



ADVANCING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

*A Psychologist's Guide to
Participation in Federal
Policymaking*

Bill
of
Rights

PREFACE



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

The American Psychological Association (APA) public interest advocacy program is the largest and most visible national presence advocating psychology in the public interest. The program is administered by public policy professionals in the Public Policy Office at the APA Central Office in Washington, D.C. Its purposes include:

- informing members of Congress and their staffs about psychological research and services and their relevance to federal policy and to society;
- influencing national health, social, and human services policy;
- promoting federal support for psychological research, services, and training initiatives;
- strengthening the voice of psychology at the federal regulatory level; and
- informing APA members about federal policy developments and opportunities, and involving them as public interest advocates.

For more information on our initiatives, contact the American Psychological Association, Public Interest Policy Office at our address: 750 1st Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002. You can also reach us at 202.336.6062 or at ppo@apa.org. For information on the web, please visit our website at <http://www.apa.org/ppo/pi>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
I. APA Public Interest Advocacy	3
The Public Policy Advocacy Network.....	3
II. A Short Course in the Federal Policy Process	
Understanding the Legislative Process.....	4
Congressional Committees and Subcommittees that Affect Public Interest Issues.....	5
How a Legislator Decides How to Vote.....	6
Regulatory Process.....	6
How to Obtain Laws, Bills, and Other Congressional Documents: Locating Information on the Web.....	7
III. Effective Communication	
Identifying and Locating Your Legislators.....	9
Understanding the Role of Congressional Staff.....	9
Writing a Letter as a Constituent.....	9
Meeting With Your Legislator.....	12
Inviting Your Legislator to Visit.....	12
Conclusion.....	13
Glossary.....	13
Acronyms.....	14

INTRODUCTION

The American Psychological Association (APA) Public Policy Office is pleased to provide you with *Advancing Psychology in the Public Interest: A Psychologist's Guide to Participation in Federal Policymaking*. This guide is designed to encourage the participation of psychologists in the public policy process. Taking part in the political life of our country is a right and a privilege exercised by too few Americans. Yet, the actions of these individuals have a profound effect on the personal and professional lives of us all. It is our hope that you will use this guide to develop and maintain contact with your U.S. Senators and Representative as a citizen and advocate for the application of psychology to better human lives. The guide will inform you about how to do this in a way that will not require you to learn all the subtleties of public policymaking or to make public policy advocacy your full-time job.

APA maintains a vigorous and effective public interest advocacy program, and your direct contact with Congress as a constituent is a vital component of this program. Your special training and expertise uniquely qualify you to contribute to the development of public interest policy and to the reshaping of political attitudes toward the field of psychology.

We hope that you will use the information in this guide to support our shared goals. It is important that you coordinate your grassroots activities with our office to assure maximum effectiveness and complementary legislative strategies. Our expert staff is available to work with you. Please contact the APA Public Policy Office at (202) 336-6062 or ppo@apa.org, and work with us to enhance federal support for psychology and to promote psychology in the service of human welfare.

In the sections that follow, this guide will discuss details of the legislative process that will help you put your advocacy work into perspective, give you pointers on the most effective ways to communicate with your legislators, and explain how to use the resources of the APA Public Policy Office to carry out your advocacy efforts on behalf of psychology.





APA Public Interest Advocacy

The American Psychological Association (APA) focuses on expanding the recognition of psychology's scientific and professional contributions and achievements to promote human welfare. Among its primary objectives are the enhancement of federal support for psychological research, services, and training, and the application of psychological research to inform policy aimed at addressing public interest concerns.

In support of this goal, APA sponsors an advocacy program that is the largest and most visible national presence advocating for psychology in the public interest. Why is it important to do this at the federal level? 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 health and mental health of Americans, such as policies regarding substance abuse and mental health services and workforce development, violence prevention research and intervention programs, and other public interest initiatives. The APA Public Policy Office staff work to ensure that Congress makes informed choices in these areas.

