

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

Advocacy Toolkit

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Understanding the Legislative Process
{Federal Government Contact Information}

- To learn who your Representative is, visit <http://www.house.gov> and type in your zip code.
- To learn who your Senators are, visit <http://www.senate.gov> and choose your state.
- If you do not have access to the internet, call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

To contact your Senator, visit <http://www.senate.gov>

or write to

The Honorable (First Name_Last Name)

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard

(202) 224-3121

To contact your Representative, visit <http://www.house.gov>

or write to

The Honorable (First Name_Last Name)

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard

(202) 224-3121

To contact the White House, visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov>

or write to

President (First Name_Last Name)

1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW

Washington, DC 20500

or call the White House Switchboard

(202) 456-1414

Understanding the Legislative Process {Capitol Hill 101}

- ✓ A Congress lasts two years, and is divided into two sessions, each of which is a year in length. For example, the first session of the 113th Congress began in January 2013, and the second session of the 113th Congress began in January 2014. The first session of the 113th Congress will begin in January 2015 and so forth.
- ✓ Congress is made up of two chambers, or Houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives.

United States Senate

- ⇒ The Senate is composed of 100 Members, two from each state regardless of population or area.
- ⇒ Senators serve six year terms, and one-third of the Senate is elected every second year. Senators are split into three classes—I, II, III. For example, Class I Senators are up for reelection in 2016; Class II Senators are up for reelection in 2018, Class III Senators are up for re-election in 2020.
- ⇒ For a complete list of all 100 Senators, links to individual Senator's websites and more, go to: www.senate.gov.

Key Information:

- ✓ The Senator from each state with the longest tenure is referred to as the "Senior" Senator; the other, the "Junior" Senator.
- ✓ The two Senators from each state will never be up for re-election simultaneously, and therefore each state's Senators are in different classes.
- ✓ The President of the Senate is the Vice-President of the United States. His or her primary role is to cast a deciding vote in the event of a "tie" (50-50) vote on legislation.
- ✓ Senators deal with all issues affecting our nation, and particularly those issues that their constituents care about. However, Senators often play more integral roles on issues that come before the Committees on which they sit.

U.S. House of Representatives

- ⇒ The House of Representatives is composed of 435 Members, plus 4 additional non-voting delegates representing American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Virgin Islands, and one Resident Commissioner, elected every 4 years, representing Puerto Rico.
- ⇒ All Members and Delegates are elected every two years (with the exception of the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico). The number of Representatives is determined by a state's population.

Key Information:

- ✓ Largely-populated states like California and New York have 53 and 29 Representatives respectively, while the smaller-populated states of Wyoming and Alaska each have one at-large Representative, the minimum number allowed by the Constitution.
- ✓ Congressional districts are redrawn after every national census, or every 10 years.
- ✓ For a complete list of the Representatives, links to Representative's personal Web sites and more, go to www.house.gov. There is also a very useful FAQ at <http://www.clerk.house.gov>.

Understanding the Legislative Process

{How a Bill Becomes a Law}

- ✓ Anyone may draft a bill; however, only members of Congress can introduce legislation, and by doing so become the sponsor(s).
- ✓ There are four basic types of legislation: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions.
- ✓ The official legislative process begins when a bill or resolution is numbered, – “H.R.” signifies a House bill and “S.” a Senate bill - referred to a committee and printed by the Government Printing Office.

Step 1. Referral to Committee:

With few exceptions, bills are referred to standing committees in the House or Senate according to carefully delineated rules of procedure.

Step 2. Committee Action:

When a bill reaches a committee it is placed on the committee's calendar. A bill can be referred to a subcommittee or considered by the committee as a whole. It is at this point that a bill is examined carefully and its chances for passage are determined. If the committee does not act on a bill, it is the equivalent of killing it.

Step 3. Subcommittee Review:

Often, bills are referred to a subcommittee for study and hearings. Hearings provide the opportunity to put on the record the views of the executive branch, experts, other public officials, supporters and opponents of the legislation. Testimony can be given in person or submitted as a written statement.

Step 4. Mark Up:

When the hearings are completed, the subcommittee may meet to "mark up" the bill, that is, make changes and amendments prior to recommending the bill to the full committee. If a subcommittee votes not to report legislation to the full committee, the bill dies.

Step 5. Committee Action to Report A Bill:

After receiving a subcommittee's report on a bill, the full committee can conduct further study and hearings, or it can vote on the subcommittee's recommendations and on any proposed amendments. The full committee then votes on its recommendation to the House or Senate. This procedure is called "ordering a bill reported."

Step 6. Publication of a Written Report:

After a committee votes to have a bill reported, the committee chairman instructs staff to prepare a written report on the bill. This report describes the intent and scope of the legislation, impact on existing laws and programs, position of the executive branch, and views of dissenting members of the committee.

Step 7. Scheduling Floor Action:

After a bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated, it is placed in chronological order on the calendar. In the House there are several different legislative calendars, and the Speaker and majority leader largely determine if, when, and in what order bills come up. In the Senate there is only one legislative calendar.

Step 8. Debate:

When a bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, there are rules or procedures governing the debate on legislation. These rules determine the conditions and amount of time allocated for general debate.

Step 9. Voting:

After the debate and the approval of any amendments, the bill is passed or defeated by the members voting.

Step 10. Referral to Other Chamber:

When a bill is passed by the House or the Senate, it is referred to the other chamber, where it usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it.

Step 11. Conference Committee Action:

If only minor changes are made to a bill by the other chamber, it is common for the legislation to go back to the first chamber for concurrence. However, when the actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill, a conference committee is formed to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions. If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies. If agreement is reached, a conference report is prepared describing the committee members' recommendations for changes. Both the House and the Senate must approve the same version of the conference report.

Step 12. Final Actions:

After a bill has been approved by both the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the President. If the President approves the legislation, he signs it, and it becomes law. Or, the President can take no action for ten days, while Congress is in session, and it automatically becomes law. If the President opposes the bill he can veto it; or, if he takes no action after the Congress has adjourned its second session, it is a "pocket veto" and the legislation dies.

Step 13. Overriding a Veto:

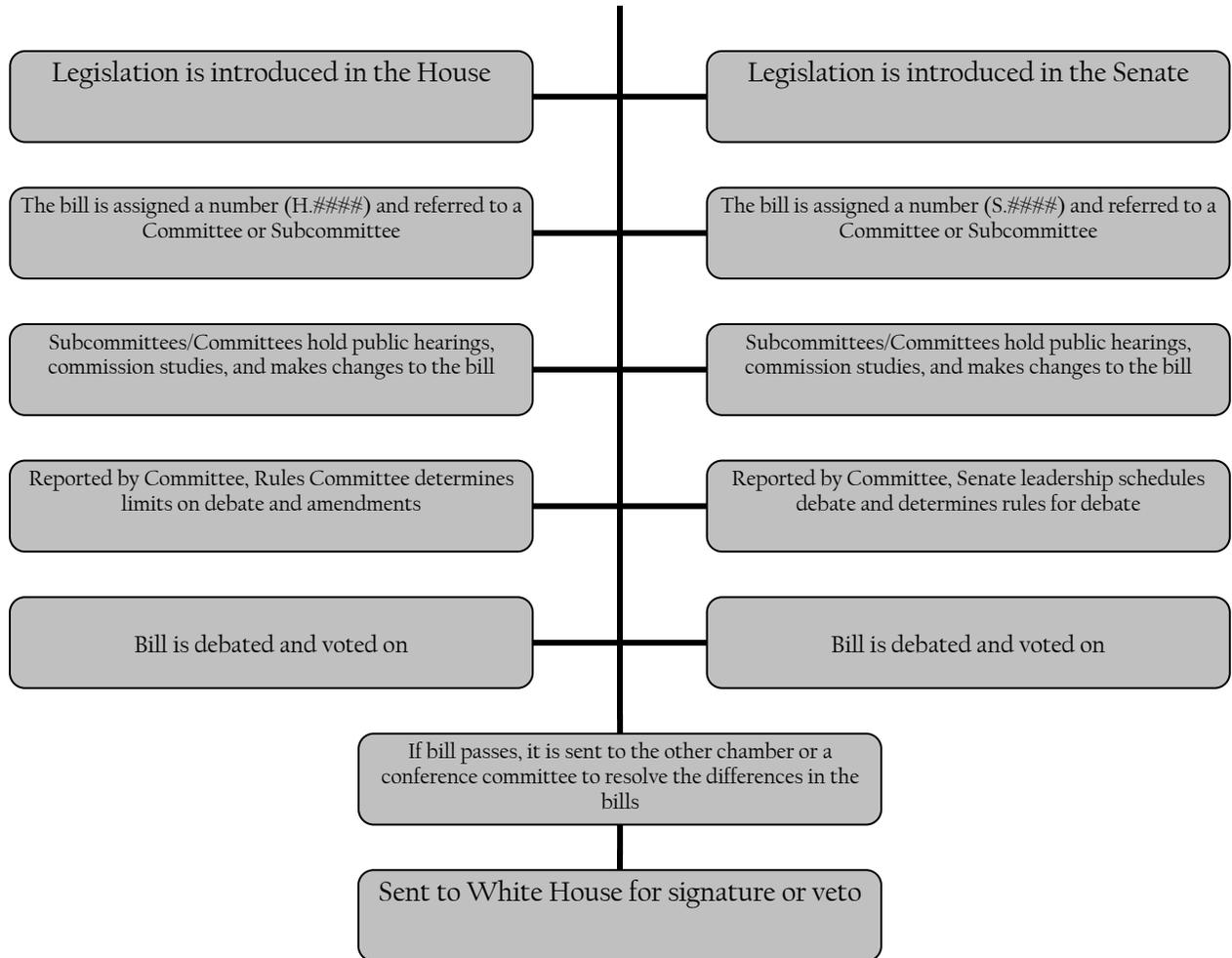
If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." This requires a two-thirds roll call vote of the members who are present in sufficient numbers for a quorum.

