

# TAKE ACTION!



## NGWA'S GUIDE TO GRASSROOTS POLITICAL ACTION

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This toolkit is designed to educate, motivate, and guide you as an NGWA member to **take action** and get involved in important political issues before Congress or in your state. The following guide will help engage you in a public education or advocacy campaign in support of those priorities impacting and improving the groundwater professions.

From supporting groundwater management and cleanup to ensuring regulations being proposed in Washington are reasonable and manageable for water well drilling contractors—your role in educating your elected officials can be as simple or as involved as you would like. Within this toolkit you'll find background information, step-by-step instructions, and a guide to resources that will help you get involved, stay involved, and make a difference in your community and to your business.

Whether you only have a few minutes or a few days, the tools outlined in this guide will equip you with what you need to help speak up for groundwater.

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### 1. WHY SHOULD I GET INVOLVED?

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We all know how a bill becomes a law—or at least what we were taught in civics class:

*What starts as an idea is drafted into bill form and reviewed to ensure compliance with state or federal laws. Then, an elected official introduces it in the House or Senate, beginning its journey to become law. From introduction to gaining cosponsors along the way, a bill may be heard in committees, testified on, moved to other committees, debated over, and even amended. Both the House and the Senate will hear the bill on their respective floors, and if there is any difference in the language, the bill will have to be worked out in a conference committee until identical.*

Along the way, while the bill is heard in committee, debated, and amended, NGWA—and you—have multiple opportunities to make sure the legislation is sound, the interests of groundwater professionals are reflected, and impacts to groundwater resources are fully understood.

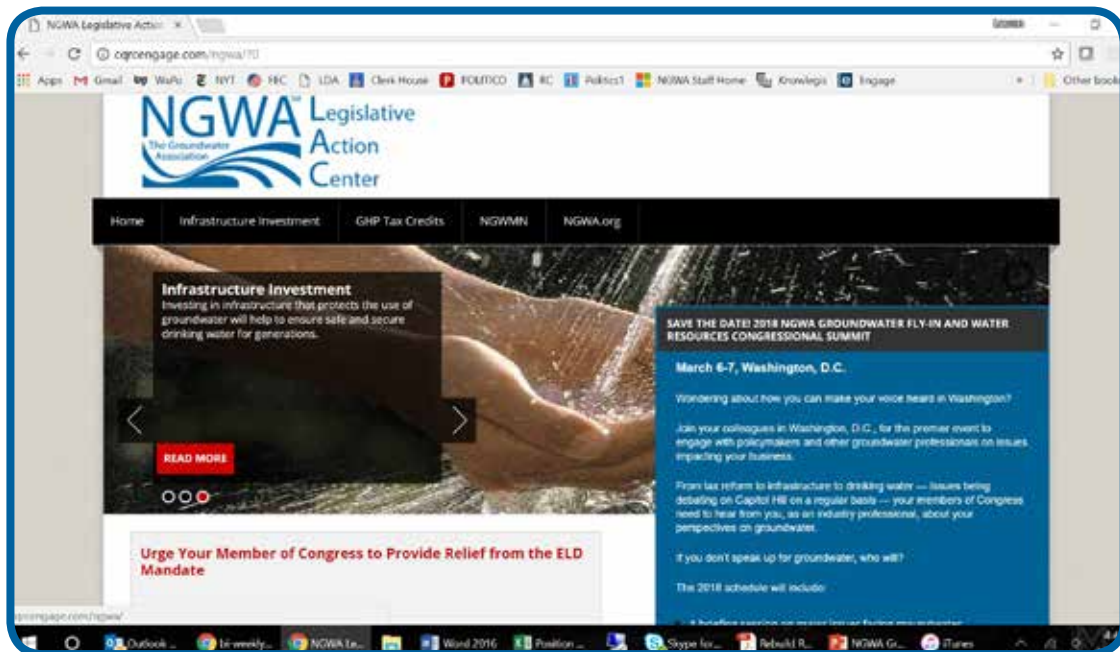
Most importantly, no one knows more about you and your business than you do. Take the opportunity to use your expertise and make sure educated decisions are being made in Congress.



