

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

To find out who your U.S. Representative is, call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Tell the operator your ZIP Code to learn who represents you in Congress. Or, visit the MHFHA web site at www.mhfha.com and click the LINK .. "Communicate with your Congressional Representatives."

Congressional Offices

Each Member of Congress has two types of offices. The Washington, DC office should be contacted regarding legislative matters or concerns about public policy. The Representative's district office or Senator's state office takes care of personal matters (e.g., late or incorrect Social Security payments, obtaining small business loans, disaster relief, etc.).

Selected Congressional Staff

Chief of Staff (CoS) —supervises daily office activities, monitors state / district "temperature" on various issues, maintains liaison with state/district officials, and often manages the re-election campaign.

Legislative Director (LD)/Legislative Assistant (LA) —one or more per office, performs background research, monitors legislative proposals, makes recommendations to the Member regarding merits of particular bills (pros and cons).

Press Secretary/Communications Director —maintains and cultivates public image for the Member of Congress through the media.

Appointments Secretary/Scheduler—manages the Member's time and schedules meetings, speeches, etc.

Caseworker—resolves individual constituents' problems with the federal government.

CONTACTING YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS BY TELEPHONE

Regarding Personal Matters

1. Call the Washington, DC office of your Senator or Representative or his /her local state/district office.
2. State your name and the city or town where you are from.
3. Ask for the caseworker and identify your problem or need, (e.g., on any problem dealing with federal departments or agencies).
4. Some Congressional offices will then request that you send a letter to the Senator or Representative, explaining your problem in writing.

Regarding Legislative Matters

1. Call the Washington, DC office of your Senator or Representative or his/her local state/district office.
2. State your name and the city or town you are from.
3. Determine your objective in advance. Do you intend to merely give your opinion, or do you wish to actually discuss a matter with someone, offering suggestions, etc.? Most offices keep tally sheets on "hot" legislative issues, so if you wish to call and simply register your opinion on a given matter, they will be glad to register your "vote." If you want to take it further, ask for the legislative assistant who handles your subject (taxes, for instance) and identify the legislative issue or bill that is of concern to you. Tell him how the issue will affect you. Ask what the Member intends to do about it, or how he/she is planning to vote.
4. If you have requested a document, etc., some Congressional offices will ask that you send a letter stating your request in writing. Congressional offices often take 2-4 weeks to reply.

WRITING TO YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Forms of Address

Senate

The Honorable _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator _____

House

The Honorable _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman/
Congresswoman _____

Guidelines on Composing Your Letter

- 1) Address the letter to *your* Representative or Senator(s) who represents you in Congress. You are his/her *constituent* and he/she is interested in your opinions! When writing by e-mail, include your name and street address to identify yourself as a constituent.
 - 2) Immediately identify the subject you are writing about and that you are a member of ***Mt Hood Forest Homeowners Association***. If it concerns a specific concern state that concern early in your correspondence. If it concerns a specific bill, identify it by name and number (S.-"Senate bill" /H.R.-"House bill"). Limit your letter to one topic.
 - 3) Tell the Senator or Representative why you are advocating this position. State facts; give examples. Tell how the legislation will affect you and your group, etc. Do not generalize. Be specific.
 - 4) Keep the letter polite. It should be positive and constructive. Never threaten.
 - 5) Repeat your reason for writing. Thank the Senator or Representative for his/her cooperation.
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E-Mailing Your Letter

Most Congressional representatives have emails. You can find that information through the link on the **MHFHA** web site. You will only be able to correspond with your representatives as you will need to identify your ZIP code to access the email portion of the site. You may find it easier to compose your letter in a word processing program and then copy it and past it to the site.

Faxing Your Letter

Most Congressional offices prefer to receive letters by fax. Fax numbers for many offices are listed on their website. If your member's fax is not listed, you may be able to get it if you call the office first and explain the purpose of your fax.

Checklist for Writing to a Member of Congress

- Include your local address on the letter.
- Keep the letter to one page or at most two.
Type the letter or write neatly.
- Do not send a photocopy.
- Type/print your name underneath your signature.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

1. A bill is written. A Senator or Representative may develop original legislation, or a trade association or private citizens may request that a bill be prepared, and assist in its writing.
2. A bill is introduced in the Senate and/or House. It is assigned a number (S. — in the Senate and H.R. — in the House). Its title and sponsors are published in the Congressional Record. Bills are available online via Thomas ([http: / /www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov)).
3. The Parliamentarians of the House and Senate assign bills to committees with the appropriate jurisdiction. Both House and Senate committees have a number of subcommittees. The chairman of the committee assigns the bill to the subcommittee with the most appropriate jurisdiction.
4. The subcommittee may hold hearings on the bill and invite testimony from public and private witnesses. Individuals may make their views known by testifying, by providing a written statement, or by allowing interest groups to represent their views.
5. Once the hearings are completed, the subcommittee may meet to "mark-up" the bill—to consider amendments. It then votes on whether to report the bill favorably to the full committee. If not favorably reported, the bill dies.
6. The full committee may repeat any or all of the subcommittee's actions: hearings, mark-up, and vote. If the committee votes favorably on the bill, it is ordered reported to either the House of Representatives (if the bill was being considered on the House side) or to the Senate (if the bill was being considered on the Senate side).

7. When the bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, the membership of the entire body can debate it. At this stage, the bill may be further amended, referred back to committee, or voted up or down.
 8. If the Bill is passed by the House or Senate, it is referred to the other body. A House-passed bill may be placed directly on the Senate Calendar, bypassing the subcommittees and committee reviews. Usually, however, the subcommittees and committees in both bodies have an opportunity to hold hearings, debate, and amend legislative proposals. Related or identical legislation often proceeds through the House and Senate simultaneously.
 9. If a bill is passed in identical form by the House and Senate, it can be immediately delivered to the President.
 10. If there are significant differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill, an ad hoc conference committee is appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House to resolve the differences. Conference committees are composed of Senators and Representatives on the committees which originally considered the legislation.
 11. If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies. If they do reach agreement, the bill is sent back to both the House and Senate. Both must approve the conference committee bill.
 12. The bill then goes to the President for his signature. He has four options: (1) if he signs the bill, it becomes law; (2) if he takes no action within ten days while Congress is in session, the bill becomes law; (3) if he takes no action while Congress is adjourned at the end of the second session, the bill is "pocket vetoed" and dies; or, (4) the President may veto the bill.
 13. If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." This requires a two-thirds vote by both the House and Senate. If either fails to get a two-thirds vote, the bill is dead. If both succeed, the bill becomes law.
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