

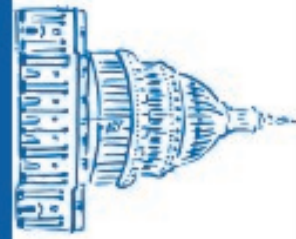


AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

A PSYCHOLOGIST'S GUIDE TO FEDERAL ADVOCACY

ADVANCING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

PSYC



ADVOCATE™



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Public Interest Government Relations Office Overview

The Public Interest Government Relations Office (PI-GRO) actively engages in shaping federal policy to promote psychology in the public interest. Specifically, PI-GRO works to inform Congress, the White House, and federal agencies about psychology and its relevance to federal policy and utilizes the expertise of psychology to address issues impacting human welfare. Issue areas include: aging; children, youth, and families; individuals with disabilities; ethnic minority affairs; health reform; HIV/AIDS; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues; service members, veterans, and their families; socioeconomic status; trauma, violence, and abuse; women's issues; and work, stress, and health.

PI-GRO regularly engages with APA membership to help ensure the success of its advocacy efforts and to enhance the ability of the field to advocate on key issues. PI-GRO relies on member experts to assist in the development and dissemination of educational and advocacy materials that are shared with Congress and the Executive Branch. In addition, PI-GRO provides APA members with a variety of public policy and advocacy opportunities, including:

Federal Advocacy Trainings and Capitol Hill Visits

PI-GRO hosts several federal advocacy trainings each year to prepare APA members to effectively share their expertise with policymakers. These trainings include an overview of the federal legislative process, key strategies for effectively informing and influencing policymakers, exposure to current legislative issues, and interactive exercises/role playing. These trainings often include an opportunity for members to practice their advocacy skills by visiting with members of Congress and their staff on Capitol Hill.

Congressional Fellowship Program

This APA-wide program, administered by PI-GRO, offers APA members the opportunity to spend one year as a special assistant to a member of Congress or congressional committee on Capitol Hill. In addition to the general Fellowship, APA offers the Catherine Acuff Fellowship (mid-career and senior psychologists), the William Bailey Health and Behavior Fellowship, and the Jacquelin Goldman Fellowship (developmental/child clinical psychologists), which is sponsored by the American Psychological Foundation.

Public Interest Graduate Student Policy Internship

This program offers doctoral students in psychology the opportunity to spend one year working on public interest policy issues alongside the PI-GRO staff. Participants gain first-hand knowledge of the ways in which psychological research and clinical knowledge can inform public policy and the roles psychologists can play in policy formulation and implementation.

Public Policy Action Network (PPAN)

This grassroots e-mail network provides opportunities for interested psychologists and students to become involved in APA advocacy efforts. PI-GRO, along with the Government Relations Office in the Education and Science Directorates, uses PPAN to disseminate targeted information and action alerts to PPAN members, focusing on recent and upcoming federal legislative or regulatory action of concern to psychology, as well as relevant federal grant and job opportunities.

For more information, please visit <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/pi/> or call (202) 336-6166.

Preface

A Psychologist's Guide to Federal Advocacy: Advancing Psychology in the Public Interest is a comprehensive guide published by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Public Interest Government Relations Office (PI-GRO) to encourage greater participation by psychologists in the public policy process. APA's PI-GRO is located at the APA Central Office in Washington, D.C. and actively engages in shaping federal policy to promote psychology in the public interest. Specifically, PI-GRO works to inform Congress, the White House, and the federal agencies about psychology and its relevance to federal policy and utilizes the expertise of psychology to address issues impacting human welfare. Among the issue areas of focus are: aging; children, youth, and families; individuals with disabilities; ethnic minority affairs; health reform; HIV/AIDS; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues; service members, veterans, and their families; socioeconomic status; trauma, violence, and abuse; women's issues; and work, stress, and health.



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Introduction

The American Psychological Association's (APA) Public Interest Government Relations Office (PI-GRO) is pleased to provide you with *A Psychologist's Guide to Federal Advocacy: Advancing Psychology in the Public Interest*. This guide is designed to encourage the participation of psychologists and psychology graduate students in the public policy process. In addition, it will serve as a resource to help you effectively advocate for the application of psychology to better human welfare and inform and influence your policymakers.

PI-GRO maintains a robust and effective public interest advocacy program which actively encourages APA members to have direct contact and remain engaged with their Senators and Representative in the U.S. Congress. As psychologists, our special training and expertise uniquely qualifies you to contribute to the development and implementation

of public interest policy and to the shaping of attitudes toward the field of psychology.

We hope that you will utilize this basic guide to support our shared public interest policy priorities. We encourage you to coordinate your grassroots advocacy efforts with our office to ensure maximum effectiveness and the use of up-to-date legislative strategies. PI-GRO's expert staff is available to work with you and can be reached at (202) 336-6166 or gro@apa.org.

In the sections that follow, this guide will provide an overview of the federal legislative process that will help you put your advocacy efforts into perspective, provide you with best practices regarding communications with policymakers, and explain how to use the resources of APA's PI-GRO to inform your advocacy efforts on behalf of psychology in the public interest.



I. APA Public Interest Advocacy

The APA PI-GRO focuses on expanding the recognition of psychology's scientific and professional contributions and achievements to promote human welfare. In support of this goal, PI-GRO spearheads an advocacy program that is the largest and most visible national presence advocating for psychology in the public interest. Specifically, PI-GRO works to inform Congress, the White House, and the federal agencies about psychology and its relevance to federal policy and utilizes the expertise of psychology to address timely health and social issues.

