



A GUIDE TO
PRESSURING
YOUR CONGRESSIONAL
REPRESENTATIVE
TO SUPPORT

Medicare for *All*



DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

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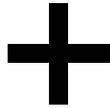
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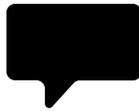
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For more information, contact the national campaign committee at medicareforall@dsausa.org. Be sure to check out our Medicare for All website at medicareforall.dsausa.org, where you can find an online version of this booklet, links to editable versions of campaign materials, more “how-to”s, reports from chapters from around the country, and more!

ABOUT DSA

Democratic Socialists for Medicare for All is a campaign organized and paid for by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). DSA is the largest and fastest growing socialist organization in the United States. We are a member-funded, member-run, and democratically accountable organization that fights for a political agenda that puts working people at the center. We believe that if we are to take on the enormous power of our political elite and their billionaire donors we need an organization that truly represents the needs, aspirations and desires of the working-class majority.

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DSA for Medicare for All Campaign

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Published in January 2019

INTRODUCTION

As democratic socialists, the fight for an uncompromising Medicare for All — one that guarantees free-at-use care to all through a single, public program — is a singular way to organize working people around a demand that will materially improve their lives. We have the power and the numbers to make it happen: 70% of Americans support Medicare for All, including 85% of Democrats and 52% of Republicans. Winning Medicare for All will save the average working person thousands of dollars per year, while guaranteeing healthcare security to every single American resident. Not only this, but it will democratize nearly one-fifth of the US economy by eliminating a massive, parasitic industry in a major blow against capital.

2019 presents a unique opportunity for the Democratic Socialists for Medicare for All campaign: to be a key player in pushing HR 676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All

Act, to a vote in the House of Representatives. DSA is not alone in this work. National Nurses United, along with nearly 30 other national and local unions and progressive organizations are coordinating to take advantage of this moment. Since Bernie Sanders' presidential run in 2016, single-payer advocates have been successfully turning Medicare for All into a litmus test for politicians. A floor vote in the House will force representatives to finally reveal whether they're on the side of healthcare profiteers or the side of the working class.

Americans have been fighting for single-payer healthcare for over a century, and at various points have pushed the policy to the brink of becoming a reality. But time and again advocates were unable to overcome the unwavering opposition of the private insurance industry, pharmaceutical companies,

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and the American Medical Association. Healthcare profiteers have already begun their latest assault on Medicare for All — we're seeing a wave of public option proposals intended to undermine our movement, as well as key committee appointments being handed to corporate Democrats.

What we need now to fight back against this assault is an unshakeable working-class movement capable of forcing politicians to reject lobbyist influence. Now is the time to be clear about our demands and pressure politicians to get on board. Pushing a floor vote in the House not only tests the political strength of the movement to make that happen, it also sends the bill to the Senate, calling the question there. Though we know Medicare for All will not become a reality under the Trump administration, a House

floor vote is the best “Which side are you on?” political opportunity in 2019 and sets the stage to make Medicare for All the decisive issue of 2020.

Every chapter and organizing committee in DSA can be involved in this campaign, as every single House rep can improve their position on Medicare for All. For progressive Democrats who already co-sponsor HR 676, chapters can push them to join the Medicare for All caucus and to become a vocal champion of single-payer healthcare using our campaign’s principles. We need progressive reps to be clear that *the public option is not an option*. Even Republican reps can be made to feel the heat: 52% of their constituents support Medicare for All, and we should try to activate those supporters to become involved in the fight.

Momentum has been rapidly building, and 2019 is the year for us to raise the political stakes. It’s time to send the message that Medicare for All is inevitable, and that we won’t

accept any compromises.

This guide will help your chapter plan out a pressure campaign on your House rep. The first chapter talks about the ways in which to build and participate strategically in local coalitions; the second discusses planning and preparing for a meeting with your rep; and the third offers a variety of tactics for escalating pressure on your rep.

