

NORM

National Organization of
Rheumatology Management

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



Equipping rheumatology managers and their partners with the knowledge and skills to meaningfully impact the legislative process for the specialty and the patients it serves.

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RESOURCES

In Washington, DC and around the country in state legislatures, one thing is certain - a few advocacy initiatives get across the finish line without a coalition of interested stakeholders working in concert. To that end, NORM relies on partnerships with several other provider, patient, and general stakeholder organizations to help ensure success. While the below list is not exhaustive, it represents a set of organizations that NORM works closely with.



National Organization of Rheumatology Management

Contact NORM: advocacy@normgroup.com

 [@NORMGrp](https://twitter.com/NORMGrp)

AMERICAN COLLEGE
of RHEUMATOLOGY
Empowering Rheumatology Professionals

 [@ACRheumDC](https://twitter.com/ACRheumDC)



 [@ATAPAdvocates](https://twitter.com/ATAPAdvocates)




 [@ArthritisFdn](https://twitter.com/ArthritisFdn)




 [@CSROAdvocacy](https://twitter.com/CSROAdvocacy)




 [@CreakyJoints](https://twitter.com/CreakyJoints)



 [@LetMyDrDecide](https://twitter.com/LetMyDrDecide)



 [@infusioncenter](https://twitter.com/infusioncenter)

THE VALUE OF ADVOCACY

Why We Advocate

One of the oldest sayings in Washington is: *“If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.”* Nothing could be more accurate for health care organizations, including rheumatology practices managed by members of the National Organization of Rheumatology Management (NORM).

Health care continues to consume a growing proportion of the nation’s economy, and health care costs are one of the biggest budget items for the typical American family. Lawmakers are under constant pressure to lower health care spending for taxpayers and consumers and increase the longevity of federal health programs. There are ramifications for rheumatology practices and their patients within the policy arena. Rheumatology practices are heavily regulated entities and must meet certain requirements to deliver care to patients. In addition, their reimbursements are frequently tied to Medicare, which have not kept pace with inflation. Policymakers may fail to consider the impact of their proposals on rheumatology practices – which is why NORM does and must continue to engage in important health policy development activities and serve as an advocate for their individual and collective organizations and their patients.

Legislative staffers who support policymakers in Congress are under greater stress every year, as the funding for their offices has continually diminished over the past 30 years when accounting for inflation. For example, a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives has no more than 10-12 full-time staff in their legislative office on Capitol Hill. Among this small group, a maximum of 4-5 staff will manage issue area portfolios (i.e., – defense, appropriations, health care, agriculture, etc.).

Each staffer is often responsible for keeping the Member of Congress informed and updated on more than a dozen issues, many of which are highly complex. The need to provide accurate and timely information, coupled with the lack of bandwidth and resources at a staffer’s disposal creates an opportunity for experts like you to help Members of Congress navigate issues that they are unfamiliar with. Your advocacy can be crucial in helping them respond to the needs of their constituents. Most importantly, if you don’t share your story with your lawmakers, no one will. The competing priorities that these offices face mean that your voice must be heard in order for these issues to be considered in the legislative process.

THE VALUE OF ADVOCACY

Your Value

In short, when you are a constituent – someone who resides in the area represented by a Member of Congress – congressional offices view you as a “customer.”

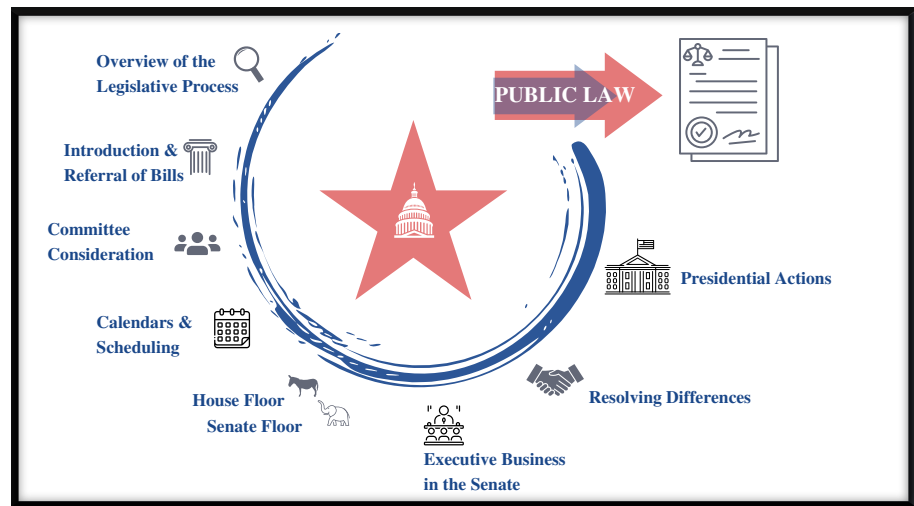
1. First, you and your neighbors are directly responsible for the most valued item for a Member of Congress: re-election. Your vote matters, and whether you supported the lawmaker in the previous election or not, you have the voice and platform to change the outcome of the next election.
2. Second, you are a taxpayer. Your taxes pay the salary of both the Member of Congress and their staff and provide the funds that they are responsible for appropriating towards public programs.
3. Lastly, and most importantly, you are an expert in your field with valuable, real-world experience. Because of the bandwidth issues that Members of Congress and their staff face, you can assist their work by becoming a trusted resource of information and insight on the ground in their district. You are viewed by lawmakers as a leader in your community, as you connect with patients and health care providers and professionals on a daily basis.