It is important for psychologists to engage in the federal policymaking process because federal legislation, in numerous areas, affects every APA member in every state. For each APA member, that impact takes shape in unique ways. For example, Congress makes decisions about the type of research that will be conducted and the level at which it will be funded. Congress also establishes federal policies in areas that directly affect the physical and mental health of Americans, such as policies regarding mental health and substance abuse services, workforce development, violence prevention research and intervention programs, and countless other public interest initiatives. APA's PI-GRO works to ensure that psychological science and expertise are shared with policymakers as they work to craft the laws of the land. In fact, APA is often called upon by Congress to offer advice on sensitive policy matters that involve psychological issues or where psychological research is viewed as relevant to a given policy issue. For example, APA advises congressional decision makers on a wide range of legislative and regulatory issues, such as child abuse and prevention, women's health, access to community services for people with physical or emotional disabilities, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights, and successful aging.

PI-GRO maintains a close liaison with decision makers on Capitol Hill, working with them and their staff as they formulate and debate legislation of interest to psychologists. The advocacy program also maintains important connections among APA and other scientific and professional societies, organizations, and coalitions to advance common legislative and

regulatory interests. PI-GRO advocacy is guided by the philosophy that public policy should be based on available scientific knowledge and that psychological research can contribute to the formulation of sound public policy to address health and social issues and to improve human welfare. The objectives of public interest advocacy include:

- Strengthening psychology's role in the promotion of human welfare through the utilization of relevant psychological research and theory when public policy is formulated to address public interest issues;
- Formulating and promoting policies that address the needs of vulnerable populations who are subject to discrimination or who have special needs related to psychological or developmental factors. In particular, these populations include, but are not limited to: children, youth, and families; individuals with disabilities; older adults; racial and ethnic minorities; individuals living with HIV/AIDS; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons; service members, veterans, and their families; individuals with low socioeconomic status; victims of trauma, violence, and abuse; women and their families; and those impacted by work, stress, and health issues; and
- Promoting efforts to support the health of all Americans, both those individuals with severe physical and mental disabilities, as well as other persons in need of health and mental health services.

The Public Policy Action Network

A significant and continuing objective of PI-GRO is to help interested psychologists and psychology graduate students to advocate in support of initiatives to address human needs. This includes providing our members with timely information on legislative and regulatory issues of importance to the psychological community. To meet this goal, PI-GRO maintains the Public Policy Action Network (PPAN). The action alerts and information updates sent out through PPAN help to provide members with the information needed to serve as an effective advocate

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for psychology. PPAN's electronic network keeps members apprised of the latest public policy developments through brief information notices which are sent approximately once per month. If you are interested in joining PPAN, please visit: <http://capwiz.com/apapolicy/mlm/>.

Understanding the Legislative Process

This section was adapted and printed with permission from *Make Your Voice Heard*, a publication of AARP/VOTE, The Voter Education Program of the AARP.

Any legislator can introduce a piece of legislation, which is also known as a **bill**. A bill is introduced in a given **chamber** of the U.S. Congress -- either the House of Representatives or the Senate. A bill is given a number by the clerk of the chamber in which it is introduced, such as S. 1 for the first bill introduced in the Senate, or H.R. 99 for the 99th bill introduced in the House of Representatives.

The bill is then almost always referred to the appropriate **committee(s)** for consideration. The committee system is intended to provide specialized consideration of bills covering a specific topic. By concentrating on an area of government, the members of the committee and their staff become experts on the topics within their jurisdictions. For example, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee has jurisdiction over the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and members of the committee and their staff are informed on mental health issues across the lifespan. Most committees have **subcommittees**, which focus on a subset of areas within the jurisdiction of the full committee. The bill is referred to the appropriate subcommittee, where **hearings** may be held. Interested organizations and individuals may be called upon to **testify** at these hearings in order to share their support or opposition to the bill and any pertinent suggestions regarding how the bill could be improved. Committee staff may then draft modifications to the bill.

After hearings, the subcommittee may **mark up** the bill, a process where changes, called **amendments**,

may be made to the bill. The bill is then **reported** to the full committee, where yet another markup may take place. The full committee may then vote to **report out** the bill to the full chamber of the legislative body.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, most legislation is referred to the Rules Committee after being reported out from a full committee. The Rules Committee votes to give the bill a **rule**, which sets the time limits for debate and the manner in which amendments to the bill will or will not be accepted. If a bill can be amended by the full legislative body without restrictions, it is given an **open rule**. If it cannot be amended, it is said to have been given a **closed rule**. The middle ground between open and closed rules, when a bill is brought to the floor with certain restrictions regarding the amendments that can be offered, is referred to as a **structured rule**. These are the basic parameters of the rule process. More detailed rulings exist and are used occasionally.

The legislative chamber's **leadership**, such as the Speaker of the House in the U.S. House of Representatives or the Senate Majority Leader in the U.S. Senate, has significant power over the scheduling of votes on a bill before the full chamber. The leadership may decide to move action on the bill quickly, or they may try to keep the legislation from ever being voted upon, often depending on the politics surrounding the piece of legislation.

Once the bill reaches the full chamber, it is debated on the floor of the chamber by all interested legislators. If amendments are permitted, members of Congress can propose amendments and request votes on them. Finally, the bill, as amended, is voted on and passes, or fails to pass, out of that chamber of the legislature.

In the U.S. Congress, the bill is then sent to the other chamber of the legislature. For example, a bill passed in the U.S. House of Representatives is then sent to the Senate for its consideration. Generally, the same process of legislation is repeated in this other chamber. The bill is referred to committees and subcommittees, hearings and markups may be held, and it may then be reported out to the full chamber

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for a vote.

By the time the bill is voted on in the second chamber, it has usually been modified by amendments and is somewhat different than the bill passed by the first chamber. The bill must then be referred to a **conference committee**, composed of key members of each chamber, where differences between the two versions are eliminated by compromise and reconciliation. This committee then issues a **conference report** containing a consensus version of the bill which is sent to both chambers for final approval.

Once both chambers have passed the identical legislation, the bill is then sent to the President to be signed into law. The signature of the chief executive is generally the final step in enactment of a new law. Yet, the President may decide to **veto** the legislation and send it back to the legislature.