With the right planning, a strategic orientation, and a good bit of gall, pressure tactics can win great concessions from elected representatives. The gaps in party structure allow pressure groups to have an outsized influence over politicians, especially if those groups can marshal a large number of constituents for their cause. With a large field operation and an active membership, DSA is in a unique position to bring pressure to bear on House reps, and like never before, now is the time to do so.

Here are some strategic questions to help you decide how to approach your pressure campaign:

What does my chapter need to employ this tactic effectively, and do we have those resources?

If the answer is “no,” get in touch with your regional organizer from DSA’s Medicare for All campaign, and let’s problem solve together!

Does this tactic make my chapter or coalition look organized, mobilized, and plugged into a larger strategy?

When talking to your rep or their staff, make it clear how organized you are, i.e. “We knocked on 500 doors in the last two weeks [demonstrates people power], and we talked to hundreds of voters who support Medicare for All [demonstrates broad base of support], which we defined as involving these five principles [shows that there is no wiggle room on what we’re asking for].”

Does this tactic build power in my chapter or coalition?

Will it be visible enough to attract the attention of potential new members?

If not, how can we get more press attention? Can we increase our social media presence? How can we reach people who wouldn’t have heard about us if we hadn’t done this action?

Will it spread organizing skills throughout the membership?

Will more people learn to canvass through this action? Or learn to have a one-on-one? Or learn to conduct research on an elected official? Or learn more about healthcare policy? Can this be used to develop new leaders? Or to build out the infrastructure of our chapter?

If not, how can we adjust so that we are using this campaign to strengthen our chapter?

1



**BUILDING
A LOCAL
COALITION**

When your chapter starts a campaign to pressure a congressperson to sign on to Medicare for All, it's important to realistically assess your capacity and power. Very few DSA chapters are large enough or have enough clout to swing a congressional election on their own and, as such, cannot expect to move a congressperson to sign onto Medicare for All without the assistance of other organized groups. Even if you could get every member of your chapter involved in your campaign (and you likely can't do that), you're still going to need the help of other organized groups to win the reforms you want.

To build an effective coalition, your chapter needs to be able to identify good potential coalition partners, create specific agreed-upon shared goals, and develop an overarching strategy to achieve those goals that all coalition partners agree on. This is easier said than done, and it can be tempting to simply identify a few potential partners, jump into action, and figure everything out as you go. This can work in some situations, but it can also

open the door to dysfunction, conflict, and other serious obstacles for your campaign. So it's probably worth planning out your coalition strategy ahead of time before launching your campaign.

WHAT ISN'T A COALITION?

A coalition is sometimes conflated with a community or with a collaboration. A community's dominant feature is shared values. A collaboration's dominant feature is shared tactics. A coalition, on the other hand, has a shared goal and strategy. Often times, coalitions build and encompass community and collaboration, but a **defined goal and affirmed strategy** are what set coalitions apart.

Entering into a coalition is **not entering into a life-long partnership**. It's pulling power together to achieve something concrete. Relationships built in coalition can facilitate further work, but there is no formal expectation to continue in coalition after the strategy has been executed. Coalitions are in it to win it.

Relationships
built within
and through
coalition
reveal
potential
overlaps in
values and
build the
groundwork
for future
collaborative
action.

WHAT IS A COALITION?

A coalition is a group of organizations and individuals who are invested in and equipped to pursue a specific demand. These groups may be organizations whose work naturally encompasses this goal, or they may be formed to address that goal specifically. They may be generally like-minded, or their politics outside of the specific issue may differ wildly. Because the make-up of a coalition may vary so broadly, it is important to define and respect the boundaries established by the coalition from the start.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COALITION WORK?

Campaigns run in coalition have more access to power and influence. Some of this is direct, some is by association. Who do the members of your coalition have relationships with or power over that you, as an organization, do not? Certain coalition partners may be better at mobilizing particular

demographic groups (ex: people of color, retired people).

Relationships built within and through coalition reveal potential overlaps in values and build the groundwork for future collaborative action and other coalitions. For example, when we leverage the stake unions have in Medicare for All through coalition work, we may be able to revisit those bases of power in the future to do work around fair labor practices or building new unions.

