God's Love is About Hope**

One of the biggest threats to participation in civic affairs is cynicism and a lack of hope. As people of faith, we should be filled with hope for our world today. Many corporations and politicians can profit and gain support by feeding the cynicism of our world. We must counteract that message regularly by emphasizing hope.
- 5 Don't Stop with Academics, Move into the Action**

Anyone who preaches a sermon should engage in high quality academic and historical critical study before preparing their sermon to give integrity to the text. Sermons should inspire people toward loving action in the world today. The sending in Christian liturgy is more than a message to lock the doors to the building, but a call to action for the Church in the world.

RETHINK SERVICE

Too often, community service projects focus on the volunteers enjoyment and not on those in need. We need to rethink our volunteer and charity efforts if we want to make a positive difference in the world.

Ask Needs, Don't Assume

Ask what partner agencies actually need. Often, donations of money go much farther than donations of goods or food that may have storage costs.

Break Down Barriers

Encourage your congregation members to interact with those receiving services. This allows everyone to enjoy each other as children of God. Focus on relationships first.

Incorporate Learning

Prior to a volunteer event, study scripture and the world to understand the issue. After the event, do reflection and devotion about what people saw and experienced.

Incorporate Advocacy

Have members at a meal (both your congregation and the community being served), write letters to legislators on the issue or have community conversations about a social issue.

Re-orient service

Focus service on building community and raising awareness instead of providing 'something'. Use volunteer opportunities as a stepping stone toward active citizenship that will lead people to address the systemic and underlying issues.

New Partnerships

Consider partnering with a faith community that is theologically, racially, and culturally different than yours. When you enter as equals, it can break down further barriers.

Be open to others serving you:

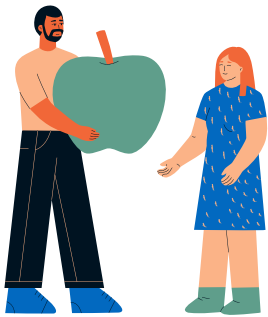
Being in right relationship with others requires us to be open to being served and serving. Be open to serving side-by-side, and allow others to bless you with their gifts and talents.

ADVOCACY IDEAS FOR YOUTH MINISTRY



Service Learning

Incorporate learning into every service project. Young people want to see how their faith is bigger than just an hour on Sunday. Build relationships with experts and service providers who can help. Many large youth events are already adopting this approach.



Write Letters/Draw Pictures

After learning about a topic or hearing a story about Christ feeding and caring for the hungry, encourage the youth to write letters to their local newspaper or legislator. If they are younger kids, they can witness about Christ's love with a drawing about loving their neighbor. They can also draw pictures on paper plates to be delivered to legislators.



Build Empathy & Awareness Among Youth

The use of simulations and activities that highlight brokenness in our world and the divisions caused by sin equip our youth to have empathy and understanding in the world. Good simulations and activities are effective with multi-generational groups as well.



Youth Educate Others

Host a hunger walk between two churches. Collect food along the way, but also have youth and adults make signs to raise awareness. Youth can design a bulletin board in the church about issues they care about or provide a temple talk or presentation over a meal.



Talk with Lawmakers

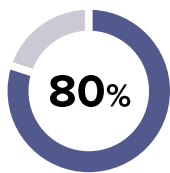
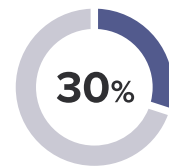
Invite local, state, or federal legislators to attend a meeting at the church. Invite them to volunteer alongside the youth. Go and visit them in Columbus or Washington D.C. Everyone is an expert in their own story. Policymakers can better serve the public when they have more experts helping them to understand the world better.

STATISTICS ON HUNGER

Use Statistics to:

- **Draw people in:** A shocking statistic or big number will grab people's attention.
- **Connect your story to the world:** Your personal story is relevant as an example to the larger issues.
- **Correct the Record:** Use a statistic to quickly set the record straight and move back to your issue.
- **Statistics will rarely win an argument:** As people of faith, lift up the stories of people and use statistics sparingly.

■ Around 30% of Ohio households are living on the edge or in poverty - not able to make ends meet without assistance.



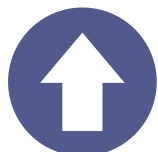
■ More than 80% of households struggling to get by are working as of 2021.

