

NATIONAL  
**JUVENILE JUSTICE**  
NETWORK

## Federal Juvenile Justice Talking Points

Below are talking points to support you in your visits with members of Congress. As always, feel free to modify and supplement these talking points as needed to leave the best impression and strongest support for your agenda.

### Introductions:

- Introduce everyone and exchange business cards if you have them.
- Thank them for taking the time to meet with you.
- Introduce and describe your interest in juvenile justice.  
*I am a juvenile justice advocate from (insert state/locality and description of your interest in juvenile justice and how it impacts your community) and a member of NJJN.*
- Briefly describe NJJN.  
*The National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) is composed of coalitions, organizations and alumni of the Youth Justice Leadership Institute across 44 states and the District of Columbia, all of whom advocate for a fairer justice system for children and teens.*
- Where appropriate and as authentically as possible, thank them for the support and responsiveness of their office to your priorities and concerns and thank them for supporting JJDP (it has had near unanimous support).

### Appropriations:

- Provide one clear, strong example that emphasizes how investing in youth works.  
*With the support of federal funding, (your or a local program) has been able to help many youth make a positive path forward and avoid juvenile justice system involvement and/or (your state) has made tremendous strides in reducing youth involvement in the juvenile justice system and improving the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system. (Example)*
- Talk about the impact of federal cuts.  
*Our progress however is in jeopardy. 1) If you have the information, discuss how in (your state), federal cuts have reduced funding by (overall amount, or the decrease for each Title II, Title V, and JABG). (Try to provide an example of a program that you could no longer fund, or how many less children a program can serve because of a decrease in funding – as specific as possible.); 2) If you don't have this information, then discuss in general how JJDP funding is needed to support local programs that help to prevent juvenile justice system involvement, to support oversight by the state to ensure compliance with the core protections, and to support the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Protection (OJJDP) which provides training and resources to the field and holds states accountable.*
- Ask for their support for adequate juvenile justice funding.

*We need Senator (Name) to support at least the level of juvenile justice funding in the Senate appropriations bill and preferably higher. We need Representative (Name) to restore funding for the JJDP. Can we count on Senator/Representative (Name) to do that?*

### **JJDP. Reauthorization:**

Similar versions of the bill have passed in both Houses by virtually unanimous consent. Members should be thanked for their support and asked to keep the phase-out of the valid-court order exception in the bill.

- Emphasize progress in your state.  
*(Give examples of any areas of progress in your state such as detention reduction, reduction in racial and ethnic disparities, using more community alternatives, etc.)*
- Talk about why the JJDP. needs to be reauthorized.  
*The JJDP. was enacted almost 40 years ago and it needs to be strengthened to better reflect the good work happening in the states, and to keep shining a light on areas where we need to do better – like reducing incarceration of youth who pose no danger to the public, reducing racial and ethnic disparities, making sure that youth charged with status offenses such as truancy are not locked up, etc.*
- Talk about reauthorization.  
*The JJDP. reauthorization is 10 years overdue. We have strong bipartisan support for reauthorization in both Houses - the House passed H.R. 1809 in May, and the Senate passed S. 860 Aug. 1st. We just need leadership to make reconciliation of the two bills and passage a priority.*
- Ask them to push to keep the phase-out of the valid court order exception in the bill.  
*A key difference between the two bills concerns incarcerating young people for status offenses – behaviors such as running away from home or skipping school, that would not be crimes if they were adults. The House bill would phase out the current “valid court order” exception to the prohibition on incarcerating these young people. A similar provision was removed from the Senate bill following an objection from one Senator, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR). The phase-out enjoys bipartisan support in both Houses.*
- Ask for their support in making passage of the JJDP. a priority this September.  
*We are asking Senator/Representative (name) to work with leaders on this issue (to cosponsor the bill if they have not already done so and support its passage) and prioritize reconciliation of the two bills and passage of the JJDP. as soon as they return in the fall. Can we count on Senator/ Representative (name) to do this?*

### **Conclusion:**

- Ask any questions that you may have.  
*Is there any information that we can get you immediately?*
- Please be sure to thank Senator/Representative (name) for his/her support of these critical issues.  
*Thank you again for your time, and if you need further information, please don't hesitate to contact (your information).*