If a bill receives a veto, it will not become law unless each chamber of the legislature votes (by a two-thirds margin) to **override** the veto. If the legislature overrides the veto, then the bill gains passage and becomes law.

Once a bill becomes law, it often requires government funding to be implemented. Through the process described above, legislation is **authorized**. A bill is passed establishing a program or function, setting standards, time limits, reporting requirements, and the maximum dollar amount that may be spent on the program or function. A different piece of legislation then funds the program or function by **appropriating** monies for the implementation of the law. Thus, to both create and fund legislation, two different bills may need to be steered through the legislative process.

The Legislative Process

U.S. Senate and House of Representatives documents mentioned in this section, including bills, committee reports, conference reports, and public laws, can be found online at: <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

Congressional Committees and Subcommittees of

Concern to Public Interest Issues

U.S. House of Representatives

In the U.S. House of Representatives, authorizations for most Public Health Service (PHS) agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and SAMHSA fall within the jurisdiction of the **House Committee on Energy and Commerce**. More specifically, this committee's **Subcommittee on Health** develops the NIH and SAMHSA reauthorizing legislation, along with many other legislative measures of interest to psychology. Once authorized, funding for most PHS programs must be approved by the **House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies**. This subcommittee divides its allocation of the overall federal budget to fund programs administered by the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. Another important House committee for health programs is the **Ways and Means Committee**. Its **Subcommittee on Health** has jurisdiction over any legislation relating to programs that provide payments for health care, health delivery systems, and health research, along with the health programs authorized by the Social Security Act: Medicare, and Medicaid. The **Subcommittee on Social Security** has authority over disability issues through its jurisdiction over the Social Security Old-Age, Survivors' and Disability Insurance System. The **Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support Jurisdiction** has authority over those provisions of the Social Security Act relating to public assistance, e.g., the Supplemental Security Income Program and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program.

The **House Judiciary Committee** has jurisdiction over many of the issues of concern to racial and ethnic minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, such as hate crimes and civil rights, and also establishes federal policy with regard to violence prevention and incarceration of juvenile and adult offenders. In addition, the committee deals with other issues of special concern to women, such as criminal justice aspects of sexual assault and domestic violence.

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The **House Committee on Education and Labor** has jurisdiction over the Older Americans Act, which authorizes health-related and social support services for older adults, the Head Start Act and other programs providing early childhood services. This committee also has jurisdiction over the education and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, child care, child abuse and domestic violence.

The **House Committee on Veterans' Affairs** has oversight responsibilities of the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs including jurisdiction over issues pertaining to veterans' health care, hospitals, civilian readjustment, education, and vocational rehabilitation.

Other committees have jurisdiction over issues of concern to psychologists. For example, the House Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry handles the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Feeding Program.

U.S. Senate

In the Senate, authorizations for most Public Health Service (PHS) agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), SAMHSA, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) fall within the jurisdiction of the **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP)**. This committee also has jurisdiction over occupational safety and public health and has several important subcommittees that deal with numerous health issues of concern to psychologists. The **Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety** has jurisdiction over issues pertaining to workers' health and safety and workplace training. The **Subcommittee on Children and Families**, has jurisdiction over programs that address the needs of families with alcohol and drug problems, along with issues such as child abuse, child care, and early childhood education. The **Subcommittee on Retirement and Aging** deals with measures affecting the well being of older adults, such as the Older Americans Act. Once authorized, funding for most PHS agencies must be approved by the **Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human**

Services, Education, and Related Agencies.

The **Senate Finance Committee** has jurisdiction over health programs under the Social Security Act, including Medicare and Medicaid, and any health program financed by a specific tax or trust fund. Child welfare programs that are entitlements, such as the foster care program, also fall within the committee's areas of responsibility.

The **Senate Judiciary Committee** deals with the same issues as its House counterpart, including issues of concern to psychologists, such as juvenile justice and violence against women.

The **Committee on Veterans' Affairs** bears responsibility for veterans' welfare measures, including jurisdiction over issues pertaining to veterans' health care, hospitals, civilian readjustment, education, and vocational rehabilitation.

Oversight, Special and Select-Committees

In addition to **authorizing committees** and **appropriating committees**, there are two other kinds of committees: **oversight committees** and **special or select committees**. Oversight committees are charged by Congress with monitoring the administration of laws by the Executive Branch. The **Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs** and the **House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform** are oversight committees that have authority to investigate the subjects within their committees' legislative jurisdiction as well as "any matter" within the jurisdiction of the other standing Senate and House committees.

Special or select committees are charged with oversight in a particular subject area. They have no legislative authority but can still be influential because of their special expertise. Examples include the **Senate Special Committee on Aging**, which continually reviews Medicare's performance, the pension coverage and employment opportunities for older Americans and conducts oversight of the administration of major programs such as Social Security and the Older Americans Act. Another example is the **Senate Committee on Indian Affairs**

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which is responsible for the study of any and all matters pertaining to Indians, including but not limited to Indian education, health, and special services.

Voting Decision Processes for Legislators

Here is how one former lawmaker, U.S. Representative Lee Hamilton of Indiana, described the process by which he and his colleagues decided how to cast their votes on legislation. This summary was extracted from the Congressional Record and reprinted with the permission of AARP/VOTE.

“A question that has intrigued me is how various members of Congress decide how to vote. Members cast about 400 votes a year on the most difficult and controversial issues on the national agenda. My impression is that in deciding how to vote, members weigh three goals: They want to make good policy, gain respect inside Congress, and get re-elected.”

Representative Hamilton then went on to explain the major forces that molded his thinking on a given issue.

Notice what he regarded as most important:

Constituents

“Constituents are the most important influence on a member’s voting decision. Whether members are agents of their constituents’ wishes or free to exercise their own judgment is a classic question in a representative democracy. But all members ask themselves on each vote where their constituents stand on the issue. On those issues where the constituency expresses strong preferences, the member is almost certain to favor them.”

