



## TIPS FOR ENGAGING IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2018 (FY18) APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

*With the release of the Administration's FY18 budget in May, decisions foreshadowed by the 'skinny budget' re-leased in March were confirmed in the funding levels identified for both defense and non-defense programs. These funding levels included cuts to many non-defense discretionary programs, which are integral to the work of the America Forward Coalition and directly impact communities and individuals across our network. The real work to fund the government will occur in Congress where there are mixed reactions to the levels put forward in the budget. As a result, communicating your work with members of Congress as they begin their work is critical and can have a real impact.*

*America Forward has identified the following simple tips for helping you to communicate with Congress about the FY18 budget in the weeks and months ahead.*

- 1. Highlight the budget's impact through concrete examples.** Members of Congress want to hear about the impact that federal policy has in their own states and districts and on the constituents they serve. Create short vignettes of how a decrease in funding or complete elimination of a specific program will impact communities and individuals. Be specific. *Sample: If AmeriCorps is defunded, over 7,700 low-income and first-generation college students in Texas would lose critical college support and coaching services from the 100 Corps members currently serving in our programs.*
- 2. Use individual stories to highlight the significance of funding decisions.** Putting a face to a program is a critical way to convey a message. Using a real person and their story can turn an abstract idea and standard talking points into an idea that resonates with policymakers. Associating a federal program with the individuals who interact with and are impacted by that program every day is an effective way to convey your message.
- 3. Meet with policymakers when they are in their state or congressional district.** Bring your message directly to members of Congress when they are home for an upcoming recess. Taking the conversation out of Washington, DC ties their decision-making more directly to their constituents and community.
- 4. Use all forms of communication to communicate your message.** In recent polls of Congressional staff, social media has showed up as one of the more effective ways to communicate with members. However, use all tools that are available to you and your organizations to ensure that your members understand the impact of their decisions. Emails, phone calls, in-person visits in DC and at home, social media, and print media are all tools that should be part of your advocacy toolkit.
- 5. Reach out to America Forward.** The America Forward team is here to provide support and resources in this effort. We will be bringing your message to policymakers as well through our Coalition related advocacy efforts but are also here as a resource for your individual advocacy efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us with questions.