



HOW TO RUN A VIRTUAL FLY-IN: LESSONS FROM SUSAN G. KOMEN

When Susan G. Komen faced the prospect of conducting its annual Washington lobby day in a virtual environment for the first time in 2020, there was no playbook.

The fly-in usually involves hundreds of advocates traveling to the Capitol, often **at their own expense. Collectively, they visit of offices in the U.S.** House and Senate.

What would that look like in the virtual world?

“We had to scramble and adapt to the new setting,” said Valerie Nauman, Senior Coordinator for Federal Policy and Advocacy.

What the organization found was that a virtual fly-in can be highly effective if engineered and executed correctly. Komen’s training reached a nearly 600 person audience and they created 40 teams of 3 to 5 people who carried out more than 150 virtual congressional meetings—all in a single day.

“It’s hard work and a lot of organizing to make sure everything is straight,” Nauman said. “But people shouldn’t underestimate the power of a virtual Hill-Day.”

Creating Real Capability

Nauman and Komen’s advocacy team began weeks in advance to develop a strategy that included education, organization and high-impact tactics.

- **Webinars.** The team held multiple webinars to level-set and educate advocates who would participate in the virtual fly-in. Now, those webinars are digital assets that can be used to train more supporters.
- **Digital Hub.** Komen maintained a digital resource where participants could find schedules, talking points and anything else they needed.



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VALERIE NAUMAN
Senior Coordinator
for Federal Policy and
Advocacy, Susan G. Komen

Results

150

Virtual congressional meetings

More than

84,000

Komen supporters were driven to take action.

Almost

50,000

people visited the action center on Komen's website alone

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- **Materials.** Komen generated materials for lawmakers and staff on Komen's policy points, which expedites meetings. "Advocates could have deeper conversations with offices," Nauman said, "They weren't having to educate first."
- **Personal Stories.** Many of those conversations focused on personal stories from breast cancer patients and survivors. One benefit to the virtual event was that advocates undergoing active treatment, who often have a hard time traveling, could participate in full. "Those are the voices that are most important," Nauman said.
- **A Virtual Day of Action.** A virtual call to action to reinforce the messages shared in congressional meetings sent emails to lawmakers from hundreds of additional advocates.

Of course, the fly-in supported Komen's year-around advocacy work to increase federal funding for programs like the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program and secure better care and treatment for the estimated 264,200 woman and men in the US who will be diagnosed with breast cancer and the 44,130 who will die from the disease in 2021 alone.

In 2020, Komen drove more than 84,000 supporters to take action. The action center on its website alone drew almost 50,000 visitors. Nauman said they will definitely host another virtual fly-in this year.

"We feel like it was a success," she said. "This was the first time that we did anything like this, on this scale. We definitely want to build on it."

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Our mission is to save lives by meeting the most critical needs in our community by investing in breakthrough research to prevent and cure breast cancer.