

National Organization of Chamorro Veterans in America



Advocacy Guide & Toolkit

Fighting Together for What We've Earned

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NOCVA

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Note: This Advocacy Guide & Toolkit is a working document; as new and/or better information becomes available, NOCVA will provide updated versions.

Information in this document is based on information available as of August 2014.

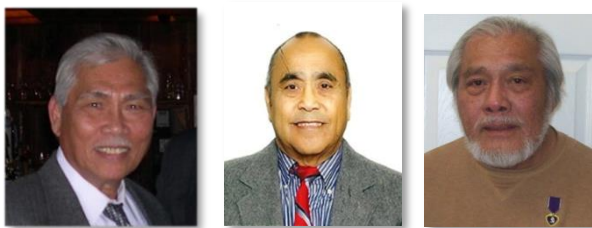
NOCVA – Using the Power of Grassroots Advocacy

NOCVA was established in 2011 with the aim to become the leading advocacy organization for Chamorro veterans in the nation. As the first organization of its kind, NOCVA is following the model used by so many other successful groups – grassroots advocacy. Other minority and ethnic groups work every day, building power and clout to push their agendas. NOCVA must begin to take full advantage of the same opportunities and get involved in the U.S. political process.

Grassroots advocacy engages everyday people – not policy or political professionals – in changing perceptions and shaping public policy. Grassroots organizations rely on the power of people who are deeply committed to a cause. In our case, we are uniting and organizing Chamorro veterans and their supporters to work together in ways that lead to meaningful change. On behalf of Chamorro veterans, we are working for better quality of life, for what we have earned, for recognition, and for justice.

We have created this ***Advocacy Guide & Toolkit*** to help you become more involved in NOCVA's grassroots advocacy effort. This guide gives you specific ways you can begin to make a difference, either individually or as part of your regional chapter. By getting involved and learning about the issues important to Chamorro veterans, we can help NOCVA speak with one strong, clear voice. A united and engaged base of grassroots volunteers demonstrates power. This can make a critical difference when passing legislation that supports initiatives important to Chamorro veterans and their families.

However you decide to contact your elected officials (in-person meetings, phone calls, letters, or emails), the key is to develop an enduring relationship. Keep in touch with your elected officials and monitor their positions on issues. Ongoing, periodic communications will help build and increase the amount of influence you -- and ultimately NOCVA -- will develop with elected officials who can help our cause. We wish you good luck as you work to make a difference for all Chamorro veterans.



Cel Aguiqui, Larry Cruz, and Frank Blas
NOCVA Co-Founders and National Coordinators

NOCVA's Grassroots Organization: Roles and Responsibilities

As a grassroots advocacy group, NOCVA is led by a national office based in the Washington, DC, metro area and regional chapters representing the 50 states, with advisers in the islands. At this time, all NOCVA members are volunteers. These committed individuals connect through online communication and informational newsletters, onsite meetings and conferences, and frequent direct personal contact (in person and/or by phone), depending on the issue. Each level of the organization works independently in building NOCVA's influence at the national, regional, and island level; all are critical to furthering NOCVA's mission and vision.

National Coordinators & Staff

- Develop mission & vision
- Establish non-profit status and explain implications, develop procedures to comply
- Set national level goals and priorities
- Conduct outreach with members
- Build and strengthen relationships with national veterans organizations
- Develop relationships with elected officials in Congress to raise awareness of Chamorro veterans
- Monitor services delivered by government agencies and organizations to ensure they are meeting the needs of Chamorro veterans
- Monitor current legislation for its impact on Chamorro veterans and develop appropriate responses
- Oversee NOCVA's national, regional, and island initiatives; coordinate as necessary
- Prepare materials that help participants understand the U.S. political system
- Highlight activities of regional chapters through NOCVA newsletter
- Share ongoing items of interest to members via website, newsletters, and facebook
- Develop fundraising opportunities (grants, sponsors)
- Establish national data base of members for statistical purposes
- Interact with media as needed

NOCVA's Grassroots Organization: Roles and Responsibilities, continued

Regional Coordinators

- Organize chapter; establish meeting schedules, designate officers
- Build membership
- Raise awareness about NOCVA and its benefits
- Understand NOCVA's mission and vision in order to educate others
- Model active participation in political process
- Understand non-profit status and implications, develop procedures to comply
- Build and strengthen relationships with regional/state veterans organizations
- Develop relationships with local and state elected officials to raise awareness of Chamorro veterans
- Monitor services delivered by government agencies and organizations to ensure they are meeting the needs of Chamorro veterans
- Monitor current legislation for its impact on Chamorro veterans
- Participate in the U.S. political system
- Forward information on chapter activities/initiatives for input into NOCVA newsletter
- Develop fundraising opportunities
- Establish data base of members for national office statistics
- Coordinate input from members in response to national initiatives

