HOPA
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association

Advocacy Toolkit

SECTION 1

What is Advocacy?

ad·vo·ca·cy | noun

the act of speaking on the behalf of or in support of another person, place, or thing[1]

In the health care field, patients, parents, caregivers, and providers are natural advocates—they engage in advocacy every day on behalf of themselves, their loved ones, and their patients.

Advocacy is more than traveling to Washington, DC to meet with lawmakers; it can take a variety of forms through multiple avenues—writing an email, calling your elected official's office, attending a town hall meeting, interacting with policymakers through Facebook or Twitter, or meeting with your Members of Congress or their staff in Washington, DC or in the district. Please note the terms elected officials, policymakers and Members of Congress are used interchangeably.

Why Does Advocacy Matter?

If you do not speak up, you cannot guarantee that your views are being heard. If nothing is getting done on your concerns, it may be because Members of Congress and their staff are not aware of the situation or have not heard from someone at home. With a brief phone call or email you can educate Congress about the concerns you have or problems you want addressed. Without hearing directly from those affected by a certain issue about priority problems and recommended solutions, policymakers either will fail to address such concerns or use information and expertise provided to them by others. Some of their sources may not share your views. Policymakers must have your input so they are aware of the needs in their communities and understand fully the ramifications of changes in policy. A well-informed, articulate, passionate citizen can be a valued resource to elected officials and their staff, can raise issues of importance, and can help craft and implement necessary solutions.

Congress Wants to Hear from You

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Congress meet the evolving needs and expectations of our nation's citizens. CMF's 2020 report, *The Future of Citizen Engagement: Coronavirus, Congress, and Constituent Communications,* states that "members of Congress consider staying in touch with constituents as being the job aspect most critical to their effectiveness."

The most effective forms of advocacy all depend on constituents like you taking action; without constituents personalizing the issue and weighing in, Congressional offices are more likely to lose interest in lobbyists' messages.

You Already Have the Skills Needed

Advocacy does not require new skills; it just involves applying existing ones in a new context. If you can send an email or leave a brief phone message, you can be an advocate. It's that easy.

Technology has made voicing your opinion to Members of Congress easier than ever. It only takes a few minutes to send a short email telling your story and outlining what you think needs to be done, and it takes even less time to draft a 280-character comment on Twitter or a short Facebook comment. Members of Congress are becoming more plugged in to social media, making them more accessible to constituents through various formats.

[1] http://www.yourdictionary.com/advocacy

[2] The full report is available at: https://www.congressfoundation.org/storage/documents/CMF_Pubs/cmf_citizenengagement_covid-19.pdf

If you are ready to get more involved—or once you become more comfortable—you can continue to build relationships with the health staff in your Members' Congressional offices. Consider visiting the district or state offices of your Members at home to build relationships at the local level. Offer yourself as a resource to the offices on health care issues.

No more excuses!

We recognize that people today are extremely busy juggling multiple priorities and do not have time to add on another activity or responsibility. You probably do not remember every detail about the legislative process that you learned in high school civics. You may not follow what is happening in Washington too closely. That's fine! You can still get involved in advocacy. Below are common misconceptions or excuses about advocacy and our response as to why you can still get involved in advocacy.

I'm not an expert in these issues.

The First Amendment gives you the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

You are an expert in the health care challenges you face everyday.

Just be honest about your experiences. Personalize your message.

I'm too busy.

Sending an email takes less than five minutes and does have an impact.

To easily find your Members' websites , visit www.house.gov and www.senate.gov—all you need to do is enter your zip code. Members' websites will have an email webform you can use to send a message.

My Member doesn't care about these issues.

You never know when an issue or story will resonate with a Member or staffer.

Most Members of Congress go into public office and public service with the intention of helping society and their constituents.

I'm not a lobbyist.

Members of Congress are more likely to listen to you—Members and staff consistently rate visits from constituents higher than visits from lobbyists in impact on their decision making.

You are the expert and can provide unique insight into what occurs first-hand in today's health care system and what is needed to improve it.

My concerns are not currently being addressed by Congress.

Maybe this is because they are not aware of the issue. You can help elevate an issue to the national agenda by communicating about it with your policymakers.

If you do not address your issues of concern with your Representative and Senators, you cannot expect them to be aware of the topic and you should not rely on other people to express your same views to them.

It doesn't seem to make a difference.

It does make a difference—it doesn't matter what form you use; each office logs incoming calls, faxes, letters, and emails. Congressional offices value constituent communication and have entire processes in place for handling calls and mail.
The CMF report cited earlier found that 90% of staff surveyed said that responding to constituents is a high priority.

If you have written or called in the past, politely follow up with the office. Usually if you bring it to their attention, you can get a prompt response.

The process is intimidating.

You do not need to know all the nuances of the legislative process—you just have to know who represents you and how to contact them.

The Member of Congress or staffer will not grill you on how you think your goal should be accomplished legislatively— they just want to hear your story and what issues are important to you. It is perfectly acceptable to say you do not have the answer immediately and then follow up later.

I've already done my part—I do not need to keep contacting them.

Matters in Congress are always rapidly changing and therefore it is important that you voice your opinion whenever there is legislation or action that could impact your concerns.

Policymakers often claim the reason for their inaction on matters is that they aren't "hearing (enough) from home" on the issue. Don't give them an excuse!

My Member belongs to a different political party than I do.

Everyone consumes health care. Both parties can generally find agreement on the problems—just how to get there can be a source of contention.

Members will (usually) not ask your party affiliation or who you voted for in the last election. As a constituent and parent, patient, survivor, or provider, you are a valued voice and have every right to (politely) express your views of your political leanings.

I cannot make it to Washington to meet with my Members of Congress.

You do not need to travel to Washington—you can make an impact from your computer or phone by writing, calling, or tweeting.

Each Member of Congress also has state/district offices—meeting with the district staff at home is a great way to build relationships back in your own community.

Attend a town hall meeting or other event when the Member is back in the state/district. Seeing them at home when their schedules are less hectic is a great way to make a connection as a community member.

SECTION 2

Civics 101

For most of us, the last time we really needed to understand the process of how a bill becomes a law was in our high school civics class. No need to dust off your old textbooks; this section offers a quick refresher of the basics. It is important to be educated about the political process, but you do not need a PhD in political science to become involved and bring about change.

The United States Congress

- The U.S. Congress consists of two bodies called chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- The House has 435 members who are elected to two-year terms; the Senate has 100 members who serve six-year terms.
- National elections are held every two years (in even numbered years) on the first Tuesday of November during which all 435 House members are up for reelection, and 33 members (one third) of the Senate are up for reelection[1].

Congressional Districts

- Congressional districts are established by state legislatures and are based on population density—districts may be parts of a city, multiple cities or towns, or entire counties.
- The number of House members is set at 435 by the U.S. Constitution and the total number of House members per state (the state delegation) is based on population and determined every ten years by the census.
- Some states—Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming—do not have enough people to qualify for a representative, however, the Constitution requires that every state have at least one representative.
- All states have two Senators regardless of the population of the state.
- Every person in America (except residents of the District of Columbia) is represented in the U.S. Congress by two Senators and one Member in the House of Representatives.

Timing and Schedule

A new Congress starts every two years, beginning the January following a November federal election, and a year of which is a separate session of the same Congress. When policymakers are working in Washington, Congress is referred to as being "in session." When policymakers are in their home states and districts meeting with their constituents and conducting business locally, Congress is referred to as being "in recess" also known as "district work periods." Although the Congressional schedule is different each year, some regularly scheduled breaks occur annually. These usually coincide with special weekends, holidays, and the election cycle. Typical Congressional recesses fall during the weeks containing Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, President's Day, Passover, Christmas, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving. Additionally, Congress usually is out for recess both the week before and after Easter, as well as the entire month of August.

