



How to

CONDUCT

CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH

Panda Ambassadors



Your senators and representatives are your pipeline to the federal government. These men and women exist to hear your concerns, represent your interests, and be your voice at the table when they are making decisions for the country. But getting through to them is not always easy. Here are some strategies to make sure your congressional representatives advocate on your behalf.

One thing to remember when conducting outreach as a Panda Ambassador: WWF is a strictly nonpartisan organization. We have positions on individual issues, but we don't back or oppose any particular political party or candidate. This allows us to work with everyone, bringing people together across the aisle to address important environmental concerns.

Step 1. Know who represents you in Congress

Most Americans have voting representatives in Congress—the exceptions are residents of US territories and residents of Washington, DC. For everyone else, it's critical to know who represents you in both the House and the Senate. These are the people you will contact. Most representatives only want to hear from people residing in their districts. As much as you may want to tell other congresspeople around the country what you think, it's best to direct your energy toward the people who actually have to listen.

If you're unsure of who that is, visit [house.gov](https://www.house.gov) and enter your zip code to find your representative. To find your senators, head over to [senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and select your state from the drop-down menu.

And while residents of DC and US territories don't have congresspeople to engage, you can still make your voice heard by contacting cabinet members and other key administration officials. You can also encourage your friends and family in states to contact their representatives.

Step 2. Visit the WWF Action Center

The easiest way for you to engage Congress is to visit the [WWF Action Center](#). Here you'll see the issues on which WWF is currently engaging policy-makers, and you can add your voice. Find the issues you care about and fill out the requested information. All the work here is done for you! The Action Center will automatically generate and send a message to the correct person.

Step 3. Contact WWF

If you aren't seeing an issue you care about in the Action Center, but you still want to reach out to your representatives as a Panda Ambassador, send an email to panda.ambassador@wwfus.org and let us know what you're thinking. Tell us who you want to reach out to and what issue you want to bring to their attention. We'll let you know whether WWF has an official stance on the issue; if so, we may be able to help out with some talking points or data.

We will also let you know if WWF doesn't have an official position on the issue, or if our position is different from yours. If that's the case, you can obviously still reach out to your representatives, but you'll do so as a private citizen—not as a Panda Ambassador. Either don't mention your Panda Ambassador affiliation or be clear that you are not representing the views of WWF. If you have questions about how to make that distinction, let us know and we can help.

Step 4. Pick up the phone

If your issue aligns with WWF's positions and you want to take your outreach further, pick up the phone. Emails and letters are great, but phone calls are even better—they are harder to ignore and they show that you're that much more invested in the issue. When phones have been ringing off the hook all day, it's a pain for staffers—and their bosses will hear about it.

You should be able to find two numbers for each of your senators and representatives—a local and a DC office. Call both if you have time.

“My name is [name] from [this neighborhood] in your district. I'm calling to let [senator or representative's name] know that I support/oppose [this legislation/issue]. It's important to me because of [x,y,z]. Please vote [yes or no].”

Be clear, concise, and polite with your message. You can even write out a short script beforehand. It can be as simple as saying:

Or, if there's no specific legislation you're calling about, you can simply say:

“I'm asking [senator or representative] to support/oppose this issue publicly.”

It's really that easy. And it only takes about five minutes. You can call your congresspeople as often as you like on whatever issues you care most about.

Step 5. Show up at town hall meetings and events

A quick internet search can give you the current year's congressional schedule. You'll see week-long breaks in the schedule every month or so when Congress is not in session. This time is meant for senators and representatives to go back home to their districts and engage constituents, so take advantage.

Visit your representatives' websites to find out what town halls or events they have planned; register if you need to, and then show up!

Come prepared with a few notes or even a short script of what you want to say. When your representative starts taking questions or feedback, get in line or raise your hand. Just like with the phone call, be clear and brief. If you're upset about an issue, it's OK to let them know you feel strongly, but keep your statement productive—cursing and name calling won't get you anything here. You probably won't have the chance to engage in a real dialogue, but at least your congressperson has heard what you have to say.

Step 6. Request an in-person meeting

If you feel a dialogue is the only way to get your message across, you can request an in-person meeting with your representative. They receive a lot of requests for meetings and can't take them all, so it can be a long shot. But if you feel that strongly, it's worth a try.

Start by sending a message to your representative's local office – an email or a written letter. Let them know who you are, that you are a part of WWF's Ambassador program, what you want to speak about, and when you are available. Make sure to pick dates when Congress is not in session. In your request, be sure to articulate what's in it for them—why they should listen to you and what they will get out of doing so. If you don't hear back, wait a few days and write again.

Your request for a meeting may be declined. Or you may be invited to meet with staff. If you are able to arrange an in-person meeting, prepare ahead of time just like you would for a job interview. Know your talking points, main messages, and bring a few hard copies of whatever information you want them to remember.

Step 7. Organize or join a community

If you really want to get your representative's attention, you need to find the like-minded people in your community. This could mean starting or joining a club, or collecting signatures of support around a certain issue or piece of legislation. You could also approach local community leaders—religious leaders, business leaders, even local celebrities—and ask them to lend their support to an issue. See if they would be willing to join you at an in-person meeting with your representatives.

The more people you have in your corner, the more likely your congressperson is to pay attention. Requesting that in-person meeting and dropping a few big local names will infinitely increase your chances of success.

Step 8. Engage local staffers

Your congresspeople maintain local offices that are staffed year-round, even when Congress is in session. Contact these staffers any time you're organizing or participating in a local event that they may find interesting. Hosting an environmental film screening, a presentation, or a fundraiser? Send along an invite to the staffers at your representatives' local offices. These people are the local eyes and ears of your congresspeople—if they know and care about an issue, their bosses will too.

Step 9. Take to the streets

Keep an eye out for opportunities to peacefully march, demonstrate, and protest. Marches on a variety of issues are happening nationwide on a regular basis. Make a clever sign, get your friends together, and join the crowd. You can even call your representatives in advance to let them know you'll be marching and why.

Step 10. Share your experience

Were you finally able to get that meeting with your congressperson? Did a staffer show up to your presentation on food waste? Let us know! Log on to the Panda Ambassadors Facebook group and share your experience. Tell everyone how easy it was to call your representative, or how you were able to collect signatures at a local event. Share your tips for getting attention and also share what you tried that didn't work so well. All of this is valuable information for your peer Panda Ambassadors.