Building the Foundation and Becoming a Resource

The keys to becoming a resource for policymakers and their staff are consistency and reliability. In order to become a resource that congressional staff reach out to first on the issues that matter to you, you have to connect and correspond with them throughout the year. Participating in annual virtual or in-person advocacy days is a great start, but only the beginning. Once you have met with a staffer, make sure you're proactively sharing information with them on your issues, being sure not to over-share. If you have a relevant update to send to staff, such as an article, press release, or government announcement, do not hesitate to email them. The point of this outreach is less about receiving a response, and more about keeping your name and contact information front-of-mind. This way, when the Member of Congress has a question on issues related to your expertise, you will be the first person they turn to for input.

LEGISLATIVE 101

Regular Order



Understanding the legislative process is key to planning and executing your advocacy initiatives.

In Congress, a process referred to as Regular Order entails committees of jurisdiction in each legislative chamber examining, amending, and approving legislation prior to a similar process occurring on the floors of the respective chambers.

While the modern legislative process often strays from Regular Order, it's an institutional roadmap that you need to understand to effectively advocate for your profession.

Congress.gov provides an excellent [resource](#) for understanding the legislative process.

You may also view a glossary of legislative terms [here](#).

LEGISLATIVE 101

Introduction and Support

A bill can be introduced in its respective chamber by a single House Member or Senator, who is referred to as the bill's *Sponsor*. Bill sponsors may also come in bipartisan pairs or a group of bipartisan legislators. Beyond the Democratic and Republican sponsors, who are considered the leaders of the legislation, additional supporters of the legislation who sign on in support prior to introduction are referred to as *Original Cosponsors*. Any Member of Congress who signs on in support of the legislation after introduction is referred to as a *Cosponsor*. Before a bill is considered in the committee(s) of jurisdiction that it is sent to upon introduction, committee leaders often reference the list of cosponsors from the bill to see if any members of their committee are in support of the measure. This is a key metric to begin the bill's journey through *Regular Order*. When advocating in favor of a specific piece of legislation, it's important to specifically request cosponsorship from your Member of Congress.

Key Committees

Below is a list of key congressional committees that have jurisdiction over the policy issues of importance to rheumatology professionals.

- [House Appropriations Committee](#) (Annual funding for federal programs)
- [House Energy & Commerce Committee](#) (Medicare, Medicaid, and public health policy)
- [House Ways & Means Committee](#) (Medicare and tax policy)
- [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) (Annual funding for federal programs)
- [Senate Finance Committee](#) (Medicare, Medicaid, and tax policy)
- [Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee](#) (Public health policy)

After a bill is introduced in either chamber, it is referred to the appropriate committee(s) of jurisdiction, based on the current law – or statute – the bill seeks to amend. Committee members examine the need for legislation through legislative hearings, where witnesses with subject matter expertise on the legislation or stakeholders who will be affected by the bill testify on the record. A legislative hearing gives committee members the opportunity to ask questions of the witnesses and discuss the potential risks and benefits of the bill. The next step in Regular Order is a committee markup. A markup is an official, public meeting where committee members debate the merits of legislation. During a markup the committee may consider editing the language of a bill by offering and voting on amendments. At the conclusion of the markup, committee members vote on whether to approve the legislation, moving it forward in the legislative process. If they do vote to approve it, this is often referred to as "reporting" the bill out of Committee. Following a markup and reporting of a bill, the respective chamber will consider the legislation on the floor in front of the full membership of the legislative body. However, this is not an automatic next step because there are many bills competing for floor time at any given point. Additionally, the House and Senate leadership teams apply political considerations that will result in the prioritization of some bills over others for floor consideration.

LEGISLATIVE 101

The Bicameral Legislature

Because they operate as independent legislative bodies, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have varying procedures to consider legislation on the floors of the respective chambers. In fact, there are more differences than similarities in the way the chambers operate when considering legislation on the floor. While there are numerous details separating these procedures, the below chart focuses on a handful of top-line differences:



Presiding officer (Speaker) has considerable discretion in recognizing Members to speak

Rules of the presiding officer are seldom challenged

Debate time is always restricted

Debate ends by a majority vote in the House

Number of amendments limited by special rules (based on Rules Committee proceedings)

Recorded votes almost always by electronic device



Presiding officer (Senate President) has little discretion in recognizing Senators to speak

Rules of presiding officer are frequently challenged

Debate time is unlimited, as individual Senators can filibuster

A super-majority vote (60 votes) is required to invoke cloture and end debate; up to 30 hours of post-cloture debate are allowed

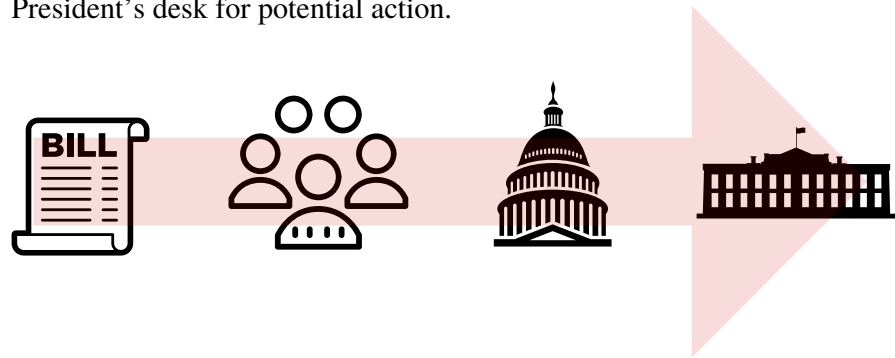
Unlimited amendments, with process negotiated by Majority Leader and Minority Leader

