

How to Be an Effective Endocrine Advocate in Less than 5 Minutes

So you want to speak up about policies that impact endocrinology, endocrinologists, and/or your patients — now what?

The Endocrine Society's Government and Public Affairs (GPA) Department will keep you up-to-date on relevant policy measures pending in the U.S. Congress, government agencies, and in the European Union. We'll let you know when bills are heading for a vote, or are in danger of being ignored. And we'll ask you to help ensure lawmakers take appropriate action on Endocrine Society priority legislation by doing three simple things:

1. Contact your lawmakers and urge them to support or defeat a specific bill,
2. Monitor the media to keep conservation issues alive in your local newspapers, TV, radio stations and magazines, and
3. Get others involved!

You — as a constituent — are your lawmakers' boss. They want to hear from you. Use that influence; you don't have to be an expert or a professional lobbyist. It won't take up much of your valuable time, and you will have an important impact on our efforts to support endocrinology. For more information, please [email](#) us.

Contact your lawmakers with an email.

Lawmakers often calculate that each letter they receive from one of their constituents represents a similar view of at least 100 constituents. That's why letters to lawmakers are so important.

- Keep your letter to one topic.
- Keep your letter short and to the point.
- Let your lawmaker know how the issue affects you personally.
- Let your lawmaker know you live and vote in the state or district.

Here are a few more tips to refer to when drafting your letters:

- a) Address your lawmakers by "the Honorable" followed by his/her name, and begin the letter "Dear Senator," or "Dear Representative"
- b) Be brief, specific and courteous. Keep your letter or email to one page, one subject and state the purpose in the opening paragraph, particularly the action you would like to see taken (please cosponsor HR 35; please vote



against S 2828). If your letter pertains to a specific bill, identify it accordingly. Always be courteous.

- c) Ask for a reply. Always close your communication by asking for a written response stating the lawmaker's position on the issue.
- d) Email tips: when emailing, be sure to include your address so your lawmaker knows you are a constituent. All House members can be found at www.house.gov and all Senators at www.senate.gov. When responding to an Endocrine Society legislative alert—which contains a ready-to-go message—try to customize the first sentence or two. “As a constituent in [your state], I urge you to....” can make a big difference.

You may ask yourself, “Wouldn't a hand-written letter be more effective?” While it is true that with today's digital communication options, a hand written or typed letter is a real novelty and will attract extra attention in most Congressional offices, it is important to understand that Congress scans all postal mail for suspicious substances. That can delay the arrival of your letter by several weeks or even months.

Place a phone call.

Phone calls are a great way to communicate your concerns to lawmakers. You will probably speak with an aide or intern rather than the lawmaker, but your call is still very important. You can be connected to any congressional office by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121.

- Identify yourself as a constituent. Being a constituent gives you power, so always be sure to identify yourself as a constituent.
- Be brief, clear, and specific. Always limit your call to one subject. State why you are calling, give a bill number if possible, and the action you would like the lawmaker to take on the issue.

Sometimes the person taking your call can tell you how the Member plans to vote on an issue. If you get intelligence like that, reporting it back is extremely helpful. You can always tell us how your call went at govt-prof@endocrine.org.

Personal visits

By far the most effective way to articulate your views to your elected official and positively affect the outcome of legislation is to speak with your lawmaker face-to-face.

1. Attend a lawmaker's town meeting: In addition to your local newspaper, the Endocrine Society provides information on where and when lawmakers host a town hall meeting, as well as tips and



sample questions. See our [Town Hall Toolkit](#) for more information. You also can subscribe to your lawmaker's newsletter (you can sign up on their web site).

2. Schedule an appointment with the lawmaker's office. Most meetings do not exceed 10 minutes, and you do not need to be an expert on an issue or a professional lobbyist to make it a successful meeting. Just bring your passion and your story. Remember it's just about communicating and educating someone on the things you care about, and keep focused on why you are there. The Endocrine Society is happy to help you with this. Please see our [District Visit Guide](#) for more information or [contact us](#).

