



# SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRAINING GUIDE: **IGNATIAN ADVOCACY 101**

An Ignatian Solidarity Network Resource

**On the Cover:**

Students from 8 Jesuit universities gathered in Washington, D.C. for a Congressional hearing on undocumented students in higher education. In conjunction with this effort, students advocated for more humane immigration policies with their congresspersons.

Photo Credit:

Fairfield University

**Special Thanks:**

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**About the Ignatian Solidarity Network:** The Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN) is a national social justice education and advocacy network inspired by the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola. ISN was founded in 2004 and is a lay-led 501(c)3 organization working in partnership with Jesuit universities, high schools, and parishes, along with many other Catholic institutions and social justice partners.

# DEAR ADVOCATE:

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ADVOCACY OFFERS US AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING THE REALITIES OF OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS FACING INJUSTICE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TO THOSE WHO HOLD POSITIONS OF POWER IN OUR GOVERNMENT.

Jesuits identified the important role that advocacy can play during their 35th General Congregation:

“The complexity of the problems we face and the richness of the opportunities offered demand that we engage in building bridges between rich and poor and establishing advocacy links of mutual support between those who hold political power and those who find it difficult to voice their interests.”

Establishing and nurturing relationships with your elected officials plays a crucial role in the Ignatian Solidarity Network and our partners’ efforts to respond to unjust structures that exist within society today. When members of Congress know their constituents care about various issues, they are more likely to vote accordingly.

One way to build a relationship is to schedule a visit to your Congressperson at their office, either in-district or in Washington, D.C. Every senator and representative has an office—often multiple offices—in their home states. Visits to in-district offices are an impactful way to speak, neighbor to neighbor, with representatives and their staffs and let them know why and how the laws and policies pertaining to what you are advocating for impact your community. Visits to D.C. offices are an opportunity to not only build a relationship with your Congressperson but also witness where the decisions are actually made.

Additional ways to build relationships with your Congressperson are to write a letter or make a phone call to advocate for an issue you are passionate about. While not as impactful as personal visits, these outreaches do have an impact and should never be forgotten as you build bridges with your legislator.

We are grateful for your desire to be part of this larger network of individuals in “building bridges” between the marginalized and those who hold political power.

Please let us know how we can support you!

Sincerely,



Christopher G. Kerr  
Executive Director



**Increase your impact!**

Visit [igsol.net/advocacy](https://igsol.net/advocacy)  
to submit report-back forms for all of your  
advocacy efforts and find additional resources  
including talking points and editable sample forms.



# WHAT MAKES ADVOCACY IGNATIAN?

## 1. Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice

**The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement.**

General Congregation 32, Decree 4

For the Ignatian Family, practicing our faith and working to build a more just society are inseparable, and so our faith compels us to advocate on behalf of those whose voices are forgotten or ignored. The vision of social justice we seek to share with policy makers is ultimately drawn from Jesus' call "to bring glad tidings to the poor...to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." (drawn from Luke 4:18-19)

## 2. Recognition of Desire

**The retreatant should ask God our Lord for what she or he desires.**

St. Ignatius Loyola, Spiritual Exercises No. 25

One of Ignatius' key insights into the spiritual life was his recognition that God places within each of us deep, holy desires. Sharing our desires with God at the beginning of a prayer both makes us aware of them and provides direction to the prayer. Advocacy visits provide the opportunity to deeply and seriously ask ourselves about our desires for our world. In connecting these desires with real, pressing needs facing society, we can share our vision of what the world should and can look like with our elected leaders.

## 3. Reflection

One of the most central prayers in Ignatian Spirituality is the Examen, in which one takes time to review one's day and look for how and when God has been present. By recognizing how one has responded to God's activity during one's day, one is better prepared to stay attuned and responsive in the future.

Taking the time to honestly debrief and evaluate an advocacy visit can serve a similar purpose. Noticing what comments most resonated with the official you were meeting with, considering how your group worked together, and sharing the lessons you learned during the meeting enable you to recognize what went well, what did not, and how you can best respond with future advocacy.

## 4. More by Deeds Than by Words

**Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words.**

St. Ignatius Loyola, Spiritual Exercises No. 230

While taking the time to observe and discuss issues in the world around us is an important starting point, the call for "deeds not words" demands that we strive for more. In moving from "words" to "deeds," we take the time to engage our public leaders in the issues facing our world. This also calls us to move from words to deeds after our advocacy meetings. After we call on our leaders to take action on the issues we raise, we return to our own communities to do the same.



Pictured: A group of Rockhurst University students advocated for immigration reform at Senator McCaskill's district office during Ignatian Family Advocacy Month.

