



Meeting Suggestions Kit

Greetings,

This kit was put together in response to calls and emails from our club presidents, sponsors, and interested GenJ members. Its purpose is to give a basic ten month breakdown of how a club can stay active and involved in their community and in the political scene.

You may be a club sponsor, in which case I want to thank you for taking on this important responsibility, you may be a club leader, in which case you have a big responsibility in your club and must lead by example. Whoever you are, I hope that this kit can provide you with ideas as to how you can best utilize the club meetings and trips to strengthen your club and its members.

One thing that has also been one of our developing goals is to integrate our clubs program with our Ben Rush Program. The Ben Rush Program offers our students the opportunity to earn scholarships and GenJ gear. Ben Rush fits perfectly with the clubs program because a club can organize activities to help its students complete the Ben Rush Program. I will reference this connection throughout this kit as it can help our club leaders think of creative things to do in their meetings.

If you have any questions concerning the details of this kit, feel free to send an email to our office. You will probably want to email our Clubs Coordinator at genjclubs@hsllda.org, but you also may send an email to our general Generation Joshua box, generationjoshua@hsllda.org. You may also call our office at (540) 338-8608 or toll free at (877) 338-8803.

Once again, thank you for your interest in Generation Joshua, and specifically our clubs program.

Michael Zeller
Generation Joshua Clubs Coordinator

Part One: Initial Club Meeting

We encourage our new clubs to have an initial meeting in which they plan to take care of preliminaries and general business. For example, have food, play ice-breaker games, and get to know each other, especially if there are a lot of students who do not know each other. Have the coordinator explain the goal of the club, and present GenJ's core values: the sanctity of life, parental rights, the institution of the traditional family, religious freedom, personal responsibility, and justice and compassion for the less fortunate. Outline what the club will be doing during the year so that students can know what to expect. After the club has had an initial meetings I would encourage the club to plan out meeting specifics for the next several months so that members can schedule ahead of time and save the dates.

If you are an already established club, with an active group move on to Part Two, and look through the club meeting suggestions.

Part Two: Clubs Meetings:

This is not meant to be a ‘hard and fast’ list of precisely how a club should run. Rather, this is a list of suggestions and ideas. Feel free to branch out and explore new options that are not mentioned here. However, these ideas will put your club members on the path to earning prizes in the **Benjamin Rush Program**.

Each of these club meeting ideas has an “activity” and a list of things you will need as well as “research” suggestions. The “**activity**” will provide an interactive way to show members how to make their voices heard. The “**research**” section will outline some research or teaching that the club president, club sponsor, or a chosen student has brought to the club meeting to share with the members. The “**Things you will need**” section outlines materials you will need and arrangements that should be made for the club meeting activity to go smoothly.

1. Know Your Legislators

This is a very basic, informative club meeting in which your club members will learn who represents them in their state legislatures as well as in the United States Congress and the United States Senate.

Activity: Letter to your legislators

Research: Do some research on your State Representatives and State Senators, and your United States Congressmen and Senators. Go to your state government’s website and see if your legislators have a web page. Search the news for their activities (try searching their name on the internet). See if you can find a bill that they have written.

Things you will need: envelopes, stamps, paper and pens (computer optional), addresses, and current events issues (maybe a news story),

Have your students discuss some current events issues and then sit down and write a letter to your representative and senator. This is an easy way to let your legislators know your position on a particular issue. Be polite, but honest about your opinion on the issue.

***Ben Rush Award Requirement Completed: Write a Letter to your Legislator.** Forward a copy of your letter to the Ben Rush administrator if you are registered for the program.

2. Club Elections Meeting

Every GenJ club needs some degree of student leadership. Devote a whole meeting to stressing the importance of the leadership and the responsibility of the club officers, and hold elections.

Activity: Club Elections

Research: Take some time to read through the duties required of the various club leadership roles. Encourage all the club members to do the same, also encourage them to ensure their membership with GenJ is up-to-date since we ask that all officers be current GenJ members.

Things you will need: paper for ballots, pens or pencils, copy of the handbook, and a list of positions to be filled.

