

# *AST Public Policy*



## **Why We Advocate**

The AST has been instrumental in assisting federal and state public policy decision-makers in the crafting and formation of a variety of legislative and regulatory initiatives. Information is provided to Congress and key officials in the Executive Branch about the organization's views and positions as determined by the AST Board of Directors. Through these efforts, the AST represents the interests of patients, physicians, and scientists in all solid organ transplantation specialties.

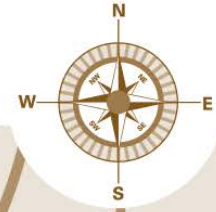
We know that you are passionate about ensuring that patients have access to essential medicines, insurance coverage, and the best care possible. We know that advocating for patients is important, so important that AST devotes one of its four strategic goals towards advancing the AST's patient-focused advocacy program.

In the past, AST leaders have been called upon to provide testimony, as well as serve on advisory panels to Congress, State legislatures, the National Institutes of Health, Institutes of Medicine, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services, the Office of the Secretary-Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control, etc.

**Find your Member of Congress at: [ContactingCongress.org](http://ContactingCongress.org)**

**U.S. Capitol Map**

U.S. CAPITOL  
*Visitor Center*



**Legend**

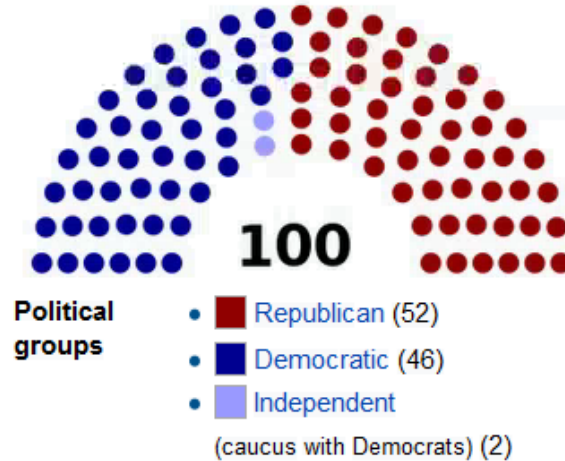
- Accessible Entrance
- Accessible Route
- Visitor Services Shuttle
- Circulator Bus Stop
- Elevators
- Parking
- Bus Pick-Up
- Bus Drop-Off
- Metro Station



## 115th U.S. Congress

### U.S. Senate

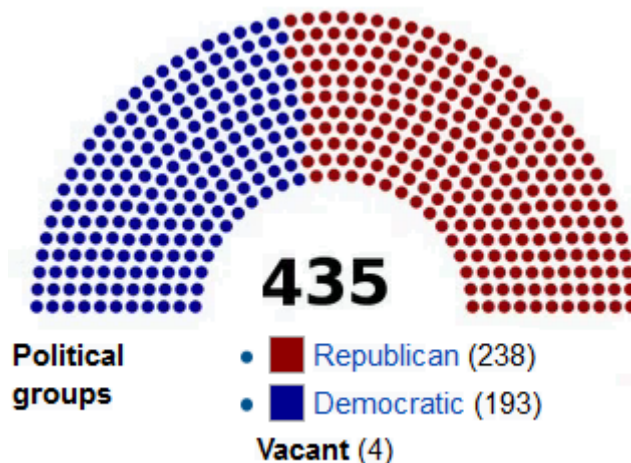
- 100 Senators
- Elected every 6 years
- Two Senators per state, regardless of population
- Majority Leader: Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Minority Leader: Chuck Schumer (D-NY)