■ An Ohioan needs to earn, on average, \$17.05 an hour to afford a 2-bedroom apartment. The average renter only earns \$13.32.



■ 10.4% of Ohioans experienced food insecurity in 2021. Over 20 years, hunger is up 36% in Ohio.

■ More than 1 in 6 kids struggle with hunger.



■ In Ohio, African Americans experience a rate of hunger around 140% greater than European Americans.

■ A lack of stable nutritious food leads to health problems such as high blood pressure and obesity.



Specific numbers change on an annual basis, but these trends are persistent.

HOW WE CREATE SYSTEMIC CHANGE



There are many theories on how to create change in our world. This information below is based on writings done by the Ayni Institute. Many churches focus predominantly on personal transformation work. While this work is important, we must collaborate and work collectively with individuals, organizations, and ministries engaging in all three categories. While we are focused on hunger, this framework can be applied to other issues.

Personal transformation

1.

This approach seeks to help individuals through personal relationships and services. Volunteering at a food pantry or produce give away, making meals and distributing them are part of personal transformation. The advantage to this work is it addresses an immediate need quickly and is very tangible. However, it is limited in scope.

Create Alternatives

2.

Often through our charity efforts, we notice larger issues that are the cause of hunger, such as a lack of grocery stores in a neighborhood. Instead of feeding people directly, your congregation can help bring in a farmer's market or non-profit grocery store. You start a local farm for the neighborhood. These efforts have larger impact, that will not be as immediate. However, the underlying issue often remains.

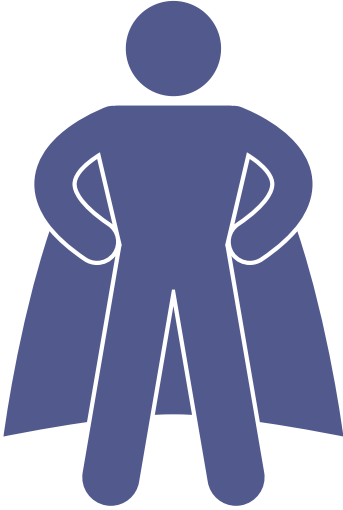
Change Dominant Institutions

3.

Changing dominant institutions seeks to solve the root causes of the problem.

- Advocacy: Seeks to engage policymakers in power through relationship, research, education, and stories and influence them to pass better policies.
- Organize: Builds new power by engaging under-represented communities to shift power to the people.
- Electoral: Change who holds positions of power. (As non-profits, congregations are limited in electoral work around candidates).
- Protest: Seeks to disrupt power through peaceful means and draw attention to an issue that is ignored.

UNDERSTAND POWER



When we organize together and use our power collectively, we can do great things. We have power through our faith to witness the love of God for the world. We must use all that we have in service to God, which includes our power. Religious leaders have power through their title of Reverend, Rabbi, Deacon, Father, Iman, Sister, team leader, etc.

Everyone has some type of power. As citizens we are the government in the United States, and we have the ability to vote, petition the government, and advocate for our shared values. Even those who can't vote still have the right and responsibility to speak about these issues. When we choose to not exercise our power or justice, we are accepting and supporting the status quo.

People Power:

We have power through our numbers. If every faith community had just one person who wrote a letter and made a phone call to their elected officials, it would be transforming.

Moral Power:

When a religious institution speaks, people listen. We have a moral authority to speak for justice.

Power through Relationship:

Faith leaders are community leaders. We all serve on boards, committees, and have the opportunity to speak to groups of people every week. Use these relationships to advance social justice.

Power through Wealth:

Wealth is more than just money. Time off, expertise space - such as a kitchen or church van - give us wealth to use toward justice.

Power through Education:

Our formal education matters, but so do our experiences. We have wisdom from our relationships, our experiences dealing with injustice, and our formal education. Use these to tell a convincing story.

Power through Humility:

Some of the most effective leaders for justice laid themselves out and became vulnerable. We see this through non-violent resistance during the civil rights movement, Daniel in the Lion's den, and Jesus on the cross.

DEVELOP A MESSAGE THAT WORKS!

Communication is a two way street. An effective message allows your intent to be understood by others, and it allows you to set the direction of the conversation. A good message will build off of 'cultural common sense' - or ideas that are generally agreed upon in the community.

