



The National Vote at Home Institute Advocacy Toolkit

Resources:

[LTES](#): Sample of an OP/ED that you can submit to local papers here.

[NVAHI Policy Primer](#): See our policy suggestions and background information on potential policies.

[Social Media Toolkit](#): See sample social media posts and guidance on crafting effective posts.

How to Lobby:

Advocating for vote at home solutions is a crucial part of accomplishing our mutual goals of fair, accessible, safe, and equitable elections across the United States. Advocating can be focused on national or local representatives or the broader public, and can be either in person or in the digital world. There are differences but the tenants of the strategy are the same:

Preparation, relationship building, and communication.

I. Preparation

- A. Be informed about the current policy you are discussing, what you want to be changed, and any statements or stances that potential decision-makers have already taken.
- B. Talk to your community & see how your local community feels about voting by mail as a policy. This could be your friends, families, co-workers, or any local decision-makers. These conversations will help you determine what topics you might still need more information on and help you practice advocating for VBM. This will also give you an understanding of where a small sample of your community stands on the issue.
- C. Decide what is most important to you or to the movement at that moment. The National Vote at Home Institute (NVAHI) can be a helpful resource for you to determine the policy priorities that are right for your community but think about what means the most to you.
- D. Commit to being an advocate! Now you're part of the team!
- E. Determine to whom you are advocating. Assess who is in a position to make the decisions you are looking for, who is the most likely to be receptive to what you're saying, or who needs to hear your perspective the most. This will often be an appointed or elected legislator.
- F. Follow the legislators on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media that they use regularly. This will inform you of opportunities to communicate with your legislator.
- G. Follow those decision-makers on Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media that they use regularly. This will inform you of opportunities to communicate with them.

H. Choose which forms of actions are most strategic to achieve the change you're looking to make, and which forms are most aligned with your capacity. Options include:

1. Calling your legislator
2. Posting information material on social media
3. Signing a petition to express your position on an issue
4. Petitioning decision-makers in-person
5. Attending a town hall where the decision-maker will appear
6. Testifying on the impact of an issue

II. **Relationship building**

- A. Building a strong relationship with elected officials is one way to get positive outcomes. Be respectful where possible and remember that elected officials are public servants meant to represent you. You have the right to speak with them and advocate for the policy that you believe in.
- B. Get to know your local legislators. The majority of laws and processes that impact your daily life happen at the local and state levels and national laws usually build on policies that have been tested in states first. By developing relationships with your local representatives you can build an exchange that can help you advocate in the short and long term.

III. **Advocating for specific policies/legislation**

- A. Many decision-makers are not local but may come back to their district or the area of concern. Advocate while they are in your home district for some face time.
- B. Contact before legislative recess and request an in-person meeting at their local office.
- C. Call the legislator's office. You may get a meeting with the legislator or a legislative assistant; either option is very useful! Don't be discouraged if you are speaking to a staffer.
- D. Email your legislator. Be sure to include your address to show that you live in their district when applicable. **See a sample email in the messaging section below.**
- E. Handwritten communications are a nice touch but can be much slower. Since legislation is often fast-moving we encourage you to scan your letter and email it or fax it if necessary. When addressing a legislator, you can use the following format, with the address updated for local and state officials in your area:

For Senate:

The Honorable (first and last name)
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510
Dear Senator____:

For Representatives:

The Honorable (first and last name)
United States House of Representatives

Washington DC 20510
Dear Representative ____:
Town halls:

- IV. Advocating to the general public:** Moving a legislator's position is crucial, but sometimes moving the public is a key strategy to get that legislator to change. You can do so in many ways:
- A. Use social media to your advantage! Tag your community in posts to help increase your reach.
 - B. Write a letter to the editor (or "LTE") and send it to your local newspaper. Your local paper and other online publications are looking for people like you to submit their opinions on issues that affect the public. You can use this LTE template to advocate for vote at home policies in your state: [LTE](#)
 - C. Town halls are a great opportunity to speak to your representatives directly in an accountable format. Plan to attend any public town halls and come prepared with a succinct question and sign up to speak early.
- V. Tips for an in-person meeting**
- A. If you are going to advocate in person, recruit like-minded advocates to build a delegation and make a plan for speaking during the meeting.
 - B. Introduce your delegation and express personal connections to vote at home in your local area.
 - C. Be brief and concise.
 - D. Express and describe local support that exists for the issue.
 - E. Make a specific request with a specific action you would like taken.
 - F. Plan for time for the representative to respond and talk. This is a conversation, not a presentation.
 - G. If they agree with you:
 - 1. Thank the legislator. Many communications with a representative are negative so showing thanks is a crucial part of winning them over.
 - 2. Make yourself as accessible as you feel comfortable as a resource or a representative of the policy position.
 - H. If they disagree with you:
 - 1. Be respectful while firm. Focus on areas of commonality and why this is important to the local community.
 - 2. Stay on topic. If the representative disagrees they may try to shift to another issue. Communicate concerns clearly and bring them back to the issue at hand when necessary.
 - I. You may not have time to discuss your full position so be sure to have comprehensive materials that you plan to leave behind. You can work with NVAHI to develop these materials.

How to Advocate for Vote by Mail

NVAHI Specific lobbying:

VI. NVAHI MESSAGING GUIDELINES (replace with Lucille's doc)

A. Messaging Talking Points

1. Our elections have withstood their greatest challenge to date, but **there is more to be done** to make sure our democracy continues to fulfill its promise to voters no matter how or where voters choose to cast their ballots. While election officials have long made do with archaic policies and low budgets, it's time to build more efficient, more resilient elections using time-tested vote at home systems across the country. By giving election officials the resources they need & giving voters the policies they deserve, we can make American elections more:
 - a) **Accessible**
 - b) **Secure**
 - c) **Equitable**
 - d) **Fair**
 - e) **Transparent**

B. Key Guidance

1. Voting by mail is here to stay because **voters have demanded it**. In 2020 voting by mail was the most popular method of participation for the first time in history.
2. Strong mail ballot policy allows states and local jurisdictions to meet the needs of voters in **efficient and ultimately, cost-effective**, ways.
3. Vote at home systems are **both accessible and secure** when put into practice alongside strong voter-centric policies.

Sample email

Dear {{FirstName}},

After a historic election in 2020, our friends at the National Vote at Home Institute have released a set of policy recommendations for states to ensure that voters can continue to vote the way they want to.

[Read more about their policy recommendations here.](#)

Despite record disinformation attempting to confuse voters, Americans showed up in record numbers. This was in no small part because election officials across the country stepped up to serve their communities in unprecedented circumstances. Now we have a clear path forward that will guide us to make our elections more transparent and accessible.

Some of the National Vote At Home Institute's policy recommendations include:

- No-excuse absentee ballots

- Ballot tracking
- Pre-paid postage on ballots
- Allowing election officials to process ballots in advance of election day
- Clear timelines for voters to return ballots

[Read more about these policies on the National Vote at Home Website.](#)

As states begin to reform election policies, legislators must adopt best practices that we know work. In 2021, let's work together and put voters first.