



How to Contact Legislators to Advocate for Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families

American Legion Auxiliary members work to keep legislators aware of issues facing veterans, servicemembers and their families. This advocacy strengthens our call to action around maintaining a strong national defense, reforming the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure veterans receive the best care, providing a top education for those utilizing the G.I. Bill, ending veterans homelessness, opposing further increases to TRICARE fees, repealing unfair offsets that penalize disabled veterans and widows, and protecting the American flag.



How Do I Contact My Legislators?

Remember: Tips for contacting your members of Congress with the traditional methods listed below and email can be found in the ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide.

- Through traditional ways like postal mail, phone calls and faxes:
 - **Handwritten or typed letters** used to be the standard for contacting members of Congress, but for security purposes, all letters to the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives are now pre-screened before being delivered to congressional officers. If you do send a letter by postal mail, it can delay arrival by three weeks or longer.
 - Some legislators have a **fax** number for public use. Fax a letter instead of sending a letter by postal mail to shorten delivery time. Contact your legislator's office for the fax number, or check their website.
 - Make a **phone call**. These are effective when time is short, for example, just before an important vote. Check your legislator's website or the phone book for the number.
- With technology by email, The American Legion's Action Center and social media:
 - **Email** has become the normal form of communication.
 - Send a message through **The American Legion's Action Center**. If you subscribe to the Legion's Action Alerts, you will receive a notification when a vote is near and your voice is especially needed. With one click, you will be able to send a message, written by the Legion legislative staff, to your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators.
 - **Social media** grabs attention on the issues! According to CQ Roll Call, a poll of House and Senate offices found "three-quarters of senior staff said that between 1 and 30 comments on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter were enough to grab their attention on an issue. Thirty-five percent said that fewer than 10 comments were enough."¹
 - Follow your representatives in Congress and The American Legion's official social media accounts.

¹ <http://connectivity.cqrollcall.com/just-a-handful-of-social-media-comments-can-grab-attention-of-congress-study-shows/>



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY SUPPORT TOOLS

A collection of resources from National Headquarters to assist and guide members and volunteers in serving veterans, servicemembers and their families.

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- Most hot-topic legislative priorities will have a hashtag—an identifier to link like stories together. If you see the priority you're talking about has a hashtag, be sure to use it.
 - An example is #Instate4Vets. Organizations and individuals used this hashtag to call for Congress to allow expand the language to allow the in-state tuition rate to be given to veterans using the G.I. Bill.
- Comment and reply to legislators when they post about issues affecting veterans, servicemembers and their families. You can also share relevant legislative stories to your own social media accounts (but please make sure they still align with The American Legion priorities).

Additional Resources

- *ALA Legislative Advocacy Guide*, found at www.ALForVeterans.org or you can order a copy through your Auxiliary department headquarters office.
- The American Legion's Legislative Center (www.legion.org/legislative). On this website, you will find information on the Legion Family's priorities through point papers and priority sheets (also referred to as drop sheets), as well as current legislative news.
- The American Legion's e-newsletters. Register to receive the Legislative Update and the *Dispatch* at www.legion.org/enewsletters.
- The American Legion's Legislative Action Center (<http://capwiz.com/legion/>). Here you can register for the Action Alerts.