

# The Affordable Care Act: What Can I Do?



## Who has the power to repeal the Affordable Care Act?

The people who have the power to repeal the ACA are the members of **Congress**. Congress is the section of the government that makes laws. There are 2 different sections of Congress, called the **Senate** and the **House of Representatives**. Every state in the U.S. has 2 members in the Senate. Every state has a different number of members in the House of Representatives based on how many people live in the state. Each Representative from the House of Representatives comes from a different district. Each district covers its own part of the state.

## Why does my voice matter?

Congress makes laws based on what they think will be best for the people they are governing. The people who work in Congress are elected by the public (meaning everyday people). So, they need to think about what the public wants when they make a law or try to get rid of a law. Otherwise, they won't get voted for again. Workers in the government listen to the problems that the public have, and use laws to help fix these problems.

**Making sure that all Americans get the health care they need is one of the most important problems in the U.S. today.** By contacting your members of Congress about the Affordable Care Act, you show them that making sure everyone can get and keep health insurance is an important issue, and they will keep that in mind when they vote on whether or not to repeal the ACA.

## How can I contact my members of Congress?

You can find contact information for your Senators by going to <http://www.senate.gov/senators/states.htm> and clicking on your state. This will bring up the names of the 2 Senators from your state.

You can find contact information for your Representative by going to <http://www.house.gov/htbin/findrep> and typing in your zip code. This will bring up the name of the Representative from your district.

## What ways can I use to contact my members of Congress?

### Phone

The best way to contact a Senator or Representative is by phone. Phone calls work better than email because the person on the other line has to listen to what you have to say. They can't just skim the words like they could with an email. You probably won't get to talk directly to your Senator or Representative. But, you will talk with one of their staff members, who will let the Senator or Representative know what you called about.

Before you call, it is a good idea to prepare a script so you know what you want to say. You should talk about your personal experiences to show why the protections in the ACA are important to you. Be careful to keep your call short. That way, the person you are talking to understands the main point of what you are saying.

Here is a sample of a good script for calling your Senator or Representative.

**You:** Hello, I would like to make a comment to Senator/Representative (last name) about the Affordable Care Act.

**Staff member:** Certainly. Please go ahead.

**You:** Thank you. My name is [your full name] and I live at [full address]. I'm calling to urge Senator/ Representative [last name] to support laws that protect the right to health insurance for disabled people. The ACA helped [me/my friend/my family member] be able to get and keep affordable health insurance for the first time. Please help make sure that insurance companies can't take away people's insurance again.

**Staff member:** I will give your message to Senator/Representative **[last name]**. would you like for him/her to send a response to you?

**You:** Yes. Thank you for your time, good-bye.

**Staff member:** Thank you for your comments. Have a good day.

### **Email**

You can also contact your Senator or Representative by email. Keep in mind that the people who read the emails for members of Congress usually don't read the whole thing. Instead, they will skim to find out what law the email is about. It is still good to send emails because when a bunch of people email about a law, it shows that member of Congress that it is something they should keep in mind when voting on it.

Here is a template for sending an email to a Senator or Representative if you are a disabled person who cares about protecting health insurance for disabled people:

The Honorable **[full name]**  
United State Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator **[last name]**:

Laws that protect health insurance for disabled people are very important to me. If the Affordable Care Act is repealed, these rights may be taken away. **[I/my family member/my close friend]** was only recently able to get and keep affordable health insurance thanks to the ACA, and it would hurt **[me/them]** a lot if **[I/they]** lost **[my/their]** insurance. I would like to learn more about what you are doing to protect the rights of disabled people to get health insurance, so I look forward to hearing back from you about your thoughts on this.

Thank you for taking the time to read and respond to my email. I think health insurance is an important issue, and would like to make sure that insurance companies continue to give disabled people fair and affordable health insurance.

Sincerely,

**[Your full name]**  
**[Address]**  
**[Phone Number]**  
**[Email Address]**

If you do not want to send an email, you can also use this template to write a letter to send to your representative. A letter can be an even better choice than an email, since the person who gets the letter is more likely to read the whole thing than if they got an email. You can find the mailing address for your Senator or Representative on their website. Be sure to write your return address so they can send you their reply.