No electronic voting system, roll call votes can be requested

LEGISLATIVE 101

Legislative Process

To become law, a bill must pass in both chambers. In the House, a simple majority secures passage, while in the Senate, a 60-vote threshold is necessary to end debate and move on to a final vote, where a majority vote secures passage. On major pieces of “must-pass” legislation, where different versions of a bill are passed in each chamber, a formal conference committee is formed to negotiate the differences between the bills. Once the assigned conference committee decides on a final bill, both chambers must then vote on the newly negotiated legislation before it is sent to the President’s desk for potential action.

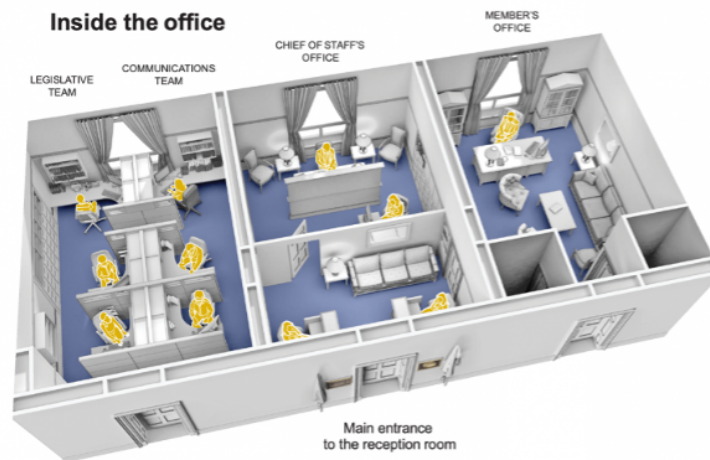


As the head of the Executive Branch, the President has several options after a bill has passed both chambers of the Legislative Branch. The President can:

- Sign the legislation, enacting it into law.
- Veto the legislation, sending it back to Congress. Congress has the option to vote again on the measure but needs a two thirds majority in both chambers to override the President’s veto and pass the bill directly into law.
- Do nothing, which is known as a Pocket Veto. If Congress is in session, the bill will become law in 10 days. If Congress is not in session and the legislative session ends prior to 10 days, the bill does not pass into law.

LEGISLATIVE 101

Office Hierarchy



The above graphic depicts the typical physical layout of a congressional office in the U.S. House of Representatives. Source: POLITICO Pro

In the D.C. office, each congressional office consists of a staff that supports the administrative, legislative, and press activities of a Member of Congress. While a House office may have as few as 8-9 staffers in their Washington, D.C. office, a senior Senate office may employ over 50 staffers. Members of Congress who hold leadership positions on a committee (i.e. – Chairman or Ranking Member) may have additional staff under their management that work specifically on committee business. The **administrative staff** is responsible for running the day-to-day operations of the office, including office tasks, planning Capitol tours and other constituent requests, and keeping the Member of Congress on schedule.

The **legislative staff** is responsible for conducting research, communicating with constituents and stakeholders on policy issues, and briefing the Member of Congress on bills and other legislative items. The **press (or communications) staff** is responsible for monitoring and responding to local and national media outlets, proactively pitching media outlets to interview the Member of Congress, and managing the Member's social media accounts. Back home, Members of Congress also have **district/state staff** who handle case work from offices in their home district or state. Case work refers to specific constituent requests for assistance with federal programs or benefits (i.e., Social Security or Veterans' Affairs benefits).

LEGISLATIVE 101

Key Congressional Staff

- **Chief of Staff (CoS):** Head of the office who is the lead advisor to the Member of Congress, and manager of the legislative, press, and administrative staff in the office.
- **Scheduler:** Manages incoming requests to meet with the Member of Congress. Delegates meeting requests to appropriate legislative and press staff in the office. Keeps the Member of Congress on schedule for various legislative responsibilities and events.
- **Legislative Director (LD):** Head of the legislative team, taking the lead on legislative priorities and strategy for the office. Often manages the legislative issues that comprise the portfolio related to the Member of Congress' committee membership. Delegates legislative issues to LAs and LCs.
- **Legislative Assistant (LA):** Manages a portfolio of issue areas, meeting with constituents on the issues within their portfolio. Writes briefing memos for Member of Congress related to issues discussed with constituents and stakeholders as well as legislation, often making a recommendation on how the Member should act or vote.
- **Legislative Correspondent (LC):** Responds to constituent outreach. Conducts research to answer constituent questions on various issues. Assists LAs and LD with legislative issues and meetings on behalf of the Member of Congress.
- **Communications Director/Press Secretary:** Manages the press work for the Member of Congress, including traditional and social media. Often serves as the formal spokesperson for the Member of Congress.
- **Staff Assistant:** Manages the front office and assists in various administrative tasks across all teams. May also participate in limited legislative or press activities.