The previous president or the club sponsor should take a few minutes to thank previous office-holders for their hard work the previous year and should revisit the purposes of the various roles in the club. Take some time during the meeting to read the officer's duties from the handbook. Then take nominations for the office, and provide some time for the students to describe their qualifications and their reason for wanting to hold that office. Finally, distribute the paper and have your members vote. The club sponsor will tally the votes. Repeat this with all of the officer positions.

3. Lobbying Day/Better Know Your Legislators Trip

Citizen lobbying is very important in a democracy. It is the best way to show an officeholder that you care about an issue. Legislators also love young people, and will often set aside a block of time for your club to visit and ask questions.

Activity: Meet Your Legislator

Research: Call the office of your legislators. Keep trying until you get through, this can often take some doing, especially for federal legislators, but try anyway. Schedule a meeting with the legislator(s) and announce to the club that your meeting will be a field trip of sorts rather than a formal meeting.

Things you will need: An appointment with the Congressman, Senator, or Representative, cameras, good questions, and dress code suggestions.

Discuss with your club leaders about who to visit and when. Keep in mind that Congressmen and U.S. Senators may have several satellite offices, and the State Representatives and State Senators will have their offices in the state capital. Make an appointment and inform your members as far ahead of time as possible, so that they can clear their schedule and save the date. Arrange for transportation and refresh the members on who they are going to meet while encouraging them to think of intelligent questions about important issues. Be sure to get pictures of your club with the legislator and send them to us.

***Ben Rush Award Requirement Completed: Lobbying Trip.** Have your members send the pictures and their names to the Ben Rush Administrator to get credit.

4. Current Events Discussion Meeting, Take One

It is good to have a club meeting and spend time discussing the news and working through the impact that events and political decisions will have on America. **This is an especially good fallback club meeting if your plans fell through or you were unable to get anything else planned**

Activity: Current Events Discussion

Research: Have members bring news stories that stood out to them. Have them cut them out of a magazine or newspaper, or print them off the web.

Things you will need: current news stories, club discussion moderator (optional), and opinions (which never seem to be lacking in our members).

Have the students bring up news stories that have caught their interest. If it is a lesser-known issue or story, give the student a chance to explain the story to the rest of the club. Talk about the perspective from which the story is written, as well as the purpose of the article. We recommend choosing a moderator to keep the discussion going. The moderator can be the club sponsor, the club president, or another capable member. Every club is different adopt different methods as you discover what works best with your club.

5. Recruitment Trip

An enthusiastic club will be a growing club. Recruit new members to GenJ and your club.

Activity: Recruit New Members

Research: See if there are opportunities to advertise your club in a local parade, set up a booth at a local book fair, or participate in a homeschool or church event.

Things you will need: GenJ membership brochures, and enthusiasm.

If you set up a booth at a convention, book fair, or other venue, then have your students talk about the things that the club is doing; For example: learning about government, discussing issues, or going on lobbying trips, etc. Have the students wear GenJ gear if they have any. If you are marching in a parade, make posters talking about what you've done or advertising what you do. Also, creating a free club email address and advertising it as a good way to get into contact with your club. Assign your president or a sponsor to monitor the emails. Consider creating a free website or club blog.

***Ben Rush Award Requirement Completed: Refer one new membership.** Tell the new members to write the referring member's name on

the form, “referred by: John Doe.” The Ben Rush Administrator will see the reference on the membership forms and give credit the the participant.

6. Voter Registration Trip

Unless good people vote, there is no way good people will be elected. In order to vote, people need to be registered to vote.

Activity: Voter Registration Drive

Research: See if a local church will allow you to run non-partisan voter registration drives. Although some church leaders may be a little worried about the legality, these are completely legal to have in churches in all 50 states. Be aware of where your polling locations in your area are, typically this information is available on your State Board of Elections website.

Things you will need: Voter Registration Forms, pens, and a location.

Call your State Board of Elections and request voter registration forms or print off voter registration forms for your state from the state government website. Set up a table with signs that tell observers what you are doing. Have your club members solicit people who walk by, ask a simple question like “are you registered to vote?” Don’t be rude, if they are not interested don’t push it, just move on. As the members bring the non-registered individuals to the booth have forms and pens ready.

