



Congressional In-District Meetings & Events Toolkit

Summer & Fall 2026

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Advocacy Opportunities Related to the Election	4
Best Practices for In-District Meetings and Events	5
Find Your Group	5
Find Your Members of Congress	5
Request an In-District Meeting or Event	6
Email Template to Request a Congressional Meeting.....	7
Plan Your Meeting	7
A. Meeting Goals. The goals of your advocacy meetings are to:	8
B. Suggested Meeting Agenda.....	8
C. Greetings and Introductions (3-5 minutes)	8
D. What To Talk About (10-20 minutes)	8
E. Tell your personal story (5-10 minutes)	9
F. Additional Talking Points (as time permits).....	10
G. Meeting Wrap Up (5 minutes):	12
F. Meeting Materials:	13
<i>Meeting Follow Up</i>	13
<i>Tips for successful engagement of Congressional offices</i>	14
<i>Resources</i>	15
<i>In Closing</i>	16

Introduction

Why meet or do an event with your Member of Congress or their staff

One of the most impactful ways that people can advocate for federal funding is to request an in-district meeting with your Representative and Senators or their staff, or invite them to a local event. Members of Congress and their staff respond well to constituent information and stories. When they know that constituents are engaged locally, they will be more likely to remember their issues and needs and may be more open to their requests. In-district meetings and events are ideal ways to share stories and experiences and advocate for increases for federal HIV and related programs.

Additionally, in-district meetings and events help constituents and advocates develop a relationship with a Member of Congress and/or their staff. Doing local meetings and events demonstrates that constituents are active members of the community with important concerns. Congressional offices also understand that for each active constituent, their family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues (who likely are voters) often share their concerns. Doing in-district meetings and events with Congressional offices is a good way to introduce yourself and begin communication that can endure and provide additional advocacy opportunities in the future.

Using the #CutsKillQuilt to Engage Members of Congress

Since last year, the Save HIV Funding Campaign has told Congress that proposed cuts would increase the HIV epidemic in the U.S. by eliminating HIV prevention services and reducing access to HIV care, treatment, and supports. The Campaign also has urged Members of Congress to increase funding for federal HIV programs as flat funding is insufficient when local, state and other federal resources, such as Medicaid and insurance subsidies, are contracting.

An effective way to engage members of Congress on these issues is to use visual advocacy, such as displays of [#CutsKill Quilt panels](#) In addition to making a more traditional request for a meeting or event participation, asking a Congressional office to hang a #CutsKill quilt panel or attend an event involving the quilt creates a tangible action on which to engage that office - and this action centers the connection between HIV funding requests and the needs of local people living with or vulnerable to HIV.

As we move through a Summer and Fall of Pride activities, multiple HIV awareness days, rallies, and other advocacy - including World AIDS Day on December 1st - the #CutsKill Quilt is an effective visual reminder of the stakes in the battle to fully fund HIV programs.

Ways to use advocate with #CutsKill quilt panels include:

- First, please let us know that you plan to request an in-district meeting by completing this [sign up link](#) Request an in-district meeting and present a local quilt panel during the meeting. **Please note** that you or your organization would keep the quilt panel - the idea would be to show it to the Congressional office during your visit and ask the office to display it connected to a particular event and then return it to you.



#CutsKill Quilt Displayed at the U.S. Capitol, Sept. 2025. Courtesy of Getty Images

You also could ask a Congressional office to:

- Hang your local quilt panel in its in-district office or outside of its DC office for an awareness Day (or line it up for World AIDS Day).
- Attend a local event and present a quilt panel there. (Again, retain ownership of the panel, but feature the quilt panel at the event and ask the office to display it in one of their Congressional offices.)
- Promote a photo of a local quilt panel or a local *digital* quilt panel in the media and on their Congressional social media platforms.
- [Ask the Congressional office to create its own digital #CutsKill quilt panel](#) and share it on social media as part of their recognition of awareness days or other events.
- Post your organization's digital #CutsKill quilt panel and [tag your members of Congress](#) with an advocacy message to increase funding for HIV programs.



