

At the request of farm workers, NFWM-YAYA members may contact their representatives in order to influence public policy affecting farm workers and their communities - this is what we call **advocacy** work. Advocacy can include many activities such as media and social media campaigns, petitions, public speaking, or marches and rallies: all for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation.

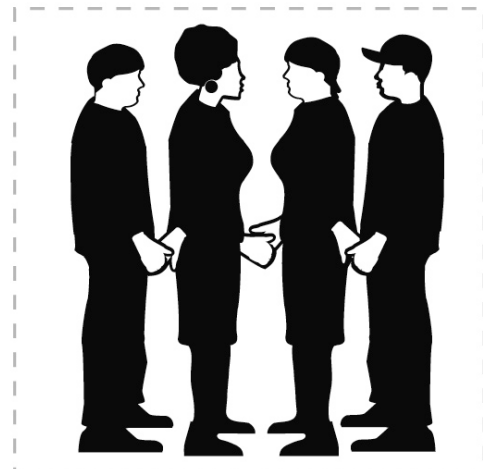
An important approach to advocacy is called **lobbying**, where you visit a government official's office with the objective of directly influencing their decisions. Many different actors, including corporations and interest groups with a lot of power, do lobbying. It is important that people like YOU engage in lobbying as well, in order to educate government officials about the experiences and needs of the people that they represent. Your voice can make a difference.

NFWM-YAYA's Advocacy work

501(c) organizations, like NFWM-YAYA, are tax-exempt nonprofit organizations with a limited ability to organize lobbying activities. According to the IRS, if a 501(c) organization spends a substantial part of its activities lobbying it may risk losing its tax-exempt status - this is why NFWM-YAYA only organizes this type of advocacy work when dealing with critical legislation that affects farm workers. However, NFWM-YAYA conducts educational meetings, prepares and distributes educational materials, and considers public policy issues an educational manner without jeopardizing its tax-exempt status.

Whenever NFWM-YAYA engages in advocacy work, we make sure to do **advocacy with** and not **advocacy for** farm workers. In other words, we advocate for the changes that farm workers want and not for the changes that others think would be better for them. It is important to always *advocate with* farm workers in order to preserve the spirit of solidarity and to respect the autonomy of farm workers and their communities.

Society tends to ignore the voices of the most oppressed people in our society. When we do advocacy work, we are joining the voices of farm workers (we are not *giving* them a voice!), so that they may be amplified and heard by our government officials. It is our responsibility to join the voices of the oppressed until they receive justice.



EFFECTIVE LOBBYING



In the United States, we elect our government officials to represent the interests of our communities. When lobbying our representatives, we urge them to act in a way that we believe will improve our lives. We do so by sharing our ideas and experiences, and by articulating the needs of our communities.

The best time for lobbying our congress representatives is when the legislatures are in recess, because most of our senators and congress people will be in their districts.

Preparing for a visit with your legislator

- 1. You will need to make an appointment.** Always make an appointment to speak with your representative or their staff. You may need to follow up a few times before you get the appointment, so contact your representatives' office at least 3 to 4 weeks ahead of time. When you reach the person who can schedule the appointment, make sure to identify your organization. Propose a few dates and times that work for you and state the reason why you want to visit your representative (what you want to talk to them about). Also, give them an approximate number of people who will be attending the meeting. Confirm the appointment 1 week in advance.
- 2. You may get an appointment with the legislator's staff.** Even if you plan ahead of time, you may not get an appointment with your representative. When this is not possible, the office might arrange an appointment with a legislative aid or staff person. Although this may not seem ideal, remember that the staff has a lot of power and may decide what issues to present to the legislator. Ask to talk specifically with the person who handles your issue/s.

The staff often have more time to talk to you and are more knowledgeable about the issues. They can give you vital background information on a bill, as well as insight about a representative's position on an issue. Meetings with the staff are very important; take them as seriously as a meeting with your representative.

3. Prepare for a short meeting. Our government officials are very busy people. Your representative will probably meet with you for 15 to 20 minutes. Be prepared to state your case in a brief and concise manner (see point 9 of this section to learn how to create an agenda for your visit).