***Ben Rush Award Requirement Completed: Register 5 voters.** If you are trying to get credit for Ben Rush, then be sure to print off a Ben Rush Voter Registration Signature form for each participant in your club. Then have the newly registered voters sign the specific student’s form. Submit the form to the Ben Rush Administrator.

7. Current Events Discussion meeting, Take II

It is good to have a club meeting, spending time discussing the news and the impact that events and political decisions will have on America. Use the unique resources offered by the club meetings to discuss and talk. This could be considered the “Standard Club Meeting.” That is why it is repeated in this kit. If we, as citizens, do not stay informed about issues, and are not constantly sharpening each other, (iron on iron) then we will not be able to influence our nation.

See #4 for details.

8. Political Volunteerism**

Volunteering is the biggest and best way to show that you support a cause, a person or a group. Due to the partisan natures of this activity, GenJ does not recommend that this activity replace a club meeting, but it is a good way for your members to have a small part in helping.

Activity: Volunteer for with a party or candidate

Research: Call local campaigns or county party leaders and ask if you would be able to volunteer for their campaign and fold letters, walk precincts, or make phone calls.

Things you will need: A contact within the party or campaign, an arranged activity for the volunteers to help with.

Most campaign and party volunteering can be done by anyone who is old enough to participate in Generation Joshua, and even some who are younger. Most parties and campaigns do not have a lot of volunteers, so do not be surprised if they have no idea what to do with an enthusiastic group of GenJ students. If they say that they don't have anything, ask them to think about it and push them a little bit to allow your members to help with some of the simple tasks. Consider volunteering several times, even for just a couple hours at a time so that the party or candidate can get to know who you are. This volunteerism can build good relationships with influential people who may be in positions of power someday.

***Ben Rush Award Requirement Completed: Volunteer 5 hours for a party or candidate.** Have your supervisor in the party or campaign sign off on the Ben Rush Volunteer form that you completed your hours of volunteering, and then send it in to the Ben Rush Administrator.

****Special Note on Partisan Activity:** Generation Joshua encourages its students to participate in campaigns and issues activism, but it discourages the clubs from formally endorsing candidates or formally organizing campaign activity. If you organize a campaign effort, it should be a voluntary event, and your students should not feel pressured to support a particular candidate.

9. Charitable Volunteerism Trip

Just as in the political sphere, volunteering is the best way to show support for a cause, a person, or a group. This activity may not work to replace a club meeting, but it is vitally important to show your members how they can do their part in the community.

Activity: Volunteer for your Community

Research: Call a local food pantry, soup kitchen, homeless shelter, nursing home, or town hall and ask if there are any opportunities for young people to volunteer and help build a stronger local community.

Things you will need: A service opportunity.

This is one of the more flexible recommendations in this kit. Basically, we recommend that your club find something that is not political and volunteer as a club. This can help remind your members that they should be involved and be making a difference in non-political areas as well. God tells us to help the hungry and to visit the sick. It also helps build a reputation to show that your

club is more than just a political group of students and parents, and that you also care about your local community. So call the local soup kitchen, ask a local nursing home if you can come and sing for the residents, call your local town hall and see if there is a park that needs trash picked up. Be creative!

10. Guest Speaker Meeting

Many public figures will be glad to accept an invitation to speak to a formal club of young people.

Activity: Guest Speaker

Research: Talk to your club about who they are interested in hearing from. Float the idea of hosting local political candidates, current officeholders, state, county, and city executive officers, and pastors. Maybe even host a debate between two candidates in a primary or election.

Things you will need: Water, a speaker, and a location.

Provide your speaker with a space to speak comfortably and leave some time to allow your members to ask them questions.

Take a minute and a half to introduce your speaker before he or she begins, so that your student know their background and can better put what they say into context. Provide refreshments at the end of the meeting so that the students have a low-pressure environment in which to approach the speaker with their interests and questions. Be flexible since many of your guest speakers may have important responsibilities.

The speaker may not be able to stay the whole meeting so be flexible in this too and have some plans to fill the time. Perhaps you can discuss the ideas raised by the speaker.