# VISITING CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

Office visits are the most effective tool in your advocacy toolkit.

In a study by the Congressional Management Foundation, Congressional staffers reported that in-person visits from constituents have significant impact on an undecided Member. 97% said that visits to a Member's D.C. office had some or a lot of influence. 94% said the same about visits to a Member's district/state office.

This makes an in-person visit to a Member's office the most effective advocacy option available. Your Members of Congress want to hear from you, and your visits make a difference.


**Pope Francis says, "Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life."**

(Laudato si' 189)

Office visits offer you the chance to engage in real, meaningful dialogue with those in positions of power in our country. Members and their staff get to hear about the issues that matter to you, and you get to hear about what is happening with these issues at the highest levels of our nation's government.

## Purpose of Office Visits

- To put faith into action by demanding that senators and representatives understand that we, constituents and people of faith, want to see compassionate and socially just policies enacted.
- To persuade your senators and representatives to vote for policies that matter to you.
- To build relationships between people of faith and the public officials who make decisions that impact our communities.



# PREPARING FOR YOUR OFFICE VISIT

Smart preparation is the key to a successful office visit.

## **Organize a Group**

Be strategic in finding participants who best represent your community's "ask." Is anyone able to share personal stories that connect to the ask? Additionally, don't forget to engage community leaders who the senator or representative may already know and respect. Aim for 5-10 participants for a visit. If you are considering bringing a larger group, check with the member's scheduler to see how many people the office can accommodate, and be sure your meeting is well planned so that you are focused on your message and everyone knows their specific role.

## **Find Out Who Represents You in Congress and Know Their Stances**

To find your senators and representatives, go to [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us). This website allows you to find out where your member of Congress stands on the issues that are important to you as well as contact information that you will need in order to schedule a meeting.

## **Schedule a Meeting**

If scheduling an in-district meeting, call the local office of your senators and representatives to request a meeting with the member to discuss the issues for which you wish to advocate. If you wish to schedule a meeting in Washington, D.C., call your congressperson's D.C. office to request the meeting. (In some instances the office will require a written request; find an example request letter on page 17.) Make sure to tell them how many people will attend. If the member is unavailable, ask to meet with a staffer who works on the issue for which you are advocating. Be persistent and don't be discouraged if you need to follow up in order to get a meeting scheduled.

## **Practice as a Group**

Before you visit your members meet with the other participants of your group to assign roles. Practice role-playing before the day of your meeting so that everyone feels comfortable with their role and knows what to do. Review your talking points and prepare your materials. It can be tempting to try to cover every aspect of the issue important to your community, but keep the message clear, concise, and consistent. You can always send more information when you follow up with the office after the visit. On page 9 you will find an outline for the group advocacy training which includes assignment roles.

## **Prepare Leave Behind Materials**

Gather educational information, policy recommendations, sign-on letters, charts, studies, faith resolutions, etc., all within a packet of resources to leave behind with the member's office. An example leave behind can be found on page 20 of this packet.

# DURING YOUR OFFICE VISIT

The following is a suggested agenda. Please adapt the agenda to fit your group and issue.

**1. Introductions:** The Facilitator should start the meeting by thanking the member for his/her time, introducing the group as a whole, and then having each person introduce himself.

**2. Story:** Share a story demonstrating the reality of the issue. It can be a personal story or an interaction someone had relating to the issue.

**3. Specific Issue Points:** Provide the member with the materials you prepared and explain specific issues and statistics.

**4. Make your ask:** “We believe that in order to be **[Good neighbors... true to American values...etc.]** we must support **[Issue]**. Can we count on your support for **[Issue]**? How can we best support you in our mutual goal?”

**5. Thank the staffer/congressperson:** “Thank you for your time and support. We will be hosting **[Event/vigil]**. Can we count on your attendance? In the meantime, please let us know how we can be a support to you as well.”

## **Condensed Example:**

*“People of faith throughout **[Town/city/state]** are committed to acting out our faith by supporting **[Issue]**. We do this by **[Include a story of the work you or other faith groups in your community have done in support of the issue]**. We count you, Senator/Representative **[NAME]** as our neighbor, too. We commend you for demonstrating the hospitality of our community by **[Find some comments or legislation the member has worked on in support of issue]**. We’d also like to ask how you plan to support **[ISSUE]** and look to create a just and compassionate **[Issue]**.”*



Remember to get the contact information and cards for the staffers you meet. Consider asking the member and staff to take a photo with your group. Most politicians love the photo op, and it can be added to your social media posts (see page 14).

