



EIGHT BEST PRACTICES FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

This year was a record year for advocacy with 47% more people taking action on issue campaigns than last year.

Find out what issue areas had the fastest growth!



The State of Grassroots Advocacy in 2017

The ridesharing industry was in trouble.

This new, disruptive mode of transportation was facing tough proposed legislation in key markets across the United States. If certain bills had passed, it would have been a near-death blow for transportation providers.

Leading ridesharing company Lyft sought to engage both their riders and drivers in public policy discussions happening throughout the country. The organization wanted to connect a wide base of constituents in different cities with decision makers in order to support legislation that advanced ridesharing.

Using grassroots advocacy technology, Lyft connected tens of thousands of passionate riders and drivers with lawmakers, elevating the voices of those that had come to rely on the company and its services for jobs and to get around town. Lyft ultimately succeeded in California and has seen additional success across the country.

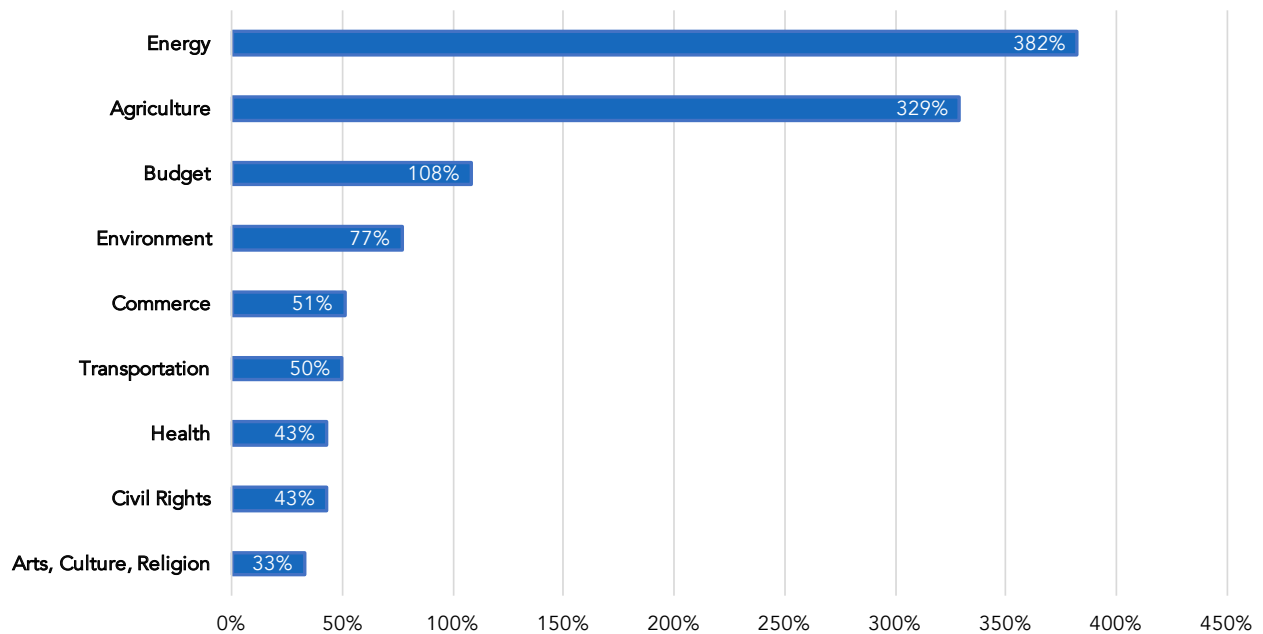
Policymakers at every level of government are interested in how to best serve the interests of their constituents. Traditionally,

however, the voices of people most affected by the government's decisions have been the least heard in the political process. When these citizens don't have the opportunity to provide feedback, decisions are often made that may not be in their best interests. Luckily, over the past several years, many advocacy organizations have adopted technology that has paved the way for voters to more easily contact their officials, and do so more effectively.

In a time when civic engagement has reached an all-time high, advocacy groups and nonprofit organizations must supplement traditional methods of engaging their supporters with a vast array of real-time tactics, such as through text alerts and social media, and offer them choices on how to contact their elected officials. By activating their advocates via the most effective channels, and allowing supporters to select the mode of communication with which they are most comfortable, advocacy organizations are maximizing their probability of successful outcomes.

