

Issue Advocacy Leadership



A Brief Guide for
Issue Advocacy Team Leaders

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UULM-MD's Issue Advocacy Organization

Introduction

Synopsis: What does a UULM-MD Issue Advocacy Team Do? What does a team expect of its leaders? Of its members?

Issue advocacy at UULM-MD is organized around issue teams, each with one or more leaders and several interested, involved and compassionate members/advocates. UULM-MD is a flat organization comprised of a Board that sets strategic direction and policies and oversees financial operations. Issue Advocacy Team Leaders form the working level along with Issue Advocates – that is, Maryland UU's – who participate in teams and congregations. Here's what you can expect to do or be asked to do if you are an issue advocate or if you are an advocate team leader.

The Functions of an Issue Advocate

Hanging on my dining room wall is a small plaque, neat, artsy lettering imploring me to "Keep It Simple." So, an issue advocate:

- Learns about the issue.
- Contacts her legislators to act favorably or unfavorably on a pending bill.
- Responds to Action Alerts from the issue advocate leader(s) and UULM-MD.
- Forwards (and retweets) Action Alerts to members of her congregation
- Writes testimony or personalizes already prepared testimony and submits it.
- Testifies in person.
- Attends lobby nights in Annapolis.
- Attends UULM-MD Annual Meeting
- May attend virtual meetings of the issue advocacy team.
- May attend virtual or in-person meetings of partner groups.

The Functions of an Issue Advocate Team Leader

Issue Advocate Team Leaders connect a legislative issue with the wider Maryland UU community serving as a conduit between our partners, our congregations and assist UU's in influencing public policy through the legislative process. The functions of an Issue Advocate Team Leader include:

Planning

- Identify partners.
- Join coalitions.
- Identify proposed legislation from partners, coalitions and, in particular, legislative caucuses, for example, MD Legislative Latino Caucus, Women

Legislators of Maryland, Veterans' Caucus, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland, Maryland Legislative Asian-American & Pacific Islander Caucus

- After discussion with the issue advocacy team members, recommend to the UULM-MD Board priority legislation to support and track through the session.

Organizing

- Find UU's who are willing to participate as issue advocates and assume issue advocacy work to build the team. The UULM-MD Coordinator maintains a database of UULM-MD members, participants at our annual meetings and others who have expressed interest in an issue. The Coordinator can make these data available to help you build your team.
- Widen the circle among UU congregations via ministers, social justice chairs, congregational officers and boards of trustees.

Coordinating

- Learn what the UULM-MD Board and Coordinator have established as decision-making and reporting protocols with advocacy leaders. New advocate team leaders may require more "hand-holding" than experienced leaders.
- Team leaders, especially new leaders should try to attend monthly Board meetings.

Researching

- For each bill, develop talking points and background information (or accept talking points and background from partners)
- Use [MGALEG website](#) to track bill status.
- Write sample testimony to share with the issue advocates.
- Build correlational datasets of congregations, legislative districts, issue interest.

Engaging

- Disseminate bill information and status to the team and all UULM-MD members routinely using the Weekly Digest,
- Post bill information and status to the UULM-MD website via coordinator
- Write pulpit editorials, newsletter articles that Circle members can share in their own congregations.
- Share testimony with the team, partners, coalitions
- Submit testimony at Committee hearings.
- Train Issue Advocates
- Attend and participate in partner, coalition and caucus meetings.
- Construct advocacy text and publish Action Alerts and Targeted messages

- Use email lists, Twitter and Salsa Engage to publish Action Alerts and Targeted messages to the team and to the broader UULM-MD and UU communities in Maryland.
- Enable meetings with legislators, staff and committees.

The Issue, Partners and Legislative Priorities

Introduction

During every legislative session, UULM-MD will conduct several campaigns to influence Maryland public policy. Annual legislative campaigns are organized

Leadership Tip
When nominating a Priority Issue for UULM-MD to support and track please incorporate elements of our mission and vision statements and our UU principles in your application.

around issue areas – a broad grouping of issues related to a subject area -- such as climate change or immigration and focus on one or more issues – specific goals sought by legislation and attendant legislation (bills). UULMMD decides to support a legislative issue because several members of the wider Maryland UU community have expressed a deeply committed interest and

are willing to lead and mobilize other UU's in the state. [The requirements to establish a team](#) in general are that the issue is state-wide, reflects UU values, and there is at least one other state-wide non-governmental organization that is advocating for the issue, an NGO that the UULM-MD team can partner with. UULM-MD expects that an active campaign will also address our UU values of diversity, equity and inclusiveness particularly with affected communities. After all, to paraphrase Aristotle, “If you want to know how a shoe fits, ask the person who wears it, not the person who made it.” Partnership and coalitions are key components of teamwork. See [How Priority Issues are Chosen](#).