To use the #CutsKill quilt in your advocacy, you can [make your own physical panel](#) or [a digital panel](#). If you have questions or need assistance with quilt-related issues, please contact Michael Chanley from the Save HIV Funding Campaign at michael@prep4all.org.

[Advocacy Opportunities Related to the Election](#)

2026 will bring Midterm elections on November 3rd. The election brings with it opportunities for organizations and individuals to engage candidates for Congressional seats or sitting members of Congress at public debates, speeches, town hall meetings, candidate forums, and other events. **We encourage individuals to ask candidates questions about their support for increasing federal funding for HIV prevention, treatment, research, housing and related programs.**

Nonprofits and other entities should know and be mindful of the limitations regarding election activities. In particular, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are **strictly prohibited** from endorsing or opposing candidates for elected public office. They must remain **non-partisan** and cannot distribute campaign materials or link to partisan content. **Some general guidelines include:**

- **Individual Activity:** Employees of nonprofits may personally support or oppose candidates, but they **cannot use the organization's resources**, facilities, or personnel to do so.
- **Resource Usage:** Organizations are prohibited from using their financial resources to support candidates and must ensure any distributed voting information is **entirely non-partisan**.
- **Permitted Activities:** Nonprofits can provide resources for members to learn about **allowable election activities**, such as sharing basic voter information or non-partisan "How to Vote" guides.

For more information about engaging candidates as a nonprofit organization, we recommend these Alliance For Justice resources:

- <https://afj.org/resource/the-rules-of-the-game-a-guide-to-election-related-activities-for-501c3-organizations/>
- <https://afj.org/article/nonprofits-elections-the-fine-art-of-remaining-nonpartisan/>
- https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Election_Checklist_for_501c3_Public_Charities.pdf

Best Practices for In-District Meetings and Events

In-district meetings and events with Congressional offices work best when participants have planned and prepped, including developing a clear request. Meeting scheduling, agenda development, participant prep, and timely follow-up help advocates to build relationships with Congressional offices and advance advocacy goals. This section outlines tips and best practices to help you achieve these outcomes.

Find Your Group

You don't have to do meetings alone! In fact, it's often more powerful for a legislator or their staff to **hear from multiple people representing different local perspectives**. Important people to include in a meeting (when possible) are people living with HIV, people using PrEP, local HIV/healthcare providers, local leaders, and family members - we encourage people to work together to create powerful meetings. **Meetings will be most persuasive** if the group includes a direct constituent living or working in the district and/or people who provide services in or to the district.

It may be easier to gather a group for a meeting with a Senate office since they represent the entire state. Gathering different perspectives might be a bit harder for a specific Congressional district, especially one that is away from a population center or that does not have strong HIV programs, organizations, or service providers. We encourage people to support each other and work together to maximize participation. ***This might involve someone attending a meeting in-person and then having someone join that meeting virtually or by phone.***

The Save HIV Funding Campaign is organizing people who are advocating for increasing federal funding for HIV programs. We are happy to put people who are interested in doing meetings in touch with each other. If you want help in finding your group, **please complete this [in-district sign up link](#)** and reach out to **Bill McColl** at bmccoll@colliercollective.org and **Jenny Collier** at jcollier@colliercollective.org.

Find Your Members of Congress

1. **Each person has a Member of the House of Representatives and two Senators** representing them.
2. **To identify your members of Congress**, please visit:
https://ballotpedia.org/Who_represents_me



3. [Review this Key Congressional Office](#) and if Congressional offices from your region are listed, **please prioritize them for in-district meetings.**
4. **If your Senators and Representatives of Congress are not on this list, please still reach out** to meet with them - each in-district meeting is important and counts!
5. **If you believe that a Congressional office may be hostile to you or your group** or a meeting may result in a negative outcome, **then please skip that meeting.**

If you have questions, please email Bill McColl at bmccoll@colliercollective.org and Jenny Collier at jcollier@colliercollective.org - they are happy to help!

