

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER CAREGIVING NETWORK (NVCN)

COALITION BUILDING SUPPORT FOR INCREASING THE CHARITABLE MILEAGE RATE

OBJECTIVE

The goal is to build a national coalition, urging Congress to enact federal legislation increasing the charitable mileage rate. Local volunteer organizations are encouraged to contact their congressional representatives and request their support for enactment of this important legislation.

BACKGROUND

During the current session of Congress, Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Representative Pete Stauber (R-MN-08) introduced S. 3020 and H.R. 3032 respectively. These bills seek to amend the federal Internal Revenue Code to increase the charitable mileage rate from the current level of \$0.14 per mile and equalize it with the standard indexed business travel rate, which is currently \$0.67 per mile. Unfortunately, the bills were not acted upon by Congress in 2024 and updated bills are expected to be reintroduced shortly after the new session convenes in January 2025.

Growing out of concerns that volunteers have expressed, particularly in rural areas of Minnesota, the Volunteer Driver Coalition was established to seek an appropriate financial strategy to address rising costs for gasoline, insurance and auto maintenance that were forcing volunteer drivers to give up what they love doing. Many caregiving organizations throughout the nation are faced with the problem of attracting and retaining volunteer drivers and caregivers. The legislation looks to change the federal tax code for volunteer drivers by increasing the charitable deduction rate in a sustainable effort to equalize it with the business deduction rate.

While increasing the charitable mileage rate enjoys bi-partisan support in both the Senate and House of Representatives, as well as significant organizational support, many Members of Congress have not yet heard how this issue impacts caregiving organizations in their districts. The focus of the grassroots coalition building effort is for local organizations to bring the charitable mileage issue to the attention of Senators and Members of Congress, who are not yet familiar with how a change in law will benefit caregiving services in their districts and request their support for the measures.

BUILDING THE COALITION

1. Work with other members of your local organization to secure a formal “support” position for increasing the charitable mileage rate. This can be a generic statement for increasing the rate or after new legislation is introduced in 2025, statements of support for specific bills. Support can be in the form of a formal resolution or a simple statement of support, as expressed in a letter signed by the organization’s governing board chair or executive officer.
2. Support for the legislation provides an opportunity for you to engage your local representative about the importance of the charitable mileage issue and introduce them to or update them about your organization, mission and services provided.

3. Request a meeting with your local congressional representative to meet and discuss your organization's support for the issue and/or specific bills. Members of Congress are typically in their districts most weekends and appreciate opportunities to meet with constituents.
4. Due to many requests, sometimes scheduling office meetings can be difficult, so also look for opportunities to engage your congressional representative or their staff at a local community event where you can introduce yourself, state your interest in the charitable mileage rate increase and request a future meeting to discuss the issue and your organization's activities in greater detail.
5. Once a meeting is set up, expect that you will have between 20-30 minutes to make your case to your congressional representative or their staff. If possible, include your Board President, Executive Director, and/or someone who personally knows the congressional member in your meeting.
6. In the meeting, briefly describe your organization, mission, types of services provided and clientele base (i.e. seniors/veterans/disabled).
7. Talk about the challenges being faced by your organization in recruiting and retaining volunteers and how increasing the charitable mileage rate will enhance your volunteer team.
8. Be truthful. Don't overly exaggerate. Reinforce why the legislation is important.
9. How can your Member of Congress help? Ask your representative to support the legislation and become a bill co-sponsor.

This is particularly important if they are a House Ways and Means Committee (Tax Subcommittee) Member or Senate Finance Committee Member. These policy committees likely will be the first to consider the legislation.

10. Create a brief one-page "leave behind" paper highlighting your organization's mission, services and support for the legislation. Reinforce why it is important to your organization that the charitable mileage rate be increased.
11. Follow-up after the meeting with a written "thank you" and invite your congressional representative to learn more about your organization and its successes in your community by inviting them to an upcoming meeting or event.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions, need additional information or help with any of the above recommendations, please reach out to the National Volunteer Caregiving Network.

