Welcome and Intro to Aid on the Hill

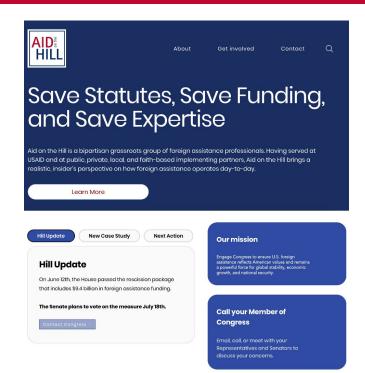


- Grassroots, non-partisan, group of 450+ volunteers made up of current and former USAID staff (DH, ISCs, PSCs) and IPs
- Draw upon our deep inside knowledge of the agency, the development sector, and development work on the ground around the world.
- Work alongside large coalition of advocacy groups including OneAID, USGLC, etc.



AOTH Objectives and How to Find Us





Website:

aidonthehill.org

And follow on:

<u>LinkedIn</u> <u>Bluesky</u>

Email: congressaidletters@gmail.com

Local Advocacy:
Communicating the
Importance of Foreign
Assistance to American
Communities



Barriers to Advocacy - What Stops Us?



Cutting the Caution Tape to Engage Your Audience

- Americans are reluctant to talk about politics and religion. 'Political' talk is seen as toxic and non-productive in the current environment.
- Part of America is not only divided but tribal, viewing others with anger, distrust and derision. Much of the media on both sides promotes this view.
- Many of us live in media 'bubbles'.
- In this environment it is frightening to try to reach out to others.
- Much of what passes as outreach is venting which makes the situation worse and reinforces that reaching out is not advisable.



Reasons For Hope





Values & Fact

- Little evidence that American values have changed. Most continue to believe we should help people in other countries, even apart from benefits to America.
- Political division is rooted in different sets of facts, not values. Each side is exposed to different 'facts'.
- >80% despair of the division and seek a way out.
- Approaching others in a venting fashion is unproductive. But there
 are other ways to do this that are effective by being respectful and
 not critical

Am I an Advocate?



Why be a local advocate.

- Sidestep the media bubble
- Civility rules apply
- Greater acceptance
- Non-verbal communication



Methods for (Safely) Reaching Out



Who to reach out to?

- Begin with established religious and civic organizations.. Existing organizations are relatively easy to gather an audience and potentially take action. Start with groups you are not affiliated with.
- Contact the local pastor/minister/president etc. Meet in person and emphasize a non-political discussion. Ie, not partisan. Explore what approaches and topics (if any) the group has expressed interest in and particularly overseas projects they have supported.
 - Consult the existing <u>Local Advocacy folder</u> and use it to generate local versions based on the area you live in.
 - Generate a flyer emphasizing that this is informative and non-partisan; a chance to meet a local person with foreign assistance experience.



Meeting Approach



Summary of basic approach (see folder for details)

- Introduce yourself and your career in foreign assistance in detail, emphasizing the reasons for your choice of career.
- Avoid talking about past events and closure of USAID, as this fuels disputes over past facts.
- Avoid criticizing any person or group or actions, or stating that any person or fact is wrong.
 Be respectful.
- Focus on what foreign assistance can do in the future based on past successes. Mention various areas in which USAID worked but focus stories and statistics on your own area, particularly activities you observed or were involved in.
- Acknowledge the need for improvement in how foreign assistance is done but emphasize that reform rather than demolition is more appropriate.

Best Practices During the Meeting



Each meeting will have a different cadence

- Leave plenty of time for questions
- Restrict disputation to responses to questions: ie, counter misinformation only when it is raised.
- Avoid statements of 'that is wrong' but instead say 'this is what has been reported/this is what I have observed.'
- Avoid telling people to change their mind or think in a certain way. Instead frame
 the conversation as your own observations and that of colleagues, to inform
 respondents' thinking.

Next Steps



Make an ask of the group

- Ask all to write/call their member of congress to advocate for foreign assistance, acknowledging that the administration has not followed up on its promised actions (reference letter of support in the Local Advocacy folder).
- Continue to meet with interested persons in this group and invite them to reach out to others in the organization not present.
- Reach out to other potentially interested groups connected to this group.



Feel free to contact me and to join an emerging network of folks who are beginning to do this - to provide support, feedback, connections, and motivation.

Contact: pbolton1@jhu.edu