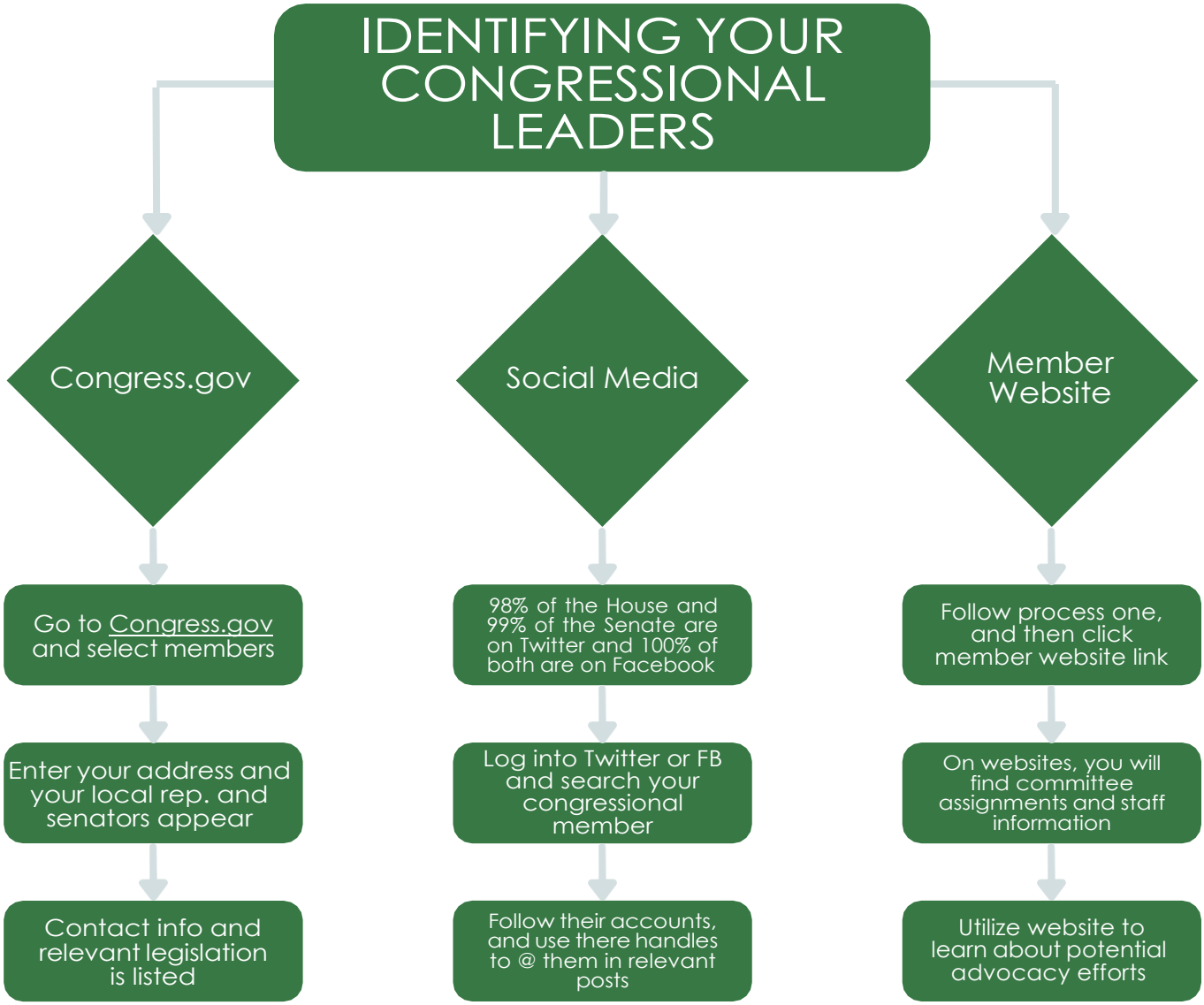
Leadership

Because the United States principally has a two-party system consisting of Democrats and Republicans, each chamber has two groups: a majority party and a minority party. The party with the greatest number of members in a chamber is considered the "majority" party, and the party with the smaller number of members is called the "minority" party. The few members of Congress who are not affiliated with a national political party and identify themselves as "Independents" typically choose a party affiliation for organizational purposes.

[1] Every six years, 34 Senate seats are up for re-election.

Finding Your Congressional Leaders

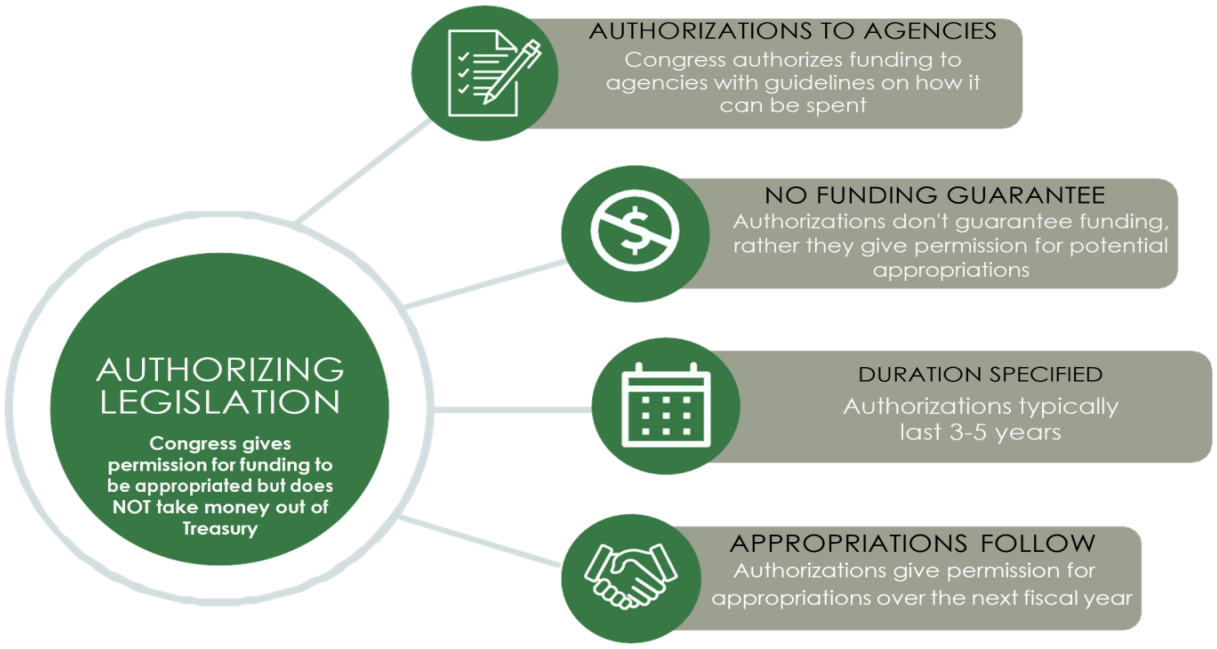
There are several easy ways to identify and engage with your congressional leaders. Below are outlined some key methods for finding out who your congressional members are, what committees they are a part of, and how to best contact their offices.

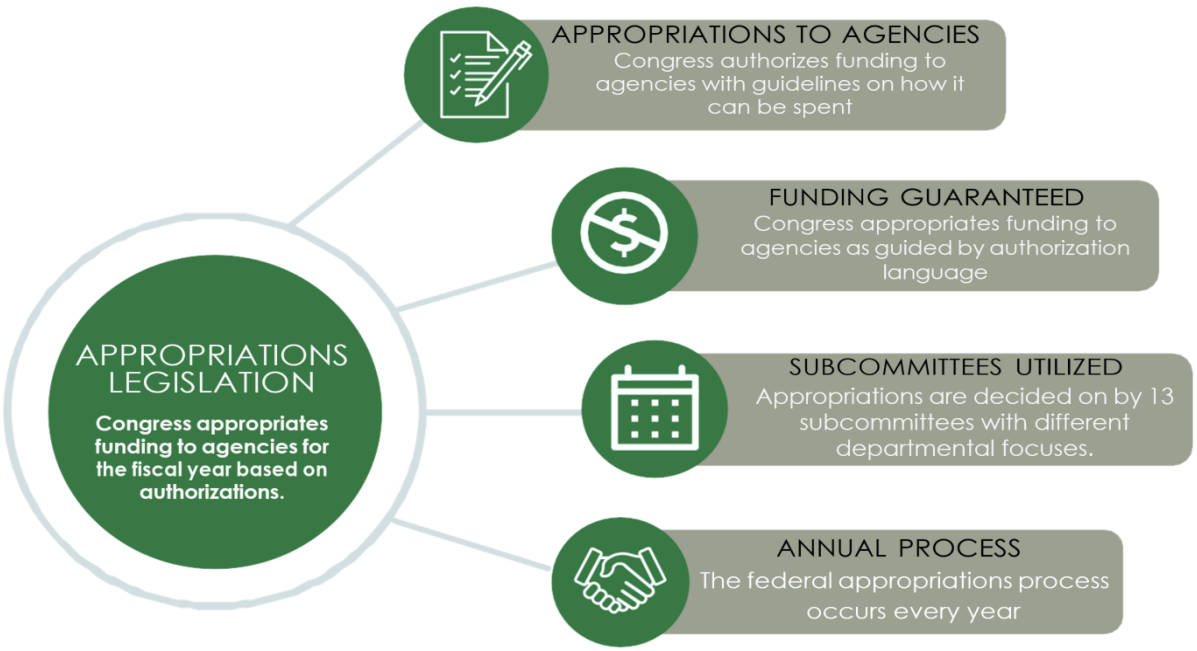


Senate Leadership Key Leaders	House Leadership Key Leaders	
Senate Majority Leader	Speaker of the House	House Minority Leader
Senate Majority Whip	House Majority Leader	House Minority Whip
Senate Minority Leader	House Majority Whip	
Senate Minority Whip	House Committee Chairs	
Senate Committee Chair	House Committee Ranking Members	
Senate Committee Ranking Member		

Key Types of Legislation

In general, there are two main types of legislation: authorizing legislation and appropriations legislation.