[Request an In-District Meeting or Event](#)

1. **Please complete this [sign up form](#)** if you plan to request an in-district meeting or event.
2. **Please also email the following people** to let them know:
 - a. Bill McColl bmccoll@colliercollective.org
 - b. Jenny Collier jcollier@colliercollective.org
 - c. Maxx Boykin maxx@prep4all.org
3. **Please contact Brooks Johnson at bjohnson@colliercollective.org** to get the contact info for the appropriate Congressional staff to contact to request a meeting.
4. **Please consider using or adapting the template email below** to request the in-district meeting or invite Congressional staff from the district office to a local event.



Email Template to Request a Congressional Meeting

Dear [NAME],

I am writing on behalf of [X people or organizations], including [identify people in the meeting] who are constituents [if you don't have constituents, remove that phrase] to request an in-district meeting with [Sen. or Rep. ____ or the name of the staff person] to discuss federal funding for HIV programs. We would appreciate meeting [suggest either the Congressional district office if it's close enough or a local HIV clinic or HIV organization location] on [date] or another mutually convenient time soon.

As people living with or vulnerable to HIV and local HIV programs wrestle with shrinking federal resources to support these lifesaving services, we would like to discuss and describe the impact that federal HIV funding has had on our district and relay concerns about how cuts or shortfalls are impacting constituents.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this request, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

<Your Town, State> (this lets them know that you are a constituent)

<cell phone number> (helpful for contact purposes)

Plan Your Meeting

Once you have set a date for the meeting, **we suggest that you:**

1. **Plan your meeting in advance with the group who will attend by having a pre-meeting.**
2. Develop a meeting agenda ahead of time
3. Time the meeting during your pre-meeting, as **you may only have 20 to 30 minutes total for the actual meeting.**

Please check out below the suggested **meeting goals** and **agenda items**.

A. Meeting Goals. The goals of your advocacy meetings are to:

1. **Educate policymakers** about the importance of HIV programs to you.
 - a. **If you are a person living with HIV or someone on PrEP**, explain what programs you rely on (such as the Ryan White Program, Medicaid, PrEP access programs) and how important they are.
 - b. **If you deliver HIV services**, work at a clinic, or do research, explain the importance of federal funding in supporting your work.
2. **Develop a relationship** with Congressional offices and staff and offer to be a resource to them.
 - a. If you are associated with an HIV services program and have authorization from the program, you may wish to **invite the Congressional office to visit** the program.
 - b. **Please note**, if you plan to schedule a visit to your local clinic or HIV services organization, please contact **Bill McColl** at bmccoll@colliercollective.org and **Jenny Collier** at jcollier@colliercollective.org to get **tips for conducting an effective Congressional visit** to a local program.

B. Suggested Meeting Agenda

Sections C-G below describe a typical meeting averaging approximately 30 minutes. Please feel free to design **the meeting agenda to best communicate local issues and concerns** and to **fit into the amount of time allocated** for the meeting/visit. *Please note that sometimes meetings can be short as 15 minutes or as long as an hour. When scheduling your meeting, please ask the amount of time you will have and plan the agenda for that duration.*

C. Greetings and Introductions (3-5 minutes)

1. **Thank** the office for meeting with you.
2. **Introduce meeting participants** and explain your interest in HIV.
3. Give the Member or staffer an opportunity to introduce themselves as well.

D. What To Talk About (10-20 minutes)

1. **Urge Congress to allocate robust Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) funding for HIV programs**