Coalition work also brings multiple levels of experience to our still-young organization. For example, working with coalition members who have strong media relationships gives us exposure to writing effective press releases and op-eds, and giving moving interviews. Working alongside research-focused groups can develop our power mapping and policy-writing skills.

WHAT CAN DSA BRING TO COALITION WORK?

People! More than anything else, DSA is willing and able

to reach out to mass numbers of community members. As a membership-based organization with no board or donors to appease, DSA can activate any affected portion of the community.

Additionally, DSA can be intentional about **framing issues in terms of class consciousness**. Most activist groups are tied to a liberal vision of society in which people get together to pursue specific reforms within capitalism. DSA can look past this view of society and frame work around individual reforms as part of a broader struggle for sweeping change. This framing can motivate people to work for an issue that may not otherwise resonate. Speaking in terms of power can move people into thinking about the underlying systems that govern society and bring those people into action against those powers.

The outreach and consciousness generated by DSA are invaluable contributions that we make to coalition work. We have the adaptability to find tactics

that are effective and utilize them to rouse people who are not typically accustomed to political action. We bring the “rabble.”

WHAT DOES DSA RISK IN COALITION WORK?

Without a clear and closely followed strategy, DSA risks our reputation in coalition work. If certain partners act out of turn, other members and potential allies may end up having a negative association with all coalition members, including DSA. When identifying partners, it’s worth thinking about how associating with a given coalition partner might affect your chapter’s reputation and whether it’s worth the risk. A police union might be a powerful ally in a given campaign, but working with a police union would seriously affect your chapter’s ability to engage in criminal justice reform work in the future.

Internally, DSA risks cultural conflict with partners. With communication and healthy feedback loops, some of this

conflict can be amended. But some coalitions will find themselves at internal odds if their values do not align enough to generate agreeable tactics. If your chapter wants to engage in tactics like disrupting events held by political figures, you might come into conflict with your coalition partners who rely on a close relationship with those figures to pursue their other work.

Finally, if coalitions are not carefully developed, DSA can risk winning; groups that are not fully committed to a strategic demand can end up limiting or obstructing the goal, especially if you rely on those groups for key contributions. And groups that aren’t committed to following a shared strategy can engage in counterproductive actions that move you further from your goal.

WHAT ARE BEHAVIORS THAT BUILD TRUST IN COALITION WORK?

Trust is achieved through repeated activity and work.

Trusted coalition members show up for the strategic, value-adding role that they've accepted. Coalitions are effective when they consistently hold each other accountable for the work that they've accepted and within the timeline agreed upon. But coalitions can also create space for feedback and for asking for one other's help, growth opportunities that also generate further trust.

WHAT ARE BEHAVIORS THAT DESTROY TRUST IN COALITION WORK?

Since coalition trust is built within the parameters of agreed-upon demands and tactics, destroying trust often happens by **acting outside of agreed-upon parameters**. When a coalition partner does this, it can cause serious problems within the coalition. If DSA

is in a coalition to pressure a specific congressperson and a coalition partner unexpectedly announces their support for that congressperson's opponent, it would likely leave DSA's organizers upset and distrustful of their coalition partners. Likewise, assuming consensus in actions such as bringing in new partners and sending out press releases can diminish a coalition. The goals and strategies of a coalition should not shift without the explicit confirmation of everyone working within it.

Within the parameters of a campaign, coalition trust can be destroyed by work that is not timely or of the expected quality. And, when a particular group takes a turn away, disassociation should be formalized and communicated, not left up to hearsay and speculation.

Trust is achieved through repeated activity and work.

WHO SHOULD BE IN YOUR COALITION?

If you're familiar with power mapping, you should try to build coalitions with groups and individuals on the top left of your power map. That means you should target potential coalition partners who **strongly agree with your objective** and **have the power to help win that objective**. This is important: it can be tempting

congressperson but might be willing to declare victory if that congressperson were to come out in favor of a public option. Other groups may share your goal of Medicare for All but might not have much in the way of resources to offer and can make reaching shared tactics complicated or challenging. For example, you may be able to get an activist group to sign on in support in

Try to identify potential coalition partners who are committed to your goal and have something concrete to contribute.

to want to reach out to every activist group in the area to buttress your coalition, but it's worthwhile trying to figure out how they would play into your coalition.