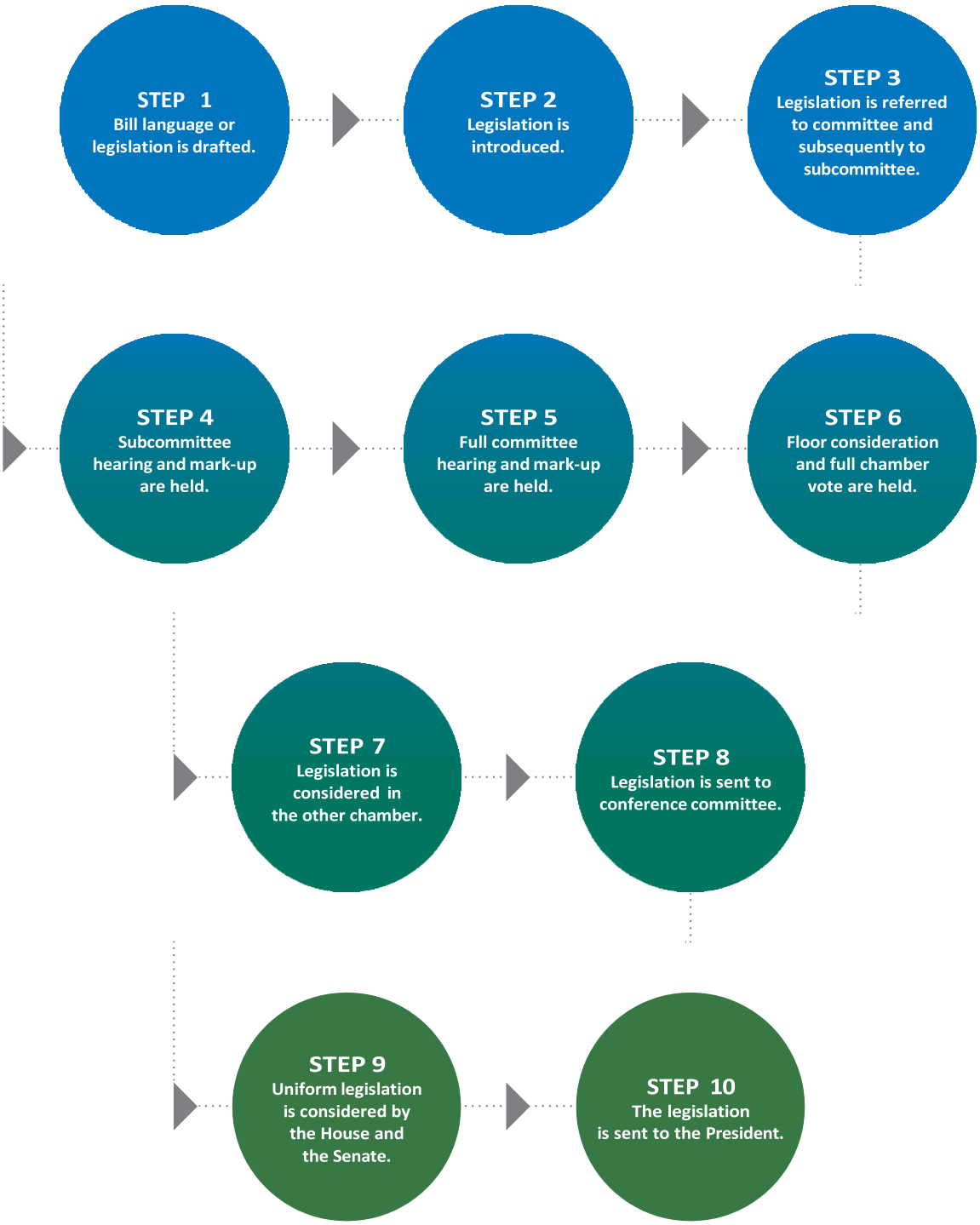




Just because funding has been authorized for a program or initiative does not mean it will be appropriated. Both steps are critical. There are numerous programs that have been created by an Act of Congress but have failed to secure appropriations for their implementation and support. In these cases it is critical for advocates to take action to help secure much-needed funding to have important programs implemented as envisioned by the enacted authorizing bill.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

The chief function of Congress is making laws and providing oversight. While Congress is in session, any member of Congress can introduce a bill. Below are the specific steps a bill goes through to become a law.



Step 1: Bill language or legislation is drafted. Anyone can draft a bill and take it to Congress for introduction. The President of the United States, a private citizen, a business or trade association, or an organization may request that a bill be prepared and may even assist in drafting the proposed legislation.

Step 2: Legislation is introduced. Bills can originate in either the House or the Senate with introduction by a sponsoring member of that chamber. They are then assigned a number. In the Senate, all bills start with "S." followed by a number (e.g., S. 1234); all bills in the House start with "H.R." (e.g., H.R. 5678). The bill's title, sponsors and cosponsors (i.e., members who join with the sponsor in official support of the measure), and introductory remarks are published in the Congressional Record, an official account of the daily proceedings of the House and Senate chambers:

Step 3: Legislation is referred to committee and subsequently to subcommittee. The Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House assign, or refer, a bill to the committee(s) with the appropriate jurisdiction. Senate and House committees have subcommittees, or smaller groups of members who focus on policy matters in particular issue areas. A bill usually is referred to the subcommittee with the most appropriate jurisdiction under the committee rules.

Step 4: Subcommittee hearing and mark-up are held. Subcommittees have the option to hold hearings on a bill and invite testimony from public and private witnesses. Individuals or organizations can make their views known by testifying before the subcommittee, submitting a written statement to be included in the official record of the hearing, or disseminating a press statement or other materials at the hearing. Once subcommittee hearings are completed, the subcommittee usually meets to "mark-up" a bill—to consider changes and amendments to the text of the legislation. The subcommittee members literally go through the measure, line-by-line, marking it up with the agreed upon changes. The members then vote on whether to report the bill favorably to the full committee. If the bill is not reported favorably, or no vote is held, the bill will likely sit in committee and not move any further through the legislative process; in other words, it dies.

Step 5: Full committee hearing and mark-up are held. Once a bill is reported to the full committee, or, if the subcommittee has abdicated its jurisdiction and deferred to the full committee, the full committee may repeat any or all of the subcommittee's procedures, which include hearings, mark-up, and a vote. Advocates again have the opportunity to testify or otherwise express their views, at the subcommittee level. If the committee votes favorably on a bill, it is reported out of committee and sent–along with the committee report–to either the full Senate or full House for consideration by all of the members in the chamber. The committee report includes the origin, purpose, content, impact, and estimated cost of the legislative proposal.

Step 6: Floor consideration and full chamber vote are held. Once the bill is reported out of committee, it is placed on the respective chamber's calendar for consideration and additional debate. Prior to reaching the House or Senate floor, members of the leadership in the chamber discuss and determine the parameters for debate (e.g., how long the debate will last, how many amendments may be offered). Once the debate parameters have been determined, the measure is brought before the chamber for consideration by all 435/100 members. At this stage, the bill may be amended, voted up or down, referred back to committee, or tabled. Should either of the two latter options occur, the bill typically dies. A majority vote (half of all members present voting in the affirmative, plus one) is necessary for the legislation to be passed, or enacted, in a chamber.

Step 7: Legislation is considered in the other chamber. After a bill is passed by the Senate or House, it is referred to the other chamber. Each chamber considers the legislation under its respective parameters and rules.

