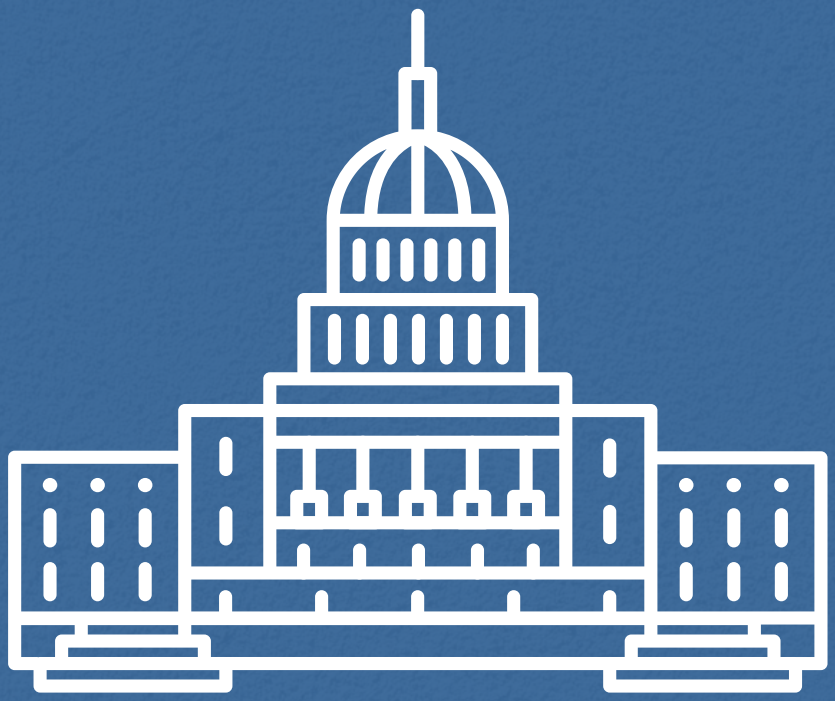
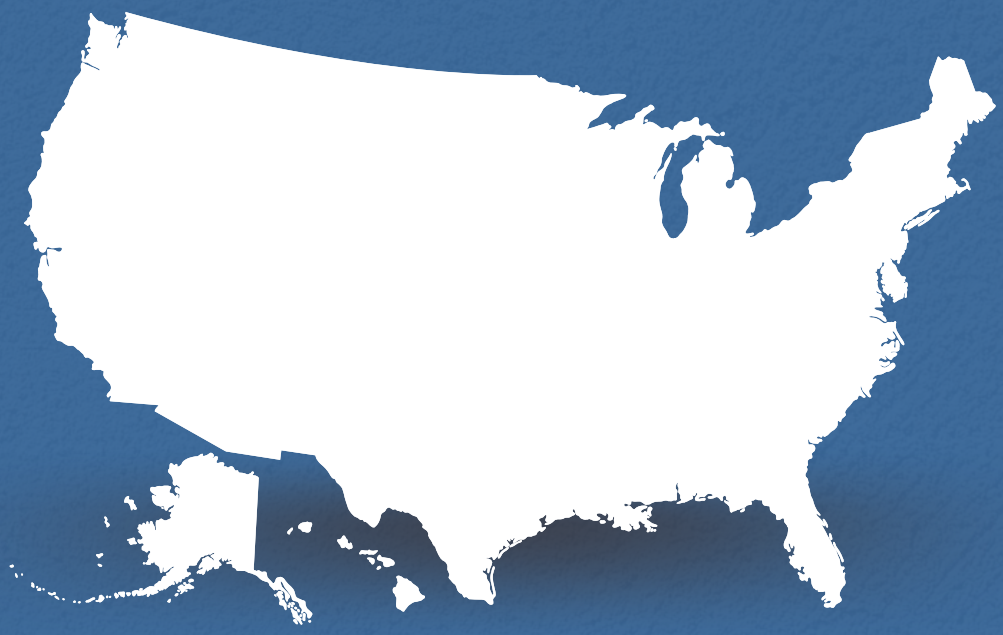


ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION ADVOCACY

250 VOICES FOR 250 YEARS

2026 AUGUST RECESS



Arthritis Foundation®
Champion of Yes®

THE CAMPAIGN: 250 VOICES FOR 250 YEARS

The Core Idea

250 advocates. 50 states. One unified ask. During August recess, when members of Congress are home, our advocates show up at district offices across every single state, proving that arthritis has no geographic blind spots. The filled in map is the story.

