The SHRM Advocacy Team TOOLKIT
When Congress develops workplace policy, HR’s voice will be heard. The SHRM Advocacy Team, or “A-Team,” represents thousands of HR professionals who actively communicate the needs of the profession to their elected officials. By working together, we can help advance effective workplace public policy and strive to move our profession forward.

At advocacy.shrm.org:

- Immediately take action on SHRM’s public-policy issue alerts.
- Easily connect to your members of Congress.
- Learn more about and sign up for SHRM’s rapidly growing member advocacy army, the A-Team.
- Take advantage of various SHRM-provided advocacy tools and materials, such as the SHRM Advocacy Mobile App.
- Join SHRM’s strong advocacy presence on social media.
- Review critical HR legislation SHRM is actively tracking.
The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world’s largest HR professional society, representing 285,000 members in more than 165 countries. For nearly seven decades, the Society has been the leading provider of resources serving the needs of HR professionals and advancing the practice of human resource management. SHRM has more than 575 affiliated chapters within the United States and subsidiary offices in China, India and United Arab Emirates. Visit us at shrm.org.

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I. About the Program: An Introduction to the SHRM Advocacy Team

Welcome to the SHRM Advocacy Team (A-Team). We launched the A-Team as a way for our leading HR Advocates—professionals like you—to have their voices heard on issues of importance affecting the workplace.

A major focus of SHRM is development of the SHRM Advocacy Team, which is designed to put our members at the forefront of the Society’s advocacy efforts.

Backed by SHRM’s Government Affairs team (GAT), the A-Team works to advance the interests of the HR profession in the development of public policy at the federal and state levels. You, the SHRM member, are the voice of our profession.

As a member of the A-Team, you will join other HR Advocates committed to the development of sound workplace public policy. Within each of the 435 congressional districts across the country, one HR Advocate will be selected to serve as an Advocacy Captain to assist our efforts within that district. Additional Advocacy Captains may be selected on a case-by-case basis to assist with Senate offices. The role of the Advocacy Captain is to serve as the face of HR within the district and to act as the point of contact for the Society’s GAT. Our goal is that a network of these committed volunteers will serve as the “go-to” people for lawmakers and their staffs on workforce-related issues.

As an HR Advocate in your congressional district, you play a critical role in advancing our efforts to enhance the visibility of the HR profession among policymakers, both in your district and in Washington, D.C. SHRM’s Government Affairs team stands ready to assist you in making this effort a success.
The SHRM Advocacy Team Toolkit – How to Use It

This SHRM Advocacy Team toolkit is part of SHRM’s effort to assist our dedicated HR Advocates in playing a vital role. It will help you communicate messages leading to the development of sound HR public policy. Your audience will be federal legislators representing your district, as well as members of the media and key allies at the community level.

The Society has developed this toolkit to help you set the stage for local awareness and action. It is designed to complement and support your current efforts and may serve as a reminder of additional things you can do to promote the HR profession.

Combining your own public outreach with SHRM’s efforts to generate advocacy through multiple channels of communication, we can continue to successfully engage local audiences and leaders, and help to develop effective public policy for the workforce.

The Importance of Advocacy

Advocacy is critical to supporting and advancing SHRM’s programs and visibility. SHRM members must proactively engage in advocacy efforts in order to advance the interests of our profession and drive support for its public-policy priorities.

- Laws, regulations and other public policies significantly affect U.S. employers and their ability to grow and provide benefits, training and a safe work environment for their employees.
- Every day, policymakers and elected officials can positively or negatively influence issues affecting the Society’s members and the organizations they represent. Sometimes those officials have very little knowledge of the impact their decisions have on those organizations or their employees.
- Increasingly, it has become critical that we take action in shaping public policy that positively affects our profession.

Together, we will have an impact on some of the most important public-policy matters facing our country. We have outlined some of these issues later in this toolkit. As more issues evolve, the Society will keep you informed of how they affect our profession and our communities.

As you engage in advocacy activities, we urge you to use this toolkit as a reference guide. It contains a wide range of information to help prepare you for contacting your legislator, attending a town hall meeting, submitting an opinion/editorial piece, expanding your network and taking advantage of every opportunity to make the voice of the HR professional heard in your congressional district.

Please be sure to review the respective sections prior to engaging in any advocacy activities. The toolkit is a resource—you just have to use it!

Your voice matters—and SHRM needs your help

Members of Congress are most interested in and responsive to their own constituents—people from their own states and communities. It’s critical that legislators hear directly from HR professionals about our priorities and concerns. Without SHRM member advocacy promoting our priorities, concerns and recommendations, policymakers will fail to develop effective workplace law. Lawmakers must have your input to learn about our positions, and to become aware of the impact their decisions have on America’s workforce.

By offering themselves as well-informed, articulate and enthusiastic advocates, SHRM members will become a valued resource to elected officials. We can advocate on important issues and help craft and implement policies that are beneficial to both employers and employees.
Your Role as an Advocacy Captain on the SHRM Advocacy Team

The SHRM Advocacy Team is working to move the HR profession forward by serving as a voice for employees, employers and—most important—the HR profession. But we can’t do this without the active participation of members like you.

Volunteer leaders within the A-Team play a vital role in advocating the HR perspective on workplace public-policy issues.

**Key duties and responsibilities of an Advocacy Captain include**

- Serve as the point person and primary member advocacy contact in your congressional district.
- Develop and maintain relationships with federal legislators and members of their staff locally, in their home congressional districts, through at least two meetings a year (or, see that these meetings occur).
- Recruit, coordinate and train other HR professionals within your congressional district as HR Advocates on the A-Team, leveraging your own efforts.
- Become familiar with SHRM public-policy priority issues and initiatives.
- Disseminate information to local A-Team members about SHRM’s public-policy issues, legislative and regulatory priorities, recent studies, or other insights into the HR profession.
- Participate in advocacy training sessions, conference calls and other Society programs that prepare you to be an effective advocate.
- Attend advocacy and educational events, town hall meetings, or other public forums.
- Support SHRM’s public-policy priorities by writing personal letters to, calling and/or meeting directly with elected officials.
- Develop and foster relationships with the SHRM chapter(s) and council(s) encompassing the congressional district, and with other organizations or interest groups that have a shared interest in SHRM public-policy issues.
- Participate in “earned” media activities, such as writing an opinion/editorial piece or letter to the editor of your hometown newspaper.
- Attend the SHRM Employment Law & Legislative Conference, as appropriate.

**Requirements of an Advocacy Captain**

1. Must be a SHRM member in good standing.
2. Current or prior experience as an HR professional is strongly preferred, and HR certification is highly desirable.
3. Must live within the congressional district that you are representing as an Advocacy Captain.
4. Subject to appointment by SHRM with input from state councils and chapter representatives, among others.
5. Must serve in the position for at least one year.

SHRM’s Government Affairs team is ready to assist you in making this effort a success. We can work with you and your colleagues to communicate effectively with your legislators, engage local media and network with leading community-based organizations in your congressional district.
Benefits of Joining the SHRM Advocacy Team

Success of the SHRM Advocacy Team in advancing effective HR public policy depends on the active participation of professionals like you.

Being a member of the SHRM Advocacy Team gives you the opportunity to:

**Lead SHRM’s efforts at the community level**

**You will serve as a critical link between SHRM and elected leaders, local media and key allies in your community**

- Tap into legislative public policy and resource updates. Through your participation, you will have access to information and updates on important public-policy issues as they develop.

- Advance the interests of the U.S. workforce. HR professionals serve as conduits between employers and employees. As such, SHRM members are uniquely positioned to provide valuable input in shaping workplace policy and creating a productive workforce. You have unique insight into the ins and outs of issues affecting employees, employers and the HR profession. As an A-Team member, you will ensure that policymakers understand the vital role that HR plays in today’s workforce.

- Participate in advocacy training opportunities. Through webinars, conference calls and other legislative events, members of the A-Team have ongoing access to advocacy training opportunities, as well as public-policy updates.

- Enhance your core competency. Joining the SHRM Advocacy Team helps demonstrate your commitment to your employer, the profession and SHRM. It can also help advance your career goals. You will develop communication and networking skills, gain an understanding of issues affecting the workplace and talent management, and develop a keen insight into how federal and state policy shapes the workplace.