A powerful group that isn't committed to Medicare for All could crowd out DSA and compromise on your stated goals. For example, a local Democratic Party might have a lot of sway over a

exchange for a seat at the table, but if that group isn't able to contribute anything in terms of people power, access to the media, or financial resources, you might not want to go to the trouble of adding another seat at the table. You should try to identify potential coalition partners who are committed to your goal and have something concrete to contribute.

When considering potential coalition partners, it's important to think about what your campaign needs are that other groups may be better-equipped to fulfill. Policy developers and researchers fall into this category. As do organizations with access to specific people (ie, labor, medical workers, a target's constituency). Does your coalition have any groups who have a high level of knowledge of the medical field? Does your coalition reflect the demographics of the congressperson's district? Have any of your potential partners demonstrated an ability to influence your target in the past?

HOW DO YOU GET YOUR COALITION OFF THE GROUND?

Once you've identified your potential coalition partners, reach out to them with the basics of the campaign you're proposing. Ask to have a conference call or an in-person meeting to discuss the parameters of the coalition

(goal, strategy, tactics, timeline). Is there anyone in your chapter with a natural connection to a potential partner? For example, a member of a union you want to partner with? It's usually easier to go through existing connections rather than contacting someone out of the blue.

If you're not sure how best to get in touch with your coalition partners, is there someone you know who might know the lay of the land a little better? If your chapter doesn't have the know-how to take a sole leadership role in a coalition effort, you might be able to find a coalition partner more suited to that role who lacks your chapter's energy, enthusiasm, and membership numbers. Groups like National Nurses United are putting a lot of resources into this campaign but can't always turn out activists in the same number that DSA can.

Once you've identified coalition partners and arranged an initial meeting or call, it's important to set

specific parameters for your coalition. This could mean coming to an agreement on some of the following questions:

What is the goal of this coalition?

What is this coalition's strategy towards winning that goal?

This can be as basic as “an escalating pressure campaign on the congressperson” or include a detailed timeline with specific tactics tied to specific dates.

What tactics will you use to win your coalition's goals? What tactics are off limits?

How much coordination should your coalition expect?

For example, when DSA holds a canvass, should we expect every coalition partner to turn out members, or will coalition partners hold their own events with limited coordination?

Who handles communication for the coalition? Can coalition partners release their own statements, or does everything need to go through the coalition before going out to the public?

How will you announce your coalition to the world? Will you hold a town hall? A press conference? A rally?

How long do you expect the coalition to last? How often will representatives from coalition partners meet?

CONCLUSION

Building a strong, well-defined coalition can make your pressure campaign a lot more powerful, but it takes deliberate preparatory work and clear, honest communication. Once your

coalition is together, make sure to keep the lines of communication open, and make sure everyone in the coalition is contributing as expected. Try to make sure your campaign is not too reliant on any single coalition partner. Partners can always drop out unexpectedly, and you should try to make your coalition robust enough to make adjustments on the fly. Keep talking to your partners, check in regularly to make sure everyone is on the same page, and you'll have the foundation for a strong campaign.

2



SETTING UP AND PREPARING FOR A MEETING WITH YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE*

**Adapted from materials for Our Revolution's Summer for Progress*

1. PREPARATION

BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT HR 676

The more you know about Medicare for All, the better your pitch to your representative will be. Included in this organizing guide is a summary of and a set of talking points about HR 676, but do your own research and make the issue your own. Some particular things to think about as you prepare:

- Check to see if there are any studies about how Medicare for All impacts your state, or conduct your own research if you have the capacity. Phoenix DSA recently conducted such research and has created a simple half-sheet of the findings. Having leave-behind material like this can be very helpful.
- Have some specific facts and figures ready to hand (i.e., 27,000 people in your district do not have health insurance).
- What objections might your representative and/or their staff raise? How will you respond?