Island Advisers

- Provide advice and analysis to national office to help founders/national coordinators keep abreast of issues affecting Chamorro veterans in islands
- Act on behalf of national office on island
- Raise awareness about NOCVA and its benefits
- Understand NOCVA's mission and vision in order to educate others
- Model active participation in political process
- Understand non-profit status and implications, develop procedures to comply
- Build and strengthen relationships with island veterans organizations
- Develop relationships with local elected officials to raise awareness of NOCVA
- Monitor services delivered by government agencies and organizations to ensure they are meeting the needs of Chamorro veterans
- Coordinate input from Chamorro veterans in islands in response to national initiatives

NOCVA's Grassroots Organization: Roles and Responsibilities, continued

Members

- Become involved with regional chapter; elect officers, attend meetings
- Raise awareness about NOCVA and its benefits
- Understand NOCVA's mission and vision in order to educate others
- Understand non-profit status and implications, follow procedures to comply
- Learn about the U.S. political process and participate
- Become knowledgeable about legislation that affects Chamorro veterans
- Suggest initiatives at the local/regional level
- Network and connect with other members
- Participate in events to raise funds for NOCVA initiatives
- Participate with other regional/state veterans organizations
- Contact local and state elected officials to raise awareness of Chamorro veterans
- Monitor services delivered by government agencies and organizations to ensure they are meeting the needs of Chamorro veterans
- Monitor current legislation for its impact on Chamorro veterans
- Help regional coordinator maintain data base of members for national office statistics
- Provide input in response to national initiatives

NOCVA Resources for Advocacy

In grassroots advocacy, it's critical that members become knowledgeable about their organization, its purpose, mission, and goals. The more knowledgeable you are, the better able you will be to effectively communicate with others.

In preparation for meeting with elected officials, members of Congress, and other individuals who can help NOCVA build influence, it is important to assemble materials beforehand that will help you present your position most effectively.

Talking points and fact sheets are helpful ways to guide a discussion and ensure that the main points are presented in the limited time available.

Talking points are a list of items or topics that you want to raise. They will help you prepare and guide you in effectively communicating during your meeting. By providing a list of talking points, you will be able to explain your position in a clear and concise way, even after your meeting is ended.

Fact sheets contain brief overview information about NOCVA or other initiatives so that others can better understand and/or find out how to get more information.

To help you in this effort, the following NOCVA resources can be accessed online or obtained upon request from NOCVA national office by contacting nocva.1@verizon.net:

- Fact Sheet
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Mission
- Vision
- Brochure
- Newsletters (*NOCVA News*)
- Website (www.nocva.org)

Finding Your Elected Officials, Legislation, and Congressional Calendars

Using your home address and zip code, you can identify all of your elected officials and their contact information through the Internet.

To find all national, state, and local leaders:

<http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>

<http://www.house.gov/>

<http://beta.congress.gov/>

<https://www.senate.gov/>

To find legislation on a specific topic:

<http://beta.congress.gov/>

To find Congressional calendars (check regularly for updates):

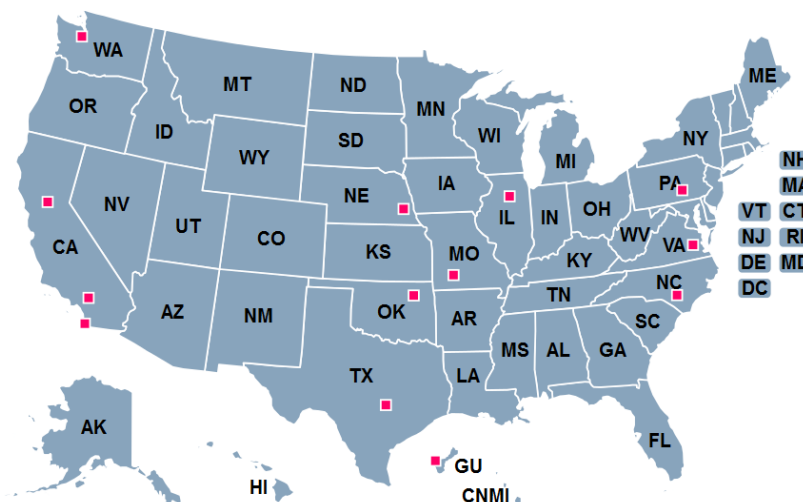
House

<http://www.house.gov/legislative/>

Senate

http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/one_item_and_teasers/2014_schedule.htm

When Congress is not in session, your elected official will most likely return to his or her state or district office to meet with constituents. Check your elected officials' websites for specific information and dates when they are available.



Advocacy Suggestions & Toolkit Materials

The following section contains information to help NOCVA members in reaching out to elected officials, whether in person, by attending public events, by making phone calls, or through written and online correspondence.

