

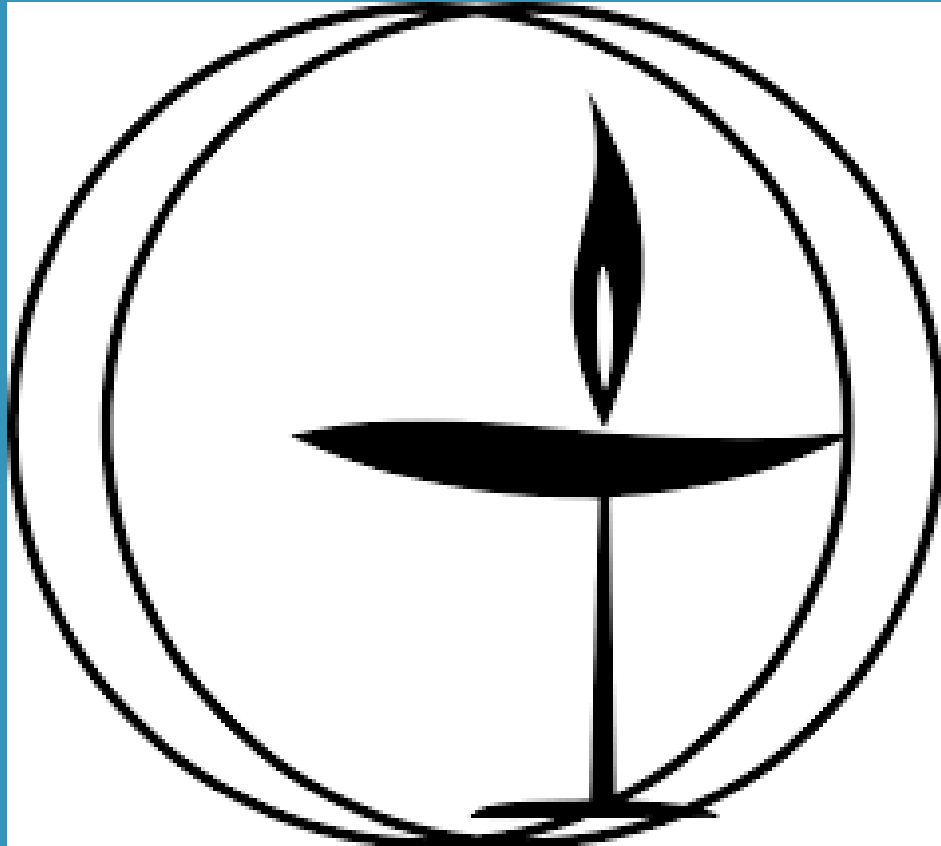
# Storytelling for Advocacy

If you don't tell your story, it might not get told...here's how to share it!

Thank you to UU  
Funding Program  
for funding the  
development of this  
workshop

<https://www.uufunding.org/>

# Chalice Lighting



# Our Covenant Today

- Shared expectations
  - This is a safe space
  - Support each other
- Prepare for emotion
- Don't try to top other people's stories
- Own your experience
  - Don't judge other people's experience

# Notes for Digital Workshops

- Zoom norms and features
  - Everyone is on mute; You'll have to unmute to speak
  - We suggest using Speaker view rather than Gallery view
  - If you have a question for the presenter, please use the Chat feature, most questions will be held until there's a break
  - If you have a technical issue, please use the Chat feature and Paulette and Pablo will try to address them
  - We are recording this workshop content for training purposes - feel free to turn your video off if you don't want your face to appear
- Breakouts
  - These will be selected by the workshop coordinators and you will get a notification
  - Breakouts will not be recorded
  - If you have a specific need (hearing / speech challenges) please message Paulette
- Bio breaks
  - We will have scheduled breaks but please take care of your needs - but don't LEAVE Meeting. (Turn your Video off if you like)


# Agenda

- 10 minutes Introduction
- 30 minutes Storytelling concepts
  - Why Tell a Story?
  - How to Tell Your Story
  - Map back to UU values
- 15 minutes Writing Exercise
- 10 minutes Break and Solo practice
- 45-1 hour Small Group Work
  - Prepare to Tell Your Story
  - Share
  - Receive feedback
- 15 minutes Break
- 30 minutes Stories in Action / Lobbying Basics
- 10 minutes Wrap Up

