

Talking Points for Your Office Visits

Tips for a Successful Visit

- Briefly introduce yourself: your name and, if you are a constituent, where you are from.
- **State your “ask:” i.e., please support or oppose this policy.**
- Explain the problem and its significance. Share how our proposed legislation or policy would help. If applicable, designate *one* person to share a relevant personal story.
- Listen! Make sure you leave ample time to listen to the Member or staff.
- Offer to be a resource or send additional information, and remember to provide the leave-behinds.
- Follow up! Email a “thank you” note and continue to build the relationship.

Share JCPA's Unique Value

- The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) is the national umbrella body of the Jewish community relations field, representing 125 Jewish community relations councils (JCRCs) across the nation and 16 national Jewish agencies, including all four streams of religious Judaism. This network affords JCPA unparalleled capacity to mobilize grassroots Jewish activism.
- Together our network builds consensus on behalf of the entire Jewish community to promote a just and pluralistic American society, advocate for human rights around the world, and support Israel's quest for peace and security.
- Our unique value is that we are the only organization that convenes national and local Jewish groups to develop policy, vet emerging issues, and then advocate with legislators and leaders from communities across racial, civic, and faith-based lines.
- The majority of JCRCs are part of their community's Jewish Federation and carry out both JCPA's and the Federation's public affairs, public policy, and intergroup relations work locally.

(flip for talking points on priority issues)

Talking Points on Priority Issues

IMMIGRATION

End Family Separation and Detention

Ask: Urge the Administration to rescind the “zero tolerance” policy, which remains in force, and immediately reunify all separated families. Congress should cut funding for family detention, reject all proposals that would expand child or family detention, and invest instead in effective community-based alternatives to detention.

- Separating children inflicts irreparable psychological trauma on both parents and children, many of whom have already experienced trauma. Hundreds of children remain without their parents despite a court order that mandated reunification by July 26.
- Expanding family detention is not the answer to family separation. Jailing asylum seekers and children is inhumane and cruel. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) should reserve detention for those who pose a threat to the U.S.
- The existing health and welfare standards enshrined in the 1997 Flores Settlement are critical to protecting children from long-term detention and should not be overturned so that authorities can detain families indefinitely, especially given the widespread opposition from medical professionals and ongoing reports of abuse in ICE custody.
- Community-based alternatives to detention are more humane and less costly than detention. For example, the Family Case Management Program, which the Administration ended in 2017, released families together, without ankle monitors, and ensured compliance by providing them with case management and legal counseling. The program had a 99.6% appearance rate at immigration court hearings and a 75% appearance rate for deportations, at a cost of just \$36 a day per family. Detaining a family costs almost \$800 a day.

Protect the Refugee Resettlement Program

Ask: Protect the integrity of the Refugee Resettlement Program by ensuring that U.S. resettles the full 30,000 refugees in FY 2019, providing adequate funding to keep the program open, and reviving bipartisan Congressional support for refugee resettlement.

- The U.S. refugee resettlement cap is currently set at just 30,000, the lowest ceiling set by any president since the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program was created in 1980. JCPA believes that this cap is woefully inadequate, especially given that we are facing the worst refugee crisis in history—68 million people are forcibly displaced due to violence and persecution, with over 25 million of them being refugees.
- The U.S. has one of the most stringent vetting programs in the world. We are concerned that public frustration with the current failed immigration system is fueling racist and xenophobic views that blame immigrants for our nation’s problems. We cannot allow our immigration laws to become a tool for hate.

- JCPA is a strong proponent of increasing the refugee numbers, and we urge Members to support a ceiling of 75,000 for FY 2020, which we believe is still inadequate. As a nation built by immigrants and refugees, the U.S. should seek to maximize, not minimize, the number of people we welcome and protect. Closing our nation’s doors to immigrants and refugees contradicts our fundamental belief in “welcoming the stranger.” Newcomers are an essential to the fabric of our society, enriching our culture and boosting our economy.

Provide a Pathway to Citizenship for Dreamers

Ask: Pass a clean Dream Act that provides a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers without harming other immigrant groups.

- Through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), many Dreamers—undocumented immigrant youth brought to the U.S. as children—have come forward, passed background checks, and now lived and work in the U.S.
- In a 2016 study, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center found that over 87% of DACA recipients are working, paying taxes, and providing for their families.
- While DACA provided temporary relief, we believe Dreamers deserve the opportunity to live, work, and study in the U.S, the only country—the only home, many of them know without constant fear of detention and deportation.
- However, it is important that protecting Dreamers not be used as a bargaining chip to place other immigrants at risk, prevent family reunification, or violate civil rights.
- Although the Supreme Court’s actions have provided temporary relief, it is imperative that we pass a permanent solution.

Oppose the “Public Charge” Rule

Ask: Oppose public charge rule, which would decrease legal immigrants’ access to many of the federal safety net programs long supported by the Jewish community and force millions to forego needed medical, mental health, and nutrition services. These programs help new immigrants be productive and integrate into the U.S.

- The proposed rules would significantly expand the list of programs that may be grounds for denying a visa or green card to including Medicaid, federal nutrition assistance, and Section 8 housing vouchers and rental assistance.
- These changes would essentially force legal immigrant families to choose between their legal residency and meeting their family’s basic needs, such food, shelter, and medical care. Studies show that legal immigrants use public benefits at lower rates than U.S. citizens while paying more in taxes than they use in benefits.
- Health care, housing, and nutrition assistance programs help immigrants thrive and remain productive. Under the proposed changes, legal immigrants who use such benefits may be denied lawful residency when they apply for a change or extension of their visa or green card

- In the 1930s, the State Department used changes to public charge rules to deny Jews and other immigrant groups fleeing persecution entry into the U.S. As Jews, we must not allow other immigrants to suffer the same fate.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Pass Bipartisan Sentencing Reform

Ask: Ensure that reform legislation include robust sentencing reform that reduces disproportionate mandatory minimums, grants judges greater discretion, and enables people who are already sentenced to have the opportunity to petition for sentencing reductions.

- We cannot delay addressing the crisis of mass incarceration in the United States. We strongly urge Congress to move forward with reform measures that reduce mandatory minimums, which are the single largest factor in the growth of our prison population.
- JCPA is deeply concerned that the current iteration of the FIRST STEP Act, the subject of ongoing negotiations, lacks sentencing reform, relies on discriminatory “risk assessment” tools that will exacerbate racial disparities, and further criminalizes immigration violations.
- We urge Members to support merging the FIRST STEP Act with the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (S. 1917), a bill that JCPA has long supported. Although we are concerned about the establishment of new mandatory minimums, use of “risk assessment” tools, and lack of alternatives to incarceration, we believe this bill would be a pivotal step in ending mass incarceration. While JCPA opposes “risk assessment” tools, we believe that Congress can mitigate damage by ensuring that such systems account for people’s needs, as well as their risks.
- JCPA also urges Congress to reauthorize the Second Chance Act, which helps remove barriers to reentry and provide second chances to formerly incarcerated people by investing in reentry, job training, and educational programs that increase employment and reduce recidivism.