

Advanced Grassroots Advocacy Strategy and Tactics





Grassroots in ~ACTION~

RESHMA MEHTA
AARP

@RESHMADC

@AARPADVOCATES

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BUT FIRST...

- I hope you're okay!
- Open Discussion: How did your organization respond to the coronavirus pandemic?

WHAT AARP IS DOING RIGHT NOW

- Our population is particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus
- Updating resources in real-time at aarp.org/coronavirus and aarp.org/elcoronavirus
- Weekly tele-town hall with CDC, HHS, and other experts
- Fierce advocacy in Congress and state legislatures



AARP Advocates @AARPadvocates · Mar 17

AARP urges Congress to act NOW to help combat #Covid_19. Older Americans are most at risk, and a new bill would help protect them & EVERYONE w/ no-cost testing, paid sick leave, & food security.

TAKE ACTION: Send a message to your Senators today! spr.ly/60161sY9O



WHY DO GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING?

- Organizing is a foundational pillar behind AARP's enduring, sixty-year success as a wise advocate and fierce defender.
- Online tools, texting, and social media help us organize, educate, and activate our members like never before.
- But we use tried-and-true tactics like direct mail & phone calls too!
- And everything is anchored by a robust advocacy strategy and training program

WHY GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING, PART 2

It tells your story

- The way we get news and information these days is noisy and, frankly, overwhelming
- Grassroots tools make it easier for AARP to cut through that noise, communicate real value to our members, and tell our story on our own terms

It delivers results

- Organizing, whether digital or in real life, can be hard to measure
- Digital organizing tools, with their powerful analytical capabilities, have made all the difference in tough campaigns, and have helped AARP better communicate with its members.

Your members expect it

- Our members expect us to fiercely advocate for them and their health & financial security
- The more we *consistently* engage our advocates, the more we meet and exceed their expectations as AARP members and reinforce the value of our brand



If a tree falls in the forest,

*and no one is around to
hear it...*

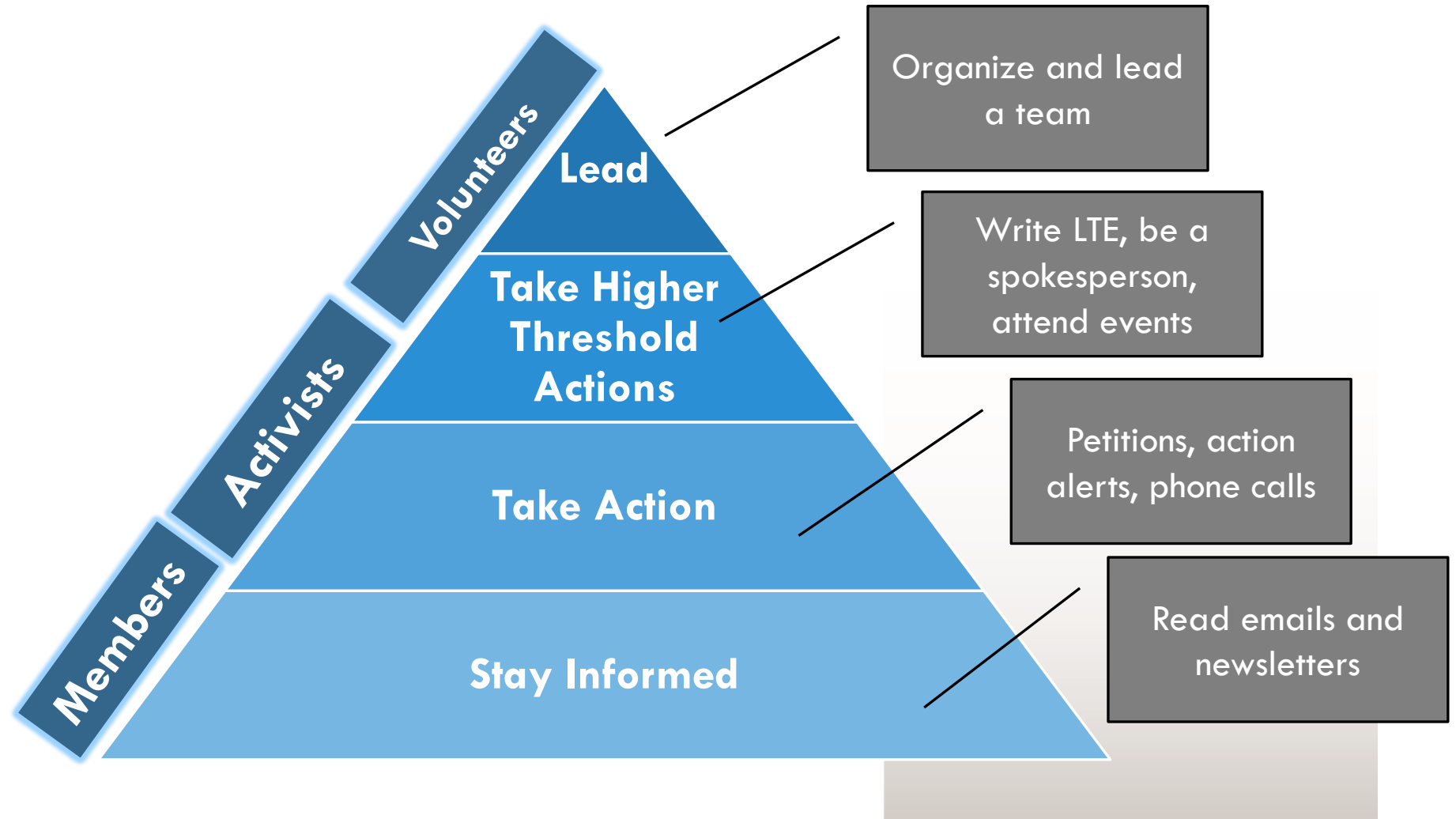
*The tree needs a better
marketing strategy.*



