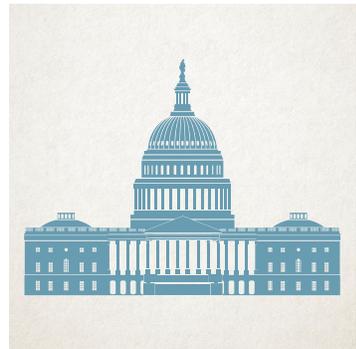
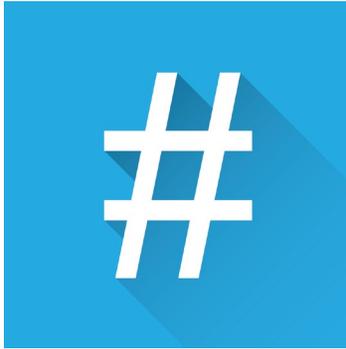




ee Advocate

An Advocacy Guide for Environmental Education
Professionals & Supporters

April 2019





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Table of Contents

I. Introduction: Your Voice Can Create Change!	5
Key Elements of Advocacy	6
How NAAEE Will Help You Become an Effective EE Advocate	7
II. Three Steps to Becoming an Effective EE Advocate	8
Step 1: Get to Know Your Representatives	8
Step 2: Create a Successful Message	9
Step 3: Thoughtfully Deliver Your Message	11
Setting up a Legislative Meeting	11
Ensuring the Meeting is Successful	12
Following Up After Your Meeting	14
Don't Ignore the State or District Congressional Office	15
III. Using the Media to Enhance Your Advocacy	17
How to Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor	17
Letter to the Editor Tips	18
How to Write and Submit an Op-Ed	19
Op-Ed Tips	19
Using Social Media to Enhance Your Advocacy	20
IV. Four Actions You Can Take Now	22
V. Additional Resources	23
How Our Laws are Made	23
Learning More about Your Representative	23
Advocacy Information from NAAEE	23
How Does the Federal Government Create a Budget?	27
Glossary of Legislative and Political Terms	28



About this Guide

We hope this guide will help you become a better advocate for environmental education (EE) and bring more support and funding to the field. For EE to reach its full potential, advocacy at all levels of government—local school boards, state legislatures, state and federal agencies, and federal Congressional and Senatorial outreach—is crucial. This guide, however, is focused primarily on advocating with your federal representatives, because these legislators are particularly important to our national work to support environmental education.

Fortunately, the same rules and best practices that we emphasize in this document are equally applicable to your advocacy work at the state and local level. Doing your homework in advance of meetings with elected officials, including researching your targets and getting to know their interests; being respectful, authentic, and knowledgeable about your issues and priorities; creating compelling, personal messages that localize issues and bring them to life for your target audience; using both traditional and social media creatively and wisely; and more than anything else, building ongoing, positive relationships based on trust and respect...all these practices will serve you well no matter who you are trying to turn into a champion for environmental education.

About the North American Association for Environmental Education [NAAEE]

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) works throughout North America and beyond to advance environmental literacy and civic engagement, using the power of education to create a more equitable and sustainable future. In all of our advocacy work, we help to educate decisions makers about the benefits of effective EE programs. NAAEE is non-partisan, and works with all political affiliations to support environmental education. Although we focus most of our direct policy and advocacy efforts in the United States, we support environmental education around the world, and many of the tips in this guide can be adapted for other contexts, cultures, and political situations involving environmental education policy change. For more about NAAEE visit www.naaee.org.

Acknowledgements

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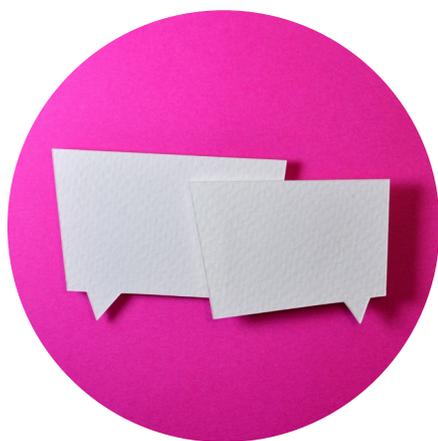
Writer/Editor: Dave Slater

Contributors: Brock Adler, Judy Braus, Traci Price, Tia Watkins

Design: Weir Design



I. Introduction: Your Voice Can Create Change!



At NAAEE, we know from experience that advocacy can bring about policy change that improves people’s lives. Our most frequent advocacy goal is the protection of federal and state grant programs that provide critical funding for EE, but in each legislative session there are also a range of other important policy initiatives that need your voice to become reality.

Our legislators and other leaders need us to tell them about the important work you and others are doing so they’ll be inspired to champion programs that support environmental education. Without your advocacy efforts, your elected officials will never fully understand how EE supports jobs, improves students’ school performance, supports community improvement, and benefits others in your district. Because you have direct experience and knowledge of the transformative power of EE, you have unique qualifications to effectively advocate for it in your community. Only you can tell the individual, local stories that bring the impact of EE to life.



The fact that you’re reading this guide suggests that you already understand that high-quality EE is vital to learners of all ages and communities everywhere. Our goal is to make it easy for you to:

- *take action*
- *build relationships with your legislators’ offices*
- *highlight your work and build support for EE*

Why is it so crucial that we educate our elected officials about the importance of EE in our communities and activate them on important education issues on Capitol Hill? Simply stated, funding for EE does not meet the huge demand for programming and professional development needed to create a more environmentally literate citizenry. At the same time, there is not equitable access to high-quality programs and materials—especially in economically depressed communities. We can address this lack of funding and inequality through smart, strategic advocacy. By doing so, we can ensure that EE reaches all the audiences around the country (including education departments and programs that play crucial roles) who can benefit from it and help move our field forward.

Effective advocacy makes a difference. Here’s how you can be an EE game changer.

Key Elements of Advocacy

Advocacy is defined as any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others¹. When it comes to environmental education, advocacy involves a wide range of activities to strengthen EE and increase equitable access, including:



One-on-one discussions with decision-makers to educate and influence them to change policy



Mobilizing the public, or specific audiences, such as young people and underserved residents, who can bring the issues to life for legislators and others



Special events that bring together decision-makers and stakeholders to highlight EE programs and promote solutions to challenges faced by the EE community



Engaging the media including social media to educate and activate our target audiences and reach new audiences

How NAAEE Will Help You Become an Effective EE Advocate

If you are new to advocacy, there are two immediate steps you can take to become better informed and connect more strongly with NAAEE and its network of EE professionals. The first is to [create a profile](#) and join the *Advocacy, Policy, and Civic Engagement* group on *eePro*, NAAEE's online networking platform for environmental education professional development. On *eePRO*, you'll find information on webinars, workshops, online courses, conferences, certification, trainings, and a variety of other resources. *eePRO* also provides a jobs board, and a listing of opportunities including grants, scholarships, and contests.