# AFTER YOUR OFFICE VISIT

Office visits are a first step in an ongoing conversation with your congressperson's office. The post-meeting debrief and next steps strongly impact your meeting's overall effectiveness.

## IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MEETING:

### Debrief Your Meeting

It's important to make sure you are all on the same page immediately after leaving the meeting, while the conversation is fresh in your mind. Make sure to leave the office building, so your debrief conversation can't be overheard.

### As a Group, Review:

- What did we hear?
- Did we get what we wanted?
- What are the next steps?
- How did we do as a team?

Choose one person to send a follow up email attaching the documents mentioned, providing answers to questions that came up during the meeting, and continuing to engage the member and staff in your group's work.

## WITHIN TWO DAYS:

### Communicate With the Ignatian Network and Your Base

Make sure to report back on how the meeting went to other groups you are working with, **including the Ignatian Solidarity Network**. Please submit a meeting report back form to the ISN at [igsol.net/advocacy](https://igsol.net/advocacy).

ISN will share these meeting notes with the Jesuit's National Advocacy Office and other D.C. partners to amplify national advocacy efforts.

## WITHIN ONE WEEK:

### Follow Up With Your Member of Congress

Send the staff you met an email or letter thanking them for their time, attaching any documents you mentioned, providing answers to questions that came up during the meeting, and restating your ask. A sample thank-you letter can be found on page 21.



# PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING: **ADVOCACY TRAINING**

Time spent planning and preparing your group for the advocacy visit will pay off when you gather for the actual meeting.

Aim to gather your entire group for at least 90 minutes prior to your scheduled advocacy meeting. This is in addition to the time spent researching your congressperson's stances and developing your talking points. **The following training can be completed in 60 minutes, and an additional 30 minutes should be used to divide roles and come up with a meeting outline.**

## ADVOCACY TRAINING GOALS

1. Participants will understand the protocol and procedures for a legislative advocacy visit
  - a. Review Do's and Don'ts of advocacy visits
  - b. Understand how to clearly make an ask
  - c. Role play scenarios for additional comfort
2. Participants will share stories about advocacy work

## ADVOCACY TRAINING AGENDA

1. Brief overview of the legislative process (omit if not needed/5 minutes)
2. Review the resources in the advocacy training packets (5 minutes)
  - a. Review Do's and Don'ts of advocacy visits
  - b. Review how to plan an advocacy meeting (i.e., how to use the legislative advocacy meeting task sheet)
3. Discuss past advocacy experiences of students and the trainer (5 minutes)
4. Role play and debrief (35 minutes)

## ADVOCACY TRAINING MATERIALS

1. Enough copies for the entire group of the following:
  - a. Issue talking points (develop your own or find sample talking points on page 18)
  - b. Legislative advocacy meeting task sheet on page 12
  - c. "Suggested roles" sheet on page 13
2. Device to keep track of time

# PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING: **ADVOCACY TRAINING**

## ADVOCACY TRAINING OUTLINE

1. Briefly review the legislative process with the group; communally discuss why advocacy meetings play an important role in the legislative process.

2. Explain to the group that they are going to spend 35 minutes practicing visits in a role play scenario. Break up the group into 3 smaller advocacy teams (each team should have 2-10 people; adjust the amount of groups as necessary). Identify at least one staffperson or experienced advocate to play the roles of legislators/staffers.

3. Ask each small group to look at the “suggested roles” sheet and decide who will play which role. Note that one person can fill multiple roles. Ask the legislator/staffer volunteers to choose which stereotypical role they will play.

4. Ask the advocacy teams to spend 5 minutes planning for their visit—develop their ask, think about ways to tie the issue to the district, identify personal experiences with the issue to share.

5. Have each group conduct role plays one-at-a-time while others listen and take notes. Try to limit each group to 5-7 minutes of role playing. The goal is to show a condensed meeting; groups don’t need to cover every talking point.

6. After each role play, ask some questions to the group:

What did the observers see for group 1 (2, 3, etc.)?

- a. How did they introduce themselves and the issues they were there to discuss?
- b. Did they make a clear ask and obtain a commitment?
- c. Did they tie the issue to the local district?
- d. Did they share compelling stories?
- e. Did they get contact information for follow up?
- f. Did they leave information behind for the staffer/representative?

How did the group respond to the personality or position of the staffer? What suggestions, experiences, or ideas do you have for handling that situation?

7. To conclude the simulation, invite members of the group to discuss past advocacy experiences. This is a good time to draw out tips and best practices from veteran advocates as well as discuss increasing your impact by integrating social media.

# PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING: **ADVOCACY TRAINING**

## **Suggested roles for group members:**

- **The Facilitator** will kick off the meeting by introducing your group, explaining the purpose for the meeting, and providing space for each person attending to briefly introduce themselves and the institution, school, or parish they represent. The facilitator will also subtly redirect the conversation if the meeting goes off-track.
- **The Note Taker** will serve as a scribe for the meeting, writing down any key points that the legislator or staffer brings up that the group may want to discuss later, including questions that you cannot immediately answer.
- **The Personal Story** is key to every meeting. Someone should be present who can tell a compelling story about why you are committed to the issue. This can be an individual's own personal story or a story about an interaction with someone being affected by the issue.
- **Specific Issue Points:** There will be specific points your group will want to make about the policy proposals currently being considered by Congress. It will be helpful to have one person take on each of these issues to show they are distinctly important. Present a brief reflection from a personal perspective on why the issue is important to your community.
- **The Ask** is the critical part of the visit when you call on your legislator to vote or act in a specific way. Be sure to allow the legislator or staffer to respond to the ask. Listen carefully and ask for clarification if their response is vague.
- **The Thanker** is responsible for bringing the meeting to a conclusion, distributing any leave behind materials, and thanking the legislator or staffer for their time on behalf of the group.
- **Follow-Up:** It is helpful to have one person assigned to send a thank-you letter to the legislator and/or staffer. This is also the opportunity to answer any questions or issues that came up during your meeting and to share what your group is doing regarding the issue(s) you discussed in your meeting.

## **Suggested stereotypical staffer roles:**

- **Skeptical staffer:** A staffer who works for someone who needs a lot of convincing on this issue, asks a hard question or two, makes sure the group is clear on the ask.  
TASK: See how the group could respond to the reality that their issue may not be supported.
- **Rambling staffer:** A person that rambles off topic, constantly making asides that are related to the group but not the issue they are meeting about.  
TASK: See if the group could steer the conversation back on topic.
- **Distracted/focused on other issues staffer**  
TASK: See if the group could capture your attention away from the emails and texts piling up on your phone.
- **Staffer who supports the issue:** What more can the group ask of you?  
TASK: See how the group responds to you being completely supportive.

# OFFICE VISITS

## DO'S AND DON'TS

Following these basic do's and don'ts helps build your credibility as an advocate and promotes more effective meetings.

### DO:

#### **Your homework.**

Take the time to figure out where your legislator stands on the issue you're addressing during your meeting. Knowing whether the office you're meeting with supports or opposes the issue you're advocating for can help you tailor your preparation to make the meeting as effective as possible.

#### **Stay flexible.**

If you get a few minutes into your meeting and the member or staffer you're meeting with is entirely on board with what you're saying, don't feel tied to the script. Incorporate what the member or staffer is telling you into your conversation.

#### **Explain why you support or oppose the issue you're discussing.**

This might seem obvious, but don't forget to share your unique perspective.

#### **Connect the issue with the member's district.**

#### **Make a clear ask.**

The ask tells the member or staffer exactly what you want.

#### **Send a thank you note.**

People complain about politicians all the time, but rarely express gratitude for their time and attention.

### DON'T:

#### **Worry if you're meeting with a staffer rather than the member.**

These folks are professionals and will certainly relay your messages to their boss.

**Be too surprised if your meeting is in a very cramped conference room or even in the hallway.** Office space is tough to come by on Capitol Hill.

#### **Forget that this should be a conversation.**

Ask what your member has already done about the issue you're discussing. Use this meeting as an opportunity to learn and to listen.

#### **Be afraid to respectfully redirect the conversation if need be.**

Staffers and members can go off on tangents, and sometimes a subtle reintroduction to the topic at hand is helpful.

**Let your leave-behind be any longer than one page.** Hill staffers already have plenty to read, so brevity is appreciated.

#### **Be nervous!**

Whether you're meeting with a member or a staffer, their job is to listen to you. Even if they disagree, they're going to hear you out.



# LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY MEETING PLANNER

## GENERAL INFORMATION:

Your Institution:

Legislator's Name:

Staff Person(s):

Meeting Date:

Meeting Time:

Location:

## ROLES FOR GROUP MEMBERS:

Facilitator:

Note Taker:

Personal Story:

Specific Issue Points:

The Ask:

Thanker:

Follow-Up:

## BEFORE MEETING:

In one sentence, what is the goal of your meeting?

What is the legislator's stance on the issue you will be discussing?

What points will your group be raising?

## AFTER MEETING:

What sort of follow-up is needed?

# ADVOCATING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Tweets and posts increase your impact! Congressional offices are increasingly relying on social media to engage with their constituents and want to hear from you.

