

Hunger Network in Ohio



Faith
Advocacy
Network

Advocacy Guide for the Faith Community

www.hungernetohio.com



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Who we are:

The Hunger Network in Ohio is a statewide faith-based organization that believes we can end hunger in Ohio by addressing the root causes of poverty through advocacy.

This book is designed for local community groups, faith communities, non-profits, and others who want to do advocacy. Advocacy is speaking publicly about an issue of concern to the community and to those who can effect change. While this guide is written about advocacy at the state level, the same concepts and ideas can be applied to local school boards, township trustees, county commissioners and others. Advocacy requires collaboration and we are here to help! Please reach out at anytime.

Why Advocacy

A background on why community groups, faith communities, and others should engage in advocacy. Research shows that more than 9/10 Americans engage in hunger relief work, but hunger still exists. The reality is our charity will not solve a systemic problem. These pages identify ways your community can begin to incorporate advocacy and justice into your existing work.

Build a Team

We cannot do this work alone! This section goes through strategies to recruit others, how to develop a strategy. Passion is important, but passion without good strategy will leave us all burned out. We need effective messages, we need to talk to the right people, we need to develop a compelling story to make sure our issues are prioritized.

Engagement Strategies

Great passion, Great research, Great strategy doesn't mean a thing if we aren't talking to the right people in a way where they will hear us. This section shares some ideas on how to effectively engage lawmakers to create the change we want to see in the world. Following this section, we have included an appendix with helpful resources. In the end, remember just do something!

OUR PRIORITIES

The Hunger Network advocates on policies that will provide opportunities to Ohioans struggling with hunger in our communities.

FEED PEOPLE TODAY

Emergency food programs provide immediate assistance families in need.

EDUCATE TO END HUNGER

A high quality education is key to addressing poverty and hunger.

BUILD HEALTHY HOMES & COMMUNITIES

We need a holistic approach to 'community' to end hunger.

BUILD AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

The economy should provide fair wages and protect against exploitation.



Take the next step

Silence in the face of evil is evil itself - - - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Most faith traditions are filled with scripture verses about hunger, refugees, the outcast and downtrodden. This guidebook is designed to help people of faith, and others, start the hard work of taking our passions forward strategically and effectively to create the change we wish to see in the world. We do not need to solve the problems of the world by ourselves or immediately, but we all need to take the next step toward justice. How do you run a marathon? Take the first step.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is about building relationships with people in the community and people in positions of authority to educate those in authority and to help them make the best decisions possible. Lawyers and social workers advocate for their clients before judges or others in authority. Their advocacy, on behalf of their clients, is extremely important. However, in this guide we will focus on advocacy around public policies that impact our communities. Most of our work is focused on the state level, but the advocacy discussed in this guide can be used with local school boards, city councils, administrative agencies, congress, and even the President of the United States.

What is public policy?

Public policy are the rules and laws that are passed by school boards, city councils, state legislators, and congress. Policies are also the administrative actions take by school administrators, mayors, governors, and presidents. Some of the most important public policy decisions focus on how we spend our shared resources through public budgets and appropriations. Our healthcare, school and economic systems are all the results of policies passed or failed to be passed. Often we can see when something isn't working right. Our advocacy can help lift up these policy shortcomings to those who can fix them.

Are churches and non-profits allowed to do this stuff? YES!

All non-profit entities can engage in advocacy and educate the community and elected officials about issues like hunger, environmental damage, inequality, and other injustices in the world. Mission team leaders, clergy, and others are often more knowledgeable on hunger and poverty than elected officials, because we see the stories everyday. Advocacy can range from letter writing during a worship service, visiting elected officials, and more direct action protests. The reality is that elected officials are called to be public servants and our insights and love of neighbor equip us to help them lead and serve our communities. They want our ideas on how to make our community stronger!

Faith and Advocacy

It's about Right Relationship

Justice is about right relationship in the world. God invites us in as community to restore right relationship in a broken world. God entrusted humanity with certain power and authority in the earth to be good stewards (Genesis 1:26). God calls humanity to live in right relationship with one another and with creation (Genesis 4:9; Matt 25). Too often, evil is systemic and seen in racism, greed, and exploitation of communities and people. We are invited in to witness to the world that God intended for us. God called Moses to advocate to Pharaoh to dramatically shift the economic and cultural reality of Egypt by ending the slavery of the Hebrews (Exodus 3). In the Lord's Prayer, Christians pray, 'give us this day our daily bread', which includes all we need for daily sustenance - including good government. Just like we feed somebody when they are hungry, we should advocate to the government to make sure everyone benefits from the blessings of the community, and that everyone is treated fairly and justly.



God has blessed our world with enough food for everyone, but many go hungry. Why? Because we are not living out our call to be in right relationship with one another and God's creation. We hoard food, we create food deserts, we focus inward instead of on the community. The great commandment - to love our neighbors as ourselves - manifests itself throughout most world religions. It is not enough to pray for those who are hungry, or to provide the scraps from our table. Those who experience injustice want justice. As a loving neighbor, we are called to act and to seek that justice with them.

People ask, 'But doesn't God want us to do charity?' Yes, God wants us to do charity because injustice exists in the world. That doesn't mean we are not supposed to also work for justice. God loves those who are hungry and oppressed just as much as those who feed the hungry. 'The poor' were not placed here so that the wealthy congregations have a Sunday evening service project. To be in right relationship with those experiencing hunger means that we should address the root causes of the injustice.

Scripture Passages

Deuteronomy 16:20
Job 5:15-16
Jeremiah 22:3

Amos 5:24

Psalms 50:6
Matthew 25:40

James 1:27
Luke 11:41

Proverbs 31:8-9
2 Corinthians 8:13-15

Isaiah 1:17
Galatians 6:2

Isaiah 56:1
Revelation 22:1-7

What additional verses would you add in?

How has your faith called you to advocate for justice?

Engage Your Faith Community

Do Something!

