



## Grassroots Advocacy at Your Meeting

*There are two easy ways NARFE members can participate in grassroots advocacy at chapter meetings: writing and calling Congress. Below are details on how to effectively execute these activities at a meeting.*

### **Writing to Congress**

Helping NARFE members write letters to Congress is an easy and effective way for them to voice their concerns. It is also a good way to generate a response from elected officials on our issues. Holding a letter-writing campaign at your meeting often takes only a few minutes. To hold a letter-writing campaign at your meeting:

1. Decide which type of letter will work best with your members: handwritten, pre-typed or postcards. Handwritten letters are the most effective as the personalization makes it more likely that members of Congress will respond. However, it can sometimes be difficult to encourage people to take the time to handwrite a letter. Pre-typed letters are easier in that members need only write their name and address at the bottom of a form letter. Postcards are another option because they are easy and quick for members to write and shorter than a full handwritten letter but still allow more personalization than a pre-typed letter.
2. Prepare for the meeting depending on what writing format you choose. If you are writing handwritten letters, print off sample letters or provide talking points that members can use to base their letters on. This will make writing their own letters less daunting. If you are writing a pre-typed letter, look at the letters available in the [Legislative Action Center](#) for reference. The Legislative Department also can provide personalized letters for your chapter that you can copy and make available to your members (please give the department at least one week's notice). If you write the letters yourself, make sure you provide space for your members to leave their name, address and a short comment, and print off enough copies for everyone. If you are using postcards, bring blank postcards that are pre-addressed on one side. Then, provide talking points for members to use as a reference for their short message. Also bring pens for members to use.
3. At the meeting, set aside a couple of minutes to explain the process and write the letters. Make sure the members know to clearly write their name and address to help ensure they receive a response. Also, inform them that personalizing their letter makes a response more likely.



4. Collect the letters and deliver them to the member of Congress. Because sending mail to the Washington, DC, offices takes several weeks to go through security, we recommend taking the letters to a local congressional office. You also can send them to the district office.
5. Wait for a response. At the next meeting, discuss the responses people received and plan any follow-up contact with the legislator.
6. If your meeting is held in a facility with Wi-Fi or Internet access, you can have a computer available for members to send emails. Have the web browser open to NARFE's [Legislative Action Center](#) and members can take action as they sign in.

### **Calling Congress**

Asking NARFE members to call Congress at your chapter meetings is an immediate way to spread NARFE's message and very effective if there is a time-sensitive issue.

Congressional offices are interested in hearing from constituents and keep track of the calls they receive, so the more NARFE members who call to discuss federal employee and retiree issues, the better. To do this effectively at your meeting:

1. Introduce the idea of calling Congress and explain why it is important. Show everyone how easy it is by making a call yourself, or explain what they can expect during the call.
2. Use NARFE's toll-free line for the Capitol Switchboard – 1-866-220-0044 – and provide the phone numbers for the individual Washington, DC, offices in case the switchboard is busy. Only calls made through NARFE's toll free line can be tracked by NARFE.
3. Print out scripts (sample script found [here](#)), from which members can read during the call, or print out talking points to help guide the conversation.
4. Take a few minutes to actually make the calls. Members should call all three of their members of Congress - their two senators and representative.
5. Ask for volunteers who are willing to share their cell phones, so those without a phone can still make their calls at the meeting.

If you would like your members to call Congress at a later date, print the instructions and script on a piece of colored paper to make it stand out. You also can include a reminder with this information in your chapter newsletter. However, helping NARFE members make calls at your meeting is the best way to ensure the calls are made.



As always, contact the Legislative Department at [leg@narfe.org](mailto:leg@narfe.org) or call 703-838-7760 with any questions.