

gotDREAM.org

Activist Tool Kit 2009

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Spreading the Message

We know the importance and urgency for achieving equal access to higher education and student legalization, embodied in the DREAM Act. But for the many out there who don't know, it is important that we spread the message. We are the messengers with the mission of trying to educate everyone around us so that together, we build the grassroots support necessary to make DREAM Act a reality.



Materials

- DREAM Act talking points
- DREAM Act power point presentation
- DREAM Act fact sheet
- DREAM Act petition sheets

Things to Keep in Mind

1. *Know your audience*
Adjust what you say and the words you say to who your audience is. For example, when speaking to fellow students, emphasize that students deserve a fair chance to dream. When talking to elected officials, you may need to emphasize that this deal makes economic sense because it allows undocumented students to legalize and earn higher salaries, and contribute more to the tax base.
2. *Be clear and concise*
Once you know who you are talking to, be clear and concise with your message. Be honest and share your passion, while focusing on some of the talking points you think will resonate with the audience.
3. *Share personal experiences and stories*
Students, with their passion, dedication and vision, have led the national movement to pass the DREAM Act since 2001. They have been so sustainable and effective because they have “humanized the issue” through the sharing of their personal experiences and stories. Share why you are involved and why you think the DREAM Act is important. This will move others to better understand the issue and support the effort.

How to Spread the Message

From family dinners to formal presentations at school, there are opportunities to spread the message every day. Below are some suggestions:

1. *Community*
Reach out to community members, neighbors, and contacts at neighborhood and community events and ask if you can come and do a short presentation.
2. *Family and Friends*
Outreach begins with your closest circles of family and friends. You may be surprised to discover some of the resources you may find! At the next family gathering, take some petition sheets and fact sheets on the DREAM Act.
3. *School*

Outreach on campus can come through reaching out to some of the following organizations:

- a. Reach out student organizations/government and schedule a time to give a brief presentation about the DREAM Act during their club meetings.
 - b. Ask teachers and professors about setting aside two minutes at the beginning of a class period to explain the DREAM Act
4. *Online*
Create a Facebook note to spread the message about the DREAM Act or add a link to www.dreamact2009.com. You can also create an email mailing list of supporters and people who would like to hear of further developments about the DREAM Act.



Building the Power

The DREAM Act campaign is dependent on how much public support we can gather and demonstrate to members of Congress and President Obama. The way we do that and flex our power is by gathering signatures. United We Dream, the national youth-led movement to pass the DREAM Act, has a goal of collecting 65,000 signatures. Join the effort and while we work to gather signatures, seize the opportunity to educate and recruit new volunteers to the movement.

Materials

- Petition sheets (for download at www.dreamact2009.com)
- Pens
- Tables and chairs
- DREAM Act signs
- DREAM Act fact sheets (available at www.gotdream.org)

How to Gather Signatures

Below are some activities you can organize to gather signatures for the DREAM Act. Be creative, prepared, and have fun!

- Have a booth at a community fair, farmer's market, or in front of the City Council during a town hall meeting
- Table at school events, such as a rallies, political awareness events, social events, cultural shows, etc
- Attend on-campus student club/government meetings
- Pass out petition sheets at your classes after a brief presentation about the DREAM Act.
- Visit your neighbors by going door-to-door and asking them to sign the petition sheet.
- Pass out petition sheets at your youth church meeting

Note: You can make every event an opportunity to spread the message and build power. Always have petition sheets and DREAM Act fact sheets on you. Also, always be in the look out for individuals who wish to volunteer and help you in your efforts; volunteer recruitment can happen at any time so be prepared.

Talking to Your Local Paper

Media is a great way to spread the message, especially in immigrant communities like the Korean American community where most of our parents and members turn to Korean media for their news. And writing to your local newspaper is a great way to gain publicity for the DREAM Act.

Specifically, there are two ways to contribute to your local newspaper: opinion editorials (Op-Eds) and letters to the editor (LTE's).

Op-Eds

Op-Eds are short articles that are 500-800 words, sometimes even shorter, and express the opinion of the writer (you!) on a specific topic.

In writing your op-ed, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- ✓ Start your editorial with a hook that will grab the attention of the reader
- ✓ Be concise – paragraphs should be 3 sentences and less. .
- ✓ Include persona stories and experiences to present the issue in a personal and urgent manner
- ✓ Tie your editorial to the national campaign theme and repeat the theme throughout the editorial. For example, “the time is now to pass the DREAM Act.”
- ✓ Make sure you know who to send the editorial to. Call your local paper and ask, or find the email address or fax number to send it to by visiting the paper’s website
- ✓ Make sure you meet the editorial deadline
- ✓ Include your contact information

LTE's

LTE's are shorter pieces that are written as a response to an already published editorial or news article. The point of your LTE is to reframe the debate around a topic in favor of your views.

Tips:

- ✓ LTE's should not be over 200 words.
- ✓ Be concise, clear, and on-message
- ✓ Strongly express your point of view
- ✓ Include what people can do about an issue and how they can get involved.
- ✓ Include your contact information

Appendix A: Example LTE

The road to the American Dream is a quality education. As a college student, I want all students to have equal access to the same educational opportunities as I do. That's why I support the DREAM Act, a bipartisan bill that would give students the same opportunity to reach their

dreams, finance their studies, and become legalized. It is exactly the kind of legislation that highlights our values as Americans.