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

In-person and virtual advocacy activities play a key role in developing your relationship with policymakers and their staff. That said, the time to make your “ask” can often be outside of these events. Grassroots activity, whether by email or phone, is a key tool that NORM utilizes to carry out periodic and often time-sensitive outreach to lawmakers. Much of what staff work on in congressional offices is focused on corresponding with constituents like you – answering emails, returning phone calls, and even responding to traditional mail. When grassroots outreach is needed, NORM or one of our partner organizations will send you detailed instructions on how and when to contact your lawmakers, but it’s helpful to have an understanding of this process so you can act swiftly when called upon.

FIND YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

Enter your zip code:

LOOK UP



Identify Your Member of Congress

1. Go to www.house.gov and enter your zip code in the top right corner. You may have to provide your full home address if your zip code overlaps congressional districts.
2. Once you have identified your House Member, you can find their website here by searching the U.S. House of Representatives Directory.
3. You have 2 Senators representing the state in which you reside. You can find your respective Senators’ websites by searching the U.S. Senate Directory.

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

Contact Your Member of Congress

It is vital to pay attention to any grassroots alerts from NORM and our advocacy partner organizations urging you to contact your Members of Congress on a specific issue. The timing of your outreach can make a real difference – preventing something negative from happening or getting something positive over the finish line.

Webform outreach – Every Member of Congress has a contact form on their website where you can enter your contact information and a message that will be sent to their staff. House and Senate website addresses follow the same format:

- U.S. House of Representatives: www.LASTNAME.house.gov (For example, Congressman Vern Buchanan’s web address is www.buchanan.house.gov).
- U.S. Senate: www.LASTNAME.senate.gov (For example, Senator Chuck Grassley’s web address is www.grassley.senate.gov).

Phone outreach – You can find the front office phone number for every Member of Congress through the below resources. When you call a lawmaker’s office and voice your opinion on any matter, the front office staff take a tally of the issue and your position, sharing the total with the Member of Congress on a daily basis. This helps the entire office keep their finger on the pulse of their constituency. You may be asked if you are a constituent and what city you reside in. This is not to record your information, but rather to understand what constituents versus non-constituents are currently concerned with.

- U.S. House of Representatives Directory
- U.S. Senate Directory

Email outreach – The most effective way to bring attention to your issue is by contacting a member of your lawmaker’s legislative staff directly. Participating during in-person and virtual advocacy days is vital to making these initial connections, but you can find out who handles the portfolio of issues that you are interested in simply by calling the congressional office using the above directory and asking. While the name of the staffer will often be shared by offices, the email address sometimes will not. However, U.S. House and Senate offices use specifically formatted email addresses. Therefore, if you have the staffer’s name, you can almost always determine their email address.

- U.S. House of Representatives: FIRSTNAME.LASTNAME@mail.house.gov (For example, John Smith’s email would be john.smith@mail.house.gov).
- U.S. Senate: FIRSTNAME_LASTNAME@SENATORLASTNAME.senate.gov (For example, John Smith’s email in the office of Senator Jones would be john_smith@jones.senate.gov).

Note that these email formats are used only for staff, not for the Members themselves.

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

Request a Meeting

As a constituent, you have the opportunity to periodically interact with your Members of Congress and their staff in both their Washington, DC offices and their local offices. You can also request that your lawmaker visit your office to get a firsthand sense of the practice, the challenges you face, and the patients you serve.

Requesting a meeting with your lawmakers is fairly simple. First, use the above steps to identify your lawmakers from the U.S. House of Representative and U.S. Senate. Next, call the office you are preparing to request a meeting with and ask who the correct contact is for scheduling a constituent meeting. Within your request, you should provide the specific location of the meeting you are seeking (Washington, D.C. or in a local office), as the staffer who handles the lawmaker's schedule is often a different person depending on the meeting location. When you call the office, they may direct you to a form on their website to submit your meeting request. Otherwise, they should provide you with an email address to contact the appropriate staff directly with the details of the request.

Within the request, you want to include a few important details:

- Your name and hometown.
- The organization you are representing (for example, NORM).
- The location that you are proposing to meet (Washington, D.C., their local office, or your office).
 - Office locations can be found in the contact section of your lawmaker's website.
- Your full availability to meet with the Member of Congress and/or their staff. If possible, offer broad time windows to provide the office with flexibility, and try to hold that availability on your own calendar.
- The topic(s) you want to discuss in your meeting, including bill names and numbers if applicable.
- Your email address and phone number.
- Any attendees besides yourself who plan to join the meeting.

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

Timing Your Meeting Request

Ideally, you want to request a meeting with your Member of Congress no later than 2 weeks prior to the earliest availability provided, and no more than 4 weeks out. Do not expect an immediate response to your meeting request, as scheduling staff are often processing hundreds of requests any given week. If a week has gone by without any response to your initial request, be sure to send another email politely following up on the status of your meeting request. If you still have not received a response a few days prior to the availability you provided, follow up once more and feel free to provide additional availability if you are able to. Polite and professional persistence provides results when requesting meetings.

