

# National Webinar Summary

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## Welcome

Joanne Carter, Executive Director, RESULTS and RESULTS Educational Fund  
(Washington, DC)

It's great to hear you connecting. Welcome everyone to our August webinar focused on tackling U.S. Poverty. If there's one thing I want to get across today it's the extraordinary importance of the work you've been doing to meet with your members of Congress and candidates during this long summer recess. Thank you for pushing to get those face-to-face (FTF) meetings and for using town halls to raise issues with your members of Congress and candidates and build connections with their staff.

Often we are trying to influence an agenda for right after Congress comes back from summer recess. But in this election year, when you meet with your members and when you raise issues in town halls, this is determining what they see as constituent priorities going into the election and literally helping set the agenda for the new Congress and a new administration.

We know from surveys of Congressional staff that they say the single biggest influence on their bosses is a FTF meeting with constituents. That impact is magnified in an election year and we can use that to help shape an agenda AND ALSO to get candidates ***on the record*** in support of issues we care about **and** committing **not** to do things that would harm critical programs that we know work—like SNAP.

I could cite many great examples of the work you're doing this summer to get FTF you're your members of Congress and candidates. Later in the call you'll hear from Expert on Poverty Kimberly Trigg of Kansas on how she's used town halls to build a relationship with her members of Congress. One really powerful example I want to give a shout out to is RESULTS Evansville for their recent face-to-face with their Rep Larry Buschon. They first met with him nearly two years ago, and then had tried to get a meeting again for the last 18 months, but with no luck.

So — I LOVE THIS — Kevin Pearson decided that he was just going to walk into Congressman Buschon's Evansville office and ask for a meeting. Earlier this summer, he did just that. And he got one! They met with Rep. Buschon on July 29 for 30 minutes and talked about the EITC and Paul Ryan's poverty plan. I understand that the meeting went really well and they've offered themselves and a local service organization as resources to the Congressman. Persistence, boldness, focus on issues that matter in a way the congressman could hear, and commitment to building a relationship.

Our call today is set up to support you in your outreach to your members of Congress especially now during the recess BUT also ongoingly between now and the election.

- We have a wonderful guest speaker: Richelle Friedman of Coalition on Human Needs and Nuns on the Bus—who brings deep knowledge and commitment on issues of tackling economic inequality and creating systemic change to improve the economic reality of low-income families; and lots of experience of engaging candidate and communities on these issues
- Then our own great Kristy Martino will overview our monthly action
- You'll hear from Expert on Poverty Kimberly Trigg on how she has used town halls to build a relationship with her members of Congress
- Jos Linn will lead us in a training of drafting questions for town hall events

Before I turn the call over to Jos Linn, I want to take a moment to thank everyone who participated in our spring/summer friends and family fundraising campaign—reaching out to hundreds of friends and family to donate and donating generously yourselves.

We set a goal of raising \$50K and we not only made that goal we exceeded it! Together 50 grassroots partners raised and donated a total of \$42,000. This made it possible for us to unlock the generous \$15,000 matching gift. So all told, we raised over \$57,000.

These funds are critical for our domestic campaigns and will support the work you all do as volunteer advocates--specifically, they help fund the great domestic grassroots team, along with our efforts to expand to all 50 states and start new groups in key congressional districts.

So please join me in thanking everyone who participated and we'll also have another friends and family opportunity later this fall leading up to Thanksgiving. Thanks for all you do.

Go get them at these town halls!! Now I'll turn the call over to our fantastic grassroots manager, Jos Linn

## **Guest Speaker – Richelle Friedman of the Coalition on Human Needs and Nuns on the Bus**

Facilitated by Jos Linn

### **Bio of Richelle Friedman**

Richelle Friedman, PBVM, joined the Coalition on Human Needs as director of public policy in April, 2006. Richelle has over 20 years of legislative experience on a wide range of issues with the goal of strengthening the economic reality of low-income families. Before coming to CHN, Friedman worked at the Children's Defense Fund, McAuley Institute and NETWORK as a policy analyst and lobbyist. Prior to coming to DC, she was a junior high and secondary school teacher. Richelle has a bachelor's degree from Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa and a master's degree from Loyola University in Chicago.