- Participate in special SHRM Advocacy Team events. All A-Team members will be invited to participate in special events and receptions in connection with SHRM meetings and conferences.

- Benefit from continuing education/certification credits. By joining the SHRM Advocacy Team, you can earn credits that can be applied toward your continuing education or recertification as an HR professional.

- Increase your organization’s visibility with key congressional contacts. Your involvement as a member of the A-Team will raise awareness of your employer (when appropriate) by key public policymakers.
The greatest impact on public policy comes from developing and sustaining relationships with your lawmakers and their staff. It is important for legislators to be aware of SHRM’s issues and how they affect the local community. Building sustainable relationships will enable you to educate, inform and update your legislators about issues of importance to the profession and to the workplace.

Building a relationship will take time and hard work. But if done well, that investment has the potential to yield significant results for SHRM and the HR profession. Some of your work may be aided by others with similar interests and issues who already have relationships with legislators.

Here are several ways to establish your relationship:

**Send an introductory packet to your congressional delegation, especially new legislators**

*The beginning of a new Congress is an ideal time to introduce (or reintroduce) SHRM and our issues*

- If a new member of Congress was just elected from your state, send a congratulatory letter to the legislator.
- A letter of congratulations can also be sent to those who were re-elected.
- Mail a packet to each legislator’s key district staff.
- This mailing is an opportunity to provide legislators with key information about the role of HR with employers in your state.

Use SHRM research or position statements to educate, inform and update lawmakers about the important role that HR plays in your community.

These mailings can help you begin developing or strengthening your relationship with the office.

- Follow up with a phone call.
- Remind the staff to call on you as a resource for further information on issues involving the workplace or workforce.

- Mention any prior meeting you may have had with the legislator in Washington, D.C.
- Extend an invitation to attend your chapter or council events.

**Maintain regular contact with your legislators’ offices**

*Keep your legislators informed about the Society’s positions on priority issues or key workplace developments*

- Send relevant articles and information to lawmakers, including press clips, study releases, case histories or details about key issues that affect the workplace.
- Communicate clearly about relevant legislation or issues—do not assume that they know where SHRM stands.
- Communicate if you are for or against a piece of legislation or policy proposal and why.
- Thank the legislator for supporting or opposing any relevant legislation, or for his or her service to constituents.

**Take advantage of local opportunities to meet and network with legislators and their staff**

- Attend town hall meetings, open forums and events held by other local organizations, plus even county fairs and community parades.
- During the event, find an unobtrusive opportunity to introduce (or reintroduce) yourself to the lawmaker or staff member.
- Present a business card if you have one, and offer to be of assistance on relevant issues.
- Follow up your discussion with a personal note (handwritten or via e-mail) reiterating the topics discussed and thanking the legislator or staff member for their time.
Arrange a visit to your chapter or council meetings or events

The first-hand experience of a chapter or council meeting can be a very effective way to educate an elected official

- Legislators value opportunities such as community events that enable them to visit with their constituents.

- Before inviting a legislator to a chapter/council meeting or event, consult with your chapter or council officers. Enlist their buy-in by educating them about the goals that could be accomplished through a legislator’s visit.

Prepare for the visit

- Coordinate closely with the legislator’s staff in determining the date, time and length of the visit.

- Provide the staff with a clear agenda, identifying exactly who the legislator will be meeting, what topics are likely to be discussed, the message you hope the legislator can convey, information on whether the visit is open to the media, and the role your chapter or council plays within SHRM.

- Use the visit to demonstrate the needs or challenges of HR professionals working for local employers and how the policies that the Society advocates benefit the entire community.

- Most important, use the visit to begin developing a lasting, personal relationship with the legislator.

Visit your elected officials in Washington, D.C.

Ultimately, you may want to schedule a personal visit to your members of Congress in Washington, D.C.

- Elected officials will appreciate your visit—taking valuable time to travel to Washington sends a very clear message about the importance you place on public-policy matters.

- Plan your visit carefully; be clear about who you want to meet and what you seek to accomplish.

- The best days to visit a legislator in Washington are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Participate in SHRM Government Affairs activities and legislative days

Every year, SHRM organizes opportunities for members and leaders to come to Washington, D.C., and meet with key legislators during our Employment Law & Legislative Conference in March, and during our Volunteer Leaders’ Summit in November

- These conferences provide you a ready-made opportunity to influence legislators and work alongside colleagues from around the country.

Thank legislators and staff for their interest and support

Take the time to thank legislators and staff, whether it is for a meeting or support of legislation

- Be certain to express your appreciation to a legislator following a meeting, visit or any other personal contact, or after the legislator’s vote in support of an HR issue. Members of Congress often lament that they routinely hear complaints from constituents but rarely compliments.

- Use the thank you as a way to continue building the relationship and as an opportunity to follow up with additional materials on a legislative issue.
Assessing Your Existing Relationships and Opportunities

Networking can expand your reach and influence. Think about your existing relationships. Do you know any elected officials—at any level of government—or members of their staff in Washington, D.C., or in the district? Do you live in the same neighborhood with an elected official, or belong to the same clubs or organizations? Are you both alums of the same college or university?

Even if you don’t know any legislators directly, “inside influencers” can help you gain access. Perhaps you grew up with someone who went into politics or have a college friend who’s now in civil service. Even campaign volunteers can be a good place to start.

Do you have connections or commonalities with a legislator’s spouse or his or her other family members? You might know the head of a local social club or business professional organization that is hosting a candidate for public office. Use existing relationships to forge new relationships.

Any direct or indirect relationship you uncover with a legislator or a member of their staff puts you in an advantaged position. It provides you with leverage you can utilize when setting up a personal meeting to discuss an issue. By leveraging these developing networks and sustaining new relationships created with your lawmakers and their staff, you can ensure greater advocacy impact in speaking for SHRM’s issues and how they affect the profession.

Please let SHRM’s Government Affairs team know about relationships of any kind you have with your legislators or their staff. Do that by adding them to your SHRM government affairs profile at advocacy.shrm.org/feedback. These relationships are a valuable resource that will enhance our efforts!

Communicating with Congress

Legislators are greatly influenced by who they know, what they know and what they hear—especially from their constituents. Communicating with your member of Congress gives you the ability to have an impact on the legislation and policies that affect our issues.

By writing a letter, sending an e-mail, participating in a meeting or town hall event, or making a phone call to discuss an issue, you can make a difference. You can educate and inform your lawmakers, ensuring that they consider the SHRM perspective when making decisions that positively or negatively affect the workplace.

Your elected officials need to hear from you. Every day, they hear from constituents and interest groups about many issues. Your issues are no less important. You speak for an entire profession, and for employers and employees throughout the state or district. Legislators need to know our perspective. It is essential for them to know the vital role that HR plays in advancing the interests of employers and employees alike.

There are many ways to communicate with lawmakers. Letters, e-mail, phone calls, faxes and face-to-face meetings are all useful vehicles. Following are some ways to be more effective in using them:
Face-to-face meetings
Perhaps the most effective way of educating and informing legislators on public-policy issues is a face-to-face meeting. It provides an excellent opportunity to convey and receive information, and to gain key insight into how your legislator stands on an issue.

Phone calls
A personal phone call provides an opportunity to directly engage staff and reinforce your relationship with the legislator’s office.

E-mails
If you have staff members’ e-mail addresses, this is a direct and more “personal” way of connecting with them. In addition to sending a letter through the SHRM advocacy website, you can deliver a personal message directly to a staff member with whom you have an established relationship. (Please note you should not use legislative staff e-mail for SHRM advocacy campaigns to legislators. Legislative staff e-mail is for direct communication to the staff member only.)

Letters
Use letters primarily to convey more-extensive messages or to accompany information such as information packets, relevant articles, etc. But brief thank-you letters are always appreciated.

Advocacy Tactics – How to Contact Your Members of Congress

By Phone
You may contact your members of Congress by phone through the U.S. Capitol switchboard. Call (202) 225-3121 for the House of Representatives and (202) 224-3121 for the Senate. Or, you can find your legislators’ closest office locations and numbers on SHRM’s online policy action center at advocacy.shrm.org.

By E-mail
E-mail your members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate through SHRM’s online policy action center at advocacy.shrm.org. Members of Congress prefer that constituents send electronic messages through the congressional webforms, and SHRM’s online policy action center will connect your message directly to each legislator’s webform.