90%

of legislators in the 113th Congress have a Facebook page and Twitter account

66%

of legislators' social media managers said they use Facebook to understand constituent views and opinions

Source: Congressional Management Foundation



## ADVOCACY TWEETS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Congressperson's handle
- Your institution's handle
- The issue(s) you're advocating for with hashtags (ex: #immigration)

### **If you met with a congressional office:**

- Thank the congressperson for his/her time
- Bonus: photograph with the congressperson

 **SLUH Campus Ministry**  
@SLUHMinistry



Thank you to Congressman Clay for talking with us about humane immigration reform & Ferguson. @LacyClayMO1 #IFTJ14



## ADVOCACY POSTS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Congressperson's page tagged
- Your institution's page tagged
- The issue(s) you're advocating for with hashtags (ex: #immigration)

### **If you met with a congressional office:**

- Thank the congressperson for his/her time
- Bonus: photograph with the congressperson

# WRITING TO CONGRESS

The following is a suggested script.  
Please adapt the script to fit your  
group and issue.

Date  
Your Name  
Your Address  
Your City, State, Zip Code  
Your E-mail  
Your Phone Number

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
House of Representatives or United States Senate  
Office Address of Representative or Senator

Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_,

**State personal information:**

“As a person of faith and your constituent, I urge you to reject/support  
[Issue]. [Issue] is important to me because...”

**State facts:**

“Legislative proposals such as the [Bill #/ Act] do not address [Exam-  
ples]. Research has shown that [Facts].”

**State your ask:**

“As both the House and the Senate consider the appropriate response  
to [Issue], I urge you to support legislation that will: [List asks]”

**Final statement:**

“The United States is capable of meeting this challenge with compas-  
sion and our community stands ready to work with Congress and the  
Administration in the implementation of solutions to this [Issue].”

Thank you for your public service and please do not hesitate to contact  
me if you have any questions.

Regards,

# 97%

of Congressional  
staffers reported  
that postal mail  
has some or a lot  
of influence on  
undecided  
Members, with  
88% saying the  
same of e-mail.

CAPITOL SWITCHBOARD:  
**(202) 224-3121**

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## STEP 1:

Call the U.S Capitol Switchboard and ask for the representative/senator's office you're trying to reach.

## STEP 2:

When the staff person answers, follow the basic script provided right or write your own.

# CALLING CONGRESS

The following is a suggested script. Please adapt the script to fit your group and issue.

### You:

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm a constituent from **[Hometown]**. May I please speak to the staffer who handles **[Issue]** for **[Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_]**?

### Receptionist:

Sure, his/her name is **[Staffer's name]**. I'll connect you. **[TIP: Write down the name]**

*If they do not have a staff member who handles the issues, ask for someone who handles similar issues. If you are sent to voicemail make necessary changes to your script, and be sure to follow up!*

### You:

I'm calling today to ask **[Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_]** to support/not support **[Issue]** because **[Why issue is important to support/not support]**. The effects of **[Issue]** being supported/not supported could be **[List of possible, factual realities]**.

I'd like to hear back from **[Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_]** on how he/she plans to act on **[Issue]**. When do you think you will be able to speak with your boss about this? When am I able to follow up with you?

*Note the response and make plans to follow up.*

Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me at **[Your phone number]** if you have any questions about **[Issue or specifically what you talked about during conversation]**.



# SAMPLE REQUEST LETTER

Request letters should be faxed to the attention of the office scheduler. Call the main number for the office to ask for the scheduler's name and fax number.

[Institutional Letterhead Logo]

[Date]

The Honorable [Representative's/Senator's full name]  
U.S. House of Representatives/U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C., 20515/20510  
ATTN: [Name of the scheduler (if you have it)]

Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

During the weekend of November 7-8, students from [Institution name] will visit Washington, D.C., to participate in a social justice conference. As a part of our time in Washington, our group will be visiting Capitol Hill to meet with elected officials and discuss three issues important to Jesuit institutions:

- Comprehensive Immigration Reform
- U.S. Policy Toward Central America
- Environmental Justice

I would like to request a meeting for our [Institution name] delegation to meet with you or a member of your staff to discuss these issues. The timeframe that is most desirable for our group is from [Beginning time] to [Ending time] on [Date].

I can be reached via the following contact information:

Office Phone #:  
E-mail:  
Cell Phone #:

I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

[Your name]  
[Title]  
[Institution]

# SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

**PURPOSE OF THE VISIT:** Ask Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform

**WHAT OUR FAITH TELLS US:**

Catholic Social Teaching tells us that it is our “duty to welcome the foreigner out of charity and respect for the dignity and rights of the human person” (Source: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops). As members of the Ignatian Solidarity Network, we stand with the U.S. Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Jesuit Provincials in asking for immigration reform that supports family unity and a pathway to citizenship.