Colleagues

“Other members of Congress are important sources of information because, as professional politicians, they will tailor their advice to a member’s needs; they are often well-informed on the issue; and they are available at the time of the vote. Members also pay special attention to the other members of their state

delegation, because they share common interests and problems.”

Lobbies

“Interest groups are neither the most nor least important influence on Congress. Lobbyists can help or hinder a member’s work. They can provide members with easily digested information and innovative proposals.”

The Executive Branch

“The President is, in many respects, the chief legislator. With his excellent sources of information, his ability to initiate legislation, to appeal to all Americans, and to set the legislative agenda, the President has formidable power in the legislative process.”

Party Leadership

“Recent electoral changes in Congress have made political party leadership a much more significant factor in members’ decisions. Members of Congress now often hear from their party leaders about specific votes on legislation. There is more effort expended by the leadership of their party in the Congress, i.e., the Speaker and the Majority and Minority leaders.”

Media

“News media may have their greatest effect on Congress as agenda setters. By focusing attention on a particular issue, they can get the American people and the Congress to deal with it. In considering a vote, members must anticipate how that vote will be played by the media.”

Staff

“It is a mistake to underestimate the importance of congressional staff in the legislative process. Because of members’ hectic schedules, they rely on staff to help them evaluate legislation. Today’s staffers usually have a good appreciation of political processes, but their main strength is substantive technical knowledge. Members of Congress vote several times every legislative day on diverse and complex issues. Usually they have more information than they can assimilate, so they need and seek help. It is then that decision making becomes a very personal matter. When the voting clock is running

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down, the member must make a decision. The member knows that in our democracy he or she alone will be held accountable for it.”

Regulatory Process

*Information in this section was taken from the APA Education Government Relations Office publication *Advancing Psychology Education and Training; A Psychologist’s Guide to Federal Advocacy*.*

After a bill is passed by Congress and becomes law, it is referred to the appropriate Executive Branch agency for the development of implementing **regulations**. While laws outline the general intent of Congress, regulations spell out the specific details of how the law will be applied. For laws of interest to psychologists, regulations are developed by governmental agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, the Department of Justice, and others.

For example, in 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, a bill which extended civil rights protection to persons with disabilities. Because the new law had several titles with different jurisdictions, it was referred to a number of agencies for the development of implementing regulations. In 1990 and 1991, the Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission published a call for public comment in the *Federal Register* (a publication that notifies the public about executive branch activities), soliciting the views of the public on how this new law should best be implemented. The Departments later developed their first **proposed rules**, signaling an opportunity for the public to comment specifically on the federal agencies’ plans. The agencies then reviewed the outside comments including, in this case, those submitted by the APA. The process may be repeated several times, with the agency extending comment periods or publishing **interim final rules**, before a final rule is published. The **final rule** may or may not reflect public opinion.

How to Locate Laws, Bills, and Other Government Documents

Information in this section was taken from the APA

*Education Policy Office publication *Advancing Psychology Education and Training; A Psychologist’s Guide to Federal Advocacy*.*

You can easily find the text of laws, bills, testimony and other government documents, as well as contact information for your members of Congress on the Internet. One way to locate information on current and past legislation is through the online database known as THOMAS. THOMAS (<http://thomas.loc.gov>) was created in January 1995 by the Library of Congress under the directive of the leadership of the 104th Congress to make federal legislative information freely available to the public on the Internet. The information in THOMAS goes back to the 101st Congress (1989-90). THOMAS allows you to search for public laws, bill summaries and status, bill text, roll call votes and reports made by congressional committees.

How to Locate a Bill Online Using THOMAS

You can search THOMAS using the two search fields on the top of the homepage. If you do not know the number of the bill you are searching for, you can enter keywords in the box to the right of “Word/Phrase” to search for the bill. If the search results do not yield the legislation you are in search of, click on the “Help” link at the top of the search results page for assistance on how to best search by keywords. Otherwise, if you already know the bill number, simply type it in the box (e.g., H.R. 3593 or S. 1811) to the right of “Bill Number” and click on the search button.

If you would like to define a more detailed search, click on “Bill Text” (under the “Legislation” heading on the THOMAS homepage.) These searches may be limited to only those bills receiving floor action, enrolled bills (i.e., the final copy of the bill that has been passed in identical form by both the House and Senate and sent to the President), or to House or Senate bills. You can also search by date or session or browse lists of bill text by bill type and number. To browse, click on the word “View” in the phrase “View Complete List of Bills in this Congress by Type and Bill Number” under the “Bill Number” search box.

Once you have accessed the bill in question, you can

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choose to view a printer-friendly version, click on a link to view references to the bill in the Congressional Record, follow a link to the “Bill Summary & Status” file or view an Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) version of the bill from the website of the Government Printing Office (GPO). Once the PDF has opened in your browser window, you can save a copy to your computer by clicking on the floppy disk icon near the top of your screen (under the URL address line). You can then easily e-mail the saved PDF of the bill, if necessary, to colleagues.

GPO-Access

Alternatively, GPO Access (www.gpoaccess.gov) is another federal web site that allows you to search for and retrieve bills online. To search for bills, go to <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/bills/index.html> and type in the bill number in the field next to “Quick Search” or browse bills by Congress. GPO Access contains information dating back to the 104th Congress (1995-96) and is similar to THOMAS, in that you can search not only for bills, but also for public laws, committee reports and the Congressional Record. It also contains information beyond the legislative sphere – including links to federal regulations, presidential materials, and judicial resources.

How to Find Your Members of Congress Online

The zip code+4 lookup service provided by the United States (U.S.) Postal Service allows you to find your complete 9-digit zip code at <http://www.usps.com/zip4>. Simply fill out the forms with your address information to retrieve your zip code. *You will need this complete zip code to determine your congressional district and find your members of Congress.*

While there is not an official central listing of member offices, public member and staff e-mail addresses, you can find your Representative’s web site and also learn more about how to write your Representative by visiting the following site provided by the U.S. House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/writerep>. Some Representatives do have their e-mail addresses posted or have forms linked from this site that allow you to send an e-mail to their offices.