THE LADDER OF ENGAGEMENT



LIKE PYRAMIDS BETTER?



REPEAT AFTER ME: TACTICS DO NOT EQUAL STRATEGY

- What is your goal? Both external and internal – where do you want to end up organizationally?
- What do you have to put into the fight to win?
- Who are your allies? Who are your opponents?

GRASSROOTS STRATEGY, PART 2

- Message: what is the one thought you want your audience to walk away with?
- Who is your target? What tactics would be effective at putting pressure on that target?
- How are you engaging the media and influencers to reinforce your message, which helps put pressure on the target and reach a broader audience?

TIMELINE

DATE	MILESTONE OR TACTIC
Jan 5	Legislature convenes
Jan 10	Train volunteers
Jan 15	Elected Official Briefing
Jan 25	Bill introduced: floor letter, press conference, email to activists urging action
Jan 30	Direct mail, direct lobbying, rolling walk-in
Feb 5 - 9	Tele-town hall, text messaging
Feb 10	Committee Hearing, Lobby Day
Feb 15	Print/Radio Ads, grassroots email, phone calls
Feb 20	Letter to Editor
Feb 22	Recess: In-district visits, town hall, on-line virtual lobby day
March 1	Legislature reconvenes: Grassroots and direct lobbying continue
April 10	Phone calls before vote
April 15	FLOOR VOTE (Wash, Rinse, Repeat!)

USE DATA TO WORK SMARTER

Segmenting or targeting your audience:

- Improves relevance and effectiveness
- Allows for more customized content for difference audiences
- Increases the odds that your advocates will take action
- Saves money by filtering for only those most likely to respond
- Helps reduce opt-outs and prevent list fatigue

TYPES OF DATA SEGMENTATION

- Geography
- Demographics
- Issue interest based on action history or surveys
- Past Behavior such as taking a previous action or calling a legislator – most valuable!



TACTICS... TIME TO HAVE FUN!

