

AAM Guide to Working with a New Congress

What's at Stake

Every two years, new and returning legislators are sworn in and the first session of a new Congress begins. They then begin considering policies and decisions on a daily basis that can impact museums and federal support for them. We cannot assume that they know all that museums are and do to serve their communities, or how they are impacted by current events, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, unless we share our stories with them. Connecting with legislators early in a legislative session, and regularly throughout it, is critical to the long-term case making that helps turn elected officials into champions for our cause. There are many ways you can get started today on important and ongoing stakeholder education and relationship building.

Finding and Getting to Know Your Legislators

Use our [Legislator Directory](#) to find your federal and state legislators' capitol and district office information, websites, and social media accounts, and key staff information for federal legislators. The start of a legislative session is an excellent time to [introduce yourself and your museum](#) to legislators. Post positive messages on social media to welcome new legislators and welcome back returning legislators. Share ways you and your museum can be a resource to them and are serving the community, and that you are looking forward to working with them.

Learn about your legislators' backgrounds and roles in the House or Senate (or state or local governing body) before you reach out to them. Follow your legislators' newsletters, press releases, websites, and social media accounts so you are informed about their interests, priorities, and events they are holding that you may be able to participate in. Add their offices to your email and mailing lists, too.

- [Getting to Know Your Legislators](#)
- [Making the Case with Elected Officials](#)
- [Ten Rules for Engagement](#)

Resources You Can Use Today

The Alliance maintains a full suite of [Advocacy Resources](#) to support your year-round advocacy activities and help you build your advocacy skills. Several of these resources are particularly relevant to educating, building relationships with, and engaging with new and returning legislators.

Introducing Legislators to Museums

- [Introduce Your Museum to Your Legislators](#)
- [Policy Issues Affecting Museums](#)
- [Museums & Public Opinion](#)

Sharing Critical Data

- COVID-19 Impact Data - [July](#) and [November](#)
- [Museums as Economic Engines](#) (and [state snapshots](#))
- [Economic](#) and [Educational](#) Impact templates

Engaging Your Board

- [Your Secret Advocacy Weapon: Your Board](#)
- [Trustee Resource Center](#)

In-Person and Virtual Meetings

Legislators, staff, and advocates have been impressed by the power of virtual meetings to eliminate barriers such as travel, and to provide an opportunity for thoughtful conversation with constituents about the issues impacting them. You can also participate in any online or in-person town halls or constituent updates your legislators are holding, and invite legislators and staff to participate in virtual tours, visits, and programs the museum is running. In-person meetings and visits are always impactful, if and when feasible and safe. These Alliance guides provide step-by-step information for arranging and participating in meetings with legislators, in-person or virtually.

- [Invite Congress to Visit Your Museum](#)
- [Invite Legislators to Meet Locally](#)

Your Constituency is Your Superpower!

As a constituent, your voice has a unique influence on your legislators. In fact, [according to data](#) from the Congressional Management Foundation, nothing influences legislators more than direct constituent interactions. Advocacy is an essential leadership skill whether you're currently in a leadership position at your museum, looking to gain valuable skills to benefit your institution, or working to advance your own career. Whatever your current role, position, or level in the field, you have a right and responsibility to make your voice heard, and to share your energy and passion for the work you do with your legislators. The future of the field depends on it.

Want to go even deeper with your advocacy skills and efforts? Looking for an in-depth advocacy resource you can share with your staff and board? Support AAM's year-round advocacy efforts and your museum's advocacy work by purchasing the Alliance's [Speaking Up: Museum Advocacy in Action](#) toolkit.

Last updated January 5, 2021