APA is often called upon by Congress to offer advice in 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, affirmative action, the influence of television programming on behavior, gay and lesbian civil rights, and successful aging.

Through its Public Policy Office, APA maintains a close liaison with decision makers on Capitol Hill, working with them and their staffs as they formulate 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 interests.

APA public interest 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 both specific social problems 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 persons who are disadvantaged, who are subject to discrimination, or who have special needs related to developmental factors. These include: children, youth, and families; racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and lesbian, gay and bisexual persons;
- 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 Advocacy Network

A major and continuing objective of the Public Policy Office is to help interested psychologists advocate in support of initiatives to address human needs. This includes providing them with timely information on legislative and regulatory issues of importance to psychology. To meet this goal, PPO maintains the Public Policy Advocacy Network (PPAN). The Action Alerts and Information Updates you receive through PPAN help to provide you with the information you need to become an effective advocate for psychology.

PPAN is a non-interactive, electronic network through which brief information notices are sent on average once per month. If you are interested in joining PPAN, please visit our link at: <http://capwiz.com/apapolicy/mlm/signup>.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

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 American Association of Retired Persons.

Any legislator can introduce a piece of legislation, which is known as a **bill**. A bill is introduced in a given **chamber** of a legislature -- either the House of Representatives or the Senate of the U.S. Congress. 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 one 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 Committee has jurisdiction over the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and members of the Committee and their staffs 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 can **testify** at these hearings, stating the reasons for their support or opposition, and suggesting ways in which 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 be accepted. If a bill can be amended by the full legislative body, it is given an **open rule**. If it cannot be amended, it is said to have been given a **closed 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

committee and subcommittee, hearings and markups may be held, and it may then be reported out to the full chamber 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 the bill with its agreed upon compromises, 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 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.

Committees and Subcommittees that Affect Public Interest Issues

U.S. House of Representatives

In the House of Representatives, authorizations for most Public Health Service (PHS) agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (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** deals with disability issues through its jurisdiction over the Social Security Old-Age, Survivors' and Disability Insurance System. The **Subcommittee on Human Resources** has jurisdiction over those provisions of the Social Security Act relating to public assistance, e.g., the Supplemental Security Income Program and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program.

The **House Judiciary Committee** has jurisdiction over issues of concern to ethnic minority and lesbian and gay communities, such as hate crimes and civil rights, and also establishes federal policy with regard to violence prevention and incarceration of juvenile and adult offenders. The Committee also deals with legislation that would codify the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, assuring women's legal right to decide to terminate a pregnancy. In addition, the Committee deals with other issues of special concern to women, such as criminal justice aspects of sexual assault and domestic violence.

The **House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Select Education** 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 Subcommittee also has jurisdiction over the education and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, child care, child abuse and domestic violence.

Other committees have jurisdiction over issues of concern to psychologists. For example, the House Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Dairy, 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), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) fall within the jurisdiction of the **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**. Most matters concerning PHS programs are handled at the full committee level and are not referred to a subcommittee unlike in the House. (Once authorized, fund-

ing 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 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 Issues** has jurisdiction over the Rehabilitation Act which provides vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities. 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, Security and Aging** deals with measures affecting the well being of older adults, such as the Older Americans Act.

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's **HELP Subcommittee on Education and Early Childhood Development** has jurisdiction over programs such as the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The **Committee on Veterans' Affairs** bears responsibility for veterans' health and welfare measures, including the provision of appropriate health services for women veterans who experienced sexual assault while in the military.

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 Governmental Affairs** and the **House Committee on Government Operations** are oversight 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**.

How a Legislator Decides How to Vote

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 deci-

sion. 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 particu-

lar 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 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 Policy 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, it was referred to

a number of agencies, including the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), for the development of implementing regulations. In 1990 and 1991, the DOJ and EEOC 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 American Psychological Association. 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 Obtain Laws, Bills, and Other Congressional Documents: Locating Information on the Web

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 congressional 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 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 run a quick search using the two search fields on the top of the THOMAS 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 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.

