

Communicating with your Congressional Delegation

Regularly communicating with your Members of Congress is key to any federal advocacy effort. Below are some need-to-knows.

Establish a Relationship

- It is better to have an ongoing relationship with a Member of Congress and their staff before you have an urgent advocacy issue before them.
- Request a meeting with Members and their key staff member to introduce them to your priority issues and your organization.
- Invite Congressional staff to meetings/gatherings of interest.
- Invite Congressional Members to facility tours, press conferences, ribbon cuttings and other meetings of interest.

Understand Districts

- Understand the congressional districting in your state.
- Cultivate regional stakeholder support within every congressional district.
- Break down data by congressional districts.
- Provide Senators with statewide data.
- Encourage constituent engagement according to congressional district.

Understand Staffing

Most congressional offices are organized with the following roles.

Usually located in the DC office:

- Chief of Staff (also called Administrative Assistant or AA)
- Legislative Director
- Legislative Assistants - assigned according to issue areas
- Legislative Correspondents - assist with incoming and outgoing communications with constituents
- Communications Director
- Scheduler
- Committee Staff - additional staff if Member has leadership role on a committee



Usually located in the District/State offices:

- District Director/State Director
- Outreach staff
- Case Workers - addressing constituent requests according to issue area
- Scheduler

Understand Committees

The role your Member of Congress can play to advance your issue is dependent on their committee assignment and their seniority on the Committee and in the legislative body. Know your Member's Committee and Subcommittee assignment.

Background Information, Data, and the Ask

- Outreach should include
 - Background information on the issue
 - Why the issue is relevant to the District/State
 - District/State related data on the issue
- A specific ask
 - Vote for
 - Vote against
 - Bill sponsorship/Bill co-sponsorship
 - Dear Colleague Sign on Requests

Identifying Legislation

You can cite these legislation identifiers below when communicating to Members of Congress. You can also use Bill Titles ("The Disaster Relief Act", "The Education Reform Act") or general identifiers ("The Omnibus Spending Bill" "The Education Appropriations Bill").

- House Bills: "H.R._____"
- House Resolutions: "H.RES._____"
- House Joint Resolutions: "H.J.RES._____"
- Senate Bills: "S._____"
- Senate Resolutions: "S.RES._____"



- Senate Joint Resolutions: "S.J.RES._____"

Email

- Email is the preferred mode of communication
- Organizational staff and consultants often communicate directly with congressional staff
- General email addresses should be used for broad alerts

Calling

- Legislative related advocacy calls are best directed to the DC office. The Capitol switchboard is 202-224-3121. Phone numbers are also listed on Members' websites.
- Legislative calls are fielded by administrative support staff in Congressional offices.
- Casework calls are best directed to state and district offices.

Social Media

- Most Members of Congress now have Twitter feeds and Facebook pages
- Congressional staff track Tweets to Members and report on trends

Letter Writing

- Formal letters are better emailed or faxed to Congressional offices.
- Snail mail goes through high security and is often delayed.
- Letters can be addressed to:

To Your Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To Your Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Best Practices

- Be courteous and respectful in all communications
- Avoid partisan commentary
- Avoid reference to elections
- Acknowledge and thank Members publicly for support