4. Be familiar with the bill. Your role in this meeting is to educate your representative about a bill and its potential impact on your community. *You should know this information by heart.*

Get together with your team and review the most important points of the bill. Create talking points about the bill and its potential impact in your community. If you need help, contact an organization or an expert that can give you more information on the bill/issue. You should be able to present information on the issues *clearly and concisely*.



**If this is a meeting organized by NFWM-YAYA, we will provide you with all the information about the bill.*

5. Be familiar with the representative that you are visiting. Get together with your team and gather as much information as possible about the government official that you will be meeting with. This will help you create a strategy/framework to appeal to them. Make sure to look up their:

- a. Biography
- b. Political party affiliation
- c. Committees and sub-committees that they belong to
- d. Issues they care about
- e. Who funds their electoral campaigns
- f. Organizations that they belong to
- g. Demographics of the areas that they represent
- h. Voting record
- i. Religious affiliation
- j. Public position on the issue at hand: be aware of previous actions the official has taken on the issue and try to surmise their sentiments by reviewing past speeches or statements.

6. **Plan to have a small delegation.** If you are planning on going lobbying as a group, don't bring a large delegation with you. A small delegation will be more effective in building a relationship with the representative and their staff.

Big delegations (more than 5 people) may annoy or confuse the staff and the representatives, especially if there is not enough room to accommodate everyone. Big delegations also tend to be harder to coordinate.

The people in the delegation should be the most suited to present the issues or to complete a given task (see point 8 of this section to learn about potential roles for your group members). It may also be a good idea to pick people that represent a wide variety of the constituent spectrum. For instance a teacher, a pastor, a farmer, a farm worker, etc. Even better is to have people who are involved in several community organizations and represent their own base. For example a member of Sierra Club local, St Joseph's church, a university student, etc.

7. **Be prepared to summarize your opponents' arguments on the issue.** Know the other side of the coin and be prepared to defend your position.
8. **Divide tasks between members of the delegation.** Agree upon the structure of the meeting, which facts will be discussed, and who will present each one. Be strategic when choosing who will speak during your visit. Some suggested roles are:

- a. **Facilitator:** This is the person with the most lobbying experience in the group. They will be the point person in the meeting and will take the delegation through the agenda from beginning to end. It is the facilitator's job to make sure that the meeting runs smoothly and efficiently by keeping time and by making sure that the representative/staff doesn't take over the meeting. If your elected official has questions, it is the facilitator's job to make sure that they are answered.
**If a member of your group does not have a role, they can be timekeeper.*



b. Note taker: This person is in charge of taking notes during the meeting. It is important for them to write down any inquiries or commitments that the representative makes. The note taker will record the representative's reactions and body language, especially when they appear particularly attentive or enthusiastic. The note taker should coordinate thank-you notes after the meeting.

c. Presenter/s: One or two people will be in charge of presenting the position of the organization to the representative. They will also deliver any relevant facts, statistics, policy arguments, or other relevant information.

d. Testimonial/s: One or two people directly affected by the issue should briefly present their story to the representative/staff. The stories will bring a face and a name to the issues at hand.



9. Create an agenda for the meeting. Since you will probably have a limited amount of time with your representative, you will need to make sure that you present your facts in an organized and efficient way. Below are some tips to create an agenda for your meeting and to divide tasks based on the roles described in point 8 of this section:

a. Introductions:

- i. The facilitator will identify themselves and the other members of the delegation.
- ii. The facilitator will identify the organization that the delegation represents (if any). **See "What is NFWM-YAYA" training for NFWM-YAYA organized meetings.*
- iii. The facilitator will inform the government official of the electoral power of the organization (number of members, coalitions, demographics that they represent, etc.)

b. Stating your position and the purpose of the meeting: The facilitator should be specific and brief. *They should also acknowledge the representative's past actions that have supported your cause.*