1. Learn together: Set up a Bible study, book club, or sermon series about a topic. Ask the question, 'What is God calling us to do?' Begin with an issue (like hunger) where the congregation already is engaged in some way.

2. Engage experts: Invite service providers, those with lived experiences, policy experts, advocates, and others already doing the work to speak to your group. Invite them to share their experiences within your congregation.



3. Prophetic is Pastoral: The prophets of the Hebrew scriptures weren't threatening those in power, they were offering warnings because they loved the community and wanted it to get back on track! Advocacy and justice work is not 'for others' but an effort to join with God in the restoration of the world. Begin with shared values (love of children) and then draw it into the larger context (immigration is an issue about parents loving their children...)

4. Take it out of the Church building: Identify ways you can take your passion outside into the world. The world desperately needs people of faith to speak out on issues of injustice.

- Build awareness in the congregation & community
- Phone calls to legislators
- Hand written letters to legislators
- Youth/child art projects about an issue
- Invite legislators to worship or to volunteer at the pantry
- In-person meetings with your legislators
- Letter to the editor of your local newspaper
- Organize a rally or walk to raise awareness

5. Celebrate: This is a marathon not a sprint. Sometimes conversations about justice are difficult, but our faith calls us to wrestle with what God is calling on us to do as a community. Celebrate the small victories and reach out to HNO for new ideas and support!

What barriers do you see within your local faith community/congregation to do more justice-oriented work? How can you overcome those barriers?

Rethink Service

Can we really make a difference in the long-term? Yes

Community service projects, too often, focus on the volunteers enjoyment, and not on those in need. We need to rethink our volunteer and charity efforts if we want to make a positive difference in the world.

A few tips:

Ask about needs, don't assume: Ask what partner agencies actually need. Often, donations of money go much farther than donations of goods or food that may have storage costs.



Break down barriers: Encourage your congregation members to interact with those receiving services. Serving dinner at a family shelter? Bring a stack of coloring books and your kids so they can color together. Sit and eat with the community. This allows everyone to enjoy each other as children of God. Encourage your members to learn something from the community. Focus on relationships first.

Incorporate learning: Prior to a volunteer event, study scripture and the world to understand the issue. We need to learn more about the causes. After the event, do reflection and devotion about what people saw and experienced. Ask, 'why does hunger continue to exist?'

Incorporate advocacy: Have members at a meal (both your congregation and the community being served) write letters to legislators on the issue or have community conversations about a social issue.

Re-orient service: Focus service on building community and raising awareness instead of providing 'something'. Use volunteer opportunities as a stepping stone toward active citizenship that will lead people to address the systemic and underlying issues.

New partnerships: Consider partnering with a faith community that is theologically, racially, and culturally different than yours. When you enter as equals, it can break down further barriers.

Be open to others serving you: Being in right relationship with others requires us to be open to being served and serving. Be open to serving side-by-side and allow others to bless you with their gifts and talents.

What is one service project you think you could modify to be more justice-oriented?

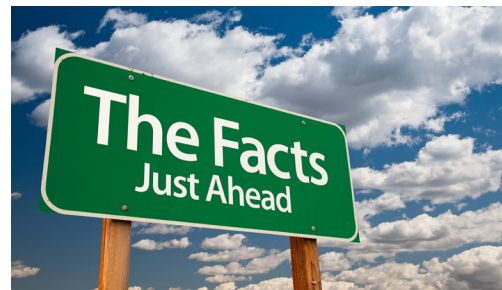
Statistics on Hunger and Poverty

Facts matter. But be cautious with data overload.

Statistics can be a powerful tool in making your case to your congregation or to a policymaker. However, statistics should be used sparingly. They will not 'win the argument' in most cases.

Use statistics to:

- **Draw people in:** A shocking statistic or big number will grab people's attention.
- **Connect your story to the world:** Your personal story is relevant as an example to the larger issues.
- **Correct the Record:** Use a statistic to quickly set the record straight and move back to your issue.



A few Effective Statistics:

- Around 30% of Ohio households are living on the edge or in poverty - not able to make ends meet without assistance.
- More than 80% of households struggling to get by are working.
- An Ohioan needs to earn, on average, \$15.73 an hour to afford a 2-bedroom apartment. The average renter only earns \$13.92.
- 13.2% of Ohioans experienced food insecurity in 2018. Ranking Ohio 39th in the nation. Over 20 years, hunger is up 36% in Ohio.
- More than 1 in 5 kids struggle with hunger. Monroe County has the highest rate of childhood hunger, a rate over 27%.
- Ohio food banks saw a 20% increase in senior citizens needing assistance in 2016.
- In Ohio, African Americans experience a rate of hunger around 140% greater than European Americans.
- The counties with the most poverty in Ohio are Athens, Scioto, Adams, Jackson and Pike Counties. The lowest poverty rates in Ohio are in Delaware, Putnam, Warren, and Medina.
- A lack of stable nutritious food leads to health problems such as high blood pressure and obesity.

What other statistics do you find helpful?

Organize for Systemic Change

Bring people together.

Congregational or community organizing are simple in theory, but require dedication. Bring people together, wrestle through the difficult stuff so that we can create long-lasting change in our world.

Our charity efforts just aren't enough to solve the root causes of social problems in our community. We engage in charity because evil exists in the world and we feel compelled to be merciful to those suffering today. However, this is no substitute to our call to address the underlying causes of problems.



Okay, I'm ready to go! How do I organize people?

Listen (1-1s): Engage in intentional listening to your community (and those outside your community). Listen to where God is calling you. Build intentional relationships with community leaders, potential leaders, people with lived experiences, and others. 1-1 conversations should primarily be the other person talking (70%). Try to identify the values and passions of the other party.

Bring people together: Gather those who share similar values and interests in an issue to determine your assets - stories, passion, meeting space, etc. are all assets! Check to see if you are missing voices at the table. Check the diversity of your leadership. Don't leave the meeting without a plan for future meetings, if needed, and work to get done in the meantime. Hold people accountable to the work.