By Mail

Members of the United States House of Representatives
The Honorable [INSERT FULL NAME]
United States House of Representatives
[INSERT ROOM # AND BUILDING] House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Dear Representative [Last name of member]:


United States Senators
The Honorable [INSERT FULL NAME]
United States Senate
[INSERT ROOM # AND BUILDING] Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator [Last name of senator]:

Writing a Letter

Constituent letters are a common way of communicating with a legislator and can be an effective advocacy tool.

- A personalized letter will get more attention than a form letter. Make sure to use personal stationery; your employer might not share your views on the subject.
- Be sure to include your name and address, e-mail address, and telephone number. Some offices will not even open an envelope if it is not from the state of the legislator.
- Security screenings can delay arrival of a traditional letter to a member of Congress. If timing is a concern, e-mailing a letter to your member’s office is quicker.
- Your letter should be simple and direct.
- Always be polite. Even if you are angry, frustrated or disappointed, be sure to use a polite tone.
- Do not be threatening, confrontational or rude.
- Identify yourself and why you are writing. In the opening sentence, make your request upfront and identify yourself as a registered voter, a constituent and an HR professional. For example: “As an HR professional who lives, votes and works in your district [include the city and state in which you reside], I am writing to request your support.”
- If you are writing in a leadership capacity, indicate your title and the number of people you are representing. For example: “I am the President of the Pleasant Valley Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management. This is an organization of 500 HR professionals in [name of state] that … ”
- Be concise. If possible, limit your letter to one page. Even if you are an expert on the subject and have many facts at your disposal, just state your support or opposition clearly and succinctly. You do not need to state every fact and figure to make your point.
- Personalize your message. Remember to be mindful of employee confidentiality and privacy. Personal stories and illustrations of local impact can be very effective in triggering policymakers into action.
- Be honest and accurate. Do not exaggerate the situation or the consequences.
- Limit your request to one issue and a specific action from the legislator.
- Offer assistance and serve as a resource. If you have an article of interest, be sure to include it with your correspondence or offer to provide it on request.
- Express appreciation. Be sure to thank the legislator for his or her attention to your concerns.
- Ask for a response—without being demanding. Be clear in your correspondence that you want to know the policymaker’s views on the issue or legislation you addressed.
- Make sure to follow up. If you receive an unsatisfactory answer to your correspondence, write or call again expressing appreciation, but communicate that the response was not what you anticipated or requested. Reiterate your points and address any concerns that the policymaker raised about the issue.

Sending an E-mail

E-mail is an easy way to communicate with a legislator or staff member.

- It’s best to use your personal e-mail account; your employer might not share your views on the topic.
- Due to the large volume of e-mails they receive, some offices do not respond individually to each message. But they do count the number of e-mails they receive on a specific issue, then report to the
legislator how many people have written about that topic and what position they are advocating.

- Some congressional offices have instituted a computer-based system that helps them weed out spam messages and block automated e-mail barrages. This ensures that e-mail messages are from legitimate constituents. Typically, the system requires you to answer a simple question or copy a word on the screen.

- All legislators have a web page with a link to contact the office. While this is an easy way to communicate, its most useful application is in mobilizing a large number of people. A personalized e-mail from you is more effective in conveying your message than when a legislative office receives multiple communications with an identical message.

- Due to the complexity that can come with contacting your two senators and member of the House of Representatives through these web pages, SHRM’s Government Affairs team has streamlined the process. A-Team SHRM’s online policy action center is compliant with all legislator web pages, enabling you to write each legislator one at a time or contact both senators or even your two senators and member of the House with one communication. This system may be found at advocacy.shrm.org.

- Display key information in the subject line. It’s easy for a staffer to erase an e-mail quickly or accidentally—flag key information in the subject line. That key subject line information could be: “Your constituent writing about _______ legislation.”

- Keep your message brief and to the point:
  - Don’t forget your name and address in the text.
  - Embed your primary message in the text. Attachments should be for secondary background information, fact sheets or endorsements.

### Calling Your Lawmakers

Calling the offices of members of Congress is one of the easiest, most effective ways to communicate. Such a call, done correctly, can result in support for your issue.

- When calling policymakers, be sure to do so on your own time and with your own phone; your employer might not share your views on the topic.

- Although it may be a toll call for you, it’s best in most instances to call your members of Congress at their Washington, D.C., numbers when calling to express an issue stance rather than trying to establish a local relationship. The Capitol Hill offices are better equipped to handle a greater volume of constituent calls, and most policy staff is located there, not in the district. However, as appropriate, you may want to contact your local legislative office as well to alert them to the issue and your perspective, especially as you develop relationships with staff in your legislators’ local offices.

- To reach the Washington, D.C., offices of your two senators and your representative in the House, just call (202) 224-3121 for the Senate and (202) 225-3121 for the House and ask to be transferred to their offices. You may also research the direct office line of your elected officials on SHRM’s online advocacy system at advocacy.shrm.org using your home address information.

- Be sure to keep a record of the date and time of your call(s), and the person with whom you spoke or for whom you left a message. Sometimes phone logs are lost, and you may need to follow up with the office to ensure a response. Also, record any phone conversations held with an office in the A-Team’s online feedback system at advocacy.shrm.org/feedback.

- Once connected, identify yourself to the receptionist as a constituent. Clearly state your name, hometown and why you are calling (briefly). Ask to speak with the legislative assistant who handles that specific issue. For example: “My name is Jane Doe. I am an HR professional from Any Town, and I would like to speak with the health legislative assistant about health care reform.”
If transferred to the health legislative assistant, you may be sent to the staffer’s voicemail. Reintroduce yourself, immediately identify the topic you are calling to discuss, and briefly state your requested action. For instance: “My name is Jane Doe. I am an HR professional from Any Town. I am calling about health care reform and urge Congressman Smith to support/oppose …” Be clear and deliberate in leaving your contact information for a response. With so many calls coming in, many aides don’t have time to replay a message to confirm a phone number.

When you do speak with a legislative assistant, state your position concisely. If you don’t know it already, ask what position the elected official is taking on the issue.

Be prepared to explain how the issue will affect your organization and its employees—the legislator’s constituents. Share a personal story.

Make your points brief. It’s a good idea to use written talking points or key messages to help you stay on topic and be clear in articulating your case.

Try to develop a dialogue that will allow you to call back in the future. Whether the legislator supports or opposes your position, encourage your congressional staff contact to call you as a resource for information on this or other future issues.

Thank the staff member for her or his time.

Using Social Media

Congressional offices are integrating social media tools into their operations, both to gain an understanding of constituents’ opinions and to communicate information about the member’s views. In most offices, there is a dedicated staff to monitor social media platforms for trends, mention of their lawmaker’s name, constituent comments, opinions, and responses to legislative activity and any statements made by congressional members. Social media platforms can be another vehicle for delivering your messages to lawmakers while also creating awareness of the issue at hand and generating the support of others. Consider the following tactics in your outreach to lawmakers via social media:

- “Friend” your lawmakers on Facebook
- “Follow” your lawmaker on Twitter
- Write a message on your lawmaker’s blog post
- Upload photos on Instagram and share with your lawmakers (a picture is a thousand words)
The Congressional Record officially documents the proceedings and debates of the U.S. Congress and records the remarks made by senators and representatives while they are on the floor. It also includes proposed bills, resolutions and motions, as well as debates and roll call votes. In addition to being the daily record of minutes for the U.S. Congress’ legislative sessions, the Congressional Record also contains hundreds of pages of political speeches, statements, statistics, charts, studies, tributes, editorials and articles. Members of Congress routinely place these items in the record to help make the case for their views. It is published by the United States Government Printing Office (GPO) and is issued daily when Congress is in session.

Some reasons to reach out to your lawmakers to publish statements in the Congressional Record include:

- Reprints of a Congressional Record statement make impressive mailings to prospective and existing supporters of your cause.
- Many congressional staffers read the record.
- It’s free publicity on Capitol Hill and will create awareness of the HR profession and, more specifically, will highlight the importance of the HR field.