# Our Purpose: Create Change

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# Advocacy means Lobbying

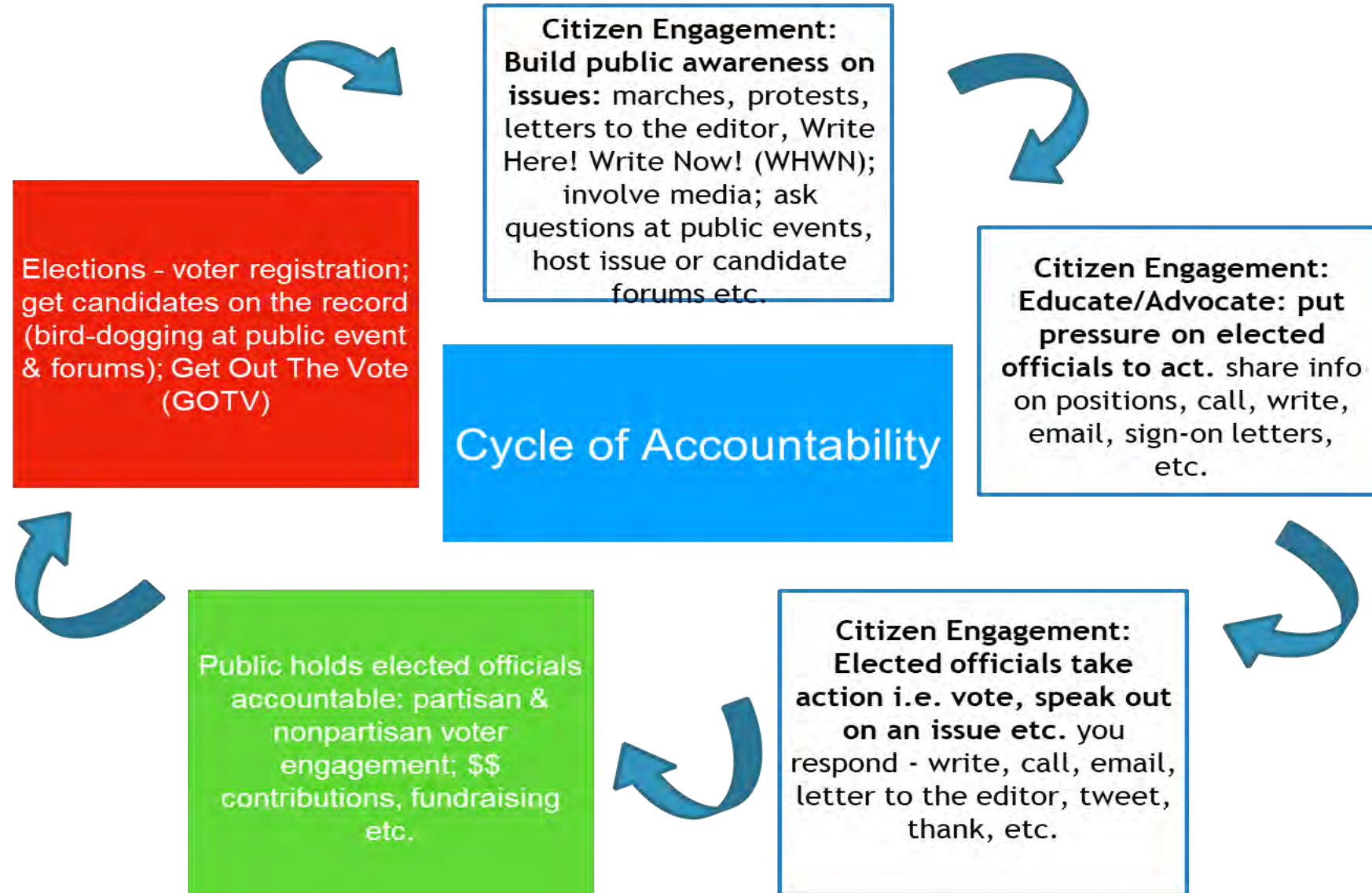
- Introduction and purpose of lobbying
    - Persuade and influence
    - Illustrate
    - Overcome objections
  - You can advocate on an issue
    - You can't endorse a candidate
  - Build relationships, not just with legislators but also staff, local officials and other people working on the same issue
  - Coalition building is crucial, when possible, and persuasive with legislators who want to know how the issue affects their constituency
- 
- An illustration of a man in a dark blue suit and yellow tie, standing and shouting into a large black megaphone. The megaphone is pointed towards the right, and a green beam of light emanates from its mouth, containing a red clock icon and a question mark. The background is a solid teal color.