Meeting Request Template

A sample meeting request template is below, which you can personalize to the current issues you want to discuss in a meeting. **CAPITALIZED BOLDED** items will require you to insert personalized text:

*Good afternoon, **STAFFER FIRST NAME**. I hope all is well.*

*As a member of the National Organization of Rheumatology Management (**NORM**) and a constituent living in **HOMETOWN**, I wanted to see if*

***REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR LAST NAME** can be available during any of the below time frames for a brief meeting in your **OFFICE LOCATION** offices:*

Tuesday, May 2 – 1PM-4PM ET

Wednesday, May 3 – 2PM, 2:30PM, 3:30PM ET

Thursday, May 4 – 10AM-1:30PM ET

***NORM** is a nonprofit organization that promotes education, expertise, and advocacy for rheumatology managers and their practices. **NORM** is focused on supporting their patients and pursuing excellence in medical practice management. You can learn more about **NORM** and its membership by clicking [here](#). I am interested in discussing issues that affect rheumatology patients and practices within your **DISTRICT/STATE**, including my office that is located at **WORK ADDRESS**. Those issues include but are not limited to **LIST OF DISCUSSION TOPICS AND BILLS**.*

*I appreciate how busy the **REPRESENTATIVE'S/SENATOR'S** schedule is this time of year and appreciate your consideration of my request. Please feel free to contact me by email or phone with any questions.*

Sincerely,

NAME

EMAIL ADDRESS

PHONE NUMBER

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

Preparing For Your Meeting

Many first-time advocates feel anxious about meeting with their lawmakers, but there is no need: as a constituent, you will be treated like a guest in your congressional offices. The tone of the meeting will be friendly and is best described as conversational.

Members of Congress are spread incredibly thin, which means it's important to make your time with the Senator or Representative as productive and efficient as possible. To that end, it's essential to take a few preparatory steps between you and any other attendees who may join you:

- Review and discuss the issue briefs among your group members. Reach out to NORM with questions.
- If you are attending as a group, assign a group leader to kick off the meeting. Discuss who feels comfortable covering each of the issues you plan to discuss, following that initial introduction.
- Make physical and mental notes on the talking points you plan to bring up.
- Consider real-world stories from the patients you serve to reinforce your points.
- To prevent tardiness, map out how you will travel to the office where your meeting is being hosted. Allow time for security screenings.
- Check www.congress.gov to see if your lawmaker is a current cosponsor of the bill you are requesting their support for.
 - Type the bill number (i.e. – H.R. 1234 or S.1234) into the search field, click on the bill name, click on the 'Cosponsors' tab, and look for your lawmaker's name.
 - If your lawmaker is already a cosponsor of the bill, you can thank them for their support during the meeting.

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

Typical Meeting

After a brief greeting in the front office, a staffer will escort you to a meeting space.

On Capitol Hill, the meeting area is often the front office due to limitations on space.

Usually, a meeting will last approximately 15-20 minutes (no longer than 30 minutes). A typical meeting agenda and flow is as follows:

- Brief introductions from attendees.
 - Include your name, the community you live in, your profession and role, and that you are representing NORM.
- Group leader begins by describing NORM or the group's shared priorities if multiple organizations are present.
- Discuss the issues, being sure to lead with your ask and end with your ask.
 - If you don't ask lawmakers and their staff to do something specific, like cosponsor a piece of legislation or sign on to a letter, they will be searching for your ask throughout the entire meeting. Therefore, it's best to lead with your ask so they can focus on the other details you provide to back up your argument.
 - If you don't have a specific ask, make sure to lead with that message, letting the staffer or lawmaker know that you simply wanted to introduce yourself and the issues that matter to NORM, and offer yourself as a resource.
 - Be sure to pause your conversation with intent, asking the staffer periodically if they have any questions based on what you've discussed so far. The goal is to have a discussion, rather than give a lecture.
 - It is perfectly acceptable not to know the answer to a question from the Member or staff off the top of your head. Assure them that you will find the answer and get back to them.
- If the lawmaker or staffer does not have clarifying questions, thank them for their time and close by again offering yourself and NORM as a resource moving forward
- If you are not provided with a staffer's business card, request one and leave yours with the staffer. Most staffers keep cards at the front desk in the lobby of the office. Let them know you will follow up on any outstanding questions from the meeting.

Following any meeting, send a brief thank you email to the staffer you met with or the Scheduler if you met directly with your Member of Congress. In your email, simply thank the staffer for their time and reiterate your offer to serve as a resource in the future. This is also the time to provide answers to any outstanding questions from your meeting. After that, don't be afraid to periodically follow up with staff as the issues you discuss progress in Congress.

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

Making the Ask

When meeting with a lawmaker or their staff, be sure to lead and end with your ask. The anecdotal stories and data you share provides the evidence to bolster you ask. The people you are meeting with are accustomed to constituents making asks. They are waiting to hear exactly what you want, and the sooner you provide that the smoother the meeting will go.

An ask can come in many forms, including but not limited to the following examples:

- Introducing a bill or becoming the sponsor.
- Becoming an original cosponsor of a bill prior to introduction.
- Becoming a cosponsor of a bill after it's been introduced.
- Authoring a letter to a government agency or other entity that other Members of Congress may or may not sign onto in support of.
- Contacting a government agency or other entity with a specific request for information or inquiry.
- Posing a question on the topic of interest during an upcoming hearing or markup in their committee.
- Offering an amendment to a piece of legislation in an upcoming markup in their committee.
- Monitoring a specific issue and alerting you to any updates as they occur.