1.

Begin with core values:

Begin with a value statement that is universally agreed upon. Freedom, hard-work, community, love of neighbor, and right relationship are values that are accessible to most people. Build your argument from there.

2.

Speak with moral authority:

As people of faith, we need to remind legislators and others that we speak with a moral authority. Unlike many advocates, we are not there to 'get something'. Your primary message should always be hopeful for the future.

3.

Speak about what you know:

Relate an issue of public policy back to something you can speak personally about.

4.

Don't get sucked in:

Know what your primary message is, and always pivot back to that. Others may disagree with you based on stereotypes or personal anecdotes.

4.

Shift the Conversation back to your message:

If the conversations shifts to personal failings, re-state your core value.

THE POWER OF OUR STORY

Clergy know the power of a good story for a sermon. The same is true in advocacy. Frame your story intentionally to advance your core values. Public narrative should drive and inspire people to act with you. This method of storytelling is borrowed from Marshall Ganz at the Kennedy School of Government. A public story contains three elements:

Story of Self

Why you were called to what you have been called to. Illustrate why you are passionate about an issue. What challenges have you faced? What barriers exist for you? Why are you here?

Story of Us

What your constituency, community, organization has been called to - it's shared purposes, goals, vision. We are part of many groups of 'us'. The 'us' is who you hope to move and engage.

Story of Now

The challenge this community now faces, the choices it must make, and the hope to which "we" can aspire is the story of now. Leadership requires us to describe more than just the problem, but opportunities for action.

Tips for Effective Storytelling

- **Identify the right story-teller** - Representation matters.
- **Train your story-tellers** - write it out, practice verbally sharing it.
- **All the details don't matter** - make it succinct.
- **Stories should evoke emotion.**
- **Stories should emphasize** your message.
- **You don't need to be perfect**, acknowledge difficulties or moral crisis.
- **Don't exploit** or appropriate others stories.



OUR GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM

It is important to target your advocacy at the right offices and levels of government.



Local Government

Ohio has 88 counties, and most counties have 3 county commissioners. They establish budgets for the sheriff, parks, and many social service agencies such as aging, mental health, and child welfare. In addition to counties, Ohio has a variety of township, city, and village structures - each with local laws and ordinances. Ohio also has 611 public school districts.



State Government in Ohio

The State of Ohio has five statewide executive elected offices - Governor (and Lt. Gov.) Auditor, Treasurer, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. Each holds different administrative responsibilities. For example, the Secretary of State is essential in voting rights. These positions are elected to four-year terms during even year and can serve two terms. Ohio also elects seven State Supreme Court justices and has a series of appellate and local court systems. Our legislative branch has 99 house members (2 year terms) and 33 house seats (4 year terms).



Federal Government

Ohio currently has 15 Congressional districts. In 2023, there were 10 Republicans and 5 Democrats. Each congress person is elected to 2-year terms Ohio has 2 U.S. Senators - currently Sherrod Brown (Democrat) and J.D. Vance (Republican). Senators are elected to staggered 6 year terms, with upcoming Senate election in 2024 and then again in 2028.



PASSING LEGISLATION

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



Legislation is introduced in the House of Representatives or the Senate



Legislation is sent to committee in either chamber. Traditionally, a bill receives at least three hearings that include public testimony.



