

ARTHRITIS
FOUNDATION
ADVOCACY



WELCOME BACK,
CONGRESS
A Guide

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

Thank you for participating in **Welcome Back, Congress!** This program is about contacting new and returning members of Congress and asking them to either join the bicameral Congressional Arthritis Caucus or renew their commitment to the cause and educate them about the 2015 federal legislative priorities. As an Ambassador, you will be contacting the office and dropping off materials, either in person at their district office, setting up a phone call with their staff, or communicating electronically if you do not live near an office. Materials include a welcome letter from the co-chairs of the Congressional Arthritis Caucus, a Congressional Arthritis Caucus issue brief, federal policy initiatives for 2015, and a paragraph about the Arthritis Foundation.

We encourage you to reach out to both your representative and your senators. If they are already in the Arthritis Caucus ([you can view the full list here](#)), please provide them with the 2015 federal priority materials and let them know we appreciate their support.

I'M IN! HOW DO I SCHEDULE A MEETING?

Scheduling a meeting at this busy time of year can be a challenge, but we encourage you to have polite persistence when making your appointment. To find the contact information for your representative, please visit www.house.gov and enter your ZIP + 4. If you do not know the +4 part of your ZIP code, you can find this by visiting the U.S. Postal Service website and enter your full address. To find the contact information for your senators, please visit www.senate.gov and select your state. We encourage you to meet with your health legislative assistant. This information might not be readily available, so please call your representative or senator's office and ask for the information.

Setting up an in-person meeting with your representative may be easier than setting up an in-person appointment with your senators. If you are unable to meet in person with your senators' staff, please schedule a 10-15 minute phone call with their health legislative assistant or other relevant staff. If a phone call is not possible, please send the packet of materials by email to the health legislative assistant.

Feel free to use or adapt the scripts below when setting up your appointment:

Email Template

Dear <scheduler or health legislative assistant if known>,

My name is _____ and I am an Arthritis Foundation Ambassador. I would like to schedule an appointment to discuss the Congressional Arthritis Caucus and 2015 legislative priorities. <Please insert a brief sentence of your personal story>

I appreciate your consideration of this request. You may reach me at <provide phone number and email>

Sincerely,

Your Name
Your Address

Phone / Voicemail Template

Hello! My name is _____ and I am a constituent of (Sen. X/Rep. Y) and an Arthritis Ambassador. I would like to schedule a meeting with the health legislative assistant to discuss the Congressional Arthritis Caucus and 2015 legislative priorities. Do you have a time I can meet with them to discuss these issues?

MATERIALS TO BRING TO YOUR MEETING

- Caucus letter (page 1)
- Caucus issue brief (page 2)
- Arthritis Foundation 2015 federal priorities one-pager (page 3)
- About the Arthritis Foundation (page 4)

DURING THE MEETING

- Be sure to be on time! Whether you are attending in person or on the phone, it is important to be punctual.
- Expect your meeting to be brief. Most meetings with your elected officials take about 15-20 minutes.
- Be sure to mention where you live and introduce everyone in attendance.
- Explain why they should join the Arthritis Caucus or support the 2015 legislative initiatives. This is a time to also tell your personal story and how arthritis has affected your life. It is important to show your legislators why this issue is important, and telling your personal story is very meaningful.
- Leave the packet of issues for their reference as well as your contact information for follow-up.

TEAM UP!

There may be other Ambassadors in your area who can attend meetings or otherwise contact the offices. Please contact Laura Keivel (lkeivel@arthritis.org) if you would like to connect with other Ambassadors in your local area.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND BLOGS

Spread the word of your activities by using social media! Use the hashtag **#FaceArthritis** and post photos, status updates, tweets, etc., to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram! Encourage your friends and family to join your advocacy efforts by [signing up to be an E-Advocate](#). If you have a blog, be sure to blog about your experiences!

FOLLOW UP

Please report your activity in the [Ambassador reporting center](#). The Advocacy and Access staff use this information to determine how to best follow up from our Washington office. Please report the outcome of the meeting and if any follow up is needed from Arthritis Foundation staff. As an Ambassador, your main goal is to build and foster relationships with your legislators and their staff. The best way to do this is to follow up with their staff after the meeting by sending a thank you note to the person you met with. Below is a sample thank you note you can adapt:



Dear <name of person you met with>,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on <date of meeting> to discuss the Congressional Arthritis Caucus as well as the 2015 legislative priorities. Arthritis affects my daily life <insert brief personal story> and I hope you will consider supporting the caucus.

If you have any questions about the Congressional Arthritis Caucus or 2015 legislative priorities, you may reach me at <provide your contact information>.

Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
<your name>
<your contact information>

QUESTIONS?

Contact the Arthritis Foundation Department of Advocacy and Access!

Laura Keivel
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