
A Quick Guide to Political Advocacy

2019

As citizens in a democracy, our elected officials represent us. The votes they take and the policies they devise are due to the authority we give them. Therefore, it is actually our responsibility to inform our leaders about important subjects in our community and the world. This is especially true when we have gained unique subject knowledge, or had a unique experience that they are unlikely to have had. As a Telos alumnus, this is the unique position you are in. You have seen what many have not. You have made friends with Israelis and Palestinians who have shared and trusted their stories with you, and urged you to go and tell others. So why not go and tell the most influential people you can? Is this not simply good stewardship?

While many of us may not want to be political, the reality is that politics is simply what happens when two or more people have to make a decision. This is no less true for Israel/Palestine. The United States has long been the most influential third-side in this conflict (see our [Why Should I Care?](#) doc for more information about U.S. influence) and therefore, it is essential that our representatives who make policy affecting our friends in Israel-Palestine do so with the full knowledge of our views. It's our duty to let them know what we've seen and where we stand so that they can make an informed decision about how to best represent us.

We hope your experience with us led to a powerful internal transformation. But we sincerely hope that transformation also has outward, tangible effects that lead to more light, love, and peace in the world. Sharing your story with your leaders is one of the most effective ways your experience can have broader, positive impact.

9 Steps to Advocacy:

1. Vote

2. Identify your elected representatives:

- [Visit this website](#) and type in your zip-code to find your Representative.
- To find your Senators, [go here](#) and scroll down until you find your State.

3. Contact them and don't be intimidated. It's our job in a democracy to inform our leaders, and their job to listen and represent us.

4: Do some research beforehand to help you build that relationship. Especially helpful is to know where they stand on issues pertaining to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, peacemaking, and justice. This is useful information that will enable you to tailor your story to your audience.

5. Craft your message. See our ['Share Your Story Guide'](#) for tips on how to communicate your pro/pro/pro message effectively.

6. Be prepared and grateful to meet with a staff member, and not the elected official him/herself. Be prepared for that staff member to be very young and have an enormous amount of knowledge on the subject at hand, or next to none. Our elected leaders are very busy and it is very unlikely for them to meet with you directly. However, they have a team of overworked and underpaid staff whose job it is to take meetings like yours and represent the office. These young staffers are the ones who advise their bosses on legislation and how to vote. Meeting with them can often be more helpful since they may give you more time and attention than the elected official would. So, whomever you meet with, be grateful for their time and treat them with the same respect as you would if you were meeting with your representative directly.

7: Build a relationship! We want to charge you to do advocacy well. To not walk into an office hostile and with a list of demands, but with a humble desire to listen, learn, and understand better. Political offices are used to angry phone calls. Our hope is that pro/pro/pro advocates model their beliefs in their dialogues with those they may disagree with. Ask questions. Ask about where the leader currently stands and what concerns they have. Ask how you can support and even pray for them (1Tim 2:1-3). Remember: our elected officials are public servants but more importantly, they are people to be loved and not simply subjects to be converted on an issue. So do what you can to love them, and as you do, they will be more likely to hear your heart in the stories you share and your desire for security, dignity, and freedom for all who live in Israel-Palestine.

8. Be prepared for the long haul. Your representative and their office will not be changed after one letter, phone call, or meeting. It will take time. It will likely take a number of points of contact. Don't take it personally if they do not respond or do not appear to be moved by your arguments. You are one of thousands of constituents they serve and your message is one of thousands they have to consider. Be patient. At Telos, we are building a movement and, as time goes on, it will strengthen in numbers and influence. So right now, you may be one of a few pro/pro/pro voices your elected leader hears, but we are committed to equipping thousands more like yourself who will eventually come alongside you to amplify your voice. Your advocacy is important now, but it will be just as important five and ten years from now.

9. Let us know! We would not only welcome the opportunity to assist you in framing your dialogues, but it is vital that we follow who in our network is talking to which leaders. This allows us to help you coordinate messages, and enables us to track progress on how individual members are voting and speaking about key bills pertaining to Israel/Palestine.

For all of us as citizens in a democracy, it is our duty to engage and concern ourselves with the activities of those elected to represent us. And that includes sharing our experiences in Israel-Palestine and our desire to see pro/pro/pro policies that build towards peace and justice there. We thank you in advance for taking this courageous and disruptive step on behalf of our Israeli and Palestinian friends, and on behalf of a more peaceful and just world.