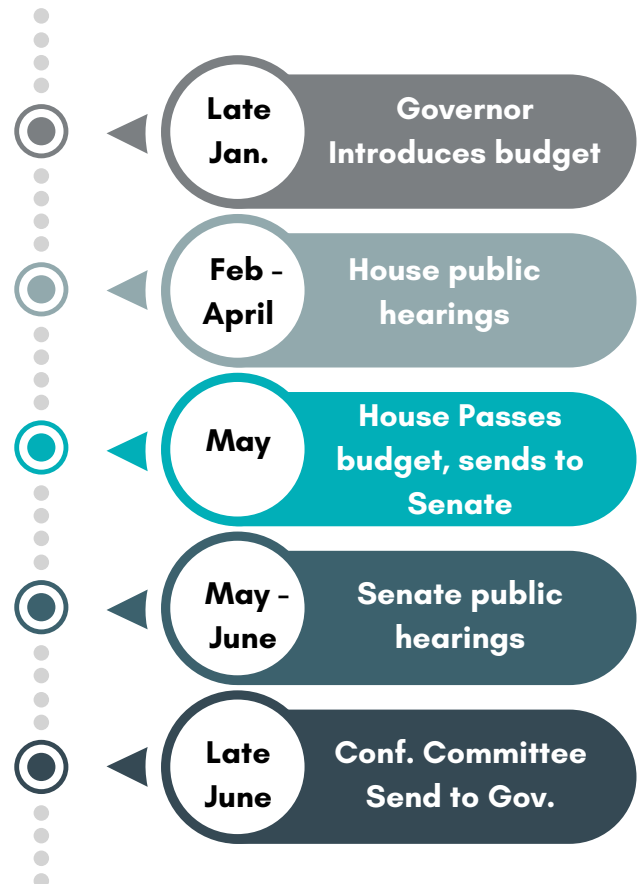
Committees will amend legislation and will vote to recommend its full passage and to send the legislation to the other chamber for the same process.



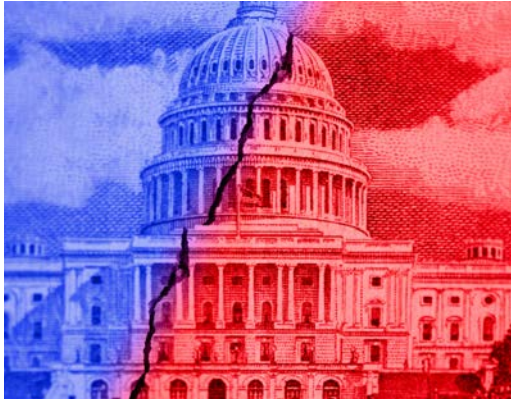
If both chambers vote to pass and then reconcile different amendments, legislation is sent to the Governor for signature or veto.

The Ohio Budget

Budgets are moral documents. The budget is one of the most important pieces of legislation every General Assembly. Worked on every two years (2019, 2021, 2023...). Through Ohio's budget state leaders set their priorities and funding levels for education, environment, healthcare, affordable housing and much more. People of faith and good conscience are needed to lift up the voices of our communities during these crucial conversations. The budget process begins in late January with the Governor and the budget must be signed by June 30th.



UNDERSTAND PARTISANSHIP



The Rule

Faith communities, and other non-profit organizations, are allowed to lobby and advocate on issues (including ballot campaigns) in Ohio, but cannot engage or endorse partisan candidates or political parties. However, partisanship, is a hurdle we must overcome, because otherwise it clouds out dialogue on our issues.

Ohio is a Purple State

Ohio voted for Barack Obama and Donald Trump twice. We are neither a red or blue state; we remain purple. However, the issue of *gerrymandering* mutes this reality in Ohio and silences legitimate debate.

What is Gerrymandering?

Every 10 years, Ohio is called to draw new legislative maps for the Ohio General Assembly and Congress to ensure equal number of residents in each district. However, through creative mapmaking, lawmakers are able to ensure their party and their political allies safe seats and silence opposition.

Didn't We Fix Gerrymandering in Ohio?

In both 2015 and 2018, Ohioans voted overwhelmingly (71% and 75% respectively) to create a more public process and guidelines to stop the political party in power from drawing unfair maps. However, the new rules were written by the General Assembly, and they maintained control over the process. In 2021 and 2022, the General Assembly largely ignored the new rules, and drew unconstitutional maps. Bi-partisan good-government advocates are launching a ballot campaign for 2024 to take the authority of map drawing out of the hands of partisan influence.

Why Does this Matter?

When elected officials must chase cable news quotes and the extreme ends of their party, they are less engaged in the issues of their districts. Non-competitive districts take away voters check on legislative extremism and overreach. We need our representatives to represent our communities and be accountable to voters first.

Majority of the Majority:

Remember, that the party in the majority - even by 1 vote - will only move legislation if the majority of party is behind it. Despite this, the minority party can still influence legislation through committee debate, questions, and amendments.

GET OUT AND VOTE!

Faith communities can register, educate, protect, and mobilize voters in any election. Please reach out for specific, up-to-date training on any new rules or best practices on voter registration and education.