Some meetings will not have a specific ask. In these meetings, it's helpful to lawmakers and staff to lead by acknowledging that you do not have a specific ask but wanted to simply introduce and update them on the issues that matter to the rheumatology community and the patients you serve.

This also presents a potential opportunity to thank lawmakers for their previous support.

COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

Patient Involvement

The only thing more powerful than an anecdote on patient care to underscore your point in a meeting is inviting a patient to participate in the actual meeting. A few tips when involving patients in your advocacy activities:

- Make sure to choose good communicators to accompany you.
- Let the office know when you request the meeting that the patient will be joining you and include the same personal information that you provide within your meeting request.
- Hold a pre-meeting with the patient to discuss your strategy and talking points.
- During meeting preparation, encourage the patient make the ask.
- It's important that their story compliment your arguments and that you both stay on-topic.



ADVOCACY TIPS

Lobbying 101: The Dos & Don'ts

- ✓ Dress professionally in business attire.
- ✓ Arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your meeting.
- ✓ Bring any printed issue briefs or background documents to share with staff and lawmakers.
- ✓ Learn the Member's committee assignments and professional background before your visit.
- ✓ Remember that lawmakers are simply people from your community – there's no need to be anxious when meeting with them.
- ✓ Take notes and report back to NORM on your meeting. Notes can be sent to advocacy@normgroup.org
- ✓ Tell the Member and staff why you are there: lead and end with "the ask."
- ✓ Personalize the issue by relating it to situations in his/her home state or district.
- ✓ Learn about the Member's previous positions on similar issues.
- ✓ Personalize the issue by relating it to situations in his/her home state or district.
- ✓ Show openness and knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them with empathy.
- ✓ Admit when you don't know the answer. This provides an excellent opportunity to get back in touch with the answer – proving your value to the office.
- ✓ Thank them for their time and support on other issues that matter to you.
- ✓ Expect lots of walking- wear comfortable shoes.
- ✗ Overload the visit with too many discussion topics. One to three is appropriate.
- ✗ Make rambling statements or read from lengthy fact sheets or talking points.
- ✗ Make promises you can't deliver on.
- ✗ Use medical jargon or acronyms.
- ✗ Shy away from visiting offices with known opposition to your issue. In fact, these are precisely the Members who need to hear what you have to say.
- ✗ Expect an immediate answer to your "ask."
- ✗ Be offended if the Member is unable to meet and requests that you meet with his/her staff. Staff are key in the Member's process if deciding whether to support your issues and will serve as your key point of contact over time.
- ✗ Stay past 30 minutes, even if the staffer seems unhurried.

NAVIGATING CAPITOL HILL



The U.S. Capitol complex consists of a number of buildings that include the chambers where lawmakers vote, the office buildings where they and their staff work, and the facilities for support staff and various services. The U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate are governed under their own respective rules and procedures. Outside of the main Capitol building, adorned by the iconic dome between the two chambers, lawmakers have offices that flank each chamber. These offices include reception space, conference rooms, staff workspace, and event and hearing rooms throughout the buildings. Navigating the buildings can be daunting at first glance, but an understanding of the complex's layout will assist in interpreting the room numbers for your scheduled appointments with your lawmakers. Importantly, give yourself 15-20 minutes to get through security screening into the building and aim to arrive at the office at least 5 minutes before your scheduled appointment to check in.

NAVIGATING CAPITOL HILL

U.S. House of Representatives Office Buildings



The House office buildings are located on the south side of the Capitol building, across Independence Avenue. The buildings include Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn. The O’Neill and Ford buildings are also in use by House offices, but are rarely used as meeting space, as no House Member offices are located within the buildings. The key to navigating the House office buildings is understanding the room numbers. Each House office building has a building number followed by a room number, as follows:

- **Cannon House Office Building**
 - Building number: 0 (not listed in room number)
 - Example for Cannon room 350 (third floor, room 50): Cannon 350
 - Note: Not every elevator in the Cannon building goes to the fifth floor. Elevators that provide access to the 5th floor are labeled accordingly.
- **Longworth House Office Building**
 - Building number: 1 (listed before the room number)
 - Example for Longworth room 350 (third floor, room 50): Longworth 1350
- **Rayburn House Office Building**
 - Building number: 2 (listed before the room number)
 - Example for Rayburn, room 350 (third floor, room 50): Rayburn 2350

Once inside the House office buildings, you can navigate between them through a series of underground tunnels. The tunnels between Cannon and Longworth are located on the basement level. To travel between Longworth and Rayburn, you must take the escalators on the west side of the building down from the Longworth basement level to access a set of elevators that will take you into the Rayburn building. Since House offices are small spaces, you can expect to often have your meetings in the reception space at a small table, or sometimes even standing in the hallway on a busy day. For that reason, it’s helpful to meet your group in the hallways 5-10 minutes prior to your appointment and send in a single representative to check in once everyone in your party has arrived.