**WHAT WE SEE:**

•**Personal Testimony (if applicable):** Personalize the issue by sharing your story or the story of someone directly affected by our nation’s broken immigration system, who may be a family member, classmate, or friend.

•**Families and Communities Torn Apart:** Our faith recognizes family as the cornerstone of our communities, but hundreds of thousands of families are separated by our broken immigration system. Backlogs at USCIS of up to 22 years and the insufficient number of family-based visas force family members to choose between being separated for extended periods of time or illegally entering the country (Source: Bread for the World).

•**Talent Wasted:** Catholic Social Teaching directly states that all people have a right and duty to participate in society for the common good, and we must provide avenues for participation in the U.S. Approximately 1.8 million individuals currently residing in the United States were brought to the U.S. at a young age. Each year, approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from American high schools. Many hope to pursue higher education, join the military, or enter the workforce, but their lack of legal status places those dreams in jeopardy and exposes them to deportation (Source: Immigration Policy Center).

•**Workers Exploited:** Much of our U.S. economy requires migrant labor that is often inconsistent with the Catholic Social Teaching principle of the dignity of work. Migrant workers are consistently exploited and forced to work in unsafe conditions without fair compensation; this continues to drive down wages and promote divisions in communities and workplaces (Source: Southern Poverty Law Center).

•**Suffering Ignored:** We must treat all people with dignity and respect, and our asylum and refugee system is under threat. Rather than offering protection and compassion for those who have been forced to flee from their countries of origin, our system treats them as potential terrorists, and subjects them to lengthy delays in having their cases decided (Source: Jesuit Refugee Service/USA).

•**An Increasingly Militarized Border:** Catholic Social Teaching calls us to the promotion of peace and disarmament, which includes respect and cooperation between nations in addition to the absence of war. The misguided border militarization of the last decade has cost \$100 billion, doubled the size of the Border Patrol without sufficient screening, training or accountability, led to over 6,000 dead and murdered immigrants, and allowed widespread civil and human rights violations (Source: Kino Border Initiative).

(continued next page)

# SAMPLE TALKING POINTS (CONT.)

## COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM:

### Protects the Vulnerable:

- 16.6 million people are in “mixed-status” families—those with at least one member who is undocumented. Nine million of these families have at least one U.S.-born child (Source: Pew Research Hispanic Center).
- Creating a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants helps keep families together, and prevents children from needlessly being placed in foster care (Source: Applied Research Center).
- Refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people will face a fairer, more efficient system that respects human dignity (Source: Jesuit Refugee Service/USA).

### Allows Immigrant Youth to Realize the American Dream:

The passage of the DREAM Act would grant many undocumented youth access to legal residency, work authorization, and eventual citizenship. This bill would provide a status that matches the American identity they already have and an opportunity for them to fully contribute to the U.S. economy and their communities (Source: U.S. Jesuit Conference).

### Reduces Future Undocumented Immigration:

The only way to reduce undocumented immigration is to fix our immigration system so that people seeking work and family reunification can enter legally. For undocumented immigrants who are already here, we must provide a realistic way for them to adjust their status by passing background checks, learning English, and paying taxes if they aren’t already, while working toward citizenship. Our faith teaches us that people have a right to migrate—this is not amnesty. It is the only smart, practical, faithful way to deal with the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

### Creates Safe and Humane Borders:

Professionalized, accountable, and humane enforcement of immigration laws should be part of any comprehensive immigration reform package. This will involve providing more robust and transparent oversight of all agencies responsible for enforcement measures (USCIS, CBP, and ICE) and a change in detention and deportation practices to preserve immigrants’ dignity and safety. These changes should include eliminating nighttime deportations, keeping families together during the deportation process, and allowing NGOs to access Customs and Border Patrol facilities (Source: Kino Border Initiative).

### Improves the Economy:

As legalization and naturalization of undocumented immigrants bolsters their wages, helps bring families out of poverty, and increases tax revenue, it will strengthen our economy and reduce our budget deficit.

## OUR REQUESTS:

Will the Congressperson publically support and vote for a bill that includes the following principles?

- Create an accessible pathway to citizenship for all 11 million people without documentation;
- Support young people without documentation by enacting the DREAM Act;
- Work to maintain family unity in all elements of the immigration system;
- Protect the most vulnerable, especially refugees & asylum seekers;
- Respect the rights of U.S. and immigrant workers;
- Ensure the human rights of immigrant families...as our immigration laws are enforced.