To schedule an appointment, call your lawmaker's office, ask for the "scheduler" and set up a meeting. Always identify yourself as a constituent. Oftentimes, the legislator cannot meet you but her/his staff can; meetings with staff are just as important. Staff in congressional offices are very busy. If you leave a voice mail for the scheduler and s/he does not return your call, try again in about two days. Polite persistence pays off.

When meeting with a lawmaker or staffer, always come prepared with a specific request for action—an "ask"—for the lawmaker to take. After clearly stating your position, ask for the lawmaker's position on the issue or legislation. Politely press for a commitment. If the legislator is not able to state her/his position at the time of the meeting, ask when you should follow up (usually within a week of the visit) and how (by phone or email) to inquire about any action taken. Be sure to discuss how the legislation will directly affect you. Personal stories carry weight. If possible, demonstrate widespread support by mentioning others in the community—organizations, officials, etc.—who agree with your position.

Always be polite, positive, and professional. Start off your meeting by thanking the lawmaker or staffer for meeting with you and for any past helpful support. Close the meeting with a "thank you" as well, regardless of whether or not the lawmaker will do what you want her/him to do. Do not refer to any lawmakers by their last names only— it should always be Senator xxx or Congresswoman xxxx. It's a good idea to bring written material, such as an information packet, to give to the lawmaker or staffer.

Follow-up your visit with a personal letter thanking the lawmaker or staffer for their time. This is another opportunity to make your point. If the congressional office made a commitment, remind them of this in your letter.

Monitor the idea.

Keep endocrine-related issues alive in your local newspapers, TV and radio stations and magazines. The media play a powerful role in our advocacy efforts as they help shape public opinion on policies, such as protecting funding for the National Institutes of Health or preventing diabetes. You can help maximize the potential of this resource by calling in to local talk shows or writing letters to the editor. Not only will you raise an



important issue in your community, you'll also grab the attention of elected officials, who pay close attention to opinions voiced in newspapers, radio and TV in their district or state.

Stay informed: Besides subscribing to your Member's newsletter and reading the local newspaper, you can read the Endocrine Society's online newsletter [Endocrine Insider](#) to keep updated with all the important policy issues that the Society works on.

Write a letter to the editor.

Letters to the Editor provide you with an opportunity to comment on articles, editorials and advertisements appearing in local newspapers. Letters to the Editor are widely read by lawmakers and community leaders to gauge public sentiment about current issues in the news. If you are interested in writing a letter or want to share you have had published, please [contact us](#).

- Know the rules. Check the paper's guidelines for writing letters, which should be clearly stated, on the editorial page of your newspaper or their online site. Be sure to include your name, address, and telephone number, as papers do not print anonymous letters, and generally will call to verify authorship.
- Be specific and to the point Many papers won't publish letters longer than 200 or 250 words and even shorter is better. Be sure to state the purpose of your letter in the first paragraph.
- Keep it current: Write your letters on debates, issues or legislation happening right now. Respond promptly to recently printed stories or editorials. Write in support of or against pending legislation at the local, state or federal level. By covering current issues, your letter stands a better chance of getting printed.

Get others involved.

Make sure your family, friends and co-workers are aware of legislation you care about and encourage them to get involved. Use the "Tell a Friend" feature in the Endocrine Society Alert system to email alerts to friends and co-workers quickly when an endocrine-related bill is up for a vote, or in danger of being ignored. Let them know the outcome of that vote, and how your specific lawmaker voted on the measure.

Invite colleagues, friends, and family over for pizza and a letter-writing party. Pick an issue, pick a theme, have fun, give door prizes, but get those opinions in to lawmakers!



So there you have it. Simple, time-tested methods of how you, a constituent, can make a tremendous impact on the legislative process. We hope you'll get involved in our efforts and utilize these guidelines to help support endocrinology. Remember, we can't do it without you!

For more information, please contact the Endocrine Society at govt-prof@endocrine.org.