KNOW YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

The more you know about your representative, the better you can move them. Things to consider when researching your representative:

- What has your representative said about healthcare in the past? Is there anything you can use there to pressure them?
- What caucuses and committees does your representative sit on?
- What organizations are close with your representative? Would it be particularly helpful to have representatives from these organizations in your congressional meetings?
- Has your representative accepted money from insurance companies or other healthcare groups? How much and when?

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resentative
will be.

PREPARE A TEAM, DIVIDE UP ROLES

If you've reached out to other groups about being part of your pressure campaign and are prepared to go in to your representative's office with a team of people representing diverse constituencies, you will make a much greater impact on your representative. Once you have this group assembled, decide who is going to be in the room for the first visit with your representative and divvy up roles as follows:

- **1 Facilitator** to open and moderate the meeting and bring leave-behind material for the representative and their staff
- **1 Note Taker** to take notes during the meeting
- **1-4 Issue Speaker(s)** to review the basic talking points and share personal accounts of how our broken healthcare system has impacted their lives
- **1 Broadcaster** who will record your encounter with your representative and/

or their staff, and either livestream it or immediately post the content

- **1 Hard Asker** who will deliver the final “ask” to your representative
- **1 Validator** who follows up with the representative’s office to make sure their answer to the ask is a credible one

People in these roles should prepare note cards for themselves of the basic rap they hope to deliver the day of. This will give you something to reference when you’re called to speak, and will help you keep on point and give you something to talk about even if your mind goes blank.

2. SETTING UP A MEETING

Pick a weekday when they’ll be in their office. You can check the congressional calendar and look for legislative recesses at <https://www.house.gov/legislative-activity>. And you can find in-state contact information for your congressperson at <https://www.congress.gov/members>.

Call and ask to set up an appointment to meet with them, explaining that you are their constituent, and that you are representing a coalition of groups that want to win Medicare for All. Make it clear that you plan to show up with a team of people representing a diverse constituency. If they are entirely unable to meet, ask if you can meet with their staff.

Sample Meeting Request Letter

Dear [STAFF],

We would like to request a meeting with [REPRESENTATIVE] in their district office to discuss HR 676, spearheaded by a coalition of groups working to win Medicare for All.

Medicare for All is a single health insurance system, administered by the federal government, which provides comprehensive coverage that is free at the point of service, provides coverage to all residents regardless of immigration status, and creates a jobs transition program for those currently working in the private healthcare industry. HR 676 is a true Medicare for All bill that would fix our broken healthcare system.

[IF A SUPPORTER:] We are pleased to see that [REPRESENTATIVE] has already been a co-sponsor of HR 676 and are hoping to talk to them about becoming a vocal proponent of Medicare for All.

[IF NOT A SUPPORTER:] We are hoping to talk to [REPRESENTATIVE] about becoming a co-sponsor of HR 676.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with [REPRESENTATIVE]. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact [GROUP REPRESENTATIVE] at [PHONE] [EMAIL].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

3. MEETING AGENDA

A standard meeting is 15 minutes. Go early, so you can find their office and not miss the window of time which they have set aside for the meeting.

Before the meeting you want to do a practice session with all the people on your team. Everyone who is part of the visit should know their roles and know what they're speaking about.

Your meetings should run according to the following rough agenda:

A. INTRODUCTIONS

- Try to convey only the most important information in your introduction, so you have time to talk about the bills.
- Be sure to mention if you or others in your group are the legislator's constituents! This has a lot of extra impact, as your legislator will know they have to work to earn your vote.

- Tell your legislator what you do, if it relates to your ask. A nurse's aide or the parent of a disabled child will carry more weight on this issue. Use job titles, not acronyms!

B. SHARE TALKING POINTS & PERSONAL STORIES

- Have a mix of 1-4 issue speakers who can both relay our talking points about HR 676 and also share personal stories about their self-interest in winning Medicare for All.
- If you don't have one of your own, don't hesitate to share the story of a friend or colleague, so long as you're sure you have accurate information. Or, better yet, bring them along to tell it!
- Keep it short, keep it on point, but don't be afraid to make an emotional appeal. If you didn't feel strongly about these issues, you wouldn't be there.