- a. **Background:** The House Appropriations Committee has passed FY27 funding bills that would cut HIV prevention, care, and treatment by **approximately \$1 billion**. The Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to pass its bills.
 - b. **Requests:** During your meetings, urge Congress to:
 - i. **Increase funding for domestic and global HIV programs.**
 - 1. Highlight program requests that are **especially meaningful to meeting participants** and give **real life examples** of why that funding is important.
 - ii. **Include guardrails in FY27 spending bills** to ensure that the Administration spends FY27 funding promptly and in the way Congress intends.
2. **Also urge Congress to:**
- a. **Reject additional cuts to health care and support programs, including HIV programs, through a “Reconciliation 3.0” bill or other legislation.**
 - i. Congress must reject proposals that would increase costs - including health care costs - for people and families, including people living with or at risk for HIV.
 - ii. People and families are struggling to make ends meet and already face rising costs of health care, food, housing, medications, and other necessities.
 - b. **Reverse Medicaid cuts and the loss of federal insurance premium subsidies** to increase insurance coverage for individuals and families nationwide.
 - c. **Block implementation of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed rule that would politicize and cut federal grants and resources**, including for federal HIV and related programs. (See [The Trump Administration Seeks to End Nonpartisan Grantmaking](#): Center for Budget and Policy Priorities)

E. Tell your personal story (5-10 minutes)

- 1. **Describe current needs through an example** - *tell a personal story about your experience if you are a directly impacted person or about your experience providing services if you are a service provider.*
- 2. **Focus on local impacts of proposed funding cuts by describing:**

- a. **Vulnerable populations:** The people who have been or would be impacted by cuts, including people living with or vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with substance use disorders, unhoused people, and other underserved communities.
- b. **Service disruptions:** HIV prevention and treatment, mental health services, substance use disorder treatment, housing assistance, transportation to care, nutrition services, and other essential supports that have been or would be disrupted or terminated.
- c. **Job losses:** Layoffs of healthcare professionals, social workers, case managers, and support staff are occurring or are anticipated.
- d. **Public health crisis:** An increase in HIV transmission rates, overdose deaths, and other negative health outcomes is occurring or would be expected.

F. Additional Talking Points (as time permits)

1. **HIV programs have a more than 40-year history of bipartisan support.**
2. **Provide background on HIV in your state with state-specific fact sheets**
 - a. Ask the staffer how familiar they are with HIV services and programs.
 - b. Describe the need for HIV services in your state or the member's district.
3. **Talking Points** (You do not need to cover all talking points – consider highlighting the points that relate best to your experience and concerns.)
 - a. **HIV care, treatment, and prevention initiatives currently are facing extreme challenges**, and some states are shutting down or implementing severe cost containment measures – including treatment waitlists – because of years of flat federal funding, recent cuts, and increased costs. **Increased federal funding is needed now to address these dramatic and potentially life-threatening shortfalls.**
 - b. **Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program**
 - i. **Increasing funding for all parts of the Ryan White Program is critical.**
 - ii. The Ryan White Program ensures that individuals living with HIV have access to the care and treatment they need – successful treatment results in viral suppression that helps people to stay healthy while preventing HIV transmission.
 - iii. The program serves more than 600,000 people nationwide – more than half of the people living with HIV in the U.S. – and it provides care in rural, urban, and suburban jurisdictions.

- iv. There is more pressure now on Ryan White Program resources because of cuts to public (Medicaid) and private insurance and increased costs, making increased funding for this program essential.
 - v. The program has helped **more than 90% of its clients** achieve viral suppression, which indicates HIV treatment success and prevention of HIV transmission.
 - vi. 40% of people living with HIV access treatment through Medicaid. Loss of Medicaid coverage because of recent cuts and new work requirements will require more people to seek HIV care through the Ryan White program. More people needing Ryan White Program support will further stress limited program funding, **resulting in the need to increase this funding**
- c. **Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) initiative:**
- i. Since 2017, the bipartisan Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) initiative has reduced new HIV cases by 21% in America’s most highly affected jurisdictions compared to 6% nationally.
 - ii. Cuts to EHE funding would put all recent progress at risk and increase human and financial costs:
 - iii. Five thousand Americans still die from AIDS-related causes each year and approximately 39,000 people acquire HIV annually. Those numbers will grow if there are cuts to HIV programs.
 - iv. Every new HIV case in the US translates to between \$500,000 – \$1.1 million in lifetime healthcare costs.
- d. **HIV Prevention at CDC**
- i. **90% of CDC Division of HIV Prevention funding goes directly to state and local health** departments and community-based organizations to:
 - 1. Provide surveillance, testing, linkage to care, responses to HIV outbreaks and more.
 - 2. Help expand access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), a medication that is 99% effective at preventing HIV when taken as directed.
 - a. **Expanding access to PrEP will help end the HIV epidemic in the US.** 2 out of 3 people who could benefit from PrEP do not access it, with significant disparities among the people most heavily impacted by HIV.
 - ii. **HIV prevention is cost-effective.**

