

Federal Government 101



Overview

- The federal government plays a role in nearly every aspect of healthcare
- NAAF's public policy priorities require engagement with:
 - Members of **Congress**. Congress makes laws and oversees Executive Branch agencies.
 - Leaders of **Executive Branch** agencies. These agencies execute the laws Congress passes.

Training Topics

- NAAF Advocacy approach
- Congressional basics
- Executive Branch basics



NAAF Advocacy Approach



Focused on Relationship Building

- Our program's goal is to **motivate advocates to build long-term relationships with legislators and staff** that help earn support for NAAF's issue agenda
- Volunteer advocacy leaders are **empowered to build and grow local advocate communities** who work together to engage legislators



Relationship Building Tactics

- To build relationships most effectively, NAAF prioritizes scheduling **regular in-person meetings with legislators and staff**
- NAAF staff also manages campaigns to communicate with legislators using **emails, letters, phone calls, petition signatures, and social media** when needed
- To connect with a local volunteer advocacy leader, **contact Communications Director Gary Sherwood**, who directs the advocacy program



Congressional Basics



Why Congress is Important

- Congress **makes laws**
- Congress **oversees Executive Branch** agencies
- Congress maintains the “**power of the purse**”
 - It determines how much money the federal government will spend each year

Two Chambers

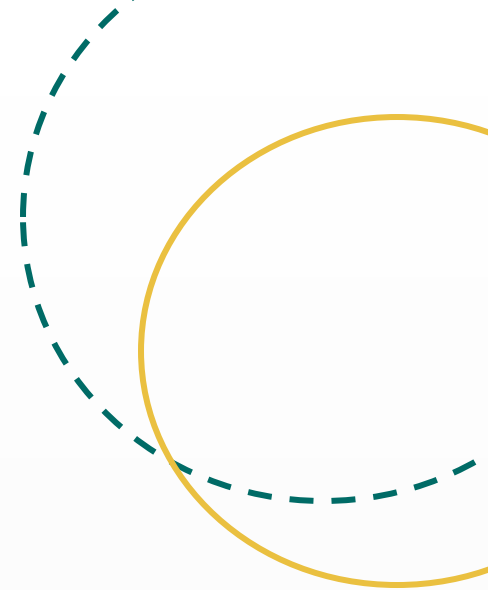
- Congress is made up of two legislative bodies or “chambers:”
 - **House of Representatives**
 - 435 members
 - After each 10-year census, House districts are shifted between states based on population
 - Each member serves a two-year term
 - **Senate**
 - 100 members
 - Each member serves a six-year term



Your Representation

- Everyone is represented in Congress by **two Senators and one House member**
 - You can find yours here: <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>
- Each member of Congress **maintains offices to serve constituents in Washington, D.C., and in their state or district**

Schedules and Elections

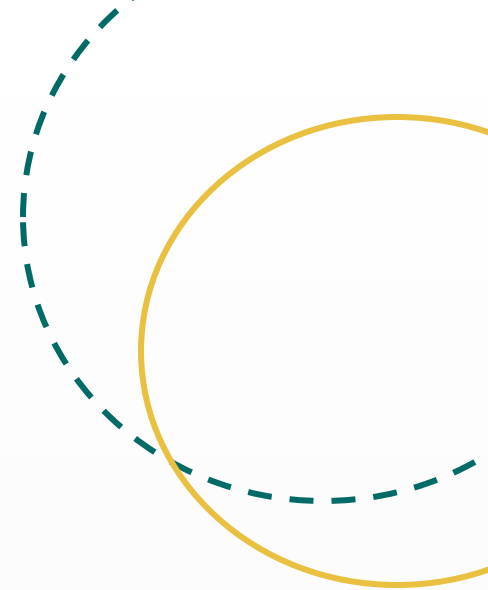


- Congressional elections are held in **even-numbered years** and include:
 - All 435 House members
 - About one-third of Senators
- Congress operates in **two-year terms**
 - In the January following a November election, a new Congress is sworn in
 - Each two-year term is noted with a new number; the Congress that began in January 2025 is the 119th Congress

Chamber Leadership

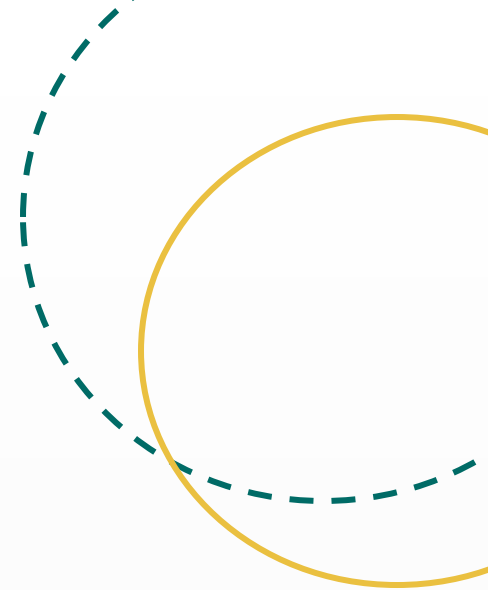
- The House is led by the **Speaker of the House**
 - The Speaker is elected by a vote of the 435 members
 - Because the majority party in the House has more votes, the Speaker is always from the majority party
 - The Speaker determines what bills are brought to a vote by all House members
- The Senate is led by the **Majority Leader**
 - Though the Vice President is President of the Senate, day-to-day legislating is managed by the leader of the majority party
 - This leader is elected by the members of the majority party
 - The majority leader determines what bills are brought to a vote by all Senators

