



CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

WHAT IS IT?

There are a variety of ways to express your views about March of Dimes policy priorities, ranging in ease from tweeting, calling and writing your elected officials to meeting them in person.

This toolkit aims to guide you through the process of contacting your representatives by providing advocacy activities and communication tips.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Your voice and opinions are powerful. Members of Congress are elected to represent your concerns. It's your responsibility to make your voice heard. You can make a difference, big or small, by communicating with your Members of Congress and their Congressional staff. If you take the time to thoughtfully express your views and follow up with them, your message will have a great impact.

HOW YOU CAN DO IT:

Call: Calling your elected officials is an efficient way to get your message across, even if you don't directly speak with them. Find a sample Congressional telephone call [here](#).

Write a letter or email: Writing a letter and emailing are other effective ways to communicate your concerns. Remember to keep your message clear and short, introduce yourself and your credentials, use specific examples, suggest recommendations and thank them.

- Find a sample Congressional letter [here](#)

Attend a town hall meeting: Attending town hall meetings are an opportunity to ask questions and demonstrate your commitment. It's important to come prepared with questions, make a point of talking with the Members of Congress or their staff at the meeting, take notes during and follow up afterwards.

- Learn about upcoming constituent events by visiting the websites of your Members of Congress, calling the local district offices or viewing the [Congressional calendar](#) and [Congress Days in Session](#)

Schedule a meeting: Meeting your Members of Congress in person or virtually is an effective way to influence them and their decisions. Steps include:

- Request a meeting—here's a [sample Congressional meeting request email](#)
- Research your Member of Congress
- Map out your "ask" and create your message—here's a [message worksheet](#)
- Prepare documents to leave behind—visit [tips for creating a leave-behind-document](#)
- Come prepared by bringing business cards, one-pagers, a notebook and pen; and make sure to dress professionally
- If the meeting is virtual, make sure to designate a leader for the video call to help with the flow of the meeting

QUICK LINKS

- To find your representative, visit this [website](#)
- To find your senator, visit this [website](#)
- [Policy priorities](#)
- More resources can be found at marchofdimes.org

COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Know the correct pronunciation of your legislator's name.
- Know whether he/she/they is a Representative or Senator and use their title when addressing them.
- Review relevant committee assignments.
- Be personable, courteous and non-confrontational.
- Begin by thanking the legislator for their hard work and representation.
- Do NOT make your political affiliation apparent, but underscore your role on behalf of March of Dimes.
- Use this opportunity to educate. Never guess or exaggerate facts. Speak in plain terms. Back up your talking points.
- Brevity is important. Get to the point of your visit.

SHARE YOUR STORY AND CONNECT

UNSPOKEN STORIES

#UnspokenStories gives voice to experiences of pregnancy from the joys of parenting to the heartbreak of loss. The supportive community is made up of parents, medical professionals, grandparents, would-be parents and friends who want to share with each other one story at a time. Visit www.unspokenstories.org.

SHARE YOUR STORY

ShareYourStory.org is a welcoming environment for families to share their story and connect with other moms, dads and families who understand first-hand the challenges and triumphs that can happen throughout the pregnancy journey.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

- To meet your elected officials and to tell them what you care about and why you care
- To educate lawmakers on March of Dimes' core issues, such as maternal health, access to care and Newborn Screening
- To encourage lawmakers to promote public policies that improve the health of all moms and babies

Learn about March of Dimes advocacy campaigns and sign up for our [Action Network](#).

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE VISITS



BEFORE THE MEETING...

- Do your homework.
- Know the correct spelling and pronunciation of the legislator's name.
- Research committee assignments if possible.
- Review your legislator's voting record and any publicly stated views or opinions.
- Anticipate how the legislator(s) may respond and have rebuttals prepared.



AT THE MEETING...

- Be on time.
- Don't be insulted if you meet with the legislator's staff.
- Staff are extremely important.
- Staff often have the "ear" of the legislator—thousands of bills are filed, and they'll turn to staff for more information (though different officials operate differently).
- Make limited small talk and keep the tone and climate of the meeting casual and friendly—not defensive or accusatory.
- Introduce, inquire, inform and request.
- State your purpose clearly: "I'm here to talk about X and/or to ask for your support specifically on..."
- Make the issue real, connect it to real life and use "human" examples when possible.
- Stay at "30,000" feet and do not get too technical unless talking to someone who has expertise in the area.
- Summarize your main points before leaving.
- Say thank you and leave on time—don't prolong meeting past requested time unless legislator is asking questions.



AFTER THE MEETING...

- Send a thank you note via mail or email.
- Even though the meeting is over, this isn't the end. This is the beginning of an ongoing relationship with your legislator(s) that will allow you to voice your opinion in the future.
- Send updated information as it becomes available.