

August 2014 RESULTS U.S. Poverty Conference Summary

The slides, recording, and summary will be posted at:
https://www.results.org/skills_center/results_national_conference_calls/.

Introduction – Dr. Joanne Carter, RESULTS Executive Director (Washington, DC)

Welcome everyone to the RESULTS August 2014 conference call focused on US poverty. Welcome especially to new folks who are joining us for the first time—we are so glad to have you join us!

Just a reminder to everyone that you can download a set of Power Point slides to accompany this call by going to the TAKE ACTION box on the top right hand corner of the RESULTS homepage.

I want to start by saying thank you for all of your work to get face-to-face meetings this month with your Representatives and Senators. There is literally nothing you can do that will have more direct impact on your members of Congress and on our agenda than meeting face-to-face in the district this month. We've heard over and over from members of Congress and their staff that meeting members FTF as constituents is the most powerful way to influence them. And if you haven't gotten a meeting confirmed yet—keep asking because persistence will pay off. But also think who else in your community you might include in the meeting request who might help get the meeting and make it more powerful. I am always surprised that many influential folks who have access to MoCs aren't necessarily taking the opportunity to use that access and want to make a difference when asked.

And the strategy we'll be working on today: getting to town hall meetings with your member of congress or candidate forums--is also a powerful way to have your voice and our issues heard by your MoC and others in your community. You'll hear many great tips and strategies but one more from me—if you get to a town hall and can ask a question or get in a line to shake hands, in addition to your request on the issues, ask for a face to face meeting to follow-up. A MoC will almost always say yes and then you have them on the record agreeing to a meeting.

This August recess pre-election is a critical time to keep up the momentum on our issues, building on your advocacy all year and our recent conference and Hill Lobby day in Washington DC. And it's particularly important because these issues have been prominently on the Congressional agenda, from the recent CTC bill that the House passed to Congressman Paul Ryan's very problematic Poverty Plan. This is a key moment to talk about these issues and ensure that the priority of protecting and expanding tax credits for low-income people gets attention, along with innovative strategies to help families build assets.

And Congress is expected to address expiring tax loopholes after the November elections, so we need to ensure the right priorities have political support and get considered during these negotiations. So thank you for your persistence getting meetings and getting to town halls this month.

I am now going to ask our board chair, Dr. Scott Leckman to announce our newly elected grassroots board members.

Announcement of New Grassroots Board Member – Dr. Scott Leckman, RESULTS Board Chair (Salt Lake City, UT)

- Thank you to outgoing Board members Ginnie Vogts and Heide Craig for their invaluable and tireless service on the Board
- Congratulations to Vanessa Garcia of RESULTS Orange County (U.S. Poverty) and Cindy Changyit Levin of RESULTS St. Louis (Global Poverty) for their election as our newest Grassroots Board Members

Overview Call Agenda – Joanne Carter

I want to echo a huge thank you and debt of gratitude to Ginnie Vogts for her leadership on the board and the incredibly valuable perspective on U.S. poverty issues, inclusion, and the priority of grassroots to the board. And thank you to all those who ran for the grassroots board—they were all fantastic candidates and we are so pleased to have Vanessa Garcia and Cindy Levin joining the board!

On today's call you'll:

- Get a legislative update from Kayla Kitson our US poverty Intern
- Here from a wonderful guest speaker Tom La Pointe who has experience as a legislator, in Human Services agency, as an advocate and political consultant. And we'll get to benefit from his perspective and experience.
- Then training on how to be effective in town hall meetings
- Some great shares from you
- And a Roll Call focusing on your ambitious plans for meetings you're your members and town hall events

I'll turn the call over to Kayla Kitson

Legislative Update – Kayla Kitson, U.S. Poverty Intern (Washington, DC)

Child Tax Credit

- House passed H.R. 4935 with a vote of 273-137 (25 Dems voted for the bill)
- We opposed bill because it permanently extends the CTC for higher-income households while allowing a key provision benefitting low-income households to expire. As a result, families earning between \$150,000 and \$205,000 would be able to receive the credit, but a single parent with 2 children working full-time at a minimum wage job would lose the entire credit (worth \$1,725) after 2017, unless the provision affecting low-income families was extended.
- The bill also would take the credit away from around 5 million children in immigrant families, including 4 million U.S. citizens, by requiring the taxpayer to have a Social Security Number to claim the credit.
- Additionally, the bill doesn't include an offset to fund the \$90 billion over 10 years that the bill is estimated to cost.
- If you haven't already, check to see how your Representative voted and thank him or her for voting against the bill or express your disappointment if he/she voted for it.
- The Senate is not expected to take up this bill, but Congress is expected to address expiring tax loopholes after the November elections, and your advocacy on H.R. 4935 sends the message to policymakers about the priorities that should be considered during these negotiations.

