



August Recess – Now is the Time

This is a critical juncture in the health reform debate, and August recess is the time when state advocates can make all the difference. In the coming weeks, we expect to hear a lot of noise from the opposition and it's up to us to counter it with positive messages. We need to let the press and public know that reform is moving forward; it is imperative for American families and essential for getting the economy on track. We need to let Congress know that we want them to return to work in September and get the job done.

What can advocates do?

- *Turn up the volume* – Make sure the voices in support of reform are heard. Hold events, call your delegation, set up meetings.
- *Show how reform will help real families* – We've provided a [guide](#) that shows the kinds of consumer stories that exemplify the need for reform that makes health care affordable. Find real people that can speak to your legislators or reporters or whose stories you can share in your own meetings.
- *Show strength in numbers* – Work with partners to write OpEds, send sign-on letters and work together to ensure that your legislators know that not only do they have the support of their constituents to pass health care reform, their constituents are demanding it.

Make sure your Representatives and Senators are getting the right message

Members of Congress have been embroiled in discussions about health care on the Hill. Now is the opportunity to tell them and show them what reform means to their constituents. The opposition is mobilizing and we need to come out in force, as well.

- *Attend public meetings* – As opposition turns out to sandbag public events, it is critical that constituents attend town hall meetings and public forums to voice their support for health care reform. Call your Members' offices for their schedule – be sure to identify yourself and your organization and let them know you want to show your support for health care reform.
- *Schedule meetings* – Organize a group that includes local health leaders, community luminaries, and clergy members as well as health care consumers that can share their stories and underscore the need for reform with your Members and his/her staff. The message should be that health reform is about real people and their voices must be heard.
- *Set up tours of health centers or hospitals* – Your Members need to connect with real people where health care is delivered. Help them understand the impact reform will have on the lives of everyday Americans.

Reaching the Public

It is essential that the public understands how health care reform will help them and to engage their support.

- *State Fair/Summer Festival Outreach* – Use summer events as an opportunity to both distribute information about the importance of health reform and collect stories as well. You can also recruit volunteers to submit Letters to the Editor in favor of health reform, and to build your existing email list and listserv subscriber rolls.
- *Media Outreach* – Look for opportunities to place OpEds, send Letters to the Editor and put real families front and center in media stories. We also need to answer the difficult questions and pivot to positive messages while insisting: health care reform is critical for American families and will help get our economy back on track. We've included an [OpEd](#) about the need for health reform and a [Letter to the Editor](#) about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's consumer confidence index. We will continue to send Letters to the Editor templates as opportunities arise.
- *Engage Partners* – Although we place a premium on public activities and media during the recess, you can use this [template sign-on letter](#), based on one sent from national organizations to Congressional leadership, to show the breadth and scope of support for health care reform. Get a lot of signers and send the letter to the press as well as to your delegation.
- *Stay on Message* – In this alert we've included messages from Community Catalyst you can use. The [Herndon Alliance](#) has also prepared talking points for August recess and has a new campaign involving doctors who support health care. [www.healhealthcarenow.org] Speaking with a unified voice and working with a variety of stakeholders will help our messages cut through the noise of the opposition.