Toolkit materials include advice and timelines for scheduling and arranging meetings, either in person or in groups; tips for writing effective letters and emails; instructions on how to call elected officials and how to post on facebook; and suggestions for following up on meetings and contacts to maximize NOCVA's grassroots impact.

Remember, there are two parts to grassroots advocacy:

1. Initiate the contact or event
2. Share information about the experience so others can benefit and plan future advocacy efforts using lessons learned



***NOCVA: Using the Power of Grassroots Advocacy
for Meaningful Change***

In-State Congressional Visit Guide

One of the most effective ways to influence the policymaking process and build a relationship with your legislator is to visit their local office in person.

Asking for the Meeting

Timeline: 3 - 6 weeks before you intend to have the meeting

The first thing you should do is send a meeting request to the member of Congress' scheduler. You may make this request by email or fax using the sample meeting request (**Template 1. in following section**), and then follow up the initial request shortly thereafter with a phone call, since schedules may be tight. Many congressional offices now also make it possible to request a meeting on their website.

TIPS:

- Suggest specific times and dates for the meeting.
- Let them know you'd like to discuss issues around federal budget cuts relating to Chamorro veterans.
- If the lawmaker is unavailable to meet with you, ask for a meeting with the staffer responsible for budget or federal workforce issues, or the district director.
- Be respectful, but be persistent! Make sure to follow up with the office if they don't get back to you. If they tell you they have no availability, call back in a couple of days and ask if there have been any cancellations.

Preparing for Your Meeting

Timeline: 1 - 2 weeks before the meeting

Step 1: Where Do They Stand?

The first thing you'll want to do when preparing for a meeting with your legislator or his or her staff is to find out where they stand on NOCVA's priorities. (You can find this information by exploring their website.)

Step 2: Print Your Talking Points and Handouts

Once you're familiar with your legislator and where current legislative proposals stand, the next item on your agenda should be to begin to assemble the materials you will need for your visit.

Prepare a list of talking points that will help you keep focused and explain your position.

Be prepared to provide NOCVA Fact Sheets to the member or their staff so they can better understand NOCVA and how to get more information.

IF ATTENDING THE MEETING WITH OTHERS

Step 3: Recruiting Attendees

Your legislator's time is valuable, so you'll want to maximize your efforts by inviting others to attend your meeting with you. You should aim to have no more than six people at the meeting for the most effective outcome. These can be NOCVA members, active or retired Chamorro veterans, and non-NOCVA members. If your representative's district includes several NOCVA chapters, you may want to work with all of the chapters to send a representative.

If you don't have an entourage, that's OK as well. One-on-one meetings are still extremely helpful.

Step 4: Conduct an Attendees Training

One of the most important pre-meeting activities you will conduct is assembling your team to plan out how the meeting is going to proceed.

- **Prioritize** - With input from your team members, you should decide in what order you are going to present the current proposal and who will play the lead role in the discussion. This is very important, as you never know how long a meeting is going to last; some meetings last 30 minutes or more, while others may last for only five.
- **Delegate** - You should plan on assigning roles for each member of your group. One person should be the lead facilitator, while others speak to specific pieces of legislation. This is a good place to highlight a personal story. You should also make sure that one person takes good notes during the meeting for future reference.
- **Review** - You should use this opportunity to review the materials you'll be giving your legislator and prepare your list of talking points. This will go a long way in making sure that your group members are knowledgeable and consistent during the actual meeting.

Confirm Your Meeting

Timeline: 2 days before meeting

This step may be obvious, but it is critical. Make sure you confirm your meeting with your legislator's scheduler a couple of days before the meeting is to occur. You may also use this opportunity to schedule a follow-up meeting or conversation with staff to inquire about additional information needed and to see if the member or staff has any feedback from your in-district visit.

Following Your Meeting

Timeline: No later than a week following meeting

Step 1: Send a Thank You

Following your meeting, send the member of Congress and staff a thank you note for the meeting. If you promised follow-up information, this is a prime opportunity to send it. If the member agreed to take action on legislation, politely remind them or thank them again for taking action.

Step 2: Share Information About Your Meeting

Email NOCVA's national office about your meeting. Attach pictures if available. This information is important in our continued communications with NOCVA members, supporters, and the general public.