C. YOUR ASK

- Never leave without making your ask! This is why you're there. If your representative is not a supporter of HR 676, this should be your primary ask. If your representative is already a co-sponsor, ask them to join the Medicare for All caucus, or to sign on to our 5 principles.
- Don't allow your representative to divert from answering by asking an open-ended question. Make sure there's a clear way to respond to your ask: "Yes, I will sign on to these 5 principles."

D. ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THEY MIGHT HAVE

After the meeting be sure to have your Validator follow up with the representative and their staff to make sure they've done what they said they would do.

And if you find that your legislator is very supportive,

build on this! Thank them in person, on social media, and in the press. Give them the kind of positive press that lets them know they don't need big donors if they have working people on their side.

4. TOWN HALLS

If you can't track down your legislator for a meeting, you might consider going to one of your representative's town halls to put pressure on them. DC DSA successfully pushed Representative Don Beyer to support HR 676 in this way, and you can read more about their action and preparation at <https://medicareforall.dsausa.org/organizing-guide/showing-up-at-a-town-hall>

Sample Pledge Sheet

As a Congressperson from the [#] District of [State] serving in the United States House of Representatives, I am proud to represent the will of my constituents in calling for a universal health program for all residents of the United States, also known as “Medicare for All.” Nothing less than legislation that meets or exceeds the following five principles will truly fix our broken healthcare system.

A Single Health Program

Everyone will be covered by one health insurance program, administered by the federal government, and have equal access to all medical services and treatments.

Comprehensive Coverage

All services requiring a medical professional will be fully covered. You go to the doctor of your choice. Dental, vision, mental health, and pharmaceuticals are all included.

Free at the point of service

All healthcare costs will be financed through tax contributions based on ability to pay: no copays, no fees, no deductibles and no premiums. Ever.

Universal Coverage

Coverage for all United States residents — non-citizens included.

Jobs

A jobs initiative and severance for those affected by the transition to government-run healthcare.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

3



**ESCALATING
PRESSURE ON YOUR
REPRESENTATIVE**

If your representative does not reply to your “ask” positively, it’s time to escalate pressure on them. Below are a few tactics you can use to make them feel the heat.

LOW PRESSURE TACTICS

Social Media: A simple-but-important way to publicize your pressure campaign is through regular posts on your chapter’s social media platforms. You can boost petitions, share public statements, and publicize your town halls, canvasses, and other campaign events. Twitter and Facebook are also good platforms to supplement your bird-dogging and letter-writing efforts — politicians’ staffs pay attention to their mentions, and a concerted effort to pressure them via social media (and getting others to do the same) can be an effective way to get your message across. Tag them into your posts directly whenever appropriate. Be firm in your social media messaging, but try to make the positive case for Medicare for All as much as possible: highlight our five principles and the mass demand

for a single-payer system that guarantees comprehensive, free-at-use coverage to everyone. Let your rep know that 85% of Democrats and 52% of Republicans want this, and that we won’t accept any carve-outs for the private insurance industry.

Writing Letters/Postcards:

An easy ask at a chapter meeting is to get everyone to write a letter to their rep asking them to sign on to HR 676, to join the Medicare for All caucus, or to sign on to our 5 principles.

Self-Published Public

Statements: Stay up-to-date on healthcare news and health policy news, especially in your community. Is a local hospital about to close down? Did a new report come out highlighting health disparities in your county? These are news hooks: opportunities to release a statement from your chapter or coalition, pointing out how Medicare for All would address this problem, how you are fighting for Medicare for All, and how new people can get involved with this fight. These

events are also opportunities to submit a Letter to the Editor or an Op-ed (see below).

- If you ever have any questions about how Medicare for All would address a particular health issue in your community, email the campaign at medicareforall@dsausa.org to connect with our Policy Subcommittee.

Online Petitions: Online petitions can be a helpful way of gauging the size of your base of support because they are so easy to create and sign. Though for this same reason, they are easy for representatives to dismiss as meaningless. Just because a person supports Medicare for All enough to sign an online petition does not mean that

they support it enough to vote for a politician because of that issue, or engage in a concerted campaign to win it. Medicare for All already has popular support; now we need to push for deeper engagement and mobilization around the issue. That being said, the online petition is easy to deploy, and you can rack up a lot of signatures with minimal effort, which is especially useful for building a list of supporters in the early stages of this campaign.

