

Tips for Calling Congress

We know that calling your Member of Congress can be intimidating, especially if you have never called before. Here's what to expect along with a few key tips to keep in mind when calling your representative.

- Tell the staff member your full name and mention that you are a constituent of the Member's district. It's OK to leave that and all the information on the office voice mail if that's where you're ultimately directed.
- Be prepared to provide your full name, mailing address, and zip code. This information lets the office confirm you are a constituent.
- Once this information is provided, deliver your message. Mention why you are calling, why you have an opinion on the issue, and what you would like your Member of Congress to do. Include, if you have it, a brief anecdote of how the pending policy will affect patients in the member's district (and/or Senator's state).

Here is a sample script:

"I'm calling to urge Senator Peters to monitor the US Preventative Services Task Force upcoming recommendations that eliminate co-testing for cervical cancer. As a healthcare provider, I want to make sure my patients have the best tools available for routine health screenings. We currently use co-testing, which includes a Pap test and an HPV test to check for cancerous cells and the presence of a virus linked to cervical cancer. The task force's draft recommendations would only use the HPV test. They rely on studies done outside the US and used products that were not FDA approved. I am concerned this will put my patients health at risk. If the recommendations are finalized, the woman's health community will call for action to protect women."

- Be succinct. A staff member is noting your request and is likely receiving many other calls, so he/she won't want detailed background, names of studies, multiple facts and figures, etc. It's unlikely that they will ask any detailed questions, but you may want to have a few details available in case they do; it's also OK to say, "I'll send that on to you." if asked a question you don't know an answer to.
- Remember, the staff member is not the Member of Congress. He/she cannot tell you if the Member will take action unless the Member has already publicly said they will. Their job is to record your comment and make sure it gets to the Member of Congress or to senior and policy staff.
- When you are done with your message, ask the staff member to pass on your comments to your representative. Let them know you are available for further questions and thank the staffer for their time.
- Always be polite!