

Contacting Your Members of Congress: A Quick Guide

Researchers and health professionals are respected, informed professionals and community leaders and make ideal advocates on health issues. Engaging in advocacy at the federal, state, or local levels is an excellent way to amplify the impact of your research and help to ensure that public policies support healthy lifestyles for cancer prevention or survivorship.

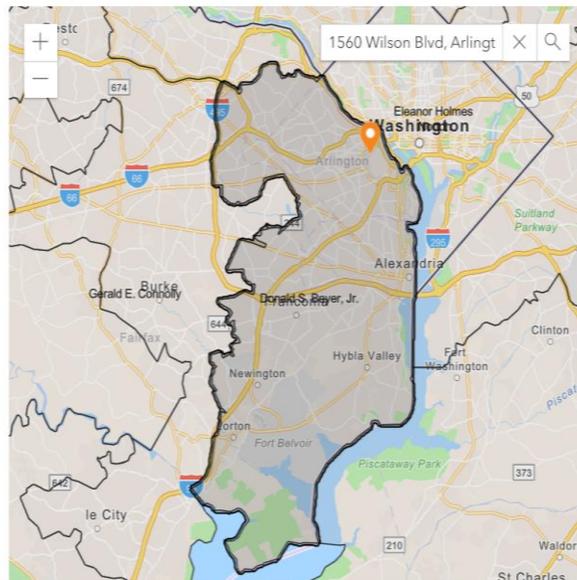
If you are new to advocacy, this quick guide provides some tips for contacting your Members of Congress. While this guide is focused on federal policymakers, similar steps would apply to contacting state and local legislators.

Who Are My Members?

Utilize Congress' "Find Your Member" tool here: [Find My Member](#)

- Enter your address, town, or zip code in the text box. Results will look like this:

Your Members



1. [Representative Beyer, Donald S., Jr.](#)



State: Virginia
Party: Democratic
Served: House: 2015-Present
Contact: 1119 Longworth House Office Building
(202) 225-4376

2. [Senator Kaine, Timothy](#)



State: Virginia
Party: Democratic
Served: Senate: 2013-Present
Contact: 231 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4024

3. [Senator Warner, Mark](#)



State: Virginia
Party: Democratic
Served: Senate: 2009-Present
Contact: 703 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-2023

- Copy the contact information of the 3 members elected to represent you, **paying particular attention to their phone numbers.** Except for residents of the District of Columbia or one of the U.S. territories, there are 2 Senators representing your state and 1 Representative for your district.

Engaging With Your Members

It is easy to engage with your Members of Congress and their staff by phone, email, or social media.

1. Pick up the phone!

- Ask to speak with the health staffer.
 - Many staffers are in meetings, attending hearings and mark-ups, or convening with other Members and their staff at any given time – if they are not available, ask to leave a message to be passed along afterward!

- Tell them you are a constituent.
 - Be prepared to share your address or affiliation to the state/district.
- Tell them what you are calling about.
 - This will allow your call or message to be routed correctly.
 - For example, I'm calling to ask for the Senator's support for increased funding for cancer research.
- Tell them why the issue matters to you and to others in the state/district.
 - Share your story from your personal point of view. Talk about your work or your personal experience and how you, your family, and others in your community have been impacted – either positively or negatively – by a policy or lack of policy. This is your opportunity to make the case for why the policy change is important to you and others like you. For example, if advocating for increased federal research funding, talk about your research and the impact it has had – or could have – if more funding were available.
 - Keep your message brief and stick to the issue at hand.
- Ask for their support.
 - Ask if your Member will support the issue.
 - If the answer is yes – thank them!
 - If the answer is no – thank them for their consideration, and if possible, find out what concerns the Member might have.
 - If the staffer is not sure – thank them for bringing it to the Member's attention, and ask when would be a good time to follow up.
 - If you are advocating for a specific bill, provide bill number for the staffer to note, if possible. For example: The Food Labeling Modernization Act of 2021's bill numbers are S.2594 and H.R.4917. The bill numbers should be provided in any advocacy materials or you can find them at [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).
- Thank them for their time and let them know you are a resource.
 - Advocacy, and democracy, is a collaborative process! Leave further contact information – and make sure you obtain theirs - to continue the dialogue.
- Follow up
 - Follow up shortly after a meeting or phone call to thank them for their time, share your contact information, and provide any additional information or resources. If you speak with them by phone – feel free to follow up via email, or vice versa.
 - Plan to check in periodically. Follow up on any outstanding items from the prior conversation. Share your latest policy-relevant research. If there is an upcoming opportunity for policy action on an issue that is important to you, reach out again to remind them of your position and why. After a vote, or after they take your requested action, thank them. Members want to know that they are meeting the needs of their constituents.

Have questions? Did you speak with your Member's office? Share your feedback with AICR staff at advocacy@aicr.org.

2. Send an email

- Get the name and email address of the health staffer or utilize the “Contact Us” section of the Member’s website.
 - Hill staff email addresses follow the standard format of firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov on the House side and firstname.lastname@senatorname.senate.gov on the Senate side, so if you know a staffer’s name, you can determine their email address.
- Make sure they know you are a constituent. Include your address or affiliation to the state/district.
- Similar to a phone call, tell them why you are emailing.
- Share your story. Make the case for why your issue is important.
- Email is a great way to share new research when it is published.
 - Use lay-friendly language and describe its impact, including relevance to federal policy.
 - Congressional staffers are well-educated and interested in your area of research. However, they may not be versed in the terminology or have specific expertise in your area of research – using digestible language helps staffers to better understand and act on your insights.
- Ask for their support, just as you would on a phone call.
- Follow up to thank them for taking action, or to remind them of your request. If you initially sent an email, consider following up by phone.
- If you are using an email template provided by an advocacy organization, customize it to include your story or reason for contacting the Member. Personal emails are much more impactful!

3. Get Social

- Most Members of Congress are active on social media.
- Tag them on Twitter so they will see your post.
- Thank them for their leadership.
 - Feel free to mention their role on relevant committees as well!
- Ask for their support.
 - Be specific and candid, citing bill numbers when necessary.

4. Other Options

- If your member hosts a town hall or open office hours, show up and ask questions.
- Request a meeting with your Member or their staff. These meetings may be in-person at the member’s Washington, DC office or district office (when safe) or via phone or videoconference. Do not show up at your Member’s office without an appointment. Staff are busy and likely will not have time to meet.
- While mailing letters is also an option, email messages are preferable for time-sensitive issues, as mail has to go through additional security checks that may delay delivery.

Have questions? Did you speak with your Member’s office? Share your feedback with AICR staff at advocacy@aicr.org.