Why This Year?

The United States turn 250 in 2026. Arthritis affects 60 million people across every district, every state, and every community. This milestone year is our opportunity to demonstrate that arthritis advocacy is truly national, truly bipartisan, and truly urgent.

The Visual Centerpiece: The Living Map

We will build a digital tracker that will be updated in real time as meetings are confirmed and completed.

- Starts empty/dark on launch day (August 1)
- States light up in Arthritis Foundation purple as meetings are secured
- States turn green once the meeting is completed and reported
- Goal: All 50 states lit by August 31
- The map will be shared on social media at key milestones (10, 25, 50 states)

2026 Campaign Goals		
Quantity	Geography	Quality
250 completed meetings	All 50 states represented	Every meeting reported back

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02	August Recess Step-by-Step
03	Frequently Asked Questions
04	Resources + Reporting

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AUGUST RECESS OVERVIEW

What is August Recess?

Thank you for participating in the Advocacy Program's August Recess activity. Each year, members of Congress typically "recess" during the month of August, returning to their home districts. This provides a chance for Members to meet with constituents from their home states. This signature activity is crucial to maintaining and forming new relationships with Congressional and State Legislators and building awareness about issues affecting people with arthritis.

In 2026, we are going further than ever before with our "250 Voices for 250 Years" campaign, bringing advocates to every state in the nation during a single recess period.

When Does Recess Run?

House Recess	Senate Recess
August 1-August 31, 2026	August 8 - September 13, 2026
Schedule early for best access	In-district meetings preferred
Be flexible with dates offerred	Staff meetings are equally valuable

Ways to Meet Your Legislator

- Schedule an appointment at one of their district offices near you
- Attend a local fundraiser for your legislator
- Attend a town hall meeting or other public event
- Email or call their office

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AUGUST RECESS STEP-BY-STEP

August Recess may seem a bit complex, but we are here to help you break it down into simple steps. Use this flow chart to guide yourself along to have a successful August Recess Campaign

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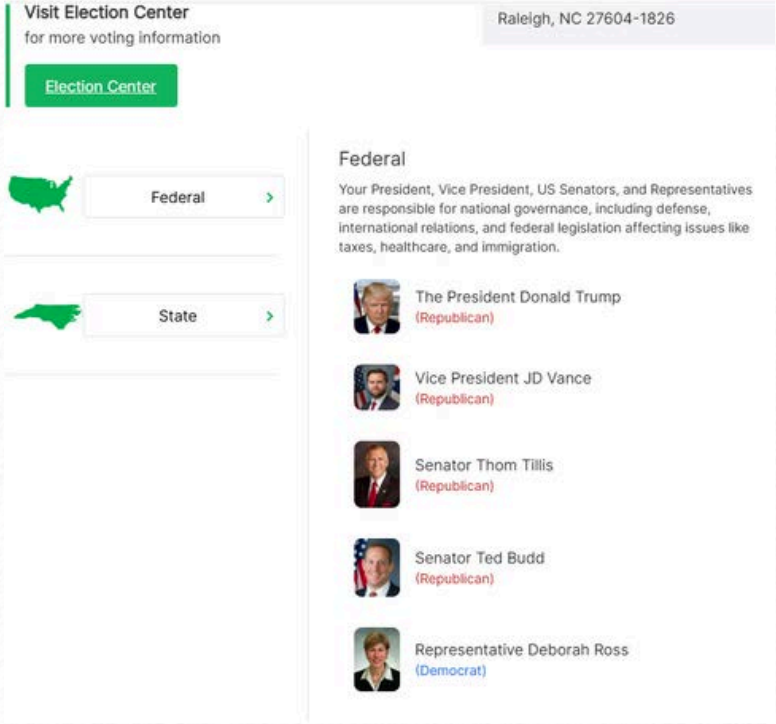
AUGUST RECESS STEP-BY-STEP

Step 1: Legislator Look Up

If you do not currently have contact information for your members of Congress, you can reach out to them using our Action Center.

