



# Using Your Voice

*A Guide to Advocating Well*



**When we look at how broken  
our world is, we often wonder  
if there's anything we can do to  
make a tangible difference for  
those who are suffering.**

If you're reading this guide, you likely have a heart  
for immigrants and refugees.

Your compassion may be stirred, but having words  
to express how you feel might be difficult. It takes  
time to gain confidence to advocate  
in this space.


Even that word – advocacy – can  
sound daunting!

When we think about it, we're simply talking  
about how to encourage our friends, family, and  
elected officials to extend care and compassion to  
our new neighbors.

Remember: Your compassion brought you here.

Your faith has compelled you to engage.

Jesus will give you the peace and wisdom to speak  
from the heart!



*What you  
say flows  
from what's  
in your  
heart.*

*Luke 6:45b*

# Where Do I Start?

There isn't just one way to advocate effectively. There is a whole range of ways you can get involved – some of which you may already be doing!

## I. Talk to others in your social circles.

A great way to get started advocating is to reach out and share your perspective with people in your social circles. Sharing an article you've read online, inviting a group of friends to view a documentary or talk through an issue can be great ways of sharing your passion and help others learn more. Building bridges takes time, but each step you take- no matter how small- is important. You don't need to be a subject-matter expert, just faithfully plant seeds of compassion. Remember, you're on a journey to understand more and you're simply inviting people along.

### Action Checklist:

- ☐ Gather a group of girlfriends and dive into a Bible study together. We have several to choose from, but for a great introduction, try Ruth & Naomi, a study that features two of the most beloved women in the Bible and connects our biblical history to present-day immigration challenges. For a broader walk through Scripture, try Far From Home, which ranges from Abraham to the early Church and looks at where God has moved his people throughout history.
- ☐ Host a movie night! If you'd like to use one of our films, try Who Is Welcome Here? It follows the journey of three evangelical women (including our Director Bri Stensrud) who simply said yes to going on a trip to Oaxaca, Mexico to visit with migrant families traveling from Central America. This 40-minute film includes helpful discussion questions/guides.





Share a positive story about refugees or immigrants on your social media. Share [an article](#) on your Facebook page or a [reel](#) in your Instagram stories. Talking about this subject can sometimes make you feel isolated and alone- but we promise- you're not alone! You never know what God will do when you choose to speak up!

**Feeling nervous to invite people in? [Join our Women of Welcome private Facebook group](#). It's a safe place to ask questions, like "How do I respond to this Facebook comment someone left me?", or "Have you ever hosted a movie night?", or even "Not sure how to ask this, but doesn't the Bible say we need to obey the laws of the land?"**

## 2. Contacting your elected officials

Another way to make sure your voice is heard is to contact your representatives, whether it be a local elected official or your U.S. Senators and Representative in the House. While phone calls are the best way to reach politicians, email, traditional mail, or social media are also effective ways to make contact.

We know this is an area you probably have the most questions about, so let's take the time to dive in here:

# Your Voice Is Needed

In the United States of America, our democracy is at its strongest when an active and committed citizenry participates meaningfully in the legislative process. Engaging in advocacy is a way for us to strengthen our republic and to drive positive change in our society.

It may surprise you how effective you can be when advocating for others.

A central part of the job for every elected leader – from a local school board official to the President of the United States – is to listen to their constituents and to learn which issues are most important to them before making policy decisions.

**After all, our elected officials represent, and ultimately work for, us!**

Federal, state, and local representatives know that if they are not responsive to their constituents' concerns, they could face a harder time getting reelected the next time their name shows up on the ballot.

**This isn't just wishful thinking – sometimes even just a few voices can affect real change.** There are all kinds of examples of elected officials changing their minds or redirecting on a particular issue after hearing from their constituents. Members of Congress and staffers regularly reference conversations they have had with constituents when debating and negotiating legislation.

- When a constituent of Congressman Seth Moulton contacted his office asking for help accessing his Veterans Affairs benefits, it came to light just how confusing some of the VA paperwork was. Prompted by this one phone call, he introduced a bill aiming to simplify government paperwork so that confusing jargon doesn't stand in the way of people receiving their benefits.
- Senator Todd Young was pretty clear on the importance of constituent phone calls as he decides which way to vote. He referenced particular legislation where the calls to his office had about a 10:1 ratio, showing that his office is tallying up voter concerns. "For me, it's just listening to my constituents and being responsive, and occasionally government actually needs to do that – to be responsive."

# You Don't Have to be a Subject-Matter Expert

Remember you're an expert on your own personal experience and community. Legislators want to hear from everyday people in their districts. They want to hear from you. It is much more important for your message to be personal and authentic than for it to demonstrate expertise on an issue. Sharing your story and perspective by simply discussing why you care about the issue is more than enough to make a difference.

If you make a phone call (and we hope you do!), one thing that can ease your worries is to know that the person answering the phone is not going to debate you or talk you out of any position. In fact, you don't reach an answering machine, you'll talk to an intern or staffer who simply marks down the issue you called about and what your position was. They usually ask if you'd like to receive a follow-up phone call or email on the topic. And that's it! These staffers report back to our representatives on how many times they've received calls on a what particular issues. If enough calls are made for any given issue, the team follows up/discusses if further considerations or policies need to be addressed. The more calls from you the better! (You can reach out more than once!)

Ok – so who are your representatives? [Head to this site](#), and type in your address to find the Members of Congress for the place where you live: two Senators and one Representative. Consider saving their phone numbers in your contacts so it's easy to make a call in the future. Only call your own representatives.

## Calling Your Representatives

What should you say?