- i. **Engage the representative.** For example: *The County that you represent, Citrus County, is an agricultural area that depends on immigrant labor to keep its thriving economy.*
 - ii. **State the problem in a concise manner.** For example: *Unfortunately, most of the farm workers in the county are undocumented immigrants who are vulnerable to abuse by their employers.*
 - iii. **Inform:** For example: *Last year, 75% of the undocumented farm workers in Citrus county were victims of wage theft.*
 - iv. **Call to action:**
 1. We are here to ask you to support/oppose/co-sponsor_____.
 2. We are here to ask you to become a champion for _____ by doing _____.
- c. **Gauging the representative's knowledge of the issue:** The facilitator should be prepared to control the meeting by asking only relevant questions. For example: *What is the representative's position on the issue? Is the representative familiar with the bill at hand? What is the representative's position on the bill?*
- d. **Testimonials:** A person directly affected by the issue should share their story with the representative in a very brief manner (make sure to practice and time yourself before the meeting). If a person directly affected by the issue is not available, you can show the representative a short video or some pictures. When sharing a story, explain why the issue is important to you personally and link the issue to a situation in the elected official's district. Testimonials should be no longer than 3 minutes.
- e. **Providing Information:** The presenter/s should provide all the facts and information about the bill in a concise and clear manner. They should be the people in your group who are most familiar with the bill.
- i. **Bill:** The presenters should give the representative an overview of the bill in layman's terms.



- ii. **Impacts:** The presenters should give an overview of the potential consequences or community impact of the bill.
 - iii. **Stats:** The presenters should have the most meaningful statistics ready to share with the representative (including the source for these numbers).
- f. **Ask for a commitment:** After presenting the facts, the presenters must ask the representative for a commitment. Make an effort to gauge your representative's interest and to match your requests to their support level. Try asking specific questions that they can reply to with a yes or no answer. This answer will guide the next steps of your campaign.

Some examples of commitments that you can ask for are:

- For those supportive of your cause: Will you co-sponsor/oppose this bill?

Would you be willing to talk to other members within a committee or state delegation and encourage their support/opposition? Would you be willing to write a newspaper op-ed about the issue? What else can you do about this issue? Would you be willing to publically support/oppose this bill/issue on your social media outlets (facebook, twitter, etc.)?

- For those who are undecided or who oppose your cause: What do you need from us to help you support this cause?

**The note taker should write down the specific steps that need to be taken before following up again with the government official.*

Important: Don't expect to get concrete commitments from the legislator's staff. They might not know the representative's position on the issue or might not be authorized to make commitments on behalf of the representative. The staff will most likely tell you that they will share these issues and concerns with their boss.

If this is a new issue for the representative, they might not be able to make any commitments by the end of the meeting. Find out what information they need to make a decision, provide it to them, and then follow up so that you can get a specific answer.

- g. Be willing to follow up.** Send more information to the legislator's office, follow up by phone or e-mail about commitments, and schedule another appointment.
- h. Thank your representative.** When the meeting is over, the facilitator should always thank the representative and/or their staff for meeting with the delegation. Make sure to thank them if they have taken previous action in support of your community, or if they support your position on the issues at hand.
- i. Leave behind printed materials and visual aids.** Include a letter requesting their support, talking points, highlights of the bill, articles or news stories that support your position, a brochure for your organization, the contact information for the facilitator or others in the group, and any visual aids that are pertinent to your concerns. Be creative and respectful. A basket of strawberries picked by farm workers in the representative's district would be a good way to remind them about your meeting.
- j. Debrief:** Debrief immediately after the meeting in another location (outside of the building). Talk about the representative's reactions, and plan out who will be responsible for the next steps. Talk to the delegation about what went well, what could be improved, and what was the hardest thing to do. Doing this will help you with your next visit.



- k. Follow Up:** Always send a personalized thank-you card to any government official that meets with you. Send a thank-you note to any staff members who were especially helpful. Follow up on any requests for information in a timely manner.

Send your representative letters of support if they act favorably upon your request. If they act unfavorably, send them letters explaining why they should support you and reconsider their position. Be a source of information for your representative; keep in regular contact with them by sharing updated information, stories, and opportunities for action.

Effective Advocacy



The Day of the meeting

1. **Dress formally.** Formal and semi-formal attire are recommended.
2. **Arrive on time:** preferably 10 minutes before the meeting.
3. **Be professional, polite, and respectful.** It is very important that you act respectfully even when the representative does not share your point of view. If you are not polite, they might not listen to you at all or they might take action to make sure that you are defeated.
4. **Listen to comments and questions.** This will help you to understand the position of the representative, their anxieties around the issue, and their motivations.
5. **Don't refer to the bills by their number or their abbreviation:** Our representatives are working on many bills. It is better that you refer to the bills by their full names.
6. **If you do not know an answer to a question, follow up with the answer later.** Following up with accurate answers to questions will make you look more responsible and trustworthy than if you make stuff up during the meeting.
7. **Don't overwhelm your representative:** State your point in a direct and concise manner. Bring short information sheets to leave behind. Lobby about one issue at a time. Too much paperwork and too much information will make the representative feel frustrated and overwhelmed.



