

Advocating for Birds

Role Playing & Building Your Advocacy Plan

Role Playing:

1. Divide into small groups – 3 to 5 individuals – and review the assignment (3 minutes)

- The Moose Lake Audubon Society is meeting with your local Congresswoman Karen Smith to ask for her support for protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas development.
- One person will play the Congresswoman and the others will play the chapter constituents meeting with her.
- *Background on the Congresswoman and district:*
 - Born and raised in the community, served in Congress for a decade but has never met with Audubon.
 - The Congresswoman represents a congressional district in New York that includes an Audubon sanctuary.
 - She has not taken a position on protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas development.
 - Prior to Congress, she served on the local city council and was an engineer. She serves on the Transportation Committee in Congress. Her website's biography also indicates she is a member of the Moose Lake Garden Club and enjoys gardening in her spare time.
 - The Congresswoman is a Republican.
 - She has publicly voiced support for finding solutions to climate change. She cited her background studying engineering/sciences and the economic benefits of clean energy. However, Audubon has not officially thanked her for doing so.

2. Designate members of your group for the following roles (3 minutes)

- Congresswoman Smith
- Everyone else is a constituent. Designate one constituent as the group leader as covered in today's presentation.

3. Prepare for the meeting (10 minutes)

- For the persons playing the constituents:
 - Discuss the roles of the constituents during the meeting (who's doing and saying what) and determine your talking points and ask on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (using the one pagers found in this folder).
 - Determine some facts about the Moose Lake Audubon Society and jot them down for your discussion (What kinds of statistics on membership, activities and accomplishments can you share?).
 - Discuss the Congresswoman's background and related information provided to help develop your meeting strategy.
 - What other information do you need to consider to prepare?
- For the person playing the Congresswoman:
 - Review the questions below and then try to ask these during the meeting with your constituents.

1. Ask a question that seems totally off topic: “Speaking of oil development in the Refuge, what do you think about raising the gas tax?”
2. Ask the constituents why you should care about the Arctic Refuge: “Why would I – or any of my NY constituents – ever care about some place that’s all the way in Alaska?”
3. Ask a question they won’t know the answer to: “What does Audubon think about the Very Obscure Act of 2017? Do you know anything about it? I need more information.”
4. Remind them how proud you are to be the former President of the Moose Lake Garden Club: “I was the President of the garden club for 5 years.”
5. Insert a comment into the conversation to try to start a disagreement: “I don’t support people who only seem to only care about the environment. And never anything about the economy. Don’t you agree?”

4. Conduct the Meeting (12 minutes)

- Typically, meetings with Members of Congress or their staff last 15 to 30 minutes, but you should always be prepared for meetings to get cut short because of the hectic schedule in Congress.
- Today, your meeting will only last about 12 minutes.
- Start role playing your meeting!

5. Evaluating the Meeting (5 minutes)

- What was the most effective part of the meeting?
- What are areas of improvement?
- How did you handle the Congresswoman’s questions?
 - Did you keep the meeting on track and stay on topic?
 - Did you avoid conflict?
 - Did you take advantage of her interest and experience with the local garden club?
- Did everyone thoroughly cover the topic and your chapter’s work?
- Did you make the ask?
- Did you weave in New York birds featured on the one pager to connect the Congresswoman’s district to the Arctic Refuge?
- Did you get a picture with the Congresswoman?
- Did you thank her for her support on climate change?
- If you were to regroup after the meeting to debrief, what do you recommend as your next steps as a chapter and group of constituents?

6. Building your Advocacy Plan (5 minutes)

Below are questions to start considering when you return home next week. Starting making notes (not on this sheet, please) so you can effectively advocate with your Member of Congress!

1. Who’s your Member of Congress?
2. Who should be in your advocacy group? Remember diversity and take into consideration the issue you are discussing and the Member’s background.
3. What issues will you discuss? What’s the ask?
4. What activities and programs do you participate in with your chapter?
5. What is a good story you can share?
6. When you return home next week, can you commit to requesting a meeting for August or September with the Member or his/her staff?