Step 8: Legislation is sent to conference committee. Often, after legislation has passed both the House and Senate, there are differences between the two bills. If differences exist between the Senate and House versions of a bill, an ad hoc "conference committee" is appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House to resolve the differences. Conference committees usually are composed of Senators and Representatives on the committees that considered the legislation and usually include the Chair and Ranking Member from that committee. Conferees meet to discuss and debate the differences between the two bills and develop uniform legislation. If conferees are unable to reach agreement, the bill could die here.

Step 9: Uniform legislation is considered by the House and the Senate. If the conferees reach agreement on the bill, the revised bill (now a uniform measure) and a conference report are sent back to the Senate and the House for a final vote. For the measure to be sent to the President, both the Senate and House must approve the compromise conference committee bill (without any modifications) by a majority vote.

Step 10: The legislation is sent to the President. If the bill has made it this far (which is not common) the bill then goes to the President for consideration. The President has four options: (1) sign the bill, which will make it a law; (2) take no action for 10 days while Congress is in session, which also will make it a law; (3) take no action either when Congress is adjourned or at the end of the second session of a Congress, resulting in a "pocket veto" which cannot be overridden by Congress and, therefore, kills the bill; or (4) veto the bill. If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to override the veto. This requires a two-thirds vote by both the Senate and House. If either chamber fails to garner a two-thirds vote, the bill is dead. If both succeed, the bill becomes law.

Thousands of legislative proposals are introduced in the Senate and House during each session of Congress. However, typically fewer than five percent of the bills introduced in Congress are enacted into federal law.[4] Bills not acted upon over the course of the two-year session of Congress die at the end of the session and must be reintroduced in the next session of Congress. Any co-sponsors of the bill must be re-collected when the measure is reintroduced.

Key Congressional Committees for Health Care Issues

Like most large organizations, Congress does much of its work by committee. Both the Senate and House have numerous standing (permanent) committees; members receive committee assignments at the start of each new Congress. Unless something unusual happens (such as the death or midterm retirement of a member), committee assignments for members last an entire Congress (two years) and members usually serve on the same committees for multiple terms. Committee assignments are made by the leadership of each respective party and the committee ratios (i.e., number of majority members to minority members) are determined by the overall make up of majority to minority members in the chamber as a whole. Each committee has two key leaders: a "chairperson," who is a member of the majority party, and a "ranking member," who is the most senior minority party member on the committee.

House and Senate

House/Senate Appropriations Committee
The committee that controls the federal "purse strings" and allocates federal funding for all government functions, from defense to biomedical research comprised of 12 subcommittees.

House/Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee (LHHS)
The specialized appropriations subcommittee that determines federal funding for the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education and all of their agencies and programs (e.g., National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality).

House

Energy and Commerce/Health Subcommittee
The authorizing committee with policy jurisdiction over the Medicaid program, Part B (outpatient services) of the Medicare program, and most non-Medicare and non-Medicaid health care issues such as biomedical research and the FDA.

Ways and Means Committee/ Health Subcommittee

The authorizing committee with policy jurisdiction over the Medicare program (shares jurisdiction over certain parts of Medicare with the House Energy and Commerce Committee).

Senate

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee
The authorizing committee with jurisdiction over most non-Medicare and non-Medicaid health care policy issues (e.g., establishing and providing oversight to various programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, policy issues related to the National Institutes of Health).

Finance Committee/Health Care Subcommittee
The authorizing committee and subcommittee with policy jurisdiction over the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

[4] Govtrack.us/congress/bills/statistics

SECTION 3

Having Your Voice Heard: Communicating with Policymakers

Many ways to communicate with policymakers exist: email, phone calls, social media, and face-to-face meetings. Advocates often wonder which method is most effective and whether all are weighed equally. Each Congressional office has its own method for handling and "counting" different constituent communications. Generally, each policymaker gets a regular report from staff regarding how many emails, phone calls, etc. have been received on various issues and what positions constituents are advocating. They also get a report on who has visited the offices and what they have requested. No matter what method you use, the most important thing is to bring your concerns and requests to your elected officials to ensure your voice is heard.

Since all offices handle constituent communication differently, you might want to call each of your Members' offices and inquire on their preferred method of constituent input.

How to Contact a Member of Congress

Generally, you can reach your Members of Congress in the following traditional ways:

- Phone through the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121
- Email your U.S. Representative through: www.house.gov
- Email your two U.S. Senators through: www.senate.gov

*For specific tips on using social media to communicate, see section 4.

Communicating with Members of Congress is one of the easiest and most effective ways for advocates to build a relationship with policymakers on issues of interest and priority. If done correctly, whether you are sending an email or a Tweet, correspondence can result in garnering support for your public policy priorities.

When communicating with policymakers, use your personal information, as your employer might not share your views on the topic. For all forms of communication, be sure to include your full name, mailing address, email address, and phone number. If you are a federal or state employee, you must use personal email and your personal computer.

Keep a hard copy of what you send, as sometimes emails or letters are lost and you may need to send a second copy to ensure a response.

Tips for interacting with Congressional offices:

- **Do not overestimate what they know.** Staff members often require outside expertise. Yet, it is important not to be condescending or use jargon. It is smart to ask staff how familiar they are with a particular subject so you can tailor your remarks to their knowledge level. Never assume they know what may be a "given" to you. Staffers can't know it all; you serve a valuable role as a resource.
- **Do not underestimate Congressional staffers.** Legislators trust them, depend on them, and act on their suggestions. Young staffers have direct access to Members of Congress and will make recommendations and help direct their positions and actions. Junior staffers often are promoted to more senior positions, so it is important to treat all staffers with respect. Keep in mind today's staff assistant could be tomorrow's chief of staff.

- **Always be polite.** When addressing correspondence to any government official, use the proper forms of address. Even if you are angry, frustrated, or disappointed, be sure to use a polite tone and appropriate language; never be threatening, confrontational, or rude. The most effective way to communicate with your Members of Congress is the way you communicate with your colleagues, neighbors, patients, family and friends—clearly, concisely, and with respect and honesty. Also, take the time to thank your Member of Congress and his/her staff for the work they do and if your member has taken an action recently with which you agree, make sure you thank him/her for the support.
- **Identify yourself and why you are writing or calling.** In the opening sentence, make your request up front and identify yourself as a registered voter, constituent, and someone who cares about this specific topic.
- **If you know the Member or staff aide,** say so at the beginning of your message; this may alert the aide reading your correspondence to give your message special attention.
- **Be concise and informed.** To the degree possible, try to keep your email or letter to a single page. If you are calling, limit your call to no more than five minutes unless the staffer asks you questions and seems engaged in the discussion. You do not need to be an expert on the issue, but you should be familiar with the basic facts and points (e.g., name of the legislation and the associated bill number and why it should be supported or opposed). If you are requesting that the policymaker cosponsor a particular measure or are writing to express disappointment at a particular vote the policymaker cast, check the list of cosponsors and the vote record first at congress.gov to ensure that you have the most up-to-date information and all of your facts are correct.
- **Personalize your message.** Remember, you are an expert in what it is like to deal with the issue about which you are communicating—and as such, you have many experiences to share. Tell your own story and explain the relevance to the issue at-hand. Although form emails and postcards are counted, they often do not elicit a response from a Congressional office. Personal stories and illustrations of local impact are more easily remembered by policymakers and their staff than statistics and generic examples. Moreover, personal stories often are what spur policymakers to action—not statistics. The reality is that our policymakers often legislate by anecdote. Your own words are best and can influence the legislator's response or vote. If you are using a template letter, take a few moments to personalize it with your own experience. Also, you should include relevant state or local information to explain how the issue affects your family and community.
- **Be focused in your request.** Although you may wish to address multiple issues, it is best to focus on only one or two issues of top priority. Your communication will be clearer and policymakers or staffers will be more receptive because you have not overwhelmed them with too many requests.
- **Offer assistance and serve as a resource.** Policymakers and their staff often are overworked and overwhelmed, so offer your assistance; they will appreciate your input and help. If you have an article of interest, be sure to include it with your correspondence, or refer to it and indicate that you would be happy to provide it should they be interested.
- **Ask for a response.** Because policymakers and their staff work for you, you have every right to (politely) ask for a response and hold them accountable if your communication goes unanswered. In fact, entire systems, processes, and staff exist in Congressional offices to respond to constituent input. It is important to note, however, that because of the volume of constituent input, it could be weeks or months before you may receive a response. Be clear in your correspondence that you are requesting a written response regarding the policymaker's views on the issue or legislation you addressed.
- **Make sure to follow-up.** If you do not receive a response in a timely fashion (a month for most offices, a bit longer for Senators from large states like California and Texas), follow up with the office by phone or with another letter (email is best) with your original note attached and indicate you have not received a response and would like one. If you receive an unsatisfactory response to your correspondence, write or call again to express appreciation for the response and be polite, yet firm, in communicating that the response was not what you anticipated or requested.