Request a Statement

Prepare a statement that you want your lawmaker to make on the House or Senate floor in recognition of your HR success and/or of a policy proposal that you support. Draft a fact-checked one- or two-paragraph introduction that incorporates the member’s endorsement of your specific issue/topic and be sure to include an example of how workplace policy and/or the HR profession are benefiting the constituents and community that the lawmaker serves. Contact your senators or representative (through the communications director, whose role is described in the “Getting to Know Congressional Staff” chapter of this toolkit) and provide a copy of the statement with a request that it be included in the Congressional Record.

Please note:

- Requestors are typically asked to provide a draft statement, a brief background and a date preference to be included in the Congressional Record.
- Inclusion in the Congressional Record is not guaranteed and is dependent on congressional business such as priority legislative matters. Please do not make announcements regarding the Congressional Record until you have been contacted and it is confirmed by your lawmaker’s office.
- Congressional Record requests must be received by the office at least 30 days before the date of the floor statement.
- You will not automatically receive a copy of the statement included in the Congressional Record. You will need to ask your lawmaker’s staffer (with whom you’ve coordinated the inclusion of the statement) for a copy as presented on the House or Senate floor.
- Congressional Record requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and are issued at the discretion of the senator or representative.
- Your lawmaker’s office reserves the right to edit all draft language.

To request a statement to be included in the Congressional Record and obtain contact information for your lawmaker’s Washington, D.C., office, visit www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

Share a Copy of Your Statement

If a Congressional Record statement initiated by you is published, please be sure to share a copy with your local media, SHRM’s Government Affairs team and your colleagues in the HR profession (including posting a copy of the statement on social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook). Public acknowledgments like a statement in the Congressional Record raise awareness and showcase the breadth and depth of the importance of sound HR policies in today’s growing workforce. They also help to create a positive political environment in which the HR sector can grow.
Do’s and Don’ts: Tips for Meeting Your Representatives

A face-to-face meeting with your elected officials is usually the most effective way of educating them on a public-policy issue. It provides an excellent opportunity to convey and receive information and to develop relationships that will benefit your organization. Simplify the process by following the tips and guidelines outlined below.

Before the Meeting

- Contact the targeted legislator’s office by phone to learn the protocol for requesting a meeting. Procedures vary by office and may involve submitting your request in writing or by e-mail, fax or mail; some offices even require that submissions be made through an online webform on the legislator’s website. Once you have submitted your request, follow up by phone to confirm a date and time and to advise the office of who will be attending the meeting.
- Decide in advance each attendee’s role. Designate one person as the facilitator.
- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and what you want to accomplish.
- Do your homework. Research the legislator’s voting record and know whether he or she sits on any key committees that affect your issue. You should visit the member’s website and search online for useful background information. SHRM’s online advocacy system also provides background information on your legislators and their stance on issues of importance to SHRM. This system may be found at advocacy.shrm.org. The SHRM Government Affairs staff can also be a helpful resource to you.
- Collect materials from the Government Affairs section of SHRM’s website, such as research materials, policy statements and talking points. They will help you in conveying your points during your presentation and serve as a leave-behind for the legislator or staff. A-Team materials to use in face-to-face meetings with legislators are available on the Advocacy Team Resources page.

During the Meeting

- Be sure to arrive on time and dress appropriately (business attire).
- All attendees should introduce themselves and indicate their positions with their employers (also note if you are a SHRM Advocacy Captain or HR Advocate, chapter or Council Legislative Director, or other SHRM volunteer); be sure to specify that you are constituents.
- Start the meeting by thanking the legislator/staff for meeting with you and, where appropriate, for supporting SHRM’s public-policy positions.
- Present your issue in a clear and concise manner. Remember your advantages: 1) you are the expert; 2) few members of Congress have an HR background; 3) you deal with these issues on a daily basis, and, more importantly, realize their real-world implications; and 4) you are a constituent who can speak to issues that affect employers and employees in the legislator’s district or state.
- Incorporate a personal story or anecdote to make the issue more “real” to the legislator. These are the types of nuggets that sometimes find their way into a speech by the legislator or a media interview: “An employer in my district has found that …”
- Request specific action from your legislator (e.g., voting for or against a specific bill, co-sponsoring a bill, etc.).
- Do not argue or lecture.
- After presenting your position, listen to the legislator or legislative aide. Ask them to indicate the legislator’s position on the issue(s) or listen for cues to see if congressional leadership or a special interest is pressuring the legislator to take one position over another.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, don’t be afraid to say so. Promise to follow up after the meeting. This allows for a great opportunity to build rapport with the office, as you are following up with information at their request.
- Thank the legislator or aide for her or his time.
• Give the legislator the (brief) leave-behind materials you prepared. Offer the legislator your business card (but only if appropriate; otherwise, provide a card with personal contact information) and offer your availability in the future. Also, request the business cards of any staff with whom you meet.

• Never offer anyone in a legislator’s office gifts of any kind. Ethics rules governing allowable gifts to legislative offices can be quite complicated. Our goal is to build rapport with offices rather than “buy influence.”

After the Meeting

• Write a thank-you letter to the legislator summarizing your conversation and any commitments that were made.

• Follow up and provide any additional information that was requested or that might be helpful.

• Record the substance of the meeting, including any specific issues addressed, in the A-Team’s online feedback system at advocacy.shrm.org/feedback.

• Don’t forget to thank the aide and scheduler! It is important to maintain a relationship with not only the member of Congress but also his or her aide and scheduler. Both of these staffers make it possible to bend the member’s ear year-round on issues affecting the HR profession. Remember to thank them both for setting up your meeting. Make sure you are sending the aide correspondence on a regular basis, even if it is just a short call or e-mail to update them on your work.

Measuring Success

How will you know if your meeting has been a success? Sometimes that answer becomes obvious over time, especially if your member of Congress co-sponsors important legislation or is willing to support your opposition to a bill that could be detrimental to the HR profession. On other occasions, the answer is more immediate. Your representative might call the next day wanting to know how a specific proposal might impact the workplace in his or her state or congressional district. Your first thought should be, “Great. They see us as a valuable resource.” You’ve established a dialogue and are on track to building a mutually beneficial relationship.

The test of success lies in the answers to these questions:

• Does my congressional representative better understand the role of the HR profession?

• Have I left the member of Congress with a memorable, anecdotal example of how a legislative proposal would impact processes in the workplace and would furthermore impact his or her constituents?

• Have I “put a human face” on the HR profession?

If you can answer yes to these questions, then you have taken an essential step toward creating a legislative climate that will be positive and supportive of the HR profession and professionals around the country.
Sample Meeting Request Letter to a Legislator

Given the importance of meeting face-to-face with a legislator and the potential benefit from it, your “meeting request letter” should be crafted with care. The letter should be simple and direct in explaining your purpose. Be clear about the specific date and time you will be available to meet, and note whether you are proposing to meet in Washington, D.C., or in the legislator’s district. Please remember that Advocacy Captains are urged to schedule at least two in-district meetings per year (or, see that your team schedules these meetings should you prefer to delegate this task to others in the district).

The Honorable [First Name, Last Name]
U.S. House of Representatives/Senate
[Room Number] House/Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. [20515 for House, 20510 for Senate]

Dear Representative/Senator [Last Name]:

On behalf of the local Advocacy Team for the Society for Human Resource Management in [insert city, state], I am writing to request a brief meeting with you in your [Washington, D.C., or district] office on [day and date] anytime between [specific hours of availability]. Representatives from our organization, including [describe stakeholders, be they Advocacy Captains, HR Advocates, chapter or Council Legislative Directors, or other leadership that will be in attendance], would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about the effect of [policy issue] on employers in the local community.

As you may know, issues relating to [immigration reform, health care, union organizing, etc.—whatever SHRM public-policy issue is up for discussion] are of critical importance to employers and their efforts to provide a workplace invested in the interests of their employees.

Thank you for considering our request for a meeting on [date]. We would very much appreciate it if your scheduler would contact me at [phone number] to schedule an appointment time convenient for you.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
Attending a Town Hall Event

Elected officials often host town hall meetings in the communities they represent. They take the questions and issues raised at these forums seriously. The news media often cover these events, which can provide another opportunity for bringing attention to our profession’s issues and priorities. To help you take advantage of this valuable opportunity, SHRM has developed this list of tips for effective town-hall meeting participation:

**Be prepared**

Present your member of Congress (not one who doesn’t represent you) with a well-researched, well-rehearsed pitch on the issue. Individuals who come to town hall meetings with thoughtful arguments, good data and persuasive stories always get remembered.