The second step you can take is to join the monthly calls for the *Advocacy, Policy, and Civic Engagement* group. These calls, led by NAAEE policy staff and other EE experts, are where you will learn more about strategy and priorities, timing of legislation, and key legislative targets and needs. Our staff make sure there's ample time for questions and answers on these calls and we often provide attendees with fact sheets and other supporting materials to facilitate their understanding and future advocacy efforts.

NAAEE and our state affiliates most frequently advocate in support of EE as opposed to environmental policy writ large. Once you are in the mix as an NAAEE EE Advocate, you will receive emails with carefully outlined strategies and talking points so you'll be up to date and completely prepared for a successful contact with your representatives or their staff in support of these efforts.

A Note about Lobbying

Lobbying is advocacy designed to influence specific legislation by communicating directly with legislators or asking others to contact their legislators to influence specific legislation. Although the laws around lobbying can be confusing, it's important to realize that nonprofits can lobby and expend resources on lobbying, within limits and up to a certain dollar amount. (U.S. tax code, however, prohibits certain nonprofits—including NAAEE—from participating in activities designed to aid the election of a particular candidate running for office.)

NAAEE is careful to ensure that its staff and advocates follow all appropriate lobbying guidelines, including understanding the important differences between lobbying by yourself versus lobbying as a representative of NAAEE or your local education association. Our goal is to ensure that when you help us with advocacy, we can both be sure it will not violate any nonprofit rules.

To find out more about the limits on lobbying activities, read [this excellent summary from the American Bar Association](#), which notes that "... lobbying is an effective form of advocacy that can help all nonprofits."

II. Three Steps to Becoming an Effective EE Advocate

Step 1: Get to Know Your Representatives

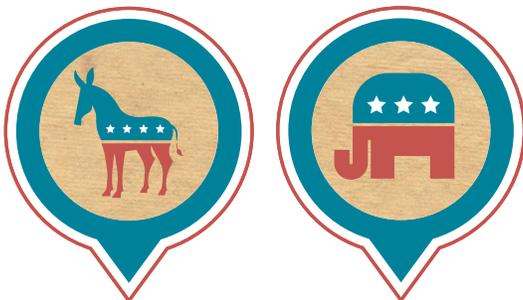
NAAEE's policy specialists will closely track crucial legislative processes, inform you when advocacy is most needed, and provide you with clear advice and messaging guidance. But we need you, as an EE Advocate, to do the upfront, ongoing work to best position yourself to influence the leaders who represent you.

Identify Your Representatives in Congress and Senators

Most people in the United States have one House representative and two senators. House members represent discrete districts based on population. Senators represent entire states. It's important to remember that, as a constituent, you have a unique relationship with your elected representatives. You are relevant to them because you live in the area or district they represent, and their job is to represent you. In fact, one of the most common questions heard in a Congressional office is "are they from the district?" A good resource is VoteSmart (<http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>), which helps you identify your representatives by zip code and senators by state (including the District of Columbia and U.S. territories).



Know Your Representatives' Party Affiliation



Members help all constituents, not just those who are members of their political party. After all, your representative has been elected to represent you and your interests, regardless of your party affiliation. But it is important to know the member's party affiliation to determine if they are part of the majority or minority party in Congress and to show that you are an informed constituent. In addition, although many members are seeking to work collaboratively across party lines, members of the majority party still have an advantage in efforts to get legislation passed and appropriations allocated, so you will want to craft your messages to appeal to those on both sides of the aisle. You can find party affiliation through the websites for the House (www.house.gov) and Senate (www.senate.gov).

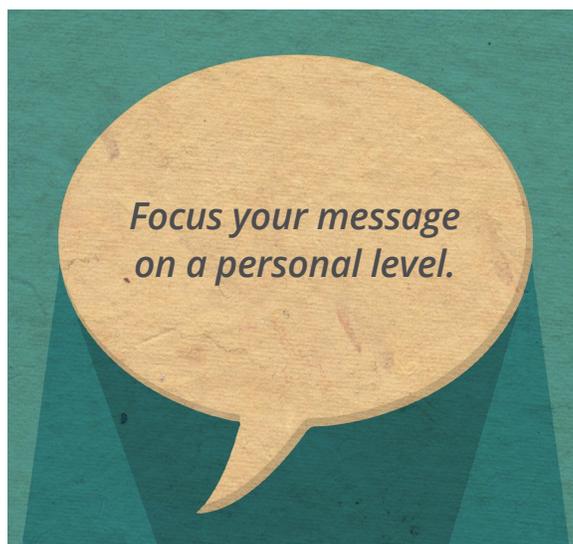
Learn What Your Representatives Care About

One of the best ways to learn about your representatives is to follow them on social media. Sign up to receive their regular e-newsletters. Dig deeper into their legislative records. (You can learn a lot from visiting their websites and learning which issues they highlight, what they say in their speeches, and how they've voted.) It's also useful to research which committee(s) they serve on (also available on their official website), and where they stand on the seniority scale (easily accessible on the web at <https://pressgallery.house.gov/member-data/seniority>). The more you know about them, their interests, and how much power they wield on the Hill or in the state house, the better your chance of success in connecting with and influencing them.

Also, try to determine whether you have any connections or common background experiences (high school, college, mutual acquaintances). A personal connection can be invaluable. As one DC public affairs professional said, "Finding out in conversation that a personal friend of mine had been the legislator's college roommate gave me immediate credibility!"² This is equally important when it comes to the legislative staff, since they will most likely be your main point of contact. Establishing a rapport early on can be incredibly helpful.

Step 2: Create a Successful Message

Although NAAEE will give you background information and overarching talking points on key issues or legislation, it's important for you to bring your personal perspective, experiences, and connections to your EE advocacy work. Whether you're communicating through an email, phone call, or a face-to-face office visit, the best way to shape the initial message to a legislator is to ask yourself this question: What would make this legislator care about environmental education at this time? As you're planning your visit, think about the benefits of EE has had locally and how you can point to specific communities or organizations within the district that have been impacted by federal support for EE. It may help to involve other constituents as you frame your approach.