Voter Registration:

- **Hold a voter registration Sunday** (Voter registration deadline is 30 days prior to the election). Many people register to vote, but move or change their name and need to re-register. If a person hasn't voted in the last few elections, they may need to re-register.
- **Check registrations:** You can use the Secretary of State or local board of elections website to make sure people are registered using a smartphone or tablet. Make sure voters know where their voting location is. You can do this on a smart phone or tablet after worship on Sunday or at your local food pantry.
- **Registration at your food pantry:** Make voter registration a common occurrence at your food pantry, meal site, or other ministry. Allow your church to be used as an address for those with complicated housing situations.

Voter Education

- **Hold a candidate forum:** Educate your community about the candidates and the issues that are coming up in the election by inviting the campaigns out. (See our 'candidate forum' section on page 24).
- **Educate about OUR issues:** As people of faith, we have issues that we care about. Let your candidates know our views on hunger and poverty and other areas of community concern. Help all the candidates be more prepared for the challenges ahead!
- **Engage in a ballot campaign:** Non-profit organizations and congregations can take a position "Vote Yes" or "Vote No" on issue campaigns and actively get involved in the campaign

Voter Mobilization

- Help people apply for absentee ballots so they can vote at home.
- Provide information about voter ID requirements, and help people obtain these.
- Coordinate rides on election day or an early vote day. Souls to the Polls events on the Sunday before the election can support first time voters, and build community and life-long voters.

Voter Protection

- If voters experience barriers, harassment, or confusion about their Constitutional right to vote, call and report it to the non-partisan voter protection hotline. **1-866-OUR-VOTE.**

LEARN ABOUT YOUR LEGISLATOR

Your legislators are human beings. That might seem obvious, but we often forget the importance of connecting with them on a human level. Know basic information about them to help foster a relationship. Whether calling, writing, or meeting your Representative, think about how to communicate our passion in a way that will connect with them on a human level.

How to Do it? The first step is to identify who your State Representative and State Senator are. You can do that at www.legislature.ohio.gov/members/district-maps. Once here, enter your address and follow the links to your legislators. Most of these questions below can be answered on this website. In addition to the questions below, take a look at bills they sponsor, read their blog or newsletters to identify what they value.

	OHIO HOUSE	OHIO SENATE	CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE
Name & Party			
Hometown			
Committees/ Leadership			
Career			
Family Status			
Alma Maters			
Previous Offices			
Faith Tradition			
Community Organizations			
Other Notable Information			

WRITING FOR IMPACT



Helpful Tips to Write a Letter to Your Legislator:

- 1. Identify yourself as a constituent and person of faith.**
My name is Pastor Jane Doe, and I serve First Lutheran of Anytown, OH.
- 2. Identify the issue you care about.**
I write to you today because there are too many hungry kids in Anytown.
- 3. Express a common and shared value.**
It is immoral that so many hard-working families are struggling with hunger.
- 4. Use a story to make it real.**
Last week, I learned that one of our families is watering down their child's milk to make it last longer due to not having enough money to make ends meet.
- 5. Use statistics sparingly.**
This family is not alone, more than 1 in 5 children in Ohio will experience hunger this year.
- 6. Always include what you want them to do.**
Please support the proposed expansion of cash assistance in HB 12345. This will help many hard working families to overcome barriers that are out of their control.

Write a letter to your local newspaper.

Letters are read by legislators, community leaders, and neighbors and encourage more public debate and discussion on an issue important to you.

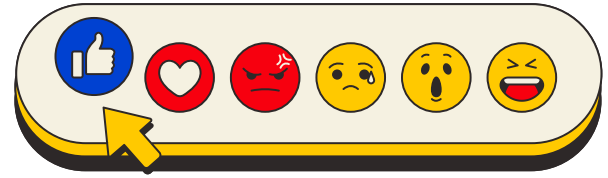
SCAN ME



Scan the QR code to access tips and tricks, as well as, sample Letter's to the Editor



ENGAGE THROUGH THE INTERNET



Social Media

Social media offers everyone a chance to help shape the news and content that each other sees. This is both a blessing and curse when it comes to advocacy.