Paul Ryan's Poverty Plan

- Rep. Ryan released a plan to address poverty on July 24 titled "Expanding Opportunity in America"
- Major elements of plan that we are concerned with:
- Consolidation of 11 programs into a block grant or "Opportunity Grant", includes Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care assistance, housing assistance. This would mean that SNAP, which is currently an entitlement program, would no longer be guaranteed to assist everyone who is eligible, and wouldn't be able to respond to changes in the economy that result in more people in need. It would also make all these programs more vulnerable to funding cuts over time. Finally, since the Opportunity Grant proposal doesn't include any new resources, any increase in services for some households would result in a decrease in services for others.
- Convert Head Start into a block grant: Head Start already serves less than half of eligible children. Block granting it would make it susceptible to funding cuts, making it available for even fewer eligible kids.
- Expand the EITC for childless workers: Ryan's plan would double the maximum EITC for this group and make it available for adults starting at age 21. While we support both of these reforms, Ryan proposes to pay for this expansion by making the CTC unavailable for many immigrant families (similar to the provision in H.R. 4935) and by eliminating the Social Services Block Grant and some child nutrition programs.

Guest Speaker – Tom LaPointe, former Maine Legislator and Iowa Director of Every Child Matters (Des Moines, IA)

Introduction

Tom LaPointe is a former Maine Legislator, public affairs officer of the Maine Department of Human Services, political consultant and a former staffer of Every Child Matters, national children's advocacy group. Over the years, has advised public and private clients as to the "How-To's" of moving an issue in the media and meeting with elected officials. He currently resides in Des Moines, Iowa where attends to his sunflowers daily and meets with his state representative routinely, he embraces the simple fact there is a relationship between the care and feeding of sun flowers and working with elected officials.

Questions

Q: *You also spent time as a legislator in Maine. As a lawmaker, what kind of advocacy techniques used by your constituents did you find most effective in influencing your position on an issue?*

A: As was discussed at the beginning of the call, one-on-one meetings are incredibly effective. That ability to have a conversation is so important. Also, random encounters, like running into your legislator at the local supermarket (which does happen) can provide an opportunity to raise issues. Be prepared for those instances.

Q: *As the Director of Every Child Matters in Iowa, you worked a lot at getting people to attend town halls and candidate forums to talk about issues related to the well-being of America's children. Can you share a story where your so-called "bird-dogging" paid off, i.e. it helped move your issue agenda forward?*

A: In 2007, during lead up to presidential caucuses in Iowa in 2008, the Farm Bill was up for reauthorization. We were involved at an issue forum hosted by the Iowa United Methodist Conference that included many other religious organizations as well. I worked with Jos to get Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) to meet with leaders of the Catholic and Methodist Churches at the conference, to urge Sen. Harkin to push for an increase in SNAP benefits as part of the Farm Bill. Jos even coached the Bishop of the UMC on the issue by teaching him a laser talk RESULTS was using to get that increase. The Bishop and others had lunch with Sen. Harkin at the event and he said he would push for the increase in Farm Bill negotiations, and that increase did become a part of the 2008 Farm Bill.

On the flip side, I went to a town hall meeting with Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) in Afton, IA leading up to the Affordable Care Act to try to talk to him. It was so crowded and packed with people, and he was so surrounded and protected by his people, that I couldn't get close to Senator Grassley. In those situations, you have to find other ways to get your message to them.

Q: *Because of the nature of town halls, not everyone gets to ask a question during the formal Q&A. What strategies can we use to still get our issues noticed or addressed at these events?*

A: Situational awareness is key. Be prepared to take advantage of other avenues of exchange at these events. Look for staffers at the event and get your info to them or ask if you can speak to official on the way to the car. Also, come with multiple packets of information and distribute them to members of the press. Maybe you can get some coverage of your issues that way, even if it wasn't discussed in the town hall itself.