### **In-Person**

Another option is to try and make an appointment to see your Senator or Representative in-person. Senators and Representatives usually have local offices that you can call or email to set up an in-person appointment. You can find out how to make an appointment on the website of the Senator or Representative. You can find this information using the websites listed earlier.

Just like with phone calls, you probably won't meet with your Senator or Representative directly. Instead, you will meet with a staff member who will report back to your member of Congress.

Here are some tips for what to do at an in-person meeting:

- Meetings are usually about 15 to 45 minutes long. Try and find out how long a meeting will be beforehand so you can plan ahead for what you want to say.
- Learn everything you can about the ACA before the meeting, as well as what other people might say to argue against your opinion.
- If you have any handouts, charts or pictures that will help you explain your opinion, bring a few copies with you to give to the people you're talking to and to have for yourself to look at.
- Arrive at the meeting place about 10 minutes before the appointment time. Try to dress nicely.
- Introduce yourself to the member of Congress or their staff member: tell them who you are and where you live.
- Try to start by complimenting something your member of Congress has done recently that you support. This helps make the person you're talking to more open to your ideas.
- Be ready to answer questions and discuss your points in detail.
- The person you are talking to may disagree with what you have to say. Make sure that you don't raise your voice or make it seem like you are arguing with them, or else they won't listen to what you are saying. Try to focus more on why you support what you do, rather than telling them why they shouldn't support what they do. Always try to end the conversation on a positive note.
- After a meeting, always send a thank-you email. This lets your member of Congress know that you appreciate their time, and helps them remember what you talked about.

### **Are there other places I can share my story?**

Nonprofit organizations like ASAN collect stories about how people are affected by certain laws. Since these organizations work with Senators and Representatives a lot, sharing your story with these groups is a good way to make sure that the people who make laws will hear about it. The more people that share their stories, the more likely it is that lawmakers will notice and want to learn more.

You can submit your own story by going to <http://autisticadvocacy.org/policy-stories>.

Another good place to submit your story is <http://acaworks.org>.

When writing your story, be as specific as you can about how the ACA has helped you. Feel free to write in more detail than you would to your members of Congress. A lot of people have been positively affected by the ACA, so there are a lot of examples of good stories to share about the ACA. For my example, I will focus on the experience of a disabled person, but you can write about any experience that you had.

Here is a good example of a story to share:

I have a chronic illness that started when I began college. I need a lot of medications and doctor's appointments to take care of it. Before the ACA passed, I had a lot of trouble getting and keeping health insurance. One insurance company let me buy insurance, but charged me much more than my non-disabled friends for the same insurance plan, so I could barely afford it. At the end of the year, the insurance company told me I couldn't get insurance from them anymore. I tried finding other insurance, but the other companies told me that they wouldn't insure me because of my disability. Because of that, I went without insurance for a couple of years, and got very sick because I couldn't pay for my medication. I had to move back in with my parents, and wasn't able to be active in my community like I used to. When the ACA passed, my parents were able to add me to their insurance, and the protections for disabled people in the ACA made sure I was able to afford it. When I turn 26, I know I'll still be able to afford insurance under the ACA since the government will help me pay for it. The ACA made me feel safe for the first time knowing that I'll be able to keep my health insurance and pay for what I need to manage my disability.

Stories like this aren't just useful for sharing with advocacy organizations: even just sharing your experiences with friends and family can be helpful. Writing a blog or posting on social media can be a good tool to spread the word about the positive impact of the Affordable Care Act. Your story may inspire others to contact their members of Congress and spread the word!

## Further resources

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- [Contact Your Senator Tool](#), by Families USA
- ASAN's [Legislative Advocacy 101: Getting Your Voice Heard](#) (PDF)
- ASAN's [Federal Level Advocacy](#) guide (PDF)
- [Find Your Representative](#) - House.gov
- [Contact Your Senator](#) - Senate.gov