

# THE FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

The following list outlines the federal appropriations cycle and recommends actions that you can take during the fiscal year to most effectively influence the outcome. Please note that this is a general guide and Congress does not always follow this schedule.

## SUMMER - FALL

- Federal agencies develop and submit budgets to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) , which advises the president on policy and budgetary matters.
- Discuss priorities for the coming year with your organization and other advocates.**

## FIRST MONDAY IN FEBRUARY

- The president submits a budget to Congress. This document highlights the administration’s priorities and sets the tone for congressional debate.

## FEBRUARY - MARCH

- House and Senate Budget Committees decide how much can be spent and begin to divide spending totals into broad functional categories.
- Ask your members of Congress to contact the budget committee about making medical research a priority.**

## APRIL 15

- The “budget resolution” that sets a broad framework for federal spending is finalized. (Congress rarely meets the April 15 deadline.)

## MAY - JUNE

- House and Senate Appropriations Committees set spending ceilings for their respective appropriations subcommittees.
- Ask your members of Congress to contact the appropriations committee about making medical research a priority.**

## JUNE - JULY

- Each appropriations subcommittee passes a bill to designate funding levels for specific programs and projects.
- Ask your members of Congress to contact the appropriations committee about making medical research a priority.**

## AUGUST

- August Recess. Members of Congress return to their districts to meet with constituents.
- Schedule meetings with your members of Congress or their staff in your home district/state.**

## SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

- Deadline to pass funding bills (Sept. 30) and beginning of the new fiscal year (Oct. 1). Congress must enact a “continuing resolution” (CR) if it fails to meet this deadline. A CR allows the government to temporarily continue operating at the previous year’s funding levels.
- Ask your members of Congress to support funding for medical research in the final appropriations bill.**



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
**RallyForMedicalResearch.org**

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From funding research grants to minimizing the barriers to clinical trials, the decisions made in Washington, D.C., directly affect the rate of progress against hundreds of diseases affecting millions of Americans.

In this brochure, you will find tips to facilitate communication with your members of Congress and their staff. It is important to reach out throughout the year to build and maintain strong relationships and make yourself known as an expert resource on issues pertaining to medical research.



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## TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING ON CAPITOL HILL

Meeting in person with your member of Congress or his or her staff is one of the most effective ways to develop a relationship and maintain a dialogue about the value of medical research. Members will usually try to make constituent meetings a priority in their busy schedules.

### Meeting Preparation:

- If you are scheduling the meeting yourself, submit a written request to the member’s office several weeks in advance. Be sure to include the following information: dates and times you are available to meet, the issues you wish to discuss, and the names of any others who will attend the meeting.
- If your member is not available, a member of their staff will meet with you on their behalf. Members rely on staff to advise them on important issues and to make key decisions on their behalf. Building a strong relationship with staff is very important.
- Prepare two to three key points to speak about.  
*(Keep in mind that meetings are typically limited to 10-15 minutes.)*
- Know your member’s stance and voting record on medical research issues as well as their committee assignments, leadership positions, and biographical information.

### During the Meeting:

- Identify your organization and briefly describe its mission and key initiatives.
- Focus on the two or three issues that are most important to you and your organization.
- If possible, describe how your issues could directly affect your district or state (for example, in terms of lives saved, cost savings, economic stimulus, or global competitiveness).
- Solicit the member’s or the staff member’s view of the issue(s), talk about merits of their position.
- Be clear about your objective and desired outcome. (Example: Vote for or against a bill)
- Emphasize the need for robust and sustained investment in research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

### Following Up:

- Leave behind your contact information and offer your expertise if it is needed in the future.
- Send a thank you note and follow-up information to ensure that the member and staff keep your points in mind.
- Send another thank you note if the member takes the requested action.

## TIPS FOR CALLING YOUR CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE

Especially when legislation is moving quickly through Congress, placing a phone call is the best way to influence your member’s vote.

- Request to speak with the legislative aide who handles the issue you are calling about.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and a member of [your organization]. Ask to leave a brief message for the member of Congress. (Example: “As a constituent, I would like the Senator/Representative to support medical research.”)
- Briefly provide reasons for your support or opposition.
- Ask where the member stands on the issue.
- You may also ask for a written reply or a return phone call from staff.
- Thank the staff member for his or her time.

Phone numbers can be found on the member’s website, or the Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 can direct your call.

## TIPS FOR WRITING A LETTER OR E-MAIL

Members of Congress often gauge the importance of an issue to their constituency by the quantity of mail or e-mail that they receive on that topic.

- Keep in mind that congressional mail security screening processes can delay postal letters by days or weeks in addition to the normal mailing time. For that reason, it is recommended that your correspondence is sent by e-mail.
- Letters and e-mails should contain all of the information you would include in a phone call or an in-person meeting. They are most effective when they are kept brief and provide relevant, credible data.
- If you are using a form letter or e-mail, take the time to add your own personal anecdotes about the importance of medical research.

### Correct Form of Address:

#### U.S. Senators

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]  
United States Senate  
[Building and Office Number]  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

#### U.S. Representatives

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]  
United States House of Representatives  
[Building and Office Number]  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

## FOR RESEARCHERS: INVITING YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS ON A SITE VISIT OF YOUR LAB OR INSTITUTION

Inviting your member of Congress on a site visit to your lab or institution is an ideal way to make a lasting impression. These visits provide an opportunity to demonstrate to your member, first-hand, the progress occurring in the fight against disease and the breakthrough innovation occurring in their own home state or district.

### Meeting Preparation:

- Members of Congress typically return to their home states and districts on weekends and during congressional work periods to visit with constituents.
- Extend an invitation to either your member’s Washington, D.C., office or nearest district office. Be sure to include the following information: the location and description of your lab or institution, dates and times you are available to host the member, any specific issues you wish to discuss, and the names of any others who will be in attendance.
- If your member is not available, a member of their staff may be available to attend on their behalf. Members rely on staff to advise them on important issues and to make key decisions on their behalf. Building a strong relationship with staff is very important.
- Once you have received confirmation, give advance notice to anyone who will be involved in the site visit, including your staff as well as any public relations staff for your lab or institution, as they may be interested in coordinating media coverage and publicity.

### During the Meeting:

- Focus on the two or three issues specific to your research area or your institution to discuss.
- Lead the member or staff on an interactive tour. Explain how your research is conducted and describe its potential for preventing and curing disease.
- Introduce the members of your staff and explain their roles.
- Emphasize the need for a significant investment in research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and use the visit to demonstrate how federal dollars are invested.
- If possible, describe how your work directly affects the member’s district (in terms of lives saved, cost savings, economic stimulus, or global competitiveness).

### Following Up:

- Send a thank you note and follow-up information to ensure that the member and staff keep your points in mind.
- Offer your expertise if it is needed in the future.