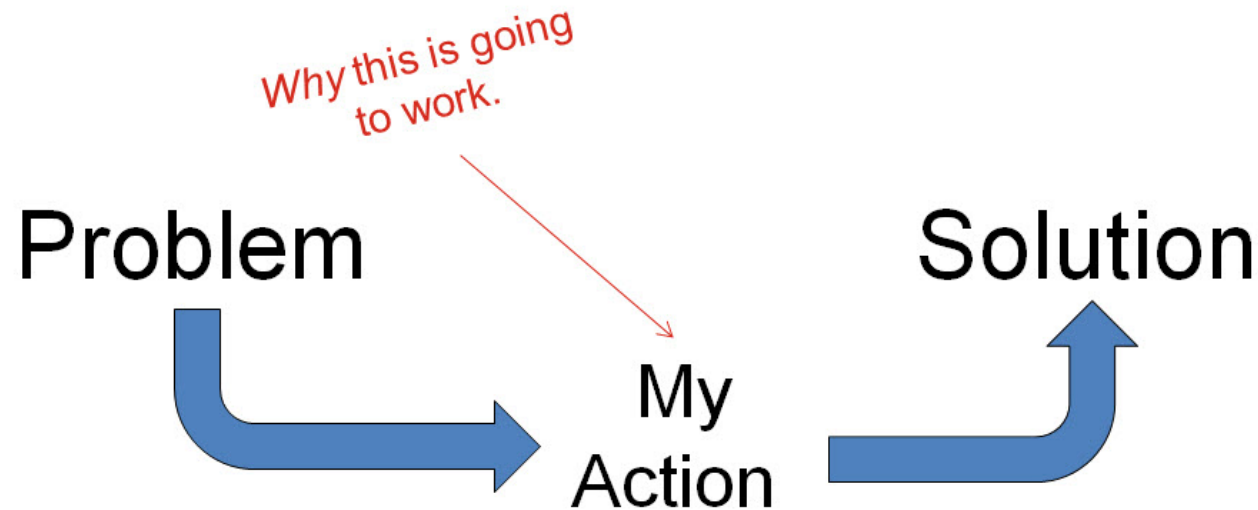
- Emails
- Petitions
- Surveys
- Social shares
- Letters to the editor
- Call & tweet your target
- Texting
- Days at the Capitol
- Rallies
- Issue briefings, events, state fairs...
- Direct mail
- Advertising
- Mascots
- Fun Stuff! Get creative!

DON'T DISCOUNT “OLD” TACTICS

- What tactic is best and most effective for the situation?
- Example: Tele-town halls were becoming less and less effective
 - Now: over 200 COVID-19 TTHs scheduled
 - Many with special guests including Members of Congress, Governors, mayors, epidemiologists
 - Historically high numbers of people listening in + asking questions
 - Approximately 32% of the called audience opt to listen in
 - Our members are very interested in AARP acting as a convener and providing useful, trustworthy information during this time of crisis.

WRITING FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

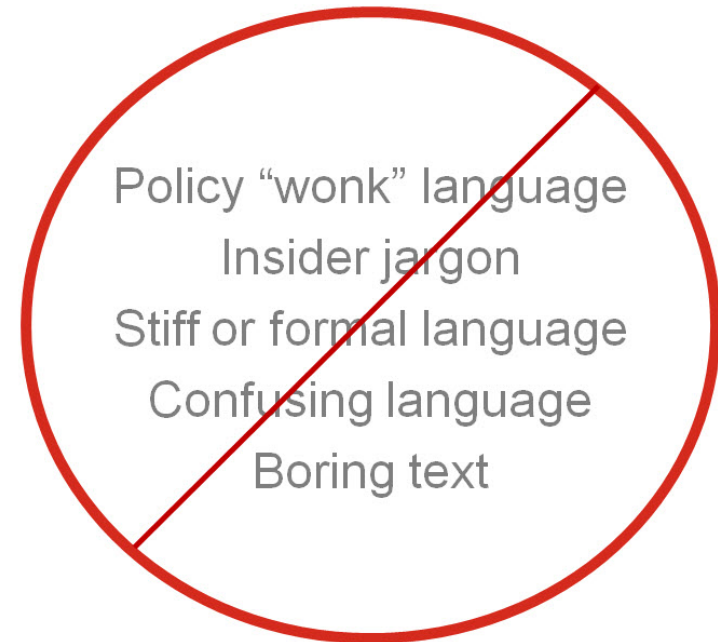
- Applies to email writing, social, direct mail
- Use theory of change: state the problem, the solution and why people should take action now to make a difference





REMEMBER THAT OLD ACRONYM “KISS”?

- Use emotion
- Have your audience in mind
- Use simple, clear language
- Write for an 8th grader



ANATOMY OF A SUCCESSFUL EMAIL

Subject Line: Tell Trump: Speak out against Rx prices

AARP Real Possibilities

ADVOCACY ALERT



It's simple: From the President to voters of both parties, Americans agree that we shouldn't pay the highest Rx prices in the world. [Tell President Trump: Use the State of the Union to highlight the need to lower prescription drug prices.](#)

Dear MeShon,

No one should have to choose between prescriptions and putting food on the table. It's shameful that so many seniors face that choice — **and it's unfair that Americans pay the highest prescription drug prices in the world.**

But there's a reason to be optimistic. President Trump has talked about the need to lower prescription drug costs. Now members of Congress are in office, and this is an

Make the subject line count! Use a question, include dates or deadlines, limit to 30 characters.