Note: You must have Adobe Acrobat Reader to view PDF files. If you do not have Acrobat Reader, you can download a free copy from <http://www.adobe.com>.

GPO-Access

Alternatively, GPO Access (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov>) is another federal web site that lets you 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+4 Lookup service provided by the United States 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 no central listing of Member office public 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 else have forms linked from this site that allows 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://clerkweb.house.gov/mbrcmtee/mbrcmtee.htm>. The Clerk of the House maintains addresses and phone numbers of all 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 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 Senate and House Committee 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 committee hearings, including links to live and archived streaming coverage via the Capital Hearings site (<http://www.capitol-hearings.org>). Hearing rooms require the use of the Real Player, available for free download from <http://www.real.com>. This site is provided as a public service by C-SPAN.

Senate Committees:

http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers_committees_home.htm

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 af-

filiation, 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>.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO)

The CBO provides Congress with the objective, timely 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 committees 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>.

Reports from the 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. Studies 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.goa.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 Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has a number of agencies within it, includ-

ing the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Use the links below to learn more about some federal agencies that administer programs of interest to education policy advocates. Information on federal grants and instructions on how to apply for these grants can be found at some of these sites, as well.

The White House:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

Department of Health and Human Services:
<http://www.hhs.gov>

National Institutes of Health:
<http://www.nih.gov>

Health Resources and Services Administration
<http://www.hrsa.gov>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
<http://www.samhsa.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 Justice
<http://www.usdoj.gov>

APA Web Site Links of Note

Individual members and students can keep up to date on the latest legislative and regulatory activities of importance to the field of psychology by visiting the homepage of the APA's Public Policy Office: <http://www.apa.org/ppo>. Be sure to also bookmark <http://www.apa.org/ppo/pi> to follow APA's advocacy for psychology in the public interest. You can also get involved in APA's federal policy advocacy initiatives by joining the Public Policy Advocacy Network (PPAN) at <http://capwiz.com/apapolicy/mlm/signup>.

II. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Identifying and Locating Your Legislators

The first step in effective communications with Congress is determining the right person to contact. It is generally most effective to contact your own legislator -- the person who represents your congressional district. As your elected official, this is the person who represents you and is most likely to be sensitive to your views. Legislators maintain a Washington, D.C. office and a district office located back home. APA can help identify and locate your legislator, or you can check the blue pages of your phone book, call your local political party office, or 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 important. The APA Public Interest Policy staff is in the best position to advise you on such exceptions. 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 office telephone number, or be connected with the Washington office directly, by calling the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. The Washington 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 recent college graduates 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 serve still 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 policy-making.

Writing a Letter as a Constituent

Congressional offices in Washington receive hundreds of letters from constituents each day. These guidelines will improve the effectiveness of your letter:

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

Be informative. Identify yourself as a psychologist (and constituent, where applicable), state your own views, 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. Rely on the facts and avoid emotional arguments, threats of political influence, or demands.

Be political. 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 legislator'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 legislator knows how to reach you.

Be appreciative. Remember to say 'thanks' when it is deserved. Follow the issue after you write and send a letter of appreciation if your legislator 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 research psychologist and a constituent, I am writing to urge you to support S. _____, the bill that authorizes the _____. This program currently provides basic primary care services to over 4 millipoor and low-income Americans each year, a group who otherwise could not afford such treatment.

4. Personalize the issue.

5. Be factual.

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

7. Request a response.

I urge you to become a cosponsor of S. In doing so, you will demonstrate your commitment to the lives and health of our nation's poorer individuals and to reducing the rate of unintended pregnancies among poor and low-income women. This bill, which is currently being considered by the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families, is expected to be reported to the full Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee in the next few weeks. I look forward to hearing your comments on this legislation and appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Jane Q. Psychologist, Ph.D.
Professor

8. Keep your letter to one page.

Date

The Honorable (Full Name of Senator)
U. S. Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator:

As a psychologist and constituent, I am writing to urge you to support **S. 625, the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 (LLEEA)**. The need to counter discrimination and targeted violence in this country has become all the more urgent with the increase in hate crimes since the tragic events of September 11th.

