How to Research and Contact Your Members of Congress

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Being familiar with the backgrounds and policy positions of your legislators will ensure that you have a successful meeting with their office.

LOOK FOR YOUR LEGISLATOR’S…

☐ Committee and Caucus Membership – These are opportunities for legislators to work on issues important to them and their constituents.

☐ Voting Record – Especially if you plan on discussing specific legislation, look at your legislator’s recent voting record. Even if you disagree with most of what your member does, finding something they’ve done recently that you can thank them for is a great way to begin a meeting.

☐ Top Policy Interests – Look at the “issues” section of their website. This will give you an idea of their policy priorities.

☐ Biography and Hometown – Where are they from and where do they live? What can that tell you about their priorities?

☐ Previous Jobs – You can get an idea of what kinds of issues they’ll care about through the lens of their previous occupations. For example, if your Member of Congress was previously a nurse, they’re likely to care about health impacts.

☐ Hobbies – What are they doing when they’re not at work? If your legislator is an avid sportsman, they probably care about conservation issues.

RESOURCES FOR RESEARCHING MEMBERS:

• A quick overview of how Congress is organized, and to find your Representatives and Senators: govtrack.us

• Your Representatives and Senators also have personal websites, with position statements, press releases, and other helpful information. The general template for websites is [representative last name].house.gov or [senator last name].senate.gov

• Resource to learn how your Members voted on specific legislation.

• You can also follow your Members on social media for a quick way to see what issues they are currently involved in or promoting. Check out their Twitter!

• Your university or Institution may have a Government Affairs department with additional resources specific to your discipline or districts

RESOURCES FOR CONTACTING MEMBERS AND THEIR STAFF:

• Calling Your Member of Congress: Visit their website for their DC and district office locations and phone numbers.

• E-mailing your Member of Congress: When calling the office, you can ask for the name of the staffer who works on the issue you are concerned about. Once you have their name, send them an e-mail using the standard House and Senate e-mail addresses. The standard House e-mail template is firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov and the standard Senate e-mail template is firstname_lastname@senatorlastname.senate.gov.