

The Common Ground Citizen Action Project (CAP) : Organization

Each CAP group consists of a core group of partners and a larger group of letter writers, or monthly participants, under the direction of a group leader. There are a minimum of four partners to a group.

The partners are responsible for organizing and leading the monthly 'education and action' meeting. They become partners by enrolling themselves in a program of education and public speaking designed to train them to become leaders in their community.

The partners program consists of three meetings per month for a minimum of four months. In the first meeting, the partners meeting, the partners study a particular issue, like for example the nuclear risk reduction proposals from the Harvard Nuclear Negotiation Project, and learn to present the issue verbally using a concise two-minute format. In most instances the issue studied will be the subject of current legislation.

The second meeting is the national conference call where the partners have an opportunity to interact with one of the key individuals involved in the legislation for which CAP is generating support. The guest on the call might be a staffer from one of the committees, or someone who was involved in the research that led to the legislation being written, or perhaps a nationally recognized authority on the issue.

The third meeting is the education and action meeting, which is attended by the monthly participants as well as any other guests of the group. In this meeting the partners educate the rest of the group about the issue and the legislation, and lead the group in writing letters to their representatives, as well as any other projects that the group decides to take on. A typical group project might be to arrange for a delegation to meet with their Congressman the next time he is in his home district, or to visit a local newspaper and encourage the editorial staff to take a position on a particular piece of legislation.

The group leader coordinates the activities of the partners. He/she is in close communication with CAP national office in Washington, DC, and is the primary recipient of the information that the partners will use to study the issues.