Other tips:

1. **Develop a relationship with your representative** by attending other government events that they attend or sponsor. This will increase the accountability that they will feel towards your group.
2. **Develop relationships and work together with other organizations** that share your values. This will increase your political/electoral power.
3. **Develop relationships with experts** on the issues that you are advocating for. Legislators will also use them as resources.
4. **Develop a relationship with the representative's staff.** They have a lot of clout with the representative and can serve as resources.
5. **Wear many hats.** When lobbying legislators, identify yourself as a parent, businessperson, campaign contributor, or fellow church/club/team/party member.
6. **Develop a relationship with reporters and editors.** They might be very effective allies in your campaign. Use twitter and facebook to share and promote favorable articles written by local reporters. This may put you and your group on their radar for further coverage or collaboration.
7. **Stay informed about the bill.** Bills can be amended or edited at any time. It is important that you are aware of any changes.
8. **Never speak negatively about your interactions with your representative.** This will diminish your credibility and will lessen your influence.



*YAYA's Guide for Effective Advocacy: Lobbying, was based on the University of California Student's Association "Lobby Training Script - Fall 2006", and the Humane Society of the United States' "Do's and Don'ts of Lobbying".

Annex 1: Tips for a facilitator of a lobbying training

Icebreaker: A good icebreaker for a training would be to ask each participant to share their experience lobbying. What worked? What was challenging? How did they feel during this experience?

Make sure that everyone is familiar with the process of how a bill becomes a law. Use Annex 2 of this training to make sure that all participants understand this process.

Make sure that everyone is familiar with the bill/issue. If a lobbying training is being held for an upcoming visit to a legislator, make sure to include a session explaining the bill/issue to the group. Provide them with written information about the bill, supportive legislators, talking points, sample letters, etc.

Make sure to schedule time during the training to research the legislator that you are visiting. Use the talents of everyone in your group to gather as much information about the representative that you will be visiting (don't forget to check their social media profiles). This will help you build your strategy for the meeting. For example, if the representative is a member of the local Latino organization, you can appeal to them by talking about Latino issues in your community and by having Latinos speak during the meeting.

Role-play exercise: Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4 people. Ask the individuals in the smaller groups to take on different roles and to role-play a visit to a legislator. This exercise works best if you provide each group with a specific bill or issue along with a possible reaction of the legislator (undecided, supportive, or opposed). Give the groups 20 minutes to prepare, and then have them present the scenario to the other groups (no more than 5 minutes per small group). At the end of each presentation, ask the other participants to give the group feedback about what went well and what could be improved.

Suggested schedule for a lobbying training

1. Introductions and ice breaker: 15 minutes
2. How do bills move through congress? 20 minutes
3. What is advocacy and lobbying? 20 minutes
4. Getting familiar with the bill: 1 hour
5. Break: 10 minutes
6. Planning your meeting and day-of-meeting logistics: 1 hour
7. Debriefing and following up: 30 minutes
8. Role play exercise: 1 hour
9. Break: 10 minutes
10. Researching your representatives: 1 hour
11. Next steps: 30 minutes

