

The Congressional Champion Scale

The Congressional Champion Scale is a tool to evaluate your relationship with your member of Congress and analyze where they stand in their level of support on a particular issue. This will help you determine the best methods to increase their support and move them up the scale..

Remember that all our advocacy work must be done with the goal of relationship-building in mind. Our touchpoints with our members of Congress and their offices should serve as intentional and consistent moments to strengthen our relationships with them—a key to successful advocacy work. These touchpoints can include concrete asks, notes of gratitude and updates of information.

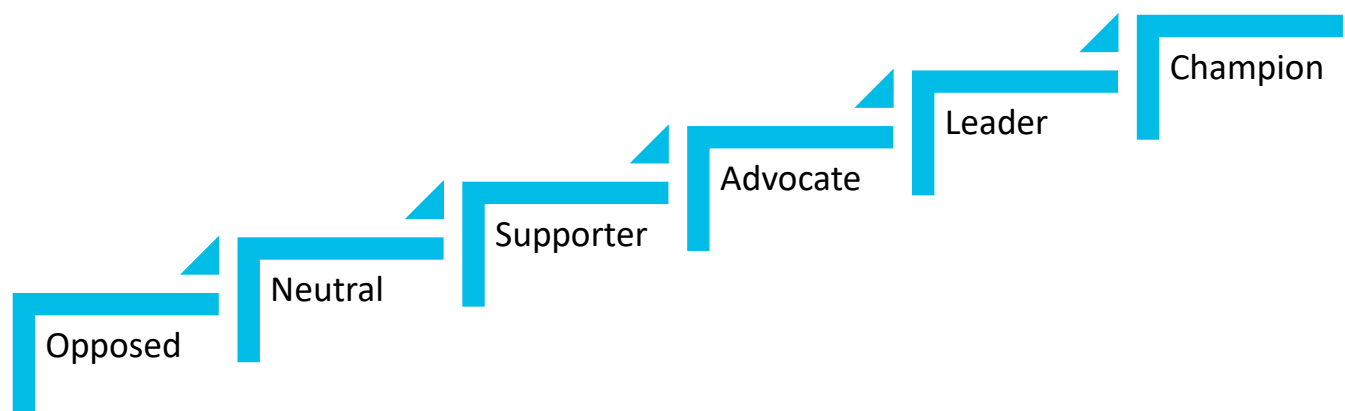
Getting to know your member of Congress

Learn basic, foundational information about your member of Congress as you begin to build a relationship with them.

- What is the name of your member of Congress?
- How long have they been in Congress?
- To what party does your member belong?
- What other background information can you gather as you build a relationship with the office and communicate about issues that are important to you?

Identifying your Congress member on the Champion Scale

Your member of Congress can be at different places and may move up and down the scale on a single issue over time. Return to this scale regularly to assess your member's stance throughout your time engaging with them.



Opposed—Example: You wrote to or called your member about an issue. A member of Congress who is opposed might say, “I don’t support that,” or “My constituents wouldn’t support that,” or “What you’re talking about isn’t even a problem,” or “I agree that it is a problem but I can’t support your solution.”

Neutral—Example: You had a successful letter-writing campaign which piqued your member’s interest. Someone who is neutral might say, “I need more information,” or “Can you explain it to me more fully?”

Supporter—Example: You send background information to your member’s office, you have a meeting to discuss it and you ask if they’ll co-sponsor the bill in question. A supporter might say, “I’ll co-sponsor that,” or “I think that is a good solution and I can get behind it.”

Advocate—Example: You asked your member to talk to other members about signing on to the bill. An advocate might say, “I am going to talk with others in our Congressional delegation about supporting it.” They’re willing to talk to others, whether in their own party, across the aisle or in their committees.

Leader—Example: Your member agrees to advocate to key leadership to move the bill forward. A leader or spokesperson might be the lead sponsor on a bill or the initiator of a sign-on letter or caucus. They are a clear leader among their peers on the issue at hand.

Champion—Example: A champion is well-known as a proponent on the issue both within Congress and among the general public. They might say, “I have arranged for five of my Democratic colleagues and five of my Republican colleagues to host town hall meetings on the legislation, and I need your help to find speakers in some of those 10 cities.”

Moving your member of Congress to the next level

Once you determine where your member of Congress is on the Champion Scale, you want to take actions that move them to the next level. It is important to remember that it often takes many actions from multiple advocates over a period of time to move a member of Congress up the scale.

- **Opposed to Neutral**—Example: Organize other constituents to write to or call the office to show that the member’s constituents care about the issue.
- **Neutral to Supporter**—Example: Send background material to the office and schedule a meeting to discuss it. After discussing the issue, you might ask them to sign-on or co-sponsor legislation for which you are advocating.
- **Supporter to Advocate**—Example: Ask the member to talk to others about co-sponsoring.
- **Advocate to Leader**—Example: Ask your member to write an op-ed on the issue. You could also ask them to focus their advocacy efforts on key leaders within Congress who have the power to move the bill forward.
- **Leader to Champion**—Example: Encourage your member to have a public event on the issue—such as a town hall—to support your issue in a more public, impactful way.

Guiding questions for further reflection

- Have you written to your member of Congress? If so, have you received a response that addresses what you shared? What will be your follow-up action to your member’s response?
- Have you developed a relationship with the member’s key aide in D.C. or with staff in the local office?
- How many times have you met with the member or their staff?
- What has your member agreed to do so far?
- Have you had letters to the editor published that positively mention your member by name?
- Have you organized community leaders (religious leaders, business leaders, elected officials, community members who are experts on the issue) in support of the legislation? Have they contacted the member about the legislation?
- What requests or actions can you take to move your member to the next level on the Congressional Champion Scale?