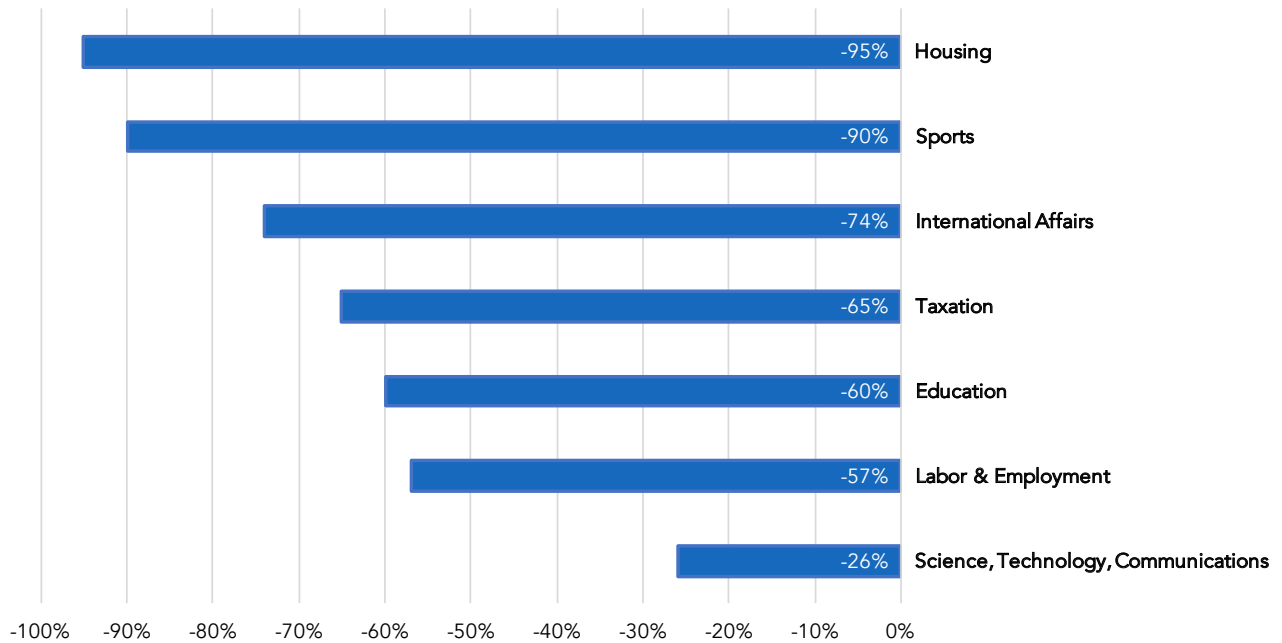
An Uptick in Advocacy

Americans are more civically engaged than ever before. According to a March 2017 Phone2Action study tracking a cohort of 70 of our clients over time, 47% more Americans became active in advocacy campaigns in 2016 than in 2015. The top advocacy issue areas with the greatest year-over-year growth included:



This spike in advocacy engagement can't be correlated to one specific cause. Instead, it's likely a confluence of events, including: the 2016 presidential election, advancement in civic engagement technology, lawmakers at all levels of government embracing digital engagement with their constituents, and further investment of resources into more sophisticated and engaging digital campaigns across industries.

But, despite the increase in the number of Americans taking action, the following campaign issues showed a year-over-year decrease in activity:



Advocates who engaged on our clients' calls to action shared many more campaigns over social media in 2016 versus the previous year. 70% more people who engaged on a campaign shared it via Twitter, and 58% more shared it on Facebook. This means that campaigns in 2016 had much larger organic reach than in 2015, which is the result of heightened awareness about issues and further adoption of social media networks.

New rules for engagement in the Digital Age

While visiting a lawmakers' office and attending protests remain key channels for engagement, technology has created a myriad of new ways for people to speak up and speak out on issues that matter to them.

Smartphones have changed virtually every aspect of our lives, including the ways in which Americans interact with elected officials. A new research study from Pew Research Center shows that 95 percent of Americans own a cell phone; 77 percent of them own smartphones.¹ Given today's mobile workforce—and our dependency on accessing the Internet through our phones—it

is imperative that public policy campaigns are mobile-responsive, facilitating calls-to-action that can easily be completed while people are on the go.

