

Fight Washington Corruption Congressional Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions (Meeting Leader, < 5 minutes)

Go around the room and allow everyone to give a quick introduction. Everyone should say his or her name and the city where they live—any more, and it could end up taking the entire meeting!

2. The Fight Washington Corruption Pledge (Petition Presenter, 5-10 minutes)

- There are thousands of MoveOn members in [Rep./Sen. NAME]'s [DISTRICT/STATE].
- This June, MoveOn members voted overwhelmingly to endorse our Fight Washington Corruption pledge, which contains three critical reforms: overturning the Supreme Court decision allowing unlimited corporate spending on elections; supporting fair elections—giving public financing to grassroots candidates so they can compete; and ending backroom deals with corporate lobbyists by making all lobbying activity public and shutting the revolving door between K Street and the government.
- We've gathered nearly 500,000 individual signatures supporting this pledge, including [NUMBER] from MoveOn members here in [DISTRICT/STATE]—here they are. [*Present the Politician Pledge Letter and petitions.*] (*If you are meeting with a representative, also let him or her know the total number of signatures in your state.*)
- Council Members: Over the last several months, our local MoveOn Council has organized [DESCRIPTION OF RECENT EVENTS].
- We're here to ask you or [Rep./Sen. NAME] to join hundreds of thousands of people and sign the Fight Washington Corruption pledge.

3. The Opportunity: Democracy for the Other 98% (Meeting Leader, 5 mins)

- The undue influence of lobbyists and big corporations is crippling our democracy. For example, Big Oil and Wall Street have each spent millions of dollars buying influence, and rigging the system to protect their bottom line. Now all of us are paying the price.
- Confronting the economic crisis, getting a real clean-energy policy, putting America back to work—all of these things will be an uphill battle until we take on the influence of lobbyists and root out corporate corruption of our democracy.
- Voters believe addressing economic woes requires taking on corporate lobbyists. A poll of battleground races conducted by Survey USA between August 3 and 5, 2010, demonstrated that in the upcoming election, voters are far more likely to support candidates who seek clear and tangible solutions to restore power in Washington, D.C., to individual Americans. [*Present the Battleground Polling Memo if you brought it.*]

[Optional: Share a Personal Story (Storyteller, < 5 minutes)]

4. The Ask: Sign the Fight Washington Corruption Pledge (Pitcher, 10 minutes)

- The outcry against big corporations like Target, BP, and Big Banks show how frustrated voters are when corporations try to buy our elections. But we can't fight corporations and their lobbyists one at a time. We need to change the way Washington does business to make government work for the 98 percent of us who aren't represented by corporate lobbyists.

- We need politicians who are willing to stand up for the other 98 percent of us and commit to working for real legislative change on the three planks of the Fight Washington Corruption pledge:
 - Plank 1: Amend the Constitution to protect America from unlimited corporate spending on our elections by overturning the Supreme Court's decision giving corporations the same First Amendment rights as people.
 - Plank 2: Pass the Fair Elections Now Act, providing public financing to candidates who are supported by small donors so they can compete with corporate-backed and self-funded candidates.
 - Plank 3: Pass legislation to end the overwhelming influence of corporate lobbyists by prohibiting individuals from switching from corporate lobbying to government service, or vice-versa, within a 5-year period; stopping corporate lobbyists from giving gifts and providing free travel to government officials; and posting online the attendees and content of all meetings between lobbyists and government officials.

Will you [or Rep./Sen. NAME] sign the Fight Washington Corruption pledge?

If you don't get a firm answer, try to pin them down—see the next page for more on how to respond.

Allow time for the person you're meeting with to answer. For help responding, see page five: Responding to Your Congressperson's Position.

5. Wrap-up and Thank You (Meeting Leader, < 5 minutes)

Thank the person for having a meeting with you, and leave him or her with a copy of the Politician Pledge Letter, the petitions, the pledge FAQ, and the Battleground Polling Memo, if you brought it. (Do NOT leave any other materials in the office.) Make a plan to be in touch to follow up on your meeting, and express your interest in working together in the future.

Fight Washington Corruption Pledge

Frequently Asked Questions

Plank 1: Amend the Constitution to protect America from unlimited corporate spending on our elections by overturning the Supreme Court's decision giving corporations the same First Amendment rights as people.

What is "*Citizens United*"? *Citizens United* refers to a plaintiff in a recent Supreme Court ruling. In a deeply divided 5-4 decision, the ultra-conservative Roberts Supreme Court overthrew a hundred years of precedent to hold that corporations must be allowed to spend unlimited money to try to elect or defeat politicians.

Why do we need to overturn *Citizens United*? By law, corporate officers are expected to act upon only one motivation, the corporate economic bottom line. So allowing them to spend in elections, given their vast capital, risks elections being decided on what's best for an individual corporation, not on what's best for the people in that district or state or what's best for us as a country.

Only by overturning the decision can we start to have a democracy that represents actual hardworking Americans.