1. **Can you briefly explain what “Nuns on the Bus” is all about and what your most recent tour was focused on?**
  - History of Nuns on the Bus

- 2012 – To confront Paul Ryan’s House budgets (he was chair of the Budget Committee) – cut Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP... This was before he was VP nominee. Midwest and rustbelt states
- 2013 – Immigration tour – pressing for comprehensive immigration reform...from Ellis Island to San Francisco
- 2014 – Your Voice; Your Vote encouraging people to vote
- 2015 – Listening tour that included Bible belt states like MO, KS, AK, TN...
- 2016 – Mend the Gaps tour highlighting the economic gaps and access gaps
- The 2016, 19-day trip included 14 states – WI, IL, MO, IN, OH, PA, NY, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT NJ, PA and over 20 cities. Sr. Simone Campbell was the only Sister on the entire trip. Eight Sisters accompanied here the 1st half and 8 others the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. I joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> half in NH. (I participated in parts of 4 of the trips – all but the one on immigration.)
- Focus on this most recent tour is to “[Mend the Gaps](#)”
  - **Mending the Wealth and Income Gap:** Tax Justice, Living Wages, Family-Friendly Workplaces
  - **Mending the Access Gaps:** Access to Democracy, Healthcare, Citizenship, Housing

## 2. What are some of the activities you have done on this tour and what has the response been?

- Standard Bus Activities: Rallies, Site Visits, Caucuses
- Rally in Boston
  - Darius and Rita talked about the Fight for \$15; both had multiple jobs and declared, “We deserve better than working 3-4 jobs and not seeing our kids.”
  - Other issues that speakers addressed at rallies included – racism; high cost of child care inhibiting the ability to afford to work; wage theft; desire for path to citizenship; need for living wages.
- Also did site visits. For example, we did a site visit to McAuley Village in Providence, RI sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy – transitional housing, job skills, parenting, food pantry, and thrift store to obtain clothes and household items.
  - Of all of the sites we visited I was impressed with the commitment of staff and their respect for the clients they served. I was also struck by the gratitude of the clients for the opportunities they received. Sr. Joan, some consider her the ‘Mother Theresa of Providence’.
  - Another site we visited was Integrity House in Newark, NJ. This is an over 400-bed residential addiction treatment center, the largest in the state. The

caring, family-like environment there was amazing, especially given the size of the program. Wherever we went people loved signing the bus. The men at Integrity House were particularly excited to sign near Newark on the map.

- The caucuses included self-selected table discussions about one of the 'gap' issues. Each of us Sisters did a short briefing to her tables on her 'gap issue'. Mine was healthcare. After talking about changes needed to mend the gap, the table was asked to say how life would change for people in their area of the changes were enacted. The result was that the caucuses ended with a sense of hope.
- In every one of the 9-10 healthcare table discussions I participated in, the conclusion reached was that we need a single-payer healthcare system.
- During the large group report backs some great ideas surfaced. One of the things I noted was that although military spending isn't a gap issue, every place we were it surfaced and every time people said that we are spending too much on the military and we need to spend more on human needs and things like infrastructure.
- People were asked to sign pledge cards agreeing to work toward mending the gaps. These cards will be presented in January to the Senators from the states they were generated. They will be challenged to pledge to work on legislation to mend the gaps.

