

Park Champion Advocacy Toolkit

Thank you for stepping up as a Park Champion! By now you've signed the Park Champion pledge and attended our monthly webinars or watched the webinar recordings, and you're ready to start advocating.



EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

As we've mentioned in our Park Champion webinars, effective advocacy begins with establishing a relationship with your member(s) of Congress. The best way to begin this relationship or build on an existing relationship is to meet with your member(s) of Congress or their staff in person. Hosting an event is a great way to initiate this meeting and to leave a lasting impression, all while highlighting your park and recreation agency, facilities, and/or programs.

So, we're asking Park Champions to invite their member(s) of Congress to an event the week of June 27 to July 5. There are a couple reasons why this week is ideal:

- **Fourth of July:** Many parks and recreation agencies or their cities will already be hosting Fourth of July events. Congress will be in recess this week, and members will be in their home states and districts to celebrate and attend events.
- **Park and Recreation Month:** This is a great way to kick off Park and Recreation month. Many parks and recreation agencies will already be hosting Park and Recreation Month events, so you need only invite your member(s) of Congress to the event(s).
- **Summer Feeding Programs:** USDA-sponsored Summer Feeding Programs (CACFP and SFSP) will be in full swing. These programs are great photo opportunities for your elected official.

BRAINSTORMING YOUR PARK CHAMPION EVENT

- **Be Creative:** As Park Champions, you have ownership over your Park Champion event; there is no playbook. However, keep in mind that the purpose of this event is to connect with your member(s) of Congress.
- **Be Effective:** Your event should leave a lasting impression that will serve as the foundation for a relationship between you and your congressional member(s) and/or their staff. It is always helpful to educate your U.S. Representative and Senators on parks and recreation issues (especially the parks and recreation bills that are up for consideration or reauthorization), but this event is an opportunity to be strategic. The event should make a connection between federal policy and your projects and, ideally, highlight a program on which your federally-elected official will have the most influence.
- **Be Cooperative:** Use the [NRPA Connect group](#) to coordinate with your fellow Park Champions. If there is more than one Park Champion in one congressional district or state, you can tap into your fellow Park Champions' existing connections and skills or even combine your time and resources into a larger event.
- **Be Efficient:** Do you already have events planned for the week of June 27-July 5? Build on them! If you have a Fourth of July event, a Park and Recreation Month event, or a program kick-off event planned, invite your congressional representatives! Examples of program events include a feeding program site event from a Walmart Foundation grant or a park dedication and re-dedication.

CHOOSING YOUR PARK CHAMPION EVENT ISSUE

Any event will help you begin or build a relationship with your member(s) of Congress, and you can advocate for any parks and recreation policy on [NRPA's Public Policy Platform](#). However, there are three big pieces of parks and recreation legislation that are up for reauthorization in 2015: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Child Nutrition Reauthorization, and MAP-21. If your agency and/or community has benefited from any of these three laws, your story will be highly relevant to your member(s) of Congress.

Of course, it's best to be strategic when choosing an issue – be sure to [research your members of Congress to see which congressional committees they are a member of](#). Committee membership is a gauge of interest and influence, so it's best to invite your member of Congress that sits on a relevant congressional committee.

Example: If your park and recreation agency has a federally-funded summer feeding program, then you should invite the U.S. Representative and/or U.S. Senator(s) that sits on one of NRPA's priority congressional committees under "Health and Wellness."

What if your park and recreation agency and/or community has not benefited from a policy on NRPA's Public Policy Platform? Or, what if your agency and/or community has benefited, but none of your members of Congress sit on a relevant committee? You should still host a Park Champion event! An in-person event is always a great way to begin or build on a relationship with your member(s) of Congress and remind them of the importance of parks and recreation.

PLANNING YOUR PARK CHAMPION EVENT: TOOLKITS

Because LWCF, Child Nutrition Reauthorization, and MAP-21 are so important this year, we have created toolkits which help you tailor a site visit specific to each issue. Once you've researched if one of these pieces of legislation has benefited your agency and/or community, please review the appropriate toolkit to get started. The toolkits are available on the NRPA Advocacy section of NRPA's website.

If your event is not related to any of the above three pieces of legislation, any of the toolkits are helpful to plan your event – of course, be sure to tailor your invitations to the issue you are addressing.

PARK CHAMPION ADVOCACY EVENT CHECKLIST

- [Review the NRPA Public Policy Platform](#)
- Research if your park and recreation agency has benefited from one of the big three parks and recreation legislative priorities – LWCF, CNR, and/or MAP-21
- [Identify your U.S. senator and representative\(s\)](#)
- [Research your elected officials' positions on congressional committees](#)
- Brainstorm event opportunities and post to the Park Champion NRPA Connect group
- [Contact Jayni Rasmussen at NRPA with your ideas](#)
- Use the LWCF, CNR or Transportation toolkit to plan your event and invite your member(s) of Congress
- Host your Park Champion event
- Follow-up and thank your member(s) of Congress

MANY WAYS TO BE A PARK CHAMPION

Please note that you do not have to hold an event during the week of June 27 to July 5, as this week is only a recommendation. You can always schedule your event at another time.

If you can't hold an event at all, that's okay too! It doesn't mean you can't be a Park Champion. NRPA's Public Policy team is hard at work in D.C. tracking important parks and recreation legislation on Capitol Hill, so we'll be in communication with you to enlist your help when it's needed most. Here are some of the ways we'll be asking for your help:

- 1. Phone Calls:** Call your elected official's DC or in-district office.
- 2. Individual Letters:** Draft and send letters via e-mail to your elected official (snail mail sent to offices is subject to careful and lengthy security monitoring and as such is not a timely delivery method).
- 3. Sign-on Letters:** Sign-on to a letter to an elected official that the NRPA Public Policy team or a Park Champion has authored.
- 4. In-District Meetings:** Meet with your elected official and/or their staff in their in-district office.