

Advocacy Checklist: Contacting Elected Officials

This checklist provides a guide on how to effectively contact your elected officials. Engaging with your representatives is a crucial step in advocating for policies that support scientific research and development.

1. Identify Your Elected Officials

Every person in the U.S is represented by two senators and one representative. Identify yours and decide who you would like to meet with.

- **Find your Federal Officials (U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate) here:**
 - Visit the U.S. House of Representatives website ([here](#)) and enter your zip code to find your representative.
 - Visit the U.S. Senate website ([here](#)) to find your state's senators.
- **State Officials (Governor, State Senators, State Representatives):**
 - Search online for your state's official legislative website. Most states have a "find your legislator" tool.
- **Local Officials (Mayor, City Council Members, County Commissioners):**
 - Visit your city or county government's official website.

2. Determine Your Key Message and Supporting Points

Before contacting an official, clearly define what you want to communicate.

- **Identify the specific issue:** Are you advocating for increased NIH funding, specific regulatory changes, or support for a particular research area?
- **Formulate your "ask":** What specific action do you want the official to take (e.g., vote for a bill, sign a letter, introduce legislation)?
- **Gather supporting data:** As biomedical researchers, you have a unique ability to provide evidence-based arguments.
 - Cite relevant research findings.
 - Quantify the impact: How many jobs does this research create? What are the potential health benefits?
 - Provide examples of how this issue affects your lab, institution, or the broader scientific community.

- **Personalize your message:** Explain how the issue directly affects you, your work, or your community. This makes your message more impactful.

3. Choose Your Communication Method

Both email and phone calls are effective ways to reach your officials.

Emailing Your Elected Officials

Email is an excellent way to provide detailed information and can be done at your convenience.

- **Subject Line:** Make it clear and concise.
 - Examples: "Support for NIH Funding," "Biomedical Research Investment," "Regarding [Bill Number/Name]."
- **Salutation:** Use proper titles (e.g., "Dear Representative [Last Name]," "Dear Senator [Last Name]").
- **Introduction:** Briefly state who you are (e.g., "I am a biomedical researcher at [Your Institution] and a constituent from [Your City/Town]").
- **State Your Purpose Early:** Get straight to your "ask" in the first paragraph.
- **Elaborate with Data and Personal Story:** In subsequent paragraphs, provide your supporting points, data, and personal anecdote.
- **Keep it Concise:** Aim for 2-3 paragraphs. Officials and their staff receive many emails.
- **Professional Tone:** Maintain a respectful and professional tone.
- **Call to Action:** Reiterate your "ask" at the end.
- **Closing:** Thank them for their time and consideration.
- **Contact Information:** Include your full name, address, and phone number to verify you are a constituent.

Calling Your Elected Officials

Phone calls are often seen as more immediate and impactful, as they represent direct interaction.

- **Prepare Your Talking Points:** Have your key message, "ask," and a few supporting points written down.
- **Call the Main Office Number:** You'll usually speak with a staff member.
- **Introduce Yourself:** "Hello, my name is [Your Name], and I am a constituent from [Your City/Town]. I am calling about [Your Topic]."
- **State Your Position:** Clearly and concisely state your "ask" and explain why it's important.

- Example: "As a biomedical researcher, I urge Senator [Last Name] to support increased funding for the National Institutes of Health. This funding is critical for discovering new treatments and maintaining America's leadership in medical innovation."
- **Be Brief:** Calls are generally short. Get to your point quickly.
- **Be Polite:** Even if you disagree with the official's stance, remain courteous.
- **Leave Your Contact Information:** Provide your name, address, and phone number so they can verify you are a constituent and follow up if necessary.
- **Thank the Staff Member:** Always thank the person you speak with for their time.

4. Follow Up and Stay Engaged

Advocacy is an ongoing process.

- **Monitor Legislation:** Keep track of the bills or issues you are advocating for.
- **Attend Town Halls:** If possible, attend local town hall meetings to engage directly with your officials.
- **Join Advocacy Groups:** Consider joining ASPET's advocacy initiatives or other scientific advocacy organizations.
- **Share Your Experience:** Encourage colleagues to contact their officials and share your positive experiences.