



What is a key contact?

With so many interest groups, professions, and citizens vying for the attention of just 535 federal legislators (435 members of the U.S. House and 100 members of the U.S. Senate), it becomes extremely important to make the personal connection with your legislator. Becoming a key contact is easy, but requires a commitment to fostering the relationship with your member of Congress. By making that connection, you become the “go-to” person for audiology issues in your district.

What does being a key contact entail?

As a key contact, there are a number of easy steps you can take to actively engage with your members of Congress:

- Brush up on the issues. Learn more about the Academy’s legislative initiatives by visiting the Academy’s Advocacy page at www.audiology.org or by contacting Kate Thomas, Senior Manager of Government Relations, at kthomas@audiology.org.
- Do some research. Learn more about your member of Congress. What is their background? What issues are they most passionate about?
- Find a common thread. Do you and your senator or representative share the same alma mater? Have friends in common? Hail from the same hometown? Adding a personal touch helps to strengthen the connection.
- Introduce yourself. Visit the district or home office of your senator or representative. Meet with staff and tell them about the Profession. Explain how your work as an audiologist impacts the community. Talk about the issues that are important to you.
- Be visible and work to develop the relationship over time. Attend town hall meetings in your district. Host a fundraiser. Work with the Academy to schedule a site visit, inviting the member of Congress to your practice setting to get a firsthand glimpse of what you do.
- Follow-up with Academy staff. Effective advocacy is a two-way street. If Academy staff is aware of the efforts in your district, they can connect with congressional staff in Washington to close the loop. Sometimes all it takes to gain a new co-sponsor is one or two active voices in the district.
- Engage other audiologists in your congressional district or state. Encourage colleagues to contact their members of Congress. Direct people to the Academy’s Legislative Action Center to find their members of Congress at <http://capwiz.com/audiology/dbq/officials/>. The “Elected Officials” section allows you to input your zip code to easily find this information.