



2017 Grassroots Tips

Check the “full calendar” listings on Web pages for the House and Senate — or use the portal at the Library of Congress website www.congress.gov — to see when a district or state “work period” is scheduled. That means your representatives will be in their home districts

The current political tumult has highlighted these communication issues for some citizens and spurred the creation of several campaigns to bridge the gaps. Here are some ways you can make your views heard by your representatives, senators, even the White House.

1. Reach out to your reps.

The U.S. Government provides a **public database** of contact info for your elected officials. Use it. *Pro tip:* Do background research, using reliable sources, before firing off an email with your position — it’s difficult to effectively argue an issue with incomplete or incorrect facts.

You can often use your elected officials’ official websites to sign up for email newsletters and other updates. You may also want to follow them on social media and comment directly on their posts.

2. Plan strategic calls, not just emails.

Phone calls from constituents are often more effective than emails because emails are depersonalized and easily ignored amid other overwhelming requests for contact.

Further, a strategically planned group call has the potential to inundate office phone lines and force a representative to issue a statement to help clear out communication channels.

3. Attend town hall meetings.

Your representatives will hold local Town Hall events or Q&A sessions where the public is encouraged to attend and voice concerns — these events are part of their gig. You can usually find info about when and where these are set to take place on local official websites or your representative’s website.

These sessions focus on direct contact between constituents and representatives. At a town hall meeting you can get up and ask a question. So be prepared to use your time wisely, in a way that will have impact. You may even want to team up other constituents with similar concerns and coordinate ahead of time to prepare questions or concerns. This way, you can cover more ground and ensure that ample time is spent on your pet issue.

Listen closely to the answers to ensure they do not skirt the question. And finally, be sure to publicize on social media or through other means your interactions during the town hall. You can live-tweet the event, for example, tagging the representative in your tweets. Their office is sure to take notice, especially if you get significant engagement.

4. Use digital tools for policy updates and action

You can track the legislation your elected representatives have proposed or contributed to in some way by browsing their respective websites. Once you're aware of bills coming down the pike that your congresspersons and senators will vote on, reach out to them to let them know where you, their constituent, stands.

One tool for this is [Countable](#), which enables you to track pending legislation, learn more about it and contact your rep directly with your views.

5. Get involved with new engagement initiatives.

Several movements are getting underway online to encourage voters and activists to make their views heard.

For example, a left-leaning initiative called Indivisible Guide was just launched by group of former congressional staffers. It lends tips on how to make Congress listen to constituents