If you know who your Representative is but you are unable to contact them using the Write Your Representative service listed above, then you may want to visit the site of the Clerk of the House: <http://clerk.house.gov/>. The Clerk of the House maintains addresses and phone numbers of all U.S. House Members and Committees, or you may call (202) 225-3121 for the U.S. House switchboard operator. Similarly, you can locate the web sites and contact information of your U.S. Senators on the U.S. Senate web site:

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

How to Find Testimony from Committee Hearings

Many committees post witness testimony on their web sites shortly after a hearing takes place. However, the transcripts are generally the prepared statements submitted by each witness, so they will not contain the question-and-answer portion. You can find committee web pages through the main U.S. Senate and U.S. House web pages. Most committees organize their hearing transcripts by date, and sometimes by subcommittee. Generally, testimony is only available for witnesses who submitted their statements electronically. You can also access information regarding congressional committee hearings, including links to live and archived streaming coverage via the Capitol Hearings site (<http://www.capitolhearings.org>).

U.S. Senate Committees:

http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm

U.S. House Committees:

<http://www.house.gov/house/CommitteeWWW.html>

Congressional Biographical Directory

By entering the required search terms, including the first and last name of a congressperson, party affiliation, position and state, you can retrieve a brief biographical sketch and picture of any elected member of Congress, from 1774 through the present time at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>.

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The Congressional Budget Office (CBO)

The CBO provides Congress with objective, timely and nonpartisan analyses needed for economic and budget decisions. For example, it provides Congress with reports detailing a cost estimate of continuing current Federal spending and taxation or budget projections to measure the effects of proposed changes in tax and spending laws. Congressional committees refer to CBO's cost estimates to determine whether they are complying with the annual budget resolutions and reconciliation instructions. All CBO reports are available to the public and may be accessed via the CBO web site: <http://www.cbo.gov>.

Government Accountability Office (GAO)

The GAO is the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of Congress. It examines the use of public funds, evaluates federal programs and activities, and provides analyses, options, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make effective oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO reports are not limited to financial evaluations of government programs, but cover a wide range of issues, including policy, performance of programs, and how programs contribute to agency and general government objectives. Reports from the GAO are available for downloading at: <http://www.gao.gov>.

The White House and Federal Agencies

Federal agencies are the administrative units of the U.S. government and are tasked with implementing laws and regulations and administering federally sponsored programs. For instance, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services includes a number of agencies, such as the Administration for Children and Families, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services among others. Use the links below to learn more about some federal agencies that administer programs of interest to APA policy advocates. In addition, information on federal grants and instructions on how to apply for these grants can be found at the sites below.

The White House:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

Administration on Aging

<http://www.aoa.gov>

Administration for Children and Families

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov>

Department of Defense

<http://www.dod.gov>

Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov>

Department of Health and Human Services:

<http://www.hhs.gov>

Department of Justice

<http://www.usdoj.gov>

Department of Veterans' Affairs

<http://www.va.gov>

Health Resources and Services Administration

<http://www.hrsa.gov>

National Institutes of Health:

<http://www.nih.gov>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

<http://www.samhsa.gov>

III. *Effective Communication*

APA Web Site Links of Importance

Psychologists and psychology graduate students can keep up to date on the latest legislative and regulatory activities of importance to psychology in the public interest by visiting the homepage of the APA's PI-GRO: <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/pi/index.aspx>

Be sure to also bookmark: <http://www.apa.org/about/gr/index.aspx>

You can also get involved in APA's federal policy advocacy initiatives by joining the Public Policy Action Network (PPAN) at <http://capwiz.com/apapolicy/mlm/signup>.

Identifying and Communicating with Your Legislators

The first step in effectively communicating with a member of Congress is determining the right person to contact. It is generally most effective to contact your own legislator -- the person(s) who represents your congressional district or state. As your elected official, this is the person who is most likely to be interested in your issues. Legislators maintain a Washington, D.C. office and one or more district offices located in their home district or state. APA can help identify and locate your legislator, or you can go online at <http://www.senate.gov> for the U.S. Senate and <http://www.house.gov> for the U.S. House of Representatives.

There may be occasions, however, when it will be appropriate and helpful to your purpose to contact other members of Congress. For example, when the chair of a congressional committee wishes to monitor broad public opinion at a critical point in the legislative process, or when you have special expertise in a specific area in which a congressional committee or subcommittee is developing policy, your communication with them can be appropriate and important. The PI-GRO staff is in the best position to advise you on such exceptions. Please contact us if you are interested in developing communications beyond your own Representative and Senators.

Once you know whom to contact, you can obtain his or her Washington, D.C. office email or telephone

number, or be connected with the Washington, D.C. office directly, by calling the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. The Washington, D.C. office can give you addresses and telephone numbers for local district offices.

Understanding the Role of Congressional Staff

Whether calling, writing, or visiting a congressional office, it is important to understand the role of your Representative's or Senators' staff members. Most congressional offices will have a legislative assistant (LA), handling your content area of interest. Many congressional staff members are relatively young and may appear relatively inexperienced. However, each Senator and Representative relies heavily on his or her staff to be knowledgeable and informed on the issues. Because the information and advice they provide is often effective in shaping the legislator's opinion on an issue, any time spent discussing your views with congressional staff will be a good investment.

In addition to the staff members in the legislator's personal office, the committees and subcommittees of Congress also have professional staff members. These staff members are often more focused on their specific areas of responsibility. While a personal staff member usually has multiple subject areas to cover (e.g., science, defense, budget, veterans, environmental issues), a committee staff member is often able to specialize in a small number of areas and to acquire expertise in them. These staff members typically work for the legislator who chairs the committee or subcommittee or who serves as its Ranking Minority Member.