Add an email salutation and greeting with the reader's first name to personalize the message.

Include the call-out-box which is above the message body to immediately alert the reader to the ask. Only ask reader to take one action.

ANATOMY OF A SUCCESSFUL EMAIL

Write at an 8th grade level and describe the theory of change using emotional language: state the **problem**, the **solution** and what **action** they can take NOW to help.

New members of Congress are in office, and this is an issue lawmakers on both sides of the aisle can agree on. The approaching State of the Union is President Trump's chance to make it a priority.

You are part of the nation's largest network of older Americans, MeShon, and when our 6 million advocates speak out together, we have incredible power to ensure leaders protect older Americans. [Let's use our power to remind President Trump of his promise.](#)



Include 2 or 3 links with the action to give readers more options to click-to-action.

ANATOMY OF A SUCCESSFUL EMAIL

Consider a **thoughtful image** to play a role in communicating your message and motivating readers to action.

Use **consistent font** with AARP standards — all emails should be in 12 pt., Arial font.



[MeShon, call on President Trump to use his State of the Union to lower drug prices. Send your message to the White House today:](#)

With growing support to lower drug prices in Congress, there's a real chance that we can make it easier for everyone to pay for their prescriptions. And there are several realistic ways to lower drug prices long-term:

- Permit Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices for its 60 million enrollees. This is currently banned under the law.
- Require drug price transparency, which would help stop drug manufacturers from charging whatever they want with no explanation.
- Help more generics come to market, more rapidly by ending loopholes and preventing patent abuse.

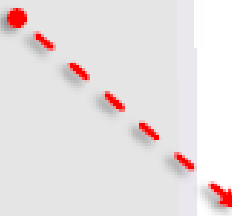
This is President Trump's chance to signal to Congress that there's an issue both parties can agree on. By tackling the need to lower prescription drug prices during the State of the Union, Trump will set this priority, for himself and for Congress, and show that this issue can receive the full support it needs.

Use space below image to give further information and greater detail. **Avoid wonky jargon.**

Proof your message!
Read closely to make sure there are no typos, all formatting is correct and all your links are working and directing to the right place.

ANATOMY OF A SUCCESSFUL EMAIL

Have a **real person**
from your office sign
the message for a
personal touch.



that there's an issue both parties can agree on. By tackling the need to lower prescription drug prices during the State of the Union, Trump will set this priority, for himself and for Congress, and show that this issue can receive the full support it needs.

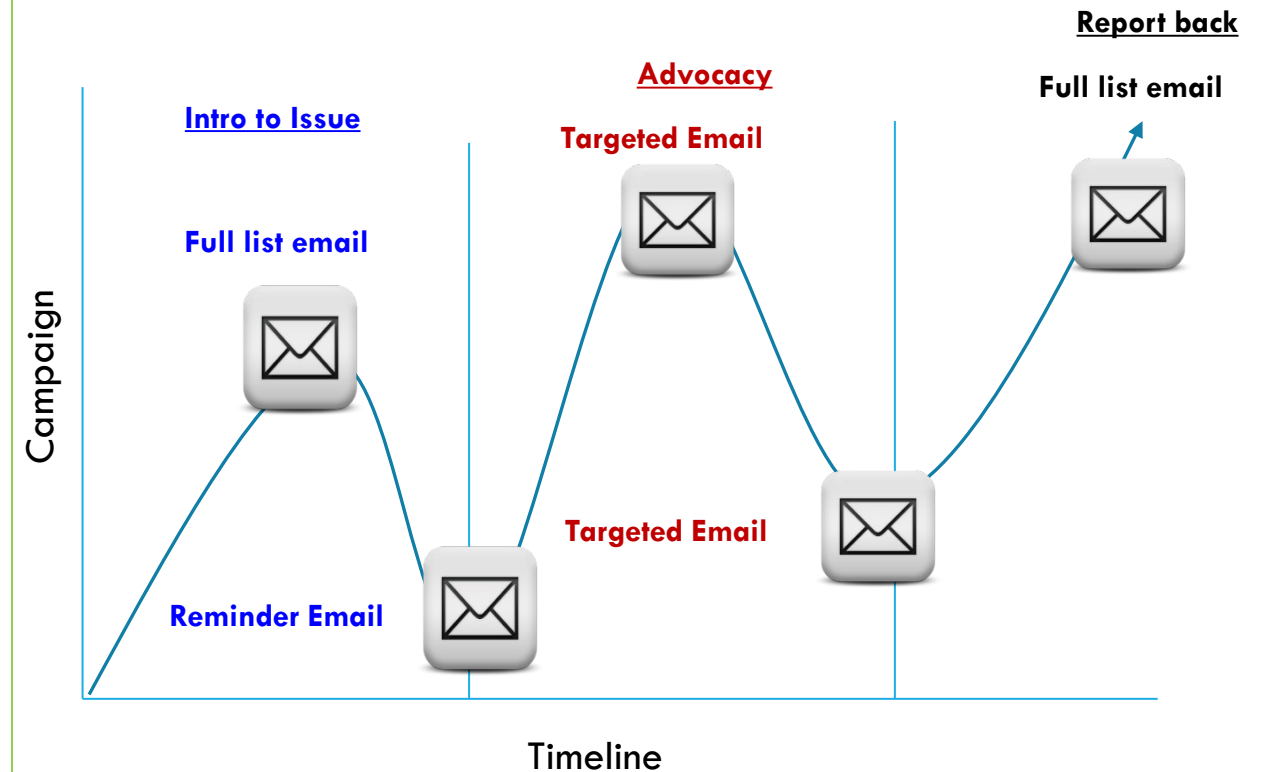
[Send a message to the White House now and tell President Trump to highlight lowering prescription drug prices.](#)