To ensure that any call, email, or visit to a member of Congress or other political representative is as effective as possible, it's important to know exactly what you're asking for and what you want your elected official to do. We call this the "ask."

Remember that you are important to your elected officials because you're a constituent and because you have a unique view of the effects of proposed federal policy or legislation. Be sure to mention that you're part of a nationwide environmental education network, but focus your message on a personal level: Why you care about environmental education, why EE makes sense as a long-term investment, and examples of real people, communities, and organizations from the legislator's district who have benefited from EE.

A great technique to ensure your pitch is personal and memorable is to build your presentation around an anecdote that illustrates why environmental education is important to you. Make it something that you're passionate about. Then think about how to connect that anecdote to what you're asking for and how you can make it personal and compelling.

For example, if you're a teacher, you could describe a particular student whose classroom performance markedly improved after being inspired by a field experience. And then you could cement your ask by presenting a statistic about how few schools in the district are able to offer these sorts of field experiences—or how crucial the upcoming appropriations bill is to ensuring that the district's children continue to receive these cost-effective opportunities. A compellingly crafted anecdote and statistic like this can become something that you use over and over in your advocacy because, if done correctly, it makes your ask memorable and uniquely yours.



Ideally, you should strive to prepare a handful of these convincing anecdotes so you are well prepared for different situations and audiences. Practice them on family and friends to see which ones resonate most strongly and to make them as tight and persuasive as possible.

You don't have to be a national education or environmental expert to be a successful advocate. In fact, you definitely should not spend time reciting everything you know about national trends or statistics. Statistics are useful, but only if they relate directly to what you or your program is doing in the community. And, of course, you can also bring a fact sheet that provides additional information.

Think about it: In many cases, you probably know far more about environmental education—and how it impacts the legislative district—than the congressional staff. This is because congressional staff tend to be generalists. They handle a wide-range of complex subjects, from transportation to budgets to foreign affairs, and can't be experts in everything. Staff generally want to be responsive, but might not know enough about environmental education, and why it's important to constituents and the district, unless advocates tell them. That's where you come in. If they like and trust you, they will rely on your advice and knowledge. They may even begin to rely on you for your expertise and connections to the EE community when future questions or issues arise around federal EE programs.

Step 3: Thoughtfully Deliver Your Message

When it comes to communicating with a congressional office, your choices are to phone, email, or meet with them in person. (Since the 2001 anthrax attacks, sending letters has not been a good option because you can expect a two- to three-week delay in delivery.)

The policy staff at NAAEE can help you decide how best to make your ask, but in general, you should think about how you are most comfortable communicating, and what works best with your message. If it's a quick, "please vote yes on House Bill xyz" message, a phone call is probably appropriate. Longer messages about the value of particular legislation lend themselves better to emails or meetings.

Your communication is going to be filtered through a staff person, regardless of the medium. The best way to make sure your message is noticed is to make a personal phone call and ask for the staff person who handles education or environmental issues. Second best is a fax or email with your address in the subject line, which will alert the staff person that you are a constituent.

Overall, though, the delivery mechanism is less important than what you say. Fortunately, as a constituent who cares deeply about environmental education, you already have what it takes to create a message that will resonate with your representative and his or her staff.

The Five-Minute Rule

It's always a good idea to plan to keep your message to no more than five minutes, whether it's a short presentation in a meeting, or an email that you're asking a Congressional staff person to read (i.e. make sure it is straight-forward enough to be reviewed in five minutes or less). Congressional staffers are extremely busy, so try to stay out of the weeds and make your point as quickly and effectively as you can. You can provide more details later or connect the office to NAAEE if the legislator or staffer needs more information.

Setting up a Legislative Meeting

The first step in getting a meeting scheduled is to call your legislator's office and ask to speak with the scheduler. (This is also a good time to ask the name of the staffer who handles education or environmental issues.) Your best bet is to try to make this initial contact at least a month ahead of your planned visit.

"Understanding exactly how the issue or policy being discussed relates to the constituents back home was the most important part of any legislative meeting for me."

—former congressional staffer

Be clear about why you would like to meet with the legislator, and ask if he or she would be available to meet with you. In most cases you will end up meeting with a staff person—likely either the education or environment specialist in the office; sometimes it makes sense to meet with both and in some smaller offices, the same person covers both issues. The staff on the phone should be able to help you determine who the best person is.

Frequently, the office will ask you to send a request in writing via email. Be very specific about wanting a personal meeting to discuss your particular environmental education issue, and explain the timeliness as appropriate to the issue. Include any information the office requires, and make sure that there is correct contact information listed for at least one person in your group. Send the request to both the scheduler and the education or environmental specialist in the office.

The more flexibility you can provide regarding your availability, the more likely you will get a meeting with a member of Congress. Let the scheduler know how many people will attend your meeting and provide their names and hometowns, as well as affiliations, as appropriate.

If you don't hear back within a week, call the office. If it seems like it will be difficult to get a meeting with your representative at this time, you could ask to meet with the education or environment staffer. Be persistent, but try also to be accommodating and understanding of how busy they are.

Ensuring the Meeting is Successful

In addition to doing your homework into the legislator's background, voting records, and committee assignments, here are a few other tips to make sure your meeting goes well:

- **Team up with others.** Partners, program participants, and others who can represent different aspects of EE or perspectives on a specific program should join you if possible.
- **Establish roles for each member of the team.** Who will take the lead? Which person can tell a short but compelling story? Everyone should have a clear understanding of his or her role and the time they will have to make their point.
- **Gather or prepare any materials** that you will leave behind.
- **Plan ahead.** Confirm a day ahead and arrive early, allowing time to pass through security on busy days in Washington, D.C.