How Advocates Help in Passing Bills



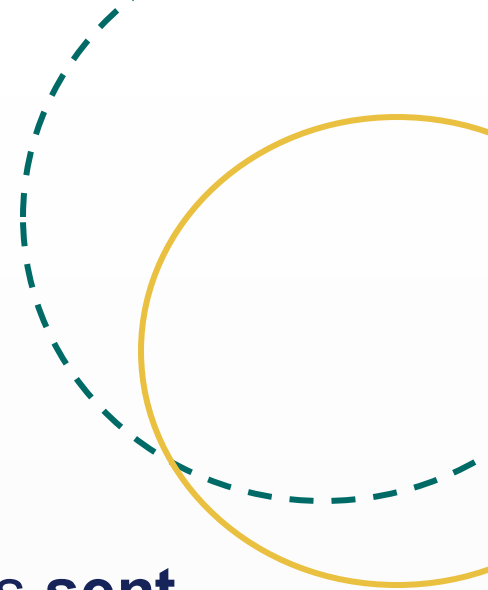
- The process begins with introducing a bill
 - **Any member** of Congress can introduce a bill
 - Usually, the members with whom NAAF has its best advocacy relationships will introduce bills in both the House and Senate
 - At this stage, advocates will often ask their representatives to show initial support for a bill by **co-sponsoring** it

How Advocates Help in Passing Bills (cont.)



- The bill is sent to a committee(s) for review and analysis
 - For each bill, there will be **at least one committee** that has been formed to review the topics it covers
 - The committee will send the bill to a **subcommittee**
 - NAAF prioritizes advocate recruitment in these key committees and subcommittees

How Advocates Help in Passing Bills (cont.)



- Subcommittee and committee action
 - The subcommittee can vote to **accept, reject, or amend a bill**
 - If the members of the subcommittee vote to move a bill forward, it is **sent to the full committee**, where this process is repeated again
 - Advocates can **continue asking legislators to co-sponsor legislation** throughout this process

How Advocates Help in Passing Bills (cont.)

- Chamber votes
 - If the full committee votes to approve the bill, it is **reported to the floor of the House or Senate for a vote** of all members
 - The **leaders of the majority party decide when to place the bill on the calendar** to be voted on by all House or Senate members
 - NAAF advocates' relationships with legislators are critical at this phase of the process
 - To go to the President for signature, **each chamber's bills must have the exact same wording (which is rare)**

How Advocates Help in Passing Bills (cont.)

- A note on passing a bill in the Senate: **the filibuster**
 - Senators are allowed to talk about a bill being considered for a vote by all members for an unlimited amount of time
 - Senators can use this rule to “filibuster” a bill, delaying a vote — and its passage — indefinitely
 - A vote of 60 Senators can force a vote
 - Effectively, **most bills (but not all) require 60 votes** to pass the Senate
 - Advocates’ bi-partisan relationships are particularly important in the Senate

How Advocates Help in Passing Bills (cont.)

- Conference Committee
 - If bills aren't the same, **House and Senate members are appointed to a Conference Committee** to work out the differences and create a final bill
 - **Each chamber must vote again** to pass the final bill
- Presidential action
 - The President can sign the bill, making it law, or veto the bill
 - If a bill is vetoed, it goes back to Congress
 - The House and Senate can override the veto, and make the bill a law, if two-thirds of the members in each chamber vote for it

What About Bills that Don't Become Laws?

- If a bill is not passed before the end of a two-year Congressional term, **it dies and must be re-introduced when a new Congress adjourns** after an election
- **Passing a bill is hard**, and advocates will often work with legislators over multiple Congressional terms

Executive Branch Basics



Why the Executive Branch is Important

- Executive Branch agencies create policies to execute the laws Congress passes
- The agencies most directly responsible for healthcare policy are part of the **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**
 - The President nominates the Secretary of HHS, who must be confirmed by the Senate
 - Congress oversees HHS's activities

Most Relevant HHS Agencies

- **National Institutes of Health (NIH).** The NIH conducts disease research. Alopecia areata research is managed by the Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS).
 - NIAMS research is focused on developing new treatments, and a cure, for alopecia
- **Food and Drug Administration (FDA).** The FDA is responsible for approving drugs and medical devices for public use.
 - New alopecia treatments first need to be FDA-approved to be available



Most Relevant HHS Agencies (cont.)

- **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).** CMS provides health coverage through Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Health Insurance Marketplace.
 - Private insurers often follow CMS's coverage decisions
 - CMS's decisions help determine whether alopecia treatments are affordable for most in the United States
- The President nominates, and the Senate confirms, the leaders of these agencies: the NIH Director, FDA Commissioner, and CMS Administrator



How Advocates Help on Executive Branch Issues

- Agency hearings and public comment periods
 - Sometimes, agencies will hold hearings on policy ideas or proposals to get feedback from affected communities
 - Advocates may be asked to participate in hearings
 - Federal law generally requires agencies to get public comments on proposed policies or regulations before they become official
 - NAAF may mobilize advocates to submit comments to agencies to ensure the alopecia community's voice is adequately represented

How Advocates Help on Executive Branch Issues (cont.)

- Congressional oversight
 - Each agency is overseen by a congressional committee
 - Advocates may be mobilized to ask legislators to engage with agency leaders to help advocate for NAAF's policy positions



Questions?

Please contact
Gary Sherwood at
gary@naaf.org



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