

Alabama Food Bank Association Advocacy Training 2018



What is Advocacy?



Advocacy is standing up for a person or a cause, it often targets key stakeholders and decision makers, and attempts to influence policy, laws, or programs.

Why Advocacy?



- Because you are the experts on hunger in Alabama.
- By stepping forward and sharing your special knowledge, you can help solve problems.
- As current political and economic pressures to reduce the deficit and cut federal spending continue, we can expect federal meals through TEFAP and SNAP to be at risk for the foreseeable future.
- Sustained advocacy efforts strengthen our networks' influence in Congress and can help maintain or increase the number of meals available to our clients.

Basics of Government



- State and federal government have three branches – legislative, executive and judicial.



Overview of Federal Lawmaking



- The US Congress has 2 chambers—the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- Each chamber has its own leadership, its own committee structure, and its own set of rules.
- Senators serve 6 year terms and Representatives serve 2 year terms.

Meet Your Legislator



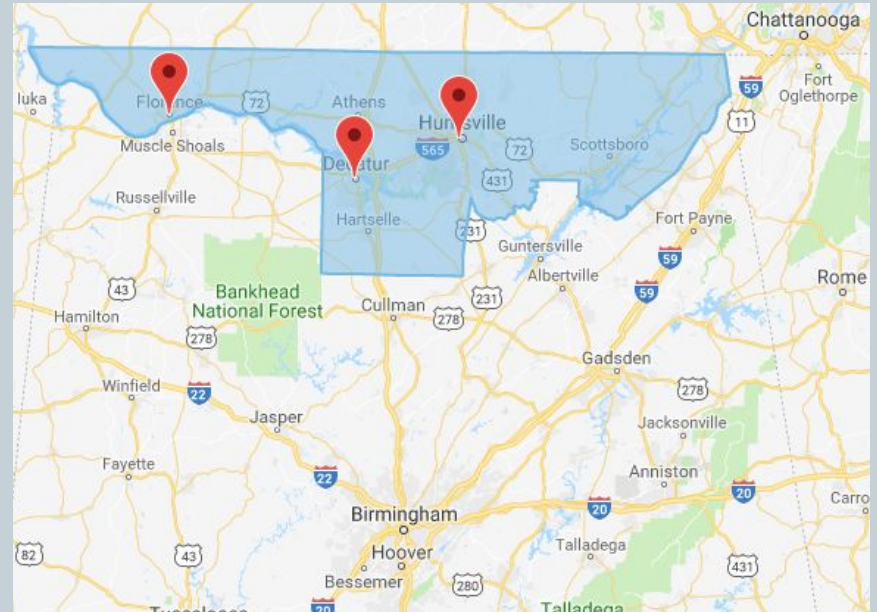
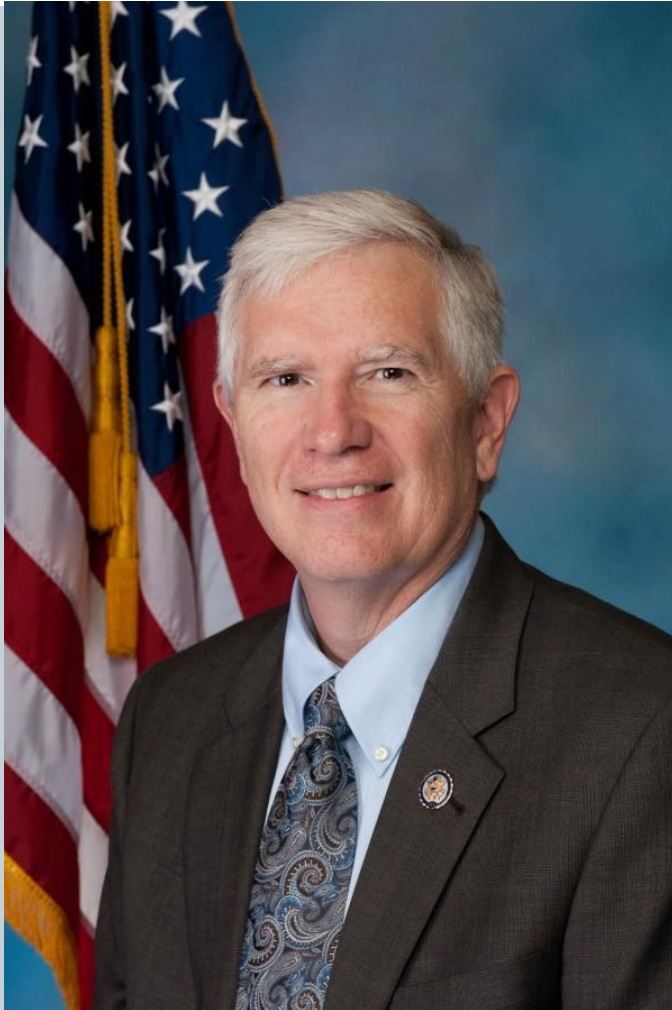
Sen. Doug Jones