Identify Goals: During your first few gatherings, determine your goals. Make sure all voices are able to contribute and have ownership of the outcome. Be idealistic and realistic at the same time.

Plan & Research: How can we achieve these goals, and who holds the power to make the change happen? Remember, holding a community forum is a step toward a goal. Identify a wide range of leaders to implement the actions.

Be prepared: Do not wait for tragedy to hit to talk about an issue and begin organizing. Begin the conversations now. With any scripture passage ask yourself, what is God doing for us and what is God calling us to do.

Tension & urgency: We need to create a sense of urgency, if it is not already felt, to encourage others to action. Advocating for justice requires change, and we are all uncomfortable with change. Constructive tension is sometimes required.

Who will you reach out to for a 1-1 conversation in the next 2 weeks?

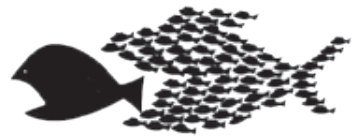
Understand Power

The old adage is true - "absolute power corrupts absolutely." But we each have power. Power corrupts when we forget that the ultimate power rests with God and not us. But God has blessed us with different skills, talents, and opportunities to use our power to serve.

When we organize together, and use our power collectively, we can do great things. We have power through our faith to witness to the love of God for the world. We must use all that we have in service to God, which includes our power. Religious leaders have power through their title of Reverend, Rabbi, Deacon, Father, Iman, Sister, team leader, etc.



Everyone has some type of power. As citizens we are the government in the United States, and we have the ability to vote, petition the government, and advocate for our shared values. Even those who can't vote still have the right and responsibility to speak about these issues. When we choose to not exercise our power for justice, we are accepting and supporting the status quo.



Types of Power

People Power: We have power through our numbers. If every faith community had just one person who wrote a letter and made a phone call to their elected officials, it would be transforming.

Moral Power: When a religious institution speaks, people listen. We have a moral authority to speak for justice.

Power through Relationship: Faith leaders are community leaders. We all serve on boards, committees, and have the opportunity to speak to groups of people every week. Use these relationships to advance social justice.

Power through Wealth: Wealth is more than just money. Time off, expertise space - such as a kitchen or church van - give us wealth to use toward justice.

Power through Education: Our formal education matters, but so do our experiences. We have wisdom from our relationships, our experiences dealing with injustice, and our formal education. Use these to tell a convincing story.

Power through Humility: Some of the most effective leaders for justice laid themselves out and became vulnerable. We see this through non-violent resistance during the civil rights movement, Daniel in the Lion's den, and Jesus on the cross.

What ways do you have power and how can you use it to advance justice?

Develop a message that works!

When in Rome, speak as the Romans

Communication is a two way street. An effective message allows your intent to be understood by others, and it allows you to set the direction of the conversation. A good message will build off of 'cultural common sense' - or ideas that are generally agreed upon in the community.

Examples:

"We need an economy that works for all."

"A child in Ohio should not go to bed hungry at night."

Tips for communicating your passion:

- 1. Begin with core values:** Begin with a value statement that is universally agreed upon. Freedom, hard-work, community, love of neighbor, right relationship are values that are accessible to most people. Build your argument from there.
- 2. Speak with moral authority:** As people of faith, we need to remind legislators and others that we speak with a moral authority. Unlike many advocates, we are not there to 'get something'. Your primary message should always be hopeful for the future.
- 3. Speak about what you know:** Relate an issue of public policy back to something you can speak personally about.
- 4. Don't get sucked in:** Know what your primary message is, and always pivot back to that. Others may disagree with you based on stereotypes or personal anecdotes.
- 5. Shift the Conversation back to your message:** If the conversations shifts to personal failings, re-state your core value.

Sample Message:

A member of our congregation is working hard at two different jobs, and trying to provide a better life for her children. But hunger continues to hold them back. As a person of faith, I pray that all may receive their daily bread, because not only is it morally right, but it strengthens our community when kids and their parents are able to succeed.

Opposition Frame:

There are lots of jobs out there, and people must be lazy or addicted to drugs if they are going hungry. We should investigate each person who comes into a food pantry to make sure they aren't trying to cheat the system and take advantage of hardworking Americans.



What is your positive message that you could use in your congregation?

Power of Storytelling

Stories are powerful for your message because they humanize the issue.

Clergy know the power of a good story for a sermon. The same is true in advocacy. When telling a story, remember to frame your story intentionally to advance your core values. Public narrative should drive and inspire people to act with you. This method of storytelling is borrowed from Marshall Ganz at the Kennedy School of Government. A public story contains three elements:

Story of Self: Why you were called to what you have been called to. Illustrate why you are passionate about an issue. What challenges have you faced? What barriers exist for you? Why are you here.

Story of Us: What your constituency, community, organization has been called to - its shared purposes, goals, vision. We are part of many groups of 'us'. Can you include the legislator or community listener's as part of the us? The 'us' is who you hope to move and engage.

Story of Now: The challenge this community now faces, the choices it must make, and the hope to which "we" can aspire. The story of now should create urgency for action. Leadership requires us to describe more than just the problem, but opportunities for action that the story invites the listener into. The asks should be specific and direct, not a laundry list of ideas.

TIPS for effective storytelling:

- Identify the right story-teller - Representation matters
- Train your story-tellers - write it out, practice verbally sharing it.
- All the details don't matter - make it succinct
- Stories should evoke emotion
- Stories should emphasize your message
- You don't need to be perfect, acknowledge difficulties or moral crisis.
- Don't exploit or appropriate others stories.



What is your story?

Our Governmental System

Advocacy needs to occur at many levels. Below get the facts on the governmental systems that impact us.

Local Government: Ohio has 88 counties, and most counties have 3 county commissioners. They establish budgets for the sheriff, parks, and many social service agencies such as aging, mental health, and child welfare. In addition to counties, Ohio has a variety of township, city, and village structures. Ohio also has 611 public school districts.

