

Legislative Action Team (LAT) Virtual Handbook

The Basics

The United States government has three coequal branches of government: Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Supreme Court. In plain terms, Congress appropriates money, sets tax rates, and writes and passes legislation. The Executive Branch, led by the President, implements those laws, proposes a budget to Congress they can choose to change or adopt, and either signs legislation into law or vetoes it. The Supreme Court determines if legislation or Executive Branch actions are in accordance with the Constitution.

Congress is divided into two chambers: the Senate, and the House of Representatives. Senators serve six-year terms, and each state elects two Senators, for a total of 100. Representatives serve two-year terms. There are 435 voting representatives, with the number of districts belonging to each state reapportioned every ten years based on the population as counted in the Census, and with districts redrawn by state legislatures. Each Congressional Representative represents a district, which typically has around 700,000 inhabitants. Additionally, there are five delegates and one resident commissioner.

Congress in both House and Senate is made up of a variety of committees, with leadership of each party in each, and with control of what gets a vote resting with the committee chair. Committee chairmanships are chosen based on which party has a majority in that chamber of Congress. FMA has a wide variety of issues, and seeks to find bipartisan support so that, no matter who is President or which party controls Congress, we can make progress for feds.

What You Need to Know as a Legislative Action Team Member

- Why You?
 - Senators and Representatives who want to get reelected pay attention to their constituents. For a Senator, that means the people who live in their state. For the 435 Congressional Representatives, that means residents of their individual district. The National Office can do a lot, but we can't speak as constituents the way you can. Your outreach to your legislators brings their support on key bills, from paid parental leave for feds to whistleblower protections or fair raises. There is no substitute for constituent engagement, and FMA has a strong track record of success. When constituents get together and conduct an organized effort to sway their legislators on their behalf, it is called a grassroots campaign. For more information on how FMA conducts grassroots campaigns, [click here](#).
- FMA-PAC
 - FMA-PAC, and the donations it gives to legislators, have two functions. First, it opens doors to meetings that would otherwise be closed, giving us bipartisan support for legislation to benefit federal managers. Second, it helps friendly legislators win reelection so they can continue to advocate for your interests and pass legislation to benefit feds. FMA-PAC is funded entirely by donations from FMA members. To learn more about FMA-PAC, [click here](#).

- The Hatch Act
 - As an American, you have the same rights to free speech, political engagement and contributions, and advocacy as any other citizen. This wasn't always the case. From 1939 to 1993, the Hatch Act prohibited federal employees from engaging in any overt political activities. Thanks in large part to advocacy efforts by FMA, the Hatch Act was modified to give you the same political rights as your fellow citizens. However, the Hatch Act still prohibits you from using government time, money, or resources to engage in political activities. For a full breakdown of the do's and don'ts of the Hatch Act, [click here](#).
- Legislative Action Teams (LATs)
 - If you're reading this, this means you. Each FMA Chapter should have a Legislative Action Team, or a LAT. Each LAT is responsible for educating, motivating, and coordinating that chapter's participation in and support of FMA's legislative agenda on Capitol Hill. You are our grassroots outreach campaign. For more information on LATs, and to read our LAT FAQ, [click here](#).
- Grassroots Campaigns: Just the Facts
 - It's easy to tell someone to "contact their legislator". It's a lot harder to tell them how to do so effectively. To make a grassroots campaign work, you need to know who to contact, how to contact them, what the next steps are, and what to say and do throughout the process. Fortunately, making sure that information is available to you is a major part of why the FMA National Office exists. For the specific steps you need to take to get your legislators to pay attention, and to support your efforts once you're in front of them, [click here](#).
- Day on the Hill
 - FMA holds an annual Day on the Hill event during our FMA National Convention. This event allows you to meet with your legislators and make your voice heard as an advocate for federal managers! Read on to learn more about how to meet your legislators.

Guide to Virtual Meetings with Senators and Representatives

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a major sea change with regards to how Senators and Representatives tend to meet with their constituents. Virtual meetings are now the standard type of meeting used. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know about a virtual meeting with your legislators!

1. Find the Legislator you would like to meet with

For U.S. Senators: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

Search by State or by Name in the drop down menus

For U.S. Representatives: <https://www.house.gov/representatives>

Click on your Representative's Name to visit their website

2. Requesting a Meeting

- a. Follow [this link](#) and use the sample meeting request letter template
- b. Be sure to modify with personal information relevant to your meeting request
- c. Friends and foes of FMA alike are worth meeting! FMA deals with a wide variety of issues, and support for specific issues can be found in sometimes surprising quarters. This is a good time to both reinforce existing positive relationships, and to take the first steps in forging new ones.

