

THE BORGES PROJECT



FINDING AND CONTACTING YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

By now you should know how to find out who your three Members of Congress (MoCs) are—your two senators and one representative. If not, you can find who they are and how to contact them here:

- House: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
- Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>

Tips for calling your Members of Congress

Is it better to call the district office or the DC office? It's always good to call both. However, legislative staff work out of the DC office and so it's better to call them if you're trying to influence an upcoming vote.

Should you call the congressional switchboard or the office directly? If possible, you should learn the direct number to your representatives' offices. When you call directly, your number is displayed for the person picking up. When a call comes through the switchboard, the staffer only sees the main line number. Staff quickly learn district/state area codes and will take you more seriously when they know you're likely a constituent.

HOUSE AND SENATE CALENDARS

At the beginning of each year, the House and Senate release calendars specifying when they will and will not be in session. The two chambers aren't required to stick to these calendars—they may stay later than they anticipated, or come back early to address some urgent business—but they generally do. Plan local group actions around State/District Work Periods—this is when MoCs are most likely to be back in their states/districts meeting with constituents, holding events, and hosting in-person town halls. State/district work periods are the best times to try to schedule local events, rallies, office visits, and other actions.

- For the Senate's 2021 schedule: https://www.senate.gov/legislative/2021_schedule.htm
- For the House's 2021 schedule: <https://www.majorityleader.gov/calendar>

FLOOR SCHEDULES

House and Senate leadership need to notify their members in advance of what they will be voting on or what will be "on the floor." In both chambers, the majority party sets these "floor schedules," though in the Senate, the minority—in this case the Democrats—have a greater say in what is considered. These schedules are a great way of knowing just what your MoCs will be voting on.

THE BORGEN PROJECT



House Schedule

In the House, these schedules are published on a weekly and daily basis. Weekly schedules come out at the end of the preceding week, and daily schedules the night before or morning of the day in question. They're referred to as "Whip Sheets"—a reference to the act of figuratively "whipping" votes to ensure a particular bill passes. Anyone can access these Whip Sheets through the webpages of the House Majority Leader or Minority Whip.

- Daily and Weekly Whip Sheets for the House of Representatives: <https://www.majorityleader.gov/floor-resources/the-weekly-leader>

Senate Schedule

The Senate is smaller, and the chamber's activity more fluid, so they do not release formalized Weekly Whip sheets, unlike the House. That said, you can still keep on top of what's happening on the floor a day ahead.

- Senate Floor action from Democratic staff: <https://democrats.senate.gov/floor/>

VOTING RECORDS

Subscribe to their listserv or follow them on Twitter.

Members typically, but not always, want to tell their constituents how, and why, they voted on a particular subject. So, subscribe to their email updates and watch their official Twitter pages. The downside? If it's a controversial issue—i.e., building a wall, dismantling the Affordable Care Act, or deporting 11 million people—they may not want to broadcast their vote or may try to spin it. So, don't trust everything you hear.

Official Records

The House and Senate keep and publicize official records of each recorded vote taken in the chambers— known as "roll call votes." The downside? It can take a little while (typically hours) for them to post, and unless you know the specific bill or date of the vote, it can be difficult to search these databases.

- House Vote Records: <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes>
- Senate Vote Records: https://www.senate.gov/legislative/legislative_home.htm