

# Welcome



Photo credits: © Phil Borges, Jim Loring/CARE, Kate Holt/CARE, Meredith Davenport/CARE, Erin Lubin/CARE

**Thank you for downloading the CARE 2008 U.S. Elections Toolkit! Welcome to the CARE Action Network. You are now an important member of a group dedicated to change – changing U.S. foreign policy and changing lives for the better.**

Every day, CARE works with people in the poorest communities on Earth, working together to win victories over poverty and bring about lasting change. Our policy and advocacy unit is guided by the insight from this work in 71 countries as we push for U.S. policies that support CARE's mission to help poor people lift themselves out of poverty. However, we consistently hear from U.S. policy-makers that too few Americans support legislative action on poverty-fighting issues, so they aren't a priority for our elected officials.

We know from our generous supporters and like-minded friends that we can prove them wrong. It is incredibly important to act now. With no incumbent running for president and every representative (and one-third of the Senators) up for re-election, it is a great time to encourage a shift in U.S. policies. Together we can make *fighting global poverty* a priority for our elected officials.

America's goodwill, innovation and investment can address some of the world's greatest challenges – over 850 million people worldwide are chronically undernourished; more than half a million women die each year from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, even though the majority of these deaths are preventable; around 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day; and everyone will be affected by climate change. CARE's goal of helping poor people lift themselves out of poverty reaffirms America's tradition of moral leadership and helps create a safer and more prosperous world for all.

With your help, we intend to send a powerful message to the candidates for the House, Senate and White House: There is an energized, organized constituency in the United States that is passionate about beating global poverty. By interacting with and questioning candidates and their staffers, we can demonstrate broad and informed support for poor people around the world. Together, we can make fighting global poverty an issue foremost in the minds of all elected officials.

On behalf of CARE and all of the people we serve, thank you for what you've done and what you'll continue to do. As you use your voice to influence candidates, you are not only building a more just world. You are changing people's lives.

**Thank you**

*Cathy Woodard*

# Reaching Out To Congressional Candidates



Photo credits: Erin Lubin/CARE, Jim Loring/CARE, Phil Borges/CARE, Valenda Campbell/CARE, Erin Lubin/CARE

**There are multiple ways to reach out to candidates and have your voice heard. It is important to remember that your overall goal is to build a relationship with candidates and establish yourself as someone they can trust and respect. Don't forget to remind your candidate that you vote in their district. Candidates and their staff have huge demands on their time and focus on those who can vote for them.**

---

## Objectives

- **Ask probing questions** – Learn where all candidates, incumbents and challengers alike, stand on issues relating to global poverty.
- **Build relationships** – Demonstrate that there is an informed and passionate constituency dedicated to fighting global poverty.

The purpose of these efforts is to connect with every candidate, to educate them about development issues, and to let them know there are people who care. Whoever is elected, we want them to know their constituents are concerned. Importantly, CARE is not trying to influence who gets elected. When you serve as a CARE volunteer, it is important to be fair, even-handed, and **nonpartisan** in everything you do. Do not state or even imply a preference for any candidate or party. These legal restrictions are important to follow so that CARE is able to provide you with information about the policy issues at hand, as well as conduct its other advocacy relating to important international development issues. **We appreciate your understanding of this important matter!**

---

## Be Comfortable with the Information

- Familiarize yourself with issues on CARE's legislative agenda such as the international affairs budget, maternal health and food aid by downloading materials on the Web (<http://www.care.org/advocacytoolkit>). Read through the materials carefully and get answers to any questions you have (E-mail [elections@care.org](mailto:elections@care.org) with questions).
- Learn about your candidate and their positions on these issues.
- Learn more about global development (<http://www.cgdev.org/section/rwpw>).
- Visit different online resources so that you are comfortable with current facts as well as differing opinions on the issue. (See resource section for more information.)

## Organize

- Join the Elections 2008 group ([www.care.org/elections2008](http://www.care.org/elections2008)) on CARE Connections – CARE’s online community - to network with other CARE supporters in your district and see what other events are going on.
  - Remember to e-mail [elections@care.org](mailto:elections@care.org) with information regarding any contact with candidates so that we remain aware of your progress.
- 

## Communicate Effectively

- You are most effective when the candidate or staff member immediately understands what you are advocating for. Candidates and campaign staffers are very busy, so you only have a limited amount of time to convince them of your views – advocating effectively means that your communication is simple, polite and concise. It is also effective to relate the issue to things that happen in your district or tell a compelling personal story that illustrates why you are advocating for the issue.
- Keep records of all your communications.

Remember, the key to influencing the people who represent you is proving to them that you are a committed, well-informed and persistent constituent. Your impact is proportional to the amount of effort you put in. It is important that you take time to prepare your thoughts, familiarize yourself with your candidate and follow up as many times as it takes. No matter how you make contact, **be clear that you want to learn what their positions are, and you want them to know that they have constituents who care deeply about global poverty.**

# Connecting With Your Candidate



Photo credits: ©Phil Borges, Una Brosnan/CARE, Brendan Bannon/CARE, Nathan Bolster/CARE, Erin Lubin/CARE

**All 435 members of the House of Representatives run for re-election every two years, so there is definitely a House race in your area. Senators serve a six-year term, and every two years one-third of the Senate is up for re-election.**

The C-SPAN elections center is an excellent source of information on federal elections. Go to <http://www3.capwiz.com/c-span/e4/address/> and type in your address in the space provided to determine which candidates are running in your district.