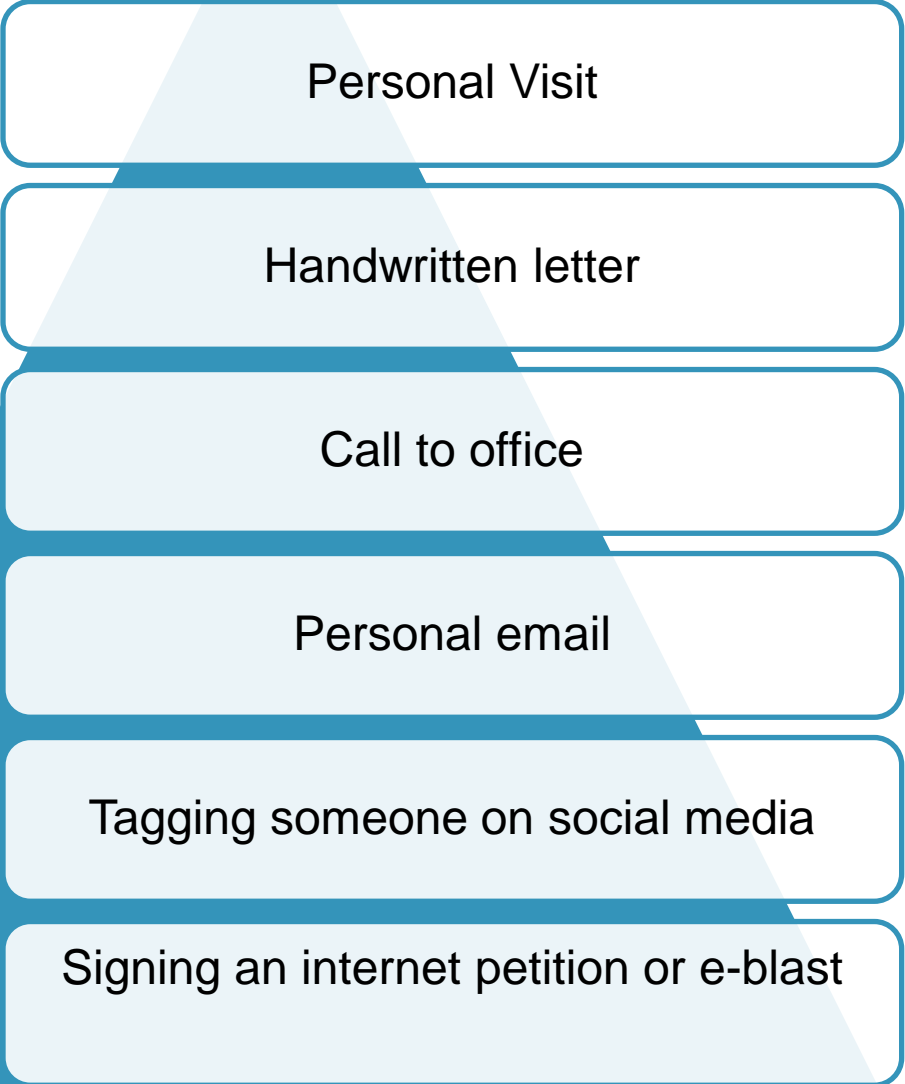


# Citizen Engagement

Take Action  
at any  
point!



POLL



***Greatest  
impact***

**Least  
impact**

# Ways to Engage

- Letters to the Editor
- Town Halls
- Legislative letter writing campaigns
- Rallies and Protests
- Giving Testimony or Public Comment
- Social Media Campaigns
- Testimonial / Persuasive Videos
- Recruiting Volunteers to your Cause
- Fundraising Appeals
- Blog Posts
- Talking 1:1 with people with different views



# An example of effective storytelling for advocacy



Zach Wahls Speaks About Family

This video has more than 3 Million views. Zach Wahls was elected to the Iowa State Senate in 2019.

# Storytelling Concepts

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# Why Tell a Story?

Why not just some bulleted facts?

Conventional rhetoric tries to convince people with facts. They may argue with you if you have even the slightest variance from their set of facts.