- **Keep in touch.** Make sure you stay in contact with the offices of your Members of Congress to establish a relationship and make yourself available as a local resource on your issues of interest. There are times when you and an elected official will have to "agree to disagree," but, over time, you also may find that the policymaker may be supportive and helpful on other matters.

Tips about Regular Mail Service on Capitol Hill

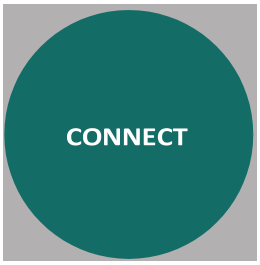
As a result of anthrax attacks in fall 2001, the U.S. Postal Service mail is handled differently by Congress. Most incoming mail is irradiated to ensure it is safe for handling. This process takes quite a while and often damages the contents. Therefore, sending written correspondence by email is advised—or make a quick phone call.

Tips about Email

Each Congressional office maintains a different policy about how email from constituents is handled. Most Members of Congress have an email form on their website. To access the form, visit the individual Member's Web page (www.house.gov or www.senate.gov), find your Member's website, and click on "contact." Many Congressional offices provide a generic, automatic acknowledgement that your email has been received but then will follow-up with either a specific email response to your issue or a letter via regular U.S. Postal Service. A handful of offices still do not respond individually to email but count the input and inform the policymaker as to how many people have written about the particular topic and what position they are advocating.

Becoming an Advocate and Trusted Resource

- Know who represents you at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Visit your elected officials' websites to find out their contact information, biographical information, and their stances on various policy issues.
- Call the offices to find out which staff member handles health care.
- Anytime you contact an office, do your homework so you reference the correct bill and have some basic background information, if needed.
- Read national and local news sources and health policy blogs to stay abreast of key issues and developments.



- Sign up for alerts from professional or advocacy organizations of which you are a member.
- Subscribe to your elected officials' email newsletters.
- Sign up for health-related organizations' newsletters to stay on what is happening in the health policy field.
- Think about your existing connections to policy in your community–whether you know someone serving in public office or know of someone who may be able to introduce you to someone who does.
- "Like" the Facebook pages for your Members of
- Congress. Follow your Members of Congress on Twitter.
- Attend a town hall meeting or other local event where you can meet your Member of Congress.

- Contact your elected officials via phone, email, or letter to voice your opinion.
- Seek local meetings by contacting the Members' schedulers or district staff or come to Washington, DC.
- Offer yourself as a resource and ask how you may be of assistance to the office.
- After the meeting or call, follow up with a thank you and any information you said you would provide.
- Check in with the staffer with relevant information, when appropriate. This will keep you in the forefront of their mind, should they need a resource on your area of concern.
- Continue to call and write the office–you never know when your issue may be relevant or resonate.

How to Meet with Your Members of Congress and Their Staff

Meetings with Members of Congress and/or their staff are terrific ways to weigh in with policymakers on issues of interest and priority. Such meetings can be conducted at Congressional offices in Washington, DC or "at-home" in district offices. If done correctly, meetings can result in garnering support for your public policy priorities. Visiting with policymakers and their staff enables you to educate them about your concerns, offer yourself as a resource, and establish a relationship that can prove mutually beneficial over time.

- **Schedule an appointment.** The first step to meet with a Member of Congress or their staff is to reach out to the office to secure the name and contact information for the appropriate staffer. Email is often the best way to send an initial meeting request. Propose a few dates/times for a meeting but remain flexible as staffers maintain a very busy schedule. Include a brief preview of your agenda for the meeting, so the staffer is prepared for the upcoming meeting. Finally, be sure to follow up on your request, additional phone calls and emails may be necessary to schedule a meeting.
- **Prepare and be on time.** Members of Congress and their staff are very busy and often have to be in more than one place at a time. Be respectful of their time by giving yourself plenty of time to go through security, find your way to the office and announce yourself to the receptionist. If you will be attending in a group, discuss with your colleagues in advance what you will be covering in the meeting. Be sure to select a primary spokesperson and determine who in the group will raise which points and requests. You should be clear about your roles and who will cover the different topics in the meeting. Open by thanking the Member/staffer for his or her time. Be sure that everyone in the group identifies herself/himself—first and last name and connection to the issue—and remember to mention that you are a voting constituent and provide some context about where you live/work in the district/state. If the Member/staffer has been helpful in the past or has taken action that you appreciate, be sure to say thank you up front. Prior to your meeting with the Member/staffer, it is best to get a sense of what matters currently are pending before the Congress, the committee(s) on which the Member sits, and any previous positions taken on the issue. For resources that list this type of information, visit www.house.gov, www.senate.gov and congress.gov.
- **Be brief and clear**, as you typically will have only 10–25 minutes for the entire meeting. Cover only a few (one to three) topics. It is best to prepare talking points beforehand to ensure that you and your colleagues "stay on message." Anticipate the kinds of questions you may be asked from both supporters and opponents. Do your best to be prepared to answer such questions in the meeting. If you do not know the answer, acknowledge the question and indicate since you are not certain of the answer that you will follow-up with them later (and remember to do so). Do not assume that the Member/staffer is very knowledgeable about the issue you are discussing—be sure to begin by asking their familiarity on the issue and, if necessary, providing them with some background. If you are not discussing a specific piece of legislation, explain that you want to provide background information or provide your perspective on an issue of importance to you and your community.
- **Provide a personal story or real-life illustration** of the problem, as personal stories are more easily remembered and more compelling than statistics. As necessary, briefly cite evidence or statistics to support your position, particularly any local, regional, or state data. However, be sure not to overwhelm the policymaker or staffer with too many statistics or references to studies (this kind of information can be in the materials you leave behind or can be sent with your thank you note). Discuss how the policy change will have an impact on your family and community. Be concise and honest about the issue(s) and the solution(s) and make clear the relevance of the issue(s) to their constituents.
- **Be polite and listen carefully** to the policymakers' or staffers' views and comments. Even if you disagree, it is important to be courteous. Be flexible and consider the opposing view. Do not be argumentative or threatening. You may agree to disagree on an issue today and find that you can agree and work together on another matter tomorrow. Much of health policy advocacy is about building and maintaining relationships.

- **Bring a concise set of materials with you to leave behind.** However, do not hand over the materials until the close of the meeting, or the Member/staffer may choose to start reading the material and only listen to you with one ear. Early in the meeting indicate that you have materials to leave on the topic(s). Make sure to leave your personal (home) contact information. If you leave a business card, make it clear that you are visiting on your own time and not representing your employer, unless you have received such clearance in advance from your employer.
- **Make sure to get a response—in a nice way.** Ask directly, and politely, for the policymaker's views and position on the issue. Do not let the policymaker or staffer distract you with other issues (gently steer the conversation back to your issue), avoid responding, or dismiss your specific concerns with a broad statement such as, "Of course, I support pediatric health." Stay on message and the topic as politely as possible. However, if the Member truly is undecided or the staffer is not familiar with the Member's position on the issue, do not force a response—reiterate your interest in knowing the Member's position, offer to answer any additional questions/provide additional information, and request a follow-up letter once a decision has been made on your request. Ask politely for a good day in the next week to 10 days for you to follow up on your request(s).
- **Report back to your advocacy organization** so others can follow-up with the office with additional information and reinforce the message(s) you delivered.
- **Follow-up with a thank you note** to the Member/staffer referencing the date of your meeting, who was in attendance, and the issues discussed. Your follow-up letter should express appreciation for the time and consideration extended to you during your meeting, reiterate your request(s), and ask for a written response from the office. Check with your advocacy organization; there may be a template thank you letter available for you to use.

Who's Who in a Congressional Office

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Chief of Staff (CoS): Second highest ranking person in the office after the Member; responsible for overall office operations and evaluating political outcome of various legislative actions.

Scheduler: Responsible for apportioning the Member's time between hearings, meetings, events, and other activities and making any necessary travel arrangements.