Source: Adapted from Congress at Your Fingertips from Capitol Advantage (<http://capitoladvantage.com>).

NOTE: For more detailed information about how the House and Senate make laws, visit the Library of Congress Thomas site at <http://thomas.loc.gov>

Understanding the Legislative Process

{How a Bill Becomes a Law}



Understanding the Legislative Process

{How Legislative Committees Work}

Perhaps the most important phase of the legislative process is the action by committees. The committees consider every possible aspect of a proposed measure and provide a forum for the public to be heard. A tremendous volume of work, often overlooked by the public, is done by the Members in this phase.

How many committees are there?

There are, at present, 20 standing committees in the House and 16 in the Senate as well as several select committees in both Houses. In addition, there are four standing joint committees of the two Houses that have oversight responsibilities but no legislative jurisdiction.

How does Congress decide which bills go to which committees?

Each committee's jurisdiction is divided into categories under the rules of the House and the Senate. All measures affecting a particular area of the law are referred to the committee with jurisdiction over the particular subject matter. The Speaker of the House or the Senate Majority Leader may refer an introduced bill to multiple committees for consideration of those provisions of the bill within the jurisdiction of each committee concerned. The Speaker or Majority Leader must designate a primary committee of jurisdiction on bills referred to multiple committees.

Which committees do Members seek to be on?

A member usually seeks selection to the committee that has jurisdiction over a field in which the Member is most qualified, or which is of interest to their constituency. Many Members are nationally recognized experts in the specialty of their particular committee or subcommittee. For example, the Committee on the Judiciary is traditionally composed almost entirely of lawyers.

Are there an equal number of Republicans and Democrats on each committee?

Membership on the various committees is divided between the two major political parties. The proportion of Republicans and Democrats on a particular committee depends upon who holds the majority in that particular House of Congress. The one exception to this rule is the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, whose membership is always divided equally among the two major political parties.

- ✓ Members of the House of Representatives may serve only on two committees and four subcommittees, with limited exceptions.
- ✓ Senators may serve on no more than three committees, and five subcommittees (with the exception of the Appropriations Committee)
- ✓ Members rank in seniority according to the date of their appointment to the full committee. Most often, it is the most senior member of the majority with the most continuous service to the committee that is elected chairman.
- ✓ Committee reports are written by the committee staff to describe the purpose and scope of a particular bill and the reasons for its recommended approval. Committee reports generally contain a section-by-section analysis of the associated bill, explaining precisely what each section is intended to accomplish.

Understanding the Legislative Process {114th Congress - Committees}

- ✓ Members of the House of Representatives may serve only on two committees and four subcommittees, with limited exceptions.
- ✓ Senators may serve on no more than three committees, and five subcommittees (with the exception of the Appropriations Committee)
- ✓ Members rank in seniority according to the date of their appointment to the full committee. Most often, it is the most senior member of the majority with the most continuous service to the committee that is elected chairman.
- ✓ Committee reports are written by the committee staff to describe the purpose and scope of a particular bill and the reasons for its recommended approval. Committee reports generally contain a section-by-section analysis of the associated bill, explaining precisely what each section is intended to accomplish.

House Of Representatives

Appropriations Committee (www.appropriations.house.gov)

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations

The largest committee in the House is responsible for drafting legislation to allocate funds to government agencies.

Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-218 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-2771
<http://appropriations.house.gov/>

Republican Members

Harold Rogers (KY) - *Chairman*
Rodney Frelinghuysen (NJ)
Robert Aderholt (AL)
Kay Granger (TX)
Michael K. Simpson (ID)
John Abney Culberson (TX)
Ander Crenshaw (FL)
John R. Carter (TX)
Ken Calvert (CA)
Tom Cole (OK)
Mario Diaz-Balart (FL)
Charles Dent (PA)
Tom Graves (GA)
Kevin Yoder (KS)
Steve Womack (AR)
Alan Nunnelee (MS)
Jeff Fortenberry (NE)
Thomas Rooney (FL)

Democratic Members

Nita M. Lowey (NY) – *Ranking Member*
Marcy Kaptur (OH)
Pete J. Visclosky (IN)
José E. Serrano (NY)
Rosa DeLauro (CT)
David E. Price (NC)
Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA)
Sam Farr (CA)
Chaka Fattah (PA)
Barbara Lee (CA)
Betty McCollum (MN)
Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL)
Henry Cuellar (TX)
Chellie Pingree (ME)
Mike Quigley (IL)
Steve Israel (NY)
Tim Ryan (OH)
Dutch Ruppersberger (MD)

Chuck Fleishmann (TN)
Jaime Herrera Butler (WA)
David Joyce (OH)
David Valado (CA)
Andy Harris (MD)
Martha Roby (AL)
Mark Amodei (NV)
Chris Stewart (UT)
Scott Rigell (VA)
David Jolly (FL)
David Young (IA)
Evan Jenkins (WV)

Derek Kilmer (WA)

Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Republican Members

Tom Cole (GA) – *Chairman*
Mike Simpson (ID)
Steve Womack (AR)
Chuck Fleischmann (TN)
Andy Harris (MD)
Martha Roby (AL)
Charlie Dent (PA)
Scott Rigell (VA)

Democratic Members

Rosa DeLauro (CT) – *Ranking Member*
Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA)
Barbara Lee (CA)
Chaka Fattah (PA)

Education and the Workforce Committee (www.edworkforce.house.gov)

This committee has jurisdiction over issues generally related to education. It is divided into four subcommittees: Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education; Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions; Higher Education and Workforce Training; and Workforce Protections.

Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3725
<http://edlabor.house.gov/>

Republican Members

John Kline (MN) - *Chairman*
Joe Wilson (SC)
Virginia Foxx (NC)
Duncan D. Hunter (CA)
David P. Roe (TN)
Glenn Thompson (PA)
Tim Walberg (MI)
Brett Guthrie (KY)
Matt Salmon (AZ)

Democratic Members

Robert C. Scott (VA) - *Ranking Member*
Rubén Hinojosa (TX)
Susan A. Davis (CA)
Raúl M. Grijalva (AZ)
Joe Courtney (CT)
Marcia L. Fudge (OH)
Jared Polis (CO)
Gregorio Sablan (CNMI)
Frederica Wilson (FL)

Todd Rokita (IN)
Lou Barletta (PA)
Joe Heck (NV)
Luke Messer (IN)
Bradley Byrne (AL)
Dave Brat (VA)
Buddy Carter (GA)
Mike Bishop (MI)
Glenn Grothman (WI)
Steve Russell (OK)
Carlos Curbelo (FL)
Elis Stefanik (NY)
Rick Allen (GA)

Suzanne Bonamici (OR)
Mark Pocan (WI)
Mark Takno (CA)
Hakeem Jeffries (NY)
Katherine Clark (NC)
Mark DeSaulnier (CA)

Energy and Commerce Committee (www.energycommerce.house.gov)

This Committee is vested with the broadest jurisdiction of any congressional authorizing committee. Today it has responsibility for the nation's telecommunications, consumer protection, food and drug safety, public health research, environmental quality, the availability of affordable energy, and the continuance of interstate and foreign commerce.

Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-2927
<http://energycommerce.house.gov>

Republican Members

Fred Upton (MI) - *Chairman*
Joe Barton (TX)
Ralph Hall (TX)
Ed Whitfield (KY)
John Shimkus (IL)
Joseph R. Pitts (PA)
Tim Murphy (PA)
Greg Walden (OR)
Larry Buschon (IN)
Bill Flores (TX)
Michael Burgess (TX)
Marsha Blackburn (TN)
Susan Brooks (IN)
Steve Scalise (LA)
Bob Latta (OH)
Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA)
Gregg Harper (MS)
Leonard Lance (NJ)
Markwayne Mullin (OK)

Democratic Members

Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ)- *Ranking Member*
Bobby L. Rush (IL)
Anna G. Eshoo (CA)
Eliot L. Engel (NY)
Gene Green (TX)
Diana DeGette (CO)
Lois Capps (CA)
Michael F. Doyle (PA)
G.K. Butterfield (NC)
Jan Schakowsky (IL)
Doris Matsui (CA)
Kathy Castor (FL)
John Sarbanes (MD)
Jerry McNerney (CA)
Peter Welch (VT)
Paul Tonko (NY)
Ben Ray Lujan (NM)
John Yarmuth (KY)
Yvette Clarke (NY)

Brett Guthrie (KY)
Pete Olson (TX)
David McKinley (WV)
Richard Hudson (NC)
Mike Pompeo (KS)
Adam Kinzinger (IL)
Morgan Griffith (VA)
Gus Bilirakis (FL)
Bill Johnson (OH)
Billy Long (MO)
Renee Ellmers (NC)
Chris Collins (NY)
Kevin Cramer (ND)

Dave Loebsack (IA)
Kurt Schrader (OR)
Joseph Kennedy (MA)
Tony Cardenas (CA)

Ways and Means Committee (<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/>)

This committee has jurisdiction over all taxation and tariffs and other revenue-raising measures. Also included under Ways and Means jurisdiction is Social Security, unemployment benefits, Medicare, child support enforcement, TANF, foster care and other adoption programs. The Committee is divided into five subcommittees Trade; Oversight; Health; Social Security; Income Security and Family Support; and Select Revenue Measures.

Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3625
<http://waysandmeans.house.gov>

Republican Members

Paul Ryan (WI) - *Chairman*
Sam Johnson (TX)
Kevin Brady (TX)
Patrick Meehan (PA)
Devin Nunes (CA)
Pat Tiberi (OH)
Dave G. Reichert (WA)
Charles W. Boustany Jr. (LA)
Peter J. Roskam (IL)
Kristi Noem (SD)
Tom Price (GA)
Vern Buchanan (FL)
Adrian Smith (NE)
George Holding (NC)
Lynn Jenkins (KS)
Erik Paulsen (MN)
Diane Black (TN)
Tom Reed (NY)
Todd Young (IN)

Democratic Members

Sander Levin (MI) - *Ranking Member*
Charles Rangel (NY)
Jim McDermott (WA)
John Lewis (GA)
Richard E. Neal (MA)
Xavier Becerra (CA)
Lloyd Doggett (TX)
Mike Thompson (CA)
John B. Larson (CT)
Earl Blumenauer (OR)
Ron Kind (WI)
Bill Pascrell Jr. (NJ)
Joseph Crowley (NY)
Allyson Schwartz (PA)
Danny Davis (IL)
Linda Sanchez (CA)

Mike Kelly (PA)
Tim Griffin (AR)
Jim Renacci (OH)
Kenny Marchant (TX)
Jason Smith (MO)

Here is a link to a list of current House Members:
http://clerk.house.gov/committee_info/oal.pdf

Senate

Appropriations Committee (www.appropriations.senate.gov)

The largest committee in the U.S. Senate is responsible for drafting legislation to allocate funds to government agencies.

Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
S-128 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-7363
<http://appropriations.senate.gov>

Republican Members

Thad Cochran (MS) - *Chairman*
Mitch McConnell (KY)
Richard Shelby (AL)
Susan Collins (ME)
Lisa Murkowski (AK)
Lindsey Graham (SC)
Mark Kirk (IL)
Roy Blunt (MO)
Jerry Moran (KS)
John Hoeven (ND)
John Boozman (AR)
Shelly Moore Capito (WV)
Bill Cassidy (LA)
James Lankford (OK)
Steve Daines (MT)

Democratic Members

Barbara Mikulski (MD) - *Ranking Member*
Patrick Leahy (VT)
Patty Murray (WA)
Dianne Feinstein (CA)
Richard Durbin (IL)
Jack Reed (RI)
Jon Tester (RI)
Tom Udall (NM)
Jeanne Shaheen (NH)
Jeff Merkley (OR)
Chris Coons (DE)
Tammy Baldwin (WI)
Chris Murphy (CT)

Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

Republican Members

Roy Blunt (MO) - *Chairman*
Jerry Moran (KS)
Richard Shelby (AL)
Thad Cochran (MS)
Lamar Alexander (TN)
Lindsey Graham (SC)
Mark Kirk (IL)
William Cassidy (LA)
Shelly Moore Capito (WV)

Democratic Members

Patty Murray (WA) - *Ranking Member*
Richard Durbin (IL)
Jack Reed (RI)
Barbara Mikulski (MD)
Jeanne Shaheen (NH)
Jeff Merkley (OR)
Brian Schatz (HI)
Tammy Baldwin (WI)

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

(www.help.senate.gov)

The committee has jurisdiction over issues generally related to education. The committee is divided into three subcommittees: Employment and Workplace Safety; Retirement and Aging; and Children and Families.

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-5375
<http://help.senate.gov>

Republican Members

Lamar Alexander (TN) - *Chairman*
Mike Enzi (WY)
Richard Burr (NC)
Johnny Isakson (GA)
Rand Paul (KY)
Susan Collins (ME)
Orrin Hatch (UT)
Pat Roberts (KS)
Lisa Murkowski (AK)
Mark Kirk (IL)
Tim Scott (SC)
Bill Cassidy (LA)

Democratic Members

Patty Murray (WA) - *Ranking Member*
Barbara Mikulski (MD)
Bernard Sanders (VT)
Bob Casey (PA)
Al Franken (MN)
Michael Bennet (CO)
Sheldon Whitehouse (RI)
Tammy Baldwin (WI)
Chris Murphy (CT)
Elizabeth Warren (MA)

Senate Finance Committee

(<http://finance.senate.gov/>)

This Committee concerns itself with matters relating to: taxation and other revenue measures generally, and those relating to the insular possessions; bonded debt of the United States; customs, collection districts, and ports of entry and delivery; reciprocal trade agreements; tariff and import quotas, and related matters thereto; the transportation of dutiable goods; deposit of public moneys; general revenue sharing; health programs under the Social Security Act, including Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and other health and human services programs financed by a specific tax or trust fund; and national social security.

Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6200
<http://finance.senate.gov/>

Republican Members

Orrin Hatch (UT) - *Chairman*
Chuck Grassley (IA)
Mike Crapo (ID)
Pat Roberts (KS)
Mike Enzi (WY)
John Cornyn (TX)
John Thune (SD)
Richard Burr (NC)
Johnny Isakson (GA)
Rob Portman (OH)
Pat Toomey (PA)
Dan Coats (IN)
Dean Heller (NV)
Tim Scott (SC)

Democratic Members

Ron Wyden (OR) - *Rnk. Mbr.*
Charles Schumer (NY)
Debbie Stabenow (MI)
Maria Cantwell (WA)
Bill Nelson (FL)
Robert Menendez (NJ)
Thomas Carper (DE)
Benjamin Cardin (MD)
Sherrod Brown (OH)
Michael Bennet (CO)
Robert Casey (PA)
Mark Warner (VA)

Understanding the Legislative Process

{ The Federal Budget and Appropriations Process }

There is a basic divide regarding Congressional Committees: authorizers and appropriators. The authorizing committees (such as the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee) are the primary authors of federal programs under their respective jurisdictions. Appropriators decide how much money is spent on those programs.

Each year, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees determine how much money each federal agency and discretionary program receives. This process begins with the President's State of the Union and Budget Request in early February and funding decisions are finalized, ideally, before the start of the next fiscal year on October 1. The following is a month by month guide of the major landmarks in the budget and appropriations process.

Key Terms:

Appropriation: Gives legal authority for Federal agencies to spend money from the Treasury for specific purposes. It is not necessarily the full amount permitted under the authorization.

