

Advocacy 101: Engaging Federal and State Legislative Offices

This guide was developed to help you identify and engage your elected officials at both the federal and state level.

Federal Representatives

Except for residents of the District of Columbia, every citizen has two senators and one representative representing them at the federal level. Senators represent an entire state and representative's particular areas of the state. To find contact information for your members of Congress, go to the following link and enter your address:

<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

The name of each representative in congress.gov is linked to additional information including their website and contact information. You should also be able to find their Washington, D.C. and local office locations in the "Contact" section. If you want an e-mail address or other contact information you may need to call the office and ask for it. It is best to briefly mention the issue you want to address and ask for the e-mail or other contact information for the staff person who covers that particular subject.

State Representatives

All states, except for Nebraska, have two legislative chambers, a Senate, and a lower house. The name for the lower house and those representatives can vary from state to state (e.g., House of Representatives, House of Delegates, Assembly).

Each citizen in a state has one Senator representing them and has 0-3 lower house representatives. The following link can direct you to State Legislature websites at the state level: <https://www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites>. The quickest way to find your elected state legislators is to click on your state and look for "Find/Contact My Legislator/Members" or something similar. Each state website is different so it may require some looking but most often it is on the home page. After clicking on 'find my legislator' you will be required to put in your street address- in part or full. Please note the district numbers for the federal and state representatives usually do not match.

It is most likely that you will only be provided with a phone number in terms of contact information. If you want an e-mail address or other contact information you will need to call the office. It is best to mention the issue you want to address and ask for an e-mail or other contact information for the staff person who covers that particular area/subject.

Other Elected Officials

If you are looking for the contact information for other elected officials such as your Mayor or County Executive, please try this link: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

Advocacy Meetings: What to Expect and How to Prepare

- You will most likely meet with a staff member of your representative. Staff are an extension of elected officials, and they are important conduits for conveying your perspective.
- Meetings generally last approximately 30 minutes. Given limited time for the meeting, it is best to prepare for and practice what you are going to say.
- You do not need to be an expert on the topic or the legislative process. Sharing your personal and authentic story and discussing why you care about an issue is impactful and can have an influence.
- Get to know your representative by reading their biography, committee assignments, and personal interests via their website and news articles.
- Have specific questions/asks prepared (e.g., sponsor and/or urge action on legislation, speak publicly on an issue, etc.). Consider customizing your message for different offices based on political position and interests.
- After the meeting send a thank you and any follow-up resources or information.
- **Be local. Be authentic. Be concise. Be courteous.**

Questions:

- What are the elected official's priorities on immigration?
- Where do you/your member stand on _____ ?
- Please support a permanent legislative solution for _____.
- Please co-sponsor the _____ Act.
- What would prevent your office from supporting _____?
- What can we do to help you/your boss to support this cause? What resources can we provide?
- What other suggestions do you have for us to advocate on behalf of this issue?