Identify Partners

An example of a team partnership. The UULM-MD Immigration Team works in partnership with CASA, a state-wide immigration service and advocacy group and the ACLU, a rights-based law and advocacy group. The UULM-MD team usually follows the lead set by these larger groups. In the case of immigration legislation, CASA, which represents the immigrant community, is in a much better position to express immigrant needs and works with the MD Legislative Latino Caucus of the General Assembly to select proposed bills.

As an issue advocate leader, you are either already involved with one or more partner groups -- that's how you convinced UULM-MD to take up the new issue -- or you are taking over an existing team that already has partners or is a member of a coalition.

Identify Legislation

Before the MD General Assembly convenes, partner groups, working with legislative caucuses and individual legislators set an agenda of proposed bills and identify bill sponsors. Bills may be pre-filed. During this preparatory period, members of the UULM-MD team may participate in learning sessions -- about the bills, about advocacy techniques. These sessions may be conducted by the team chairperson(s) or, more likely, by partner groups who have salaried expert staff. For example, the ACLU holds an advocacy training session about issues before the legislative session begins.

Recommend Priorities

To ensure maximum advocacy effectiveness, the number of bills that a UULM-MD team will identify as priority is usually kept small, about three or four bills. Priority issues are those for which UULM-MD will conduct an advocacy campaign through an established Advocacy Team. Usually, our partners or coalition will identify several bills that they will focus on. Remember that during the Assembly's deliberations, team leaders, responding to alerts from partners, will be asking team members to contact their legislators, prepare and submit testimony, write letters to the editors and more. Consequently, we need to keep the number of bills that we are tracking to a manageable amount.

Building the Team – The Annual Meeting, the UULM-MD Website, Your Issue Web Page

Introduction

You may be the chairperson of a new team or succeeding a retiring chairperson of an existing team. If you are chairing a new team, then most likely, you decided to champion the issue along with several other UU's, perhaps from your own congregation. This group forms the base of your team.

The Annual Meeting of UULM-MD

Teams, existing or new, usually form for the legislative session at the UULM-MD Annual Meeting in January. The meeting is held at the UU Congregation of Annapolis or, because of the pandemic, virtually via video conferencing. During the annual meeting, attendees will participate in breakout sessions according to issue interest. Those who attend your issue breakout session will most likely form

the base of your team. **Make sure you get and save their email addresses! Share the list with the Coordinator (Ashley).**

Usually, you will ask a member of one of your partner organizations to participate in the breakout session. Your partner may also be asked to speak briefly at the annual meetings plenary session offering a look at the upcoming legislative agenda.

Leadership Tip
Individuals who join an advocacy team are added to our database. Make sure you get the list of individuals interested in your issue from the UULM-MD Coordinator.

Leadership Tip

Once you have decided which content you want to present on your issue page introduction and on your current session page send it to the UULM-MD Coordinator to post.

When a legislative session begins use the issue's Current Session web page (e.g., 2021 session page) to

explain the bills;
link to the [Maryland General Assembly website](#) for detailed bill information and status;
display or link to background information for each bill which may come from our partners and may take various forms such as single or multi-page flyers, fact sheets, FAQs, slideshows (for example, Microsoft *Powerpoint*).

[The UULM-MD Website](#)

[\(Discussed in Detail in the Advocacy Guide\)](#)

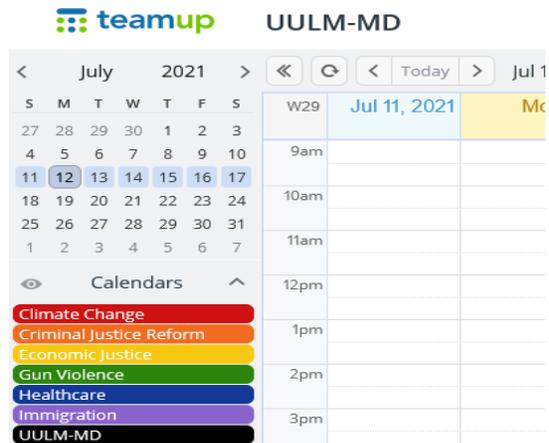
In addition to the UUs who attend our Annual Meeting, you will also need to let the 4000 UU's in Maryland know about your issue and team opportunities. Your first task is to write an introductory, informative, and inspiring message about the issue that will be posted on the UULM-MD website on your [Issue Page](#). Make sure that your message incorporates our UU values and addresses UULM-MD's mission to evaluate all legislation through the lens of our Eighth Principle, to become a beloved community of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Use the Calendar

When you scroll down on the [Look Ahead](#) page, you'll see the weekly calendar of events and activities of priority issue areas. Use the calendar to post action items such as committee hearings, schedules to submit testimony, lobby days/nights organized by partners and allies, team meetings, for example via videoconferencing.