State Government in Ohio: The State of Ohio has five statewide executive elected offices - Governor (and Lt. Gov.) Auditor, Treasurer, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. Each holds different administrative responsibilities. For example, the Secretary of State is essential in voting rights. These positions are elected to four year terms during even year and can serve two terms. (2014, 2018, 2022).



The Ohio Legislature has 2 chambers - the House and the Senate. The Ohio House has 99 members elected to two year terms and the Ohio Senate has 33 members, each elected to four year terms. Each Senate district is comprised of 3 House districts. You can serve a maximum of 8 years in a row in each chamber. Many legislators 'hop' back and forth between chambers. Half of the Senate is up for re-election every two years. The Ohio legislature is in session traditionally in the spring and fall from Tuesday through Thursday.

Ohio also elects seven State Supreme Court justices and has a series of appellate and local court systems.

Federal Government: Like all states, Ohio has two U.S. Senators. Currently serving are Senator Rob Portman (Republican) and Senator Sherrod Brown (Democrat). Based on population, Ohio has 16 congressional Representatives. See the Congressional district map in the back of this guide.

Passing Legislation: "I was only a bill..."

Legislation in Ohio is passed the same way at the state level as it is at the federal level. Bills are introduced into the House or the Senate (budget bills begin in the House) and the bills are assigned to a committee and sometimes a sub-committee. In Ohio, committees often hear public testimony on proposed legislation where anyone can come in and testify. Contact an advocacy organization or the committee chair for a hearing schedule. Committees will modify the bill and refer it to the full chamber. The Full chamber will then vote to pass it, sending it to the other chamber for the process to begin again. Once both chambers have passed the bill, a conference committee is appointed to iron out any differences. The bill is then sent to the Governor for a signature or veto. If you want to make a difference on legislation, it is important to know where it is in the process and be strategic around it.

The most important piece of legislation passed in Ohio occurs every two years - the Ohio budget. Under Ohio's constitution, the Governor must normally make a budget proposal in late January/early February of odd numbered years (2017, 2019, 2021) and then the House begins hearings. The House will hold hearings until the Spring break (the week before and after Easter). Upon return, the House will vote to send the budget to the Senate which will pass their version by the middle of June. The Governor must sign it by June 30th, because the Ohio fiscal year begins on July 1st of each year.

Partisanship

Understand it, but avoid it.

Faith communities, and other non-profit organizations, are not allowed to engage in partisan politics. But we should understand the dynamics of partisanship so that we can better understand the motivations of other organizations and elected officials.

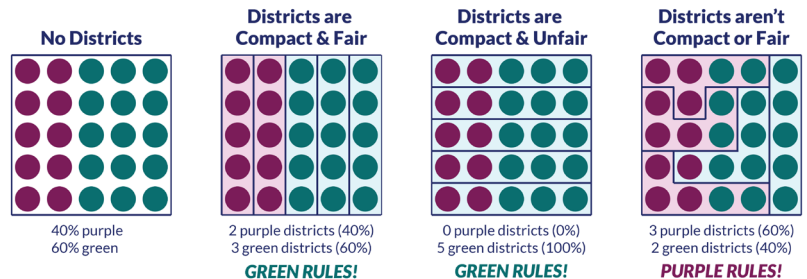
Is Ohio politically conservative or liberal?

Neither, Ohio is very moderate along the ideological spectrum. However, our call to feed people isn't liberal or conservative, it's the moral thing to do.

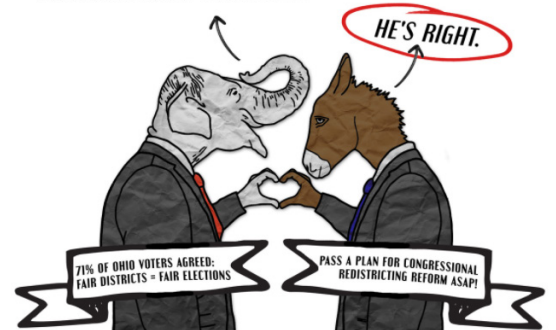
What is Gerrymandering?

Every 10 years, legislative districts are re-drawn throughout the country to keep roughly an equal number of people in each district. However, if maps are unfairly drawn with the intention to benefit one party, the results may not be fair. The new maps will be drawn for the 2022 election.

Ohio voters passed two separate statewide constitutional amendments to improve our map drawing practice. The new methods will go into effect after the 2020 census. The 2022 election will likely see districts that are more representative of the people. The process will not be perfect and can still be exploited to benefit the party in power, however it will be much better than the current system.



GEORGE VOINOVICH CALLED CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING REFORM "THE SIMPLEST WAY TO GET WASHINGTON MOVING AGAIN."



Can I advocate for my position if my representatives are in the political minority? Whichever party is in the minority has substantially less power than the party in the majority - even if only by one seat. The majority party holds all committee chairs, and decide what will receive hearings and votes. Often, to win an issue, you need a 'majority of the majority' not just a majority of the legislature. The Speaker will often prevent a bill from coming to the floor for a vote if his party isn't supportive.

The minority party still has influence. While they have less influence than the majority party, the minority party can still introduce legislation, offer amendments, raise concerns and ask questions during committee hearings. Make sure they know what you think, too.

Advocate to the chair and ranking minority member of the committee. Identify what committee is hearing or will hear the issue you care about and schedule meetings with the committee chair and the ranking minority member of that committee.

Partner with other faith communities. Find a congregation in the area of the legislator and ask them to accompany you to the meeting or set it up for you. If you can develop urban/suburban/rural partnerships you will be very effective.

Adopt messaging that works for them, not you. Don't quote Elizabeth Warren to Republicans or Ronald Reagan to Democrats. If the elected officials prioritizes education, talk about hunger from an education perspective.

Identify people in the majority who support your position. Use these individuals to rally others in the majority to support your cause.

GET OUT THE VOTE! (GOTV)

Just Do it!

Faith communities can register, educate, and mobilize voters in any election. These are not partisan activities! The Hunger Network and our partners are ready to train volunteers in your congregation or food pantry sites on best practices and responsibilities. Please reach out to access our training and additional resources!