So now you know who the incumbent and challengers are. How do you connect with them?



---

## Meet Face-to-Face

Face-to-face meetings with a candidate or a senior staff member provide perhaps the best opportunity to express your opinion and discuss your concerns. These meetings are also a great way to build a relationship that can be continued or resumed in Washington, D.C., should the candidate be elected or re-elected.

Candidates are incredibly busy campaigning, and an incumbent is even more time-pressed, since he or she is in Washington, D.C., much of the time. Often, candidates will not be able to meet you, but a meeting with the right staffer can be just as effective. All candidates rely heavily on staffers, and often these campaign staffers become the legislative staff if the candidate is elected. These are the people who control the flow of information to the candidate – make them your friends!

## Arranging a Meeting

- Fax or e-mail a letter, addressed to the candidate, but directed to the attention of the scheduler, requesting a meeting. (See resource section for more information.)

- Mention that you live in the candidate's district and your affiliation with CARE.
- Make follow-up phone calls to the scheduler until you can agree on a date. If they don't return your call within two to three days, then call again. Keep track of your calls, but remember that they are very busy.
- If you cannot meet with the candidate, try to meet with a senior staff member such as the campaign manager or the political director.
- Schedule your meeting (event) on CARE Connections ([www.care.org/elections2008](http://www.care.org/elections2008) - see resource section for more information). Make sure to mention if you want additional CARE supporters to attend. It only takes a minute and increases our advocacy effectiveness exponentially.
- Follow up with the scheduler and let them know who will be attending your meeting and what the agenda will be. Get directions to the office and provide a number where you can be reached if anything changes.

## Preparing for Your Meeting

- Make an effort to gauge your candidate's interest and match your actions to their initial level of interest.
- Go to CARE's Web site (<http://www.care.org/advocacytoolkit>) and familiarize yourself with CARE's downloadable issue briefs and questions.
- Practice what you are going to say so you sound natural to the candidate or staff person, and not like you are reading straight from a script. Practicing will build your confidence and add to your effectiveness.

## At the Meeting

- Be on time and wear business attire.
- Be accurate. To build a working relationship and get results, you need to be a credible source of information. Never bluff. If you don't know something, just say so. Tell them you will find out and get back to them.
- Be brief. Candidates and their staff are incredibly busy and so are you. They appreciate it when you get to the point and respect their time. Because your meeting or call might be interrupted, get to your request in the first few minutes. Make sure to exchange contact information and leave documents and any other appropriate items for the candidate/staffer to become more engaged with your issue. Effective advocacy is based on communication that is simple, polite and to the point.

- Be courteous. Always, always be courteous. A “How are you?” after the initial hello works wonders! Being abrasive is almost always counterproductive and it provides a good excuse to ignore your request.
- Be specific. In your communications with candidates and their staff, make a point to mention exactly why you are passionate about these issues.
- Be sure to ask questions that get to the candidate’s views on our hot topics (For questions go to <http://www.care.org/advocacytoolkit>)

## Following Up

After meeting with a candidate or a staff member, it’s important to continue to assert yourself. Follow these tips to maintain contact.

- Thank the person you met with for listening to your concerns, especially if the candidate takes action. Commend the candidate publicly, including letters to the editor etc. (Be sure to share these publications with the candidate’s staff.)
- Get the name of the staff person you speak to and try to deal with the same person each time. Remember that if your candidate is helpful and you praise them publicly, next time they may help even more. The ultimate goal is to build a positive, long-term relationship.
- Provide additional information on global poverty issues as needed. Offer to fax or e-mail information as many times as necessary, because they get many requests each day. If you do fax something, call immediately to make sure that they have received it.
- After the meeting, send notes and any follow up actions to [elections@care.org](mailto:elections@care.org).
- Send a thank you/follow up e-mail to the person with whom you met, citing specifics from your meeting.

---

## Public Events

The easiest way to meet a candidate for Congress is to attend their public events. In order to get elected, the candidate will need to be out in public often, so you’ll have ample opportunity to ask questions about his or her position on global poverty.

To find out where the candidate will be, simply call the campaign headquarters and ask when the candidate will be in your area. (Contact information is often found online or by calling directory assistance and asking for the campaign headquarters of your candidate.)

## At an Event

- Q&A: At the event, put yourself in a position to ask a question. Make sure your hand is the first one up, even before the candidate asks for questions. Make sure your hand is up highest. Make it look like you're going to explode if you don't get to ask your question. If you've brought a friend, station yourselves in different places to ensure that at least one of you is called on. (Go to <http://www.care.org/advocacytoolkit> for questions)
- Handshake line: Candidates love to shake hands. This is another opportunity to ask your question. Grab the candidate's hand and do not let go until he or she answers your question.
- If you cannot talk directly to the candidate try to talk to a senior staff person such as the political director or the campaign manager.
- Remember – be respectful! Do not pick fights or be purposefully antagonistic.