Q: *Is there a way that we can anticipate what might occur in Senate this fall by reaching out to Republican offices?*

A: RESULTS members can try to counteract the effects of powerful Republican campaign ads and influence by using media. Your training and ability to get letters to the editor published can be very effective in talking about the issues and influencing independent voters.

Q: *What are good strategies when a town hall is full of supporters of the member of Congress/candidate that will cheer everything he/she says, even if it is contrary to your own position?*

A: Sometimes it can be difficult to get your message through when you are facing what seems like a "hostile" audience. So, again, use your situational awareness. Find out where official's car is parked and go there, stake out a spot and then when he/she comes out, have a private conversation with them about your issues. Another thing you can do is phrase your question at the event in a way that preempts that kind of response you don't want from the audience.

Q: *Jos has heard how you used an event with Wesley Clark to get your issue out there, can you share that?*

A: In 2003 in the lead up to the Iowa caucuses, my staff and I here were tracking all the presidential candidates and we heard that Gen. Wesley Clark was going to be at the Drake Diner (local restaurant in Des Moines). I said "let's go see if we can talk to him." I caught him in the parking lot and told him I'd love for him to talk about kids issues in an event he was doing later that night in Ft. Dodge, IA. He asked me to ride with him in his car to discuss it. I told I couldn't but that I would give him a briefing packet of materials before the event and asked him

to look for a person wearing one of our Every Child Matters t-shirts who would ask a question about this issue (we had arranged with Sen. Harkin, who was hosting the event, to get her called on). At the event, I gave his staff the briefing packet and did a very brief overview of the issue for the General before the event started. Then during the event itself, our person got called on and the General gave his answer using some of the very talking points we had given him. It was a great way for us to get our issues out there.

Follow Up from Lobby Meetings – Jos Linn, Grassroots Manager for U.S. Poverty Campaigns (Des Moines, IA)

- Please keep following up with your House and Senate offices after your recent lobby meetings.
- Follow up is more than just a “thank you” for meeting.
- Remind them of your request and check on status of it.
 - Have they spoken to tax leaders about the EITC, CTC, and FSC?
 - Have they co-sponsored:
 - [H.R. 769](#) (current co-sponsor [list](#))
 - [H.R. 2116](#) (current co-sponsor [list](#))
 - [H.R. 2917](#) (current co-sponsor [list](#))
 - [S. 836?](#) (current co-sponsor [list](#))

Jos’ Story

I had been working with Rep. Bruce Braley’s office to co-sponsor H.R. 2116 and H.R.2917. He is not my rep but he generally supports our issues and we have a group in his district. We met with his tax aide in DC and asked her to urge him to co-sponsor those bills (he had already signed onto H.R.769). I followed up with her after the conference and reiterated my request and also urged him to vote no on H.R.4935, the bad CTC bill.

I didn’t hear anything back until the day of the vote on H.R.4935. She left me a message asking her to call. I knew she was calling to tell me he was going to vote for it. I saw that he did and called her back. She wasn’t there so I left a message saying that I was disappointed that he voted for the bill and ran through the reasons. I then told her that if he says he supports working families and is willing to support the bad CTC bill, surely he can co-sponsor the EITC and Financial Security Credit bill. I got an e-mail the next week saying he had signed onto both bills.

Persistent follow-up and using new information can pay off.

August Action – Jos Linn

- Keep pushing for face-to-face meetings this month.
 - Congress on recess until September 5.
- Sit-down meetings should be your goal so follow-up with schedulers about getting meetings this month.
- Also ask about town halls and public events
- Town halls give you the opportunity to address the issue in a public place and get member of Congress/candidate “on the record.”
- Educate members of your community about your issue.
- Find tips and resources in the August Action:
http://www.results.org/take_action/august_2014_u.s._poverty_action/.
- Find sample town hall questions at: http://www.results.org/take_action/u.s._poverty_town_hall_questions/.

August Advocacy Training: “Birddogging” – Kristy Martino, U.S. Poverty Organizer (Kittery Point, ME)

Bird-dogging: Make the most out of town halls

Town halls and public events are opportunities for BIG WINS.

