



2026 STRATEGY: LISTENING + RELATIONAL ENGAGEMENT SESSION

This document offers guidance on a key relational organizing tool: the listening session or house meeting (the only difference is the setting).

For this election season, WIN suggests the following theme for your sessions:
Building Public Moral Leadership and Political Power for the District's June Primary

Purpose of These Sessions

- **Identify leaders** who care about protecting residents and building a more just DC
- **Surface the specific impacts** of federal overreach on our immigrant communities, unhoused neighbors, impacted youth, and other neighbors
- **Develop leaders' ability** to turn individual stories into public demands for Mayoral and Council candidates
- **Organize** congregations and communities around issues that will create a more just DC

Invite attendees to act — particularly by turning people out to the May 17th Candidates Forum

WHAT DOES A LISTENING SESSION LOOK LIKE?

Size: 10–20 people (if more attend, you simply need more facilitators)

Time: 45–75 minutes — start and end on time

Location: Home, congregation, organization office, school, union hall, or anywhere people can gather safely

Who to Invite: Start with people you know — congregation or organization members from different ministries, neighbors, civic associations, partner school teachers or parents, or other groups that care about building a more just DC. The focus is on engaging member institutions and surrounding community neighbors and allies.

KEY STEPS TO SET ONE UP

- Select a date, time, and location
 - Invite people personally — turnout is key; aim for 10–15 per session
 - Work in pairs so one person can facilitate and one can take notes
 - Prep with a WIN organizer before your session
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SESSION AGENDA

1. Open: Credential and Frame

Introduce yourself and share your story. Explain what a listening session accomplishes, introduce WIN, and name the urgency of this moment for Washington, DC. Offer the 2026 framing, the opportunity this election cycle presents for the city, and mention the May 17th Candidates Forum.

2. Introductions and Rounds

Ask everyone to introduce themselves with a couple of setting-appropriate details (pronouns, organizational affiliation, neighborhood or Ward) and answer a rounds question. Give people 1–2 minutes each, and ask for consent to keep the conversation moving so everyone participates.

Model the rounds yourself — include a personal detail or quick anecdote to encourage others to do the same.

Sample rounds question: How is federal overreach affecting your family and community? What does a flourishing DC look and feel like?

3. Move from Stories to Power

Your goal is to get people to share the personal side of why they care. If the conversation stays surface-level, push people to go deeper.

Sample prompt: When we hear about 14-year-olds being tried as adults or ICE coordinating with local police, who in your congregation or neighborhood comes to mind? What happens to our community if we don't act?

Connect the conversation to power and move people from talking about problems to naming issues and demands. You can also share demands raised in other house meetings and ask if they resonate.

Sample prompt: Individual anger won't stop a presidential memorandum — but organized people can. We are building a WIN People's Agenda. What commitment do we need from Mayoral and Council candidates to make this city safe and equitable for all of us?

Name that WIN is building a broad-based constituency — from churches, temples, mosques, apartment complexes, parent organizations, and neighborhood associations — that can speak for the whole. Share a story of a time when people organized and won. (Ask your WIN staff organizer if you want help preparing one.)

4. Close with Key Asks

State that the next step is taking this energy into action — building the election agenda, talking to neighbors, and showing up together on May 17th.

Ask: Who isn't in this room that needs to be? Who are the neighbors or families in our childcare centers, congregations, or neighborhood partnerships who are feeling this pressure?

Set a turnout goal: How many people does your organization want to bring to the May 17th Candidates Forum?

Questions? Contact us at 2026@windc.org