Ten Tips for an Effective Meeting

1. Dress for Success. Business attire will set a professional tone for your meeting.
2. Succinctly introduce yourself and your organization. Describe your mission, the audience you serve, and the size of your membership or reach. Bring a card so that they have your contact information handy during the meeting.
3. Thank the legislator for any past show of support for environmental education or relevant issues.
4. Clearly and briefly state the purpose of the meeting and what you hope to achieve. (For example: We'd like to tell you about the impacts of environmental education throughout Virginia and hope the Senator will agree to support funding for NOAA's education grant programs.)
5. Connect the dots. Be specific about how a federal or state program has benefited local schools, communities, or organizations. If true, be sure to mention that federal funding leverages additional private investments in the programs.
6. Bring materials to leave behind. A small packet including fact sheets about specific bills, federal grant programs, relevant articles or findings and contact information is a good way to provide additional detail that may not be able to be addressed in a short meeting.
7. Pay attention. You can learn a lot about a particular legislator's interests and concerns by being a good listener. Small details can help you make personal connections that also strengthen your case. For example, if the legislator (or staff person) mentions a family member who is a teacher, this is a perfect opportunity to bring up research that suggests EE has tremendous benefits for student achievement.
8. Don't make stuff up. Use compelling stories from your own experience and data from trusted sources. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and offer to find out. This helps you maintain credibility and also gives you a good reason to follow up.
9. Ask questions. Be direct in asking for the legislator's position on a particular issue. Congressional staff will often be able to tell you where specific legislation might be in the process, what they are expecting from certain committees, and other information that can inform your strategy in the future. Take notes to ensure anything you learn during the meeting can be shared with others or referenced later.
10. Say thank you. Even if you don't secure any sort of commitment, thank them for their time and consideration of your cause.

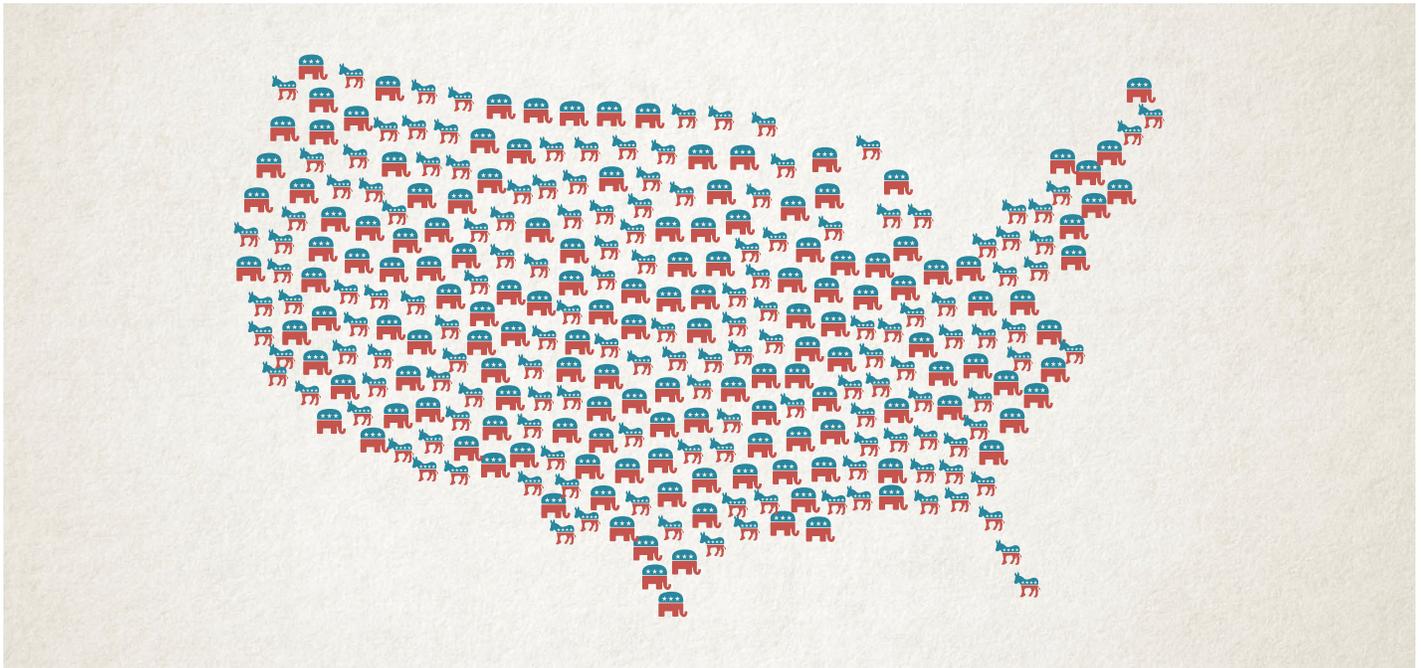
Following Up After Your Meeting

1. Write a thank you letter or email summarizing your visit. Include answers to any questions that came up and were not resolved and provide any additional information that might be helpful based on the conversation you had.
2. Thank the legislator for his or her support on your issues and most importantly, if there was a certain bill that he or she agreed to co-sponsor or vote for, remind them of that bill.
3. Maintain ongoing communication with the legislator and his or her staff through letters, emails, or calls. Reaffirm your commitment to serve as a resource to them on environmental education issues.
4. Find out when the legislator will be back in the district and offer to host a visit to see EE in practice in his or her community.
5. Report back to all your team members and please include NAAEE. Keep our policy office informed about your advocacy efforts and activities so we can then follow up as appropriate with your legislators. Reporting on any feedback or commitments you received will also help us as we develop long-term strategies about EE issues.



“As an advocate, you have traveled all this way to speak to a member and their staff. It can’t just be a ‘one and done’ effort. Build a relationship. Let them know you will stay in touch on the issues that matter to you. You really can make a difference.”

—former congressional & senate staffer



Don't Ignore the District or State Congressional Office

To be successful as an EE advocate, your goal should be to build positive long-term relationships with your legislators. One terrific way of doing so is to engage the district or state office in your issues.

Generally, district or state staff have slightly more time to delve into the nuances of your issue and understand better how the issue affects the representative's constituents. It's also important to know that many representatives are much more relaxed and receptive in their home districts.

Even if you meet with district staff rather than the representative, these meetings are a great, lower-pressure way to begin a relationship with a legislator's office, glean insights into the legislator's interest in your issues, and begin to position yourself as an EE resource. By being well informed and responsive to their questions, and by emphasizing the connection to their local constituents, you can often begin to turn the district staff into supporters of EE within their larger Congressional organization.

In addition to meeting the representative and/or their staff in the district office, consider inviting the legislator and district staff to events that highlight your local EE program impacts. You can also create a field outing to bring EE to life, introduce them to other constituents, and get their office excited about supporting your issue. Staff and even the legislators themselves often relish the opportunity to get into nature or visit a school or, community center, campus, or nature center to see work in the field. As environmental education professionals, we have a natural leg up because our work and subject matter are innately interesting and enjoyable to people who spend most of their days in an office.