**Tell a personal story**

Legislators hold town hall meetings to get first-hand accounts of the impact of policies on their constituents. Think in advance how a policy might affect you, your employer, your family or your community. Whether lawmakers support SHRM’s issues or not, they want to hear your story.

**Use the strength of numbers**

Politicians live for one thing: 50 percent plus 1 on Election Day. This keeps them re-elected and in a job. Nearly every person to come before a member of Congress represents more constituents than just themselves. Use that power. “I have 50 employees” … “I represent 300 members in my chapter” … “There are 500 other SHRM members in my congressional district who think just like me.” The legislator is trying to do the political math the minute you stand up—make it easy for her or him.

**Be respectful**

Too many people open their comments with, “I pay your salary, so you better listen to me.” The exchange then becomes a confrontation, not a conversation. It doesn’t matter if you are talking to your plumber or a public official—starting a conversation in a rude manner is no way to persuade someone. Members of Congress want to hear your views. You don’t need to badger them to get your message through.

**Go in a group**

Nothing says “listen to me” to a public official like a large group or crowd of people passionate about an issue. That doesn’t mean you should bring pitchforks and torches to your next town hall meeting, but a choir is better than a soloist performance.

**Talk to staff**

Every member of Congress brings staff to town hall meetings. Talk to them before the meeting, exchange contact information, and tell them your story (in addition to making a public statement during the meeting).

**Leave paper**

Although the meeting might be staffed by people from the legislator’s district office, material you leave with them will likely be shared with the Washington, D.C., office and the legislative assistant who covers your issue.

**Follow up politely**

Remember the “Five P’s”: “politely persistent people persuade politicians.” Congressional offices are harried, so they often respond to the squeaky wheel—the one who follows up with a phone call after attending a town hall meeting.

**Get people to multiple meetings**

This is a surefire way to get noticed. When elected officials are asked the same knowledgeable question in one town as in a previous town, they take notice and often will tell staff to follow up on the issue. Hearing the same thing in different places from different people signals to a politician there may be a problem—or opportunity—afoot.
Demonstrate you are not going away

If you continue to attend town hall meetings, the legislator must deal with you—if only to avoid an uncomfortable encounter at yet another town hall meeting.

Recess Isn’t Vacation

There is a misconception that “congressional recess” means “vacation” for lawmakers. To the contrary, congressional recesses are an opportunity for members of Congress to spend more time at home with their constituents. As a matter of fact, congressional recesses are now formally referred to as “constituent work weeks.” When members of Congress return to their home states/districts, their days are usually 8 to 10 hours long (compared to the 12- to 14-hour day in Washington, D.C.), and are filled with meetings with constituent groups, visits to district facilities and town hall meetings.

The annual calendar for Congress presents a fascinating opportunity for grassroots advocates seeking to build relationships and influence legislators both in Washington, D.C., and at home in their respective states and congressional districts. The schedule mostly follows a two-weeks-on and one-week-off format. It includes five days of voting when legislators are in Washington and consistent end times on Fridays. But what does this all mean for those seeking to influence legislators?

First, legislators will likely schedule more town hall meetings. The congressional calendar now has more scheduled constituent work weeks. This means members of Congress have more certainty and time to schedule town hall meetings in the district. It also means they’ll likely schedule more events as well—visits to businesses, schools and groups. Great photo opportunities, but also great face time with constituents.

Second, constituents and their representatives often overlook the value of meeting with legislators in their district offices. However, with more weeks back home, the best venue to meet with a member of Congress and staff is the district office. Constituents will feel more comfortable meeting in their own locales. And members of Congress usually have more time because they are not rushing off to committee hearings and votes in Washington, offering the potential for a more robust and detailed dialogue.

So, why not take advantage of the scheduled constituent work weeks to discuss HR policy with your lawmakers? The new and improved calendar not only might make legislators more efficient, it could also be a boost to your grassroots efforts!
III. Getting to Know Congressional Staff

Each member of Congress maintains at least two offices: one in Washington, D.C., and the other(s) back home in the district or state. Many of these offices are thousands of miles and one or more time zones apart, but they must function very effectively together to best serve legislators and constituents.

Building Relationships with District/State Staff

Approximately 40 percent of a legislator’s personal office staffers are located in district and state offices, and most senators and representatives spend more than 40 weekends a year in their district/state. Congressional staffers who work on Capitol Hill often have different roles than those in the state/district offices.

- Hill staff and the elected official rely heavily on the local knowledge provided by district staff.
- Hill staffers are often not from the state or district and often have never been there.
- While staff turnover on the Hill is common, district staffers tend to have long tenures and often remain even when elected officials change.
- It is the primary responsibility of district staff to meet with individuals, organizations and municipalities to learn what is happening in the region and report back to their D.C. counterparts and the elected official.
- District staffers focus on issues with local impact.
- District staffers look for real-life examples that impact their member’s view of legislation, justify support or opposition, and can be used as examples during floor speeches.
Roles of Congressional Staff Members (Washington, D.C.)

Each member of Congress has staff to assist him or her during a term in office. To be most effective in communicating with Congress, it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff. Commonly used titles and job functions:

**Chief of Staff (COS)**

This individual has direct access to the member and overall responsibility for offering advice on legislative initiatives and constituent relations. The COS usually oversees office operations and supervises key staff. (Administrative assistant [AA] is another title used interchangeably with COS. More and more congressional offices, however, are giving the AA title to individuals in less-senior positions, such as receptionists and other front-desk staff.)

**Legislative Director (LD)/Deputy Chief of Staff/Senior Legislative Assistant**

The LD monitors the member’s legislative schedule and analyzes the pros and cons of specific legislative proposals for the member and COS. The LD also frequently oversees the work of the legislative assistants (see below).

**Press Secretary or Communications Director**

The press secretary’s main function is to promote the member’s views or positions on a variety of issues to the media, constituents and the general public. This person understands the special requirements of both the print and electronic media, and knows how to use these tools to build effective lines of communication with constituents and the media. The press secretary also writes media releases, attends events with the member and defuses bad publicity.

**Legislative Assistant (LA)**

An LA typically reports to the LD and is charged with tracking specific issues or issue areas (for example, tax, health, energy, etc.). The LA writes floor statements, monitors legislation, researches issues for the member, keeps staff apprised of developments during committee hearings and meets with constituents to discuss legislation.

**Legislative Correspondent (LC)**

The LC answers mail sent to a member’s office. He or she also can help the LAs monitor legislation, meet with constituents and write policy briefs.

**Scheduler/Appointment Secretary**

Schedulers manage the complex and multiple demands placed on a member. This individual must find a balance between constituent requests, congressional responsibilities and staff requirements in deciding the member’s availability for meetings. The scheduler also may be responsible for making travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates and planning visits to the district.

**Other Staff Titles**

Other members of the representative’s staff may include caseworkers (who are assigned to help resolve constituent issues in the state/district), the office manager and receptionists (sometimes known as administrative assistants—see above).
Building Relationships with Congressional Staff

An effective and sustained relationship with a member of Congress and staffers in the congressional office is built upon a foundation of personal communications and face-to-face exchanges. These must occur consistently over time so that the other communications that you will invariably need to use—letters, e-mails, phone calls—will have the kind of personal impact and value that can result in real action from the office in support of the issues of importance to you. As important as it is to build lasting relationships with members of Congress, it is equally important to establish similar relationships with their staffs in Washington, D.C. (and in their respective state/district offices). There are too many issues for members of Congress to keep up with on their own, so they rely a great deal on their staff for research, opinion and support. These staffers can be powerful allies if you get them on your side. Think how effective it would be to have a congressional staffer making the case for positive HR policies with your member of Congress. Each time you make a phone call or send a letter to your senators’ or representative’s aides, you’re educating them on the issues.

There are several platforms that will assist HR Advocates in developing relationships with state/district staff:

**Individual appointments**

Plenty of people would like to spend some individual quality time with the member and/or staff, and one of the simplest ways to accommodate that need is by scheduling appointments during regular office hours in the district/state office. It is convenient for the member and/or staff.

These events also increase visibility and enable the member to serve remote areas and reach constituents who may be unable to travel.