The prevalence of smartphones has also opened the doors to widespread civic engagement, particularly with groups that have previously been left out because of lack of regular access to the Internet. According to Pew, smartphone ownership of Americans aged 50+ has risen to 74%, while 64% of low-income households own smartphones.¹



**95% of
Americans
now own a
cellphone**

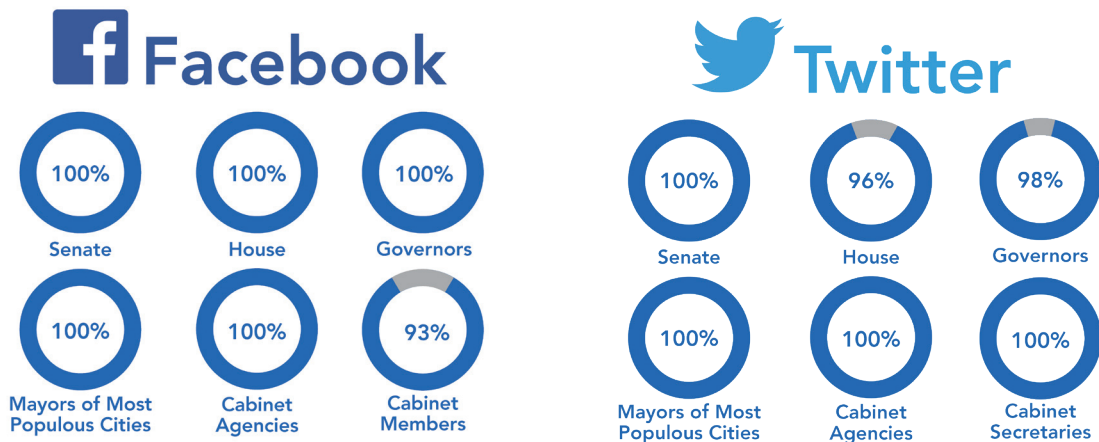


**74% of Americans 50+ own a
smartphone**



**64% of low-income
households own smartphones**

¹ <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/>



Social Media as a tool for grassroots advocacy

In addition to smartphones, the explosion of social media has also greatly affected the lives of both constituents and the decision makers that serve them, making social media a critical channel through which to communicate.

For a growing number of people, the practice of looking up trending topics and getting news updates from a Facebook feed or logging on to Twitter has become second nature.

Elected officials and other decision makers are seizing this opportunity to communicate with constituents in new ways. In fact, the President and 100% of Congress use social media to communicate with constituents.² This is making it possible for civic engagement activities to become as routine for people as it is for them to post status updates on Facebook.

Social media platforms understand the power of online activism, and have introduced tools that make mass mobilization easier in rapid response moments. After the Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality in June 2015, Facebook quickly launched an app that allowed users to apply a rainbow filter to their profile pictures to signal support for the decision. The rapid response to a policy decision allowed Facebook users to share with their networks and peer groups their perspective on a pressing issue in American politics, simply by temporarily changing their profile pictures with the click of a button.



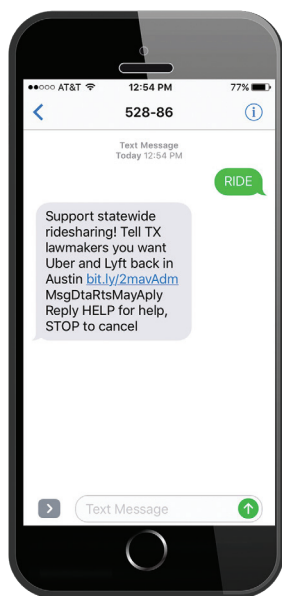
² <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44509.pdf>

Best practices for grassroots advocacy

With the world of grassroots advocacy rapidly changing, and in a climate where a record number of people are getting involved, it's important to remember a few key best

practices for running successful campaigns that engage the public, move people to take action and maximize your probability of success.

1. Know (and segment) your audience



Not every message is going to resonate with every person. The first step to creating effective grassroots advocacy campaigns is knowing your audience and making sure you have relevant data and information about them. Is your

campaign targeting millennials? People who usually vote along a particular party line? Using data, such as social media and website analytics, to collect as much background information as you can about your target audience before communicating with them will help you craft more effective messages tailored to each segment. A good rule of thumb is to send different messages to each different segment. Many advocacy groups

send one message to supporters who have taken action on their campaign in the past, and a different message to people who are brand new to grassroots advocacy. The message to the first group can have a strong call to action, since this segment is more likely to respond, while the message to the second group should have a lower threshold at first to get them used to the idea of civic engagement.