"To properly advise members of Congress, staffers need to understand the issues, and how they affect constituents. I always appreciated advocates who helped me better understand the issues and how actions taken by Congress affected their lives."

—former Congressional staffer

Who to invite to an event. Think about who you want to target for an event. Are you hoping your member of Congress will come? A senator? Or both? Or maybe it's the office staff? If you're aiming for an actual member of Congress or senator, it is absolutely essential that you consider "what's in it for them?" and how to ensure that it will be an extremely good use of their time in terms of constituent contacts and recognition.

How can the visit bring EE to life? One way to make the invitation as enticing as possible is to be specific about what the elected official can hope to gain from the experience. Will you feature students or teachers from the district who can talk about their experiences? (Legislators love to engage with—and have their photos taken with—students.) While keeping your presentation/program as tight as possible, think about rounding it out by including representatives from the following groups:

- **Practitioners.** Members of Congress enjoy speaking with the people who perform the day-to-day tasks of a program, such as the teachers and naturalists on the front line of EE.
- **Beneficiaries.** People who benefit from your program and can speak with conviction and enthusiasm about the life-changing impacts of EE, such as fellows, students, educators, and community leaders, will always impress visitors.
- **Funders/Supporters.** Community leaders who have made a commitment to EE can demonstrate that your issue has broad-based support in the district. Business representatives can often be particularly useful in helping you connect with legislators who might be more conservative or suspect about environmental education.

Logistics. What do you need to worry about? The short answer is that no detail is too small, including:

- Once your elected official commits to attend an event, anticipate that he or she might not be able to stay very long. If you think they will only be there a short time, try not to cram too much into a short visit. Also be prepared to adjust your presentation or agenda; legislators may arrive late or have to leave earlier than expected.
- Staff and elected officials often love to take part in community events and field trips. These events provide an unparalleled opportunity to present the value, wonder, and impact of EE in action. But if you're planning an outdoor event, think about how you will prepare for the weather and ensure that each member of the party—even those who are not "outdoorsy"—is as comfortable as possible. Make sure you have enough umbrellas, bug spray, or whatever you'll need to make the visit enjoyable for everyone.
- How will you ensure that the legislator or staff get positive recognition or even media coverage from the event? Do you have a designated photographer? Is there a member of your team who can write it up for the local newspaper and for your social media channels?
- What sort of overview document will you leave with the legislator and/or staff? Don't worry about producing something glossy. Documents that are succinct yet informative have the best chance of being read and saved.

III. Using the Media to Enhance your Advocacy

The media can be a tremendously useful resource to reach your target audiences and reinforce your advocacy work. Fortunately, the strategies for delivering your messages through the media are the same as your strategies for communicating effectively with your legislators: Construct tight, clear asks and bring them to life with local, personalized anecdotes.

Once you've developed your compelling, go-to EE messages, anecdotes, and statistics, letters-to-the-editor and op-eds are two of the best ways to get them in front of your audiences. Here are some tips for making that happen.



How to Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor (LTE)



The letters-to-the-editor section is one of the most widely read sections of any newspaper. Letters to the editor are usually written in response to an article or editorial published earlier in the newspaper. In smaller papers, they are also frequently written in response to an issue of importance to the community.

As a general rule, if you're new to writing letters to the editor, you should focus on smaller local newspapers, where you have a much greater chance of getting published. Legislative staff track very closely the issues that are being discussed in their districts, so LTEs are a great way to get your issue in front of a legislator and to put yourself on their radar as a thoughtful constituent.

Begin by keeping an eye on the letters-to-the-editor section of the paper. In addition to reading the paper's guidelines

(which are almost always available on the paper's website), you'll want to get a general sense of the style, length, and content of letters they publish. Take the time to study the letters to see which ones resonate with you. You'll see that the best letters are those that are short and to the point, present issues in a way that the average reader can understand, and connect the issue to the community.

If you see an article or opinion piece that presents a position that is opposite yours, write a letter to the editor disagreeing with the piece and stating your position. If you don't disagree but have a different perspective, that too can be the basis of a letter to the editor. Timeliness is essential in this instance because the paper will generally not publish LTEs if too much time has passed between when the letter is submitted and the original date of the article you are responding to.



You'll want to keep your letter to no more than two short paragraphs (although one is even better!), while taking great pains to ensure you don't exceed the word restrictions listed in the paper's guidelines. In the first sentences of your letter, refer promptly to the article or position that you are writing about, and include the date and title of the article. Explain why you agree or disagree. Seal the deal by connecting it to the community using a local EE statistic or example, and clearly summing up the point you want the reader to remember.

For smaller papers, based on your monitoring of their letters to the editor, you might also find that there is the opportunity to write letters that don't connect directly to recently published articles—as long as they raise an issue of interest to the readership. One way you can do that, while also connecting with your local legislator, is to actually use the LTE to thank the legislator for a recent vote or action that supported your EE priority (while also explaining why the issue is important). You can be certain that district staff will make sure these sorts of letters are read by the legislator!

At all times, try to be conscious of what made other LTE's memorable to you and emulate their formula: short and to the point with a memorable anecdote, statistic, and/or local connection.

Letter-to-the-Editor Tips

- Carefully review the paper's guidelines on the paper's website. They seldom bend their rules regarding word-count restrictions.
- Short and engaging is always best.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms. If your family wouldn't understand what you've written, readers won't either!
- Local anecdotes and/or one "killer statistic" make a letter memorable.
- Wrap up with an ask or closing point that emphasizes what you would like to see happen to benefit the community.

How to Write and Submit an Op-ed

An opinion-editorial, also referred to as an op-ed, is an opinion piece that a publication's reader writes and submits on a topic relevant to the publication's audience. The pieces generally run at least two or three times longer than a letter to the editor, allowing the writer to explain an issue in more detail—although staying on the short side is always a good rule even with op-eds.

Begin by reading the paper's guidelines on their website, which in addition to providing word-count restrictions will sometimes talk a bit about what the paper is looking for in its outside opinion pieces. Because writing a tight and convincing op-ed entails a commitment of your time, it is a good policy to actually call the editorial page editor, and ask if he or she has a few minutes to give you feedback on the op-ed you hope to submit. In addition to establishing a relationship and getting good advice from the editor, this conversation can greatly improve your chance of getting the piece published because the editor will now be keeping an eye out for your submission.