So-called “birdogging” is asking pointed questions of members of Congress (MoCs) and candidates to see where they stand on the issues and getting that info out into the public.

Your goal is to shine a light on issues of poverty and hopefully get the MoC or candidate to take a stand.

How do you make the most of a town hall meeting?

FIND AN EVENT

- MoC websites
- Newsletters and newspapers
- Social media
- Office schedulers
- Find MoC websites and contact info at: <http://capwiz.com/results/dbq/officials/>

PREPARE YOURSELF

- Research the position of your members of Congress on our issues (find votes and co-sponsorship info at <http://capwiz.com/results/dbq/officials/>; check out their websites)
- Get a feel for the location and audience for the event

GET A POSSE

- Go in a group if possible to increase the chance of one of you getting called on for a question
- Sit separately
- Designate someone to take notes

BE STRATEGIC

- Arrive early and sit where you can be seen
- Wear conspicuous but not political clothing
- Get your hand up FIRST, FAST, and HIGH

HAVE A BACKUP PLAN in case you don't get a question asked

- Stand in the handshake line and get a photo
- See out the media and talk about issues highlighted or not highlighted
- Find staff and ask for meeting; give them the [lobby requests](#)

SHARE, SHARE, SHARE: Write about your experience, inform your network, spread photos and info via social media, engage with the media, and don't keep it to yourself!

What are the Ingredients of a Good Town Hall Question?

- Short, concise but be sure to include information about the issue and your answer you seek in the question (use the [EPIC Laser Talk format](#))
- Make sure your request is specific and has a clear YES or NO

When you get a face-to-face meeting scheduled or plan to attend an event, please contact Meredith Dodson (dodson@results.org) or Jos Linn (jlinn@results.org) to help you prepare.

Challenge Yourself to Make a Difference!

Will everyone in your group commit to attending at least three town halls/public events this month?

Don't limit your town hall appearances to just your specific representative and senators. Attend events in neighboring districts and events held by election candidates. The more people who hear your message, the better!

Additional Resources:

- August Action: http://www.results.org/take_action/august_2014_u.s._poverty_action/
- Town Hall Activist Milestone: http://www.results.org/skills_center/milestone_11/
- Lobby Materials and Resources: <http://tinyurl.com/2014RIC>
- Sample Town Hall Questions: http://www.results.org/take_action/u.s._poverty_town_hall_questions/

Shares – Jos Linn

Ginnie Vogts of RESULTS Columbus

Ohio is a state that went from mostly Democratic districts to mostly Republican districts in 2010. I understand why it's important for RESULTS to be non-partisan and for volunteers to develop and cultivate relationships with elected officials from both parties. Right now my central OH group covers three districts, two of which are Republican. We visited nine of the 16 Ohio offices in June at the International Conference. As always, we're requesting face-to-face meetings during the August recess and have one scheduled for this coming Monday.

Last week, I actually got a call from Congressman Patrick Tiberi. Who represents the 12th Congressional District in OH and sits on the very important House Ways and Means Committee, which deals with taxes. He was calling to explain that he couldn't meet with us this month because we'd met with him several times before and he was reserving his meeting times for new constituents. But he was willing to speak on the phone and discuss the issues we care about. We ended up talking for almost twenty minutes, mostly about various tax issues. I mentioned the EITC and Child Tax Credit, which are not new to him. In the past, he has assured me that he is in favor of EITC and CTC and they are not going away. However, he has not voted to make the 2009 improvements that we support permanent. I don't think any Republican has. He went out of his way to explain that he does care about poverty but he believes poverty will be resolved through jobs and education. He also told me about his work helping businesses create more jobs through tax credits, and the programs he has worked on for homeless veterans. He said right now, their attention was on the 50 or so business tax credits that have or will expire soon and that the EITC and CTC improvements three years from now seem like eons away.

