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Researching Members of Congress

Researching Members of Congress is a critical step in legislative advocacy. We research Members of Congress to find out where they stand on our issues, identify what constituencies and players influence them, and to determine what skills or leverage we need to be effective in our advocacy efforts.

Key Questions to Guide Research

- What is the Member's position/voting record on our priority issues?
- What legislative committees does the Member serve on? Is he/she on any key committees pertinent to our issues? Is he/she in a leadership role on those committees?
- Who does the Member listen to? Who contributes to the Member's campaign? Who has endorsed the Member? What key constituencies voted for the Member in the last election?
- What are the Member's self-interests? Legislative priorities? How can we use this information to win the Member's support?
- What kind of power in numbers do we need to project to get the Member's attention on our issues?

Tips & Resources

- Read basic biographical information about a Member of Congress and research their voting record. Start by doing a simple Google search to see what you find.
- Visit a member's official website (via google or www.house.gov & www.senate.gov), as well as www.votesmart.org and www.opencongress.org.
- Ask friends and colleagues what they know about a Member of Congress and learn about who else may know them.
- Visit the Secretary of State's website in your state to find the previous year's election results for the Member.
- Find out who donates to a Member's campaign by reading campaign finance reports (www.fec.gov) or visiting www.opensecrets.org. Look to see if one of your allies is a donor. Specifically pay attention to individuals who donated \$500 or more or are from specific industries that are large donors.