## 2. NGWA LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER

Looking for the most up-to-date information on legislative activities of NGWA in Washington? If you're not receiving *Washington Update*, NGWA's e-newsletter, sign up today to receive your copy and get in the know—send an email to [lschapker@ngwa.org](mailto:lschapker@ngwa.org) using the subject line "Washington Update subscription request".

In the meantime, the NGWA Legislative Action Center, [NGWA.org/Advocacy](http://NGWA.org/Advocacy), will give you information on issues in Washington, important updates on events, and will allow you to access "action alerts" to contact your members of Congress in a simple, fast, and effective way.



## 3. NGWA GROUNDWATER FLY-IN

Who better than you, the industry professional, to speak up for groundwater on Capitol Hill?

And how better to do it than by attending the NGWA Groundwater Fly-In?

Usually held in early March, the NGWA Groundwater Fly-In gives you the opportunity to join your colleagues in Washington, D.C., for the premier event to engage with policymakers regarding issues impacting your business.

From issues such as drinking water and tax reform to viewing groundwater as natural infrastructure and the geosciences workforce, your members of Congress need to hear from you, as an industry professional, about your perspectives.

A typical schedule for the NGWA Groundwater Fly-In includes:

- A briefing session on major issues facing groundwater professionals
- Guest speakers from Capitol Hill and the administration
- A day of Capitol Hill meetings arranged by NGWA staff
- A networking reception
- Tips for continued grassroots activities when back home.

NGWA staff provides the tools necessary for success including issue briefs, background materials, and a meeting app where you will find your schedule on Capitol Hill.

During your day of visits on the Hill, you'll be teamed up with other NGWA members from your state or region, so you will have a diverse range of perspectives and expertise to take with you to each meeting.



## 4. INVITING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO TOUR YOUR FACILITY

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One of the best ways to promote a good working relationship with your members of Congress is to invite them to speak to your coworkers. Members are always looking for venues to reach out to their constituents and hear their voices. They would welcome the opportunity to share their views and listen to yours. Events like touring a brownfields site or seeing a water well drilling rig in action can be meaningful and impactful ways to show just how important groundwater is to your district.

This is a quick and easy checklist on how to set up a successful congressional visit to a jobsite or your business:

1. Find out when your senators or representative will be in the state or district. Many members are in the district from Friday to Monday. They also are back for longer periods during holidays and legislative recesses.
2. Call or email at least a month ahead of time to arrange the date and time. If you have an existing relationship with the district office, call there first. If not, you may want to call directly to the Washington office and ask to speak to the member's scheduler. NGWA can assist in identifying the right person to contact, as well as their contact information. Be sure to emphasize the role you and your business play in the district when arranging the meeting.
3. Send a confirmation email as soon as the details of the visit are set up—including information like who will be attending, if press or a photographer will be present, confirming a length of time for the visit, and asking any remaining questions.
4. Confirm with the office who your point of contact will be on the day of the event, and make sure your contact information is in the hands of whoever may need it. Schedules often change at the last minute, so being flexible is key.
5. Notify NGWA of the visit and ask for any assistance in publicizing or attending the event, if needed.
6. Publicize the event widely within your company and encourage a healthy turnout from coworkers or employees.
7. If visiting a plant or jobsite, make sure all safety standards are being followed, and areas are clean and acceptable to be photographed and put on social media.
8. Consider contacting the local media to cover the event at least three to four days in advance.
9. Make arrangements for a photographer to attend the event.
10. During the event, make sure all attendees understand the purpose and are there to support the effort. Questions can be asked of the member of Congress, as long as they are respectful and relevant to the event.
11. Following the event, send a thank-you note, and possibly a photograph, to the visiting member.
12. Now that you've established a relationship with your member of Congress, feel free to keep the office posted of news concerning your business.