NAVIGATING CAPITOL HILL

U.S. Senate Office Buildings

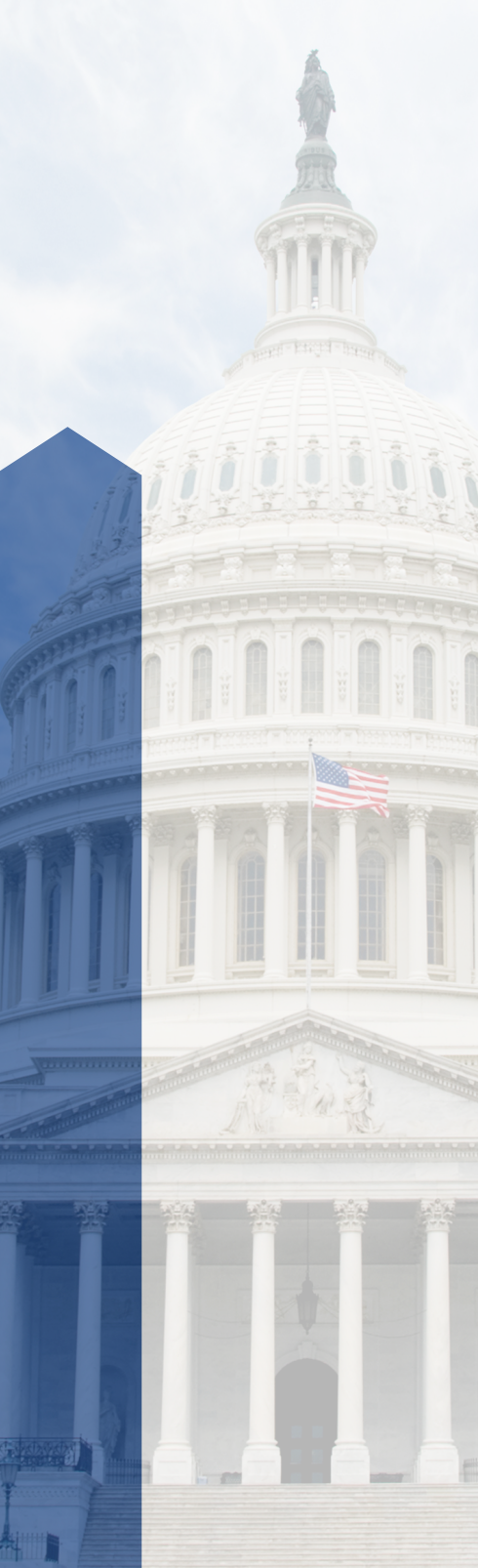


The Senate office buildings are located on the north side of the Capitol building, across Constitution Avenue. The buildings include Hart, Dirksen, and Russell. The Senate offices are labeled in a simple format. The below are examples of room 350 in each building, located on the third floor at room 50:

- ***Hart Senate Office Building:*** Hart 350 (HSOB 350)
- ***Dirksen Senate Office Building:*** Dirksen 350 (DSOB 350)
- ***Russell Senate Office Building:*** Russell 350 (RSOB 350)

Once inside any of the Senate office buildings, you can navigate between them through a series of underground tunnels. The tunnels between the Hart building and the Dirksen building are located on the basement level, the first floor in the center of the building, or at southwest and northwest corners of each floor where the buildings are attached. To navigate from Hart all the way to Russell, you must go down the elevator to the basement level of Hart and walk through the tunnels in the basement to Dirksen, continuing west through the tunnels to Russell. The architecture of the buildings provides clues to which buildings you are in as you cross through the basement. Hart is a modern, open building with mostly white and black stone. Dirksen is somewhat classical with green stone floors, and the Russell basement is more classical with red brick walls and brown floors on the basement level.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS



In early 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered in-person business around the world, Capitol Hill was no exception. Just like other industries, Members of Congress and their staff turned to virtual platforms to conduct official business and constituent meetings. In 2022, many offices began to slowly return to in-person meetings but, given the visitor policies still being strictly limited on Capitol Hill, almost all offices still conduct at least some virtual meetings. The good news is that the etiquette for virtual meetings differs very little from in-person advocacy appointments.

A few tips to consider when meeting virtually with Congress:

- Situate yourself in a well-lit location with little to no background noise.
- Log on early, giving yourself time to check your Wi-Fi connection, sound, microphone, and camera. This can also be a good time for your group to go over any last-minute preparation.
- Keep your camera turned on to actively participate in the meeting. In a group setting, this can assist your group by picking up on each other's non-verbal cues.
- If you are not speaking, mute your line until you are prepared to speak again.
- Share any issue briefs or leave behinds via email with the office prior to your appointment.
- When appropriate, utilize the chat function in our video conference platform to share relevant hyperlinks.
- Do not take offense if the staffer you are meeting with does not turn on their camera or uses the dial-in function. Flexibility is key with virtual meetings, as offices have varying policies.

STATE MEETING REQUESTS

To advocate at the state level, you should contact your state legislators. Every state, except for Nebraska, has a bicameral legislature. A bicameral legislature means there are two legislative chambers (e.g., a House and Senate). You can also contact the Governor, who is the head of the Executive Branch in your state.

To find your local state legislators, there are several resources for you to use just by entering your home or office mailing address. Once you identify your representatives, you can begin to contact them and build a relationship to impact state policies.

Find your Legislator:

You can find your elected officials by using the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations “Find Legislators” tool located on the right side of their action center. Alternatively, your state legislature’s website will likely have a tool to find your state legislators.

- [Click HERE to find your legislators](#)
- [Click HERE to find your state legislative website](#)

Now that you know who represents your state house and senate districts, you can begin meeting with those legislators to talk about policy issues impacting the rheumatology community. Below outlines the process you should consider when reaching out to those offices.

Take a moment to consider your issues before contacting your state elected officials.