Authorization: Basic legislation that establishes a federal program and that sanctions a particular expenditure for that program.

Budget Resolution: Legislation setting forth the congressional budget that establishes budget totals and divides them into spending categories by federal agency.

Continuing Resolution: A joint resolution enacted by Congress and signed by the President that provides budget authority for federal agencies to continue their operations.

Discretionary spending: Spending controlled in annual appropriations acts, not mandatory (ex., programs authorized by the America Competes Act).

Mandatory spending: Spending controlled by laws other than annual appropriations (ex., Social Security).

Omnibus Appropriations: A bill that combines several spending areas into a single measure.

Supplemental Appropriations: A bill appropriating funds for one or more federal agencies after the annual appropriations bill(s) has already been passed.

January-February

In late January or early February, the President gives his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. This speech sets the President's priorities for the coming year. While it does not provide specific funding recommendations, it does offer insight into the overall fiscal environment and if the President plans on introducing new programs, reforms, etc.

In early February, the President submits his budget request for the coming fiscal year. This

collection of documents makes funding requests for all federal discretionary programs in all agencies. It also provides details on new programs and reforms the Administration would like to see implemented, including those under the jurisdiction of authorizing committees.

While the recommendations are not automatically accepted by Congress, they often form the basis for future appropriations discussions.

Accompanying the budget request are several supporting documents including the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Program Ratings Assessment Tool (PART). Over the past few years, the PART has become the main evaluation tool the Administration uses to evaluate the efficacy of all federal programs and the basis for its appropriations recommendations.

The President's budget request is extensively studied and members of Congress begin to form their opinions on the issues. For instance, if a Representative's favorite program is recommended to be cut, then he or she knows that working to "restore" funding to it will be a main priority for the coming months.

During this time, Congressional Committees hold hearings on the appropriations recommendations as well. For the appropriators, the hearings involve appropriate representatives of the administration explaining and defending the budget request, such as the Secretary of Education. Other hearings involve witnesses from the general public and the opportunity for other members of Congress who do not sit on the committee in question to formally submit their opinions. These hearings occur in appropriations subcommittees and in authorizing subcommittees.

In February, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) releases its annual "Budget Options" report. CBO is a nonpartisan resource that provides Members of Congress with estimates of how much bills cost (called scoring) and other budget-related information. The Budget Options report provides Congress with solutions to change revenue and spending targets for the coming fiscal year; along with how much each individual action will cost or save.

March – April – May 15

During this time hearings on the budget and annual appropriations continue, but the primary focus shifts to the House and Senate Budget Committees. These committees draft their respective chambers' budget resolution. The budget resolution sets an overall spending figure for discretionary programs for the coming fiscal year. The budget resolution is not a law, but sets a guideline for appropriators to follow. It is important to note that the budget resolution does not include any specific program funding decisions, although many Members of Congress "assume" funding decisions into the resolution.

Establishing a budget resolution allows the chairman of the Appropriations Committee to give his subcommittee chairmen – called "Cardinals" – individual allocations, called 302(b) allocations. By passing a budget resolution, any amendments that increase spending over the budget resolution or the caps set in the 302(b) allocations are subject to a point of order – meaning that amendments must either include offsets or have enough votes to carry through.

May 15

Under law, Congress has until May 15 to pass a budget resolution. If they fail to pass one, the Appropriations Committees can bring their appropriations bills to the floor of their respective chambers.

What happens if the House and Senate cannot agree on a budget resolution by May 15? Without limits on discretionary spending, any of the appropriations bills that are brought to the floor are subject to any amendments without regard to cost. If the budget resolution appears deadlocked, then Congress often includes a "deeming resolution" in the first of their appropriations bills. The deeming resolution includes discretionary spending caps that create parliamentary protection against amendments that violate the budget cap. Deeming resolutions cannot include language that calls for budget reconciliation.

May 16-June-July

This is the period when the House and Senate begin significant action on appropriations bills. The House Appropriations Committees typically act first, with the Senate acting later in the summer. For each appropriations bill, the House and Senate go through the following parallel processes using the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (Labor-HHS-Education) bill, as an example.

Subcommittee Mark Up

This is when the House and Senate release actual program funding numbers for the Labor-HHS-Education bill. The actual bill language includes funding levels for all programs within the subcommittee's jurisdiction as well as any other legislative language regarding use of discretionary funding.

From this point, and every subsequent step in the process, these numbers become more difficult to change. At the subcommittee mark up, the chairman introduces his appropriations recommendations and the bill is subject to amendments by other members of the subcommittee. Given sufficient votes, the bill is passed out of subcommittee and moves on to the full Appropriations Committee.

Appropriations Committee Mark-Up

This is similar to the subcommittee mark up, only that all members of the Appropriations Committee have the opportunity to offer amendments. Upon successful passage of the bill, the Appropriations Committee drafts report language that accompanies the bill. The report language explains why the committee did what it did and also provides further clarification on technical matters.

Floor Consideration

This is when all members of Congress debate the bill and have the opportunity to offer amendments on it. Debate and amendments are "managed" on the floor by the respective Chairman and Ranking Member of the bill in question.

Conference

After the House and Senate have passed their respective Appropriations bills, their differences must be negotiated via what is known as "conference." Party leadership and senior appropriations members are appointed from the House and Senate to work out the differences between the two bills, with the majority party in firm control of the proceedings. The result of the negotiation process is a final conference report that contains final funding decisions.

This conference report needs to be passed by both the House and Senate before it can be signed into law by the President.

If the budget resolution contains reconciliation language, authorizing committees work to meet their reconciliation instructions during this time. If a committee is directed to make cuts, the committee will hold hearings, introduce and mark up legislation that meets those instructions. The Congressional Budget Office is the ultimate arbiter in deciding if legislation passed out of the committee saves as much as members on the Committee claim.

August

Congress typically takes off the entire month of August for district work and returns after Labor Day. This is a very slow time on Capitol Hill with very little going on in public, but there are many backdoor conversations and negotiations between staff.

September-October-?

Ideally, this is when Congress finishes work on all of their appropriations bills before the start of the fiscal year, October 1. In an effort to meet the deadline, several appropriations bills are often combined into one "omnibus" appropriations bill. For instance in FY2005, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 included the Agriculture; Commerce, Justice and State; Energy and Water; Foreign Operations; Interior; Labor-HHS-Education; Legislative Branch; Transportation and Treasury; and the Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies appropriations bills.

Omnibus appropriations bills are used because they make final passage easier for two reasons: (1) it saves time for debating individual bills and (2) it is more difficult for Members of Congress to vote against an omnibus bill because voting against one bill becomes voting against several bills.

If Congress has not completed its annual appropriations work by October 1, then it must pass a "continuing resolution" or federal agencies without appropriations bills signed by the President will be forced to shut

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down due to lack of funds. Continuing resolutions fund federal agencies at the levels equivalent to the previous year for the length of the resolution. This allows individual programs and agencies to function in a manner similar to the previous year.

Continuing resolutions (commonly referred to as a “CR”) can hold for a matter of a few hours or for an entire fiscal year. If Congress believes it needs a little extra time to complete its work, the CR may last for a few weeks. If Congress feels it is irrevocably deadlocked, they may pass a year-long CR and start over for the next fiscal year (commonly referred to as “punting”) in an attempt to bring about some sort of consensus that has enough votes to pass.

Understanding the Legislative Process

{ Tracking Legislation }

There are several resources available to follow bills through the legislative process.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

Thomas: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>

- This website is the most comprehensive site for congressional information. It contains the full text of bills, a bill summary and status, hearing testimony, recorded notes, committee reports, and other useful information about a particular piece of legislation.

Congressional Record: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html>

- The Congressional Record is the official record of the proceedings and debates of Congress. It is published daily when Congress is in session. It provides daily summaries of action in each chamber, committee hearings, bills introduced, bills signed, and a schedule of committee meetings for the following day.

U.S. Senate: <http://www.senate.gov>

- The “Legislation & Records” link provides information about bills and resolutions being considered in the Senate. The site allows viewers to track bills and see how individual members voted on a particular bill. The site also provides a schedule for upcoming legislative activity.

U.S. House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov>

- The “Legislative Resources” section provides information about bills and resolutions being considered in the House. The site allows viewers to track bills and see how individual members voted on a particular bill. The site also provides a schedule for upcoming legislative activity.

Washington Post: <http://www.washingtonpost.com>

- At this site, the “Today in Congress” section provides pertinent information on any action items that will happen in Congress on that particular date.

