



What Your Member of Congress Can and Cannot do for You

Members of Congress are often bombarded with requests by constituents, some they can address and others they cannot. Below is a guide to help you understand what your Members of Congress can and cannot do for you, your organization and individuals you support. This list will help you craft a practical “ask” when you meet with Members of Congress and their staff.

Members Can:

- **Co-sponsor a Bill:** Members of Congress can sign onto bills introduced by other Members of Congress, this is called a co-sponsorship. This can help facilitate moving a bill through Congress and show support for the bill.
- **Signing onto a Dear Colleague Letter:** Members of Congress send out Dear Colleague letters for a number of reasons including asking other members to support current legislation or requesting that a bill be addressed in committee.
- **Vote on a Bill:** All Members of Congress, except representatives from Washington, DC and U.S. territories, are eligible to vote on a bill.
- **Request a hearing:** Members of Congress are able to request a hearing on a bill before a committee. This is particularly helpful when the Member serves on the committee or subcommittee.
- **Casework:** This is a constituent service provided by members of Congress. District office caseworkers can act as an interfacing between constituents and the federal government to resolve problems encountered with federal programs. For example, caseworkers can help with an individual’s Social Security, Medicaid or Medicare benefits.

Members Cannot:

- **Introduce or Co-sponsor a Bill in another Chamber or at the State Level:** Members of the House of Representatives can only introduce or co-sponsor bills in the House and Senators can only introduce or co-sponsor bills in the Senate. No Members of Congress are able to introduce or co-sponsor legislation at the state level.
- **Provide Legal or Tax Advice:** Members of Congress are unable to provide any legal or tax advice.
- **Unilaterally Change Federal Regulations:** There is an established process through which federal regulations are written and members of Congress are not able to unilaterally change federal regulations.