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In Praise of Actual (as Opposed to Virtual) Advocacy

After settling for virtual forms of advocacy (via Zoom, social media, etc.) over the course of the pandemic, nonprofit and other advocates are finally able to enter the halls of Congress and directly lobby Senators, Representatives, and their staff on the critical issues affecting their communities. For all the advances in virtual communications, actual advocacy – up close and personal – is still more effective. We should know because the state association members of the National Council of Nonprofits participated in Lobby Day on June 15, 2020, and the impact, intel, and experiences were profound.

On June 15, representatives from state associations of nonprofits attended meetings “on the Hill” to emphasize how all benefit from the work of charitable nonprofits, explain the impact of COVID-19 on nonprofits and services provided, and explain why action is needed to support a sector that represents more than ten percent of the private U.S. workforce. The professionals didn’t simply complain of problems; they came prepared to address bipartisan policy solutions:

- Employee Retention Tax Credit Reinstatement Act ([H.R. 6161/S.3625](#))
- Universal Giving Pandemic Response and Recovery Act ([H.R. 1704/S.618](#))
- Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2022 ([H.R. 7432](#))
- Nonprofit Sector Strength and Partnership Act ([H.R. 7587](#))

By most accounts, Members of Congress and staff were receptive to the nonprofit policy priorities. The lobbyists relayed stories from frontline organizations and employees made to mitigate the economic and health impacts of the pandemic on our communities. For some offices, it was the first time they heard about these issues and recommendations in person. For some advocates, it was an opportunity to build on the relationships developed since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 and continue to advance solutions. State associations of nonprofits also shared reports and data about the state of their sectors, including [Kentucky](#) and [Montana](#), along with developments on state-specific relief for nonprofits. As for impact, numerous representatives cosponsored or committed to cosponsor legislation in the days after Lobby Day. United Way Worldwide and the YMCA of the USA also held days on the Hill to support similar solutions for nonprofits.

Charitable nonprofits are an irreplaceable presence in our communities. It was essential that we bring this message directly to the Capitol to advance legislative solutions. One day of advocacy by one network of nonprofits won't – by itself – move the policy needle. Charitable nonprofits throughout the country are encouraged to [sign the coalition letter](#) to the President and Congressional leaders, contact your Senators and Representative to express support for these policy solutions, and follow updates from the National Council of Nonprofits and state associations when there is a need to take action on any of these priorities.