**3. We know that the Nuns on the Bus are trying to raise awareness of important issue facing vulnerable Americans. As part of CHN, you also do a lot of lobbying on Capitol Hill on issues related to poverty. Our volunteers are focused on getting face-to-face meetings and attending town halls this month. Can you explain how the work of volunteers back home impact the work you do with congressional offices in DC?**

- What members of staff hear from us in DC is much less than what they are hearing from constituents. Much more important to hear from people like RESULTS volunteers back home.
- I know that RESULTS has focused a lot on refundable tax credits. I want you to know that currently low-income advocates in DC are meeting tax staff in Senate offices encouraging them to expand the EITC for non-custodial low-income workers, the only group that is taxed into poverty. That includes parents with custody of their children, low-income workers without children including older workers nearing retirement...i.e. the near-retirement age greeters at Walmart.
- We did a meeting with the staff of Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT). The staff person told us that the information on the EITC is great and his boss will sit up and pay attention when he hears from people in my state that this is an important issue to them. One example why the work of RESULTS is so important. It matters a lot.

**4. What actions do you see as important for advocates to do in the run up to and after the November election to move issue of poverty to the top of the priority list?**

- Congress will be working on appropriations in September. None of the individual appropriations bills have been passed yet (must be passed by September 30). Congress likely to pass a continuing resolution so they can keep the government running through the election and into December.
- Need to make sure that we continue the message that Congress needs to adequately fund human needs programs (part of the non-defense discretionary budget (NDD)). Last year, advocates told Congress that if they tried to increase defense spending, it was imperative that the same increase be made in NDD spending was also included. We need to keep that message up, especially when it concerns programs that help low-income individuals and families.
- Another thing Congress will do is put in riders to bill (bad language) and we are concerned that they might put riders in the continuing resolution that would weaken the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), which tries to protect consumers from predatory lending, among other things. In addition to telling Congress to fund anti-poverty programs, we need to tell them to not include riders which would undermine these programs and protections as well.

**5. Bruce Kessler from RESULTS South Central PA: Are there some Republicans showing interest in the EITC for childless workers?**

- Typically, the EITC has been a bipartisan issue. Last December, one of the big, big victories was making the EITC and CTC provisions permanent. It was bipartisan agreement (they were business tax provisions in it as well). Paul Ryan has spoken about needing to do more for childless workers. If your members of Congress are Republicans, tell them how important this issue is to you. Also share the [state-by-state EITC fact sheets](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities about how many workers would be impacted in your state.

**6. Dave Fleming of RESULTS Houston: I've read about the relative value of giving money back to families through things like the EITC v. investing in education. How much debate is going on about the value of investing in education over the long term v. more immediate resources through the tax credits?**

- When advocates go into meetings, we never try to tell lawmakers that this pot of money is more important than that one. We don't want for these important programs to have to compete with each other. For EITC and SNAP, we tell them that low-income people need to spend their money on basic necessities and that's good for business, which is why small business alliance is active on issue like SNAP and EITC.
- On education, programs like SNAP and school lunches are critical in helping children learn. They can't learn if they don't eat. We also believe in programs like Early Head Start, which has been proven very effective. Some who oppose these programs talk about how over time, the effectiveness of Head Start phases out.

However, if you look further out, at children in 8th grade, you find that the phase-out argument is not really true; these programs are effective and continue to be over time.

- We strongly support investments in education and early childhood education, as well as programs like SNAP and EITC.

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7. **What do you tell members of Congress as background on the wealth gap or do you assume they already know about it?**

- They generally already know but when we talk about how the wealth gap has increased (via groups like [Citizens for Tax Justice](#)), and a lot of it has increased b/c corporations and wealthy people not paying their fair share (see the fact that Donald Trump doesn't want to release his taxes). It used to be that a CEO made 25 times more than the media worker, but it is 400 times. So we use this information to make that point. The issue is well understood but it's good to have those facts with you to back it up.