Thank you,
Fred Griesbach
AARP Campaigns

all your links are working
and directing to the right
place.

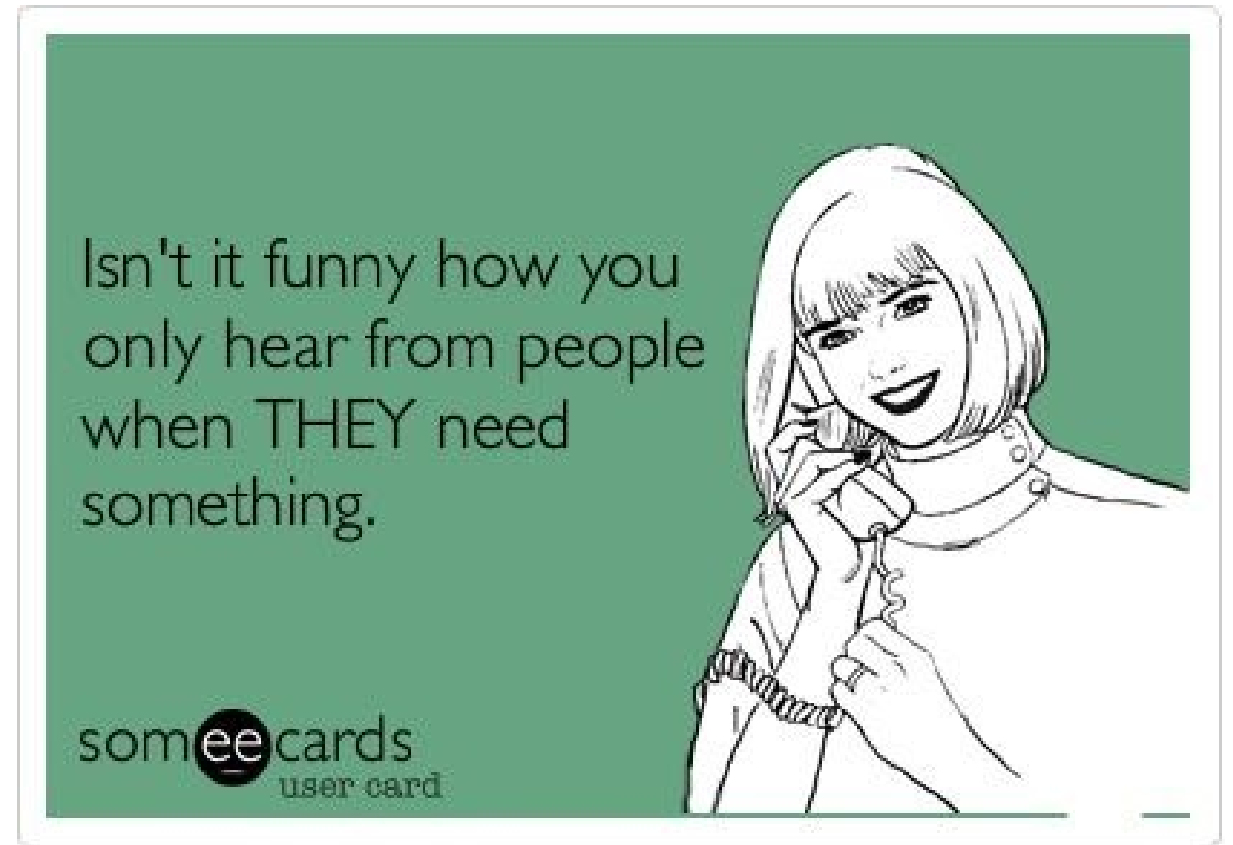
EMAIL CADENCE

Send a series of emails on the same issue rather than one-off emails



LEGISLATURE OUT OF SESSION?

