

# Advocacy : Learning the Landscape

Time to gain the lay of the land by figuring out who your elected officials are and what bills you could be supporting or asking to get introduced.

1. The people on your team are your best asset! So let's get to know them! Copy and paste this spreadsheet and have your team fill it out. The first column is their name. The second is their state. The third is their U.S. senators (quick reminder: each state has two). The fourth column is for their U.S. representative (they will have just one representative). Next, ask them if they have any personal or professional connections to any members of Congress. Place that information in the fifth column. If your team doesn't have anything to put in this column, that is a-okay.

Name	State	US senators	US representative	Existing relationship with any legislators

If they don't know their legislators, [have them go to this link](#) and put in their address and zip code.

2. Find legislation that you want to support! Now that you know who to contact, you need to know what you want to contact them about. There are many ways to find this out. A chart is provided below to help you along the way.

Within the chart, the first column is the legislation’s number. Quick civics lesson: A House bill will start with H.R. and a Senate bill will start with S. The second column is the bill’s name. The third is where you can place a description of what the bill would do if it became an act. If you don’t know that yet, don’t worry. Bills are often written in legal terms but there if you have the bill number you can find a summary here.

To find out what legislation to support you can:

- Go to Facebook groups and online forums to see which pieces of legislation are being talked about. If you don’t see anyone posting about this, ask them directly what legislation they think advocates should support and why.
- Find nonprofits serving people impacted by the disease or related diseases and see if their website lists any legislative actions. If not, reach out to them and ask them what legislation they think advocates should support and why.
- Know of legislators who also have been impacted by the disease? Reach out to their office and set up a time to meet to discuss if they’re doing anything to help further the cause and what you and your growing group of advocates can do to support their efforts.
- Finally, go to congress.gov and search the name of the disease in the search box. Pieces of legislation directly naming the disease should come up. Pro-tip: Check to see if these bills are in the current Congress (if not, maybe they should be!).

After finding these bills, if you don’t have a clear understanding of a bill, please reach out to the bill’s original sponsor and ask their staff for a brief explanation of what the bill does and what its impact will be if signed into law. The bill’s original sponsor can be found on congress.gov on the bill’s page.

Legislation number	Legislation name	What does the bill provide or change?

As a team, decide which bill(s) are most important for you to help get passed.

3. Before moving forward, take a moment to describe in three sentences the disease you are organizing around. Write it in a way that someone who has never heard of the disease could understand.

Have team members read over your sentence to ensure it is accurate and concise. Editors make everything better!

4. Write to your legislators! No time like the present to build relationships with senators and representatives. They work for you and want to hear from you. Have each advocate write a letter to their senators, representatives, and any legislator with whom they have a relationship.

Here is a template for that letter.

Template:

Dear [REDACTED]

I am reaching out to you as a constituent to ask that you cosponsor

[REDACTED] I am an advocate because (list personal experience)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

If you have any questions about this bill or how it would positively impact your constituents lives, please feel free to reach out to me. I am happy to meet with you.

Yours,

[REDACTED]

Quick note: Why are you asking people to become a cosponsor? A cosponsor is a legislator who publicly supports the bill and signals that they will be voting for the bill. It's important because it increases the pressure to move the bill through the process of becoming law.