A more powerful way to persuade people is to use ***emotion.***

# HOW STORYTELLING AFFECTS THE BRAIN

## NEURAL COUPLING

A story activates parts in the brain that allows the listener to turn the story in to their own ideas and experience thanks to a process called neural coupling.

## MIRRORING

Listeners will not only experience the similar brain activity to each other, but also to the speaker.



## DOPAMINE

The brain releases dopamine into the system when it experiences an emotionally-charged event, making it easier to remember and with greater accuracy.

## CORTEX ACTIVITY

When processing facts, two areas of the brain are activated (Broca's and Wernicke's area). A well-told story can engage many additional areas, including the motor cortex, sensory cortex and frontal cortex.



# Persuade and influence

- The story you select makes a great deal of difference
- Be memorable
  - Share something only you can
  - Include details that will stick
- Lived experience
  - Who you are matters and your story matters
  - Don't speak for others - share your personal story
- Storytelling is ancient, lasting and vivid
- Personal stories are more resonant than "a friend of a friend" or "I heard of this guy who..."





## ASK

- Are you the best person to share this particular story?
- Is this a story where there's a clear beginning, middle and end?
- Are you a sympathetic character in the story?
- Is the story concluded or ongoing?

# YOU are the BEST one to Tell YOUR Story

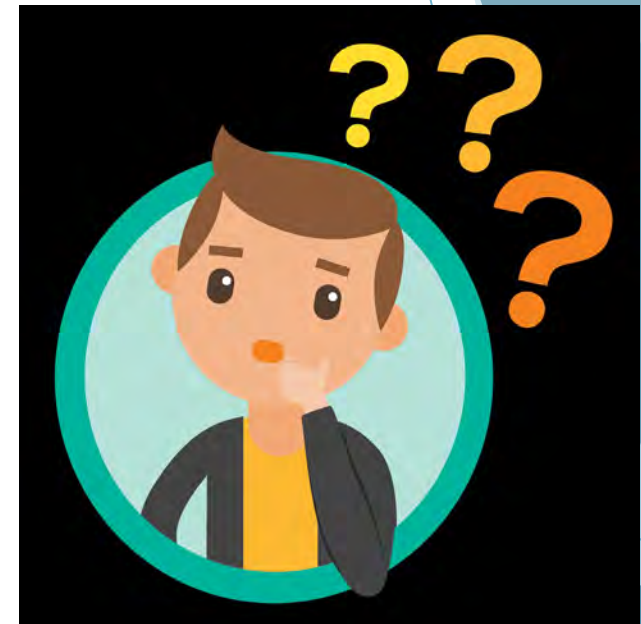
- Sharing your story is:
  - Sacred
  - Effective
  - A way to create change
- Talk from the heart
- Take a moral, ethical perspective
- You are a person with inherent worth and dignity
- There is a deep purpose to you sharing your story!



**A story expresses how and why life changes.**

# Ask yourself

- When did you realize the world treated you differently?
- When did you see that nature was being destroyed?
- How was your voice silenced?
- What part of your world has improved and what has gotten worse?
- How have your opportunities been limited?
- How do you know it was because of \_\_\_\_\_?
- What are your solutions?
- What would really change things for you?



# BUT I'm Scared

- *...I'll have to relive something difficult*
- *...I'll be too angry*
- *...I'll cry*
- *...that it won't work / doesn't matter*
- *...of being vulnerable*
- *...that I'll be used*



# Embrace the Darkness

- If you are scared, use it. Tell the listener why you are afraid, what the consequences of telling your story have been and ask them for their empathy
- Stories do not have to be all positive to be effective. Share why it's hard to be YOU.
  - What is the tension in your situation?
- 100 percent happy stories are unrealistic and hard to believe





**“Ever since human beings sat around the fire in caves, we’ve told stories to help us deal with the dread of life and the struggle to survive. All great stories illuminate the dark side.**

**Audiences appreciate the truthfulness of a story teller who acknowledges the dark side of human beings and deals honestly with antagonistic events. The story engenders a positive to realistic energy in the people who hear it.”**

**--Robert McKee, Storytelling that Moves People, Harvard Business Review**

# Other Ways to Think About It...

- *Can you help shift things in the right direction?*
- *Do you feel a moral obligation to others like you?*
- *Would remaining invisible actually help you stay safe?*
- *Are there ways to share the story without too much exposure?*



# Quantity Counts, But Quality Sticks

- All of the contacts to staffers of form letters get counted and the numbers matter
  - Indicate level of interest from constituents
  - Action alerts work
- Handwritten letters get set aside in a different pile for review
  - From the Heart stories matter (Personal stories / true anecdotes)
  - Passion
  - Faith
  - Value
  - Stories stick!