- Keep talking to your grassroots base!
- Surveys, quizzes, connecting on social media, webinars, trainings, session wrap-up/victory lap, volunteer recruitment, tell them what you're up to behind the scenes



CASE STUDY

- AARP Minnesota's 2019 Elder Abuse Campaign
- Goal: To put sustained pressure on Senate targets throughout the month of April and early May to pass a well-funded elder abuse bill.
- Strategy: Increase public awareness of continued documented cases of abuse using the Elder Voice Report (released Apr 9) and media stories with a clear call to action.



CASE STUDY

- AARP Minnesota used an array of tactics to bring their strategy to life including:
 - 1. Earned Media
 - 2. Paid Media
 - 3. Social Media
 - 4. Grassroots
 - 5. Volunteer Engagement

CASE STUDY

Timeline:

April 8: Start Facebook and Twitter storm

April 8: Lobby Day

April 9: Elder Voice Report press conference:

- Media Advisory
- Press Release

April 10: Public News Service story on Elder Voice Report

April 10: Convio news update – include call to action

April 11: Elder abuse LTEs (Goal: weekly letter from volunteer)

April 12: Elder abuse op-ed in Strib

- Fischbach

April 12: Senate elder abuse finance hearings (must meet 3rd deadline)

April 12: 3rd Committee Deadline

April 14 – April 22: Legislative break

- Birdogging in Districts

April 15: Recess Convio alert

April 15 – 19: Elder abuse ads in local papers

April 22 – April 30: Digital and radio ads – MinnPost, Strib

April 23: Print ad in Star Tribune

April 25: House floor session on elder abuse – Utilize text msging and robos as needed

April 25: TTH with Gov – oversample in 10 vulnerable districts

April 27: Direct mail to TTH engagers with 800# call to action

Last week of April/Early May: Elder abuse conference committees

Last week of April/Early May: Digital ads in Star Tribune and MinnPost

CASE STUDY

2019 CAMPAIGN CALENDAR

April 2019						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Lobby Day	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 Lobby Day Start EA FB storm	9 EV Press Conference: - Advisbry - Release	10 PNS EA story	11 Start EA LTE campaign Convio newsletter	12 EA op-ed in Strib MGS Conference Senate Finance – Elder abuse hearing 3rd committee deadline	13
14	15 Leg break In-districts Birddogging Recess Convio on EA Local EA ads	16 Leg break In-districts Birddogging Local EA ads Rep. Hagedorn staff meeting	17 Leg break In-districts Birddogging Local EA ads	18 Leg break In-districts Birddogging Local EA ads	19 Leg break In-districts Birddogging Local EA ads Rep. Emmer meeting	20
21 Easter	22 Leg break In-districts Birddogging EA digital ds	23 Mpls Retired Teachers presentation EA digital ds EA Strib print ad	24 EA digital ds Vols deliver ads to Cap HHS Omnibus on floor Media advisory on vote EA on House floor Rx press conference Rx bottle action at Capitol	25 EA digital ds TTH with Gov.	26 EA digital ds	27 EA direct mail hits homes
28	29 Convio – House Floor Vote Rep. McCollum staff meeting	30				

CASE STUDY

- VICTORY!
- AARP Minnesota and advocates claimed victory after coming to consensus with the long-term care industry on a bill to prevent elder abuse.
- The agreement was sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Schultz (D-Duluth) and Sen. Karin Housley (R- St. Mary's Point).
- The bill passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, and was signed into law by Governor Tim Walz on Tuesday, May 21.

IN SUMMARY...

- Strategy FIRST!
- Recruit and train grassroots volunteers
- Regular outreach using coordinated online and offline communication
- Creative tactics – have fun!
- Tailored messaging
- Move your advocates up the ladder of engagement
- Build the long-term strength of your organization

THANK YOU!

Reshma Mehta

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