Online Petitions

Many petition sites are a method to gather email addresses. Sign petitions sponsored by groups and organizations you know and trust. Petitions are an effective first-step digital organizing tool, but can also be a tool used to just grab people's email addresses to be sold. If you know the sponsoring organization, sign! If not, be cautious.



Spot False News & Report

False news is too common online. False news hurts our ability for civil discourse and wrestling with difficult issues to find solutions. "False news" is different from satire (like the Onion, SNL, or other late night television which have a long history of perspective-based comedy). False news, instead, is an article grounded in a conspiracy theory or plays off emotion more than fact. Ask yourself if the original source can be held accountable (ie. local newspaper or journalist or is it a website you have never heard of?) Is the article title and image supported by actual facts in the article? Is the headline or photograph designed to get clicks and play on emotion? Watch for general statements or vague quotes from random people.



Strategies for Social Media for Advocacy.

- Like public official's social media pages - whether you voted for them or not.
- Tag legislators in Facebook posts when there is something you want them to see
- Share CREDIBLE news and information about social issues on your Facebook page.
- Everything doesn't need to be an argument of sensationalized headlines.
- Publicly thank legislators when they do something good.

QUICK CONTACTS

PHONE & EMAIL

Email: A quick way to get in touch - sometimes.

Unique emails are more effective than form emails. If you fill in a form from a website, you should be encouraged to edit the subject slightly, and the content so that it is a unique note. Here are some other helpful tips for emailing legislators.

- Make sure your subject line is clear on your position. (Please support funding for Ohio foodbanks, Oppose SB 1234).
- Quickly identify yourself as a person of faith or why your opinion matters. If you are in the legislators district, indicate that too!
- Be brief.
- If you use an email form, know what site you are working through (Hunger Network is a credible site!) Be cautious about sending emails through some sites that are only trying to collect email addresses.
- If you email the chair of the committee, also email your Representative or Senator. They both need to hear from you. Indicate in the email you are emailing both.
- Email is the first step. Follow up with a phone call or letter as well.

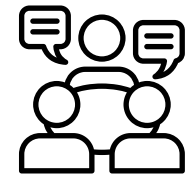
The phone: old-fashion and reliable.

Legislative staff often say that their legislator will ask, 'what issues did we receive calls about today?' Imagine if a legislator hears that she receives 1-2 calls a day for a month (from different people) on the same issue. It will be hard for them to ignore the issue!

- Find their direct number at Ohiohouse.gov and Ohiosenate.gov.
- Identify the specific issue you are calling about and clearly state your position.
- Thank the staffer for their time. They are not your enemy.
- If they ask a question, it is okay to say I will get back to you with that.
- Don't forget to send a thank you email or make a thank you phone call when a legislator does something good so that they do it again.

MEET YOUR LEGISLATOR

Meetings with your state legislators can occur in Columbus or in the home district. Ohio Legislators are typically in Columbus Tues. – Thurs. during the months of active sessions (Jan. – May and Sept – early Dec.). Election calendars will interfere with this general rule. Why do we meet with them? It's about building right relationship.



To Set Up a Meeting:

- 1 Identify your legislator and call their office using the House/Senate websites.
- 2 Identify yourself as a constituent to their aide on the phone and a person of faith. They will want to know the meeting topic.
- 3 Pick a date that works for you and the legislator. You can meet in-district or at the Statehouse. (House members offices are across the street from the Statehouse, connected by the parking garage.)
- 4 Schedules are flexible in Columbus. You might meet with the legislator or an aide. You will have about 15 minutes. Or invite them to meet in-district. Legislators are often more conversational when meeting in-district.



Tips for a Great Meeting

- Begin with conversation that connects you and the legislator – What values do you think they have that intersect with your values? Did you both attend the same college? Kids at the same school?
- Have everyone introduce themselves and their faith community.
- Identify the issue you are there to talk about. “Today we are here to talk to you about hunger issues.”
- Share a personal story “I care about hunger, because, I recently ...”
- Only reference one or two facts or statistics in the printed materials. They can read the details on their own time.
- Directly tell the legislator what they can do. “Because of this, we would like you to vote for/against...”
- If they haven't interjected with their opinions, ask them what are their thoughts on the proposal.
- If the legislator says they are supportive, ask them what you can do to support them in moving the policy forward.