# GOALS

- Connect with our shared humanity
- Tell hard truths
- Lead them to a new perspective
- Ask for specific change



# How to Tell Your Story



*“The purpose of good storytelling is to be **tiny** and EPIC at the same time.”*

-- Colum McCann

\*emphasis, mine

# Classic Storytelling Concepts

- How to find your best story
  - Including different aspects of that primary story, potentially for different audiences
  - What's your unique story?
    - Where are the emotional highs and low?
    - Where are the moments of clarity?
  - Is there something someone said to you that's really stuck with you?
  - When you get deep with people, what do you share about yourself to explain?



# Effective stories

- Simple
  - Easy to understand
    - No extraneous details
  - Heartfelt and true
    - Don't exaggerate but if it's complicated, simplify
- Purposeful
  - What's your point?
  - What do you want your listener to do?
  - Use data sparingly
- Tailored
  - Know your audience



# Illustrate

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- Paint the picture

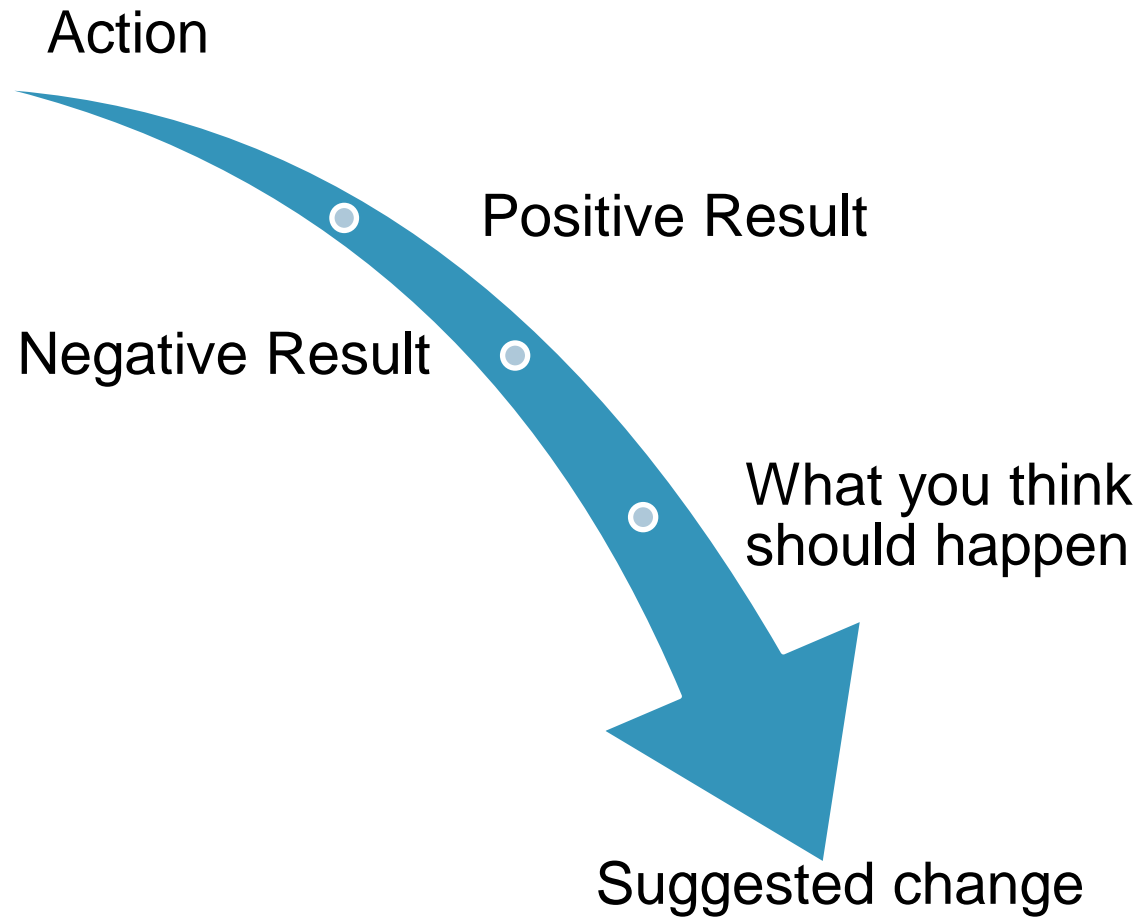


# The Big Picture





# Land the story



# How much detail?

You can have different lengths that you adjust, but first master a clear and concise version.

