



*For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities*

Tools for Contacting Your Members of Congress!

Created by The Arc of the United States
National Council of Self-Advocates



This toolkit includes tips on how to do these things:

- Know who members of Congress are.
- Find your members of Congress.
- Use storytelling to tell Congress what matters to you!
- Make social media advocacy posts to get more people involved.

WHAT IS CONGRESS, AND WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS?

The United States has three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. Congress is the legislative branch. Congress is responsible for checking and balancing the executive and judicial branches.

Congress has two institutions: 1) the House of Representatives and 2) the Senate. There are 435 House Representatives and 100 Senators. **Representatives and Senators are referred to as “members of Congress.”** Representatives and Senators are directly elected by people who live in their district or state!

Representatives serve for two years and are reelected every two years. Senators serve for six years. One-third of Senators are reelected every two years.

Members of Congress propose bills to become laws. Laws become official when the President approves and signs them.

HOW DO I FIND MY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO TELL MY STORY?

1. You can find your members of Congress [here](#).
2. Once you find your member of Congress, you can share your story. Tell them what matters to you. It is their job to represent you!
3. Here are some common ways to share your stories:
 - Make a phone call
 - Request a meeting
 - Attend a town hall
 - Connect on social media
4. To tell an effective story, focus on the following:
 - Be clear and short.
 - Have a beginning, middle, and end.
 - Use easy-to-understand and direct words.
 - Spell out any acronyms you use.
 - Share in ways others can relate to.

You can record your story or write it down. Learn more about how to make a good story [here](#).



HERE IS WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW WHEN YOU SEND A MESSAGE!

1. Find organizations that you trust for more information. If you can, read the bill. This will help you share what is good and what should be changed. You can read bills at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).
2. Make sure your messages are clear and concise.
3. If you have a personal connection, include your personal story!
4. Members of Congress often respond to personal stories instead of sending an automated response.

Here is an example of an email you can send:

To	memberofcongress@senate.gov & Person & Person
Cc	& Person
Bcc	& Person
Subject	Messaging

Dear Member of Congress,

I am Angela and I live in Virginia. I am a person with a disability that relies on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to have access to food. I am unable to work and I still struggle to feed myself and rely on the food shelf and charities to make sure I can eat. If we cut SNAP benefits, I will go hungry and it would be extremely difficult to not be able to feed myself. Please protect this benefit so that me and many others with disabilities will not be impacted by this.

Sincerely,
Angela |

CONCLUSION AND RESOURCES

The Arc's [Action Center](#) highlights issues that matter to people with disabilities. It allows people to submit messages to their members of Congress. Here are some resources to help you contact your members of Congress:

- [Fact Sheet: How to Call Your Elected Officials](#) (Autistic Self Advocacy Network)
- [They Work for Us: A Self-Advocate's Guide to Getting Through to Your Elected Officials](#) (Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center)

Here are examples of social media posts. It is important to share things on social media to bring awareness, get more people involved on the issues, apply pressure to members of Congress, and build connections. [Canva](#) is a website that can be used to create graphics



**How to Call Your
Elected Officials**



**Getting Through to Your
Elected Officials: Easy-
to-Read Edition**



**The Arc Action
Center**



**The Arc's Position
Statements**