Staff members in legislators' personal district offices typically serve a different function. These staff members take care of the lawmaker's appointments and appearances in the district. They also serve as caseworkers who help to resolve the problems of the district's citizens as they relate to federal programs. For example, a district office caseworker can help find out why a social security recipient's check is late. Usually members of the personal district office staff are not involved in issues of public policymaking.

III. Effective Communication

Writing a Letter as a Constituent

Congressional offices in Washington, D.C. receive hundreds of letters and e-mails from constituents each day. The guidelines below will improve the effectiveness of your correspondence with your members of Congress:

Be direct. State the subject of your correspondence clearly, keep it brief and succinct, and address only one issue in each communication.

Be informative. Identify yourself as a psychologist (and constituent, where applicable), state your own views in a clear and succinct manner, support them with your expert knowledge, and cite the bill number (House bill: H.R. ##### or Senate bill: S. #####) of relevant legislation, if appropriate. Your personally written letter is more highly regarded than pre-printed materials or postcards.

Be constructive. Focus your correspondence on the issue at hand and how the policymaker can address your views. Avoid taking a pessimistic tone.

Be factual/courteous. Rely on the facts and avoid emotional arguments, personal attacks, threats of political influence, or demands.

Be specific. Explain the hometown relevance of this issue. Use your institution's stationery, if authorized.

Be discriminate. Write only on the issues that are very important to you and avoid the risk of diluting your effectiveness.

Be inquiring. Ask for the policymaker's view on the subject and how she or he intends to vote on relevant legislation. Expect a reply, even if it is only a form letter.

Be available. Offer additional information if needed and make sure your policymaker knows how to contact you.

Be appreciative. Remember to say 'thank you' when it is deserved. Follow the issue after you write and send a correspondence of appreciation if your policymaker votes your way.



Sample Letters

1. Use personal or business stationery.

→ Jane Q. Psychologist, Ph.D.
Psychology Department
Hometown University
Hometown, State 12345

Today's Date

2. Address your legislator properly.

→ The Honorable _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator _____:

3. State your relationship to the legislator up front and concentrate on one issue.

→ As a psychologist and a constituent, I am writing to urge you to support S. 123, a bill that authorizes a program to support children's mental and behavioral health care needs.

6. Be specific about what you want and inform your legislator about where your issue is in Congress.

→ I urge you to become a cosponsor of S. 123. In doing so, you will demonstrate your commitment to the lives and health of our nation's children. This bill, which is currently being considered by the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families, is expected to be reported to the full Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in the next few weeks. I look forward to hearing your comments on this legislation and appreciate your support.

← **4. Personalize the issue.**

← **5. Be factual.**

← **7. Request a response.**

8. Keep your letter to one page.

↗ Sincerely,
Jane Q. Psychologist, Ph.D.
Professor

Sample Letters

Date

1. Full name of Senator. → The Honorable _____
_____ U. S. Senate Building
Washington, D. C.

2. Last name of the Senator. → Dear Senator _____:

3. Introduce yourself by stating your profession and local ties. → As a psychologist and constituent, I am writing to urge you to support and cosponsor **H.R. 4925, the Healthy Media for Youth Act.**

5. Start the second paragraph by explaining what the legislation would do or what issue you would like to see the Member address. →

The Healthy Media for Youth Act works to strengthen our nation's response to the detrimental pressures many of today's youth feel by promoting healthy and positive depictions of girls and women in the media. In particular, this important legislation works to accomplish this mission through increased research, a National Taskforce, and youth-directed programs aimed at bettering the psychological, physical, and interpersonal development of youth.

4. Get right to the point about why you are writing in the first or second sentence, use bill numbers if applicable.

Over the past couple of years in my day-to-day activities as a family psychologist I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of young, female patients reporting negative self-image problems. To this point, the American Psychological Association's Report on the Sexualization of Girls (2007) found that three of the most common mental health problems among girls, eating disorders, depression or depressed mood, and low self-esteem, are linked to sexualization of girls and women in media. This legislation offers a positive step forward in helping to combat the negative and unrealistic stress thrust upon our youth from unhealthy media depictions.

6. Insert any personal experience or expertise you might have about the issue.

8. Invite the Member to respond to your inquiry and thank the Member for listening to your concern. →

I look forward to your response and thank you for your consideration of the Healthy Media for Youth Act. I hope that you will work with your colleagues in Congress to quickly enact this critically needed legislation. Please feel free to contact me at () ___-___ if I can provide you with any additional information.

7. Background information or studies pertinent to the topic can be helpful in making your case.

10. Never assume that the return address on the envelope is sufficient. Leave full address/contact information in signature line. →

Sincerely,

Your full name
Postal address with zip code
Phone number

9. Provide contact information for Member or staff.

Sample Letters

June 5, 2010

The Honorable John Doe
000 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Rep. Doe:

As a psychologist at University Hospital and constituent, I am writing to urge you to cosponsor and enact the **Positive Aging Act** (H.R. 3191/S. 3698).

The Positive Aging Act would go a long way in providing optimal mental health care services for our senior populations. This important legislation would require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make grants available to public and private nonprofit entities for integrative mental health services for older adults in primary care settings. Additionally, this bill would support the establishment of interdisciplinary geriatric mental health outreach teams in community settings where older adults reside or receive social services.

As a psychologist with over 25 years of experience working with seniors in our community I can attest that there is an immense need for integrative mental health services in primary care settings. Far too many of our elder populations are not receiving the mental health services they need and deserve due to a lack of integrative care options. Simply put, the Positive Aging Act will work to address these shortages and I believe our seniors' community stands to benefit greatly from its passage.

Thank you for all the great work you have done and continue to do for our community. Can I count on your cosponsorship of the Positive Aging Act? Please do not hesitate to contact me at (000) 000-0000 if I can serve as a resource for information about the mental health needs of our seniors.