There is a calendar color-coded for each issue. **You** can post events on your issue calendar. Check with the Coordinator.

Leadership Tip:
You can use the calendar to post events such as lobby days, deadlines for submitting committee testimony, district events such as meetings scheduled by team members with specific legislators or Advocacy Team meetings. To post events, contact the UULM-MD Coordinator.

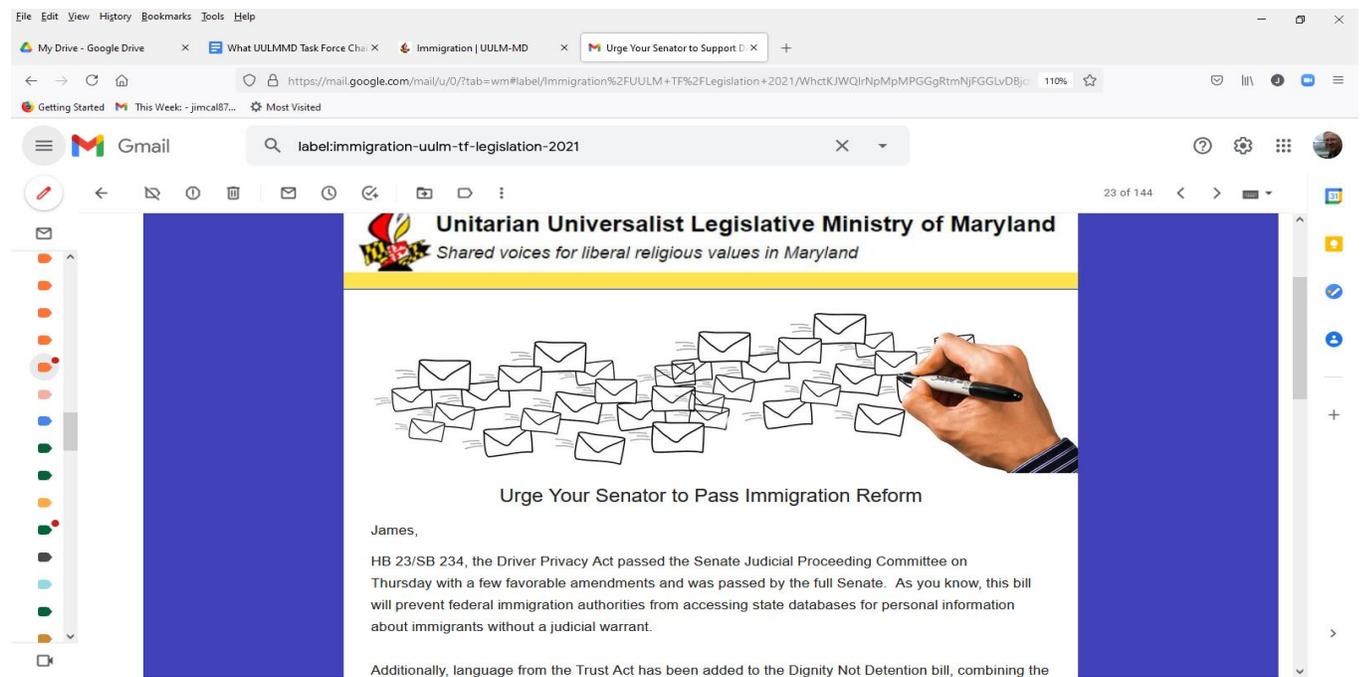


The remainder of this page is intentionally blank. Scroll down to learn about the Weekly Digest.

Communicating with Your Issue Advocates – The UULM-MD Weekly Digest

Every Monday during the legislative session, UULM-MD posts a digest that includes information about priority legislation, recent activity and may include action alerts that ask our members to contact their legislators.

The Weekly Digest (Example: Immigration Reform)



Your Very Own UULM-MD Email Address

UULM-MD's Coordinator will also assign an email address to you, for example immigration@uulmmd.org. This address is linked to Microsoft Outlook and you can use it to send messages and respond to members of your team. Build an email list in Outlook and use your email address to send messages to your team. For a wider audience and a slicker presentation, you can send messages to all those who have expressed an interest in your issue via Salsa Engage.

