

August Recess Advocacy Toolkit

FASEB prepared this kit to encourage researchers and other advocates to reach out to their Senators and Representatives while they are in their home states/districts during Congress' summer break from August 4 – September 1, 2025. For those who are deeply disturbed by the actions of the new administration, this is an ideal time to re-double your efforts to explain to elected officials the danger our nation faces if the proposed cuts to research agencies are enacted into law.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved preliminary fiscal year (FY) spending bills that rejected the administration's proposed cuts to NIH and NSF. However, the House Appropriations Committee is not scheduled to vote on the NIH and NSF funding bills until early-September, giving advocates another month to make their case about the need for increased funding for biomedical research. Many members of the House have already spoken out in opposition to the proposed 40 percent cut to NIH, and there are signs they are willing to push back against the administration's desire to reduce funding for NSF as well. Additional advocacy is needed to ensure that the proposed cuts to NIH and NSF funding are not approved by Congress.

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1. What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the act of influencing decision-makers to support a cause, policy, or funding priority. It can include lobbying, public education, coalition-building, and grassroots mobilization. Nonprofits such as FASEB have a role in raising awareness and speaking out for biological and biomedical researchers nationwide, on science policy and advocating on behalf of their vital scientific contributions. For more than 100 years, we have advanced public policy goals and sound practices in scientific research. Today, [our member societies](#) continue to leverage FASEB's long-standing relationships with federal agencies to ensure sustainable and predictable Congressional funding for scientific research.

2. Setting Goals & Strategy

- Specific: Define your issue clearly.
- Measurable: Track change over time.
- Achievable: Set realistic expectations.
- Relevant: Align with community or organizational priorities.
- Time-bound: Attach deadlines to actions.

Example:

Specific: “Secure robust sustained federal funding of at least \$51.3 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in fiscal year (FY) 2026 to keep pace with scientific opportunity and urgent health needs.”

Measure: By tracking the status of FY 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) bill in the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate and their recommended funding level for NIH. Use the [Appropriations Status Table](#) on www.congress.gov to follow the status of the annual appropriations bills that determine funding for each federal agency.

Achievable: Engage in the annual federal appropriations process to let key decision makers and those with influence over the appropriations process, such as your member of Congress and the Chair and Ranking member of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, know of your request.

Relevant: Align with your scientific society and the [Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research](#), a coalition of patient and voluntary health groups, medical and scientific societies, academic and research organizations, and industry that support enhancing the federal investment in biomedical, behavioral, and population-based research conducted and supported by the NIH.

Time-bound: Know the timeline for influencing the legislative process and when your advocacy has the most impact such as in the spring of each year as the annual appropriations process begins in each chamber of Congress. Congress needs to finalize the LHHS bill and send it to the White House for signature by September 30 before the start of the next fiscal year to ensure the agency is funded. It is also important to check the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations websites to keep on top of their schedule for markups of the twelve annual appropriations bills once the President releases his proposed budget.

The Congressional Research Services provides an [excellent piece](#) on the appropriations process and a [video](#).

3. Understanding Your Issue

- Background and context

- Current legislation or policy
- Key stakeholders
- Data and evidence
- Impacts on the community

For example, FASEB has a [federal funding brochure](#) that provides background and context for federal funding for key agencies and research programs, and the rationale for the federation's annual funding requests with citations to data and evidence supporting our recommendations. FASEB also provides [one - pagers](#) showing the impact of NIH funding by state which can be downloaded and provided to decisionmakers in Congress. Are you [signed up for FASEB's Washington Update](#) to keep on top of policy issues?

4. Knowing Your Audience

Identity and Research:

Legislators - Find your U.S. Representative and your two U.S. Senators. Do they sit on the House or Senate Appropriations committees? What have they said about supporting research? Are you following them on their social media platforms? Have you signed up for their newsletters to be informed of in person or virtual town halls where you can bring up your issue?

Use these websites:

<https://www.govtrack.us/>

<https://www.house.gov> - Find you representative in the U.S. House of Representatives

<https://www.senate.gov> - Find your two Senators

<https://appropriations.house.gov/> - House Appropriations Website

<https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/> - Senate Appropriations Website

5. Messaging & Storytelling

Key Message Elements:

- Problem
- Solution
- Ask (what you want them to do)

Example Message:

“NIH is our nation’s premier medical research agency and plays a central role in advancing biomedical knowledge and improving public health. Through its research life-saving vaccines, new cancer treatments, and major advancements in genetics and neuroscience have been achieved. However, funding for NIH is in jeopardy for FY 2026 with a proposed 40% cut to its budget. We urge Congress to provide at least \$51.3 billion for NIH which provides for real growth.”