I tried to listen and have an open mind. I acknowledged his work and gave him credit for what he has done. I tried to find common ground, realizing that our world views might not be similar. When he said a \$25,000 research and development tax credit was not nearly enough to help companies expand, I said that millions of families live on less than that for a whole year. When he said he wanted to improve the EITC so it wouldn't come in a lump sum and be blown all at once, I found myself listing the things people "blow" their EITC on like rent and school clothes and tires and medical bills. We also talked about HR 4935, the bad CTC bill Kayla mentioned at the start of the call. He voted for it but when I pointed out that it expanded the CTC to wealthy families but would eliminate it for 4.5 million children who are U.S. citizens, he was astonished. He asked me to send him information about this and I have. It puzzles me to think that a Member of Congress would vote for a bill yet be so in the dark about it. But I was grateful to be in a position to educate him and provide him the facts, which RESULTS provided me.

I also brought up the Financial Security Credit, and he asked me to send him more information when the Senate version of the bill came out.

After circling around all these topics, it was apparent that we see things through different lenses. I was becoming discouraged about not finding the common ground that I always hope for. So I said to myself "what the heck" and went all in. I asked him to be the voice for struggling families in his party, families who have no one to turn to, who often feel hopeless working full-time but still living in poverty. I asked him to find a way to work for them that really helps. What did I have to lose? Mr. Tiberi comes from a family of humble beginnings, a fact he often references. He was on free and reduced lunches as a kid in Columbus schools. I don't know if he'll take up my challenge, but maybe he'll think of that as he reads the material I sent and he thinks about what will happen to EITC and CTC families after 2017. Maybe I'm a dreamer but at least I had a chance to have this conversation. I'm glad of that. A step, even if it's a baby one, is still a step.

Roll Call – Scott Smith, RESULTS San Diego

Hi, this is Daria Flores from the San Diego group. I'm please to do this month's Roll Call. Here are the questions we want you to answer this month:

1. **How many people are in the room?**
2. **How many face-to-face meetings will your group try to schedule this month?**

3. How many town hall events will your group try to attend this month?

We had 61 people on today's call, who will schedule 52 face-to-face meetings and attend 45 town halls events this month. Way to go and good luck!

Announcements – Myrdin Thompson, U.S. Poverty Organizer (Louisville, KY)

Hi, this is Myrdin Thompson, RESULTS Organizer from Louisville, KY. Now let's do the final announcements.

- **Please fill out the Lobby Report Form.** Tell us how your lobby meetings went at www.tinyurl.com/lobbyreportform.
- **Learn how to Tweet this summer!** The Media support group wants to help you use Twitter to advocate for the end of poverty. They have materials to show you how. Tune into next Tuesday's Weekly Update for details. Note that there is no Media support call this month; the regular Media support call will resume in September.
- Beginning next week, RESULTS founder Sam Daley-Harris will be hosting a three-week book discussion of [Reclaiming Our Democracy](#), his book about the founding of RESULTS which is celebrating the 20th Anniversary of its release. If you're ready to be inspired (or re-inspired) about your work with RESULTS, join the discussion. The series will be held **August 13, 20, and 27 at 9:00 pm ET**. To participate in the series, go to the [registration page](#) linked to in today's slides or in our Weekly Updates.
- Beginning next week, check out the [RESULTS Blog's four-week series on getting face-to-face meetings with members of Congress](#). Learn why these meetings are so important and helpful tips for getting them.
- Join the **RESULTS Introductory Call** next Wednesday, August 13 at 9:00 pm ET. Register at www.tinyurl.com/RESULTSMeetandGreet/.
- The next **RESULTS U.S. Poverty Free Agents Calls** are Tuesday, August 19 at 1:00 pm and 9:00 pm ET. To join, dial (857) 232-0476, passcode 703096 (*note the new number*).
- Find a full list of upcoming events on the [RESULTS Events Calendar](#).
- Thank you for being on the call today. The next RESULTS National Conference Call is **Saturday, September 13 at 12:30pm ET**.
- Finally, yesterday was the last day for our U.S. Poverty Intern Kayla Kitson and a few weeks ago, our other intern Jay Carroll ended his internship with us. Both Kayla and Jay were wonderful in helping us this spring and summer. In particular, they did a lot of work preparing the materials many of you used at this year's International Conference. They both displayed a passion and professionalism for this work and we deeply thank them for their invaluable service. We wish them both the best of luck going forward. So operator, please open up all the lines so we can say a hearty thank you and good luck to both Kayla and Jay!