Monitor the paper's op-ed page to get a sense of the op-eds it publishes. And keep an eye on the paper's news articles, because if the paper recently ran a piece that you can respond to or reinforce, it might improve your chance of getting your op-ed published.

To get an op-ed published, you need to create a compelling hook to make it interesting and demonstrate its relevance to the community. The overarching angle should be easy to grasp, compelling, and relatable to the reader.

You should be able to state your key point in a single sentence or two. Lay this angle out in your first paragraph. Then decide the key arguments supporting your message and develop each in turn.

It's always a good practice to run your key points by a colleague or friend whose opinion you trust. This exercise will force you to simplify and sharpen your argument. It will also reinforce the importance of using anecdotes and examples about real students and community members who have benefited from EE.

Op-ed Tips

Before writing an op-ed, be sure you can answer the following questions:

- What is the community problem or challenge that you are writing about?
- What is the urgency?
- Who does it affect?
- How does EE and/or your specific ask address that problem?
- What is the cost (or why is your ask a cost-effective approach)?
- What anecdotes or statistics are you going to include to bring the issue/solution to life and connect it tightly to your community?
- Which community leaders or legislators are key to your proposed solution?

Using Social Media to Enhance Your Advocacy

Social media has emerged as an increasingly effective way to amplify your voice, engage members and friends in your advocacy efforts, and reach legislators with your message. More and more studies are confirming that Congress pays attention to social media – and the number of voices/supporters does not have to be overwhelming to make an impression. In fact, in a poll of House and Senate offices by the Congressional Management Foundation, three quarters of senior staff said that between one and 30 comments on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter were enough to grab their attention on an issue. Thirty-five percent said that fewer than 10 comments were enough.³

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Here are tips for how you can become more active on social media and use it more effectively to advocate for environmental education priorities.⁴

Advocacy on Facebook:



- **Strike a positive tone.** We have all seen how quickly conversations can turn negative on social media, especially with regard to political issues, so try to maintain a positive tone that constructively positions the EE issue at hand.
- **Share links so your friends can advocate.** When you engage in advocacy actions or find EE articles of interest, share links wherever possible so your friends can advocate too. In the post, share why you care about the issue or use some of your “killer statistics” that show the need for the legislation or action for which you are advocating.
- **Tag friends who might want to advocate for EE.** If you want to go a step further, tag friends who are passionate about the issues you are advocating for.
- **Write on your members of Congress’s wall.** This is a great way to get your member of Congress’s attention. You can post a picture from an in-district meeting and thank them for their time and support on the issues you discussed. Or you can use it to ask for support on a particular piece of legislation. Always keep your posts polite!
- **Tag your members of Congress in a post.** If you can’t write on your member of Congress’s wall because of their page settings, create a status update and tag your member of Congress in it. Remember to always send thanks, ask for support, or be an encouraging and positive voice.

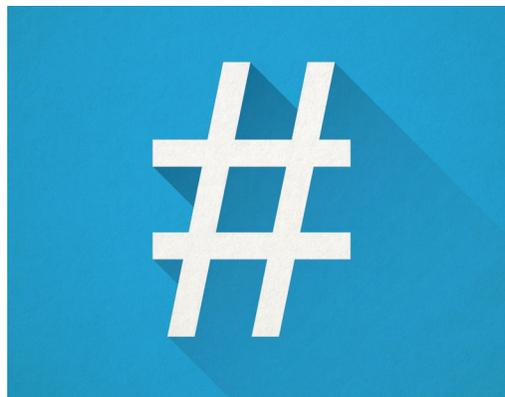
Advocacy on Twitter:



- **Take advantage of Twitter’s setting options** so you can follow key conversations and your legislators.
- **Share links so your followers can advocate.** When you take an action, share the link in a tweet to encourage others to advocate with you. This is an easy way to make people aware of an issue. Tweet about the action or share compelling statistics and then direct people to the link. Tip: Using hashtags when relevant is especially valuable on Twitter.
- **Tag your members of Congress in a tweet.** You can ask your members of Congress to support legislation just like you would in an email or Facebook post. Make sure to include the name of the legislation, its number (if possible), and how you would like them to support it (vote yes, co-sponsor, etc.). This is also a great place to thank your congressional member for support, whether it’s sharing a picture from a meeting or acknowledging that they co-sponsored a bill.

Additional Tips for using Facebook and Twitter:

- **Use #hashtags wisely.** The point of hashtags is to create and contribute to conversations on particular topics, so try to join a conversation and see if your post gets some buzz. By joining or starting a hashtag conversation you give people a way to search for your topic, which raises your viewer potential and thus increases your impact. If you are talking about a particular piece of legislation or issue, there are likely already hashtags being used. To find out what is being used, do keyword searches on the platform you are using, check out websites you know are advocating for the issue, or reach out to NAAEE or your state organization.
- **Share your story.** Always remember, one of the most important parts of advocacy is sharing why you care—make it personal and help members of Congress and your social network understand why they too might care about the issue. When you tell your legislator your story, and it is attached to a profile confirming that you are a constituent, you become more than a few words on a screen, which adds a personal touch that email can't. Sharing your story online is also great because your story may help someone else understand the need for EE advocacy in a new way. You never know when your story will touch or inspire someone else.
- **Do your research.** Check out NAAEE's resources page to read fact sheets and blogs, or join our webinars to learn about the different issues you can support. The more you know, the better equipped you will be to talk to others about why passion should translate into action. Whenever you advocate, and especially when you encourage your network to advocate, make sure you understand the basics of what you are supporting. If you have questions you can't find the answer to, reach out to NAAEE—we are happy to help!
- **Remember to thank people.** Whether it is your friends and family who tell you they took action or your member of Congress acknowledging your post or supporting a bill, everyone likes to be thanked. It is also a great way to continue the conversation and positively reinforce any action that took place.





IV. Four Actions You Can Take Right Now

Now that you've decided to become an EE Advocate, NAAEE asks that you consider the following four actions:

- 1. Become an eePRO.** Create a profile on NAAEE's professional networking platform, eePRO, and join the Advocacy, Policy, and Civic Engagement group. Spend some time on NAAEE's website policy pages and join our monthly calls to familiarize yourself with our priority issues and asks.
- 2. Begin a relationship with your legislators.** Research your representatives and senators. Sign up for their emails and track them on social media. Create a personal strategy for how you, as a constituent, will begin to reach out to them to promote EE.
- 3. Create your go-to anecdotes.** Spend some time developing your compelling, unique, local anecdotes that illustrate the power of environmental education and why you care—with local statistics to support them. Test them on your family and friends until you're sure you have something that resonates.
- 4. Write a letter-to-the-editor or short op-ed.** Keep an eye on articles or opinion pieces in your local paper that provide a potential hook for your issue and submit an LTE or op-ed using the guidance provided above.