Is it possible to overturn *Citizens United*? Yes—although rare, constitutional amendments do happen. This is not a short-term or easy campaign, but overturning *Citizens United* will have the most profound effect on restoring our democracy. Since it will take a while, we also need to focus on short-term legislative fixes to the holes in our democracy that *Citizens United* opened.

How do we get a constitutional amendment? There are two ways an amendment to the Constitution can be offered: either by a 2/3 vote of both houses of Congress or by a constitutional convention convened at the request of the legislatures of 2/3 of the states. The amendment has to be ratified by 3/4 of the states, either by their legislatures (normal course of action) or by conventions in each state, if so required by Congress in initiating the amendment process. Congress proposed all 27 amendments to the Constitution, and all but one was then passed by state legislatures rather than conventions.

What about the DISCLOSE Act? Won't that solve the problem? The DISCLOSE Act is a step in the right direction of fixing the corruption in Washington—but it is only a small step compared to the enormous dimensions of the problem. The DISCLOSE Act reduces some of the consequences of the disastrous Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* but does not offer a clean break from the system that enabled BP, Wall Street, and the coal industry to take control of our democracy from the people. Even this modest step to re-empower hardworking Americans seems to be too much for Senate Republicans, whose unanimous filibuster has defeated a more conservative version of the bill which had passed the House with bipartisan support.

Plank 2: Pass the Fair Elections Now Act, providing public financing to candidates who are supported by small donors so they can compete with corporate-backed and self-funded candidates.

What are "Fair Elections"? Candidates would qualify by raising a set number of small donations from their home state and be prohibited from raising large contributions. Once qualified, candidates would receive a four-to-one match on small donations they continue to raise, up to a limit.

Has anyone done them? The bipartisan Fair Elections Now Act is modeled on successful systems in several states (ME, AZ, CT, and NC) that allow candidates to run for office using a mixture of small donations and limited public financing.

What impact would it have on our elections? The legislation would end the campaign money chase and allow lawmakers to do the job we elected them to do—working to solve our nation's problems.

Plank 3: Pass legislation to end the overwhelming influence of corporate lobbyists by prohibiting individuals from switching from corporate lobbying to government service, or vice-versa, within a 5-year period; stopping corporate lobbyists from giving gifts and providing free travel to government officials; and posting online the attendees and content of all meetings between lobbyists and government officials.

How can we limit the influence of corporate lobbyists? Right now, the revolving door in Washington between government and corporate lobbying offers far too much incentive for government employees to seek favor with potential future corporate-lobbyist employers—and for corporations to hire lobbyists with the expectation that those lobbyists will treat the corporation well if they enter the government. That's why we must prohibit individuals from switching from corporate lobbying to government service, or vice-versa, within a 5-year period. And because lobbyists are most effective operating in the dark, to ensure faith in the deliberative process we must require transparency about who is influencing decisions and on whose behalf. That's why there should be mandatory online posting of all meetings between lobbyists and government officials.

How many lobbyists are there? Astonishingly, there are more than 13,000 lobbyists prowling Washington, D.C., on behalf of corporate interests. Clients spent more than \$3.47 billion last year to pay for their services.

What's a corporate lobbyist's job? A corporate lobbyist's job is to fight on behalf of his or her employer to make sure laws, rules, and regulations do not get in the way of corporate profits. In turn, lobbyists receive high salaries. So they find lots of ways to curry favor in Washington, including providing gifts and free travel to government officials. This system ensures that an ordinary person doesn't stand a chance in getting legislation passed to benefit themselves and their families.

Responding to Your Congressperson's Position

<u><i>If the person you are meeting with...</i></u>	<u><i>Then you should...</i></u>
<i>Agrees to sign the Fight Washington pledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank them for their support! • Let them know that we'll follow up soon to add their name to the official list of signers.
<i>Generally supports the Pledge but will not commit to signing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank them for their support! • Focus mostly on the three specific planks of the pledge: overturning Citizens United, Fair Elections Now, and the Lobbyist Reform Act.
<i>Seems uncertain about the Pledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate the urgency and importance of supporting this pledge. For instance, you could say: "We're feeling the impacts of corporate corruption here in [your state]. Big Banks and Wall Street have each spent millions of dollars buying influence, and rigging the system to protect their bottom line—all the while rising unemployment is hurting our communities. We need to rein in corporate influence, and we're here today to ask Rep./Senator [NAME] to stand with the Other 98% of us—those who can't afford to buy elections or hire lobbyists." • Try to identify specific concerns about the pledge and respond to them as well as you can. (If you don't know the answer to something, that's fine—say you'll get back to them. Don't make anything up.) • Ask when you can expect to hear back from the office about the Congressperson's position on the Pledge.
<i>Is skeptical or hostile towards the Pledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank them for taking the time to meet with you. You don't want to have a meeting that ends on a hostile note—although it's OK to disagree in a respectful but firm tone. • Try to identify specific concerns about the pledge and respond to them as well as you can. (If you don't know the answer to something, that's fine—say you'll get back to them. Don't make anything up.)