Legislator Look Up Tool HERE

By clicking continue, you'll be able to see all of your elected officials from the President of the United States all the way to your local Assembly-person. We're looking at FEDERAL, not State.



Click on your elected officials to learn more about who they are and their background.

- View their contact information and where their district offices are located

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AUGUST RECESS STEP-BY-STEP

Step 2: Schedule Your Legislative Meeting

Call the office and ask to speak to the Scheduler or send an email to the Scheduler requesting a virtual meeting. For the quickest result, we recommend that you call your legislator's office first.

Once you schedule, fill out this survey so we are aware.

TIP: Polite Persistence Persuades People!

Emails are sometimes overlooked or may get caught in spam filters, so use the email as your backup plan. You can use the phone script and email draft below to guide your scheduling.

Sample Phone Script

Hi, this is [name]. I am a constituent of [Legislator's name] and an Arthritis Foundation Advocate. I am calling today to schedule a call with the [Legislator] to discuss the CDC Arthritis Program funding. I am available to meet [list several dates and times you are available]. Please contact me at [phone] and [email] to schedule an appointment. Thank you.

Sample Email Script

SUBJECT: Request for Meeting – Arthritis Foundation
Dear [Scheduler's Name], I would like to request a meeting with [Legislator's name] or their staff during August Recess to discuss the CDC Arthritis Program funding. I am available [list several dates and times you are available]. Please let me know if you have time over the next few weeks to meet and thank you in advance for any time you can offer. I may be contacted at [your contact information].
[Your Name & Contact Information]

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AUGUST RECESS STEP-BY-STEP

Step 3: Create a Meeting Reminder

After you've scheduled your in-person meeting, the hard work is done! Once you have confirmed a time with the office, put it on your calendar so that you do not miss it. You will likely have about 15-20 minutes for the conversation.

Tips:

- Confirm the meeting platform when confirming the time (Zoom, Teams, Google, conference call, in person, etc.).
- IMPORTANT! Send a reminder email to the scheduling staff a day or two before the meeting to confirm that the timing still works for their office.

Step 4: Email Arthritis Foundation Advocacy

Email the Advocacy team at aahmed@arthritis.org once you have confirmed a meeting time. We will answer any questions you may have. We will also add your state to the 250 Voices tracker so we can celebrate your commitment publicly!

Step 5: Practice and Prepare

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AUGUST RECESS STEP-BY-STEP

Step 6: Conduct the Meeting

- Do your homework. Research your elected official to learn about their legislative background and anything you have in common. Find out if they are already a member of our Congressional Arthritis Caucus, or if they are a sponsor of our priority pieces of legislation.
- Review the relevant one-pagers.
- Practice your one sentence story. Answer the prompts on the previous page and practice your story.
- Be on time and dress professionally.
- Be confident. You have a lot to offer, whether it is a personal story or just information on an issue. Elected officials and their staff members appreciate information from constituents
- If you have an in-person meeting, print out the leave behind and subsequent materials to give to them.

Step 7: Follow Up

Following up after your meetings with elected officials is a critical next step in maintaining relationships the legislators and their staff. Personalize your messages so that they are reflective of the issues you spoke about in your meetings. Before or during your meeting, be sure to ask for the best way to follow up via email so you can send along important documents and answer questions from the meeting.

