



IN DISTRICT MEETING TOOLKIT



ALS
ASSOCIATION



INTRODUCTION

One of the most effective ways to influence the legislative process is for you, as a constituent, to meet with your members of Congress in your home district. Every Congressional meeting is an opportunity to develop or enhance your relationship with members of Congress and their staff, nurture congressional champions and persuade members to vote in favor of legislation that benefits the ALS community. The ALS Association has prepared this toolkit to support advocates in securing and having successful meetings with your members of Congress.

One important element of success is letting your members of Congress know that you are part of **The ALS Association Grassroots Advocacy Team**. That lets your members of Congress know you are part of a national effort that is lobbying members of Congress across the country and that The ALS Association will follow up with them and answer any questions.

Another element is using the **Head, Heart, and Hand** advocacy method to organize the meeting to be sure you cover the facts, describe the impact of ALS and make the ASK.



The last key element of a successful meeting is **Making the Legislative ASK**. The Legislative ASK is one of the most important parts of the meeting because lets tells your members of Congress know exactly what you want them to do – be it provide more funding for federal ALS research or make changes to federal law.

Take Action!

Once You Have Set Up A Meeting: Once you have set up a meeting, please immediately contact The ALS Association Advocacy Team at advocacy@als.org. We will supply you with the materials that you need – including talking points and fact sheets – so that your meeting can be a success.

Questions: If you have questions about the toolkit, please send them to advocacy@als.org.

SCHEDULING YOUR MEETING

STEPS TO SCHEDULING A CONGRESSIONAL RECESS MEETING

Follow these easy steps below to schedule a meeting with your members of Congress when they are back in their state or home district.

Step 1: Connect with advocates who will attend the meeting with you

Reach out to others to develop a team (small or large) of people who want to meet with their member of Congress. Anyone can be an advocate, but people living with ALS should play the most important role in all meetings.

Once you have pulled together interested people for your ALS Grassroots Advocacy Team, decide who can fulfill the roles below.

Team Leader: Each group should have a team leader who will take responsibility for setting up the meeting, planning and following through after the meeting. The team leader should open the meeting by stating what “the ASK” is.

Spokesperson: Each group should have 2-3 spokespersons who are willing to speak briefly about how ALS has impacted their lives and use the talking points to “make an ASK.” The spokesperson should be a person living with ALS or their family member.

Supportive Listeners: If possible, engage other supporters to be listeners in the meeting. They show the member of Congress and their staff that many constituents care about ALS and want them to take action. Supporters can also make brief remarks that reinforce what the spokespersons say, take meeting notes and track of time.

Meeting Closer: Either the team leader or someone that the team leader designates should close the meeting by “Making the Ask” again and thanking the member of Congress or their staff for the meeting.

Step 2: Choose meeting location

In-Person Meetings: Your member of Congress may have more than one district office. Visit the member’s website so you can determine which location is best for your advocacy team.

Find your member of Congress’s district office addresses and official website at this link: <https://bit.ly/DistrictOfficeInfo>. Be sure your letter requests a meeting in the office that is most convenient for your group.

Step 3: Draft and send your meeting request to the scheduler for your member of Congress

Every member of Congress has a scheduler on their staff who sets up meetings. Find the scheduler for your member of Congress here: <https://bit.ly/SchedulerInfo>

SCHEDULING YOUR MEETING

See the sample **meeting request email template**. Take a moment to personalize the meeting request. For example, emphasize that you are constituents, including people living with ALS and their family members, as well as that you want to talk about ALS.

In your cover letter, be sure to note that you are part of The ALS Association grassroots advocacy team.

Step 4: Follow up on your meeting request

Members of Congress and their staff are very busy. Therefore, it is important to politely, but persistently follow up. Contact the district office by phone or email and find out if they have your request or need additional information. You will be most successful in securing a meeting by being persistent but also flexible.

Step 5: Confirm the meeting date, time and location as well as provide materials.

A few days before your scheduled meeting, call or email the scheduler to confirm the meeting. Send the Congressional office the leave behind material(s) The ALS Association sent to you.



SCHEDULING YOUR MEETING

MEETING REQUEST EMAIL TEMPLATE

To: [SCHEDULER/IN-DISTRICT STAFF CONTACT]

Subject: ALS Association District Meeting Request

Email Body:

Dear [STAFF CONTACT NAME]:

Advocates from The ALS Association in [INSERT STATE/DISTRICT] would like to meet with [INSERT MEMBER OF CONGRESS' NAME] during the upcoming congressional recess to discuss legislative issues of great importance to the ALS community. The people from your [DISTRICT/STATE] who will be attending are:

[NAMES OF CONSTITUENT'S IN BULLETED LIST]

We hope [INSERT MEMBER OF CONGRESS' NAME] will be available to meet sometime between [TIME] on [DATE][INSERT MEETING TYPE: IN-PERSON OR VIRTUALLY] to discuss [INSERT POLICY PRIORITIES]. If this date does not work for [INSERT MEMBER OF CONGRESS' NAME] schedule, we look forward to working with you to find an available time to meet.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that is 100 percent fatal. Over the course of the disease, people with ALS lose the ability to initiate and control muscle movement, which leads to total paralysis and death within five years of diagnosis. There is no cure.

Thank you for your consideration of this meeting request. If you have any questions, please contact [POINT OF CONTACT] at [CONTACT INFORMATION].

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR TITLE]

[YOUR EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER]

BEFORE YOUR MEETING

PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING

The meeting leader should thank the member of Congress and staff for the meeting, introduce participants by name and as constituents, and briefly “Make the ASK”.