Many undocumented children were brought to the U.S. by their parents without any knowledge of their status or what it would mean for their future. Instead, they grew up in the U.S., working hard and getting good grades. It is not until they try to get their driver's license or apply to college that they become aware of their undocumented status. They, who see themselves as Americans and in many cases do not have any memory of their mother country, are now standing on a sharp ledge, without a safety net to catch them. They, like all students, deserve a fair shot. That's why I urge you to support the DREAM Act and help them achieve the American Dream.

Sincerely,
YOUR NAME
YOUR STUDENT ORGANIZATION
CONTACT INFORMATION

Visiting Your Elected Official

Even as Congress members, our elected officials may not fully understand the issue. That is why students across the U.S. have been visiting their elected officials to share their personal stories and experiences and hold them accountable to the issues important to our communities. Called legislative visits, meeting with our elected officials is one of the most effective ways to build support and power to pass the DREAM Act; it allows us to build relationships with our elected officials, educate them on the issue, and gather intelligence that can help us strengthen our efforts.

Materials

- Visit request letter
- Contact information of the Congress member (visit www.thomas.gov)
- Legislative visit packet (includes: DREAM Act fact sheet found at www.gotdream.org, local media coverage on the issue, list of co-sponsors currently in the Senate and House found at www.thomas.gov)
- Camera

Step 1: Research

The first thing to do is research your elected official. This helps us better prepare for the visit, have an effective message, and determine what will be our “ask” at the visit. Find out: when they got into office, their voting record on the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform, when they will be re-elected, what committees they sit on, what issues they prioritize, their background whether it be in business, education, etc.

Step 2: Set up the visit

During Congressional recesses, Congress members return to their districts, which makes it a good time to schedule a legislative visit to the district office. Normally, Congressional recesses occur.... To set up a visit, call the district office and/or send them a visit request letter. Ask for a meeting appointment with the Congress member. If he/she is not available, request a meeting with their education and/or immigration staff member. Once the call and/or letter has been sent, call back within 5 days to confirm the meeting date and time.

Step 3: Prepare for the visit

So now you have researched and set the visit. To prepare for the actual visit, get together with the people who will be going – this is your delegation. Set up an agenda for the visit and designate roles to each person. For example:

Agenda:

1. Introductions
2. Why we are here – the DREAM Act
3. Personal testimony
4. The ask – will you co-sponsor the DREAM Act?
5. Thank you and confirm next steps

Roles:

- Note-taker
- Facilitator
- Introduction speaker
- Personal testimony speaker
- “The ask” speaker
- “Thank you” speaker
- Photographer

Once the agenda and roles are designated, do a “role-play” or act out the actual visit, with someone playing the role of the Congress member.

Step 4: At the visit

Normally visits are 30 minutes or less. During the meeting, stay on topic and only have designated speakers speak.

Pay close attention to when the “ask” is made – you should be prepared to leave the meeting know what the next steps are, whether or not the “ask” has been affirmed by the Congress member. For example, Senator X is not prepared to co-sponsor the DREAM Act. Ask then what can students do on the ground to build more political support so that he can co-sponsor DREAM Act? Who else should we visit? What message does he think will work with other Senators? He may say, “I need more information” or “I would like to talk to my colleagues about the issue.” Then you should be prepared to say that tomorrow your delegation can email him more information and you should call Senators who support DREAM Act to encourage them to reach out to Senator X.

Step 5: After the visit

After the visit, make sure you get together with your delegation and debrief on the visit – what went well, what could be improved? Also, follow up on all the next steps that were identified at the meeting. And lastly, send a letter to the office thanking them for the meeting. In this letter, reiterate the agreements made and next steps. Your contact information should also be clearly stated in the letter. Maintain relationships with the Congress member’s office and invite them to future events you are planning around the DREAM Act.



Appendix A: Sample Request Letter

May 20, 2009

The Honorable Diane Watson
United States House of Representatives
4322 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 302
Los Angeles, CA 90010
ATTN: Bin Plume

SENT VIA FAX 323-965-1113

RE: Request to Schedule a Meeting Between May 25 – 29, 2009
To Discuss Immigration and Health Reform

Dear Representative Watson:

The National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) and community members residing in your district would like to schedule a meeting with you during the Congressional Memorial recess between May 25 – 29, 2009 to discuss immigration and health reform.

The National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) was founded in 1994 by local community centers to provide a national voice on major civil rights and immigrant rights issues while promoting the full participation of Korean Americans in American society.

We work in collaboration with faith-based, labor, business, immigrant, Asian Pacific American, and minority communities located in southern California and throughout the nation. NAKASEC serves on the executive committees of several national tables, including the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, Fair Immigration Reform Movement, We Are America Alliance, APIA Vote, and the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans. KRC is a Coordinating Committee member of Mobilize the Immigrant Vote.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss immigration and health issues. We will follow up with your office to schedule a convenient meeting time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Becky Lee at 323.937.3703 or at becky@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Becky Lee
Student Leader