## 5. CONGRESSIONAL DRIVE-INS

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Meeting with your members of Congress in their district offices when they are home on recess and at local town hall meetings is an excellent way to stay in touch.

It's often a challenge to get a member of Congress to your office or a site visit, given their packed schedules during their limited time in the district.

Members of Congress keep offices in the district just like in Washington, so if you can't make the trip to the nation's capital, stop by and see your delegation in your hometown.

Members of Congress often list their office hours in the district on their website. Their website will also contain the location of their office(s) near you, as well as a phone number. Avoid contacting the Washington office about district visits or issues. The staff there tend to keep the local district staff more focused on local issues, so the Washington office will just refer you there.

NGWA staff can assist with identifying the appropriate staff contacts, and, once you're in touch with the congressional staff, the same rules apply for meetings that would apply on Capitol Hill.



## 6. ATTENDING TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Congressional town hall meetings give constituents a chance to make their voices heard. Such events generally take place in districts during congressional recesses and provide an opportunity for lawmakers to hear from the public on a wide range of concerns.

1. Find a town hall for your member of Congress. It is important to only attend those town halls of members where you live or work in their districts. Constituent feedback is valued, but feedback from nonconstituents is neither considered nor appreciated.

Search for events in your area by visiting [TownHallProject.com](http://TownHallProject.com) or your legislator's website, Facebook page, or Twitter feed to find the date, location, and time of events. Events may also be posted on local media or in newspapers.

2. Register for the event. Attending town halls often requires advanced registration to plan for size constraints and to verify only constituents are attending the advertised events. Make sure you're on the list before showing up to the event.
3. Come prepared. Whether you would just like to spectate or hope to ask a question, do some advanced research and read recent news or press releases from your member of Congress. This will give you an idea of where your member's priorities are, so that you can ask the right question.

It's helpful to also write down a few questions in advance, in case you get the opportunity to ask one. Keep them

brief, but make sure to phrase your question in a way that cannot easily be answered with a "yes" or "no." Aim to keep your question around 10 to 15 seconds and include a short introduction of who you are and what you do. Make your question or statement relevant and include numbers if possible.

Some sample questions:

- What is your position on federal funding for [NAME SPECIFIC PROGRAM OR AGENCY]?
  - How are you working to close the gap in STEM education due to pending retirements?
  - What programs do you support that will help grow jobs in [NAME JOB SECTOR]?
  - My community lacks [XXXXX]. What are you doing to help ensure we have the same access to [XXXXX] as nearby communities?
4. Arrive early. Town hall meetings are often crowded, so getting in the door early ensures you'll get a seat and might be able to ask a question. When signing in, be sure to ask staff if you also have to sign in to ask a question.
  5. Follow up. Hopefully you introduced yourself to staff or the member of Congress. If you exchanged business cards, send an email after the town hall reinforcing your interest in working with the member's office and how you can be a resource to the office.



## 7. WRITING OP-EDS/LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you've contacted your member of Congress, but have yet to receive a satisfactory response, consider writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Members of Congress focus intently on what is said in the local press. This tool is an easy way to elevate your issue.

1. Keep it brief. Limiting your letter to one page will ensure you've distilled your argument to the most relevant points. It also will help ensure readers spend time reading the entire piece.
2. Respond to something specific, and be timely. Your letter is more likely to be published if you are writing in response to a story or piece from the local paper. Your letter must also be sent within a few days of the original story's publication to ensure it's relevant.

3. Establish yourself as an expert. No one knows more about groundwater than you do. Make sure that's made clear and that you are speaking from a position of authority on the matter. It may also result in additional outreach from the paper if you are someone who can comment for them on topics.
4. Make your letter stand out by highlighting facts, figures, and specific examples about you and where you live. Newspapers like to publish materials that are clearly written from a local resident, rather than sounding like manufactured talking points.
5. Newspapers often have instructions on how to submit a letter to the editor. Be sure to follow them!



FOR MORE  
INFORMATION

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