Congress.org: <http://www.congress.org>

- This resource is valuable when attempting to locate information about a particular Member of Congress.

TELEPHONE RESOURCES

Daily Calendar Information: The Cloakroom

- The Democratic and Republican Party provide recorded messages about the floor proceedings in both chambers.
- Senate Democratic (202) 224-8541 and Senate Republican (202) 224-8601

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- House Democratic (202) 225-7400 and House Republican (202) 225-7430

Legislation Status

- The Office of Legislative Information on Capitol Hill responds to telephone inquiries regarding current legislation. A staff member can give you information such as the status of certain legislation, bills introduced by a specific Member of Congress, or bills introduced on a given subject. They can be reached at (202) 225-7400.

Action Tools

{ Meeting with Your Legislator }

The most effective way to communicate with your legislator is to schedule a meeting to talk face-to-face. While these personal visits are the most effective lobbying tool, they also require the greatest amount of planning and time. Here are a few guidelines to help you plan a successful visit.

HOW TO SCHEDULE A MEETING

- ✓ Ask to speak to the scheduler when you call the office to set up your appointment. Let the scheduler know you are a constituent. They will know which staff member you need to meet with based on your issue. Call at least a week in advance and prepare to allocate 15-20 minutes of time for your meeting.

HOW TO PREPARE

- ✓ BRING A WRITTEN STATEMENT. Prepare a written letter that you can leave with the staffer recapping what you mentioned in your visit. Be sure to address why this legislation is important to you, how it will affect you, your colleagues, citizens with disabilities, and your program's current unmet needs. Not only will this letter provide the legislator with a written record of your visit, but also writing the letter will help you prepare for your appointment.

TIPS FOR DURING THE MEETING

- ✓ EXPLAIN HOW PROPOSED LEGISLATION WILL DIRECTLY AFFECT YOU. Bring statistics from your institution and personal stories from students. Highlight both the successes your program has achieved as well as the areas where additional funding is needed. Explain how a cut in funding will affect your capacity to help individuals with disabilities.
- ✓ BE POLITE AND PROFESSIONAL. Always be on time and dress professionally. Even if you disagree with your legislator's position, always be polite. A staffer may make critical remarks about your position or institution, or may ask you tough questions. That is his or her job. If you do not know the answer, remain calm and tell them that you will look into the question and get back to them.

ENDING THE MEETING

- ✓ ASK FOR A COMMITMENT. Your goal is to enlist your legislator's support, so be as specific as possible. Ask the staffer direct questions such as "Will your boss vote for...?" or "Will your boss support...when it comes to the floor?" to elicit direct answers.
- ✓ BRING A BUSINESS CARD. Give the staffer your business card and ask for theirs. The card should contain all your contact information.

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FOLLOW-UP

- ✓ FOLLOW UP YOUR MEETING WITH A THANK YOU LETTER. Regardless of how the meeting goes, you should always follow up by thanking the staffer for his/her time and reiterating the points you discussed in the meeting. This can be sent by email or fax.
- ✓ OFFER TO PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION. Always offer to provide staffers and legislators with additional information on your issue. Offer to provide more detailed information about your local institution and research, if necessary.

Action Tools

{ Top Ten Tips for Conducting a Successful Meeting }

1) Always schedule an appointment in advance.

Time is valuable in legislative offices. Contact the office in advance to arrange a meeting. It is best to fax your meeting request and to follow-up with a phone call. Due to the busy schedule of legislators, meetings are often assigned to staff.

2) Prepare thoroughly for your meeting.

Do your homework before meeting with your legislator's office. Visit their website to find out about their policy interests and voting records. Particularly, find out how they have voted in the past on your issues, be aware of their party leadership's stance on the issues, and know committee assignments.

3) Have a "message" and stick to it.

Successful legislative meetings are always narrow in scope. Stick to a few main points of support for your issue and make a specific request for action.

4) Bring it home.

Always connect your issue to your institution or community. Legislators value your thoughts as a constituent. They rely on local stories and sources for the work they do.

5) Make a specific request.

The purpose of your meeting is to gain support for your issue. Legislators expect you to make requests. It is important to make the request specific and direct, preferably tied to current legislative activity.

6) Build a relationship with staff.

Staff can be very influential in getting your requests honored by your elected officials. You should make every effort to establish strong relationships with staff and encourage them to use you as a resource in your area of expertise.

7) Follow-up.

Send thank you letters after your meeting to express your appreciation and to reinforce any commitments made during the meeting. Remember to honor any commitments you made in the meeting, such as providing more information. You want to remain a reliable source.

8) Do not characterize your issue in partisan terms. Stick to the facts.

Keep the discussion on policy, not politics. Remember you want legislators, regardless of their political affiliation, to support your position.

9) Be on time.

Enough said.

10) Remain kind, but not overly comfortable.

Do not let the informal nature of the meeting stop you from making your request.

Action Tools

{ Sample Meeting Request }

Use this sample letter to schedule a meeting with your legislator. It can be sent by fax or email to the Scheduler.

The Honorable <<First Name Last Name>> United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 ATTN: Scheduler	-or-	United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515
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<<Date>>

Dear Representative/Senator <<Last Name>>:

On <<date>>, I am visiting Washington, DC for <<insert reason for visit, particularly if it is part of larger conference that would be of interest to office>>. I am representing <<city, state>> Assistive Technology Act Program during this visit.

While in Washington, I would like to visit with you to discuss issues of importance to the constituency served in <<Congressional district or state>> by the service the <<state>> Assistive Technology Act Program provides. This year, Congress will consider federal investments in programs important to individuals with disabilities. Important issues are being discussed and addressed by several proposals and pieces of legislation.

I would appreciate any time you might have <<insert window of time>> on <<date>> to meet with me to discuss these important issues and how they affect your constituents and issues important to people with disabilities. I can be reached at <<phone number>> or <<email>>. I look forward to hearing from your office. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

<<Name>>
<<State>>Assistive Technology Act Program

Action Tools

{ Talking Points }

Consult these talking points when you meet with your Members of Congress. Most importantly, speak about the impact the Assistive Technology Act Program has in your state.

Assistive technology allows people with disabilities to be more independent and productive; to attend and meaningfully participate in education, live in their own homes, be employed and partake in community activities of their choosing.

- ⇒ All 50 states, US territories and the District of Columbia receive formula grant funding under the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 1998, as amended in 2004 (P.L. 108-364) and are required to carry out a continuum of specified state level and state leadership activities that promote the ability of people with disabilities to know about, have access to and ultimately be better able to obtain assistive technology (AT). State AT Act Programs have the flexibility to create and implement the following activities in ways that address the unique needs of their communities.
- ⇒ Assistive Technology Demonstration Programs provide opportunities for people to learn about and become familiar with specific types of assistive technology by comparing and contrasting the functions and features of 1, 2 or more products through hands on exploration of devices. Instruction is provided by knowledgeable assistive technology professionals.
- ⇒ Assistive Technology Device Loan/Borrowing Programs allow individuals to borrow – for a limited time period – devices for trial use at home, school, work etc. to see if the device (or one with similar features) will meet the borrower’s needs before a purchase is made.
- ⇒ Device Reutilization Programs support and encourage the reuse of assistive technology no longer needed or in use by its original owner, but can be useful to others. Recipients usually obtain equipment at significantly lower cost or, in some cases at no cost. There are several options for reutilization including device reassignment/reuse programs, device exchange services and long-term device loans for open-ended periods of time.
- ⇒ State Financing Activities help individuals obtain affordable funding to purchase/obtain assistive technology devices and services through a variety of initiatives including financial loans and administration of alternative funding programs that provide AT directly to consumers when the monies come from other sources. State financing activities may also include management of cooperative buying programs, “last resort” options, device leases or rentals, device design and fabrication programs and funding eligibility reviews and consultation.
- ⇒ AT Act Programs develop and disseminate training materials, conduct training, and provide technical assistance on a wide range of assistive technology topics. Trainings, conducted for small or large groups in a variety of formats, are designed to increase participants’ knowledge, skills, and competencies regarding AT. Technical assistance focuses on providing in-depth assistance to state or local agencies or other entities (rather than individuals) to achieve a mutually agreed upon goal. AT Act Programs are required to

specifically address transition services that support transitioning to work, postsecondary education and to community living for youth and adults.

⇒ The 56 State AT Act Programs continue to successfully achieve their mandate to help persons with disabilities learn about and obtain assistive technology that meets their needs even while the program has never been fully funded according to the statute.