Tips for Conducting Your In-State Congressional Visit

- **Acknowledge Support** - Take a moment to acknowledge the member's current support for any legislation he or she is already co-sponsoring or any past support he or she has given. A thank you goes a long way.
- **Establish a connection** - Mention a current event you have a shared interest in, or praise a recent vote the legislator cast that you can agree on. "I was glad to see the way you cast your vote on the earned health and retirement benefits issue." is the sort of statement that will let an elected official know you are engaged in federal politics and care deeply about a variety of topics.
- **Grassroots Support** - You should let those you are meeting with know what you and your fellow NOCVA members are doing to be active in your area. Be specific and provide them with examples, such as letters to the editor that were printed, etc.
- **Paint the big picture and the small picture** - For example, one person could tell his or her story about how the proposed cuts could affect her/him personally (the small picture); then someone else could present current statistics and impact in the United States and your state.
- **Tell Your Story** - The most effective method of communicating the importance of this legislation is to tell your personal story or the story of someone close to you. Personal stories often change minds, and this is your chance to sell the current proposal.
- **Make specific, clear requests and ask for an answer** - Often, the main reason groups have unsatisfactory meetings is that their requests were not clear and specific enough. Your elected officials need to know what you want them to do (what bill you want them to co-sponsor, how you want them to vote). However, in addition to the specific requests you bring, don't be afraid to ask the legislator what else they think they could do on your issue (whether they say yes or no to your original request).
- **Don't be afraid to say "I don't know."** - During your visit, you may encounter a question that you cannot answer. Don't worry! It's okay to admit you don't know the answer. You can simply research the issue, or ask someone else with NOCVA to do so, and then get back to the legislator's office with the information requested. Whatever you do, never pretend you know something if you do not. Legislators will appreciate honesty, your willingness to find an answer to their questions, and your commitment to the issue at hand.
- **Be Assertive** - During your meeting, it will be important to be assertive, but not aggressive. Your main goal is to convince the legislator to follow through on your request.

Additional Suggestions for Meeting With Your Legislator

A face-to-face meeting with your legislator can be a powerful opportunity to advance your agenda. The meeting can also position you as a reliable expert on your issue and an important ally for your legislator...if it's done right. Follow these steps for a successful visit:

1. **Plan your meeting.** Decide whether you are going alone, or with a group of constituents. If you go as a group, decide who is going to lead the meeting, and what each person is going to contribute to the discussion. This will help eliminate awkward silences or repetitive messages, and will ensure that you hit all the key points you want to cover. You will likely have only 15 or 20 minutes for your meeting, so plan accordingly.
2. **Know your audience.** Do a little research about your legislator if you don't know much about him or her. Find out his or her positions on the issues you're focusing on.
3. **If there are multiple issues that are important to you, select one that you will discuss for that meeting.** Attempting to persuade a legislator on multiple issues not only weakens your position as a reliable, focused constituent, but it dilutes your impact on each issue.
4. **Define your message.** Focus your comments on one issue. Then, rather than trying to say everything you know or think about that issue, plan two or three observations or arguments that get at the heart of your position.
5. **Make an appointment....**but don't be surprised if it changes. Legislators often have last-minute hearings or committee meetings. Be flexible.
6. **Meet in your home district.** Meetings in the home district are often less hurried than meetings at the capitol, and they provide the "home turf" advantage. Find out when your legislator is in his or her home district, and schedule your appointment then, or invite them to visit you at a chapter meeting. If this is not possible, travel to the capitol as an alternative.
7. **Once you're in the door, begin by finding something personal that you have in common with the legislator.** Have they ever been to Guam or the CNMI? Are they familiar with island culture? Does something in their office suggest an interest that you share, such as fishing, sports, or art? Engage in a little "small talk" to break the ice—but keep it brief.
8. **State the reason for your visit.** Be clear about why you are there, why they should be interested (remember to mention again that you're a constituent, and use local examples), and what you want them to do.

9. **State your case.** Again, keep it concise, focused, and personalized.
10. **Invite comments and questions.** Engage your legislator in dialogue. Don't worry if they ask you something you don't know the answer to—simply tell them you don't know, but that you'll find out for them.
11. **State only what you know.** Don't overstate your case, be careless with the facts, or guess.
12. **Ask for a commitment.** If you don't ask your legislator for action, you won't see any. If they decline, encourage them to think about it, and let them know you'll keep in touch.
13. **Have a leave-behind.** Provide your legislator with brief, written information for further reflection (copies of talking points and fact sheets). See if you can add a local angle for your district.
14. **Report on your visit.** As soon as possible after your visit, jot down notes that record the tone, what was said, and what questions were asked in the meeting. Not only will this help in reporting on your visit, but it will help you build a record of your relationship with your legislator that can inform future dialogue. Let your group know that you made the visit, and report what you covered and what the legislator said. If possible, provide them with a copy of your leave-behind materials as well.
15. **Follow up.** Send a handwritten thank you note to your legislator. Let them know that you appreciate their time. If you promised to get them additional information, provide it or let them know how and when they can expect to receive it.
16. **Visit more than once.** Over time, visit with your legislator to continue to discuss the issue and make requests as you have them. Be sure to be a reliable source of information for them on your issue by delivering what you promise, avoiding overstatement, and communicating clearly.

Inviting Members of Congress to Your Chapter Meeting

During recess periods, members of Congress will be in their home states to hold events, meet with constituents and work out of their local offices. It is during this time that NOCVA members will have an extraordinary opportunity to reach out to their legislators and educate them about issues important to Chamorro veterans.