Staff Assistant: Junior staff member usually responsible for answering the phones. Keep in mind that today's staff assistant can be tomorrow's Chief of Staff.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Legislative Director (LD): Monitors the legislative schedule, works with the CoS to develop priorities, advises on legislation, develops legislation, and oversees the legislative staff.

Legislative Assistant (LA): Offices have multiple LAs who each handle a portfolio of issues; LAs take meetings, draft legislation, and work with the LD to advise the Member on legislation.

Legislative Correspondent (LC): LCs read and draft responses to constituent mail; LCs may also assist LAs with meetings, when necessary.

STATE/DISTRICT STAFF

State/District Director: The State or District Director often serves as the Member's proxy at home - attending events, coordinating events while the Member is home, and acting as a liaison to the community.

Community Representative: Some offices may also have mid-level staff in the district office that work with the state or district director in representing the Member at home.

Caseworker: Staff, often in the state, but sometimes in DC, that act as a liaison between constituents and federal agencies and to assist with resolving constituent problems (passports, Veteran benefits, etc.).

COMMITTEE STAFF

Each Committee also has staff that specialize in issues related to the Committee's specific jurisdiction. These staff members may work generally for the Committee or may be assigned to a specific Committee member's office. For example, the HELP Committee Chair's health LA is from the staff of the HELP Committee.

Other Tips

When visiting Capitol Hill or a federal building in which your Member of Congress maintains an office, you could encounter long lines to get through security. While security is similar to that of airports (bags and all contents from your pockets must be put through the X-ray machines and you must step through a metal detector), you are allowed liquids and you will not need to show your driver's license (unless entering the Capitol Building). Allow yourself plenty of time to get through security.

The Congressional schedule is very fluid and Members and staffers often are pulled away for various events and activities that are not known in advance (*e.g.* last minute press conference, meeting with the Chairman of a committee the Member serves on, etc.) and, as such, your meeting could be delayed or bumped (the Member may not be available and you instead may meet with staff). Bottom line—be flexible. Also, space on Capitol Hill is at a premium so your meeting could occur in the reception area in the office, in the hallway, or downstairs in the coffee shop. Do not take any last-minute meeting changes personally and make sure you always are gracious and flexible.

Also, don't forget your camera! Even if you don't meet with the Member, you never know who you might run into in the elevator!

SECTION 4

How to Use Social Media for Advocacy

Social media can sound scary—putting your thoughts out there on the internet for everyone to see. But if done correctly, it is a very powerful tool in your advocacy tool kit. Ninety-eight percent of all Congressional offices use some form of social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, etc.). A recent study funded by the Library of Congress found that most Members of Congress use social media to share their positions—more so than for campaign or public relations purposes.[5] Even if you do not feel comfortable engaging in social media yourself, simply "following" your Members on Twitter or "liking" them on Facebook will give you insight into your Members' priorities and activities.

Here are some tips for successful use of social media for advocacy purposes:

1. **Keep it civil and clean.** The internet can be a hateful place, filled with vitriol—and nothing brings this out more than politics. Make sure you do not play a part in this, either by starting it or engaging in it. There is nothing to be gained from these types of conversations and if you participate in them, it likely will muddle your overall message and make you a persona non grata. Your goal is building relationships and being trusted and respected.

2. **Would you want your grandmother to see it?** Before you post anything on social media, a good rule of thumb is would you want your grandmother to see it? Particularly if you are using social media for advocacy on a topic important to you, you want to remain professional and appropriate.

3. **Remember, social media is a two-way street.** Use social media to engage with others—both your Members of Congress and others who care about your issue(s). If you are using social media just to push out your message, you are not using it to its fullest potential. Reply to interesting tweets; comment on Facebook posts, keeping in mind tips 1 & 2. You cannot expand your social media reach without getting involved.

4. **Include social media in all your advocacy activities.** Social media should be built into all advocacy activity these days. If you are planning a Capitol Hill advocacy day, make sure to include the Member's Twitter handle on the schedule so your advocates can Tweet a thank you or a photo after the meeting. If you are attending a Hill Day, announce it on Facebook so any friends who might be interested also can sign up. For any "at home" advocacy days, create a hashtag that anyone can use. (#supportbiomedicalresearch)

5. **Don't use all 280 characters.** Twitter only allows a user up to 280 characters per Tweet. It is important to do your best not to use all 280 characters in your Tweet. If you do, your followers will not be able to add comments when they Retweet you, or they will have to delete part of your original Tweet to add comments.

6. **A picture is worth some of your 280 characters.** Including pictures in your Tweets or on Facebook helps tell part of the story—but the tradeoff is that photos take up characters. When you have pictures with policymakers or of a special event, do include the photos but also be sure to give context to who is in the picture (the elected official is most important to name and list using his/her Twitter handle) using the remaining characters.

7. **Don't change your avatar (avi) frequently.** People get used to seeing your "avi" (photo or logo) and if you change it frequently you may unintentionally "lose" people as they scroll through their Twitter or Facebook feed looking for your "old" avi. Think of your "avi" as your brand—a visual that people associate with your Tweets or Facebook posts. Pick one and stick with it as long as you can.

8. **Follow, follow, follow.** The more people you follow on Twitter, the more people will follow you. (The more people that follow you, the wider your social media reach will be and your messages read) Make sure you follow your Congressional champions, as well as the leaders from both parties. Follow the advocacy organization(s) for your issue and retweet anything interesting to your followers.

9. **Thank and express disappointment.** As much as we use social media—along with traditional forms of communication—to advocate for our issues, we need to use them to thank Members for their votes, positions, advocacy on behalf of issues important to us. Likewise, use social media as a platform to let members know when you wish they would have acted differently.

[5] LBJ School of Public Affairs "Tweetocracy: How & Why Congress Uses Social Media"

Twitter Basics

@ = Mentions/Replies: A mention is any Twitter update that contains "@username" anywhere in the body of the Tweet. An @reply is any update posted by clicking the Reply button on a Tweet. Any Tweet that is an @reply to you begins with your username.

 # = Hashtag: A word or a phrase prefixed with the # symbol. A hashtag is simply a way for people to search for Tweets that have a common topic and to begin a conversation. (#supportbiomedicalresearch)

RT = Retweet: A re-posting of someone else's Tweet. Twitter's retweet feature helps you and others quickly share a Tweet with all your followers.

MT = Modified Tweet: When making any changes to a Tweet that is not your own, it is best to change the RT (automatically inserted by Twitter) to a modified Tweet. By using MT, the Twitter community will know you made a few changes to the original Tweet and allow you to give "credit" to the original author.

DM = Direct Message: A private message sent to or from one of your followers. You can only send a direct message to a user who is following you; you can only receive direct messages from users you follow.

SECTION 5

Conclusion

Advocacy is an integral part of our political process, and your active participation is essential to ensuring that your priorities are received and addressed by policymakers from your perspective. Unless you communicate with policymakers about key issues of concern, both legislative and regulatory proposals will be crafted and enacted without the benefit of your expertise and perspective. Policymakers and their staff expect, welcome, and appreciate input from constituents. This Advocacy Toolkit provides all the tools necessary for you to be an effective advocate at the national, state, and local level. We thank you for taking the time to review and use this resource and encourage you to involve your colleagues and others in your efforts.

Good luck in your advocacy endeavors; do not forget to have fun!

SECTION 6

An Advocate's Dictionary

A

Act
Legislation (or a bill) that has been passed by both the House and the Senate and then signed by the President.

Administration—White House
The Executive Branch under a particular president, "The Obama Administration"

Advocacy
Advocacy is defined as the support or defense of a cause and the act of pleading on behalf of another person.

Amendment
A proposal to change or an actual change to a piece of legislation or existing law

Appropriations Bill

Provides the legal authority needed to spend or obligate U.S. funds from the Treasury. There are up to 12 annual individual appropriations bills, which together fund the entire federal government, and must all be enacted prior to the start of a new fiscal year, designated as October 1.

Authorization Bill
Provides the authority for a program or agency to exist and determines its policy. It also can recommend spending levels to carry out the defined policy or program, but these levels are not binding. Authorizations may be annual, multi-year, or permanent. Expiring programs generally require re-authorizations. House and Senate rules require that authorization be in place before final funding decisions are made.