Action Tools

{ Tips for Writing Your Legislator on an Issue }

Identify yourself as a Constituent.

The most important thing to do is establish yourself as a constituent because non-constituent mail rarely gets a response. Put your name and complete address on the letter. Legislators will only feel obligated to respond to constituent correspondence, so it's important to establish a district connection.

Email or Fax Letters.

Due to the security measures in place for mail going to the U.S. Congress, letters should never be sent via snail mail. Instead, email or fax the letter.

Use Proper Forms of Address.

Remember to address your lawmaker as “The Honorable.” Be sure to get their title correct such as Senator, Representative, or Chairman. Use “The Honorable” in the address and the office title in the salutation (Dear Representative Doe).

Be Brief and Simple.

Preferably, your letter should be one page. Make your request in the first paragraph. Do not feel the need to explain the legislation in your letter.

State and Repeat Your Position.

Make your position or request clear in the opening and closing of your letter. Be specific, such as asking for a yes or no vote or cosponsoring legislation.

Personalize Your Message.

A personal letter is much more effective than a form letter. This ensures that your message will have an impact. Though forms, postcards, and petitions are read and counted, they do not have the same impact as a personalized, individualized letter. Connecting your issue to your personal situation will set your email above the rest in the inbox. If a sample letter is provided, incorporate your own words and personal perspective into the text.

Always proofread before sending.

This is essential to making a credible argument.

Do Not Send Enclosures or Attachments.

These extras are rarely read or filed. Also, do not attach files or images to your emails.

Make Your Message Timely.

Do not procrastinate. Be aware of the legislative process (where the legislation is in the process- is it up for a vote tomorrow in committee or on the floor?) and time your letter accordingly. Faxes serve better in getting to legislators at critical times in the process.

**Send a Copy of Your Letter to ATAP*

It is important for you to notify Audrey Busch when you've contacted a legislator, as it helps the coordinate the legislative strategy and additional lobbying. Make sure you also send a copy of any response you receive.

Action Tools

{ Calling Your Legislator }

If you find that you do not have the time to write a letter, making a phone call is one of the quickest and most effective ways to contact your legislator.

Tips to remember when making a phone call:

- First, as always, if you are a constituent, identify yourself as one.
- Second, ask to speak to the health staffer who works on the Assistive Technology Act. Be brief and specific. Congressional staffers are busy people and they will appreciate your effort to keep your conversation concise.
- Finally, offer to send information you have on the subject so that the staffer can be better informed on the issue.

Sample Telephone Script:

“My name is <name>. I am a constituent and I work at <<State AT Program>>. I urge <<Representative or Senator’s name>> to support full funding for the Assistive Technology Act Program.

The Assistive Technology Act Program, which helps persons with disabilities learn about and obtain assistive technology that meets their needs, should be fully funded. Federal funds allow the 56 State AT Act Programs continue to successfully achieve their mandate and provide the services through the network of State AT Act Programs which directly and positively impacts people with disabilities throughout the nation.

If you have any questions or if I can provide you with additional information, please feel free to contact me at <number or email>. Thank you.”

If you do not know the telephone number for your Senator or Representative, call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

More Tips:

Prepare ahead of time.

It is imperative that you plan for your phone conversation. You can use the sample talking points found earlier in this manual, and jot down a few notes before making your call. Be prepared to leave a clear message with your contact information.

Conversation.

When calling a lawmaker's office, ask to speak with the aide responsible for handling the Assistive Technology Act and other disability issues. This will be the health staffer given the AT Act's move to the Administration on Community Living. If this person is not available, leave your name and contact information, the issue you are calling in regard to and the specific action you want the legislator to take.

Follow-up.

Always follow-up with an email thanking the legislator and the staff for their time, and also use this opportunity to reiterate your position and provide any additional materials.

Action Tools

{ Thanking Your Legislator }

Not only is it important to contact your Member of Congress when an issue arises that concerns you, it is also important to thank your legislator for voting a certain way, speaking up on an issue important to you, or attending an event you organized. Showing a Member of Congress and their staff your appreciation for his or her efforts is a great way to build a relationship and let the legislator know the voting constituency supports his or her decisions.

Follow these tips when writing a thank you letter:

- If you are a constituent, begin your letter by saying so.
- Make clear what exactly you are thanking your legislator for: supporting a bill, making a speech, or attending an event.
- Remind the legislator why this issue is important to the constituency and why his or her support is necessary.
- Offer to provide additional resources for the legislative office.
- Be sure to include all your contact information in your letter.

Use this sample letter to thank your legislator. It can be sent by fax or email.

The Honorable <<First Name Last Name>>
United States Senate -or- United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20515

<<Date>>
Dear Representative/Senator <<Last Name>>:

On behalf of myself and my colleagues at <<institution>>, I would like to thank you for supporting funding for the Assistive Technology Act Program.

The Assistive Technology Act Program, which helps persons with disabilities learn about and obtain assistive technology that meets their needs, will now be able to fund the 56 State AT Act Programs and ensure they continue to successfully achieve their mandate and provide the services offered which directly and positively impacts people with disabilities throughout the nation.

If you have any additional questions about assistive technology, I can be reached at <<phone number>> or <<email>>. We look forward to continued collaboration with your office.

Sincerely,
<<Name>>
<<State>> Assistive Technology Program

Additional Resources

{ Federal Advocacy and Non-profit Rules }

v. lob·bied, lob·by·ing, lob·bies

v. *intr.*

1. To try to influence the thinking of legislators or other public officials for or against a specific cause: *lobbied for stronger environmental safeguards; lobbied against the proliferation of nuclear arms.*

v. *tr.*

1. To try to influence public officials on behalf of or against (proposed legislation, for example): *lobbied the bill through Congress; lobbied the bill to a negative vote.*

2. To try to influence (an official) to take a desired action.

n. ad·vo·ca·cy

1. The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support.

Many organizations shy away from activities they presume to be lobbying but which in fact fall outside of the definition of lobbying, which is narrowly defined by the IRS. Generally speaking, lobbying is the *expression of a view or a call to action on specific legislation*. Lobbying does not include, for instance, nonpartisan analysis of legislation, the expression of a position on issues (as opposed to legislation) of public concern, or action taken in "self-defense" of the organization.

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The right of citizens to petition their government is basic to our democratic way of life, and charitable organizations are one of the most effective vehicles for making use of citizen participation in shaping public policy. Fortunately, legislation passed by Congress in 1976 makes it possible for charities to lobby freely for their causes, communities and individuals they serve. The federal government clearly supports lobbying by charities. Congress sent this unambiguous message when it enacted the exceedingly helpful 1976 lobby law. The same message came from the IRS in regulations issued in 1990. Together, the law and regulations provide wide latitude for charities to lobby.

However, the law only provides this latitude for charities that elect to be covered by it. In most circumstances, charities should become subject to this law - not only because it provides liberal limits on how much they can spend on lobbying, but also because it provides very clear and helpful definitions of what activities related to legislation do not constitute lobbying. If you are formally asked to testify before a congressional committee, for example, your testimony would not constitute a lobbying expense. Generally, organizations that elect the 1976 lobby law may spend 20% of the first \$500,000 of their annual expenditures on lobbying (\$100,000), 15% of the next \$500,000, and so on, up to \$1 million dollars!

If you do lobbying but don't elect to be subject to the 1976 law, your lobbying must be "insubstantial." This is a vague term that has never been defined. If you remain subject to this rule, you cannot be certain how much lobbying your charity can do. Some charities have been reluctant to elect the 1976 law for fear that this action will either change their section 501(c)(3) status or serve as a "red flag" to the IRS and prompt an audit of the organization. Neither concern is justified. Electing to come under the 1976 law does not affect a charity's tax exempt status. Electing charities remain exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

If you have additional questions, we recommend you contact your in-house counsel.

Additional Resources { Useful Websites }

- **Congressional Budget Office:** www.cbo.gov
Analyzes budget proposals and provides economic forecasts.
- **U.S. Department of Education:** www.ed.gov
Federal agency that outlines the federal government's initiatives and priorities for education.
- **Government Printing Office:** www.gpo.gov
The information provided on this site is the official, published version of products produced by the Federal Government.
- **U.S. House of Representatives:** www.house.gov
Home page for Representatives of the U.S. Congress.
- **House Education and Labor Committee:** <http://edlabor.house.gov/>

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Deals with issues relating to education and labor.

