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## **Legislative Affairs & Advocacy Update: August**

by Donna Zankowski MPH RN FAAOHN, Legislative Affairs Chairperson

I hope your summer is going well. August is for vacations and time away from the regular routine. August is also a time for the Congressional recess, and by the time you read this message, your legislators should be back in their home districts. This is an excellent opportunity to attend a local town hall if your legislator has scheduled one. Remember, your legislator is working for you (whether you voted for them or not), and there is an expectation that you, their constituent, should have an opportunity to be heard.

To find out if your legislator has a local town hall planned, it is best to contact their local office (be prepared to leave your name, contact info, and address so they can verify you are a constituent). Ask if a local town hall is scheduled. If not, you can request that a local town hall be scheduled, or if you are willing and able, you can request a meeting with your legislator (or their legislative assistant) at their local office. You can find out who your legislator is at: <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>. You can find their local office contact information at: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

Another easy way to make your opinion known to your legislator is to call their office. Calling is often more effective than writing an email or signing on to an advocacy quick link because your legislator's office will tally the calls it receives on a particular subject daily. To make your call more successful, it is a good idea to write out a short script. Include your name, address, contact info, and the subject matter in your intro. You can plan to read your script to the person who answers, or you can ask to speak to the legislator, or the legislative assistant in charge of that topic. For example, if I wanted to call and talk about cuts to the NIOSH budget, I may ask to speak to the legislative assistant in charge of labor issues, or budget appropriations.

If you would rather leave your message and not interact with anyone, that's OK too (I do this myself when I don't feel up to a conversation but still want to take some action). Calling after business hours, or on weekends will usually take you right to voicemail, and you can read your script as your message. It is up to you if you want to engage further (by asking for a call back), or just want your opinion counted and relayed to the legislator.

The bottom line is that taking an action that works for you helps everyone. The legislator knows what you, their constituent, wants (remember – House members want to be re-elected every 2 years), and you get to exercise your right to participate in your government.

I, and the rest of the Legislative Affairs Committee, thank you for your support, and wish you a happy summer.