## Overview of August Action

Kristy Martina, U.S. Poverty Organizer (Kittery Point, ME)

- We're still focusing our work on the issues we pushed at the Conference: expanding the EITC for childless workers, educating members of Congress on reducing the racial wealth gap, and protecting SNAP
- Congress continues its long recess, which will last until Labor Day
- We want to get face-to-face meetings during this recess to really push these issues hard
- While we are talking a lot about town halls and candidate events, please remember that you should be pursuing public events *and* face-to-face meetings. Don't see it as an either/or – each presents unique and important opportunities.
  - You want as many contacts with lawmakers and candidates as you can get – the more they hear from you, the higher profile you make the issue
  - Town halls and events: allows you to educate your community in an issue and possibly get an MoC or candidate to make a public commitment on it
  - Face-to-face: allows you to build the relationship with the lawmaker or candidate and delve deeper into the issues. Face-to-face meetings will be especially helpful on our wealth gap work, since many lawmakers are not focused on this issue, especially the racial wealth gap. Sitting down to talk to them gives you the time to explore and educate them on this issue that a town hall format does not provide.
- If you need help with setting up face-to-face meetings this month, review the [July Action](#) for tips or contact Jos Linn for assistance ([jlinn@results.org](mailto:jlinn@results.org))

- As for town halls and candidate events, the [August Action](#) has helpful tips to find and preparing for them, which you can see in slides 11-12. Remember to check congressional and candidate websites or call their offices to ask about events. In addition, if RESULTS staff find out about an event in your area, we'll let you know. The Action even has sample questions to ask if you're not sure what to say, which Jos will talk about later.
- Also, if you are new to town halls or need a refresher on how to work them effectively, please plan to attend our **Candidate Engagement Training** webinar this coming **Tuesday, August 16 at 9:00pm ET**. It'll be quite helpful. You can find the login info on slide 13 and in Tuesday's Weekly Update.

Before we go to our training for this month, we want to hear from one of our Experts on Poverty, Kimberly Trigg, of RESULTS Salina, KS. Many of you heard Kimberly speak at the 2016 RESULTS International Conference, so you know that she is not only an expert on poverty, but an expert on attending town halls. She is going to share a little of her story today and how she's used town halls to build a relationship with her local member of Congress.

### August Action Resources

- **RESULTS August U.S. Poverty Action** (town halls and candidate events): [http://www.results.org/take\\_action/august\\_2016\\_u.s.\\_poverty\\_action/](http://www.results.org/take_action/august_2016_u.s._poverty_action/)
- **RESULTS July U.S. Poverty Action** (face-to-face meetings): [http://www.results.org/take\\_action/august\\_2016\\_u.s.\\_poverty\\_action/](http://www.results.org/take_action/august_2016_u.s._poverty_action/)
- **Sample Meeting Request:** [http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=7268106&MC\\_plugin=2201](http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=7268106&MC_plugin=2201)
- **RESULTS 2016 Lobby Requests:**
  - [Expanding the EITC](#)
  - [Reducing the Wealth Gap](#)
  - [Protecting SNAP](#)
- **CBPP EITC State Face Sheets:** <http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/state-face-sheets-the-earned-income-and-child-tax-credits>

### OTHER ONLINE ACTIONS

- **EITC Letter to the Editor:** [http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=59692501&MC\\_plugin=2201](http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=59692501&MC_plugin=2201)
- **SNAP Letter to the Editor:** [http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=64248626&MC\\_plugin=2201](http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=64248626&MC_plugin=2201)
- **Online EITC E-mail Alert:** [http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=9823986&MC\\_plugin=2201](http://capwiz.com/results/issues/alert/?alertid=9823986&MC_plugin=2201)