# Communication Guidelines



Photo credits: © Phil Borges, Jim Loring/CARE, Kate Holt/CARE, Meredith Davenport/CARE, Erin Lubin/CARE

**The impact you can have on global poverty is potentially enormous. Please take the following into consideration when you advocate in support of mitigating climate change, improving foreign assistance, safeguarding maternal health and strengthening food security so that we can operate effectively.**

## General

- If you are ever contacted by the media directly, please set up an appointment with them instead of taking the interview immediately. E-mail [elections@care.org](mailto:elections@care.org) so we can work together to maximize the opportunity.
- Always identify yourself as a volunteer for CARE. This removes you from any liabilities.
- When asked a question about CARE, CARE's work or a policy CARE supports for which you don't have an answer, tell the person you will get the answer and get back to them. Please don't speculate.
- Maintain regular contact with CARE through [elections@care.org](mailto:elections@care.org), so we can maximize the impact of all our advocates.
- Be judicious about how the logo is used – if unsure about any possible sensitivity, please ask CARE staff. For example, a meeting announcement is fine. But a poster for a rally on Darfur would not be authorized. Please refer to [www.care.org/logo](http://www.care.org/logo) and download different versions of the logo from that page.
- All e-mails to [elections@care.org](mailto:elections@care.org) should include your name, contact information and your state of residence.

---

## At a Public Appearance for a Candidate - Do

IMPORTANT LEGAL NOTICE: There are important legal rules relating to the questions that may be posed by staff and volunteers of 501(c)(3) organizations. The sample questions are intended for use in small groups or one-on-one discussions with candidates. Different legal rules apply to public events or "bird-dogging." Discuss the importance of public policy approaches to a broadly-stated issue.

- Discuss how CARE has been trying to educate candidates about these issues.
- Be clear that CARE is encouraging candidates to develop some type of plan for addressing these issues.
- Be clear that CARE does not support or oppose candidates.

- Be clear that CARE will not suggest that certain candidates are better or more qualified than others.
  - Point out that this is an important issue to voters and they deserve to know how candidates would try to address it.
  - Be prepared.
- 

## **At a Public Appearance for a Candidate – Do Not**

- Discuss individual candidate platforms in any way.
- Answer questions that mention the names of any candidates.
- Indicate that some candidates have responded to CARE's encouragement while others have not (this will invite a follow-up question for specific names, a question that should not be answered because it will reflect positively on those who we say have responded).
- Comment positively or negatively on statements or positions of any of the candidates.
- Suggest that one political party is more responsive on this issue than the other.

## On Your Own Time (Not as a CARE Volunteer)



Photo credits: Erin Lubin/CARE, Jim Loring/CARE, Phil Borges/CARE, Valenda Campbell/CARE, Erin Lubin/CARE

### Using the Media

Another way to reach your candidate is through the local media. You can call your local papers to see if they accept opinion articles (also known as op-eds because they appear opposite the editorial page). If a publication accepts submissions, find out the name of the person to whom the material should be submitted and any editorial guidelines you need to follow. If the publication does not accept op-eds, send a letter to the editor, which nearly every paper publishes. Be sure to save any clippings that appear in your local newspapers and send copies to your candidate along with a short note.

Here are some tips for your article or letter:

- Refer back to the article/column you are responding to.
- Express support for the overarching goal and share ways to take action OR point out that you disagree with the article's premise and make suggestions for action.
- Explain what the existing legislation does/calls for.
- Use a compelling fact and expand on it.
- Emphasize what needs to be done and by whom.
- Explain the benefit of taking this action.
- Remember – a good article or letter can not only raise overall awareness on an issue, but can also be a good way to positively or negatively call out a candidate.

(See resource section for a sample Letter to the Editor on the Farm Bill.)

---

### Volunteering for a Campaign

If there is a candidate whom you support, by all means, get involved with their campaign! Campaigns run on volunteer help, so any candidate will gratefully put you to work for as much time as you have to volunteer. However, CARE does not endorse candidates, so any volunteer work on a campaign *must* be separate from work with CARE.

While you'll be volunteering as a private citizen and not as a CARE representative, you will undoubtedly make connections with campaign staff and possibly with the candidate. If your candidate heads to Washington, you will already have built a personal relationship with some of the people in the office, which will make getting a meeting with them in their new official capacity far easier. You've already established yourself as someone who adds value to their work!

---

## **Host an Event**

Candidates always look for ways to get in front of their constituents – these are voters; these are the people the candidate has to know. If you can gather a group of motivated friends, you can often get the candidate to come and speak at your event. Candidates are particularly likely to attend such an event if it will also serve as a fundraiser. If you have found a candidate you want to support, feel free to contact the campaign about hosting an event. Remember, CARE cannot support a specific candidate. Any actions, fundraising or otherwise, in support of a specific candidate or political party must be separate from work with CARE.