B

Bill
A legislative proposal that becomes law if it passes both the House and Senate in identical fashion and receives Presidential approval. Bills are introduced as "HR" in the House, and "S" in the Senate with consecutive numbering in each respective chamber. Besides bills, joint resolutions are the only other type of legislation that becomes law [HJ Res. or SJ Res.].

Budget Authority
Authority provided by law for the Federal Government to enter into obligations that will result in budget outlays.

Budget Outlay
The actual money spent by the Federal government when they send out Social Security Checks, pay its workers, build new roads or any other activity that requires the government to spend money.

Budget Resolution
The annual decision made by Congress to set spending and revenue levels, providing a voluntary framework within which Congress agrees to limit subsequent funding bills. It also may instruct committees to change current law in order to reduce spending.

C

Capitol Hill
The area encompassing the U.S. Capitol, and the House and Senate office buildings (aka, the Hill).

Casework
Intermediary work, primarily handled in the district/state offices, performed by Members of Congress for constituents who may have problems, or "cases," with the federal government (e.g., Medicare, Social Security).

Caucus
An informal group of Members sharing an interest in the same policy issues (e.g. the House Kidney Caucus).

CBO Score
"Score" or "CBO Score" generally refers to a cost estimate conducted by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

Chairman
The Presiding Officer of a committee and/or a subcommittee—a Member of the majority party in the chamber.

Chamber
"Chamber" refers to the two bodies that make up Congress, the House and Senate.

Chief of Staff

The second highest ranking person in the office after the Member; responsible for overall office operations and evaluating political outcomes of various legislative actions.

Christmas Tree
A Christmas Tree bill is used to describe a bill that is one of the few legislative vehicles that might move and actually pass in Congress at a particular time (usually before the end of the year or a congressional recess) to which various and numerous Members of Congress try to attach their favored piece of legislation. These attached pieces of legislation are akin to ornaments on the Christmas tree.

Cloture
The formal Senate procedure used to end a filibuster. It can take up to three days and requires 60 votes. If cloture wins, 30 additional hours of debate are allowed prior to voting, but they are rarely used. If cloture fails, debate would continue without limits. Instead, the bill is usually set aside.

Colloquy
A pre-scripted floor dialogue between the chairman of a committee and another Member of Congress.

Committee of the Whole
The entire House meeting in the form of a committee.

Committee Report
A formal report prepared by a House or Senate Committee to explain the content of a bill being reported. Committee Reports are optional in the Senate, but mandatory in the House. They contain minority and majority views of Committee Members, a cost impact analysis, and compare the bill to current law.

Companion Bill
A companion bill is similar or may be identical to one introduced in the other house of Congress.

Concurrent Resolution
Used to take action or express opinion on behalf of both the House and Senate; it does not make or become law. It fixes Congressional adjournment dates and sets the annual Congressional budget.

Conferee
A Member of Congress named to represent his/her chamber in negotiations with the other chamber. Formally known as "managers," the conferees meet in conference committee to negotiate a compromise between the House and Senate versions of a bill.

Conference
A formal meeting or series of meetings, between House and Senate members to reconcile differences between House and Senate passed measures. A Conference is held by a Conference Committee consisting of both Democrats and Republicans (referred to as "conferees" or "managers") who sit on the committees with jurisdiction over the legislation that needs to be reconciled into a single uniform measure.

Conference Committee
A temporary panel of House and Senate negotiators. A conference committee is created to resolve differences between versions of similar House and Senate bills.

Conference Report
Refers to the final compromise version of a bill proposed by House and Senate conferees. It also contains the "statement of managers," a section-by-section explanation of the final agreement.

Congressional Budget Office (CBO)
The agency that, at the request of Congress, conducts non-partisan economic analysis and research and evaluates proposed bills and amendments, assessing their potential cost.

Congressional District
A geographical area within a state from which a Member of the House of Representatives is elected and s/he represents in Congress. There are 435 Congressional districts.

Congressional Record
A daily account of House and Senate floor debate, votes and Members' remarks. It is available for free online at www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord.

Congressional Research Service (CRS)
The Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. CRS responds to requests for general information and issue analysis only from Members, Committees, or Congressional staff.

Cosponsor
A Member who formally adds his/her name as a supporter to another Member's bill. An "original" or "initial" cosponsor is one who was listed at the time of the bill's introduction, not added on later.

Continuing Resolution
A short-term or long-term spending bill that funds the federal government after September 30 until a permanent appropriations measure is enacted.

D

Dear Colleague
A letter sent by one or more Members of Congress to fellow Members. "Dear Colleague" letters can describe a new bill and ask for cosponsors, may ask for a Member's vote for or against a particular issue, or request fellow Members' support for another priority such as increasing funding for a specific research program. Appropriations "Dear Colleague" letters usually request Members to show support by signing onto to a joint letter to be sent to Appropriations Committee leaders asking for a particular funding amount for a specific program of interest.

Debt
The debt is total amount owed by the Treasury Department, the accumulation of the yearly Federal deficits.

Delegate
A Member of the House from Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, or Washington, D.C. The Constitution prohibits delegates from voting on the House floor, but permits them to vote in Committee.

Deficit
The amount which budget outlays exceed the government's revenue for the year. The deficit is a yearly figure, whereas debt is the total accumulation of deficits.

Discretionary Spending
Refers to optional spending set by the annual appropriation levels and decided by Congress. This spending is in contrast to entitlement programs (e.g. Medicare and Medicaid) for which funding is mandatory. Funding for the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is considered discretionary spending and annual funding is determined in each appropriations cycle.

District Work Period
The time set for Members to work at-home away from Washington, D.C. during which the chamber is not in session (aka, recess).

E

Earmarks
Specific provisions detailing–or setting aside–funding for a particular program or purpose. Expenditures are earmarked in appropriations bills or the accompanying reports. Congress currently has a self-imposed ban on earmarks.

Entitlement Program
Programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security where recipients have a legal right to benefits. Funding levels are set automatically by the number of eligible recipients, not at the discretion of Congress.

Executive Branch
One of the three branches of government, charged with "executing the law". The President oversees the executive branch, and it is made up of numerous agencies and departments including Health and Human Services.

Executive Order
A Presidential directive with the force of law that does not need Congressional approval.

F

Filibuster
The term used for an extended debate in the Senate that prevents a vote. Senate rules contain no motion to force a vote. A vote occurs only once debate ends by cloture.

Fiscal Year
The federal government's budget year begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th. For example, fiscal year 2013 began on October 1st, 2012 and will end on September 30th, 2013.

Floor Consideration
When a bill is being considered by the entire House or Senate, it is brought to the Floor. Party leaders can then determine rules for debate, and individual members can comment or attempt to amend the bill.

Free-Standing Bill
Refers to a coherent bill, dealing with a single issue. (aka, stand alone bill)

G

GAO
The Government Accountability Office, which audits and studies federal agencies and programs for Congress.

Germane
The technical Congressional term for "relevant." Amendments are said to be germane or non-germane to a bill.

GOP
Stands for "Grand Old Party," used to refer to the Republican party.

GPO
The Government Printing Office, which prints laws, bills, committee reports, etc. GPO sells these documents to the public and distributes an allotted number of them free to Members of Congress.

H

Hearing
A formal meeting of a committee or subcommittee to review legislation or explore a topic. Hearings also may be called to investigate a matter or conduct oversight of existing programs. Witnesses are called to deliver testimony and answer questions in all three types of hearings.

J

Joint Resolutions
Measures used to appropriate funding, pose constitutional amendments, or fix technical errors. Joint resolutions become public law if adopted by both the House and Senate and, where relevant, approved by the President. In terms of Constitutional amendments, they must be approved by three-fourths of the states.

L

Lame Duck
The period of time that Congress meets after an election but before Congress adjourns, in which Members of Congress who have not been re-elected still cast votes. Lame duck usually occurs in November and December of an election year.

Legislative Assistant
Offices have multiple LAs who each handle a portfolio of issues; LAs take meetings, draft legislation, and work with the LD to advise the Member on legislation.

Legislative Calendar
Congress' calendar designating days when they are in DC for legislative business and District Work Periods.

Legislative Day
Any day on which the House or Senate meets. It runs until the next recess or adjournment.

Legislative Director
Monitors the legislative schedule, work with the CoS to develop priorities, advises on legislation, develops legislation, and oversees the legislative staff.

M

Majority Leader
The Majority Leader is elected by his/her party members in the House or Senate to lead them, to promote passage of the party's issue priorities, and to coordinate legislative efforts with the Minority Leader, the other chamber, and the White House.

