



Strategies for Gathering Information about your Lawmakers

Knowing more about your Senators and Representative will help you conduct more effective meetings with your lawmakers and/or their staff. A better understanding of what motivates your lawmakers can help you connect them to your message about MPS and ML. Research can be as simple as reading public documents and information that can be found easily online. Lawmaker interests that may offer a connection to National MPS Society work include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Children's health
- ✓ Intellectual and physical disabilities
- ✓ Championing other rare diseases or conditions (ie, autism, cystic fibrosis)
- ✓ A background in health care or the medical field
- ✓ Biotechnology support

1. **Biographies: a good starting point**

Biographies offer the basics about a lawmaker which can help you become more familiar with their history and legislative goals.

- U.S. Senate: www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
Click on your senator's NAME to be brought directly to his/her website. There will usually be an "about" or similar section that includes an official biography.
- U.S. House of Representatives: www.house.gov/representatives/
Click on your senator's NAME to be brought directly to his/her website. There will usually be an "about" or similar section that includes an official biography.
- Campaign Websites: If it is a campaign year, you may also find biographies of your lawmakers on their campaign websites. Search for your lawmaker and "official campaign website" on a search engine like Google to locate his/her campaign website.
- Wikipedia: www.wikipedia.org
Search for your lawmaker's name to find unofficial biographical information such as political history and his/her positions on issues.

2. **Related Organizations: a great way to find connections**

In your lawmaker's biographies, you may find that he or she participates in or supports various organizations or groups. It is helpful to look at the websites for these organizations to get a sense of a lawmaker's interests. These may include websites of:

- Organizations of which the legislator is a board member
- Religious organizations with which the legislator is affiliated

- Nonprofits that the legislator supports
- Organizations that have endorsed the legislator

3. Social Media: *a deeper level of insight*

Social media can give a better understanding of lawmakers' interests as well as their viewpoints on current issues. If you don't have social media accounts or don't have time, don't worry!

- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com
Most senators and representatives maintain a Facebook page that you can access if you have a Facebook account. You do not need to sign up as a "friend" – most lawmakers allow you to access their Facebook pages freely. Looking at what a lawmaker "likes" and what he/she posts may give you insight into the people or causes they support.
- **Twitter:** www.twitter.com
If you have a Twitter account, you can access recent "tweets" from lawmakers. Like facebook posts, tweets may offer insight into lawmakers' interests and positions, as they often use twitter to respond to current events or promote their activities.
- **Blogs**
Some lawmakers have blogs where they or their staff post information about legislation and other policy issues the legislator supports or opposes. You can find links to these blogs on lawmakers' official websites.

4. Donor History: *advanced research to uncover support or opposition*

Finding out who your lawmakers' donors are can be a way to help determine what might motivate them to take action – or not take action – on your issue. Again, if you don't have time, don't worry – just focus on Steps 1 and 2.

- Donor information and earmarks requested: www.opensecrets.org
Under the "Politicians and Elections" tab, you can select "Congress" and search by your Senator or Representative's last name. You can find information on political contributions by year or over the course of their campaign. You can also find which organizations were the recipients of earmarks by selecting "Politicians and Elections" and then "Earmarks".

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