- **House Appropriations Committee:** <http://appropriations.house.gov/>
Grants money to fund government agencies and programs.
- **U.S. Senate:** www.senate.gov
Home page for Senators of the U.S. Congress.
- **Senate HELP Committee:** <http://help.senate.gov/>
Deals with issues relating to health, education, labor or pensions.
- **Senate Appropriations Committee:** <http://appropriations.senate.gov/>
Grants money to fund government agencies and programs.
- **THOMAS:** <http://thomas.loc.gov/>
Established by the Library of Congress to provide access to information about Congress, the legislative process and legislation.
- **White House Home Page:** www.whitehouse.gov
Provides direct access to federal services, including applications for federal student aid.

Additional Resources

{ Capitol Hill Glossary }

Act – Legislation that has passed both Houses of Congress and becomes law.

Amendment – A change in a bill or document by adding, substituting or omitting portions of it. Action on amendments can be taken at the subcommittee, the full committee, or on the floor.

Appropriations Bill – Legislation that provides funds for authorized programs.

Authorization Bill – Legislation establishing a program and setting funding limits. You will often hear members of Congress, their staff, lobbyists and advocates say “funding for the program was authorized at \$100 million, but only \$12 million was appropriated.” An authorized funding level does not indicate the amount of actual funds.

Block Grants – Lump sums given to the states by the federal government for loosely defined purposes, such as childcare or improving public safety.

Briefing – A session held by members of Congress to inform the public, the media, advocates and others about an issue, legislation or the status of legislation. Sometimes questions are taken by the members of Congress, other times it is purely an informational session with no time allotted for questions.

Caucus – Meeting of Republican or Democratic members of Congress to determine policy and/or choose leaders.

Cloak Rooms – Small rooms off the House and Senate floor where members can rest and hold informal conferences.

Cloture – Method of limiting debate or ending a filibuster in the Senate. At least 60 Senators must vote in favor before cloture can be invoked.

Colloquy – A formal conversation, often in written form, between members of Congress to provide clarification on a point or issue.

Concurrent Resolution – Legislative action used to express the position of the House or the Senate, but does not have the force of law.

Continuing Resolution – Legislation that gives budget authority for specific on-going activities used when Congress hasn't yet passed all regular appropriations bills prior to the start of the fiscal year (October 1).

Committee – A working subdivision of the House or Senate that prepares legislation or conducts investigations; committees and their subcommittees have specific areas of concern.

Conference Committee – Meeting between Representatives and Senators to resolve differences when two versions of a similar bill have been passed by the House and Senate.

Congressional Record – Official transcript of the proceedings in Congress.

“Dear Colleague” Letter – A letter circulated to members asking for their participation, often asks to co-sponsor a bill.

Engrossed Bill – Final copy of a bill passed by either the House or Senate with amendments. The bill is then delivered to the other chamber.

Enrolled Bill – Final copy of a bill that has passed both the House and Senate in identical form.

Extension of Remarks – When a member of Congress inserts material in the Congressional Record which is not directly related to the debate underway.

Filibuster – Tactic used in the Senate whereby a member of the minority party intentionally delays a vote.

Fiscal Year – Accounting year. For the Federal Government, the fiscal year (FY) is October 1 to September 30 of the following calendar year.

Guidance – Informal letters and guidance from the executive branch explaining their stance, but technically not binding under the law.

H.R. – Letters followed by a number that signify a bill that has originated in the House of Representatives.

Hearing – A committee session in which witnesses are called to testify about a particular issue. Hearings are usually conducted at the subcommittee level first in order to determine whether the issue or bill in question should be taken up in the full committee.

Joint Resolution – Legislation similar to a bill that has the force of law if passed by both houses and signed by the President, generally used for special circumstances. A joint resolution can originate in either the House or the Senate.

Lame Duck – Member of Congress (or the President) who has not been reelected but whose term has not yet expired. The expression can also describe a session of Congress during which the appropriations bills for that year are not passed before the next session of Congress begins.

Logrolling – Process whereby members help each other get particular legislation passed. One member will help another on one piece of legislation in return for similar help.

Motion to Table – Proposal to postpone consideration of a matter in the Senate.

Omnibus Bill – Bill regarding a single subject that combines many different aspects of that subject.

President Pro Tempore – Senator who presides over the Senate in the absence of the Vice President of the U.S. The President Pro Tempore is usually the longest-serving member of the majority party.

Pocket Veto – When the President does not sign or veto legislation submitted to him within ten days of Congress' adjournment, the bill dies.

Point of Order – An objection that language, an amendment or bill is in violation of a rule. Also used to force a quorum call.

Quorum – The number of Senators or Representatives who must be present before a legislative body can conduct official business.

Ranking Members – The members of the majority and minority party on a committee next in seniority after the chairman.

Regulatory – law-binding regulations issued by the executive branch to clarify and expand upon statutory law.

Sense of the House/Senate – Legislative language which offers the opinion of the House/Senate, but does not make law.

Simple Resolution – A measure considered only by the body in which they are introduced, a simple resolution addresses a matter concerning the rules, the operation, or the opinion of either house alone.

S – letter followed by a number that signifies a bill that has originated in the Senate.

Statutory – enacted or authorized by statute. An example of statutory law is the America COMPETES Act.

Unanimous Consent – A procedure whereby a matter is considered agreed to if no member on the floor objects. Unanimous Consent motions save time by eliminating the need for a vote.

Whip – assistant leader for each party in each chamber who keeps other members of the party informed of the legislative agenda of the leader. The whip also monitors the sentiment among party members for certain legislation and tries to persuade members to be present and vote for measures important to the party leadership.

Source: *Many of these definitions are taken from Congress at Your Fingertips, edited by Capitol Advantage.*

**In addition to this glossary, a great on-line resource is the C-SPAN Congressional Glossary available at: <http://www.c-span.org/Resources/Congress-Legislative/>*

Additional Resources { Commonly Used Acronyms }

You will quickly learn that denizens of Capitol Hill speak in acronyms. Here are some common ones. A great resource for deciphering the “alphabet soup” can be found on the web at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/acronym.shtml>.

GAO – Government Accountability Office

GPO – General Printing Office

OMB – Office of Management and Budget

CBO – Congressional Budget Office

CJS – The House and Senate Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittees

CRS – Congressional Research Service

HOB – House Office Building

SOB – Senate Office Building

HBCU – Historically Black Colleges and Universities

HEA – The Higher Education Act

IDEA – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

WIA – The Workforce Investment Act

HELP – The Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in the Senate

LHHS – The House and Senate Labor, Health, Human Services and Education

Appropriations Subcommittees (also referred to as “Labor-H” or “Labor-HHS”)

{Important Contacts}

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

2013 H Street, NW, 5th Floor

Washington, DC 20006

(202) 457-0046 (office) V/TTY

(866) 536-4461 (fax)

www.aapd.com

American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD)

110 N. Washington Street, #328J

Rockville, MD 20850

(301) 545-6140 (office)

(301) 545-6144 (fax)

<http://www.aahd.us/>

Roberta Carlin, Executive Director, e-mail: rcarlin@aahd.us

American Council of the Blind (ACB)

2200 Wilson Blvd, Suite 650

Arlington, VA 22201

(202) 467-5081 (office)

(202) 467-5085 (fax)

<http://www.acb.org/>

Eric Bridges, Director of Advocacy, e-mail: ebridges@acb.org

American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)

1660 L Street, NW, Ste.513

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 469-6831 (office/TDD)

(646) 478-9260 (fax)

<http://www.afb.org/>

Mark Richert, Director of Public Policy, 202-822-0833 (direct line)

e-mail: mrichert@afb.net

American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association (AMRPA)

1710 N Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036-2907

(202) 223-1920 (office)

(202) 223-1925 (fax)

<http://www.amrpa.org/>

Carolyn Zollar, VP Government Relations and Policy, e-mail: czollar@amrpa.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

444 N. Capitol Street, NW, Ste. 715

Washington, DC 20001

(202) 624-5884 (office)

(202) 624-5955 (fax)

<http://www.asha.org/>

Catherine Clarke, Director of Education and Regulatory Policy, e-mail: cclarke@asha.org

Susan Karr, Associate Director of School Services, e-mail: skarr@asha.org

Association of University Centers on

Disabilities (AUCD)

1010 Wayne Ave., Ste. 1000

Silver Spring, MD 20910

(301) 588-8252 (office)

(301) 588-2842 (fax)

<http://www.aucd.org/>

Kim Musheno, Director of Legislative Affairs, e-mail: kmusheno@aucd.org

Andy Imparato, Executive Director, e-mail: aimparato@aucd.org

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (BCMHL)