# SAMPLE LEAVE BEHIND

Leave behinds should be kept under one page and include relevant facts and asks.

[Institutional Letterhead Logo]

Ignatian Solidarity Network urges the Congressperson to **support comprehensive immigration reform** (CIR) by publically supporting and voting for a bill that creates an accessible pathway to citizenship for all 11 million people without documentation, works to maintain family unity in all elements of the immigration system, protect the most vulnerable, especially refugees and asylum seekers, respects the rights of U.S. and immigrant workers, and ensures the human rights of immigrant families as our immigration laws are enforced.

Further, ISN asks the Congressperson to be **vocal in opposition of legislation that devalues immigrants** and the contributions they make to our communities and economy.

**More information:**

Christopher Kerr  
Ignatian Solidarity Network  
(216)-397-2080  
[ckerr@igantiansolidarity.net](mailto:ckerr@igantiansolidarity.net)

## BACKGROUND

Catholic Social Teaching tells us that it is our “duty to welcome the foreigner out of charity and respect for the dignity and rights of the human person.” Currently there are 36 million foreign-born immigrants living in the United States, 11 million of whom are undocumented. Under current legislation there is no pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who consider the United States home and contribute \$10 billion annually to state and local tax revenues.

## CIR PROTECTS THE VULNERABLE

Creating a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants helps keep families together, and prevents children from needlessly being placed in foster care. Refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people will face a fairer, more efficient system that respects human dignity.

## CIR PROMOTES A SAFER BORDER

The misguided border militarization of the last decade has cost \$100 billion, doubled the size of the Border Patrol without sufficient screening, training or accountability, led to over 6,000 dead and murdered immigrants, and allowed widespread civil and human rights violations.

## CIR REDUCES FUTURE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRATION

The only way to reduce undocumented immigration is to fix our broken immigration system, so people seeking work and family reunification can enter with documentation. For current undocumented immigrants, we must provide a realistic way for them to adjust their status by passing background checks, learning English, and paying taxes if they aren't already, while working toward citizenship. Our faith teaches us that people have a right to migrate—this is not amnesty. It is the only smart, practical, faithful way to deal with the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.



# SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

Thank you letters or emails should be sent within seven days of your meeting. Be sure to include answers to questions or resources mentioned during the meeting as email attachments or additional materials.

[Institutional Letterhead Logo]

[Date]

The Honorable [Representative's/Senator's full name]  
U.S. House of Representatives/U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C., 20515/20510

Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

We are writing to thank you/your staffer, [Name of staff], for taking time out of your/his/her busy schedule to meet with us about humane immigration reform, U.S. policy toward Central America, and climate change [Or issues discussed]. It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to discuss these issues in person on [Date].

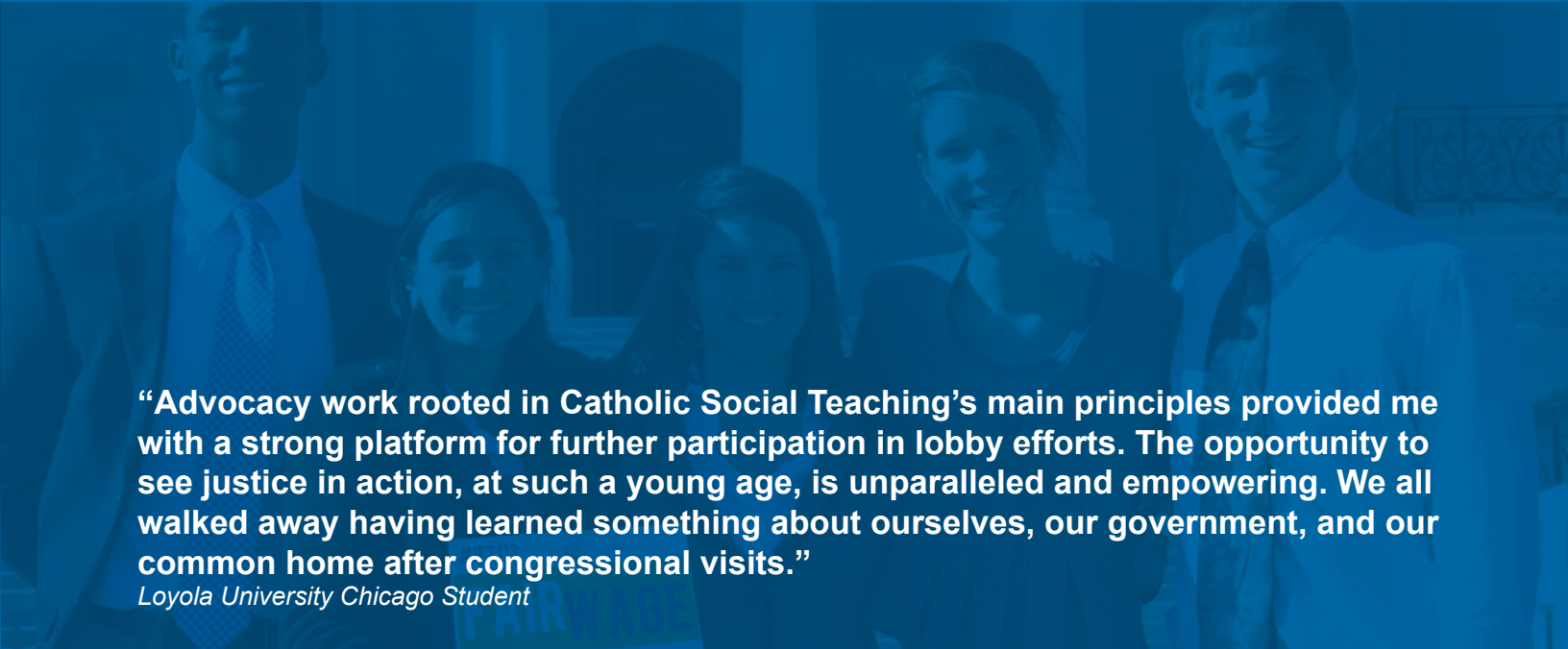
Our group included [Number] constituents from [State/Congressional district]. We represent a large and diverse portion of the Jesuit network and we thank you for taking our concerns seriously. Please update us on your work on immigration reform, U.S. policy toward Central America, and environmental justice.