V. Additional Resources:

1. How Our Laws Are Made

- In the House: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html>
- In the Senate: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html>

2. Learning More about Your Representatives

Effective advocacy requires you to know who represents you in the various areas of government. These leaders work for you and you should be able to identify them. The websites below will help you learn more about the people that represent you.

U.S. House and Senate

- House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/Welcome.shtml>
- United States Senate: http://senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

State Government

- State Legislator: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/state-legislatures.html>

House and Senate Floor Schedule/Calendar

- Currently on the House Floor: <http://clerk.house.gov/floorsummary/floor.html>
- House Calendar: <http://1.usa.gov/1qcpTIU>
- Senate Floor Schedule: <http://www.senate.gov/>
- Senate Calendar: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/calendars/senate/browse.html>

Legislative Contact Form

- Contact your Representative in the House: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>
- Contact your Senator: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

3. Advocacy Information from NAAEE

NAAEE's EE Advocacy Priorities

- <https://naaee.org/our-work/programs/naaee-policy-initiatives>

4. Sample Templates for Media Outreach

- Sample op ed from the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico

SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN

Taking learning outdoors leads to stronger, healthier communities

By Eileen Everett | For the New Mexican, September 8, 2018

Through community dialogues, we at the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico, have been seeking perspectives, experiences, wisdom, and dreams to transform our education system. This includes opportunities for multidisciplinary education which is responsive to the backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences of students. We believe every New Mexican should have access to first-rate, engaging, and meaningful environmental education opportunities starting with early childhood education.

According to a 2018 study released from Stanford University where over 2,000 publications were reviewed and 119 articles were analyzed for K-12 student outcomes connected to environmental education over a 20-year period (1994-2013), researchers discovered the following evidence of the benefits of environmental education:

Increased knowledge in multiple disciplines which translates into a well-rounded and balanced workforce with problem-solving skills.

Increased socioemotional skills which leads to workers who work better cooperatively, are more motivated, have better self-esteem to take on new tasks and responsibilities, and demonstrate increased leadership skills.

More academic skills including 21st-century skills which leads to individuals with better communication, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and ability to analyze which all contribute to stronger, more profitable work places.

More motivation to learn and be curious which is central to a workforce that is committed to lifelong learning and growth. Increased civic engagement and commitment to environmentally friendly behavior, both of which lead to stronger, healthier communities.

Reflecting on the recent ruling of *Yazzie v. State of New Mexico* and *Martinez v. State of New Mexico*, why don't we look inwards in investing in the valuable assets of our state, mainly in terms of our cultures and natural areas to transform our education system? Why not embed our diverse cultures, languages, and traditional ecological ways of knowing into learning? Isn't it time that we connect our students with their schoolyards and public lands right in our backyards?

To learn more about the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico's strategic systems thinking process and to share your ideas, please visit eeanm.org/strategic-systems-thinking-in-community.

Eileen Everett is executive director of the Environmental Education Association of New Mexico and deeply values education designed for all students and a more equitable and inclusive world.

■ Sample letter to the editor encouraging Congressional support for EE legislation

Dear Editor:

As a teacher at X High School, I have had the pleasure of seeing first-hand how a top-notch environmental education program inspires our students as it connects them to the natural world. Most importantly, I have seen how the program helps them make informed decisions about the environment that greatly benefit society in the long run.

Congress is now considering new legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act, which – for the first time -- will provide crucial federal funding for environmental education and environmental literacy programs. These programs are a great investment in our children and our communities.

Representative X has been a strong supporter of environmental education in our school district, but it's important that he realizes how important this legislation is to his constituents. I hope your readers will join me in calling Rep. X to ask him to support the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Sincerely,

■ Sample social media posts thanking a Member of Congress for supporting EE

Note: NAAEE's preferred hashtags include #enviroed, #NAAEE, #eadvocacy, #eepolicy

Facebook: [Your school/organization] is essential for our community. We join the North American Association for Environmental Education in thanking [Sen./Rep. _____] for supporting environmental ed in 2018.

Twitter: [Your school/organization] thanks [Rep. _____] for supporting environmental education in 2018. Environmental ed is essential! #enviroed #NAAEE

Twitter: Thank you [Rep. _____] for supporting environmental education in 2018 and supporting [your school/organization]! #eepolicy #NAAEE

- **Example of a post from the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association’s monthly email**

Thank you to our RI Senators!



RIEEA joins the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) in thanking Rhode Island Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse for signing the recent appropriations letters that support environmental education programs at EPA and NOAA. We are proud of Rhode Island!

- **Examples of tweets encouraging Senate and Congressional support for EE programs**

Time’s running out to make calls to Senators! Help support funding for critical [#EnviroEd](#) programs! [#EEAdvocacy](#)

Please reach out to your elected officials to ask for their support for the [#ClimateChangeEducation](#) Acts before both the House and Senate! Resources. Find more details here: <https://naaee.org/advocacy/current-issues> ... [#eeAdvocacy](#) [#enviroed](#) [#environmentaled](#) [#policy](#)

[#FeelGoodFriday](#): Make your voice heard in the halls of Congress! Reach out to your elected officials about supporting critical funds for [#EnviroEd](#) programs at [#EPA](#) & [#NOAA](#) this week! Resources here: <http://naaee.org/advocacy/appropriations-materials> ... [#eeadvocacy](#) [#policy](#)

Make sure to thank your [#representatives/#housemembers](#) before we gear up for another round of outreach next week! Get tips here: <https://naaee.org/federal-appropriations-thank-you> ... [#federalfunding](#) [#enviroed](#) [#eeAdvocacy](#) [#advocacy](#) [#policy](#) [#enviroedpolicy](#)

Support [#EnviroEd](#) with just a few phone calls/letters! Find tips to contact your legislators here: <https://naaee.org/advocacy/appropriations-materials> ... [#EEAdvocacy](#)

[#EnviroEd](#) needs your support! Call/write your Reps & Senators today. Find resources here: <https://naaee.org/advocacy/appropriations-materials> ... [#EEAdvocacy](#)

- **Sample telephone outreach script for House members in their Washington, DC offices**

Note: It is extremely helpful to speak directly with one of the policy specialists in the office, so please tell the person answering the phone that you really need to speak with the person who handles appropriations issues for environmental education or, if not, someone who works on environment or education issues. Your “ask” for the call is for the Representative to sign two “Dear Colleague” appropriations letters that benefit the state and the community.