1101 15th Street, NW, Ste. 1212

Washington, DC 20005

(202) 467-5730 (office)

(202) 223-0409 (fax)

<http://www.bazelon.org/>

Jennifer Mathis, Deputy Director, e-mail: jenniferm@bazelon.org

Bethany Lily, Policy Attorney, bethanyl@bazelon.org

Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA)

1608 Spring Hill Road, Ste. 110

Vienna, VA 22182

(703) 761-0750 (office)

(703) 761-0755 (fax)

<http://www.biausa.org/>

Robert Demichelis, Self-advocate Volunteer, e-mail: rdemichelis@biausa.org

Amy Colberg, Director of Government Affairs, e-mail: acolberg@biausa.org

Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions (CDIHP)

c/o Institute for Educational Leadership

4301 Connecticut Ave., NW, #100

Washington, DC 20008

(202) 822-8405 ext. 163 (office)

(202) 872-4050 (fax)

<http://www.cdihp.org/>

Western University of Health Sciences

309 E. Second Street

Pomona, CA 91766

(909) 623-6116 (office)

(909) 469-5503 (fax)

Brenda Premo, Director of the Center for Disabilities, e-mail: bpremo@westernu.edu

June Isaacson Kailes, Disability Policy Consultant, e-mail: jik@pacbell.net

6201 Ocean Front Walk, Suite 2

Playa Del Rey, CA 90293

(310) 821-7080 (office)

(310) 827-0269 (fax)

(310) 469-5520 (TTY)

Center for Workers with Disabilities (CWD)

1133 19th Street, NW, Ste. 400

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 682-0100, ext. 247 phone

(202) 289-6555 fax

<http://cwd.aphsa.org/>

Nanette Relave, Director, e-mail: NRelave@aphsa.org

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000

Arlington, VA 22202

(888) 232-7733 (office)

<http://www.cec.sped.org/>

Deb Ziegler, Assistant Executive Director, e-mail: debz@cec.sped.org

Kimberly Hymes, Director of Policy and Advocacy, e-mail: kimh@cec.sped.org

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)

1 Research Court, Suite 450

Rockville, MD 20850

(301) 654-8414 (office)

(301) 654-5542 (fax)

<http://www.rehabnetworking.org/>

Rita Martin, Deputy Director, e-mail: rmartin@rehabnetwork.org

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Inc. (DREDF)

Government Affairs Office

1825 K Street, NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20006

(800) 348-4232 (office)

<http://www.dredf.org/>

Susan Henderson, Executive Director, e-mail: shenderson@dredf.org

(510) 644-2555 (office)

(510) 841-8645 (fax)

Mary Lou Breslin, Senior Policy Analyst, e-mail: mlb99@aol.com

2212 Sixth Street

Berkeley, CA 94710

(510) 843-4062 (office)

(510) 841-8645

Division for Early Childhood of the CEC (DEC/CEC)

27 Fort Missoula Road, Suite 2

Missoula, MT 59804

(406) 543-0872 (office)

(406) 543-0887 (fax)

<http://www.dec-sped.org/>

Sarah Mulligan, Executive Director, e-mail: sarah.mulligan@dec-sped.org

Easter Seals (ES)

233 South Wacker Drive, Suite 2400

Chicago, IL 60606

(800) 221-6827 (office)

<http://www.easter-seals.org/>

National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics (NAAOP)

1501 M Street NW, 7th Floor

Washington, DC 20005

(202) 624-0064 (office)

(202) 785-1756 (fax)

<http://www.naaop.org/>

Peter Thomas, General Counsel, e-mail: pthomas@ppsv.com

George Breece, Executive Director, e-mail: george@breece.com

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD)

1825 K Street, NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 506-5813 (office)

(202) 506-5846 (fax)

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs |
440 First St., NW, Suite 360 Washington, D.C. 20001 | T: 202.344.5674 | Email Address:

atap@ataporg.org
<http://www.ataporg.org>

<http://www.nacdd.org/>
Donna Meltzer, Chief Executive Officer, dmeltzer@nacdd.org
Eseme Grant, Director of Public Policy, egrant@nacdd.org

National Association of State Directors of
Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS)
301 N. Fairfax St. Suite 101
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 683-4202 (office)
<http://www.nasddds.org/>
Dan Berland, Director of Federal Policy, e-mail: dberland@nasddds.org
Nancy Thaler, Executive Director, e-mail: nthaler@nasddds.org

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 420
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 519-3800 (office)
(703) 519-3808 (fax)
<http://www.nasdse.org/>
Nancy Reder, Deputy Executive Director, e-mail: nancy.reder@nasdse.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)
381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1401
New York, NY 10016
(212) 545-7510 (phone)
<http://www.nclld.org/>
Lindsey Jones, Director of Public Policy, e-mail: ljones@nclld.org

National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB)
141 Middle Neck Road
Sands Point, NY 11050
(1-516) 944-8900 (office)
(1-516) 944-5984 (fax)
<http://www.hknc.org/>

National Collaborative on Workforce And Disability/Youth (NCWD/Y)
c/o Institute for Educational Leadership
4301 Connecticut Ave., NW, #100
Washington, DC 20008
(877) 871-0744 (office)
<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
1710 Rhode Island Ave., NW, 4 th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 207-0334 (office)
(202) 207-0341 (fax)
<http://www.ncil.org/>
Kelly Buckland, Executive Director, e-mail: Kelly@ncil.org

Eastlake, Derry & Associates, LLC
737 Powell Ave
Morgantown, WVA 26505
(304) 296-3510 (office)
(304) 296-5073 (fax)

Brian Peters
540 S. 1 Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204
(414) 291-7520 (office)
(414) 226-8338 (fax)
E-mail: bpeters@independencefirst.org

National Disability Institute (NDI)
1667 K Street, NW, #640
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 296-2040 (office)
<http://www.ndi-inc.org/>
Johnette Hartnett, Director of Strategy and Research, e-mail: jhartnett@ndi-inc.org

National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
820 1st St. NE, Suite 740
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-9514 (office)
(202) 408-9520 (fax)
<http://www.napas.org/>
Eric Buehlmann, Director of Public Policy, e-mail: eric.buehlmann@ndrn.org
Curtis Decker, Executive Director, e-mail: curt.decker@ndrn.org

National Down Syndrome Society/National Policy
Center (NDSS)
1602 L Street, NW, Suite 925
Washington, DC 20036
(800) 221-4602 (office)
(212) 979-2873 (fax)
<http://www.ndss.org/>
Sara Weir, President, e-mail: sweir@ndss.org

National Industries for the Blind (NIB)
1310 Braddock Place

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs |
440 First St., NW, Suite 360 Washington, D.C. 20001 | T: 202.344.5674 | Email Address:
atap@ataporg.org
<http://www.ataporg.org>

Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 310-0500 (office)
(703) 671-9053 (fax)
<http://www.nib.org/>
Pat Beattie, Director of Public Policy, e-mail: pbeattie@nib.org

National Rehabilitation Association (NRA)
P.O. Box 150235
Alexandria, VA 22315
(703) 836-0850 (office)
(703) 836-0848 (fax)
<http://nationalrehab.org/>
Patricia Leahy, Director of Government Affairs, e-mail: pleahy@nationalrehab.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
801 18th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 872-1300 (office)
(202) 416-7706 (fax)
<http://www.pva.org/>
Maureen McCloskey, e-mail: maureenm@pva.org

Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA)
1700 N. Moore Street Ste. 1540
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 524-6686 (office)
(703) 524-6630 (fax)
<http://www.resna.org/>
Michael Brogioli, Executive Director, e-mail: mbroglioli@resna.org

TASH
2013 H St. NW
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 540-9020 (office)
(202) 540-9019 (fax)
<http://www.tash.org/>
Barbara Trader, Executive Director, e-mail: btrader@tash.org

The Arc of the United States & United Cerebral Palsy (DPC) via Disability Policy Collaboration
1825 K Street, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 534-3700 (office)
(202) 534-3731 (fax)

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs |
440 First St., NW, Suite 360 Washington, D.C. 20001 | T: 202.344.5674 | Email Address:
atap@ataporg.org
<http://www.ataporg.org>

<http://www.thearc.org/>

Marty Ford, Chief Public Policy Officer, e-mail: ford@thedpc.org

Annie Acosta, Director of Fiscal and Family Support, e-mail: acosta@thedpc.org

Julie Ward, Director, Health Policy, e-mail: jward@ucp.org

Brenda Walker, Administrative Assistant, e-mail: walker@thedpc.org