After your legislative meeting you will email leave-behind materials to your Legislator's office. These materials will provide an overview of the legislative ask and provide the legislator's office with the information they need to get involved. An additional resource to consider using is our State Arthritis Fact Sheets linked here.

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AUGUST RECESS STEP-BY-STEP

Draft Follow Up Email:
Dear [Staffer's Name],
I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you on [indicate the meeting day/time]. I know you are very busy, and I am grateful that you made time to talk with me about issues that are important to people with arthritis.
As you know, I am dedicated to raising awareness for arthritis, the nation's leading cause of disability. You will recall that we discussed [list the key issues that you discussed]. [Include specific talking points and snippets of your personal story here] [If you promised to follow up with any information, include that here] I look forward to continuing this relationship and to future meetings with both you and your dedicated staff. In the meantime, if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Sincerely, [Your name]

Step 8: Report Back
Once your meetings are complete and your follow-up communications have been sent, it's important to report back to the Arthritis Foundation advocacy team. Sharing key takeaways such as any commitments made, concerns raised, or questions needing follow-up, helps track progress and align future advocacy efforts. Your report also updates the 250 Voices for 250 Years living map, marking your state as complete. Every report lights up the map!

Click the link below to tell the Advocacy Team about your legislative meeting.

2026 August Recess Post Meeting Survey

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What if my federal legislators do not return to their home states during August Recess?
A: We ask that you please arrange a call or a meeting with the office anyway. Meeting with the senator's staff can be just as impactful as meeting with your legislator themselves, and the staff will elevate your stories to their boss. If legislators can return home for August Recess and your meeting was already on the schedule, you are more likely to have an in-person meeting with them.

Q: My legislator's office will not respond to me, despite polite persistence! What should I do?
A: Try reaching out to a different office. State Representatives and Senators may be easier to schedule with than your federal officials. If you have tried that already and no one is getting back to you, please reach out to Ayesha Ahmed, aahmed@arthritis.org. You can also send a letter directly to your officials that includes everything you would have said on a call.

Q: If my legislator is unavailable, should I take a call with a staff member?
A: Yes! Calls with staff are very valuable. If your legislator is unavailable, ask to set up a call with the DC-based Health Legislative Assistant (HLA). They will pass on your information to the legislator. Developing a relationship with your HLAs is a great building block on your advocacy journey.

Q: What if my legislators already co-sponsor our bills and are already on the Arthritis Caucus?
A: You can still speak with your legislator to introduce yourself to them and encourage them to use Arthritis Foundation resources for their constituents.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How do I find my legislator's contact information?
A: If you do not currently have contact information for your members of Congress, you can reach out to them using our Action Center Legislator Look Up Tool.

Q: What if my legislator is unavailable for a meeting?
A: Don't be discouraged. There are lots of opportunities to advocate in person:

- Seek out events where your legislators may be during their recess, like a town hall
- Consider meeting with another legislator like your state senators or representatives
- If all else fails, send a letter outlining your story and the priorities important to people with arthritis

Q: How does my meeting count toward the 250 Voices for 250 Years goal?
A) Any confirmed meeting with a federal or state legislator or their staff counts. Just report back using the post-meeting survey, and we'll mark your state on the living map. Each state can have multiple meetings; we need at least one per state to light it up.

RESOURCES AND REPORTING

Key Resources:

- **FY 27 Leave Behind: Click HERE**
  - Make sure to email a copy of this to your legislator or bring a copy with you to the meeting.

- **Talking Points: Click HERE**
  - You can use these to help prepare for your meeting.

- **State Fact Sheets**
  - Find your state HERE

Scheduling

- Complete the scheduling survey here once your meeting is scheduled

2026 August Recess Meeting Schedule Survey

Reporting

- Complete the 2026 August Recess Post-Meeting Survey after each meeting.
- Your report pushes your state to turn green on the 250 Voices living map!

2026 August Recess Post-Meeting Survey

Advocacy Staff

- Reach out to Ayesha Ahmed for any questions, aahmed@arthritis.org