As the materials we left at your office demonstrate, humane immigration reform, U.S. policy toward Central America, and environmental justice are important issues to Jesuit institutions. We represent a growing consensus in our community that believes a broken immigration system, U.S.-aided militarization & impunity in Central America, and outdated environmental policy has resulted in far too much suffering and inequality domestically and abroad. We call on the U.S. government to take an active and even-handed role in bringing about reform in all three areas of our concern. This requires a bipartisan effort to bring about the change for which we, the constituents, want.

Again, we thank [You/name of staff] for [Your/his/her] time and consideration. We are happy to send additional materials and supporting documents like those we left at your office. Should you or [Name of staff] have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact, [Name], [Phone number], [Email]. We look forward to a follow-up meeting and further work with you on these critical issues.

Sincerely,

[Name]  
[Title]  
[Institution]



**“Advocacy work rooted in Catholic Social Teaching’s main principles provided me with a strong platform for further participation in lobby efforts. The opportunity to see justice in action, at such a young age, is unparalleled and empowering. We all walked away having learned something about ourselves, our government, and our common home after congressional visits.”**

*Loyola University Chicago Student*

Pictured: A group of Creighton University and Creighton Preparatory students advocated for a fair minimum wage during Ignatian Family Advocacy Day.

Photo Credit: Jeff Peak

## LET'S GET STARTED

Having familiarized yourself with the resources in this guide, you should be just about ready to get out there and start advocating. As you do, know that other members of the Ignatian family are joining in the same process all across the country.

After you've finished preparing, practicing, meeting, and following up on your advocacy visit, please let us know how your visit went by going to [igsol.net/advocacy](https://igsol.net/advocacy). By sharing with us the office you met with, the issues you discussed, and how the office responded to your ask, we and our colleagues at the Jesuit Conference can incorporate your experiences into our on-going advocacy efforts. In this way, we all contribute to a shared cause and have the best chances of bringing about the changes our society so deeply needs.

Advocacy gives us a chance to participate and contribute to the functioning of our democracy. As people of faith, we believe that each and every person deserves to have their voice heard. By advocating for issues of justice, we give voice to the marginalized voices of our brothers and sisters who might otherwise go unheard by those in positions of power in our country.

**[igsol.net/advocacy](https://igsol.net/advocacy)**

### 6 Tips for Effective Advocacy:

1. Take time to educate yourself on the issues.
2. Prepare as a group.
3. Advocacy is a long process, so don't get discouraged if the meeting doesn't go exactly how you want.
4. Make your advocacy a relationship by staying in touch with the legislator or staffer you met with and telling them how you're engaging the issue.
5. Follow up with ISN via [igsol.net/advocacy](https://igsol.net/advocacy). When the whole Ignatian family engages issues together, we're far more effective than we are individually.
6. Have fun!