INVITE

LEGISLATORS

Faith communities can sponsor events that feature elected officials. Sometimes, it makes sense to also invite the media to these events if your goal is to foster public awareness. Balance this goal with an open and honest conversation with your legislator, who may be less inquisitive if cameras are present.



Education Events

These are a great way to get people talking to others and a great way to educate a legislator. Elected officials are more likely to show up to a community education event or forum that feature community experts if they also have an opportunity to speak. (such as reflection or closing remarks).



Invite to Volunteer

Invite them to volunteer or visit a local meal site. Elected officials don't often see the hard work already going on and the growing need. Make sure clients, volunteers and staff have the choice to be present or not while the elected official is there.



Invite to Worship

You can also invite elected officials to address your worshipping community during normal hours. Be very intentional to inform them of what is appropriate and not appropriate from your pulpit.



Candidate Forums

Prior to an election, a congregation may invite candidates to attend an event and provide them an opportunity to present themselves to the community. How do you set up this event?

- **Invitations:** Faith Communities cannot show favoritism toward one political party over the other. Identify the races you want to invite, and invite all candidates.
- **Participation:** Identify a day & time that work to achieve great turnout. Do the leg work to get great turnout. A few ideas:
 - *The Potluck Model:* Invite all candidates for all upcoming races to a meal (potluck, chilli cookoff, etc.) and provide them an opportunity to share for a few minutes.
 - *The Forum Model:* Invite candidates for a particular race to a conversation about that position. Ask questions about hunger, poverty, and the top issues of your community.
- **Additional Ideas:** Require candidates to donate to your food pantry or wear a funny hat to speak. This can help humanize them and create more conversation.



SO WHAT NOW?

As mentioned at the beginning of this guide, this is only the beginning, an introduction and starting point to advocacy. We hope to update and add to this guidebook in the months and years to follow, as we all continue to grow and learn about creating long-term and systemic change. Though as we just read, we cannot wait to have all the knowledge to begin to do something now.

We have all probably done something - we have liked a group on Facebook, we have donated to a cause we support, but now it is time to take one more step. The line below is imprecise, and at different times with different legislators, different strategies may be more or less impactful than others. Can you take one more step?



What Steps Will You Take?

RESOURCES

Contact Information:

Ohio House of Reps.	www.ohiohouse.gov	1-800-282-0253
Ohio Senate	www.ohiosenate.gov	1-800-282-0253
Ohio Governor	www.governor.ohio.gov	614-644-4357
Senator Sherrod Brown	www.brown.senate.gov	202-224-2315
Senator JD Vance	www.vance.senate.gov	202-224-3353

Faith Based Advocacy:

Hunger Network in Ohio	www.hungernetohio.com	Faith and hunger advocacy resources (Ohio)
Bread for the World	www.bread.org	Faith and hunger advocacy resources (National)
ELCA Advocacy	elca.org/advocacy	National Lutheran Advocacy Office
Faith in Public Life	www.faithinpubliclife.org	Advocacy, organizing, messaging, media, faith
MFSA	www.mfsaweb.org/	National Methodist Advocacy Office

Ohio Advocacy:

Ohio Assoc. of Foodbanks	www.ohiofoodbanks.org	Data, policy hunger resources, (Ohio)
Adv. for Ohio's Future	www.advocatesforohio.org	Nonpartisan Health and Human Services Coalition
Ohio Voice	www.ohvoice.org	Civic Engagement work in Ohio

Hunger Data:

Map the Meal Gap	map.feedingamerica.org	National data map
U.S. Dept. Agriculture	tinyurl.com/bddc45cz	Annual Data on Hunger in U.S.
Ohio Poverty Report	tinyurl.com/4fchru4n	Annual Data on Poverty in Ohio

Policy Overviews:

hungernetohio.com/policyoverviews	Food Insecurity, Housing, Criminal Justice, Immigration, Labor and the Economy, Education, Environment, Good Government, Healthcare, Discrimination
--	---

Ohio District Maps:

https://tinyurl.com/ohdis	Ohio House, Ohio Senate, and Congressional District Maps
---	--

SCAN ME



For a continuously updated list of resources, please scan the QR to the left and visit our website!



WWW.HUNGERNETOHIO.COM

LAST UPDATED: FALL 2023