

GENERAL ELECTION 2010

LOBBYING YOUR PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES



General elections don't come along very often; it might be another five years before we get the chance to mercilessly lobby parliamentary candidates at a time when they are hyper-aware that every vote really does count.

The run up to the election is going to be filled with continual 'breaking news' coverage provided by the broadcast media, with candidates' 'tweets' and 'podcasts' and more hustings than you can shake a stick at—so it is incredibly important that UCU members make the union's voice heard above all others.

It is really important that individual UCU members work to 'Make Education Count' in this election. The union will be lobbying candidates nationally, but it will be on the ground member to candidate contact that really drives our messages home.

You can make sure you know where each of the candidates in your area stand by asking them five quick questions which can be found in the UCU Education Manifesto (http://makeeducationcount.org.uk/?page_id=321). You should also raise local issues—especially if there are cuts hitting your area.

The questions are quite straightforward but there are some definite 'dos' and 'don't' for getting in touch with your candidates and making sure they listen. You can find those on the next page.

It is also really important that we get feedback about what your candidates said and where they have been lobbied. You can see the best ways to do that below.

Feedback

We want to know what your candidates say about education in your constituency—and on national issues. We will be keeping track of responses on the www.makeeducationcount.org.uk website.

Great ways to contribute to the site and update other UCU members include:

- passing on written responses from candidates to post on the site
- taking a quick video clip (if the candidate is ok with that) to put on the site (email to makeeducationcount@ucu.org.uk)
- meeting the candidates and reporting back what they say—ask to get a quick snap with the candidate and we can put that up on the website too!

THE DO'S AND DON'TS



Do...

- Make issues local. It is important that we bring national issues to the candidates' attention but they will be much more interested if you can demonstrate how this impacts locally.
- Try and set up a pre-arranged face to face meeting—the more the merrier, invite branch colleagues to join you.
- Contact by email and make sure you get a response.
- Let the candidate know you will feedback to other branch members and to UCU nationally.
- Get in early—candidates are going to be very, very busy people for the next few weeks.
- Keep it short—as candidates are busy, we want our communications to be short, to the point and easy to respond to.
- Mention UCU issues if you are phone canvassed or door knocked by candidates and their teams.
- Take pictures, video footage (with permission) and send them in to makeeducationcount@ucu.org.uk so your branch and other UCU members can see the responses.

Don't...

- Send a three page essay on why the candidates should agree with UCU—they won't read it and you are unlikely to get a response.
- Take video footage without asking the candidate first.
- Assume a candidate will have a certain position—we know there are manifestos and party lines, but that does not mean every candidate will agree with their party's national policy.
- Keep responses to yourself—the candidates might sway your vote with positions on important education issues; other members might want to take this information into account too.

All change – finding your candidates and new parliamentary seats

This general election will see major changes in the political landscape. Hundreds of MPs are standing down, and the boundaries for many constituencies have changed—some constituencies disappear altogether!

You may cease to be in your current MP's constituency as soon as the election is called (the new boundaries come into play as soon as the 'short campaign' starts). To check who your

candidates are and what your constituency is, go to www.election-maps.co.uk; you can search by postcode and area. You must make sure that you look at the 'Proposed Westminster Constituency' as this is your new constituency boundary for the election.

Westminster MPs are up for election this year; Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will have assembly/parliamentary elections next year.

Get in touch

If you have any problems finding your candidates or want to contact the political team for any reason during the general election campaign, contact UCU's Westminster political liaison officer Lisa Johnson at ljohnson@ucu.org.uk.