Sincerely,

Jane Q Psychologist, PhD
1111 Main Street.
City, PA 00000-0000

(000) 000-0000

Meeting with Your Legislator

A carefully planned face-to-face visit with your legislator is the most effective means of conveying your message. Such a meeting can often times be arranged in advance of a visit to Washington, D.C. PI-GRO staff welcome the opportunity to work with you to set up such a meeting whether you are in town for an APA governance meeting or for another purpose. You can also arrange a meeting in your legislator's district office.

Make an appointment. Contact your legislator's scheduler, explain that you are a constituent, along with your affiliations and the subject you wish to discuss, and ask for 15 to 30 minutes of your legislator's time. This can often be done by submitting a written request through the member's website or in some cases by calling the office. If it is clear that the legislator is unable to meet with you, then a very good substitute is a meeting with the relevant legislative assistant (LA). Legislators have demanding schedules. In fact, you should not be surprised or disappointed if you meet with an LA, even if your appointment was scheduled to be with the legislator.

Do your homework. Learn as much as you can about the legislator's record as it relates to your issue. The PI-GRO staff and the legislator's web site are helpful sources of information.

Be on time. But do not be surprised if they are not. Congressional schedules are hectic, and being a visitor to Capitol Hill often requires patience and flexibility.

Establish ties. Introduce yourself, convey information about your affiliations, and exchange pleasantries briefly. But do not get bogged down in small talk. You will have precious few minutes with the legislator, so stay focused on the purpose for your meeting. Also, be sure to ask for a business card of the appropriate staff and leave your relevant contact information (i.e. a business card, etc.) with the office.

Be prepared. Have your information ready in a digestible, concise form, just as you would when writing a letter or making a telephone call. Know the opposing arguments as well as those in favor of your view. Take your cues on how to proceed from the

legislator or staff member. If he or she seems familiar with the issue, you can move right ahead. If not, take the opportunity to inform him or her about the issue.

Be inquiring. Ask your legislator to state his or her position on the issue. Know what you want in advance, and ask for it. Be tolerant of differing views and keep the dialogue open.

Be responsive. Try to answer questions. When you cannot, offer to get back to your legislator or staff with the information. Thank him or her for the time spent with you.

Be appreciative. Follow up with a letter of thanks, capitalizing on the opportunity to restate your points, and offer to serve as a resource to the legislator and his or her office. Email can be a time-effective and appropriate means to deliver this note of gratitude.

Inviting Your Legislator to Visit

This section was adapted with permission from Make Your Voice Heard, a publication of AARP/VOTE.

Would it surprise you to know that your legislator might be interested in visiting your place of employment? Sometimes the most convincing case is the one seen first hand. If your research or practice receives federal funding, or your place of business employs a significant number of the member's constituents then a visit from your Representative may be worthwhile to consider. Such visits keep lawmakers in touch with the interests and needs of their constituents, inform them about less familiar subject areas, and provide you with an opportunity to strengthen your relationship with the legislator. Especially attractive to a Representative is the opportunity to meet a great number of concerned and involved constituents during a congressional "District Work Period" when Congress is in recess, typically during holiday periods. Of course, the initiative to arrange such a visit will have to come from you.

Appearances or site visits by public officials are exciting, but they require a great deal of advance planning.

Meeting with Your Legislator

Below are a few recommendations for a successful visit:

1. Arrange and coordinate the event with the staff scheduler from the Representative's office. Send a written request with all of the appropriate details, such as time, place, duration of the visit, number of attendees and other guests, activities planned, etc.

If you are inviting your member of Congress to an APA-sponsored event, you should coordinate the invitation very closely with PI-GRO. We can also provide valuable advice if you are inviting him or her to tour your agency or university.

2. You may wish to have members of the local press attend the visit. Contact your institution's public relations office or press office for professional help with this. Be sure that your lawmaker's press secretary is consulted before members of the press are invited.

It is important to target the right reporters to invite to the event. In this case, it could be a political reporter who covers the lawmaker, or it could be a science or health reporter, or all three. Your public relations or press office can invite them by sending a "media advisory" (a one-page announcement with basic information) or by sending a press release, following up with a telephone call two days before the event. You might consider having your institution's photographer on hand and including a photograph in your institution's newsletter or sending a copy to your legislator's office for her or his newsletter. The APA Public Communications Office can also help with questions you might have about inviting the press.

3. Notify anyone who will be affected by the visit, such as colleagues or officials in your university department or your state psychological association well in advance, and again the day before the event.
4. Provide the legislator's office with precise and detailed directions to the event and designate a contact person who will be available as a liaison in advance of the event.
5. Meet the legislator before the event, allow time for introductions, and provide a briefing on the itinerary and a time schedule for the event. Discuss important factors surrounding the visit, for example, how many psychologists work in the agency, or the amount and source of federal funds received.
6. Introduce your guest. Give a brief explanation of why the legislator is visiting and announce whether or not there will be a question and answer session.
7. Follow up on any commitments made to the legislator at the event. Coordinate with the legislator's press secretary on the details of a press release, if appropriate.
8. Don't forget to send a thank you note, possibly containing photographs taken during the event, as well as any press clippings or news coverage generated by the event.
9. Stay involved.

Glossary

Act: A bill or measure passed into law. Also used to describe a comprehensive piece of proposed legislation with multiple components.

Adjourn: To end a legislative day.

Adjourn Sine Die: To end the congressional session.

Administrative Assistant (AA): The Congressman's chief of staff in a congressional office (often times, this person will simply use the job title of Chief of Staff).

Amendment: A proposal to change, or an actual change to, a given piece of legislation.

Appropriation: Legislation to provide specific funding for an authorized program.

Authorization: Legislation to establish a program, specify its general purpose and, broadly, how that purpose is to be achieved, and set a funding ceiling for the program.