For example, a campaign with an ultimate goal of persuading lawmakers to pass a bill can acquire new supporters by running ads on Facebook asking people to sign a petition. Signing a petition is a lower bar of entry for new supporters. It's clear, it's simple and it allows new supporters to easily signal their support for a cause. Once a supporter has taken that action, they can next be asked to contact their representative via a platform like email, which allows a campaign to give more detail and context for why a letter to a representative is what is needed.

2. Make sure your campaign is accessible

Advocating for a cause shouldn't be any more difficult than it needs to be. With more people willing to speak up on issues that matter to them, and plenty of causes to choose from, it's important for participation in campaigns to be easy. The experience should make newcomers to advocacy want to engage repeatedly and

take increasingly higher-level actions that will more strongly influence decision makers.

Before launching a campaign, verify that your websites and forms are mobile-friendly and your call-to-action is clear. It should be easy for people who have never interacted with your organization before to join and engage.

3. Create a ladder of engagement options

Not everyone is going to be willing to share their personal story with a lawmaker over the phone. When creating campaigns, make sure to include varying levels of engagement so that everybody is able to participate in ways in which they feel comfortable. Leverage technology that allows your supporters to choose from email, calls, or social media posts, maximizing the likelihood of their participation.

Contact Your Federal, State & Local Lawmakers Now!
They want to hear from you. ⚡

Communicating with your lawmakers is one of your most important responsibilities as an American citizen. The tool below will help you exercise these civic rights. Enter your name and address, and select your preferred method of communication. Then, craft a message on the issues that matter to you, and we'll deliver it to your officials at all levels of government.

Send an email to your officials with one click!

Mr. * Full Name *

Email (j.smith@email.com) *

Home Address (123 Amy St) *

Zip Code *

Send Email

Dear Official,
I am your constituent and I am writing to ask you to

Once supporters have taken a first action, it becomes easier to move them up the ladder of engagement to take additional action.

4. Develop a compelling ask

The ask to your supporters needs to be compelling. Stressing the importance and urgency of taking action is a critical step in making potential advocates pay attention. If lawmakers are about to consider a bill, let supporters know when that vote is happening. Talk about what's at stake, and make the human impact as clear as possible.

People get involved in policy issues because the decisions made by leaders have real impacts on their lives. Connect the story of your cause to the advocates who may be engaging with it, and don't be afraid to be

authentic. For example, when the American Heart Association's organizers lead campaigns they focus the stories they tell on volunteers who have been touched by an issue. In one case, they [leveraged a story](#) about how one mother lost her child to sudden cardiac arrest as a driving force to galvanize their movement.

Organizations are competing for constituent and advocate attention moreso now than ever, so developing the case for participation in your campaign is crucial to bringing new advocates into the fold.

5. Make it visual!



Social media analytics show that on average, posts that contain visuals tend to have much higher engagement (more likes, comments, shares, etc.) than text-only posts. Digital campaigns should be clear and visually appealing. If the campaign is difficult to navigate on a computer or mobile device, it may discourage people from participating. Without cluttering the page, use a graphic or short video to educate participants about the issue and make clear what's on the line.

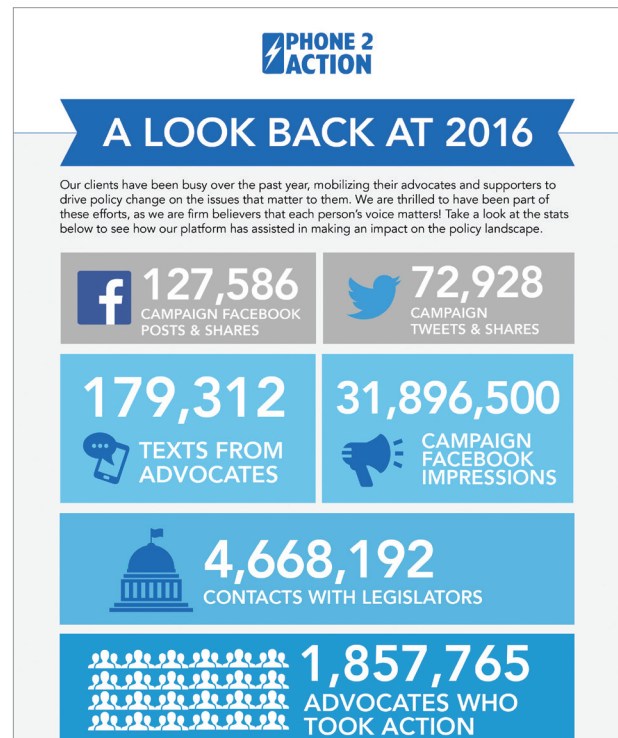
By creating engaging and compelling visuals, you will also increase the chances of your campaign being shared by your constituents on their social networks, increasing its reach

and its potential to go viral. Each tweet or Facebook post your advocates generate can be worth \$25-\$50 in earned media value, according to Phone2Action data.