3. Prior to the Meeting

- a. If you have never coordinated or participated in a congressional meeting before, consider contacting the FMA National Office to answer any questions. Please feel free to contact us for information related to topics you wish to cover or the legislator's history.
- b. Be sure you have access to a virtual meeting platform (i.e. Microsoft Teams or Zoom) downloaded to your laptop or device and are familiar with operating. To download Microsoft Teams to your device, [click here](#). To download Zoom, [click here](#).
- c. Once a meeting date and time is confirmed, offer to "host" the meeting. If the legislator's office accepts, you should then create a meeting on the agreed on platform and send them the link. Alternatively, the legislator's office may have a preferred platform or may send you a meeting link of their own creation. See the section entitled "Choosing your Virtual Platform" for more information.
- d. Be sure you are comfortable with the platform and test your Internet connection and/or phone signal. To avoid running in to difficulties at the time of the event, make sure that you are already logged in to the relevant platform well before the meeting, and that you have the link available to you.
- e. Before the meeting starts, ensure that all FMA participants have their screen name set appropriately. If using a shared device, double check to make sure that your name will be displayed instead of the name set by a family member, colleague, or automatically assigned device name. Ensure that there is adequate lighting visible from the front and

diagonally to the sides of the faces of all presenters, and avoid excessive backlighting. If possible, set the webcam at or slightly above face level, and ensure that all meeting participants are visible within frame if multiple people are clustered around a single camera pickup.

- f. Review FMA Issue Briefs (or whatever topic you wish to discuss), as well as information about the legislator. If asking them for their support on specific issues, it is worth identifying if they have voted in favor of similar issues in the past in order to verbally recognize their leadership on the issue.
- g. Have talking points to stay on message.
- h. Make your points clear and concise by explaining how your issue impacts the legislator's congressional district and constituents, as well as the region, state and nation.
- i. When possible, discuss the issue from a personal perspective – share anecdotal experience, or that of a family member or fellow federal manager.
- j. If multiple advocates plan to join the call, assign a leader who will open and close the meeting and keep things running on time.

4. During the Meeting

1. Be polite and friendly! Remember, the people you're meeting with are regular people.
2. Introduce yourself and briefly discuss what FMA is.
3. Engage the member of Congress/staff by sharing your experiences and asking questions.
4. Leave time for questions from the member of Congress and/or staff.
5. If you are meeting with staff, remember they are responsible for briefing the member of Congress and recommending actions, and can be valuable allies in your advocacy.
6. Work to establish long-term relationships with staff. Try to arrange for follow-ups.
7. Remember to thank again member/ staff for meeting with you.

5. After the Meeting

1. Follow up with a thank you note to the staffer or legislator's office, and include your contact information.
2. Follow up with the FMA National Office to discuss how the meeting went, feedback and any additional actions with which they can assist you.
3. Consider inviting them to speak at your installation!

SAMPLE SCRIPT

The following is a sample script that you might use as a template for your meeting with the legislator or staffers. The conversation will likely deviate from this, especially as the people you are meeting with ask questions and you follow up on topics of interest. Go where the conversation takes you! Consider the following example to be one example of the sort of information you might want to try to get across.

Introduction

1. “Good morning/afternoon. My name is (_____), and with me are (_____) and (_____). On behalf of the Federal Managers Association, thank you for taking the time to meet with us today.”
 - a. If you are a constituent, mention so at this time. Example: “I’m one of your constituents and work at (name of installation), located in (location) in your district.
2. I am here today to ask for your support for _____
 - a. Tailor the message depending on the topics you are there to discuss.

Key Messages

- Always be factual. Support assertions with facts from the issue briefs and personal anecdotes.
- Project a positive image and be respectful. Remember: conversational, not confrontational.
- Politely and persistently seek to get a definitive answer on whether or not the Member intends to cosponsor legislation favored by FMA. Ask what further information they may require in order to make a decision.
- Do your research ahead of time to find out what committees the legislator sits on, and tailor the issues you address with them to be relevant for their committees. If you have any questions about what issues to address, reach out to Greg Stanford at gstanford@fedmanagers.org.

Closing

1. I urge you (your boss) to _____. Example: “I urge you to support the FAIR Act, in order to give feds a raise that makes sense given the 2024 inflation numbers.”
2. If an FMA supporter: “Thank you again for meeting with me and for your support of FMA.”
3. If not generally supportive of FMA: “Thank you again for meeting with me and taking the time to learn more about FMA!”
4. “If you would like more information about these issues, or if you have any questions, please let me know and we can arrange a follow-up meeting.”

Choosing Your Virtual Meeting Platform

Zoom and Microsoft Teams are the platforms typically preferred by legislative and government offices.

The free version of either platform will be completely adequate for your needs with regards to a virtual Day on the Hill. However, the key difference between the two platforms is that the free version



of Zoom imposes a 40 minute time limit on meetings, while the free version of MS Teams allows for meetings to last essentially indefinitely. Therefore, if you choose to use Zoom, please make sure not to start the meeting too early.

The most important aspect of this choice is going with the platform that participants are most comfortable with. If the office you are meeting with has no preference, go with whichever platform you have the most experience using. If the office does have a preference, go with the flow. If you have any questions or need any support on this, please email Adam at akay@fedmanagers.org for assistance.