A special chapter meeting is a great way to introduce legislators and/or their staff to NOCVA members and educate them about our issues. Below are some tips on how to orchestrate a memorable visit.

Tips for Hosting a Legislator

Time Frame: The length of a recess can vary from a week to over a month. Consult the current Congressional calendars (see page 8) for exact dates.

The event is simple: Work with other regional coordinators in your area to hold a joint chapter event and invite your representatives, senators or their staff to attend.

It's as easy as 1-2-3:

1. Pick a date and location and submit official scheduling requests using the sample chapter meeting request (**Template 2. in following section**) to the main district office of your legislator. Effective scheduling is the most important aspect of your event. You can fax it and/or email it to the office scheduler. Be sure to call to follow up.
2. You can also invite multiple congressional offices to attend your chapter meeting for a Q&A forum to hear each office's different positions on the issues. Make sure to set aside some time to have a "meet-and-greet" so individual NOCVA members can meet the guests.
3. If only one member of Congress or their staff attends, set aside time for them to speak and answer questions as well as a meet-and-greet with NOCVA members in attendance.

Preparing for Your Chapter Meeting

NOCVA Members Arrive

- NOCVA members from invited chapters arrive, mingle briefly, and take their seats. It is important to start the meeting on time.
- Chapter president moves to front of the room and introduces the event.

Introductions

- Chapter president gives brief introduction about the issues impacting NOCVA members (referring to prepared **Talking Points**).
- Chapter president introduces the panel guests (if multiple congressional offices sent representatives) or the single speaker (if only one).
- Chapter president describes the format of the event: [Speaker(s) introduce themselves and talk about issues. NOCVA members then ask questions of the speaker(s) who answer in turn.]

The Speaker

- Chapter president introduces each speaker and gives them several minutes for an introductory statement.
- After all introductions are complete, NOCVA members are invited to raise their hands to ask questions. Each speaker takes turns answering the questions.
- After all questions are asked or the allotted time of the event nears its end, the chapter president asks each speaker to conclude with a few thoughts.
- It might help to have a moderator for the meeting.

Meet-and-Greet

- Chapter president thanks the speaker(s) and opens up the event for individual NOCVA members to meet and speak with them.

Following Your Meeting

Timeline: No later than a week following meeting

Send a Thank You

Following your chapter meeting, send the member of Congress and staff a thank you note for the meeting (**Template 3. in following section**). If you promised follow-up information, this is a prime opportunity to send it. If the member agreed to take action on legislation, politely remind them or thank them again for taking action.

Share Information About Your Meeting

Email NOCVA national office about your meeting. Attach pictures if available. This information is important in our continued communications with NOCVA members, supporters, and the general public.

Calling Your Members of Congress

To address a specific and current legislation affecting Chamorro veterans, NOCVA chapters can host their own call-in days. Providing a simple script for your members is an easy way to remind members of Congress that NOCVA members continue to pay attention.

Sample Call-in Script to Provide to Members

Tell Your Representative and Senators to protect veterans benefits and health issues, such as those impacting Chamorro veterans

Please call **1-866-220-0044** and make sure your members of Congress know that Chamorro veterans and active-duty military who protect America won't sit still while they are singled out for unfair cuts.

Step 1: Dial 1-866-220-0044 for the Capitol.

Ask the operator to connect you to your representative's and/or senators' office. Alternatively, you can find the direct number for your representative and senators by finding their personal site on www.house.gov and www.senate.gov, respectively (page 8).

Step 2: Tell the staff person who answers the telephone where you live so they know you are a constituent, then say:

"I am a Chamorro veteran/active-duty military and member of NOCVA." [In 1-2 sentences, tell the staff person a little about your work as a veteran.]

"[Senator X or Representative Y] represents thousands of veterans and their families, and we should not be unfairly singled out to bear the burden of fixing a budget problem we did not create."

"Chamorro veterans and their families did not cause the budget crisis – and making extreme cuts to pay earned health and retirement benefits or making changes to cost-of-living adjustments, would unfairly single out those who protected our nation, including many now on a fixed income."

Step 3: Thank the staff member for listening and request a written response.

Step 4: Repeat steps 1–3 until you have called your representative and two senators.

Make sure to only contact your members of Congress. Lawmakers will disregard your message if you are not a constituent.

Step 5: Call the White House toll-free at 1-888-225-08418 and deliver the same message!

The non-toll-free number is 1-202-456-1414. Before you begin your message, make sure you are connected with the comment line.