MID-PRESSURE TACTICS

Canvassing Voters: The best way to get elected representatives to care about a particular issue is to get their voters to care about it, and to do that, there's no better tactic than canvassing.

How many of your representative's constituents lack healthcare?
Then why don't they support a cost-effective universal healthcare system?

We gave a basic run-down of how to organize a Medicare for All canvass in our original organizing guide. There we encouraged chapters to take a “knock every door” approach to canvassing, as working-class issues transcend the narrow limits of electoral canvassing. But if you want to focus your canvasses specifically on your CD’s voters, contact the campaign at medicareforall@dsausa.org, and we’ll try to provide assistance in getting your started.

Phone Zap: Even better than getting members at a chapter meeting to sign letters is getting member constituents to call their reps. Office staff do make a note of how many calls they’ve gotten in favor of, or in opposition to, a particular bill and report that information to the representative. You can do this in an ongoing fashion, as part of your ‘Ask’ when you talk to voters about Medicare for All, or you can do this in a phone bank event, where everyone is calling at the same time.

Op-eds and Letters to the Editor:

Politicians and their staff read local papers, and they’re sensitive to negative press. Placing Op-eds and Letters to the Editor is a great way to get their attention. When writing these pieces, use the research you conducted to prepare for your initial office visits. How many of your representative’s constituents lack healthcare? Then why don’t they support a cost-effective universal healthcare system? Perhaps because they took \$20,000 from BlueCross BlueShield? To do this effectively, it can be helpful to have a partial draft written ahead of time, and then wait for a health related news hook (and they happen all the time), tweak it to fit the specific circumstances, and then submit it to the local paper. That way you aren’t rushing to get the draft out while the news is fresh. In your LTE/Op-ed, you will want to reference the membership/coalition that you represent, as this demonstrates political power and might make it more likely that they’ll respond to you. Also, don’t forget you can create your own news hook by organizing a rally or a press conference!

- If you ever want any feedback, edits, or policy advice in crafting your LTE/Op-ed, don't hesitate to reach out directly to us at medicareforall@dsausa.org!

Plan a Large, Public-Facing Event, like a Rally, Barnstorm, Press Conference or a Town Hall:

In our previous organizing guide, we ran through a detailed how-to about holding an educational event about Medicare for All, and the same basic steps apply for any outward-facing event. Especially if you can drum up some inspirational speakers and get your rep's constituents out to an event, these can be very effective in building excitement for your pressure campaign. Be sure to build your press list beforehand and invite local media.

HIGH PRESSURE TACTICS

Birddogging: “Birddogging” a politician means calling them out in public and in person for their actions or inactions. DC DSA successfully birddogged Representative Don Beyer, and you can read more about

their action on our website at medicareforall.dsausa.org/organizing-guide/showing-up-at-a-town-hall

1. Conduct Research: First, find your representative's public events schedule. Some representatives will post it on their website, but if not, you can call their office and ask to speak to the person in charge of the representative's schedule. You may have to call their D.C. office to reach this person, and you may not reach them on the phone, so be prepared to have to email them. Also, sign up for your representative's newsletter and follow them on social media, so you can stay up-to-date on what they are doing. And know their position on Medicare for All: where they stand on the issue and the reasoning and rhetoric they've employed publicly to outline their position. This will be important for crafting effective birddogging questions.

2. Assemble a Team: Ideally, you'll want to have about 10-15 people with flexible schedules “on call.” Public events can pop up pretty quickly, and

they might be scheduled in the middle of a weekday. That being said, don't hold back if you only have two or three people on your team: you can still birdog effectively with a small group! Once you've got a few interested folks onboard, get everyone together beforehand and practice. Agree on the questions you'll ask at the event, and practice responding to things your rep might say.

Also make sure you have someone take responsibility for recording the action and posting it to social media. It is tremendously important that the video that is produced at these actions is shared widely through your networks.