Sample script for your phone conversation:

I am (fill in your name) from (your organization). Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am calling [on behalf of my organization, as a teacher, a parent, yourself, etc.] to urge Representative X to sign on to two “Dear Colleague” letters in support of important appropriations for environmental education grants at EPA and NOAA. The deadline is [date], so the Representative’s support is urgently needed.

The first letter asks the appropriations committee to maintain level funding for the National Environmental Education Act programs. This letter is being circulated by Representative [name]. EPA’s environmental

education grants are small but critical investments that provide significant returns for our communities and the local environment.

[If applicable, provide a description of the funding provided to your organization or within your state through an EPA grant. Find details on awarded grants by state here: <https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>, click on the “awards” tab and scroll down to the map.]

The second letter urges Congress to sustain funding for the vital NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training and Environmental Literacy grant programs. Please sign on to this letter in support of these important programs—it is being circulated by Representative [name].

I will follow up with you by email with copies of the letters and contact information. Should I send these materials to you or is there another person I should contact? May I have your email address?

Thank you for your time.

5. NAAEE’s Advocacy 101 Webinar

For an accessible advocacy overview, visit NAAEE’s website to view our Advocacy 101 webinar at <https://naaee.org/eeopro/learning/webinars/naaee-advocacy-101-webinar>

6. How Does the Federal Government Create a Budget?

Each legislative session, advocacy around the often confusing and protracted federal budget process is crucial to the continued growth of environmental education. Here is a summary from the National Priorities Project of the five key steps in the federal budget process :

Step 1: The President Submits a Budget Request

The president sends a budget request to Congress each February for the coming fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1.⁵ To create his (or her) request, the President and the Office of Management and Budget solicit and accept budget requests from federal agencies, outlining what programs need more funding, what could be cut, and what new priorities each agency would like to fund.

The [president’s budget request](#) is just a proposal. Congress then passes its own appropriations bills; only after the president signs these bills (in step five) does the country have a budget for the new fiscal year.⁶

Step 2: The House and Senate Pass Budget Resolutions

After the president submits his or her budget request, the [House Committee on the Budget](#) and the [Senate Committee on the Budget](#) each write and vote on their own [budget resolutions](#).⁷ A budget resolution is not a binding document, but it provides a framework for Congress for making budget decisions about spending and taxes. It sets overall annual spending limits for federal agencies, but does not set specific spending amounts for particular programs. After the House and Senate pass their budget resolutions, some members from each come together in a joint conference to iron out differences between the two versions, and the resulting reconciled version is then voted on again by each chamber.

Step 3: House and Senate Subcommittees “Markup” Appropriation Bills

The [Appropriations Committees](#) in both the House and the Senate are responsible for determining the precise levels of [budget authority](#), or allowed spending, for all discretionary programs.⁸ The Appropriations Committees in both the House and Senate are broken down into smaller [appropriations subcommittees](#). Subcommittees cover different areas of the federal government: for example, there is a subcommittee for defense spending, and another one for energy and water. Each subcommittee conducts hearings in which they pose questions to leaders of the relevant federal agencies about each agency’s requested budget.⁹

Based on all of this information, the chair of each subcommittee writes a first draft of the subcommittee’s [appropriations bill](#), abiding by the spending limits set out in the [budget resolution](#). All subcommittee members then consider, amend, and finally vote on the bill. Once it has passed the subcommittee, the bill goes to the full Appropriations Committee. The full committee reviews it, and then sends it to the full House or Senate.

Step 4: The House and Senate Vote on Appropriations Bills and Reconcile Differences

The full House and Senate then debate and vote on appropriations bills from each of the 12 subcommittees. After both the House and Senate pass their versions of each [appropriations bill](#), a [conference committee](#) meets to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions. After the conference committee produces a reconciled version of the bill, the House and Senate vote again, but this time on a bill that is identical in both chambers. After passing both the House and Senate, each appropriations bill goes to the president.¹⁰

Step 5: The President Signs Each Appropriations Bill and the Budget Becomes Law

The president must sign each [appropriations bill](#) after it has passed Congress for the bill to become law. When the president has signed all 12 appropriations bills, the budget process is complete. Rarely, however, is work finished on all 12 bills by Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

7. Glossary of Legislative and Political Terms

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 Congressperson’s 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: Authorizes a program, specifying its general purpose and, broadly, how that purpose is to be achieved, and sets 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 2-year cycle of activities of the legislative branch. Proposed legislation introduced during a 2-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: Congressional support agency that provides political analysis and information at the request 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 appropriation, that have not yet been funded through the enactment of regular appropriations bills.

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

General Accounting Office: Congressional support agency that reviews and evaluates the management of Federal programs and activities, primarily at the request of individual members of Congress.

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 'HJ Res' (when originating in the House) or 'SJ 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 possible revision of a piece of legislation by committee members.

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

National Academy of Sciences (NAS): Chartered by Congress, 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.

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: Sanctions anew, 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.

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

Speaker of the House: The presiding officer in the House of Representatives. The Speaker is elected by the majority party in the House.

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

Unanimous Consent: A procedure for adopting noncontroversial measures without a vote.

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

Whip: A legislator who is chosen to be assistant to the leader of the party in the House or the Senate and whose job is to marshal support for party strategy.

References

¹ https://mffh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/AFJ_what-is-advocacy.pdf

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³ Congressional Quarterly <https://info.cq.com/resources/just-a-handful-of-social-media-comments-can-grab-attention-of-congress-study-shows/>

⁴ Adapted from World Vision Advocacy <https://worldvisionadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Social-media-guide-for-advocates.pdf>

⁵ National Priorities Project <https://www.nationalpriorities.org/budget-basics/federal-budget-101/federal-budget-process/>

⁶ All quotes from former staffers taken from: Congressional Quarterly, <https://info.cq.com/resources/congressional-staffers-reveal-all-on-how-they-like-to-be-approached/>



ee Advocate



NAAEE is the professional association
for environmental educators in
North America and beyond.

Education We Need for the World We Want



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