It was at my first job in high school, at the local mall, when I first realized that no matter how hard I worked, I wasn't going to be able to ever work hard enough to pull my family out of poverty. I asked for more hours, but I couldn't miss school – I'd already gotten calls from the office about my absences. I had to take my mother to the doctor. I had to make sure my brother got home safely on the bus. It was all too much --we were one catastrophe from it all crashing down. No amount of hard work can balance an unjust system.

Add detail about the job  
“serving hot pretzels in the food court”

Explain family structure “It was my mother, my little brother and my grandfather living in a 2 bedroom apartment,”

Add details about the issue you'd like changed: “I made \$5 an hour, but my take-home pay for 20 hours a week was \$300”

# Based on UU values

- [1st Principle](#): The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- [2nd Principle](#): Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- [3rd Principle](#): Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- [4th Principle](#): A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- [5th Principle](#): The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- [6th Principle](#): The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- [7th Principle](#): Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**All talking points will map back to these  
as we talk about our UU values.**



# What's your UU Elevator Speech?

Turn to your neighbor and tell them what you think a  
UU is!

Here's an example:

# Mapping to the principles

- Economic Justice
  - 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> principles
- Immigration Reform
  - 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> principles
- Environmental and Climate Justice
  - 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> principles
- Defending our Democracy
  - 5<sup>th</sup> principle



# Writing Exercise

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- Make a mind map of some of your ideas
- One sheet per topic
- Use words that describe

# Break and Solo Practice

+15

Reminders:  
We're recording!  
You're on mute!  
Take care of yourself!



# Time to Talk!

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We'll break you into groups of 3-4

Please select a timekeeper. Feel free to take notes on your own story but you will not be asked to report on any stories, only the process.

Each person gets 5 minutes to share a story that they have in mind, and immediately after, the others in the group ask questions, give feedback or offer insight for 5 more minutes. After each person has had a turn, they start again, with a shorter version (around 2 minutes) and then the rest of the group offers positive feedback. It's fine if the second story is significantly different, if the suggestions were to focus on just one thing.

# Data and Call to Action

- You can add a little bit of data to make your point, but don't overdo it!
  - You do need to end with - what can the person do to help?
    - Tell someone
    - Tell lots of people
    - Propose changes in the law
    - Say no when someone wants to push something through
    - Ask better questions
    - Ask for sponsorship / co-sponsorship of a bill
    - Know the key points of the bill
    - Ask for changes to any existing bills as necessary

*"Just like me, there are many kids dealing with the fear that their parents might be deported. In fact, the American Immigration Council estimated that 6 million children live with a parent or family member who is undocumented."*

*"You've heard my story, and while everyone is different, I've heard similar stories from others. Remember, one third of LGBT couples are raising children."*

# Word choice examples

*When I was a kid, I had a silly hat that I would wear to school.*

*When I was a young girl, around 7 or 8, I had a fuzzy red hat that I'd wear on cold wintery days as I walked the city streets to my red brick elementary school.*

*My favorite red knit wool hat was a bit too big but I loved to wear it every day as I walked to my grade school in Cleveland. It was often biting cold but I felt exhilarated to meet up with my classmates, and we talked and laughed as we kicked the snow, making our way to the old brick building.*

# Dig. Keep Digging.

- Dig until you have 2 minutes about a story that matches one of the talking points
  - Talk about how you think your story might be unique
  - Talk about the principles
  - Talk about how your experience has made you eager for change in the law
    - Do you have a solution?
    - Or do you just know what needs to change?



# Group Feedback

- Is it believable?
- Is it too detailed or not detailed enough?
- What was confusing?
- Where was the emotion?
  - Did you laugh?
  - Cry?
  - Both?
- How was the teller's body language?
  - Eye contact?
  - Posture?
  - Hand gestures?