Email Messages via Salsa Engage

In addition to sending email messages from your UULM-MD email address to your list of team members, you can use Salsa Engage to send emails directly to your team or to a wider audience. Salsa Engage is a web-based customer relations management software package that is highly rated for non-profit

advocacy organizations. You can work with the Coordinator to construct a slick message page for your message including, when necessary, action buttons to contact legislators and ask the UULM-MD Coordinator to send it. Some advocacy leaders use Salsa Engage directly. The Coordinator can train you, but you must be aware of certain organizational, legal and tax liabilities before you send messages independently. For example, as an issue-based advocacy group, we can neither support nor oppose a legislator or political party. **We have written a guide for Issue Team Leaders to use Salsa Engage. To get a copy of the guide as well as a login id and password to use Salsa, contact the Coordinator.**

Targeted Actions Via Salsa Engage

Salsa Engage lets you send messages to the general UULM-MD community or to specific groups such as issue team advocates or to members who reside in certain legislative districts. For example, if you want to influence the delegates and senators on a particular committee that is considering one of your priority bills, you may want to construct a message that asks UU's who are represented by committee members to contact those legislators to urge them to vote for (or against) the bill.

A Targeted Action is a tool that allows our members to write their representatives. We provide a sample letter and background information on the legislation, and the members click on the SEND link which will present a form to add their names and addresses. The Salsa software will use this information to ascertain who their representatives are and send messages to the targeted lawmakers. Salsa will send an email message to UULM-MD confirming that their messages have been sent.

Targeted Actions allow UULM-MD to control to whom we are sending email messages. Targeted messages can only be sent to the sender's (member's) own Senator and Delegates. That is, you must live in the senator's or delegate's district. For example, we cannot send your message to Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Chairperson Sen. Will Smith if you do not live in his district.

We can send messages to:

- the entire General Assembly,
- the State Senate
- the House of Delegates
- a specific Committee,
- a specific lawmaker (based on district)
- a personal thank you to the sponsor of a bill
- Example of a Targeted Action: <https://uulmmd.salsalabs.org/2021-04-09-immigrationreform>

Building Your Targeted Action:

- Write the **introductory message** to the targeted UU's explaining the action they are to take; for example, "Contact your senators to urge them to support HB111."
- Write **brief details** about the bill. You may include links to background data.
- Write a brief message with **suggested language** to the legislator asking for support (or opposition); explain reasons to support (or oppose) the bill and include our UU values.
 - For example, "Dear Delegate NNN, I encourage you to vote in favor of HB111 because.... As a Unitarian Universalist, my faith calls me to promote and affirm justice, equity and compassion in human relations and HB111 ensures that all Marylanders will have an equal opportunity to enjoy the [economic/health/safety/etc.]... Add other language... Please let me know how I can help. Thank you for your consideration."
- Identify the text separately: i.e., (1) the **introductory message** to UU's, (2) the **bill details**, and (3) the **suggested language** to the legislator -- **and send it to The Coordinator**.
- The Coordinator will construct the Targeted Email message and will include a button to "Contact Your Legislator." In the final actual message, the button, when pressed, will link to a form page that includes the suggested language you composed. Recipients of the Targeted Email message will have a convenient and easy way to contact their legislators and send an advocacy message.

Widening the Circle

Another effective method to engage UU 's statewide, in addition to UULM-MD's digital communication techniques, is to broaden the reach of your message by working with congregational leadership – ministers, presidents and board members, social justice chairs and team members in congregations.

UULM-MD has congregational contacts that you may use. You can get contact information by checking congregational websites. [The UUA has a list](#). Before you contact congregational leadership, check with the UULM-MD Board and Coordinator to find out if there are events planned with the congregation. Sometimes, UULM-MD Board members will speak at congregations.

Your objectives when speaking with congregational leaders are:

- Establish an ongoing UULM-MD and Issue Team presence
- Identify one or more congregational members who will serve as team liaisons particularly if there are no issue team members associated with the congregation

- Ensure that the team liaisons / members understand their role – to disseminate informational and action alerts to all members of the congregation and to encourage all members of the congregation to advocate for the issue
- If you find really committed and active members, you may expand their role to:
 - Build a committee
 - Conduct pulpit editorials
 - Display UULM-MD posters
 - Staff a UULM-MD table during Sunday worship services
 - Write articles for the congregation’s newsletter
 - Build an email list of all congregational members to send alerts
 - Coordinate with UULM-MD leadership to facilitate a speaking and fundraising event

Sources

Much of the information presented here is derived from several sources, among them the American Public Health Association, the University of Kansas, the Illinois Library Association, American Chemical Society, the Sierra Club. United Nations Association of the USA, Natural Resource Defense Council, UU’s for Social Justice, UU Service Committee.

Conclusion

Political Scientist Richard Neustadt wrote that “presidential power is the power to persuade.” The same holds true for every American citizen. Our power lies not only in exercising the franchise, but in convincing our public officials to implement policies that are beneficial to our neighbors and to our nation and the world. Advocacy is persuasion; it is arguing coherently, forcefully, passionately for a cause—for the rights of all human beings.

[For More Information and To Learn About Opportunities Click here.](#)

Disclaimer

Any errors of omission or commission are mine.

Yours in faith and justice,

Jim Caldiero