**Town hall meetings**

These types of meetings can accommodate a large number of people and usually result in media coverage. In-person town hall meetings provide an open, direct and unfiltered dialogue between citizens and their elected officials. However, the structure of town hall meetings may not allow for primary focus on one issue since many other constituents will have topics that they would like to be addressed by the member and/or staff.

**Roundtables, conferences and field hearings**

Many members and their staffs would prefer to attend third-party events since their office will not have to plan the logistics of the day. Consider inviting a member and/or staff to an existing event that you are hosting. These types of venues will raise awareness and visibility of your issue.

**Press/visibility**

Members of Congress need not only to do good but also to be seen as doing good. District/state staff will constantly be looking for good photo opportunities. It may sometimes serve the member’s goals to appear at press/visibility events created by others, but the office is likely to find the need to create its own events as well.
IV. Earned Media

Earned media (or free media) refers to favorable publicity gained through promotional efforts other than advertising, as opposed to paid media, which refers to publicity gained through advertising. Earned media often refers specifically to publicity gained through editorial influence, whereas social media refers to publicity gained through grassroots action, particularly on the Internet. The media may include any mass media outlets, such as newspaper, television, radio, and the Internet, and may include a variety of formats, such as news articles or shows, letters to the editor, editorials, and polls on television and the Internet. These are all media tactics that you can take advantage of to raise awareness of public-policy issues of relevance to the HR profession.

10 Quick Tips for Writing a Successful Letter to the Editor

1. **Follow the correct submission procedures.** Review the submission guidelines provided by the publication. These guidelines will note what contact data to include and will be available either online or printed in the publication’s editorial section.

2. **Include your contact information.** Put your name, address, phone number and e-mail address, plus any additional information required by the publication’s submission guidelines, at the bottom of your letter. An editor may need to contact you to confirm that you are the author.

3. **Keep it simple.** Your odds of publication are best if your letter is short, direct and focused. Try to keep it to two or three succinct paragraphs and less than 200 words.

4. **Focus on one key point.** Do not deviate too much or you might lose your audience.

5. **Present yourself as a knowledgeable source.** As in the sample letters that follow, explain that you work as an HR professional, giving readers a reason to trust your thoughts and opinions.

6. **Submit a letter that stands on its own.** If you are responding to another letter or an article, don’t assume readers have read it. Provide the necessary background information as briefly and simply as possible.

7. **Carefully support your opinions with evidence.** Numbers, statistics and cited facts will make your argument more persuasive. Just be careful not to overuse them. They can get confusing and drive the reader away.

8. **Don’t use too much jargon.** Avoid using a lot of technical terms, such as profession-related buzzwords and acronyms, which can be a turn-off to readers.

9. **Make a strong closing.** Leave readers with a clear understanding of your message by restating your main point at the end of the letter.

10. **Edit and proofread your letter.** You can do this yourself, but you should also ask a friend or colleague to review your letter. They can help ensure that your writing is clear and to the point. Plus, they may catch an error you overlooked.
Resources – Sample Advocacy Letters

Sample Letter to the Editor (LTE)

Name of Media Outlet or Publication
Letters to the Editor
Address 1
Address 2
City, State ZIP-Code

Dear Editor:

[State the reason for writing your letter here, and introduce the issue or theme. If you are responding to an article or editorial in the publication, reference the headline of the piece and the date it appeared.]

[State your case here. Include facts, figures and references to establish the credibility of the information. Keep this statement of your case consistent in length with letters to the editor regularly used by the publication.]

[Include a call to action or specific request to either your elected official(s) or readers. For example, ask readers to join in calling on policymakers to address the issue, or ask your elected official to take a specific stance on the issue or vote a certain way.]

[End with a strong, positive statement in support of your case.]

Sincerely,

[Writer’s Signature]
[Name of Writer]
[Writer’s Title (e.g., Advocacy Captain, HR Advocate, Legislative Director or leadership position)]
[Writer’s Organization (e.g., Society for Human Resource Management Advocacy Team or relevant state council or chapter)]
[City, State]
Sample E-mail to a Member of Congress

[Date]

Representative [First Name Last Name]
[Room Number] [Cannon, Longworth or Rayburn] House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative [Last Name],

As a constituent living in [insert congressional district] and an HR professional at [organization’s name (only mention your employer if permissible)], I’m writing to ask you to please support efforts in Congress [insert the public-policy issue you are advocating for; an example follows] to make Section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code permanent. This provision, set to expire December 31, allows an employee to exclude up to $5,250 per year in educational assistance at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

This exemption is a critical tool used by employers to attract the best employees, build a skilled workforce and position the U.S. economy to compete globally. I have seen first-hand the benefits of Section 127 not only to our company but also to the employees who continue to develop their skills by furthering their education. Please vote in favor of making Section 127 permanent. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Street]
[City, State ZIP-Code]
[Date]

Senator [First Name Last Name]
[Room Number] [Dirksen, Hart or Russell] Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator [Last Name],

As a constituent living in [your state] and an HR professional at [organization's name (only mention your employer if permissible)], I’m writing to ask you to please support efforts in Congress [insert the public-policy issue you are advocating for; an example follows] to make Section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code permanent. This provision, set to expire December 31, allows an employee to exclude up to $5,250 per year in educational assistance at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

This exemption is a critical tool used by employers to attract the best employees, build a skilled workforce and position the U.S. economy to compete globally. I have seen first-hand the benefits of Section 127 not only to our company but also to the employees who continue to develop their skills by furthering their education. Please vote in favor of making Section 127 permanent. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Street]
[City, State ZIP-Code]

SHRM’s online advocacy system includes address information for your legislators’ offices in Washington, D.C. Be certain to verify the room number and House or Senate office building for each representative you wish to write. Or, you may use SHRM’s online advocacy system for your letter to be sent via the U.S. Postal Service, as this system will automatically format your letter and record that you sent a message (helping SHRM track which A-Team members are actively writing letters). This system may be found by visiting advocacy.shrm.org.
V. Expanding Your Network

Advocacy is about communication, relationship building and political organization/the ability to rally multiple people around a single issue or goal. The more successful you are in each of these endeavors, the more successful your advocacy efforts are likely to be. One way to do this is to form an advocacy network to help you to expand the reach of your efforts.

Inviting Others to Join You

As the Advocacy Captain of your congressional district, you are not expected to shoulder the entire burden of generating support for SHRM’s public-policy initiatives. By identifying other HR Advocates in your district, you can build a team of supporters to share in those advocacy responsibilities.

When choosing members of your team, remember that generating positive attention for SHRM’s public-policy priorities is not about personal political agendas or partisan politics. While we are asking you to contact and interface with politicians, we are not asking you to be political. SHRM is only asking that you educate and inform politicians—there’s a difference!

HR Advocates need to be on-message if they are going to have the best possible chance at advancing issues facing the HR profession. Regardless of individual political party affiliation, members of your advocacy network must stay focused on SHRM’s public-policy goals.

Importance of Building a Local “Kitchen Cabinet”

Think of your local SHRM Advocacy Team as your “kitchen cabinet,” and rely on it accordingly. For instance, the President has a formal cabinet of agency chiefs—but he also has a “kitchen cabinet” of informal insiders who have his ear and can provide him with insight and guidance on key issues.

You, too, need a local “kitchen cabinet,” for counsel and assistance in advancing SHRM’s advocacy goals within your district. Identify enthusiastic, like-minded allies who are eager to help and are excited about being part of the political process.

Coordinating with Your Team

- Invite colleagues from the HR profession to join your efforts.
- Locate those with existing relationships with legislators and/or their staff.
- Establish relationships with like-minded constituents at the local level:
  - Work colleagues affected by policies.
  - Professional organizations.
  - Community-based organizations.
  - Others outside the profession impacted by policies.
- Communicate regularly—update your team as issues arise.
- Inform them when action is needed.
- Invite them to meetings.
- Do not wait for a crisis to contact your advocacy network.
- Simplify your message and talking points so that everyone in your delegation is speaking with one voice and stays on message. The more people you have involved in your advocacy efforts, the greater the chance that your message becomes diluted. Simplifying your message and talking points will help to avoid this dilution.
VI. Congress 101

In order to be effective Advocacy Captains and HR Advocates it is important to understand the structure and responsibilities of Congress and have basic knowledge of the legislative process.