1. Each year, there are approximately 32,000 new cases of HIV, and each new case has expected lifetime medical costs of more than \$500,000.
2. This equals ***\$16 billion in new lifetime medical costs each year.***

e. HIV Research at NIH

- i. U.S. research funds have led to the creation of effective HIV treatment and prevention, including PrEP and research confirming that people living with HIV who achieve an undetectable viral load through treatment cannot transmit HIV.
- ii. HIV research also has contributed to breakthroughs in other diseases, including cancer, TB, and viral hepatitis.

f. HIV/AIDS Housing

- i. Housing is the #1 unmet need for people living with HIV – 2 out of 5 PLWHA who need housing assistance do not get it.
- ii. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) **Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA)** program is the only federal program that directly provides supportive and affordable housing for low-income people living with HIV.
- iii. Stable housing is associated with better health outcomes, including a 20% higher viral suppression rate.
- iv. HOPWA provides housing to 55,000 households and supportive services to over 100,000 individuals, as well as services to help people obtain and retain housing.

g. PEPFAR and Global HIV Programs

- i. Since 2003, PEPFAR has helped save approximately 26 million lives and prevented millions of new HIV cases by expanding treatment, prevention, and care in more than 50 countries.
- ii. PEPFAR strengthens health systems, economies, and political stability in partner countries, which supports U.S. national security and helps prevent future disease and outbreaks in the United States.

G. Meeting Wrap Up (5 minutes):

1. Ask how you can be a **resource on issues related to HIV**, and ***what is the best way to stay in touch?***

2. **If you work for an HIV services program, invite the office and member of Congress to visit your program or clinic.** Ask whom you should contact to issue the invitation.
3. **Thank** the staff for their time and consideration!

F. Meeting Materials:

It is helpful to use materials when meeting with Congressional offices to help make your points. Consider sharing the following materials that describe federal HIV program funding requests and the impact of these programs on your state when meeting with or engaging Congressional offices. These materials include:

1. [State-specific 1 pagers](#) identifying the amount and impact of CDC HIV Prevention, Ryan White Program, and HIV research funding provided to your state.
2. [AIDS Budget & Appropriations Coalition \(ABAC\) materials](#), including:
 - a. [Funding Chart](#): This chart contains the HIV community's federal funding requests for domestic HIV programs.
 - b. [ABAC FY26 Community Letter to Appropriators](#): This letter to Congress describes the ABAC funding requests for FY26 and the federal HIV programs these requests support.

Meeting Follow Up

1. Send an email to the staffer **thanking them** for meeting with you.
2. **Share meeting materials (described above) electronically**, especially state information.
3. **Make sure to CC: everyone who attended the meeting with you** so that you are all in contact.
4. **When you hear about new developments, write back again in reply to this email** as a way to remind the staffer about your meeting and to remind them of your concerns. **The goal is to stay in touch with Congressional offices and build a relationship** that allows you to communicate your concerns as they come up in the future.

To Report Out Meetings and/or Get Support

Please **report out** on your meeting, **ask question**, and **get help** by contacting:

1. Bill McColl at bmccoll@colliercollective.org
2. Jenny Collier at jcollier@colliercollective.org
3. Brooks Johnson at bjohnson@colliercollective.org

Thanks so much!