Planning as a Team: Once your meeting is scheduled, set aside 1-2 hours to meet as a team. Set a time when the most people can get together with a virtual system by Zoom, by phone or in-person. Plan to meet at least one week before your meeting (if not more) and then have a final “touch base” two days before your meeting to confirm the details of the meeting.

Time Constraints/Agenda: Congressional appointments can range from 15-45 minutes, but most last only 30 minutes. As you develop the agenda, allocate about 20 minutes for presentations and about 10 minutes at the end for the member of Congress/staffer to talk or ask questions.

Team Roles: Decide who is the team leader, who will be the *spokespersons*, the *listening supporters* and the *meeting closer*.



THE HEAD
State the Facts



THE HEART
Share Your Experience



THE HAND
Make the Ask

Head, Heart and Hand Method: Advocates widely use this method because it such a successful formula for a good meeting. Use the method during your planning session – and then use it during the meeting! Take some notes to help you remember who will speak and what you want to say. As you plan, consider how you will use the scripts and talking points that The ALS Association provides.

THE HEAD: STATE THE FACTS (Team Leader)

The team leader and spokesperson should use the talking points The ALS Association provides to make the Legislative ASK of your member of Congress. These materials should be used both for planning and during the meeting. (Materials will be posted at www.als.org under Advocacy or email advocacy@als.org to have The ALS Association email materials to you.

THE HEART: SHARE YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES (Spokespersons)

Choose 2-3 people to be *spokespersons* with each person speaking 3 minutes or less. They should speak from the heart – but also emphasize how the “ASK” would help people living with ALS. Each spokesperson should share how ALS has personally impacted them and those they love. Congressional meetings are brief, but your personal experience with ALS is impactful and important to share. Each spokesperson should practice what they want to say. Supportive listeners are there to show that lots of people care about ALS.

THE HAND: Urge Member of Congress/Staff to Take Action (Team Leader/Meeting Closer)

The team leader, on behalf of everyone living with ALS and their families, should make the legislative ASK. Be clear that in addition to listening, you want the member of Congress/staffer to TAKE ACTION. Be specific! Will they support more appropriations for ALS research? Will they support the bill you are advocating for? How will they help? Wait for their response.

DURING THE MEETING

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Put your planning into action by using the Head, Heart and Hand outline that you prepared earlier with your team.

As the meeting begins, the team leader should thank the member of Congress for the meeting, briefly describe the legislative "ASK" and introduce the participants who will speak. They should also ask if the group can get a picture with the member of Congress/staffer at the end as well as request the name, email and phone number for the staff person they should follow up with.

As the meeting ends, the team leader and the participants should be sure to thank the member of Congress or their staff person for their time.



AFTER YOUR MEETING

FOLLOW UP AFTER YOUR MEETING

Here are the steps to take after the meeting.

If you are working in a team, decide who will be responsible for posting about your meeting on social media, emailing the Congressional office a thank you note and sending a report back to The ALS Association about your meeting.

Step 1: Follow up on social media

Craft and post a Tweet and/or Facebook post to publicly thank the member of Congress for meeting with you.

Tag your member of Congress. To find their Twitter or Facebook handle, visit their congressional website for their official accounts. Use the **#ALSAdvocacy** hashtag and tag **@alsassociation** in your posts. If you tag us, the Home Office can help amplify your post! Share your pictures from the meeting.

Step 2: Send a thank you email to the member of Congress/staffer you met

Personalize the thank you email template below and email it to participants in the meeting. Please include any follow-up information they may have requested.

Step 3: Report back to the Home Office about your meeting

The Association's Advocacy Action Center allows you to easily record notes and outcomes from your meeting. Most of the steps involve a drop-down menu where you simply check a name or issue. One important part does ask you to add in any details that you want to share.

1. Access the "Log an Advocacy Interaction" site to complete the report back form:

<https://bit.ly/LogInteraction>.

2. Type the names of the member of Congress and/or congressional staff into the search box and select all of the people from the office who you met.

3. Under "Type," select "Meeting".

4. Under "Date, Time, Duration," select the date, time and length of your meeting.

5. Under "Notes," record any notes from the meeting, including if the member of Congress agreed to support any of our ASKS. **This is the most important part of the form.**

6. Under "Related Issues," select any policy priority you discussed.

7. Click Submit!

By sending your meeting report form through the Association's Advocacy Action Center, it allows you to immediately share information with the Home Office and allows us to track progress on legislative ASKS.

AFTER YOUR MEETING

THANK YOU EMAIL TEMPLATE

To: [STAFF CONTACT NAME]

Subject: Thank You for Meeting with ALS Advocates

Email Body:

Dear [STAFF CONTACT NAME]:

On behalf of The ALS Association and all people living with ALS in [INSERT STATE/DISTRICT], I want to thank you for meeting with us on [INSERT DATE] to discuss [INSERT ISSUES YOU DISCUSSED].

As a reminder, ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. There is currently no effective treatment available to save or extend the lives of people living with ALS. I hope [INSERT MEMBER OF CONGRESS' NAME] will:

[INSERT ASKS DISCUSSED IN BULLETED LIST]

Thank you again for supporting people living with ALS, their families and our community. If you have questions, please reach out to me or Denise Bailin, the Association's Director of Congressional Affairs at denise.bailin@als.org. I look forward to staying in touch.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR TITLE]

[YOUR EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER]

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