

How to Make a Meaningful Impact

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Elected officials depend on hearing from constituents and subject matter experts to shape their policy decisions. Their main challenge is cutting through the noise and sorting the information once received. So, we have put together some best practices to clearly and concisely get your message to the right people.

It is important to remember some basic information about advocacy. First, be as concise and direct as possible. Getting your ask across quickly and using as many specifics as possible will help them navigate their many issues. It is also important to remember to identify yourself as a constituent and legal professional.

Some of the best ways to reach your Members of Congress include some of the same ways you communicate with anyone, including email, phone calls, and posting on social media. There are also other ways like posting an op-ed or attending a town hall that can be just as effective. Of course, nothing replaces human contact, so the best way to be heard remains a face-to-face meeting either on Zoom, their office in Washington, or their district offices back home. Below you will find some best practices on how to effectively reach and persuade your elected officials.

Tips On Sending E-Mails to a Member of Congress

Thanks to our ABA Action Center, sending an email directly to your elected officials has never been easier. We create pre-formatted that are guaranteed to pass the Congressional Firewalls emails and post them to the Action Center. All you need to do is either click send or customize them with your own perspective for a more meaningful message.

Key Tip: With an e-mail message to a legislator, it is very important to include your street address in the e-mail. This is the only way a legislator has of knowing that you are a constituent. In most instances, e-mails without street addresses may not even receive a response. You will notice that when you send an email from our website, your street address is automatically included in the email.

STEP 1:

If this is your first time sending an email through our system, fill in your basic information so we can

automatically match you with your elected officials. This information will be safely saved, so you do not have to enter it again.

STEP 2:

Read through the pre-written email, and think about how this issue affects you. *Customizing the message makes it far more impactful, but if you do not have the time or do not have a significant understanding of the issue, feel free to send the message as is.

STEP 3:

If you would like to customize the letter, start with the subject line. This is the first impression the office will see, so make sure to include the approval/opposition of the topic, and try to have the bill number or name included if possible.

STEP 4:

Feel free to edit the text as much as you would like, and use your best judgment on what to change. Having said that, always be sure to:

1

Start off by identifying yourself as a constituent and an attorney. If it is relevant, feel free to specify which type of law you practice.

2

Be concise. The staff in charge of each industry are extremely busy. In the first paragraph, make sure to list the bill number or name, and clearly state your position.

3

Also, clearly state what you would like the elected official to do. If you would like to urge them to support a bill, say so. If you want them to co-sponsor a resolution, ask.

4

The second paragraph is to describe the issue and give your perspective. Try to get across how this will affect your day-to-day life and business.

5

Wrap up the email with the clear request again.

6 Thank them for their time and attention.

7 Bonus Points: If you would like, offer to be a resource for them moving forward. They need experts they can call to weigh how policy will affect the people they were elected to represent.

8 Click send!

Tips On Writing to a Member of Congress

In general, the same guidelines for writing an e-mail apply to writing letters.

A letter or fax is still one of the more widely used methods of communicating with a legislator's office. Writing a letter gives you, as a constituent, the opportunity to express and defend your position on an issue. Your letter will be most effective if you follow a few simple guidelines:

- State your purpose for writing in the first line or first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly (e.g., House bills are named "H. R. ##" and Senate bills are named "S. ##").
- Be courteous, to the point, and include key information, using examples to support your position.
- Address only one issue in each letter and, if possible, keep the letter to one page.

Addressing correspondence to a federal legislator:

⇒ To a Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

(see the [Find Your Legislator](#) section to find your Legislator)

⇒ To a Representative:

The Honorable (full name)

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

(see the [Find Your Legislator](#) section to find your Legislator)

⇒ **Exception:** Note that when writing to the Chair of a committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address your letter as follows:

"Dear Mr. Chairman:" or "Dear Madam Chairwoman:" or "Dear Madam Speaker:"

Addressing correspondence to a state legislator:

⇒ **To a State Senator:**

The Honorable (full name)

Louisiana Senate

(see the [Find Your Legislator](#) section to find your Legislator)

Dear Senator (last name):

⇒ **To a State Representative:**

The Honorable (full name)

Louisiana House of Representatives

(see the [Find Your Legislator](#) section to find your Legislator)

Dear Representative (last name):

Tips On Telephoning a Member of Congress

A telephone call is one of the most widely used methods of communicating with a legislator's office.

- To find the phone number for your state legislator or member(s) of Congress, visit the [Find Your Legislator](#) section of the website. For members of Congress, you may also call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121) and ask to be connected with your Senator's or Representative's office.

- Remember that a staff member, not the Member of Congress, takes telephone calls. Ask to speak with the staff member who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.
- After identifying yourself, tell the staff member you would like to leave a brief message, such as: "Please tell Senator/Representative (last name) that I support/oppose (issue or bill number)."
- You may also want to state the reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your Senator's or Representative's position on the issue or bill. You may also request a written response to your call.
- Always be polite and courteous, and make sure to thank them for their time.

Tips on Meeting With Your Members of Congress

The best way to advocate will always be through personal contact with your elected officials. Though, since the pandemic started, it could never be easier to meet with your Members of Congress on Zoom or in their district offices! Another great way to meet with your elected officials is during [ABA Day](#).

It is always important to prepare for these meetings and schedule them at the appropriate time. The Congressional Management Foundation asked congressional offices and the consensus is clear, 4-6 weeks before your meeting is the right amount of lead time. It is also important to be punctual and ready for any question that may arise about your issue. That is why it is best to have a clear ask using the exact bill number and name along with the exact thing you would like them to do (co-sponsor a bill, introduce a piece of legislation, etc.). It is also important to follow up after your meeting to circle back with any requested information, thank them for their time, and further build the relationship. For more information on the perfect visit, see [here](#).

Other Best Practices On How You Can Reach Out

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Master Your Congressional Meetings

Nothing moves the needle in a more meaningful than a face-to-face with a legislator. Use these tools to learn before you go, and make the most of your next Congressional interaction.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Perfect Personal Visit

Learn the ins and outs of congressional communication so you can get the most out of your meeting with an elected official.



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Social Media Deep Dive

Dive deeper into how you can use social media to shape the world around you.



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Cell Phone Lobbying

Use this walkthrough to learn how to effectively lobby your elected officials right from your phone.



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Social Media Resources

Use these images and suggested posts to take your messages to the next level.



The advertisement features a blue background with a white car on the right. On the left, the Thrifty Car Rental logo is displayed next to the ABA logo. A white button with the text 'BOOK NOW' is positioned in the center. To the right of the button, the text reads 'Adventure for less this summer.' followed by 'ABA Members save on car rentals.' in a smaller font.