

Stand with Dr. Dean

Organizing a Constituent Meeting

Organizing a constituent meeting is easy and it's a great way to get more people involved with the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign. Constituent meetings have a high impact on elected officials because it allows face-to-face, two-way communication with the community members they're elected to serve.

Constituent meetings are an important part of the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign. They can:

- Educate elected officials on the importance of healthcare in your community
- Engage family, friends and neighbors on the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign
- Empower your community to take action and get involved

Before your Constituent Meeting

1) Identify leaders and find a venue

The first thing you'll need to do is identify a team of leaders to organize the event. You'll want to include people from diverse backgrounds and interests to bring in different points of view and skill sets.

Once assembled, the leadership team will need to resolve several details immediately:

- When and where should the meeting be held?
- What format should be used? A meet and greet? A discussion panel with featured speakers? A debate between those proposing and opposing a public option?
- What local elected officials and candidates for office should be invited?
- What strategies should be used to get the word out?

2) Set goals

The meeting's basic goal is to get local elected officials to sign Dr. Dean's healthcare pledge.

Your leadership team should set clear, quantifiable goals for your constituent meeting. Work to get 20 people to attend, have 10 elected officials and candidates for office sign the petition, or recruit five new DFA Members.

Setting tangible goals will make getting attendees to RSVP much easier and put your work in context of the larger campaign.

3) *Send invitations and get the word out*

Healthcare has a profound impact on everyone in the community, so you'll want to reach out to a wide variety of local leaders. For example:

- City Aldermen / Councilors / Supervisors
- County Legislators
- Mayors
- School Board Members
- State Legislators / Assemblypersons
- State Senators
- Town Clerks

Quick tip:

If you're having trouble getting elected officials to RSVP to your event, reach out to those running against them in the primary or general election. They won't want to give their rivals an audience without being able to speak themselves.

You won't be able to find a date or time that will work for all the elected officials and candidates you want to attend, so you'll want to send invitations out as soon as possible and be prepared to use a variety of tools – mail, e-mail, phone calls, and more.

Start inviting people close to home because those people will be most likely to turn out to your event. But be sure to cast a wide net to other members of the community:

- Family, friends and neighbors – those with a personal connection to you will be most likely to RSVP and turn out to your event
- Healthcare professionals – doctors, nurses and others working in the healthcare system may want to join you at your party
- Progressive activists – people with a declared interest in healthcare reform and progressive politics in general are also likely to join you
- Websites and ads – social networking websites like Facebook will help get the word out fast and posting notices on bulletin boards in the community
- Bring a friend – encourage your attendees to bring people they know who are interested in healthcare reform and progressive politics

Also, let the DFA Field Team know that you're holding an event. We can help you:

- Create an event on DemocracyForAmerica.com and invite other DFA Members
- Send an e-mail blast to DFA Members in your area alerting them of the event

(Contact us at field@democracyforamerica.com.)

As the event approaches, you need to follow-up with everyone who has committed to volunteering to make sure they actually turn out to the event:

- Follow-up with RSVPs through e-mail, phone, and whatever other contact information you have for them
- Make sure everyone knows the date, time and meeting location, including the actual street address

Quick tip:

Usually only half of those who RSVP will actually turn out to your event, so be sure to consistently follow-up with those who say they'd like to join you at your party.

At your Constituent Meeting

1) Greet your guests

Your constituent meeting is a great way to build a list of progressive activists and healthcare advocates in your area for future actions. You'll want to make sure to get contact information from your guests and take the time to greet each person.

- Set up table with sign-in sheets and pens near the entrances and encourage guests to sign in
- Stand near the entrances with other organizers and introduce yourself
- Thank everyone for coming and, if appropriate for your group or event, ask for a contribution – we can supply you with DFA Contribution Forms if you need them

Take a moment to call the meeting to order and re-introduce yourself and your co-organizers just before you get started. Be sure to thank everyone for coming a second time and make a second, firmer ask for contributions. For example:

"Hi everyone. My name is Jane Smith and I'm a Smalltown DFA organizer. I'd like to thank you all for coming. We're about to get started, but first I want to ask you all to chip in and support the work we are doing with a contribution of \$25 tonight. Your donations will give us the sources to win this campaign."

Once your event gets underway, just remember one thing: Have fun!

2) Come together

Take a moment to call your guests together. Re-introduce yourself and your co-organizers just before you get started. Be sure to thank everyone for coming a second time and share your interest of the Stand with Dr. Dean campaign. For example:

"Hi everyone. My name is Jane Smith and I'm a Smalltown DFA organizer. I'd like to thank you all for coming. The Stand with Dr. Dean campaign is very important to me because I think we need to draw a line in the sand and tell Congress we need to make a public healthcare option available to all Americans."

You may want to share a personal story with your elected officials about how healthcare has impacted your life and encourage other guests to introduce themselves to the whole group.

Then, share healthcare horror stories. Ask a doctor or nurse in attendance to talk about their experiences. Ask a small business owner to talk about how healthcare costs for employees impact the bottom line. Then, ask your local elected officials to join you in signing the pledge:

Give America a choice. We support healthcare reform that allows individual Americans to choose either a universally available public healthcare action like Medicare or for-profit private insurance. A public option is the only way to guarantee healthcare for all Americans and its inclusion is non-negotiable.

Any legislation without the choice of a public option is only insurance reform and not the healthcare reform America needs.

After your Constituent Meeting

1) Thank your guests and recap

Be sure to thank everyone for coming one last time before they leave. This will also be your last chance to ask for contributions.

Meet up with your co-organizers after the event to recap the event and discuss the pros and cons:

- What went well?
- What could have gone better?
- What did you learn from the event?
- Did everyone have fun?

2) Tell us how it went!

Send your feedback and pictures to field@democracyforamerica.com. We'd like to hear and see how great it was! And we'd like to share your stories and pictures with other DFA Members across the country.

Finally, send us your sign-in and petition sheets. You can send them to us by mail, e-mail or fax:

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