6. Measure your impact

Did a legislator respond to constituent feedback? Did advocates successfully help get a bill passed? Make sure your supporters who took action are able to see the impact of their efforts. Once a campaign ends, share results so they can see how their voices influenced the outcome. How many people participated and took action? How many phone calls were made and social media posts shared? People will be more likely to take further action down the road if they know that they were recognized and made a difference.

By measuring the impact of your campaigns, your organization will also be able to see which strategies and tactics were most and least effective, and can use that data to make effective decisions on future campaigns.



When you know what works with your supporters and targets, you're best positioned for long-term success.

7. Use and promote live event engagement tools

Many current technology platforms allow organizations and advocates methods to tune in live to actions and events that are on the other side of the country. Through Facebook Live, Twitter chats, and SMS capabilities, advocates from all over can feel like they are part of an exciting conversation or action through their phone or computer. Use Twitter chats to gather stories around a particular topic, or go live on Facebook to give supporters a glimpse into a congressional hearing.



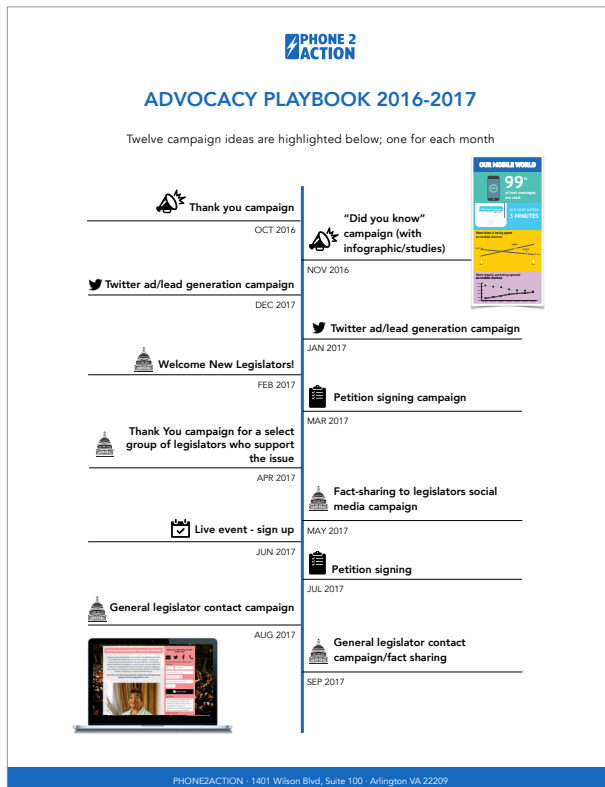
During the 44th Annual March for Life in January, pro-life activists from around the country communicated their message using the hashtag #WhyWeMarch. While thousands rallied to hear speakers such as Vice President Mike Pence, supporters



unable to attend could still participate and share their stories. March for Life organizers compiled content posted on social media using #WhyWeMarch to show the far-reaching impact of their work.

When hosting a fly-in or lobby day, or convening an annual conference, use live event engagement tools to connect offline and virtual attendees. Use technology that allows attendees to instantly connect with lawmakers, while also allowing for the keynote speaker to give a compelling call-to-action.

8. Create a plan for long-term engagement



If a supporter has taken action, he or she is a potential advocate for your cause who can be mobilized for future efforts. Every person who has acted on your campaign should immediately receive an automatic reply email thanking them for their participation, asking them to share the campaign with a friend, and potentially offering higher-level engagement, such as making a donation. Once this follow-up is completed, the advocate should be entered into a “follow-up” flow in which they receive regular communications and updates. Create a plan for keeping them engaged until the next action, or even the next campaign.

In our current climate, there are many causes competing for supporters' attention. Maintaining consistent communication and giving them new opportunities to take action will help ensure that they remain plugged into your work long term.

About Phone2Action

Phone2Action is the market-leading digital advocacy platform which helps organizations engage with their advocates to empower them to communicate with policymakers at local, state, and national levels via email, Twitter, Facebook and patch-through calling. [Find out how you can use Phone2Action for your next campaign.](#)

