



ADVOCATING FOR NLC'S AGENDA



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



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Dear City Leader:

Thank you for serving as an advocate on behalf of the National League of Cities and America's cities and towns. As a leader in your community, you are uniquely positioned to help members of Congress and the Administration understand the direct impact of federal action at the local level. By joining together, our voice in Washington is strengthened because we represent not only our hometowns, but also 19,000 cities and towns across America.

We live in difficult times. Our residents and our communities face real hardships. We, as leaders, need to imagine new possibilities for our hometowns, and we must show federal decision makers how investment in cities and towns will create jobs and bring about the innovation needed to help our economy recover.

This year, NLC has established an "Agenda for Economic Growth." This agenda identifies key actions the federal government can take to create jobs and advance economic prosperity nationwide. As part of this agenda, we are calling upon Congress and the Administration to authorize a new federal surface transportation program, fix the country's broken immigration system, and protect federal investments in effective programs, such as the Community Development Block Grant program.

Never has there been a better time for you as a local leader to open a dialogue with your congressional delegation and the Administration, both in Washington, D.C., and at home. Show and tell them how effective these federal programs have been in your community and what continued federal support means to the residents of your community.

Throughout the year, NLC's Federal Relations team will provide tools and resources to help you communicate with these officials as we work together to advance NLC's Agenda for Economic Growth. Together, we must ensure that the White House and Congress work in partnership with the nation's local leaders so that our communities can prosper.

I sincerely appreciate all you do for NLC, especially your continued commitment to making our cities and towns great!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James E. Mitchell, Jr." in a cursive script.

James E. Mitchell, Jr.
Council Member, Charlotte, North Carolina



BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

“When you need a friend, it’s too late to make one.” —Mark Twain

- Get to know your member of Congress before you have a request for action.
- Find out which staff members work on issues of importance to your community.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and local official—you already share a common goal of serving others in your city or town.
- Familiarize yourself with your member’s legislative position on the issue.
- Be positive and treat staff as you would your member of Congress.
- Follow up with staffers to ensure the member receives your message.

SHARE YOUR STORY

“All politics is local.” —Tip O’Neill

- Personalize requests for your community by telling an anecdote, local story, or statistics of how something will affect your hometown.
- Send a thank you e-mail and follow up with additional information.
- Back at home, invite your member of Congress to visit an area in your community affected by the piece of legislation.
- The more personal and direct your method of contact, the greater the influence—your federal representatives want to know why you care.

NLC’S FEDERAL RELATIONS TEAM

CAROLYN COLEMAN
Director, Center for Federal Relations
202.626.3023, coleman@nlc.org

CAROLYN BERNDT
Principal Associate
Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee
202.626.3101, berndt@nlc.org

NEIL BOMBERG
Program Director
Human Development Committee
202.626.3042, bomberg@nlc.org

LAURA BONAVITA
Principal Associate
Information Technology and Communications Committee
202.626.3037, bonavita@nlc.org

LARS ETZKORN
Program Director
Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations Committee
202.626.3173, etzkorn@nlc.org

MITCH HERCKIS
Principal Associate
Public Safety and Crime Prevention Committee
202.626.3124, herckis@nlc.org

STACEY LEVITT
Senior Associate, Member Outreach
202.626.3196, levitt@nlc.org

STEPHANIE SPIRER
Senior Associate, Policy and Legislation
202.626.3030, spirer@nlc.org

MIKE WALLACE
Program Director
Community and Economic Development Committee
202.626.3025, wallace@nlc.org

LESLIE WOLLACK
Program Director
Transportation Infrastructure and Services Committee
202.626.3029, wollack@nlc.org

BE CLEAR ON YOUR REQUEST

“If you don’t ask, you don’t get.” —Mahatma Gandhi

- Ask for specific legislative action or support; it is what your member of Congress expects.
- Reference the legislation you are addressing; include the bill number and title, if available.
- Briefly and respectfully state your position.
- Be concise and accurate in your presentation.

NLC ADVOCACY RESOURCES

NLC serves as the voice of America’s cities and towns in Washington. Together with the 49 state municipal leagues, we translate NLC’s legislative priorities—your Agenda for Economic Growth—into action on Capitol Hill by building relationships, crafting advocacy strategies and influencing federal action that affects local communities.

NLC offers the following resources so you can stay up to date on what we are working on in Washington and continue your advocacy efforts in your hometown:

NLC website www.nlc.org

Federal Relations Update, a bi-weekly NLC e-newsletter summarizing the latest federal developments affecting cities and towns

Nation’s Cities Weekly, NLC’s weekly print and online newspaper

Issue briefs providing background information on NLC’s Agenda for Economic Growth and other federal policy issues

Legislative briefings at committee, council and panel meetings, state municipal league meetings and national conferences

Support for lobby days during the NLC Congressional City Conference and strategic times throughout the year

AMERICA'S CITIES AND TOWNS CALL ON THE 112TH CONGRESS TO:

- Authorize a well-funded long-term, comprehensive surface transportation program that acknowledges local decision-making authority, collaborates with state and local governments, supports sustainable multimodal choices, invests in outcome-oriented solutions, and maintains a strong federal role.
- Support full funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program because it serves as a catalyst for financing housing, infrastructure, and economic development in America's cities and towns.
- Fix the country's broken immigration system by adopting a comprehensive policy that addresses both enforcement and integration efforts.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION:



- **PERSONAL VISITS:** Meet with your members of Congress and their staff in Washington or in their district offices back home. Likewise, federal agencies have representatives in Washington and around the country.



- **PHONE CALLS:** A well-timed telephone call can be very effective in sending your message, especially before key votes or actions.



- **E-MAIL:** Sending a letter via email can be highly efficient and effective if you want to get your message across instantly.

HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY LETTER

Use your own personal letterhead if the city's or town's is not available.

OURTOWN
The Place to Be

1357 Main Street
Ourtown, ST 11111
(123) 456 – 7890
www.ourtown.gov
twitter.com/cityofourtown

March 13, 2011

The Honorable Jane Doe
United States House of Representatives
246 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Address the letter to your legislator, the bill's sponsor, the chair of the Committee considering the legislation, or the leadership of the House or Senate, whichever is applicable.

Sent via e-mail

Re: H.R. 1234

Indicate which bill you are addressing by its bill number.

Get to the point of the letter quickly and state your support or opposition of the bill.

Dear Representative Doe:

I am writing to express the City of Ourtown's strong opposition to H.R. 1234, which includes proposed cuts to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The bill is currently in the House Committee on Appropriations.

We oppose H.R. 1234 for several reasons:

Summarize key reasons for supporting or opposing the bill, including explaining how the bill will help or harm your city.

1. CDBG directly improves the quality of life for your constituents. We often use CDBG funding for local infrastructure, fixing streets and building sidewalks that make our city more accessible for businesses and more welcoming for families.
2. The CDBG program is an effective tool for building partnerships among government, service providers, businesses and community organizations. By using CDBG projects as a stepping stone, we have formed a team of problem-solvers who want to make Ourtown a place where families enjoy living and neighbors work together.
3. In our city, the CDBG funding we received last year has created or saved 45 new jobs, been leveraged with private companies to help five small businesses grow, and built new sewer systems through three neighborhoods. Cutting CDBG funding now would impede further job creation and economic development.

For these reasons, and for the benefit of your constituents and the place they call home, I urge you to protect CDBG funds and oppose H.R. 1234. I will be contacting your office soon to discuss your position on this important bill.

Let the legislator know you will be following up on your letter.

Sincerely,

Ann Q. Public
Council Member, City of Ourtown

cc: National League of Cities

Please keep NLC informed.