Voter Registration:

- **Hold a voter registration Sunday** (Voter registration deadline is 30 days prior to the election). Many people register to vote but move or change their name and need to re-register. If a person hasn't voted in the last few elections, they may need to re-register.
- **Check registrations:** You can use the secretary of State or local board of elections website to make sure people are registered using a smartphone or tablet. Also look up if their voting location after church on Sunday or at a local hot spot (meal site, produce giveaway etc.)
- **Registration at your food pantry:** Make voter registration a common occurrence at your food pantry, meal site, or other ministry. Allow your church to be used as an address for those with complicated housing situations. Remember, loving our neighbor requires us to value their opinion.
- **In the neighborhood:** Find a 'hot spot' (festivals, football games, back to school events) and have trained volunteers asking people to register or check their registration status.

Voter Education:

- **Hold a candidate forum:** Educate your community about the candidates and the issues that are coming up in the election by inviting the campaigns out. (See our helpful tips later on in this guidebook!)
- **Educate about OUR issues:** As people of faith, we have our issues that we care about. We are not neutral. Put our issues out there, educate your congregation about the issues we care about.
- **Participate in a ballot campaign.** Non-profit organizations are allowed to endorse and engage in ballot campaigns on school issues, statewide campaigns (like Gerrymandering, wages, and even voter rights!)

Voter Mobilization:

- Help people apply for absentee ballots so they can vote at home.
- Provide information about voter ID requirements, help people obtain these.
- Offer rides to the polls on election day.
- Coordinate rides to early vote. All 88 counties in Ohio offer early voting in person. This is a great way to support nervous voters, build community,

HELPFUL TIPS for Reluctant Registrants:

- I am registering people to vote, because my faith calls on me to love my neighbor.
- Those in power spend millions to take away your right to vote. They wouldn't be doing that if it didn't matter.
- Register now so you have the choice to vote in November
- We might not see results immediately, but if we keep engaging, our kids will have better opportunities.

Learn about your Legislator

Knowledge is power!

Your legislators are human beings. That might seem obvious, but we often forget the importance of connecting with them on a human level. Know basic information about them to help foster a relationship. When you first meet a legislator in person, bring up any common experiences you share. Are you both members of the same faith tradition? Do you both coach little league? Does a member of your congregation serve on the Chamber of Commerce with the member? These connection points are more valuable than all the policy research in the world.

How to Do it? The first step is to identify who your State Representative and State Senator are. You can do that at bit.ly/FindOhioLeg. Afterward, go to the member directory at Ohiohouse.gov and OhioSenate.gov and look them up under the member directory. Most of these questions can be answered there. In addition to the questions below, glance at bills they sponsor, read their blog or newsletters to identify what they value.

What do you know about your Representatives

	Ohio House	Ohio Senate	Congressional Representative
Name & party			
Hometown			
Committee memberships/ leadership positions			
Career			
Family Status			
Alma maters			
Previous elected offices held			
Faith Tradition/Congregation			
Community organizations			
Other notable information			

Write your Legislator

Hand written letters continue to be one of the best ways to influence legislators.

Helpful tips to write a letter to your legislator

1. Identify yourself as a constituent and person of faith.

My name is Pastor Jane Doe, and I serve First Lutheran of Anytown, OH.

2. Identify the issue you care about.

I write to you today because there are too many hungry kids in Anytown.

3. Express a common and shared value.

It is immoral that so many hard-working families are struggling with hunger.

4. Use a story to make it real.

Last week, I learned that one of our families is watering down their child's milk to make it last longer, because they don't have enough money from their multiple jobs to make ends meet).

5. Use statistics sparingly.

This family is not alone, more than 1 in 5 children in Ohio will experience hunger this year.

6. Always include what you want them to do.

Please support the proposed expansion of cash assistance in HB 12345. This is the type of hand up many hard working families need to overcome small barriers that can quickly spiral out of control).

7. Be respectful. You don't need to be a policy expert. Legislators need you to advise them and educate them.

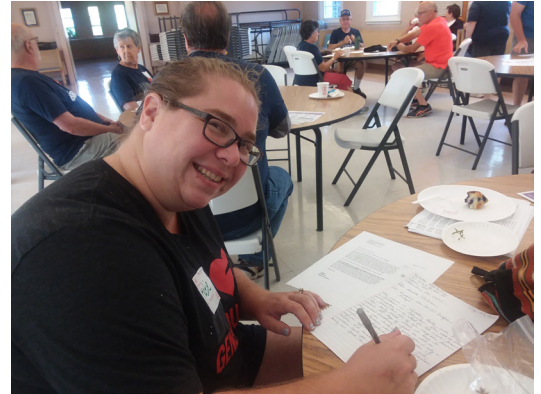
Write a letter to your local newspaper.

These letters are also read by legislators and encourage more public debate and discussion on an issue important to you among policymakers, within the community, and on social media.

When writing a letter to a newspaper editor here are some helpful tips:

1. **Find your local newspaper:** hungernetohio.com/letters-to-the-editor Every paper has different rules and procedures.
2. Take your time to make sure it is clear and concise. Advocacy takes more than 30 seconds sometimes.
3. Letters should be 200- 250 words (depending on the paper).
4. Include your correct contact information; the papers often verify your identity.
5. Emphasize why this matters to you as a person of faith.

Sample Letter to the Editor: *As a Deacon in the ELCA and as a member of the Hunger Network in Ohio, I join other people of faith in urging the Ohio Senate to provide additional funding to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. As a faith-based advocacy network, we at the Hunger Network in Ohio firmly declare that all people deserve 'their daily bread.' More than 70% of the food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters in the Ohio Association of Foodbanks network are operated by faith-based organizations and volunteers. More than a quarter of the food at our local food bank comes from the state-funded Ohio Food Program and Agricultural Clearance Program. It provides foods like cabbage, potatoes, peanut butter, eggs, beef stew, apples and tomatoes – foods that are expensive to purchase at retail cost and aren't often donated. We do this work because we believe that all Ohioans should have the dignity of healthy and nutritious food. Our congregants donate their time, talents, and treasure to assist those who are struggling. In a state budget of nearly \$70 billion, we can and should invest a modest \$25 million per year in emergency hunger relief. I ask the members of the Ohio Senate to restore and expand on Ohio's commitment to eliminate hunger in our communities.*



The Internet is Really Really Great...