**1. Where you're from:** Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I live in your district.

- It's important they know that they represent you!

**2. Who you are:** Mention any affinity groups that you are a part of that they might be interested in.

- Do you belong to the representative's same political party? Did you vote for them? Let them know!
- Are you an evangelical Christian? A pastor? A public school teacher? A nurse? A mom? Give them a very short description of who you are.

**3. What you care about:** For example: I'm concerned about families waiting at the border to go through the asylum process. Or: I'm concerned about Dreamers who need a permanent solution from Congress.

- Sometimes you'll have specific language to use around a specific policy (ex: I'm asking you to support the Afghan Adjustment Act), but most of the time, you are simply letting them know that you believe that our country can do better, and you want them to work on the issue.

### Action Checklist:

☐

Start small. Google your representatives along with the word "immigration." Have they taken an action that you support? Do they speak about refugees and immigrants in a dignified way? Support them publicly. Hop over to their Instagram or Facebook and leave a specific, supportive comment, or tag them in an encouraging tweet!

☐

Send an email. Think of what specifically you'd like to see happen in the world of immigration. A path to citizenship for DACA recipients? Increased farmworker visas? Fixes to our asylum system? Write a short email from the heart telling your representatives why you care. Let them know that your faith compels you to advocate for immigrants and refugees.



- ☐ Make that phone call. Use the script provided, and make three short and sweet phone calls. If you think of it, take a screenshot of your phone call screen, or find some other way to share publicly that you made a call. Tag @womenofwelcome so we can cheer you on!

**Ready to make a call or write an e-mail?**

**Check out our "[latest advocacy needs](#)" page for ideas and prompts.**

### **3. Meet your representatives face to face.**

If you have the chance, meeting with an elected official or their staff is one of the most effective ways to share your views on matters important to you. Whether you participate in an in-person meeting, attend a local event, or meet virtually, sharing your perspective face to face allows you to make your advocacy personal.

If you've never visited your Senator or Representative's office (locally or in D.C.) it may sound incredibly intimidating. But once you try it, you'll realize after that first meeting it's just a simple conversation with another person. Hundreds of thousands of people travel to D.C. to visit congressional offices every year. It's a completely normal – and very important – part of the legislative process. For a more detailed guide to meetings on Capitol Hill, [click here](#).

#### **Action Checklist:**

- ☐ Do a bit of research to see if any of your representatives have Town Hall events near you. For your Representative, you shouldn't have to travel too far! Even Senators try to host events all throughout the state. Write out one paragraph about why you support immigrants in your community, and what steps you'd like to see your Representative take in case you get the chance to speak.



Extra credit: call your local office for your Representative and ask the person answering the phone how to set up an in-person meeting with your representative. They will outline the process their specific office has and let you know what is possible. If you are able to set a meeting, you can always email the Women of Welcome team, and we can help support you as you prepare.

*We would love to know if you are able to meet with your representatives.*

*We are here to support you any way we can!*

## Tips to make your federal advocacy more effective

Here are a few tips and tricks to make sure your message is heard:

### **Be local.**

If you're contacting or meeting your representative, make sure they know you're one of their constituents. Representatives' offices love to hear how an issue might impact those in their district or state. When possible it's always best to explain specifically how an issue might impact you or others in your area. Remember: your state representatives works for you!

### **Be authentic.**

Speaking up is most effective when your message rings true, so it's always helpful to discuss your specific interest in an issue from your perspective. Personalizing your message helps make it accessible and memorable - it helps distinguish your story from those of others. Feel free to share why your faith/values motivate your involvement. Sending a form or template email to a congressional office does make a difference, but it's most effective when you've taken the time to personalize it.

### **Be courteous and Christ-like.**

Simple friendliness can go a long way when trying to converse with someone about this complex topic. If you are meeting your legislator or their staff in person, it is important to remain polite and courteous even in disagreement. Follow up your meeting with an email thanking them and providing any helpful follow-up information. If you're comfortable with doing so, offering to pray for the person you're meeting with can be a great way to close the conversation.

### **Explain your message concisely.**

To maximize the impact of your message, be clear and concise when sharing. Don't feel pressure to take on every issue within immigration all at once. Be thoughtful about what you you'd like to see change, giving a handful of reasons why you feel this is important for your community and the nation.

### **Be persistent.**

Engaging the culture around you and working toward meaningful change requires a patient, long-term approach. We know it can feel lonely, but persevering with your message reminds your representatives that their constituents care even when an issue is not breaking news. Lasting change takes time. Think of the suffragettes working to earn women the right to vote. Many who devoted their whole life to that movement didn't live to see the 19th amendment pass. Moses faithfully led God's people to the edge of the Promised Land, but never entered himself. Scripture reminds us to not get weary of doing good, but that we will reap a harvest at the right time if we don't give up.



Your voice is needed and we're confident that you're going to do great things for Christ and for people he loves.

Remember, you're not alone.  
We're a strong community of over 100k women who are learning and stepping into these brave spaces together.

Find friends:  
Join our [Private Facebook Group](#) where women like you are asking questions and supporting one another.

Find extra help:  
Watch our [Equipping Series](#) videos that dive deeper into some of the most common questions in this space.





We're here to help attach confidence to your compassion. Reach out and let us know how we can support you!



[facebook.com/WomenofWelcome](https://facebook.com/WomenofWelcome)



[instagram.com/womenofwelcome](https://instagram.com/womenofwelcome)



[youtube.com/c/womenofwelcome](https://youtube.com/c/womenofwelcome)



[womenofwelcome.com](https://womenofwelcome.com)