Sen. Richard Shelby

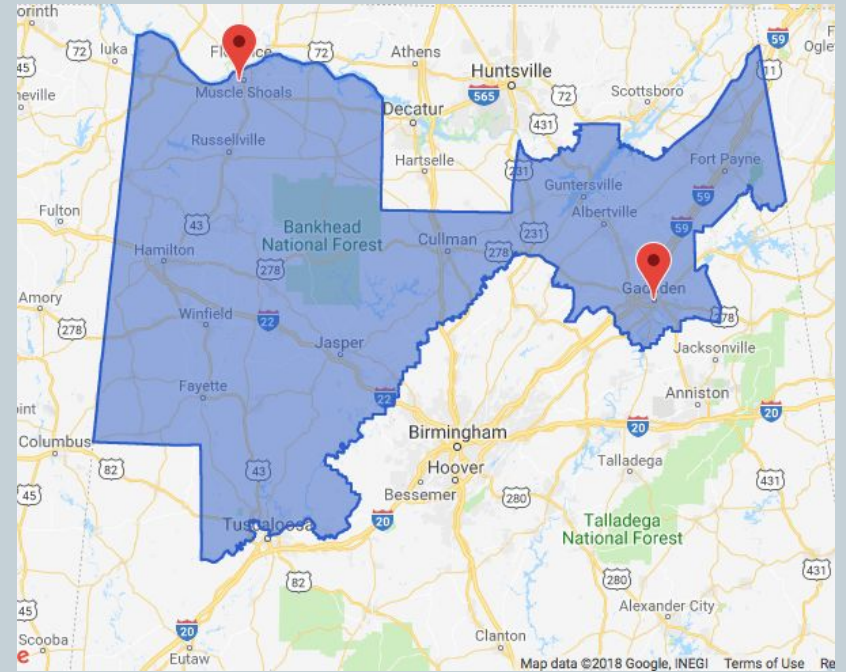
Representative Mo Brooks

5th District



Representative Robert Aderholt

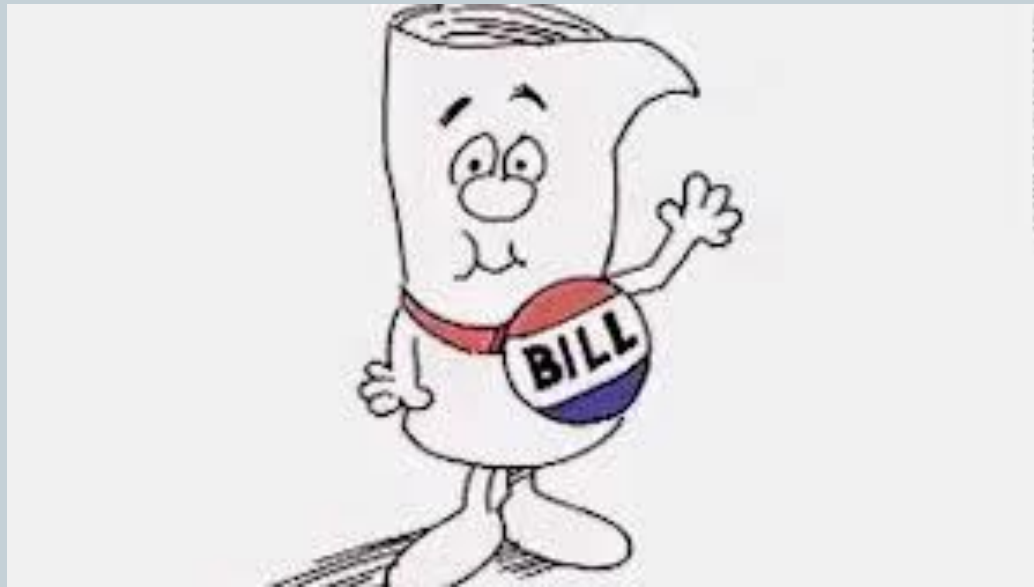
4th District



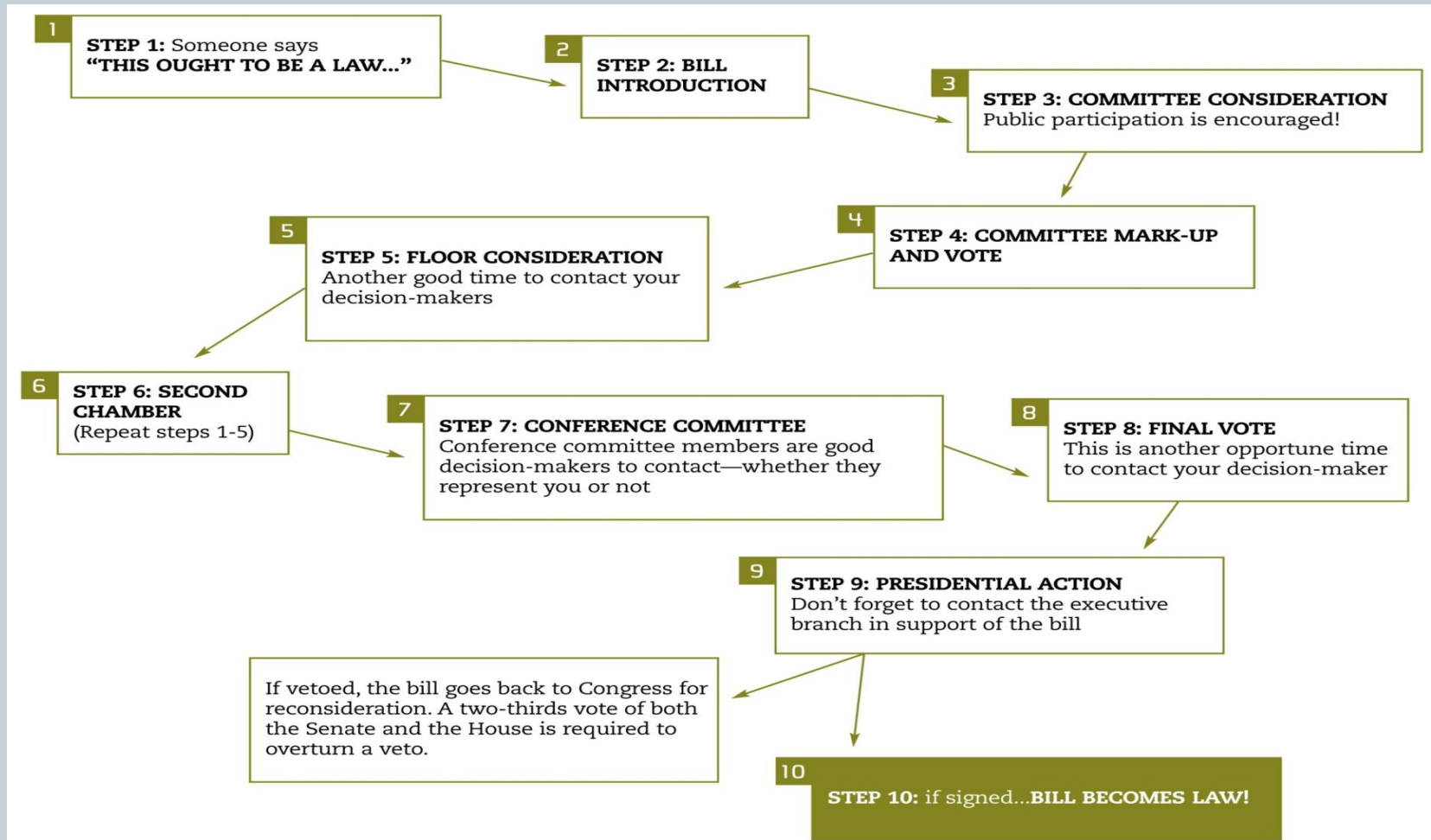
Schoolhouse Rock!



- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFroMQlKiag>



How a Bill Becomes a Law-Federal



Can I Lobby?



- Many food banks believe that they are prohibited from *any* lobbying because of their 501(c)3 tax exempt status.
- **In fact, 501(c)3 organizations can (and should) lobby, though there are some restrictions.**
- These restrictions are not nearly as limiting or confusing as commonly believed.
 - No “substantial part” (generally accepted as less than 5%) of your organization's activities can consist of lobbying.
 - Lobbying v. education

Legislative Priorities



- **Protect and Strengthen Child Nutrition Programs**
 - Summer Feeding
 - After School Programs
 - School meal programs
- **Ensure The Next Farm Bill Reduces Hunger In America**
 - SNAP (Food Stamps)
 - TEFAP (Commodities)
 - CSFP (Senior Food Boxes)
- **Reduce Hunger Through Federal Spending Legislation**
 - FY2018 Appropriations

Farm Bill:

SNAP and Other Anti-Hunger Programs



- **TEFAP** provides food commodities at no cost to Americans in need of short-term hunger relief through organizations like food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters.
- **SNAP (food stamps)** is the cornerstone of the nation's nutrition safety net
 - When the number of families struggling to make ends meet increases, SNAP responds quickly and effectively to meet that need.
- **CSFP (senior food boxes)** leverages government buying power to provide nutritious food packages for low-income seniors

Alabama State Legislature



- Meets for 30 days
 - In 2017 session 1,673 bills were filed
 - Find your legislator-
- <http://capwiz.com/state-al/home/>

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ALABAMA

My Elected Officials

President Donald J. Trump (R)

Governor Kay Ivey (R)

U.S. Senators:

Richard C. Shelby (R)

Doug Jones (D)

To find your U.S. Representative and/or State legislators, enter your address below OR 9-digit ZIP code, and click "GO".

Address

City

State **Alabama**

Remember my location (What's this?)

Go

OR

ZIP code -

Remember my location (What's this?)

Go

Making a Difference



- You don't have to be a legislative expert to effect change.
- Decision-makers do not necessarily know much about hunger and poverty, and need to hear from people who do.
- Opportune times to weigh-in:
 - during committee hearings
 - before key votes
 - during the budget process—when budget is being created by executive branch and when being adopted by legislative branch
- Decision-makers that need to hear from you include:
 - your own decision-maker(s)
 - committee members and conference committee members

So, how do you reach out to your legislators?



WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CALLING A DECISION-MAKER?



- **Plan:** Before you make the call, plan what you are going to say. Your phone call will be very brief, so keep your message simple and to the point.
- **Message:** Be sure to tell your story succinctly, why you care about the issue, and why you need their support.
- **Call:** Make the call! Tell the decision-maker that you are a constituent of their legislative district and/or community.
- **Staff or Message:** If you are calling a decision-maker, you may not be able to reach them directly. Be prepared to talk to staff or to leave a succinct message instead.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN MEETING WITH A DECISION-MAKER?



- Meeting with your elected official gives you the chance to interact with him or her in a way that is not possible through a letter or email.
 - **Before the meeting:** Plan out what you are going to share, including why you care about the issue and how it affects other people they represent. You don't always have to include an "ask" – it's important to sometimes just start the relationship.
 - **During the meeting:** Allow time for dialogue and invite questions.
 - **After the meeting:** Thank the decision-makers for their time and let them know how they can reach you should they have questions. Send a thank you note or email.

ADDITIONAL TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND



- You don't need to be an expert in all of the technicalities of your advocacy issue.
- You only need to be an expert in your story—how the problem affects your clients and how the solution can bring about meaningful and direct change.
- Communicating with a decision-maker is not much different from the communication you use every day.
- Follow-up and repeated contact makes a difference. Send your decision-maker supporting information.

ACTION ALERT

I am writing on behalf of the Alabama Food Bank Association. You are receiving this email because you previously expressed an interest in advocating on behalf of hungry children and families in Alabama. A bill has been introduced in the Alabama Senate that could significantly affect your program and the people you serve. [Senate Bill 139 would restrict access to SNAP for low-income families through no fault of their own.](#) Senator Orr is the sponsor of this bill. If you have a few minutes today or tomorrow, it would be great if you could give him a quick call.

Senator Orr

[334-242-7891](tel:334-242-7891)

We've provided some sample language below, but please feel free to give them more information – you can let them know the agency you represent, or share a story of the families that you serve. Let them know that with these proposed cuts, you will expect to see an increase in demand from your community. If you'd like to talk further about the bill please don't hesitate to give me a call at [256-653-3535](tel:256-653-3535). If you are interested in reading more about the bill, I've also attached a one-pager that provides a little more detail.

SCRIPT

[Introduction of who you are and the program you represent] I am calling because we are very concerned about the impact of SB139 on our food pantries and the communities they serve. This bill would add unnecessary barriers to families receiving SNAP benefits and unnecessary administrative work to the department of human resources.

** Reinstate resource limits on SNAP recipients: Reinstating the resource limits will make it harder for SNAP recipients to work by limiting their access to transportation. Additionally the resource limit will hurt seniors who try to protect their families by setting aside money in savings accounts for their funeral expenses.*

** Force SNAP recipients to cooperate with child support enforcement. Denying someone help affording food for the family does nothing to get the recipient current with child support, it only hurts the other people in the family, including other children.*

Thank you so much again for your support.
Laura Lester

Key Anti- Hunger Message Points



Need remains high despite improved economy

Charity can't do it alone; public private partnership maximizes impact

Food banks and pantries at max capacity now; no way to absorb increased demand from any SNAP cuts

Programs are efficient and effective

Investing in hunger-relief is an investment in future

A message from a legislator



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1-np2iYxOY>



Thanks!

Laura Lester

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