# Stories in Action

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# Practice

- It's one of the most important things for a good delivery
  - Even if you are nervous
  - Especially if you are nervous!
- Practice until you are comfortable, and then try different likely scenarios
  - Try a few unlikely ones!
  - Practice in the mirror
  - Practice with a friend
- Go to the building prior to lobbying at least once
  - Learn the security procedure, where the bathrooms are, how to find an office based on the floor and office numbers
  - You will get better and you will feel more comfortable

# Refine Your Pitch

- Know what to do in different situations
  - Federal
  - State
  - Local
  - Short encounters
- Look for solutions
  - Learn about legislation
  - Talk to other people in your network
  - News



# Play with it

- Role playing scenarios
  - An unexpected opportunity to share your story
  - A brief amount of time to share your story
  - An official meeting
  - How to deal with changes / questions
- Development of speech / storytelling skills
  - Practice
  - Adapting to different settings such as rallies or house parties
  - Verbal versus written storytelling

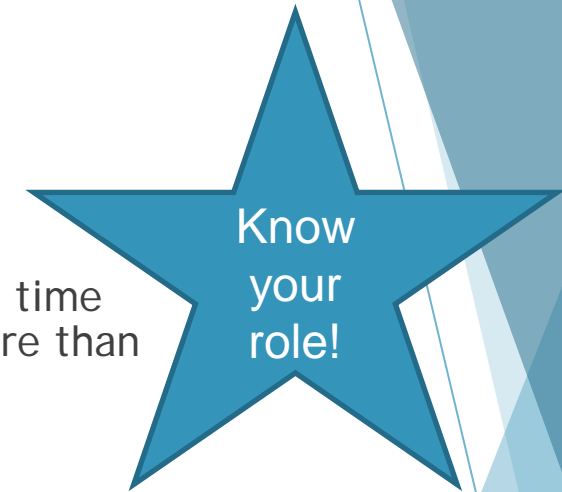
# Leave your own assumptions at the door

- You may assume that Democrats will be sympathetic and Republicans will be callous
- But just like you, they have their own personal experiences that shape their beliefs
  - Assume they are interested in hearing from you as a constituent
  - Engage them in your story
  - Ask them to change something
    - To help you
    - To help others like you
    - To make the world more fair
    - To increase opportunity

# Types of Lobbying meetings

- **Sit down meeting**

- Follow the full outline. Time yourselves.
- Take time to build a relationship over the ask.
- Assign roles (introduce the group; tell a story; make the ask; take notes; time keeper, etc.). Make sure everyone knows the importance of listening more than talking.



- **Walk and talk meeting (“bird-dogging”)**

- Be courteous and be clear about your Ask
- Be brief - less than one minute - and make sure you hear from them.

- **Receptions or mingling**

- Do not hog their time. Very briefly lay out the issue or concern.
- Best “ask” is usually “I would like to schedule a meeting.”

# Anatomy of a 15 min

- Opening (2-3 minutes)
  - Begin with appreciation!
  - Introductions
  - Get to the issue
- Body (5-7 minutes)
  - Ask / Respond / Follow up
    - **The most important part!**
- Closing (3-5 minutes)



We'll be sharing these handouts in the Chat!

# Overcome obstacles

- Whataboutism
- That's not most people's experience
- I have never heard that
- I don't believe you
- If you had made a different choice, you'd have had a different outcome



# Write Here : Write Now!

## *Letter writing*

- Translate your story into a letter
  - Should be easier after you've gone through the process
- Handwritten is more effective
  - Exactly because it's more time consuming
  - Make sure it's legible
  - Hand delivered is best
    - Mail gets it there but takes more time and has less impact



*Stay tuned for monthly briefings!*

July 16<sup>th</sup> deadline for  
Write Here, Write Now

# Keep up to date with UUSJ

- [www.uusj.org](http://www.uusj.org)
- Practice to keep your skills up
- Keep adding to your information
- Subscribe to the UUSJ newsletter
  - Look for more workshops and opportunities
- For more information, contact Lavona Grow at [Advocacy@uusj.org](mailto:Advocacy@uusj.org)

Remember, this is a process...you are building and refining continually.



# Please consider donating for the continued great work of UUSJ!



<https://uusj.net/wp1/contribute-to-uusj/>



THANK YOU.

Go Share YOUR  
Story!