

# Inviting elected officials to chapter activities

Quick Reference Guide

Thrivent Financial's not-for-profit status enables our members, through volunteering with their local chapters, to make a difference in our communities. This status is a privilege, not a right; it's been given to us, and it can be taken away.

Government has tremendous influence over the ability for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans to serve our members and communities. Elected officials who come to know our organization and what we do are likely to support us. Therefore, **local contact at the chapter level** is the single most important thing we can do to ensure that elected officials continue to support us.

Our goal is clear: If we take simple steps to invite elected officials to chapter activities, we can go a long way toward ensuring that Thrivent Financial can provide the dollars and resources its members can use to improve lives and communities.

## Simple steps for contacting and building awareness among elected officials

Inviting elected officials to chapter activities is an important responsibility for chapters. Most elected officials appreciate opportunities to join their constituents in efforts to help build a better community. An elected official's attendance at a chapter activity is important recognition for the chapter and its member volunteers. Here are some simple steps your chapter can follow:

- ✓ **Create a list of your area's leading elected officials.** Include state officials (state house or assembly members, state senators, etc.) and federal officials (U.S. House and Senate members). You may even include your mayor or other local officials. Be sure the list includes both postal and e-mail addresses and telephone numbers. Visit <http://capwiz.com/thrivent> to find the names of elected officials in your area.
- ✓ **Prioritize activities.** The larger the activity, or the greater its impact on the community, the more attractive it will be to elected officials. Invite officials to those activities that will attract a large gathering of volunteers, aid a well-known community cause or have a significant impact in other ways.
- ✓ **Introduce yourself.** Before inviting elected officials to activities, contact their offices to let the staff members know you will be extending invitations from time to time. Ask who in the office manages the schedule and how they prefer to receive an invite, (postal or email). Note this information for future use.
- ✓ **Send the invitations.** Include the basics, such as date, time, location and your contact information. Try to include facts that will get the elected officials' attention, such as how many people will attend, who or what the activity benefits, if you plan to invite the media, etc. See the next page for more tips on sending invitations to elected officials.
- ✓ **Follow up.** If you haven't received a response by at least one week before the activity, call to see if the official(s) will attend. The staff may have questions about the activity, and your conversation may help an official choose to attend the chapter activity over a competing event.
- ✓ **Be yourself at the activity.** Elected officials are invited to chapter activities to meet our members and see them in action. We aren't asking members to discuss specific issues; rather, we want them to do what they do best: volunteer and make a difference in their communities! See the next page for more details about what to do at the activity.
- ✓ **Send a thank-you note.** A timely and sincere note thanking an official for his or her attendance at a chapter activity can seal a relationship. Include in the note any photos you took or newspaper articles you clipped that refer to the activity. Don't forget this important final step.

- ✓ Refer to the **Visibility Toolkit** at [www.thrivent.com](http://www.thrivent.com) > Thrivent Community > Chapters for more information.



## Inviting elected officials to chapter activities (continued)

### Educating elected officials is part of chapter vice president and communications director roles

Because educating elected officials is important, the chapter vice president and communications director have the following accountabilities in their role descriptions:

- ✓ Invite elected officials to chapter activities.
- ✓ Track and retain documented records of elected officials' attendance at chapter activities.

### Sending an invitation to an elected official

- ✓ You can send an invitation via email or the postal service, depending on an elected official's preference. (See **Send the invitations**, pg 1.)
- ✓ It's appropriate to send an official the same invitation you would send to volunteers and others in the community, but don't forget to make your initial contact with the official's office. (See **Introduce yourself**, pg 1.)
- ✓ If you wish to create a separate invitation for elected officials, a sample letter is included in your Visibility Toolkit. Include a list of prior chapter activities to paint a more complete picture of your chapter's work. The text can be adapted to email as well.

#### Don't get discouraged ...

Elected officials' schedules are notoriously busy and unpredictable, but don't be discouraged. Every invitation you send—even those that aren't accepted—helps educate elected officials about your chapter's work in their communities, and helps demonstrate the positive impact of our not-for-profit status.

### When elected officials attend your event

- ✓ Expect that staff members may accompany an official, even if it was not specifically mentioned. Staff members are also an important audience for the good news of your work.
- ✓ Determine ahead of time what you would like the official to do at the activity. Is he or she there to pound nails or serve food alongside other volunteers? Should the official say a few words to kick off the event?
- ✓ Consider appointing a person to host, greet and/or escort the official during the activity. This person would ensure that the official has opportunities to meet others at the activity, and get the official to the designated program or volunteer spot, etc.
- ✓ Ensure that any media representatives who attend know that the elected official is present. Likewise, be sure to alert the official to the media's attendance as well.
- ✓ If there is a formal program, offer an elected official the opportunity to make brief remarks, or at the very least publicly recognize the official during that program. Most elected officials will not abuse an opportunity to speak at a volunteer activity by launching into an inappropriate political stump speech.

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**Unless elected officials *experience* Thrivent Financial for Lutherans making a difference *in their own communities*, corporate messages don't hold a great deal of weight.**

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### More information on this topic

- ✓ Visibility Toolkit ([www.thrivent.com](http://www.thrivent.com) > Thrivent Community > Chapters)
- ✓ To find the names of elected officials in your area, visit <http://capwiz.com/thrivent>.

- ✓ Ask CHIP! The Chapter Information Place  
Go to [www.thrivent.com](http://www.thrivent.com) > Thrivent Community > Chapters > CHIP and search on 'elected officials.'



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