## Expert on Poverty Share – Kimberly Trigg

2016-17 Expert on Poverty Mentor from Salina, KS

- Moved to Kansas 10 years ago to change life style. Encouraged by my DCF worker to apply for a new program called Circles a program to end poverty by building relationships and environments that empower families and communities to thrive.
- It was at Circle that I met JoAnn Dimmitt, whom had was the current RESULTS Group leader. After two years participating in the group Joann asked if I would like to be group leader because she was looking to retire.
- Interactions with my congressman: I first asked his staff 3 ½ years ago to visit Circles. It was not till I was invited to RESULTS International Conference in 2015 was when I first interacted with Congressman Tim Huelskamp (R-KS-1). I was excited to meet my congressman, yet my first experience was not as pleasant as I hoped for. We had a disagreement over free summer lunch.
- Despite rocky start, I was determined in building a relationship with my congressman and his staff. This included going to as many town hall meeting as I was able to attend, even attending one on my birthday.
- We say that all politics are local; the importance of interacting with your local bureaucrats, so much so when the congressman came to Salina, he walked by the then acting mayor to say hello to me first. Also, thanked me for my advocacy.
- When attending a town halls, I find it best to read/know your audience at the town hall, if you are an “out of townner” try to introduce yourself to the local.
- Also, write down your question; it makes it easier to stay on track.
- Follow up! Follow up! I cannot stress the importance of following up with staff enough, yet understanding life does get in the way.
- Congressman Huelskamp lost his primary in early August. I reached out to the staff thanking them for all their help. I wrote a personal letter to Huelskamp thanking him for his service, letting him know how he made me feel on our first interaction, again thanking him for voting for the EITC., and letting him know I look forward to work with him for the betterment of Kansas.
- I am also moving on and reaching out to Dr. Marshal, who won the primary.

## August Training

Jos Linn, Grassroots Manager for U.S. Poverty Campaigns (Des Moines, IA)

Most of you have gotten trainings on how to make the most of town halls. We talked about it on last month’s webinar, we did trainings at the RESULTS Conference, and, as Kristy noted, the August Action has tips for you too.

Big obstacle to going to a town hall is knowing what to ask; if you feel unsure about what you plan to say, knowing that it’s likely to be in front of a crowd of people, you might choose the safe path and stay home. We’ve all felt that way, even me, so there’s no shame in it. But if you have the tools to not only know what to say, but craft it yourself, you won’t have to feel that way anymore.



So this month's training will help you draft your own question for town halls and candidate events. First of all, let's recognize that there are two types of town halls. One where you stand up and ask a question verbally to the lawmaker or candidate or one where you write your question down and they read it themselves. Let's start with the first kind and the most difficult – asking the question yourself.

To start off, please know that at RESULTS, we do not expect you to come up with your own question from scratch. We have resources and coaching available to help you. For example, in the August Action, there are templates for town hall questions on the three main issues we're focusing on right now: the EITC, SNAP, and the racial wealth gap. You can see them all on slides 17-19.

For today, we're going to focus on the EITC, since that is our #1 request right now. Let me read through the question on slide 17 for those of you who cannot see the slides.

*I want to talk about an important change to tax policy that has bipartisan support. Did you know that over 7 million Americans are currently being taxed into poverty? These are young low-income workers and others not raising children in their home, including non-custodial parents caring for their children, veterans and members of the military, and young workers just starting out in the workforce who owe more in taxes than what they get from the Earned Income Tax Credit (known as the EITC). Both House Speaker Paul Ryan and President Obama have put forward proposals to expanding the EITC for these workers, and there are even more robust proposals in Congress would benefit [in our state \(16 million nationally\)](#), basically ensuring no American would be taxed into poverty. Do you support expanding the EITC for these workers and, if elected, will you work to make it law next year?*

Now this is a generic question, which is what we want. We want to give you something that could be used in any situation. However, we all know that each member of Congress or candidate is different. You might not say the exact same thing to a conservative Republican as you would to a liberal Democrat. That's where you come in.

When getting ready for any interaction with a member of Congress or candidate, you should do a little research. What is their position on our issues? How have they voted? What public statements have they made? You can easily find this information on the internet with a simple Google search and through our [Elected Officials page](#) on the RESULTS website. Once you have a little background on who you'll be talking to, you can start to tailor your question for maximum impact.

Another thing to consider is what kind of an event are you attending? More and more, members of Congress are holding "theme-based" town halls and events. Maybe the focus is on the economy or crime or national defense. In these situations, the more you can relate your question to the topic at hand, the better off you'll be. This is especially true in town halls where you have to submit your questions in advance.

Since I believe we learn best by watching others, let's hear an example of how to tailor a question to your town hall. I'm pleased to have Ginnie Vogts of RESULTS Columbus. Ginnie is needing help for a town hall she is attending, so let's help her tailor a question for that particular event.