- Identify the issues for which you would like to advocate. What issues are most important to you?
- Outline your advocacy goals. What would you like the legislator or legislature to do?

Contacting your elected official’s office for a meeting can be done several different ways. It is important to note that office staff can sometimes be the assigned person that you might meet with if the elected official is unavailable.

You might also consider inviting elected officials to your rheumatology practice for a tour, which can be very beneficial for explaining how policies impact patients and the practice.

Here are a variety of ways to contact the offices of your state lawmakers:

- Fill out the contact form on their website.
- Call their office directly.
- Email the office contact listed on their website.
- Stop by their district office.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a powerful tool that can aid in amplifying NORM’s advocacy efforts through engagement leading up to – and during – an official advocacy day, as well as to highlight efforts throughout the year. Members are encouraged to share a variety of posts. From “evergreen” posts to sharing stories, videos, articles, or responding to a specific call to action, your activity can help enhance an issue.






Please use the following tools to help promote NORM advocacy on social media. Personalization—sharing your own photos, videos, stories, and experiences—so long as they are HIPAA compliant, is highly encouraged to spread the message and put a face and a voice to the issues.

Twitter Guide

Tweets: Tweets are the content (text, photos, videos, or links) posted to Twitter to share messages and interact with other users. At the top of the home page, you can start typing your Tweet into the box where it asks, “*What’s Happening?*” If you would like to add content beyond text, you may do so by clicking on the different symbols below which correspond to different media options (e.g. the [insert symbol] to add an image).

- **Hashtags (#):** Hashtags—the “#” symbol followed by a keyword/phrase without spaces—are used to connect conversations and content in Twitter. When a hashtag is clicked, users and/or the public can see any other Tweet that contains the same hashtag. (e.g. #NORMAdvocacy)
- **Mentions (@):** You can mention another user in a Tweet by using the “@” symbol followed by the user’s username (also called a “Twitter handle”). The “@” symbol can be used to call out (also known as “tag”) another user to bring your Tweet to that user’s attention. (E.g. @NORMGrp)

Engaging on Twitter:    

- **Comment:** If you would like to comment and/or reply to a particular Tweet, you may do so by pressing the  and writing your message. 
- **Retweets:** Twitter users may “Retweet” Tweets from other Twitter users they enjoyed by pressing the retweet symbol at the bottom of the Tweet. Users also have the option to include supplemental text when they “Retweet.” 
- **Like:** If you enjoyed a particular Tweet, you can press the heart symbol at the bottom of it to “like” it. 
- **Share:** If you would like to share a Tweet or save it for later, you may do so by pressing the share symbol. 

SOCIAL MEDIA

Tips & Templates

TIP 1: TAKE/POST PHOTOS & VIDEOS! Whether you are advocating in person or on a virtual platform, *with permission*, take photos/screenshots before, during, and/or after your meetings to enhance the social media posts. If possible, sharing photo and video content is encouraged, as this form of digital media has been proven to result in the most engagement.

TIP 2: POST OFTEN! Social media can be utilized 24/7 to spread messages. You do not have to wait for an advocacy day to share your story or post a “call to action” on a specific advocacy issue.

TIP 3: ENGAGE! Engage (follow, comment, like, etc.) with your target audience/partner organizations. This develops and build your following and will allow your message to be spread with a targeted audience. Engagement with @NORMGrp is a great place to start.

Advocacy Day Posts

- Today I am joining @NORMGrp advocates to speak with congressional lawmakers during #NORMAdvocacyDay #NORMAdvocacy
- Thank you [@MEMBERTWITTERHANDLE] for meeting with @NORMGrp advocates today to discuss [insert topics]. #NORMAdvocacy #NORMAdvocacyDay #NORM #Rheumatology
- Thank you [@MEMBERTWITTERHANDLE] for your leadership on [insert issue]. @NORMGrp looks forward to working with you to advance [insert bill name/number] this Congress! #NORMAdvocacy #NORM

“Evergreen”/Daily Posts

NORM advocates are encouraged to post often and bring attention to issues.

Feel free to post the following types of content and make sure to tag @NORMGrp and/or other partners.

- **NORM Federal Priority Issues:** Share any personal/relevant stories for how reforms are needed to modernize current law to enhance patient access to needed medications/services
- **Articles:** Share relevant articles highlighting the need for federal action on specific issues.
- **Data/Statistics:** Share data/statistics/graphics that can help expand on the need for reforms.
- **Reposting:** Advocates are encouraged to monitor NORM's social media accounts and may consider "re-posting" NORM social media posts to amplify the message.

SOCIAL MEDIA

NORM Social Media Accounts



Twitter: [@NORMGrp](https://twitter.com/NORMGrp)



Facebook: [@NORMGroup](https://www.facebook.com/NORMGroup)



Instagram: [@norm.group](https://www.instagram.com/norm.group)



LinkedIn: [National Organization of Rheumatology Management](https://www.linkedin.com/company/normgroup)



Website: www.normgroup.org



Hashtags:

#2022NORM

#NORMAdvocacy

#NORMAdvocacyDay

Additional Resources



[Twitter's Official Getting Started Guide](#)



[House Member Twitter Handles](#)

For more information, please contact:

National Organization of Rheumatology Management (NORM)

Advocacy@normgroup.org

P.O. Box 348

Westtown, PA 19395