Some engagement is better than no engagement. But much of our 'activism' online isn't impactful. Engage online absolutely, but don't allow it to end there!

Social Media:

Social media offers everyone a chance to help shape the news and the content that each other sees. This is both a blessing and curse when it comes to advocacy. Be strategic with social media.

Online Petitions:

Many petition sites are just a method to gather email addresses. Sign petitions sponsored by groups and organizations you know and trust. Petitions should be used as an organizing tool to identify people who can be allies. Engage them first with a petition, then keep them notified with tangible steps for action.



Spotting Fake News:

Fake news is too common online - from all sides of the political spectrum. "Fake news" is different than satire (like the Onion, SNL, or other late night television which have a long history of perspective-based comedy). Fake news is not opinion pieces where the author has credibility for their perspective. Fake news are online articles made to appear like real news, but are made up or based on unfounded conspiracy theories. Here are some points to recognize fake news.

- READ the actual article, not just the headline. Does it have specifics or just generalities?
- Is it just a 'shared' Facebook post or tweet with no citation except some random name that posted it?
- Does the article have a date? A location? If not, it's probably made up.
- Do you recognize the website or organization behind the article? If not, you might not want to trust it.
- Take 30 seconds to do a quick google search to see if anyone else is posting about it.
- Check SNOPEs.com or another fact-checking news site.

Just because you disagree with a news story doesn't make it fake news. We need to weed out fake news which often seeks to subtly divide us and hurt civil discourse. We can have different views and perspectives of the same event - the Wall Street Journal and New York Times are both fact-based publications, with different perspectives.

False news hurts our ability for civil discourse and wrestling with difficult issues to find solutions.

Strategies for social media for advocacy.

- Like public officials social media pages - whether you voted for them or not.
- Tag legislators in Facebook posts when there is something you want them to see or others to see about them.
- Share CREDIBLE news and information about social issues on your Facebook page.
- Everything doesn't need to be an argument of sensationalized headlines.
- Do not get into long arguments on Facebook or Twitter with random people. It's just not worth it.
- Publicly offer praise to legislators when they do something good.

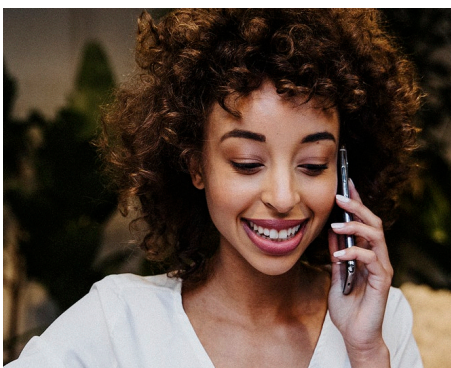
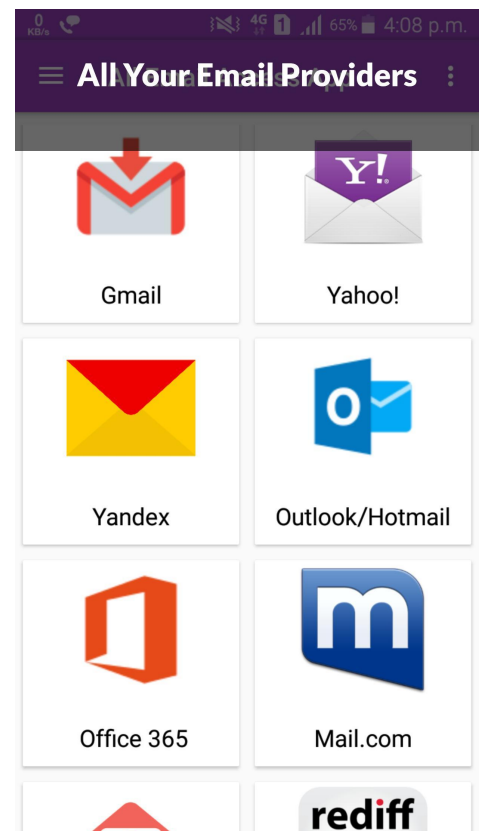
Phone and Email

Time to have a conversation...

Email: A quick way to get in touch - sometimes.

Unique emails are more effective than form emails. If you fill in a form from a website, you should be encouraged to edit the subject slightly, and the content so that it is a unique note. Here are some other helpful tips for emailing legislators.

- Make sure your subject line is a clear on your position. (Please support funding for Ohio foodbanks, Oppose SB 1234).
- If you are using an organization's online form to send the email, edit the sample subject and text to increase the likelihood it will be read.
- Quickly identify yourself as a person of faith or why your opinion matters. If you are in the legislators district, indicate that too!
- **Be brief.**
- If you use a email form, know what site you are working through (Hunger Network is a credible site!) Be cautious about sending emails through some sites that are only trying to collect email addresses.
- If you email the chair of the committee, also email your Representative or Senator. They both need to hear from you. Indicate in the email you are emailing both.
- Email is the first step. Follow up with a phone call or letter as well.



The phone: old-fashion and reliable.

- Call the Ohio legislator at 1-800-282-0253 and ask for your legislator. Or you can find their direct number at Ohiohouse.gov and Ohiosenate.gov.
- Call and send an email.
- Identify the specific issue you are calling about - bill number is helpful.
- Clearly state your position.
- Thank the staffer for their time. They are not your enemy.
- Staffers normally make tallies of phone calls 'for' and 'against'
- If they ask a question, it is okay to say I will get back to you with that.

Legislative staff often say that their legislator will ask, 'what issues did we receive calls about today?' So calls are important. Imagine if a legislator hears that she receives 1-2 calls a day for a month (from different people) about hunger concerns in the district. It will be hard for them to ignore the issue! Send emails, make calls, write letters.