In the United States, Congress holds the power to write and pass bills, which then become laws if the President approves them. Congress is made up of the House of Representatives (“the House”) and the Senate. Federal taxing and spending policies also fall under Congress’ power. Congress shares powers with the President in matters such as military issues.

Congressional elections occur every two years. During these elections, voters choose all members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate. Members of the Senate are elected every six years.

Members of the House and Senate each have their own office and staff in Washington, D.C., and several in their districts. Their office staff is there to work on legislation and to help and listen to constituents.

When they are in session, Members of Congress vote on legislation in their respective chamber in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. At other times, they may return to their home state to meet with constituents.

House of Representatives

There are 435 members in the House of Representatives. The number of Representatives for each state is determined by its population. There are also several nonvoting members who represent U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.

Representatives advocate for the interests of residents and businesses within their districts, as well as on issues of national or international importance. They debate and vote on the House floor, oversee government agency spending, and serve on committees. At other times, Representatives return to their home state to work closely with their constituents. All House of Representatives seats are voted on every two years.

Senate

There are 100 U.S. Senators. Each state is represented by two senators, regardless of the state’s population. Senators’ terms last six years.

Senators spend a portion of their time in the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., acting as advocates for the political interests of residents and businesses within their districts as well as dealing with issues that affect the nation and other countries. In addition to serving on committees, they debate and vote on the Senate floor and oversee government agency spending. At other times, Senators return to their home state to work closely with their constituents.

The Senate also has informal groups of members who share interests in specific issues or philosophies. These groups are called caucuses.
How a Bill Becomes a Law

1. **Introduction of a bill.** Any member of Congress can propose or sponsor a new law. Ideas for laws can come from many sources, including citizens, interest groups, public officials or the President. The bill is assigned a chamber-specific number (e.g., H.R. 236, S. 29) and labeled with the sponsor’s name. The bill is sent to the Government Printing Office (GPO), and copies are made. Bills are also available electronically at http://thomas.loc.gov.

2. **Committee action.** The bill is referred to the appropriate committee by the Speaker of the House or the presiding officer in the Senate. A bill may be referred to more than one committee, and it may be split so that parts are sent to different committees or subcommittees. Time limits may be set on committees. When the bill reaches committee, the committee members review, research and revise the bill before voting on whether to send the bill to the chamber floor. If the committee members want more information before making the decision, the bill is sent to a subcommittee. While in subcommittee, the bill is closely examined and expert opinions are gathered before it is sent back to the committee for approval. Finally, when the full committee has approved the bill, it is sent—or reported—to the chamber floor, where it is ready for debate.

3. **Floor action.** When a bill is debated on the floor, members explain why they agree or disagree with it. Then, a reading clerk reads the bill section by section and the legislators recommend changes. When all changes have been made and accepted, the bill is ready to be voted on. If passed, it is sent to the other chamber for a vote, unless that chamber already has a similar measure under consideration. If either the House or the Senate does not pass the bill, it dies.

4. **Working together: the House and Senate.** When a bill reaches the other chamber, it goes through many of the same processes it went through in the first chamber. The bill is discussed in committee and then reported for floor debate and an eventual vote. If the House and Senate pass the same bill, it is sent to the President. If the bills are different versions of the legislation (i.e., a House version and a Senate version), both are sent to a conference committee. Appointed members of both the Senate and House sit on that committee, which must reconcile the differences between the two chambers’ bills and produce one bill. The bill produced by the conference committee must then pass both chambers before being sent to the President for consideration. Most major legislation goes to a conference committee.

5. **Signing a Bill into Law.** When a unified bill approved by both the Senate and House reaches the President, he has three choices. He can:
   - Sign the bill—the bill becomes a law.
   - Veto the bill by refusing to sign it—the bill is sent back to the originating chamber, along with the President’s reasons for the veto. If both the House and Senate still believe the bill should become law, they can hold another vote on the bill. If two-thirds of the members of each chamber support the bill, the President’s veto is overridden and the bill becomes a law.
   - Do nothing, called a “pocket veto”—if Congress is in session, the bill automatically becomes a law after 10 days. If Congress is not in session, the bill does not become a law.
VII. Additional Resources

SHRM Advocacy Team Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the SHRM Advocacy Team?
An integral component of SHRM’s Member Advocacy Initiative, the SHRM Advocacy Team seeks to advance the interests of the HR profession in Congress and in state legislatures. Made up of HR Advocates located throughout each of the 435 congressional districts, the team works to enhance SHRM public-policy efforts by leveraging the reach and visibility of SHRM members with their elected officials, both federal and state. Team members put a face behind the positions we are advocating on issues affecting the workplace.

What is grassroots advocacy?
Grassroots advocacy is when everyday citizens communicate for the advancement of a particular cause. They might contact their legislators to try to influence legislation and public policy, organize a public education event or petition drive, or write an opinion/editorial piece or letter to the editor and submit it to their local newspaper. Grassroots advocacy comes from the ground up.

Why is SHRM advocacy important?
Advocacy communications are most effective when they are delivered from multiple, credible sources. As advocates for the HR community, SHRM members understand and are best positioned to communicate how public-policy issues can affect employees and employers. By working together, we can help shape important public-policy initiatives that will produce effective workplace public policies.

What is the role of an Advocacy Captain?
As the key advocates within their congressional districts, Advocacy Captains are seen as credible voices for our profession on workplace issues, not only by legislators at the state and federal levels, but also by the media and by the communities in which they live and work. And, if an Advocacy Captain isn’t comfortable with any aspect of this role, he or she has access to another SHRM member colleague who is willing to take on that task. Most importantly, Advocacy Captains serve as the point of contact for SHRM’s Government Affairs team in their respective congressional districts, as well as for policymakers on issues of importance.

What does an Advocacy Captain do?
As an Advocacy Captain, you are asked to develop and maintain relationships with your elected officials and their staff (or, see that relationships are being developed by members of your local team). In addition, you are encouraged to reach out to other HR Advocates and professionals in your congressional district to support you. These individuals can prove beneficial in recruiting others to support advocacy initiatives within the district, or by serving as subject matter experts—either for meetings with legislators or in discussions/outreach efforts with the local media. SHRM’s Government Affairs team stands ready to assist you in making this effort a success. We can work with you to suggest ways of communicating effectively with policymakers, engaging the local media and networking with leading community-based/like-minded organizations in your district.

What kinds of activities can I expect to participate in as an HR Advocate?
HR Advocates play a vital role in communicating workplace issues to congressional leaders and state elected officials by participating in a wide range of local advocacy activities. Those activities include writing personal letters and making calls to legislators’ district or Washington, D.C., offices; meeting one on one (or jointly with other HR Advocates) with a legislator or staff member; authoring opinion/editorial pieces and letters to the editor for local newspapers; participating in local advocacy and educational events and town hall meetings; networking with like-minded community-based organizations; participating in SHRM advocacy
days; participating in educational activities; and much more.

**What type of time commitment is required from HR Advocates and from Advocacy Captains?**

There is no set time commitment for participating in this initiative. However, Advocacy Captains are encouraged to serve a two-year term and may be reappointed for additional terms of one to two years in length. Willingness to serve multiple terms is recommended and appreciated. Advocacy Captains should expect that their activities will require several hours per month when working on a specific advocacy initiative, including planning a legislator meeting and contacting other HR Advocates to join your efforts. Most months, your only commitment is participating in the monthly A-Team webcasts, which often run only about 30 to 45 minutes. However, that modest time commitment can pay huge dividends to our profession, and can boost the Advocacy Captain’s personal and professional development.

**How can SHRM help me in my role as an Advocacy Captain?**

SHRM’s Government Affairs team stands ready to assist you. You will be invited to participate in webinars and conference calls exclusively for the SHRM Advocacy Team. In addition, we will provide educational materials, “leave-behinds” for legislator office visits, a list of HR Advocates in your district (upon request), this toolkit and access to online training videos. We also envision follow-up in-person training for Advocacy Captains and other HR Advocates in select states.

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**SHRM Issues**

Visit the Public Policy section of SHRM’s website at shrm.org for a look at the public-policy issues SHRM’s Government Affairs team will be advocating on Capitol Hill and in certain state legislatures.