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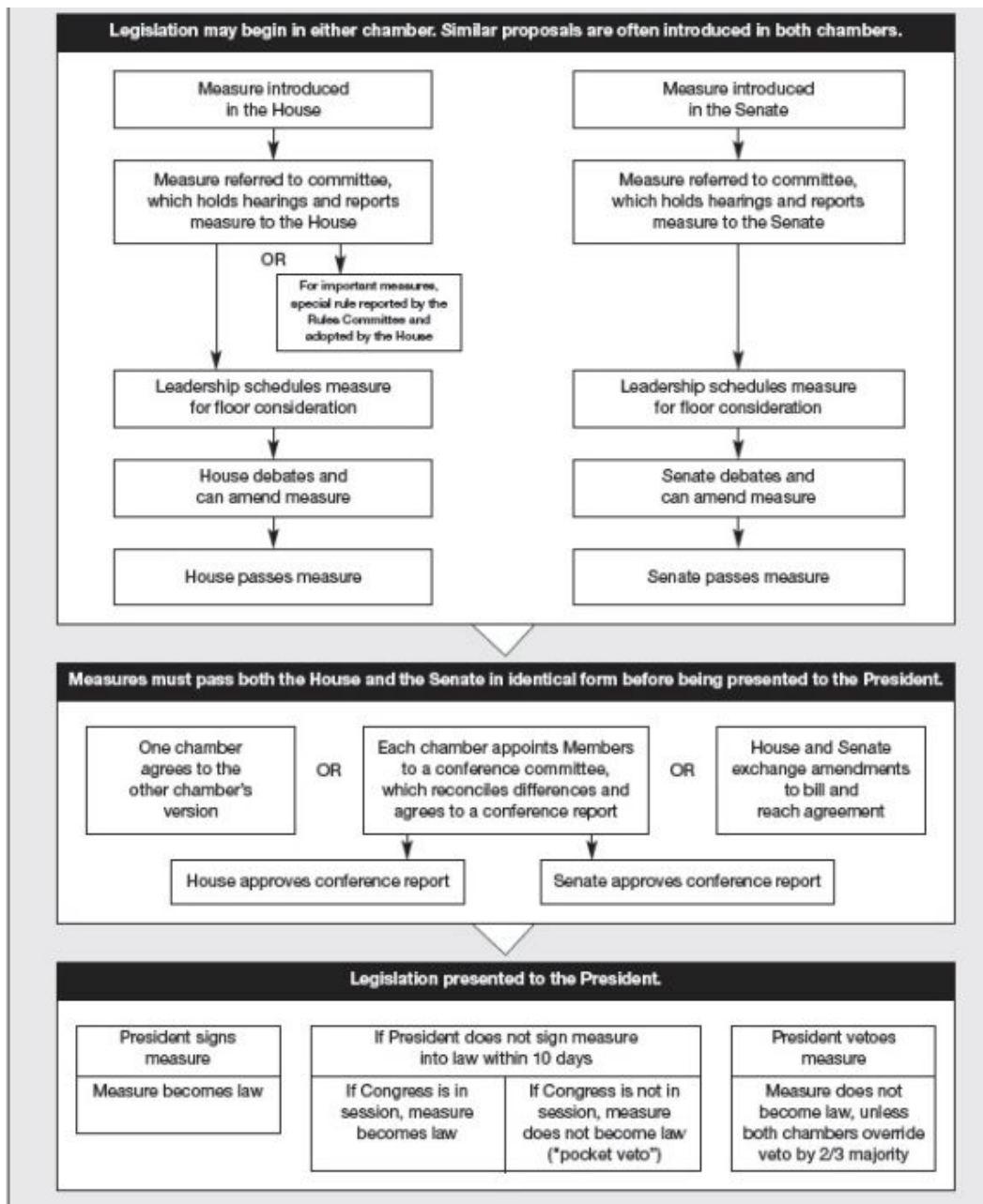
### U.S. House of Representatives

- 435 Members of Congress (6 Non-Voting Members)
- Elected every 2 years
- Districts based on population
- Speaker of the House: Paul Ryan (R-OH), Minority Leader: Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)



## Legislative Process

Laws begin as ideas. First, a representative sponsors a bill. The bill is then assigned to a committee for study. If released by the committee, the bill is put on a calendar to be voted on, debated or amended. If the bill passes by simple majority (218 of 435), the bill moves to the Senate. In the Senate, the bill is assigned to another committee and, if released, debated and voted on. Again, a simple majority (51 of 100) passes the bill. Finally, a conference committee made of House and Senate members works out any differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The resulting bill returns to the House and Senate for final approval. The Government Printing Office prints the revised bill in a process called enrolling. The President has 10 days to sign or veto the enrolled bill.



## **Tips for Visiting Capitol Hill**

### **Plan Your Visit Carefully:**

Be clear about what it is you want to achieve, determine in advance which Member or Committee staff you need to meet with to achieve your purpose.

### **Be Prompt and Patient:**

When it is time to meet with a Member, be punctual and patient. It is not uncommon for a Congressperson or Senator to be late or have a meeting interrupted due to her/his crowded schedule. If interruptions occur, be flexible. When the opportunity presents itself, continue your meeting with the Member's staff.

### **Be Prepared:**

When possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. Members are required to take positions on numerous issues. In some instances, a Member may lack important details about the pros and cons of a particular matter. It is helpful to share information and examples that demonstrate clearly the impact or benefits associated with a particular issue or piece of legislation.

### **Be Political:**

Members of Congress want to represent the best interests of their district, state, and party. Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the Member's constituency. Describe for the Member how you or your group can be of assistance to him/her. When appropriate, remember to ask Member and staff for a commitment.

### **Re Responsive:**

Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information, especially in the event the Member expresses interests or asks questions. **Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter** that outlines the different points covered in the meeting and attach any additional information and materials the office requested.

