



## AASM ADVOCACY TOOLKIT:

### A Sleep Professional's Guide to Engaging in Federal, State, and Local Politics

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**Communicating with your lawmakers.** In all communications with your legislator it is important to stress that you are their constituent, or provide services for their constituents. When communicating, always be brief and to the point. While you may have multiple concerns, it is important that you focus solely on one or two issues. Remember, your legislator is probably not a physician, be clear and avoid using industry specific jargon. Although you may be eager to impress, it's of upmost importance that you are always honest. Your legislator will appreciate it if you inform them about potential opposition to your proposal, but also make it known if others support your cause. To make quick and accurate answers to questions, have your legislation materials in front of you for reference. There is no shame in admitting that you cannot answer a question; instead, say you will quickly follow up with an answer after further research.

To wrap up your correspondence, make it known that you can be a resource for your representative or senator if they pursue your concerns further. As always, a gracious “please” and a “thank you” go a long way. Spread your friendly, positive attitude throughout the room.

**Invite your legislator to your sleep center.** A visit will provide both you and your lawmaker with positive press. Valuable one-on-one time with your senator or representative can be the start of a very fruitful, mutually beneficial business relationship.

Any questions? The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) makes itself a resource for all political correspondence. Please direct any legislative questions to AASM advocacy staff by email at [policy@aasm.org](mailto:policy@aasm.org) or by phone at (630) 737-9700.

**Choose the best method of communication.** The best way to contact your representative or senators is by written letter, email, or phone; while any of these mediums are acceptable, nothing beats a face to face conversation.

### **Letter/Email**

Regardless of how you contact your legislator, include your name, title (if applicable), and both your home and email address in your letter. Many lawmakers still primarily use written correspondence because it reaches more of their constituents than email.

Remember your courtesies. In the mailing address, refer to your representative or senator as “The Honorable (Full Name).” In your greeting, write “Dear Representative (Last Name)” or “Dear Senator (Last Name).” If you are contacting a chairman or the Speaker of the House use the title “Mister/Madame (Title).”

To find the contact information for your representative, search by their name after you click [here](#). To find the contact information for your senator, search by their name, or your state, after you click [here](#).

### **Phone**

When calling your legislators, ask for the legislative assistant or legislative correspondent who handles health issues. The assistant and correspondent are specialized members of a legislator’s team. They will typically be better equipped to communicate about your concern over any specific issue than your legislator will be. Assistants and correspondents have the ear of the representative and senator they serve and will be a great resource. More than likely, you will not have an opportunity to speak with your representative or senator on the phone due to their very busy schedules.

Be sure to follow up with your phone call with an email or letter to touch base on your concern.

To find the phone number for your representative, search by their name after you click [here](#). To find the phone number for your senator, search by their name or your state after you click [here](#).

## Requesting a Meeting

The best way to get a legislator's attention is through a sit-down meeting. While the House and Senate are in session, a meeting must take place in a lawmaker's Washington D.C. office. While the House and Senate are not in session, you can likely meet with your representative or senator in one of their in-state offices. Most lawmakers have no preference where their meeting is scheduled, so take advantage of their time away from Capitol Hill. Click [here](#) to find updated calendars for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Something may come up and you might be surprised to find that you are meeting legislative assistant rather than your representative or senator. Federal lawmakers have very busy schedules that may force them elsewhere. With meetings, calm flexibility is the key to a productive discussion.

Meetings with lawmakers must be made at least a month in advance. To make an appointment, ask for the legislator's scheduler. A phone number for a representative is searchable [here](#). Your senator's phone number is searchable [here](#).

Plan your meeting to be as short as 15 minutes. Be prepared for your conversation to start late or be cut short. Nonetheless, do not arrive late to the meeting yourself. If you know that you will be late, be sure to call your legislator's office. Allocate an extra 15 minutes in your schedule to arrive early.

Be firm; ask for a commitment. Your opportunity to voice your opinion may be short, but it does not have to be without result.

As you exit, leave a brief memo of supporting materials with the office and be sure to follow up with a letter or email thanking staff members for their time.

Again, the AASM has a government relations team working for your benefit. For any questions, please contact AASM advocacy staff by email at [policy@aasm.org](mailto:policy@aasm.org) or by phone at (630) 737-9700.