Issues are categorized by the topic areas that appear in the toolbar at the left of this page. Each topic area corresponds with the policy focus of a member of SHRM’s Government Affairs team. If you have specific questions regarding any of the issues listed under each topic area, please contact the member of the Government Affairs team that is handling that issue.

Below are three resources that are available on SHRM’s website year-round to provide more information about the HR public-policy issues SHRM is advancing in Washington, D.C., and on the state level.

- **SHRM’s Guide to Public-Policy Issues** provides a reference to the federal and state public-policy priorities SHRM will be advocating.
- **SHRM’s Public-Policy Position Statements** on emerging HR public-policy issues are developed with the active participation of volunteer members.
- **Sign up to receive the HR Issues Update e-newsletter.** HR Issues Update is a SHRM e-newsletter delivered every other week when Congress is in session. This newsletter is designed to provide current information on HR public policy topics like health care, leave rules and other workplace issues. No government jargon—just quick and concise news to help HR professionals stay informed on the issues that affect their jobs today or in the future.
Glossary of Legislative Terms

**Advocacy:** The support or defense of a cause and the act of pleading on behalf of another person or issue.

**Amendment:** A proposal to change a piece of legislation.

**Appropriations:** Provides the legal authority needed to spend U.S. Treasury funds.

**Authorization:** Provides the authority for a program or agency to exist and determines its policy.

**Beltway:** An interstate highway encircling Washington, D.C. “Inside the Beltway” suggests that an issue is of interest or relevant to only Washington-area residents and workers.

**Bill:** A legislative proposal that becomes law if it passes both the House and Senate in identical fashion and receives Presidential approval. Bills are introduced as “H.R.” in the House, and “S.” in the Senate, with consecutive numbering in each chamber (e.g., H.R. 631 = House bill #631).

**Budget Resolution:** Details the spending and revenue levels set by Congress each year. It may also instruct committees to change current law in order to save or spend money.

**Capitol Hill:** The area encompassing the U.S. Capitol building.

**Caucus:** An informal group of members sharing an interest in the same policy issues.

**Chairman:** The presiding officer of a committee and/or subcommittee; a member of Congress of the majority party in the chamber.

**Cloture:** A procedure used in the Senate to end debate and bring legislation to a vote. Cloture can be invoked by agreement between the Majority and Minority leaders or by 60 members of the Senate voting to invoke cloture.

**Demonstration Project:** A project funded by the federal government to test new technology or policies.

**Discretionary Spending:** Refers to spending set by the annual appropriation levels and decided by Congress. This spending is optional, in contrast to entitlement programs (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security), for which funding is mandatory.

**Earmarks:** Provisions that set aside funding for specific programs or purposes.

**Entitlement Spending:** Funds for programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and veterans’ benefits. Funding levels are automatically set by the number of eligible recipients, not at the discretion of Congress.

**Executive Order:** A Presidential directive with the force of law that does not need congressional approval.

**Filibuster:** The term used for an extended debate in the Senate that has the effect of preventing a vote. Senate rules contain no motion to force a vote. A vote occurs only when debate ends or when cloture is obtained defining a period of time for the vote to occur.

**Fiscal Year:** The federal government’s budget year, which begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following calendar year.

**GAO:** The Government Accountability Office audits federal agencies and programs for Congress.

**GOP:** Stands for “Grand Old Party” and is used to refer to the Republican Party.

**Hearing:** A formal meeting of a committee or subcommittee to review legislation or explore a topic. Hearings also may be called to investigate a matter or conduct oversight of existing programs. Witnesses are usually called to deliver testimony and answer questions.

**Joint Resolution:** A measure used to appropriate funding, pose constitutional amendments or fix technical errors. Joint resolutions become law if adopted by both the House and Senate and, where relevant, approved by the President. Constitutional amendments must be approved by three-fourths of the states.
Lame Duck: Member of Congress who will not return in the next Congress but who is finishing out her or his current term.

Lame Duck Session: The period of time when Congress meets after an election and before adjournment of that session of Congress. Members who will not be returning or who have not been re-elected can still cast votes during this period of time.

Majority Leader: A person elected by the majority party members in the House or Senate to lead them; to promote passage of the party’s priorities; and to coordinate legislative efforts with the Minority Leader, the other chamber and the White House.

Mandatory Spending: Required funding that now accounts for two-thirds of the federal budget. These funds are not controlled by current decisions by Congress but are automatically obliged by virtue of previously enacted laws. For example, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps and Social Security are entitlement programs; funding for them all falls under mandatory spending.

Mark-up: Refers to the meeting of a committee held to review a bill before reporting it out to the full chamber, or floor, for consideration. Committee members offer and vote on proposed changes (amendments) to the bill’s language. Most mark-ups end with a vote to send the revised version of the bill to the floor for final consideration and approval.

Minority Leader: A person elected by the minority members in the House or Senate to lead them; to promote passage of the party’s issue priorities; and to coordinate legislative efforts with the Majority Leader, the other chamber and the White House.

OMB: The Office of Management and Budget is the federal agency that prepares the President’s budget submission to Congress and develops associated economic forecasts.

Override: The vote taken to pass a bill again, after it has been vetoed by the President. It takes a two-thirds vote in each chamber, or 290 in the House and 67 in the Senate, if all are present and voting. If the veto is overridden in both chambers, the bill becomes law, despite the objection of the President.

Oversight: The term used for congressional review of federal agencies, government programs and performance.

Pocket Veto: A passive veto when the President neither signs nor returns a bill within the 10 days allowed by the Constitution. Congress must be in session in order for a pocket veto to take effect.

Pork Barrel Legislation: Implies the legislation is loaded with special projects (earmarks) for members of Congress to distribute to their constituents back home. The term suggests the project funding is frivolous and unnecessary.

Power of the Purse: Refers to the constitutional power given to Congress to raise and spend money.

President’s Budget: A document sent to Congress each year by the White House, usually during the first week of February. It outlines the President’s spending priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

Quorum: The number of members who must be present before business can be conducted. In the full House, 218 representatives make a quorum. In the Senate, 51 senators are needed for a quorum.

Ranking Member: The minority-party member of a committee or with the most seniority. He or she has the highest ranking on the committee after the chairman.

Recess: A brief, same-day break in the session. Can also refer to longer breaks over several days, such as holiday periods, which are approved by vote.

Recorded Vote: A specific type of vote held on the record. It links the name of each member with his or her voting position.

Refer: Following introduction, to send a bill to the appropriate committee for initial examination.

Reporting Out: The vote of a committee to send a bill to the full House or Senate for review.
Rider: An amendment attached to a bill, usually unrelated to the subject of the underlying bill.

Roll Call Vote: The same as a recorded vote. The name of the member and her or his voting position are noted together.

Special Interest: Any group of people organized around a specific shared topic or policy.

Whip: A leadership position; a member who is elected by her or his party to count potential votes and promote party unity in voting.

Yea and Nays: A specific type of recorded vote. Members call out “yea” or “nay” when their name is called, or signal the clerk with a thumb up or down.

Useful Internet Sites

Congress.gov
http://www.congress.gov
Acting under the directive of the leadership of the 104th Congress to make federal legislative information freely available to the public, a Library of Congress team brought the THOMAS World Wide Web system (named for Thomas Jefferson) online in January 1995. It was retired in 2016 and is superseded by Congress.gov. The site includes information on the floor activities of both the House and Senate, information on any bill dating back from the 104th Congress to the current session, and access to the Congressional Record.

U.S. House of Representatives
www.house.gov
This site contains information and links to individual leadership, member and committee offices; a complete House directory; current floor action information; C-SPAN programming; and the Internet Law Library and Library of Congress.

U.S. Senate
www.senate.gov
At the Senate’s homepage, you can access information on legislative activities, committee information, links to individual senators’ websites, contact information and historical background on the Senate.

The White House
www.whitehouse.gov
At this site, you can obtain information about the President and Vice President, read White House press releases, look through White House historical documents, get information about White House tours, and browse the White House library.

Requesting Assistance from the SHRM Government Affairs Team

SHRM’s Government Affairs team is always available to you and ready to give you what you need to make your advocacy efforts successful. We can work with you and your colleagues to help you communicate effectively with your legislators, engage local media and network with leading community-based organizations in your congressional district.

To request assistance from Government Affairs, please e-mail us at Advocacy@shrm.org. You can also learn more about involvement by visiting advocacy.shrm.org.