Additional Suggestions When Calling Your Legislator

Making a phone call to your legislator is quick, easy, and can be done at a moment's notice, making it an attractive method for legislative contact. For these same reasons, it is critical that the phone call be effective. You don't need to be an expert on the issue in order to be persuasive; you just need to give your personal perspective. Follow these steps for an effective call to your legislator:

1. **Plan:** Before you make the call, **plan** what you are going to say. Your phone call will be very brief, so keep your message simple and to-the-point. Take a moment to think about it—you might even want to make some notes—and you'll find that your call goes more smoothly than if you were to call unprepared. Know your request (for example, vote for a specific bill) in as few words as possible.
2. **Message:** After identifying (and possibly writing down) your request, think about a **key point** or personal story that supports your position.
3. **Call:** Make the **call**. If your legislator is in your home district on specific days or on weekends, call them when they are in your home district. There is more time and less distraction, and your position as a constituent will be enhanced if you are talking as a resident of the district represented by your elected official.
4. **Staff or Message:** You may not be able to reach your legislator if you are calling his or her office during the legislative session. Be prepared to talk to one of the legislator's **staff** or to leave a **message** instead. Make sure you get the staff person's full name, and treat them respectfully.
5. **Constituent:** Begin by stating that you are a **constituent**. Legislators are most responsive to the people who can keep them in office—their constituents.
6. **Persuade:** Get to the point. Following your plan, state the reason for the call. Try to get the legislator to state their position on the issue, and try to **persuade** them by using the points you developed.

7. **Thank:** If the legislator agrees to support your issue, **thank** them. Regardless of their position, thank the legislator for their time. Let them know that you will be tracking the issue.
8. **Recruit:** **Recruit** a like-minded friend, family member, or colleague to make a call as well. Particularly with phone calls, quantity is critical. Legislators pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their constituents care about that issue.
9. **Report** your call. When you are part of a grassroots effort, your participation is helpful only if the people mobilizing the effort know about it. Let NOCVA national office know you made the call.
10. **Call Back:** Call more than once. Quantity is as important, if not more important, than quality in grassroots advocacy, because a high number of calls indicates to a legislator that many people in their district care about an issue. As you monitor the issue, **call back** to ask for specific support or action as appropriate to the process.

Attending Congressional Town Hall Events

Attending town hall or tele-town hall events held by members of Congress and posing a question is a great way to raise awareness of and put a local face on Chamorro veterans and their issues.

What Are Town Halls?

Members of Congress hold town halls in their home states to connect with constituents, share legislative updates, and take questions.

Traditionally, these town halls are held in community centers, churches, libraries, and other public spaces. However, more and more, members of Congress are relying on telephone conference services to hold “tele-town halls,” where constituents listen and participate from home over their phone. To find out when tele-town halls are scheduled, call your senator and representative and request to be put on their tele-town hall list. This will ensure you will be included each time one is held.

When Are Town Halls Held?

Typically, town halls are held during congressional recess periods. See page 8 for links to use to check on current Congressional calendars.

Every member of Congress keeps his or her own schedule. You can contact the district or state office for your representative or senator and ask if there are any town halls scheduled.

What You Can Do

Attend a town hall and speak up! Be sure to identify yourself as a member of NOCVA.

Once a town hall or tele-town hall event is confirmed, team up with your local NOCVA chapter and members to attend. The more NOCVA members who attend, the more likely your voices will be heard.

Come armed with facts and questions for your senators and representative. Below are some samples you can use.

Sample Town Hall Questions

- Chamorro veterans and their families are being asked to make sacrifices to reduce the deficit, yet they have already contributed \$_____ to deficit reduction. While we are doing our fair share, what can you do to ensure that all sacrifices will be shared and cuts will not unfairly target Chamorro veterans and their families?

- If Congress protects Social Security, why not Chamorro veterans and their families as well?
- Some in Congress are calling for drastic cuts to the federal workforce. I am a former [profession] in charge of [task]. How will you explain to me and your voters why American taxpayers are going to get less of [service]?

After the Town Hall Tell Us You Attended

Email NOCVA's national office about your meeting. Attach pictures if available. This information is important in our continued communications with NOCVA members, supporters, and the general public.

Writing To Your Legislator

Writing a letter offers you the opportunity to give more information than you could in a phone call. The disadvantage to writing letters is that they are not interactive. Consider following your letter with a phone call or visit for more interaction. Follow these basic steps for writing your letter:

1. Begin by stating that you are a **constituent**. Make sure that you write your return address on the envelope, so that the legislator's office staff knows immediately that you are a constituent.
2. **Personalize** your letter. Research consistently shows that handwritten letters have the most impact. If you are basing your letter on a form letter, rewrite it, or at least retype it. Photocopies of generic letters are the least effective. In making your case on the issue, use personal examples.
3. **Use the news**. Watch news stories in your local community that you can use to illustrate your point or include a story about what you experience in your work.
4. **Local, local, local**. If possible, make a strong connection between the issue and your local community that the legislator represents. Again, use local examples that illustrate why your issue is important and why your position is a strong one. Don't be afraid to tell your story or talk about your personal experience with the issue.
5. If the legislator has supported your issues in the past, **acknowledge** this—but don't take it for granted that the support will continue. Give reasons why the legislator should continue or intensify his or her support.
6. Show **restraint**. Keep your letter brief—one to one and half pages at the most. Make sure that supporting information that you leave behind is brief as well.
7. **Persuade** a like-minded friend, family member, or colleague to write a letter as well. Legislators pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their constituents care about that issue.
8. **Report** your letter. When you are part of a grassroots effort, your participation is most helpful when the people mobilizing the effort know about it. Let NOCVA national office know that you wrote the letter, and what you intend to do to follow up.
9. **Follow up**. In the letter, ask your legislator for a response. To get a better picture of your legislator's position, consider following your letter with a phone call or visit.
10. **Communicate** more than once. Again, quantity is as important, if not more important, than quality in grassroots advocacy. One letter will not gain influence. As you monitor the issue, continue to communicate with the legislator.

Sending Your Legislator an Email

Email has changed the way that we communicate and in many ways has replaced other forms of communication, such as phone calls or handwritten letters. This technological tool is fast, cheap, and efficient. However, because it is a fast and relatively informal means of communication, many legislators view it as less credible than other methods.

If you use email to communicate with your legislator, you should do so in the context of an ongoing relationship in which you use other methods as the foundation of your communication. To craft an email with impact, follow these steps:

1. **In the subject line of the message, state that you are a constituent** (For example—*Subject: Message from a constituent on xyz issue*). Most legislators have their staff sort and respond to their email, and this strategy will increase the likelihood that your letter is read.
2. **State your request concisely.** View your message as different from an electronic letter. Again, email is less formal and much more brief than traditional written communication. Craft your message accordingly—keep it tight and short.
3. **Provide personal examples and local context.** Use similar principles as those in letter writing, but in a tighter format. If you are sending a generic email written by a group of which you're a part, insert personal examples in the message.
4. **Persuade a like-minded friend, family member, or colleague to send an email as well.** Again, quantity is critical. Legislators pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their constituents care about that issue. One email is not convincing.
5. **Share your email.** Let others know about the email you sent; include them on the cc line. This will help others follow along to understand how to engage so they can also begin writing emails about the topic, further increasing impact.
6. **Follow up.** Again, because the impact of email varies widely from legislator to legislator, be sure that you are using other methods to communicate with your legislator. Follow your email with a phone call, handwritten letter, or visit.
7. **Communicate more than once.** As with all other forms of communicating with your legislator, view your email as part of an ongoing relationship. Keep in touch and tuned into your legislator and his or her position on the issue.

Writing Letters to the Editor

An underused resource in grassroots advocacy is the local media. Letters to the editor can be powerful vehicles for influencing or inspiring public debate, making the case for your issue, or responding to related events. Elected officials always read the opinion pages of their local paper, because it gives them an idea of what their constituents think. Try to write a letter that editors find compelling enough to print. Use these tips to write a letter that is more likely to get printed:

1. **Capitalize on the hot stories.** Find ways to tie stories in the news with your issue. Open your letter to a reference to the recent event, and then quickly build a logical bridge to your issue.
2. **Be brief.** Most Letters to the Editor should be under 250 words.
3. **Be clear.** This may seem obvious, but a surprising number of letters that don't get published just plain don't make sense. Avoid jargon, use common vocabulary, and let a few friends or colleagues review the letter for you before you send it.
4. **Use word cues to underscore your point.** Begin your major conclusion with "The important thing is,..." If you have research that makes your case, state the facts with "Research proves that..."
5. **Don't overlook neighborhood weeklies and smaller papers.** Often these publications have more room for letters, and community papers have very large readerships.
6. **Include a call to action or solution.** If you are illustrating a need or making a case for a specific action, include a line about what people can do to help.
7. **Don't be afraid to toot your own horn.** If you -- or your organization -- are involved in work that addresses the issue, include that in your letter.
8. **Be passionate, but not poisonous.** There is a difference between "fire in the belly" and righteous indignation. Avoid sarcasm, and if you're angry, cool off a bit before sending a final version.
9. **Use local or personal angles.** All grassroots strategies rely on the local and the personal in an issue. Include this perspective in the letter to illustrate why readers should care about the issue.
10. **Try meeting with editorial boards.** The editorial boards on newspapers often meet with community members, and sometimes will write an editorial based on information they receive from these meetings. Ask for a meeting with your local paper's editorial board, make a case for your issue, and ask them to support it with an editorial.

Facebook Guide



What is Facebook and why are we using it?

- Facebook is a social networking website that allows users to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.
- The NOCVA Facebook page is a place where you can get up-to-date information on NOCVA's activities.
- Through Facebook, we can promote our advocacy activities and spread our message to elected officials.
- It's easy and quick to post about your advocacy efforts on Facebook. Use the ideas below to post about events and meetings with elected officials on your own Facebook page.

