



LEGISLATIVE SESSION PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Make the most of the interim. Work through these items before the next session begins.

While Congress is in recess or focused on re-election, advocates have an opportunity to prepare for the next legislative session. This is also a time to prepare for state legislative action, county and school district advocacy. Below is a checklist to help ensure that you hit the ground running when Congress, state legislators, or other decision makers get back to work. By being prepared, you can boost the chances that your favorite legislation will be considered.

A quick note: when you're contacting legislators or speaking up on an issue as yourself, that's your voice, not the Forum's. The DKG U.S. Forum only advocates as an organization on issues where it has an adopted position statement or resolution. Be clear about which one you're doing.

A. Evaluate the last session

- ☐ 1. What happened to your tracked legislation last term? Did it pass? Advance in the process? Why or why not? What is the current status?
- ☐ 2. Update legislator score cards—does he/she support your legislation? Vote for it?
- ☐ 3. How has similar legislation played out? Clarify any language change that might be needed for your bill.

B. Confirm where the Forum stands

- ☐ 1. Are your current position statements and resolutions still accurate, or does anything need updating?
- ☐ 2. Was each one actually adopted through the Forum's official process, and can you point to the documentation?
- ☐ 3. Anything that should be reaffirmed—or retired—before the new session starts?

C. Check-ins with key legislators on current bills

- ☐ 1. Who is sponsoring/co-sponsoring the legislation? Are your representatives on board?
- ☐ 2. Schedule a virtual conversation with the legislative staffer working on the bill?
- ☐ 3. Sign-up for notices regarding hearings, public comment periods, and bill tracking (congress.gov or your state legislative website).
- ☐ 4. Don't forget to thank the legislators who supported Forum-backed bills last session.

D. Examine NEW legislation

- ☐ 1. Once you have decided on your priority issue(s), check to see if there are any currently proposed bills on that topic. (congress.gov or your state legislative website)
- ☐ 2. Use the Bill Evaluator process (see dkgusforum.org/resources) to decide if you are pro or con regarding the proposed bill.
- ☐ 3. Find allies (other DKG members, other organizations, friends) to work with to plan (a) issue statements; (b) strategies for advocacy you will want to use and when, etc.
- ☐ 4. Keep an eye on anything carried over from last session that's still moving.

E. Do your homework on the issue

- ☐ 1. Pull together the background, data, and sources you'll need before taking a position.
- ☐ 2. How does this issue actually play out for educators and students? Get specific examples if you can.
- ☐ 3. Talk to members or partners who deal with this issue directly.
- ☐ 4. Think through what the opposition will say, and have an answer ready.

F. NEW ideas for legislation

- ☐ 1. Work with allies to research the issue, write up position statements (see testimony writing on Forum website/resources).
- ☐ 2. Find a legislator to work with and schedule an appointment (or with staffer) to discuss how to proceed.
- ☐ 3. Run any new proposed position through the Forum's formal adoption process before advocating on its behalf.
- ☐ 4. Develop a campaign plan complete with timelines that are manageable and timely.

G. Build your advocacy campaign

- ☐ 1. Who's doing what? Line up committee members, chapter leads, and volunteers.
- ☐ 2. Map out tactics—legislator visits, testimony, letters, social media, Legislative Day—and when each should happen.
- ☐ 3. Line up coalition partners who care about the same issue.

H. Prepare your materials

- ☐ 1. Put together a simple one-page fact sheet or issue brief members can actually use.
- ☐ 2. Draft a short template letter/email and a few lines for social media.
- ☐ 3. Make sure it's clear which materials speak for the Forum and which are just talking points for individual members.
- ☐ 4. Get sign-off from Forum leadership before anything goes out (if appropriate).

I. Monitor, document, and follow up

- ☐ 1. Keep track of bill status, hearings, and committee action as the session moves along.
- ☐ 2. Assign someone to watch for developments and report back to the group.
- ☐ 3. Keep a record of anything done in the Forum's name—testimony given, legislators contacted, etc.
- ☐ 4. Send a thank-you after key votes or hearings.
- ☐ 5. Note what worked and what didn't so next session's evaluation (see A) has something to work with.