Manager's Amendment
A package of numerous individual amendments agreed to by both majority and minority sides in advance of floor consideration.

Mandatory Spending
Such required funding that accounts for nearly two-thirds of the federal budget. These funds are not controlled by annual decision of Congress but are automatically obliged by virtue of previously-enacted laws. For example, as Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, and social security are entitlement programs, funding for them all falls under mandatory spending.

Mark-up
Refers to the meeting of a Committee held to review the text of a bill before reporting it out to the full chamber for consideration. Committee Members offer and vote on proposed changes (amendments) to the bill's language. Most mark-ups end with a vote to send the revised version of the bill forward to the floor (full chamber) for final consideration and approval.

Minority Leader
The Minority Leader is elected by his/her party members in the House or Senate to lead them, to promote passage of the party's issue priorities, and to coordinate legislative efforts with the Majority Leader, the other chamber, and the White House.

Motion to Instruct Conferees
A motion to instruct conferees, if adopted, asks House or Senate conferees to take a certain negotiating position.

Motion to Proceed
A motion to proceed seeks to bring a bill to the Senate floor for debate and amendment.

Motion to Recommit
A motion to recommit returns a bill from the floor of the full chamber to committee, in effect killing it. However, a motion to recommit with instructions is a last opportunity to amend the bill.

Motion to Reconsider
A motion to reconsider, if adopted within two days of a vote in the House [or three days in the Senate], requires the original vote be held again before the full chamber.

Motion to Strike
A motion to strike is a type of amendment that seeks to delete language from a bill.

Motion to Table
A motion to table, if adopted, permanently kills the pending matter. It also ends any further floor debate.

Motion to Waive the Budget Act
If adopted, this motion temporarily sets aside a specific provision of the Congressional Budget Act. Without a waiver, the CBA provision would cause the pending amendment to fall on a point of order (defined below). With a waiver, the amendment may be considered even though it violates the Congressional Budget Act. A minimum of 60 votes are required for adoption.

O

Off-Budget
Describes programs not counted toward budget limits due to provisions in current law. For example, Social Security trust funds and the United States Postal Service are off-budget programs.

Offset
Spending cuts or revenue increases put into a bill to "offset" any spending increases. Used to prevent new bills from raising the deficit.

OMB
The Office of Management and Budget is the federal agency that prepares the President's budget submission to Congress and develops associated economic forecasts.

Omnibus Bill
A large measure that packages together several bills into one or combines diverse subjects into a single bill. Examples are reconciliation bills and combined appropriations bills.

Override
The vote taken to pass a bill again, after it has been vetoed by the President. It takes a two-thirds vote in each chamber, or 290 in the House and 67 in the Senate, if all are present and voting. If the veto is overridden in both chambers, the bill becomes law despite the objection of the President.

Outlays
The actual payments made out of the U.S. Treasury to fulfill spending obligations.

Oversight
The term used for Congressional review inquiry of federal agencies, government programs and performance.

P

Payfor
A funding source used to pay for new government spending, usually comprised of reductions to, or elimination of, other government programs. Also known as an "offset."

Paygo
The pay-as-you-go rule compels new spending or tax changes to not add to the federal deficit.

Pocket Veto
A veto that occurs when the President fails to sign a bill within the ten days allowed by the Constitution. For a pocket veto to take effect, Congress must be adjourned.

Point of Order
A point of order is made during floor proceedings to assert that the rules of procedure are being violated. A point of order halts proceedings while the presiding officer rules on whether or not it is valid. In the Senate, the presiding officer's ruling may be appealed by any Senator. The Senate votes on the appeal and the chair has been frequently overturned. In the House tradition, appeals are also possible, but rarely entered and almost never succeed.

President Pro Tempore
The highest-ranking Senator from the Majority party, traditionally the Senator with the most seniority. The President Pro Tempore presides over the Senate in the absence of the Vice President, who has constitutionally authority over the body.

President's Budget
The budget document sent to Congress each year by the Administration, usually the first week of February. It estimates federal receipts and spending, and recommends appropriation levels and outlines the Administration's priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

Presiding Officer
Synonymous with Chairman, the Presiding Officer maintains legislative order and decorum during House or Senate debates, hearings or votes.

Pro Forma Session
A daily meeting of the House or Senate during which no votes are held and no legislative business is conducted. Members still can become cosponsors during a pro forma session.

Q

Quorum—House
The number of House (218) Members who must be present before business may be conducted.

Quorum—Senate
The number of Senators (51) who must be present before business may be conducted.

Quorum Call—House
A quorum call in the House seeks to bring a majority of Members to the floor to record their presence.

Quorum Call—Senate
A quorum call in the Senate may have more than one purpose. It is most often used to delay floor proceedings.

R

Ranking Member/Ranking Minority Member
The Member of the minority party on a committee and/or subcommittee next in seniority after the chairman (highest ranking Member of the minority party).

Recess
A temporary break in the session for a short period of time within the same day. Recess also refers to longer breaks over several days, such as holiday periods, which are approved by vote. Senators and Representatives usually travel home during recess to conduct business with local constituents.

Recorded Vote
A recorded vote is a specific type of vote held on the record. It links the name of each Member with his/her voting position.

Reconciliation Bill
Makes the changes in law required to meet pre-set spending and revenue levels. The bill comes forward when a prior budget resolution passed by the House and Senate calls for it. The budget committee packages the bills produced by all the other committees into one master omnibus bill.

Regular Order
Regular order refers to the regular rules of procedure in the chamber. In the Senate, the term also may refer to the daily order of business.

Report
A written document by a Committee to accompany the legislation that has been voted out.

Reporting Out
The vote of a committee to send a bill to the full House or Senate for review.

Rider
An amendment attached to a bill, usually unrelated to the subject of the underlying bill.

Roll Call Vote
A vote held on the record. The name of the Member and his/her voting position are noted together.

S

Sense of the House
Legislative language that offers the opinion of the House, but does not make law.

Sense of the Senate
Legislative language that offers the opinion of the Senate but does not make law.

Sine Die Adjournment
The end of a Congressional session or an entire Congress.

Special Interest (Group)
Any group of people organized around a specific shared interest (e.g. nephrology nursing advocates, environmentalists, a specific industry (such as oil or tobacco), an ethnic community, an individual corporation, or a professional trade association, like trial lawyers or insurance agents).

Sponsor
Member or Members who propose and support legislation.

Senior Senator/Junior Senator
Senior Senator/Junior Senator describes the seniority relationship between two Senators from the same state, with the senior Senator serving in the Senate longer than the junior Senator.

Staff Assistant
Junior staff member usually responsible for answering the phones. Keep in mind that today's staff assistant could be tomorrow's Chief of Staff.

State of the Union
The President's State of the Union Speech defines his view of national priorities and needed legislation. The Constitution requires that the President report to Congress on the State of the Union "from time to time."

Suspension of the Rules
(Suspension Calendar)
A special procedure used in the House to speed up action by setting aside the regular rules. Bills brought up under this process are debated for 40 minutes, may not be amended and require a two-thirds vote for approval.

T

Time Agreement
A voluntary pact among Senators to limit debate time on a bill or on an amendment.

U

Unanimous Consent
Unanimous consent means that all Members on the floor agree, or consent, to a pending request.

Unfunded Mandate
A requirement imposed by Congress on state or local governments without the provision of associated funding to pay for it.

Up or Down Vote
A direct vote on the substance of an amendment or bill sometimes referred to as a "clean vote" or "straight up or down." Members simply vote "yea" or "nay" on it.

V

Veto-Proof
Votes with a margin sufficient to override a Presidential veto, should it occur. Since a two-thirds vote is required to override, a veto-proof majority is 290 votes in the House and 67 votes in the Senate.

Voice Vote
During a voice vote Members say "aye" aloud as a group, followed by the group saying "no." No names are recorded.

W

Whip
A Member elected by his/her party to count potential votes and promote party unity in voting. The House Majority Whip is the third ranking leadership position in his/her party and the House Minority Whip ranks second. The Senate Majority and Minority Whip are the second ranking leadership position in their respective party.

Y

Yeas & Nays—House
A specific type of recorded vote. It requires a seconding of the Motion of one-fifth of those present to take place. The vote, if ordered, places members' positions on record. It is usually held by electronic device.

Yeas & Nays—Senate
The term for a roll-call vote. Members call out "yea" or "nay" when their last name is called or signal the clerk with a "thumbs" up or down.