Don't forget to send a thank you email or make a thank you phone call when a legislator does something good so that they do it again.

Meet Your Legislator

We need to be in right relationship with them as well.

Meetings with your state legislators can occur in Columbus or in the home district. Ohio Legislators are typically in Columbus Tues. - Thurs. during the months of active sessions (Jan. - May and Sept-early Dec.). Election calendars will interfere with this general rule. Why do we meet with them? It's about building right relationship. They need to see your face and know your thoughts.

To set up a meeting with your legislator:

1. Identify your legislator and call their office using the House/Senate websites.
2. Identify yourself as a constituent to their aide on the phone and a person of faith. They will want to know the meeting topic.
3. Pick a date that works for you and the legislator. You can meet in-district or at the Statehouse. (House members offices are across the street from the Statehouse, connected by the parking garage)
4. Schedules are flexible in Columbus. You might meet with the legislator or an aide. You will have about 15 minutes. Or invite them to meet in district. Legislators are often more conversational when meeting in-district.



HAVE A PLAN: Legislative meetings in Columbus go quickly. Be able to explain your issue in 10 minutes. Have a 1 page summary of what you want the legislator to do. If you can't summarize your argument in 1 page or less, you won't be able to convince them in a timely manner. When your group goes in, be on time, be courteous, be direct with what you want.

10 Steps for a Great meeting

- 1) Begin with conversation that connects you and the legislator - What values do you think they have that intersect with your values? Did you both attend the same college? Kids at the same school?
- 2) Have everyone introduce themselves and their faith community.
- 3) Identify the issue you are there to talk about. "Today we are here to talk to you about hunger issues."
- 4) Share a personal story "I care about hunger, because, I recently ..."
- 5) Only reference one or two facts or statistics in the printed materials. They can read the details on their own time.
- 6) Directly tell the legislator what they can do. "Because of this, we would like you to vote for/against..."
- 7) If they haven't interjected their opinions, ask them what are their thoughts on the proposal.
- 8) If the legislator says they are supportive, ask them what you can do to support them in moving the policy forward.
- 9) **You don't need to be a policy expert.** If they ask a question and you can't answer it - say so and follow up!
- 10) If they try to re-frame the issue, be respectful but push them back into your message, not theirs. (see messaging page above.)

BONUS! follow-up with a positive thank you card. Advocacy requires us to be in right relationship with legislators and this can take time to build up the relationship. Even if the meeting doesn't go as you hoped, know that it was a step.

Invite Legislators

It's our court, they will have to play by our rules

Faith communities can sponsor events that feature elected officials. Whenever you have a public event with an elected official, you may consider inviting the media to attend. When making these considerations, first list clear objectives of your event. If the goal is to raise public awareness, the legislator is a draw for the media. If the goal is to influence the legislator or public official, the media might intimidate them or pressure them. Be thoughtful in your strategy.

Community education events are a great way to get people talking to people and a great way to educate a legislator. Invite them to provide brief closing or keynote remarks. But the real intent is to have them in the room also learning with the community members.

Candidate Forums prior to an election, a congregation may invite candidates to attend an event and provide them an opportunity to present themselves to the community. How do you set up this event?

1. Invite all the candidates for a specific office (ie. everyone running for mayor) or everyone running for office that November. Ask for RSVP's by a specific date, but be flexible if others join or drop out. If only one candidate shows up, that's okay as long as you made a good faith attempt to invite everyone. It is best to invite through a written invitation, with follow-up email and phone call.
2. Host something your congregation likes to do with candidates, such as a chili cook-off or pasta dinner. You can also add in fun requirements for candidates, such as wearing a silly hat or that they bring canned food donations to your local pantry.
3. Provide candidates a chance to share their 2-3 minute time. Also allow Representatives of local ballot issues (such as a school or senior citizen levy) to speak as well.
4. Require the candidates to answer a question on hunger, poverty, racial tensions, or something else going that your community cares about. They want our votes, we want their thoughts on our issues.
5. You are also allowed to invite the media to attend and cover the event.

Invite an elected official you do not need to worry about partisanship if you invite an elected official to participate in your worship time or in a service project. Schedule a time with their office and be clear with them on the expectation and plan. Sometimes an elected official will be happy to just attend and participate, other times they may want to speak. You could provide them time during an education hour or 5 minutes at the beginning of worship to address the group.

Also invite them to volunteer or visit a local meal site. Elected officials don't often get to see the hard work already going on and the growing poverty that exists. Work with the local social service providers to make sure their staff is able to answer questions about the services already provided and the gaps that exist. These are not just celebrations of our successes, but education on what needs to improve.





So What now?

As mentioned at the beginning of this guide, this is only the beginning, an introduction to advocacy. We hope to update and add to this guidebook in the months and years to come as we all continue to grow and learn about creating long-term and systemic change. But we cannot wait to have all the knowledge to begin to do something now. We all have probably done something - we have liked a group on Facebook, we have donated to a cause we support, but it is time to take one more step. The line below is imprecise, and at different times and with different legislators, different strategies may be more or less impactful than others. But in general, can you take one more step?



What step will you take?

