This HIV Group Helped Save Obamacare, but What's Next?

The Recess Resistance Toolkit by Positive Women's Network–USA can help you "bird-dog" Congress members during the August break.

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This summer, Positive Women's Network–USA (PWN-USA) helped lead national efforts to save the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare) from repeal. Although the group succeeded, the fight isn't over.

All members of Congress are home for the August recess, but when they return to Washington, DC, in September, they'll be voting on a number of pieces of legislation, as well as the federal budget, which includes funding for HIV and hepatitis programs as well as Medicaid and food stamps.

That's why PWN-USA has released a Recess Resistance Toolkit and is asking everyone to take a pledge to "be active during #ResistanceRecess to #ProtectOurCare and the #HIVBudget."

You can take the pledge here and view the entire tool kit here. Below are a few suggestions, taken from the tool kit, on ways you can take action during the recess and where you can find the needed resources.

Find local events

Many members of Congress use recess as an opportunity to connect with and hear from folks at home. Check this list for upcoming events in your area:

- Families USA events calendar and tool kit with lots of great info for talking about health care
- MoveOn's Resistance Recess page has lots of upcoming events
- Town Hall Project events calendar

- If you’re on Facebook, be sure to join or follow local political groups ,such as the local Democratic and Republican party, as well as organizing groups like Indivisible, Rise Up or MoveOn. That way, you will see when they post events. Pretty much all protests, town halls and other events are publicized on Facebook.

If your Senator is holding a town hall or making a public appearance at an event, plan to show up and “bird-dog” them.
What is bird-dogging? Basically, the goal of bird-dogging is to compel your elected officials (in this case, senators) to answer questions publicly in front of their constituents, voters and the media. Bird-dogging is fun and easy! Just show up at local events and make sure you are ready to ask them tough questions on the issues that matter most to you.

Set up a meeting with your member of Congress’s office.

Your senators work for you. They are obligated to try and meet with constituents when requests are made. However, they are very busy (especially right now), and their calendars get full quickly. Since they will be home next week, this is the perfect time to reach out and set up a meeting.

For more tips, details and comprehensive resources, check out the recess tool kit and sign up for the PWN-USA newsletter. If you’re active on social media, use the hashtags #ResistanceRecess and #HIVResists when you post.

To read about the activists and actions that helped kill the Senate health care bill, click here and here.

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