## **Meeting Expectations**

### **Arrive 5-10 minutes early if possible.**

- Always better to increase your window of availability to meet with a Member of Congress and their staff.

### **Congressional offices are small.**

- You may have to meet in the hallway or high traffic areas such as off the House & Senate floor, Committee hearing reception rooms, or walk and talks with the Member of Congress.

- Don't be discouraged...it is always a productive meeting if you are prepared and have a follow-up plan for yourself and your advocacy team in Wash, DC.

### **You are likely to meet with Congressional staff and the Member of Congress.**

- Congressional staff are approximately 25-30 years old.

- Congressional staff are VERY INFLUENTIAL in the decisions ultimately made by Members of Congress.

### **Be flexible and beware of changes in the schedules of Members of Congress and their staff – caused by votes, hearings or other meetings running long.**

- Flexibility and adaptability are two of the most important assets of any successful advocate on Capitol Hill.

## **Meeting Do's and Don'ts**

### **Introduction & Constituent Connection:**

**DO:** Address Members of Congress & all Staff formally and with respect.

**DO:** Make a constituent or personal connection.

**DON'T:** Assume a meeting with a staffer is less productive than one with the Member of Congress.

**DON'T:** Bring up campaign matters. It's illegal.

### **Who You Are, What You Do, Why It's Important**

**DO:** Give a brief overview of AST, the field of organ transplantation and share personal experiences about what you see in your practice.

- Many congressional staff and Members of Congress are familiar at a minimum (101 level) with kidney disease, diabetes as well as organ transplantation.

**DO:** Stay on message. Pinpoint the purpose of your meeting and refrain from straying off topic.

**DON'T:** Assume Members of Congress or staffers know about the field of organ transplantation. Frequent turnover on Capitol Hill is common and it is always a good idea to refresh offices. Always explain medical terms. Keep explanation to 1-2 mins.

### **Making The Asks**

**DO:** Provide legislators/staff with leave behind talking points to follow along.

**DO:** Ask directly, but politely for co-sponsorship or introduction of policy proposals, legislation, letters to agencies, etc.

**DO:** Consider political party affiliation when discussing each issue.

**DO:** Offer yourself and AST staff as a resource for additional information.

- Provide contact information or personally connect them with AST staff via email.

**DON'T:** Press if they refuse to commit co-sponsorship or convey that they are on the opposite side of the issue.

**DON'T:** Be afraid if they ask questions.

- Refer to the materials provided by AST for answers to the questions.

- If you are still unclear, offer for AST staff to follow-up.

### **Closing & Follow-Up**

**DO:** Remember to leave the leave-behind materials and your business card (personal business card or AST business card).

**DO:** Ask before leaving if the legislator has a free minute to take a photo.

**DO:** Send them a follow-up email, thanking them for their time and again offering up yourself and AST as a resource.

**DON'T:** Leave without their contact information or business card.

## Roles of Congressional Staff

Each Member of Congress has staff to assist him/her during their term in office. To be most effective in communication with Congress, it is helpful to know the titles and principle functions of key staff.

### **Common Staff Titles:**

- **Chief of Staff:** The Chief of Staff reports directly to the Member of Congress. S/he has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The Chief of Staff is also in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and supervision of other staff.
- **Legislative Staff: Legislative Director, Legislative Assistant, Legislative Correspondent:** The Legislative Director oversees the Legislative Staff and is also responsible for monitoring the Floor legislative schedule and makes recommendations to the Member of Congress regarding the pros & cons of particular issues. In most congressional offices, there are several Legislative Assistants whose issues areas are assigned based on expertise in particular areas. Depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member, an office will have separate legislative assistants assigned to health issues, environmental matters, taxes, etc. The Legislative Correspondent oversees the office's mail operation to make sure each constituent inquiry is answered in a timely manner.
- **Press Secretary/Communications Director:** The Press Secretary's job is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the Member, her/his constituency, and the general public. The Press Secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands, and special requirements of both print and electronic media, and how to most effectively promote the Member's views or positions on specific issues. The Press Secretary also works with the Legislative Staff on speech writing and the Member's social media presence.
- **Scheduler/Executive Assistant:** The scheduler is responsible for apportioning a Member's time among the many demands of congressional responsibilities and constituent requests. The scheduler may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking engagements and visits to the district, etc.
- **Caseworker:** Most caseworkers reside in the Member's district and are responsible for working with constituents on resolving both personal and public matters in the district as they relate to federal agencies, such as Social Security, Immigration, Veterans Affairs, etc. There are often several caseworkers per district whose workloads are separated by either issue areas or location.
- **Other Staff Titles:** District Director, Staff Assistant, Fellow, Office Manager.