Jon Husted

Ohio Secretary of State



Ohio House Districts 2012-2022

(As Adopted 2012)



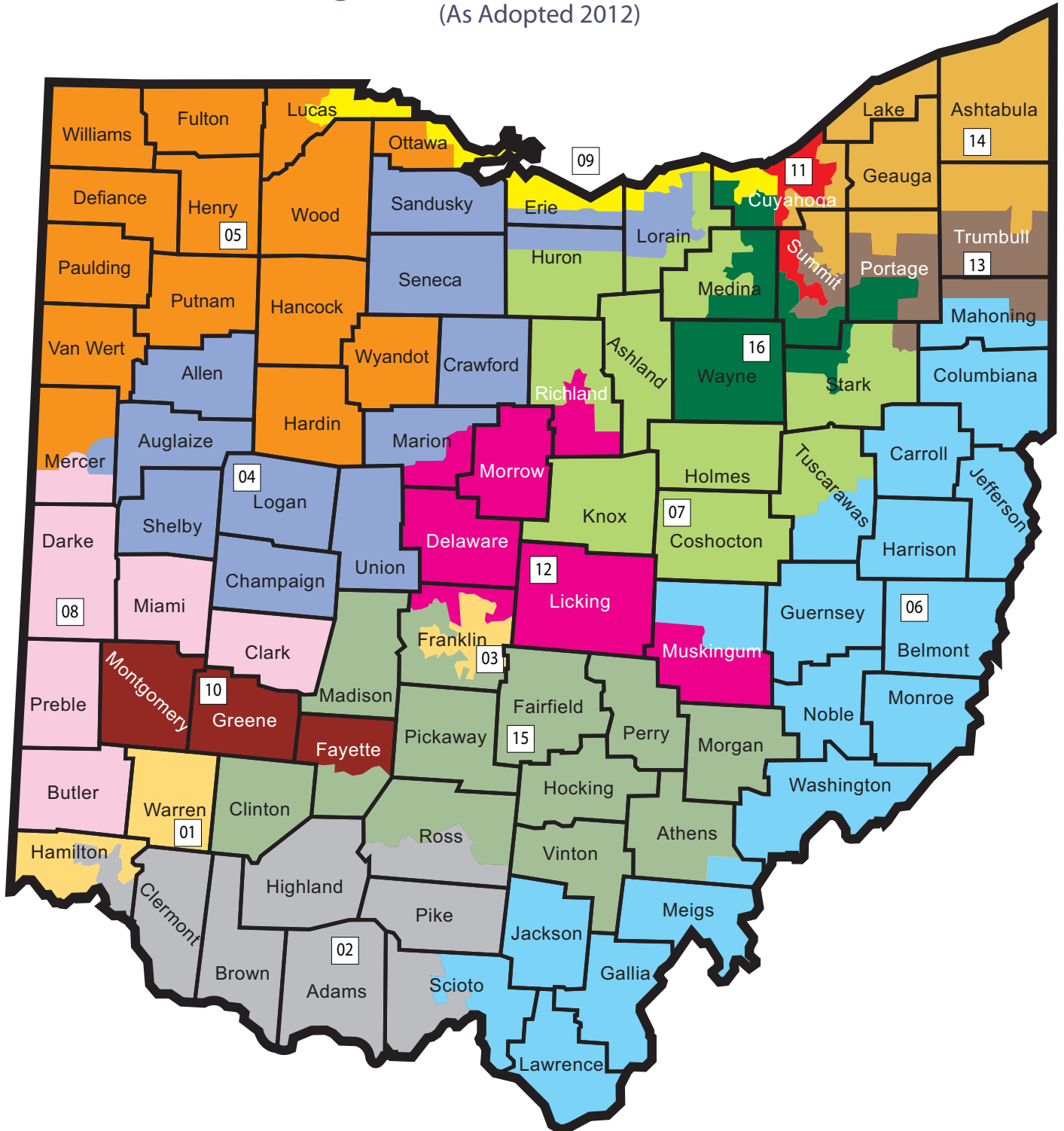
Ohio Senate Districts 2012-2022

(As Adopted 2012)



Ohio Congressional Districts 2012-2022

(As Adopted 2012)



Additional Resources

Contact information:

Ohio House of Representatives	www.ohiohouse.gov	1-800-282-0253
Ohio Senate	www.ohiosenate.gov	1-800-282-0253
Ohio Governor	www.governor.ohio.gov	(614) 466-3555
Senator Sherrod Brown	www.brown.senate.gov	(202) 224-2315
Senator Rob Portman	portman.senate.gov	202-224-3353

Congressional Representatives

Steve Chabot (R. 1st)

chabot.house.gov
(202) 225-2216

Bob Latta (R. 5th)

latta.house.gov
(202) 225-6405

Marcy Kaptur (D. 9th)

kaptur.house.gov
(202) 225-4146

Tim Ryan (D.13th)

timryan.house.gov
(202) 225-5261

Brad Wenstrup (R. 2nd)

wenstrup.house.gov
202- 225-3164

Bill Johnson (R. 6th)

billjohnson.house.gov
(202) 225-5705

Mike Turner (R. 10th)

turner.house.gov
202) 225-6465

David Joyce (R. 14th)

joyce.house.gov
(202) 225-3307

Joyce Beatty (D. 3rd)

beatty.house.gov
202-225-4324

Bob Gibbs (R. 7th)

gibbs.house.gov
(202) 225-6265

Marcia Fudge (D. 11th)

fudge.house.gov
(202) 225-7032

Steve Stivers (R. 15th)

stivers.house.gov
(202) 225-2015

Jim Jordan (R. 4th)

jordan.hous.gov
(202) 225-2676

Warren Davidson (R. 8th)

davidson.house.gov
202) 225-6205

Troy Balderson (R. 12th)

Balderson.house.gov
(202) 225-5355

Jim Renacci (R. 16th)

anthonygonzales.house.gov
(202) 225-3876

Additional Resources:

Hunger Network in Ohio
Bread for the World
OH. Assoc. of Foodbanks
Map the Meal Gap
One Ohio Now
US Dept. Agriculture
US Census
ELCA
Faith in Public Life

www.hungernetohio.com
www.bread.org
www.ohiofoodbanks.org
map.feedingamerica.org/
www.oneohionow.org
bit.ly/USDASept2019
bit.ly/censusOct19
elca.org/advocacy
www.faithinpubliclife.org

Faith and hunger advocacy resources (Ohio)
Faith and hunger advocacy resources (National)
Data, policy hunger resources, (Ohio)
National data map, county, state, congressional district
State budget advocacy, annual report 'State of State'
Annual data on hunger
Annual data on poverty, Oct 2019
National Lutheran Advocacy Office
Advocacy, organizing, messaging, media, faith



www.hungernetohio.com
January 2020