Follow NOCVA on Facebook

- Go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/National-Organization-of-Chamorro-Veterans-in-America/193643964077240> and click "Like" to follow NOCVA on Facebook.
- Don't forget to like and share our posts on your Facebook page to help spread our message.

Sharing your story

- Sharing your story is a great way to raise awareness about Chamorro veterans.
- Remember to post a photo along with your story and go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/National-Organization-of-Chamorro-Veterans-in-America/193643964077240> for examples.

- To submit your story:
 - First, find the post box on your Facebook page and select which type of post you are submitting (text, photo, or video). In the post box, type in your story
 - When you are satisfied with your story, remember to tag the NOCVA Facebook page in the post so we can see your story.
 - When you have completed your post, click “Share” and your post will be added to your Facebook timeline.

Posting about meetings

- Are you attending a meeting with an elected official? Before you get there, decide who will take photos during the event and post on Facebook after the event.
- Find your elected official’s Facebook page so you can mention and tag them in your posts about the event or meeting.
- In your post, report back about your favorite moment from the event or meeting. Below is a sample post that you can customize: *“Last week we attended [elected official’s name] town hall event and shared our stories about the issues that negatively impact our Chamorro veterans and their families. [Insert your favorite part of the event here]!”*
- Remember to also thank the elected officials you met with by posting a thank you on their Facebook wall.

Template 1. Sample Meeting Request for In-State Visit

Date

The Honorable [Insert your Representative's or Senator's first and last names]
Attn: Scheduler
[Insert the district office address]
[Insert the office city, state and ZIP Code]

Dear [Representative [OR] Senator] [Insert your Representative's or Senator's last name],

I am writing to request a meeting with you at your district office in [Insert the name of the city where you'd like to meet]. I would like to discuss pending legislation affecting Chamorro veterans.

As a member of the National Organization of Chamorro Veterans in America (NOCVA), I am concerned about proposed cuts in the upcoming budget negotiations that unfairly target retired Chamorro veterans. Among the top issues affecting veterans like me are cuts to our earned benefits and healthcare. Budget cuts to either of these will have a tremendous impact on me, my family, and my community.

I will follow up in the next few days with a phone call to schedule this meeting. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at [Insert your phone number or email address].

Sincerely,

[first and last name]
[address]
[city, state and ZIP code]

Template 2. Sample Meeting Request for Chapter Meeting

Date

The Honorable [Insert your Representative's or Senator's first and last names]

Attn: Scheduler

[Insert the district office address]

[Insert the city, state and ZIP Code]

Dear [Representative [OR] Senator Insert your Representative's or Senator's last name],

I am writing to invite you to attend a chapter meeting of the National Organization of Chamorro Veterans in America (NOCVA) to discuss issues important to Chamorro Veterans. The meeting will be held on [Insert date] at [Insert location of meeting]. We will discuss issues and legislation affecting Chamorro veterans. Members from several local chapters and statewide officers will be in attendance.

I will follow up in the next few days with a phone call. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at [Insert your phone number or email address].

Sincerely,

[Insert your first and last name]

[Insert your address]

[Insert your city, state and ZIP code]

Template 3. Sample Thank You Letter to a Member of Congress

[INSERT SPECIFIC CHAPTER]

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF CHAMORRO VETERANS IN AMERICA

Date _____

The Honorable _____

Address _____

City, State Zip Code _____

Dear Senator _____,

Thank you for making _____ of your staff available to visit with us on _____. We appreciate the time given to us and the cordial exchange we had.

NOCVA members from our chapters in _____ participated in the visit and we provided signed letters from _____ of our members from areas in your districts. These letters expressed the deep concerns of NOCVA over the issues that negatively impact Chamorro veterans and their families.

We understand our country's budget and deficit problems and are already making sacrifices to assist in their resolution. However, we feel it is unfair to continually single out and scapegoat veterans in addressing these issues.

We sincerely hope you will support our concerns as you work to address our nation's budget and deficit problems.

Sincerely,

[Name]

NOCVA [Specific] Regional Chapter

Address _____

City, State Zip Code _____

[Telephone number _____]

[Email] _____

Credit/Sources

Portions of the *NOCVA Advocacy Guide & Toolkit* were adapted from material contained in the following sources:

NARFE “Protect America’s Heartbeat” Toolkit (Last updated: March 21, 2012)
http://www.narfe.org/pdf/NARFE-ProtectAmericasHeartbeat-Toolkit_FINAL_3-26-12.pdf

<http://www.hawaiiicharterschools.com/sites/default/files/documents/blog-posts/2014/HPCSN%20Advocacy%20Toolkit%20final.pdf>

http://www.civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/field/toolkit/online_grassroots_toolkit_2011.pdf

<http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/rightsandfreedoms/u/takepart.htm#s2>

<http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>

<http://www.house.gov/>

<http://beta.congress.gov/>

<https://www.senate.gov/>