LLEEA would strengthen our nation's response to hate crimes by expanding federal jurisdiction over hate crimes and by providing federal assistance to state and local law enforcement. Currently, hate crimes can only be prosecuted at the federal level when motivated by bias based on race, religion, national origin, or color and when the victim is engaged in a federally protected activity (e.g., voting) and in several other circumstances specified by the statute. Hence, hate crimes often go unrecognized and unprosecuted. S. 625 would enable the federal government to address those cases that other jurisdictions are either unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute, while retaining primary responsibility for hate crime prosecution at the state and local level.

In addition, S. 625 would expand current law to recognize crimes motivated by a person's gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Hate crimes committed against these groups are forms of discrimination. The federal government needs to have jurisdiction over such crimes to further protect its citizens at increased risk for such victimization. Psychological research has demonstrated deleterious mental health outcomes (e.g., depression and anxiety, including posttraumatic stress disorder) for victims of hate crimes.

Thank you for your consideration. 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.

Sincerely,
Your full name
Postal address with zip code
Phone number

Date

The Honorable Rick Santorum
U. S. Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Santorum:

As a psychologist and constituent, I am writing to urge you to cosponsor and enact the **Family Opportunity Act of 2005** (S. 183/H.R. 1443).

As you may know from recent news coverage, many families with children who have severe mental or physical disabilities may face debt, bankruptcy, and even relinquishment of custody because they cannot afford to provide health care for their children. The **Family Opportunity Act of 2005** (S. 183) sponsored by Senators Grassley, Jeffords, Harkin, and Kennedy would address this problem, by allowing middle-income families with children who have severe mental or physical disabilities to "buy-in" to the Medicaid program. The Act would also fund a demonstration project allowing states to cover children who would likely become disabled without adequate health care coverage. The ability to obtain Medicaid benefits will promote early intervention, access to medically necessary services, and family stability.

I was proud to hear that you cosponsored a similar version of the FAMILY OPPORTUNITY ACT in 2001. This year, the Senate bill (S. 183) has 54 cosponsors, and the companion House bill, H.R. 1443, sponsored by Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX), has 54 cosponsors. Additionally, the Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Resolution has reserved funding for this program if Congress enacts the measure. Please reaffirm your commitment to children and families by having your staff contact Senator Grassley's office to cosponsor the FAMILY OPPORTUNITY ACT (S. 183).

I look forward to hearing your comments in support of this important legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact me, if I can serve as a resource for information about the mental health needs of children with mental disorders or physical disabilities.

Sincerely,

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. APA Public Interest Policy staff are always willing 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 appointment secretary, state 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. 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 a demanding schedule. 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. APA Public Interest Policy 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 keep to your purpose for the meeting.

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

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 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.

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, 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. Here are a few tips:

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 the APA Public Policy Office. 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 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 associa-

tion 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 called for.

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.

CONCLUSION

Why should you become more politically aware and involved? Because decisions made each and every day by Congress have an impact on the health and well-being of American citizens and the role of psychology and psychologists. Remember that your elected officials routinely make decisions about the conduct, funding, and nature of federal policies and programs that affect human lives. The men and women making these decisions are, generally, not content experts. They must, therefore, rely upon the expressed views of their constituents, the information of the

experts, and their own opinions to make important decisions. As a psychologist, and as a citizen, you have a right and a responsibility to inform those decisions.

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.

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.

Congress: Refers to the two-year cycle of activities of the legislative branch. For example, the "108th Congress" began in January 2003, and included a 2003 and 2004 "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 Research Service (CRS): The congressional support agency that provides 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: To introduce a bill by "dropping" it into the ???

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.

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.

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.

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 United States 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 Represent-

tatives. The Speaker is elected by a majority of the House and is next in the line of succession 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

AHCPH 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>.