Bill: A proposed law.

Budget: An annual proposal that outlines anticipated federal revenue and designates program expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year.

Calendar: The list of bills or resolutions to be considered by committees or by either chamber.

Chairperson: Member of the majority party who presides over the work of a committee or subcommittee.

Committee Report: A committee's written statement about a given piece of legislation. Committee reports are especially important because they often contain implementing and enforcing language for the legislation.

Conference Committee: A temporary, ad hoc panel composed of House and Senate conferees which is formed for the purpose of reconciling differences in legislation that has passed both chambers. Conference committees are usually convened to

resolve bicameral differences on major and controversial legislation.

Congress: Refers to the two-year cycle of activities of the legislative branch. For example, the "111th Congress" began in January 2009, and included a 2009 and 2010 "session." Proposed legislation introduced during a two-year Congress may be taken up at any time during that period, but once the Congress has ended, pending measures are no longer viable and must be introduced anew in the next Congress in order to be considered.

Congressional Budget Office (CBO): The congressional support agency that provides objective, nonpartisan, and timely analyses to aid in economic and budgetary decisions on the wide array of programs covered by the federal budget and the information and estimates required for the Congressional budget process.

Congressional Research Service (CRS): The congressional support agency that provides non-partisan policy analysis and responds to research requests of individual members of Congress.

Continuing Resolution: A joint resolution of Congress to provide continued funding for government agencies generally at the same rate as the previous year's appropriations, which have not yet been funded through the enactment of that year's appropriations bills.

Drop a Bill: A term used by person to reference the introduction of bill (i.e. the formal process of introducing legislation involves "dropping a bill" into the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives' hopper).

Fiscal Year: The financial operating year of the federal government, beginning October 1st and ending September 30th of the next calendar year.

Government Accountability Office (GAO): The congressional support agency that reviews and evaluates the management of federal programs and activities, primarily at the request of individual members of Congress.

Glossary

Institute of Medicine (IOM): Chartered by the National Academy of Sciences to enlist distinguished members of the appropriate professions in the examination of policy matters pertaining to public health.

Joint Committee: A committee consisting of members of both the House and Senate.

Joint Resolution: Joint resolutions, which are essentially the same as bills, usually focus on a single item or issue. They are designated as either “H. J. Res.” (when originating in the House) or “S. J. Res.” (when originating in the Senate).

Legislative Assistant (LA): The professional staff member in charge of a particular issue or issue area.

Legislative Council (Leg. Council): The generally non-partisan legal staff that draft legislative language at the request of Congressional members.

Majority Leader: Leader of the majority party in either the House or the Senate.

Mark-up: The review and revision of a piece of legislation by committee members.

Minority Leader: Leader of the minority party in either the House or the Senate.

Motion to Recommit: The procedural motion on the House floor that will traditionally give the Minority party one last opportunity to amend or kill a bill before final passage.

National Academy of Sciences (NAS): Chartered by Congress, NAS convenes committees of experts, often at the initiative of Congress, to advise the government on scientific and technical matters.

National Research Council (NRC): Organized by the National Academy of Sciences to advise the federal government, the public, and the scientific and engineering communities.

Pocket Veto: When the President withholds approval of a bill after Congress has adjourned, thereby killing the bill without a formal veto.

President of the Senate: The Vice President of the U.S. officially presides over the Senate, except during times of very important debate. A President pro tempore is elected to preside in his or her place.

Quorum: The number of Senators or Representatives who must be present in their respective chambers before business can be conducted.

Ranking Member: Member of the majority party on a committee who ranks first in seniority after the chairperson.

Ranking Minority Member: The minority party member with the most seniority on a committee.

Reauthorization: Renews, usually with changes, a previously approved program.

Recess: Marks a temporary end to the business of the Congress and sets a time for the next meeting.

Resolution: A formal statement of a decision or opinion by the House, Senate or both, which does not carry the force of law.

Rider: A provision added to a bill so that it may “ride” to approval on the strength of that bill. Riders are often attached to appropriations bills.

Speaker of the House: The presiding officer in the House of Representatives. The Speaker is elected by a majority of the House and is next in the line of succession for the Presidency after the Vice President.

Table a Bill: A motion to remove a bill from consideration.

Unanimous Consent: A procedure for adopting non-controversial measures without a vote.

Veto: Disapproval of a bill or resolution by the President.

Whip: A legislator who is chosen to be an assistant to the leader of the party in the House or Senate and whose job is to marshal support for party strategy. This legislator “whips” party line votes.

Acronyms for Key Government Agencies

ACF Administration for Children and Families

AHCPR Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

AOA Administration on Aging

CBO Congressional Budget Office

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CMS Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

CHAMPUS Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services

CMHS Center for Mental Health Services

CSAP Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

CSAT Center for Substance Abuse Treatment

DOD Department of Defense

DOEd Department of Education

DOJ Department of Justice

FCC Federal Communications Commission

FDA Food and Drug Administration

FTC Federal Trade Commission

GAO Government Accountability Office

GPO Government Printing Office

GSA General Services Administration

HRSA Health Resources and Services Administration

HHS Department of Health and Human Services

IES Institute of Education Sciences

IHS Indian Health Service

NCHS National Center for Health Statistics

NCMHD National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities

NIA National Institute on Aging

NIAAA National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

NICHD National Institute on Child Health and Human Development

NIDA National Institute on Drug Abuse

NIDRR National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

NIH National Institutes of Health

NIJ National Institute of Justice

NIMH National Institute of Mental Health

NIOSH National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health

OCCAN Office on Child Abuse and Neglect

OERI Office of Education Research and Improvement

OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

OMB Office of Management and Budget

OSHA Office of Safety and Health Administration

PHS Public Health Service

SAMHSA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SSA Social Security Administration

VA Department of Veterans' Affairs

For information about these and other government agencies, visit <http://firstgov.gov>.