3. The Action: Confrontational or Conversational?

From here, you can go one of two routes. You can either opt for a high confrontation/visibility approach, or you can work within the parameters of the event, trying to be more respectful and hoping for a real dialogue. You should choose the route (or some combination of them) that is most likely to actually move your representative on Medicare

for All. If you think it is likely that you can get a number of people to ask questions of your rep and have them respond, the conversational route is probably best. If you are unlikely to really get a word in, the confrontational is better. Either way, be sure to arrive at the event early, so you can be sure to get in!

The Confrontational Approach:
Wear your Medicare for All t-shirts. Get as many people to go as you can. Sit together. Make a ruckus (clapping or booing) when the representative says anything about healthcare. Agree beforehand on coordinated actions, like starting a chant or taking off your jackets and revealing your t-shirts all at once in the middle of the event.

The Conversational Approach:
Dress in regular clothes. Sit in different parts of the room. It's less important to have a big group (although that's great) as it is to be organized and practiced.

- When the moment arrives, perhaps at the beginning of a Q&A session, make sure

all of your people are waiting in line at the mic or have their hands in the air.

- Don't ask questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no — ask “How...” and “Why...” questions — but be sure to make it clear that you are really asking why they aren't supporting Medicare for All.
- Practice ahead of time and write your questions down on notecards. You won't get many opportunities like this, and you don't want to waste it. Prep follow up questions. Try to keep them talking as long as you can.
- As soon as they finish answering one question, have someone else on your team prepared with another. The questions you prepare should be similar but not identical. You're trying to give your rep the impression that a wide variety of their constituents are very concerned about Medicare for All.

4. After the Event: Keep an eye out for any reporters that are at the event, and try to talk to

them about why you are fighting for Medicare for All. If your rep agrees to your demands, follow up with their staff and keep the pressure up until their verbal commitment is made actual.

5. Repeat! Sometimes a rep needs to hear these questions over and over again before they reconsider their position. A lot of Medicare for All questions at one event is annoying, but Medicare for All questions at every event during every recess no matter where in their district they go makes them feel they are confronting a movement.

Organizing Sit-Ins or Die-Ins:

A sit-in is a resource intensive, high intensity tactic that will involve significant planning and coordination with your chapter and coalition. If you're going to engage in an action that might risk arrest and/ or might attract significant press attention, it is crucial to articulate specific demands; to have raised sufficient funds to bail out your comrades (reach out to the campaign to signal boost fundraising efforts); to have a clearly defined plan and roles ahead of time.

A sit-in is likely not an effective tactic for representatives you think you can move on Medicare for All. It is better reserved for representatives who are not likely to move but who have significant support for Medicare for All amongst their constituents. This is an opportunity to gain visibility, attract new members, highlight contradictions in your rep's positions, and weaken their base of support.

A sit-in (like all tactics) should be strategically timed: it will be most effective when the general public's call for Medicare for All has reached a fever pitch, and we're close to a win (or a loss).

There are many more pressure tactics than the ones listed here, and these don't need to be deployed in ascending order. You can be running a birddogging campaign at the same time as you are trying to schedule a legislative visit and doing weekly canvasses, if you have the resources and people power in your chapter. And if you don't, think first and foremost about how you can use this campaign to effectively grow your chapter. A month of tabling and

new member recruitment might be necessary before you are able to escalate to birddogging.

Use the knowledge you and your coalition have about your representative and your community, and get creative. What is your representative passionate about? Where have they caved before? What are their pet interests? Who are their key supporters and donors?

Defining a win ahead of time is also important. Getting your rep to sign on the HR 676 is obviously a win. But sometimes a win can simply be taking a public stand on Medicare for All. Some reps — mostly because they are bought and paid for by the insurance industry — will never sign on to HR 676, but it is still valuable to pressure them because you can highlight the contradictions between what they support and what their constituency wants while building your chapter's political power. Medicare for All is *really* popular: no matter the politics of their district, just about every rep who doesn't support HR 676 is *failing to represent the will of their constituency*, and they should know it.