- Ginnie Vogts of RESULTS Columbus explains that one of her local members of Congress, Rep. Joyce Beatty, is having a town hall to discuss crime and policing. She wants to know how she can relate our work on the EITC to this topic.
- Jos Linn coaches that the EITC is a pro-work tax credit and when people are working, they are less likely to get involved in illegal activity. In addition, Ginnie could mention that statistics show that urban crime has a disproportionate impact on young, black men. If we expand the EITC, especially for younger workers (21-24 which could steer them clear of the circumstances that lead to people being the victims or perpetrators of crime.

I hope you found that helpful. So now, let's give you a chance to draft up your own questions for upcoming town halls and candidate events. If you're not sure where to start, use any one of the questions found on slides 17-19 of the slides, which can also be found in the August Action. Afterward, if there is time, we'll open up the lines and here some examples and answer your questions.

### 3 minutes of silence while groups work

1. **Question (Lucinda Winslow of RESULTS Coastal Connecticut):** Do these questions in the slides and in the action apply to candidate as well?
  - Yes. You'll want to tailor them to that particular person, but the background should work for candidates and members of Congress alike. The only thing you'll want to change is the phrasing of the request to something like "if elected, will you work to expand the EITC for childless workers and ensure that no Americans are taxed into poverty?"

I also want to note some key differences in town halls where you submit your questions in advance. The sample question I showed earlier might work well for speaking, but you might not have the time or room to write it all out on a note card at the town hall. Plus, if the question looks too long, it may not get picked. Lastly, you want make sure you link to the theme of the town hall immediately (if there is one) or something the person will find friendly. If your question is not relevant to the event, confrontational, or just something they don't like right off the bat, it won't get asked.

So, I recommend that you keep it short. Open with a sentence that relates the question to the event or the person, then introduce your issue, and then close with a specific request.

For example, in Gennie's example, it might sound something like:

*Crime is not only a security issue, but also a poverty issue. When people have enough, they're less likely to break the rules. Right now, there are millions of workers who are struggling and actually being taxed into poverty – these are low-income workers without children in the home. We can help them by expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which already has bipartisan support in Congress. If elected, will you work to expand the EITC for childless workers and ensure that no worker is taxed into poverty?*

Thanks, folks. I hope you found that helpful. Remember, these town halls can be very effective in pushing lawmakers and candidates to take a stand on poverty. If you have questions or need help, please don't hesitate to contact me. Otherwise, happy asking!

## Announcements

Jos Linn

- **Contact Jos for Lobby Prep.** If you get a face-to-face meeting or plan to attend a town hall, please contact Jos Linn ([jlinn@results.org](mailto:jlinn@results.org)) to set up a lobby prep call to help you get ready.
- **Please Fill Out Lobby Report.** After any face-to-face meeting or town hall where you ask a question, please fill out our Lobby Report Form so we know how it went. [www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF](http://www.tinyurl.com/RESLRF).
- Note that this month's **RESULTS U.S. Poverty Free Agents Calls** are canceled so our Free Agents (and everyone else) can participate in the Candidate Engagement Training next **Tuesday, August 16 at 9:00pm ET**. To participate, login online at <http://fuze.me/33195710> or dial in by phone at (201) 479-4595, meeting ID 33195710#.
- If you know someone who'd be interested in creating a world free of poverty, invite him or her to our next **RESULTS Introductory Call** is Friday, August 26 at 1:00 pm ET. People can register upcoming Intro Call on the [RESULTS website](#).
- You can find these and other events on the [RESULTS Events Calendar](#).
- Thank you for being on the webinar today. Our next U.S. Poverty National Webinar will be **Saturday, September 10 at 12:30pm ET**.

Finally, today is National Left-Hander's Day. All the Southpaw's out there – enjoy your day! And every be sure to get your left hand (and right) up first, fast, and high at town halls and candidate events this month!