Include:

- [Personal stories](#)
 - [Local data](#)
 - Impact [narratives](#)
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6. Tactics & Tools

- Meetings – In person meeting with elected officials in D.C. and back in the congressional district. Get to know the district staff by expanding your in person visits beyond the D.C. office of your member of Congress. District office locations are on members’ websites (look under the “contact me” page/link). Use [FASEB’s template](#) to request a meeting with your elected officials at home.
 - Email and phone campaigns – Engage in action alerts led by your scientific society or FASEB and share the information with others to take action. [Sign up](#) for FASEB’s trusted e-action alert system that allows you to send emails directly to your Senators/Representative.
 - Town halls or public forums - Attend your elected officials’ public events for constituents. Use FASEB’s [Tips for Attending a Town Hall Meeting](#) guide to learn how to prepare to attend a local event
 - Letters to the editor - Find out what restrictions your institution has regarding writing letters to the editor and the requirements of your local news outlet. Articles should be timely and in sync with what is occurring in the news.
 - Letters to Congress - Consider signing letters supporting your position and adding your voice to the voices of many through coalition letters. You can even start your own letter writing campaign on campus.
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7. Engaging Policymakers

Tips for Contacting Elected Officials:

- Be concise and respectful - Members of Congress and their staff have limited time so be prompt for your meeting and respectful of their time by being prepared with a succinct message.

- Keep your introduction brief - Don't allow introductions to consume most of your meeting time which could be as short as 10-15 minutes depending on the person you are speaking with.
 - **Tell your story and make it local to the district/state.**
 - Make a clear, specific ask and stay on message. If other topics come up try to give a short answer and return back to your main issue, e.g., funding for NIH.
 - Listen – Ask if the office has any questions or concerns about your request so you can learn what concerns the office has that may stand in the way of supporting your ask.
 - Follow up - Write a short thank you and provide any additional material after the meeting. Email is the best method since mail can be delayed in processing.
 - Build a relationship – It is important not to have your first meeting with the office be your last meeting. Building a relationship with the office will be helpful to both sides as you serve as a resource for the office with your knowledge of the value of federally funded research and you build a stronger relationship with the office over time.
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8. Media & Social Media Outreach

FASEB encourages you to use alternative methods to amplify your advocacy throughout the year and to keep the issue fresh in people's minds. Use FASEB's [tips](#) for connecting with elected officials on social media (includes sample posts).

Social Media Tips:

- Use hashtags – Ex: #FundNIH
- Tag officials and organizations
- Share infographics or videos
- FASEB's social media platforms can repost your messages.

FASEB

Links



FASEB.org

faseb.org



Bluesky

bsky.app/profile/faseborg.bsky.social



X

twitter.com/FASEBorg



Instagram

instagram.com/fasebofficial



LinkedIn

linkedin.com/company/faseb



www.youtube.com/@faseb5372

Media Tips:

- Write a Letter to the Editor or an Opinion Piece. Watch the Tips for Writing an Op-Ed/Letter to the Editor [training](#) on FASEB's YouTube channel.
- Do not use scientific jargon.
- Write with the intent to communicate the importance of your issue to the general public.
- Focus on local and regional media outlets first over national ones since it is easier to be published locally.
- Members of Congress pay attention to local newspapers to stay attuned to what matters to their constituents.

9. Host a Visit to Your Institution - This is an excellent way to continue to build the relationship with your elected officials, educating them about the vital impact of federal funding on the research performed there and the people involved. An institution visit is also an opportunity for them to see first-hand how federal dollars are being used and the impact it has on the faculty and students involved. It also reminds researchers how important advocacy is to their ability to continue to do the research that benefits the local economy. Use FASEB's [Guide to Hosting a Lab Visit](#) to get started!

Tips for Setting Up a Visit

- Plan in Advance - Know when the congressional recesses are – this is a great time to plan a visit since your elected officials are more likely to be back in the state/district.
See [House calendar](#) and [Senate calendars](#) for 2025 for recess schedules which are usually around major holidays.
- Contact the House/Senate office and ask the staff what information you need to submit to formally invite the elected official to visit your institution.
- Media Coverage - Arrange press coverage by utilizing your communications department to invite local press to the event. If you want to keep the event smaller, have your institution's photographer and communications person write a summary/press release after the event for distribution to the local press. You can also work with the communications director in the elected official's office to coordinate activities. Elected officials like to document their work for their newsletters and websites.
- Host Site Preparations - Prepare your institution's faculty and researchers who will be at the event about what to expect with a run of show encapsulating an event's timeline, flow, and logistics. A run of show is a document that outlines each essential action, who is responsible for it, its duration, and when it will occur to avoid glitches and ensure your event runs smoothly. Coordinate with your institution's government affairs office and leadership and with the elected official's staff on your plans so the elected official knows in advance what the event will entail and who will be there. Plan for approximately 60 – 90 minutes and offer a guided tour of your facilities. However, if the elected official cannot stay that long be flexible and conduct the most important aspects of the visit up front with your institution's leadership. Avoid offering gifts to elected officials and their staff due to lobbying and ethics rules and focus on informational materials.
- After the Site Visit - Send a formal thank you letter to the elected officials and recap any policy request for legislation such as the importance of federal funding for research back in the state. A media release to local news outlets can also be sent with information about the event.