[Tips for successful engagement of Congressional offices](#)

As you engage with Congressional offices, please consider these tips:

- **Know the legislator, the district and its demographics** as well as possible. You can see their bios, recent statements and other information on their websites and social media accounts.
- **Provide information about who you are and what you do, and share how to contact you in the future.**
- **Come prepared.** Bring brochures or other relevant information, such as local HIV-related data or data about how much funding your group, institution or state receives. Use the [meeting materials](#) described earlier in this toolkit.
- **Know the “other side’s” positions** and be ready to respectfully respond to them.
- **Always come with an “ask.”** In addition to making an “ask” for federal funding for HIV programs, other asks could include an invitation to an event or a visit to your clinic or a local organization.
- **Make your case, briefly and persuasively.** Be specific about what you want the legislator to do and when.
- **Tell a personal story** and incorporate local issues and data whenever possible to help make the point.
- **Establish a time when you will expect to receive an answer or follow-up.**
- **Find ways to stay connected.** Ask to be on the legislator’s health advisory committee, receive a regular newsletter, and/or attend local events.
- **Follow up promptly with a thank you email, digital copies of meeting materials, and any other promised information** for the legislators and/or staff with whom you met.
- **Don’t answer questions you don’t know the answer to.** If the legislator or their staff ask a question and you don’t know the answer, please say that you will research the issue and get back to them later. After the meeting, please contact Bill McColl at bmccoll@colliercollective.org and Jenny Collier at jcollier@colliercollective.org from the Save HIV Funding campaign to discuss the question and how best to respond.
- **Be polite, but feel empowered.** As a constituent, legislators work for you and the other individuals they represent, and you have a right to talk to them and their staff about issues that concern you and impact their constituents!

Resources

Quilt Resources:

- **Quilt making Instructions:**
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hbwlGeyg4we1FLPGN7pP5SgmzSSh9B6qcPRfbFsbAk8/edit?tab=t.0>
- **Digital Quilt:**
 - <https://savehivfunding.org/digital-quilt/>
 - <https://savehivfunding.org/virtual-quilt-guidance/>

Additional #SaveHIVFunding Campaign In-District Meeting Resources:

- [Save HIV Funding Campaign Training Video](#)
- [Congressional Calendar](#): This calendar shows the planned Congressional recesses and may be helpful in trying to choose a date to meet. Please be aware that the dates may change but this is usually accurate.

State Level Data and Profiles:

- [SHF State-specific 1 pagers](#) identifying the amount and impact of CDC HIV Prevention, Ryan White Program, and HIV research funding provided to your state.
- [CDC HIV Prevention State Profiles](#)
- [AIDSvu](#)
- [PrEPvu](#)

Appropriations Resources:

- [AIDS Budget & Appropriations Coalition \(ABAC\) materials](#)
- [Funding Chart](#): This chart contains the HIV community's federal funding requests for domestic HIV programs.
- [ABAC FY26 Community Letter to Appropriators](#): This letter to Congress describes the ABAC funding requests for FY26 and the federal HIV programs these requests support.

Other issues:

Information and fact sheets on the impact of implementation of the FY25 budget reconciliation bill, otherwise known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" or OBBBA.

- [The AIDS Institute Policy Brief](#): H.R. 1 – Deep Cuts to Medicaid and ACA Coverage Threaten Progress Against HIV
- [The AIDS Institute Policy Brief](#): Premium Tax Credit and Enhanced Premium Tax Credit Explainer.
- [Defending Medicaid](#): Families USA
- [Medicaid Work Reporting Requirements: Implementation Update After CMS' Interim Final Rule](#): FamiliesUSA



- [Tell Congress: Uphold your promise and protect Medicaid](#): FamiliesUSA Action

In Closing

In-district meetings provide a valuable opportunity to connect with Congressional offices on issues important to you and your community - *thank you for connecting with Congressional offices locally!*

We would appreciate it if you could **please let the #SaveHIVFunding Campaign team know when you complete in-district meetings and/or outreach related to your local events or the #CutsKill Quilt - we want to hear how these conversations go as they are critical to our advocacy!**

To update the Campaign on these issues, or if you have questions or need support, please do not hesitate to contact:

- Bill McColl at bmccoll@colliercollective.org
- Jenny Collier at jcollier@colliercollective.org

Finally, **thank you** for supporting Save HIV Funding Campaign's in-district advocacy, **we appreciate you!**

Updated: July 2026