Annex 2: How a bill moves through congress

1. **A bill is introduced by either a representative or by a senator.** It may be the lawmaker's own bill, an administration bill, or the idea may have originated with some business or labor group in the legislators' districts.
2. **Bills are referred to committees.** The committee generally refers the bill to a subcommittee which studies the issue carefully, holds hearings, and reports the bill, with recommendations, back to the full committee. The full committee may discuss the bill further, make additional changes, or scrap the bill. If the full committee votes to *report out* the bill, the bill is ready to go to the floor of the House or Senate for a vote.
3. **The committee reports the bill.** A committee report is generally presented with the bill to explain the bill's provisions and the committee's decision. After this, the bill is ready to be scheduled for debate by the full House or Senate.
4. **The bill goes to the floor of the House or Senate for debate.** After a bill is debated, possibly amended, and passed by one house of Congress, it is sent to the other house where it goes through the same procedure. If the bill passes the other house without any changes, it is sent to the president for his signature and it either becomes a law or is vetoed.
5. **If the Senate and the House pass different versions of a bill, both bills are sent to a conference committee.** The House and Senate each appoint members from the committee that reported the bill to serve on the conference committee and resolve the differences between the two bills. If they fail to reach a compromise, the bill will die in the conference committee.
6. **When the conference committee reconciles the differences and agrees on one bill, the bill goes back to the Senate and to the House for a vote on final passage.** No amendments to a conference report are permitted. The bill must either be voted up or down. If it is approved in both houses, the bill goes to the president.
7. **If the president signs the bill, it becomes a law.** If the president vetoes the bill, it is sent back to the House and Senate, and will take a two-thirds majority vote of both houses to pass the bill over the president's veto.

*Source: The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), <http://www.uaw.org/page/how-bill-moves-through-congress>

Annex 3: Sample letter of support

National Farm Worker Ministry
Youth and Young Adult Network
4420 Parkway Commerce Blvd, Suite A
Orlando, FL 32808

Date

Dear _____:

We write to urge you to support the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits, and Security Act, S. 1038/H.R. 2414 ("AgJOBS"). The AgJOBS bill is a result of Congressional negotiations and a historic compromise between the United Farm Workers and major agribusiness employers. AgJOBS enjoys broad, bipartisan support in Congress. It is endorsed by major labor and management representatives, as well as a broad spectrum of organizations, including Latino community leaders, civil rights organizations, religious groups and farm workers themselves.

The status quo for farmworkers and agricultural employers is untenable and must be reformed. Over 50% of farmworkers are undocumented workers. Their wages are low and they live in the shadows of our society. We depend on the farm labor force for the food on our tables; we need a stable labor supply.

AgJOBS would provide a legal, stable labor supply by offering undocumented farmworkers the chance to earn legal immigration status by meeting stringent past and future agricultural-work requirements and immigration-law obligations. The ability to legalize immigration status is key to enabling farmworkers to bargain for better working and living conditions and reducing high turnover in the industry. AgJOBS also would revise the H-2A agricultural guestworker program in a balanced manner due to concessions made by all sides in this debate.

The reintroduction of AgJOBS on _____, demonstrates continued support for this bipartisan labor-management compromise. AgJOBS is a component of the comprehensive immigration reform that this country urgently needs. Your support for AgJOBS is critical to address the urgent needs of our farm labor force. Thank you.

Sincerely,

NFWM-YAYA Organizer

Annex 4: Sample thank-you / follow-up letter

National Farm Worker Ministry
Youth and Young Adult Network
4420 Parkway Commerce Blvd, Suite A
Orlando, FL 32808

Date

Dear Congressman _____,

Thank you for meeting with the Florida Youth and Young Adult Network of the National Farm Worker Ministry delegation on _____. It was great to meet with you and to talk about AgJOBS and comprehensive immigration reform.

As promised, I am sending you more information about the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits, and Security Act, S. 1038/H.R. 2414 (AgJOBS). We hope to have your support for this bill. The current situation for farm workers and their employers is untenable and must be reformed. Over 50% of farm workers are undocumented. Their wages are low and they live in the shadows of our society.

AgJOBS would provide a legal, stable labor supply by offering undocumented farm workers the chance to earn legal immigration status by meeting stringent past and future agricultural-work requirements and immigration-law obligations. The ability to legalize immigration status is essential to enabling farm workers to bargain for better working and living conditions and will help reduce high turnover in the industry. AgJOBS also would revise the H-2A agricultural guestworker program in a way that would be beneficial to all parties involved.

AgJOBS is a component of the comprehensive immigration reform that this country urgently needs. Your support for AgJOBS is critical to address the urgent needs of our farm labor force.

Attached is a two-page summary of this bill, a sign-on letter demonstrating the broad support behind AgJOBS, and a recent editorial from the New York Times supporting this bill.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at _____

Sincerely,

NFWM-YAYA Organizer