

Description

Social media can be a powerful tool that enables you to connect with elected official and other policy makers on issues that are important to you. The key is to write clear and concise messages that show the person you are targeting why the issue is important and why they should care about it. When possible, provide a specific ask, such as voting for or against particular legislation. Click here (link to new page) to learn more about the different social media platforms you can use.

(New Page)

Before we get into the specific social media channels, let's draft a plan for your social media advocacy. For purposes of this exercise, we can pretend that you are a resident of New York and you want to contact Senator Kirsten Gillibrand regarding a specific piece of legislation about oxygen access that you would like her to support.

First, think about what you want to ask the senator and how to communicate that message.

Some key points:

1. Let the official know that you are a resident of their state.
2. Describe the legislation (if you have the bill number, that is especially helpful) and what it would do.
3. Talk about the impact it would have on you.
4. Describe how it would affect others in your state. If this is a bill related to COPD, you can find COPD statistics for every state here: <https://www.copdfoundation.org/What-is-COPD/Understanding-COPD/Statistics.aspx>
5. You can also add a link that provides more information about the issue or the specific legislation.
6. You can also just contact them to encourage them to become a member of the Congressional COPD Caucus. (<https://uscopdcoalition.org/caucus-advocacy/>) You can find more information about the Caucus here: <https://copd.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/AdvocacyPublicPolicy-Revamp-TakeActionPage/ET0YGDU1N0pPgD7hR2JaWxcBJl6EEEna7PJ33tCYBpMXd5Q?e=bpypBb>
7. Let's talk about hashtags. You can use a hashtag by placing the # symbol right before a word. That helps to show that trends on social media and how many people are using the same terms. In Twitter, hashtags can be part of your message. In other forms of social media messaging, they can go in the message or at the end. In this example, we might use the hashtags #oxygen and #copd. Samples are provided in the messages. When a hashtag consists of two words, there is not a space between the words.

As a side note, you might also want to follow your elected officials on social media as it shows that you are involved and engaged.

Facebook:

Facebook is the world's largest social media network, with more than 2.7 billion monthly users around the world. Many elected officials have a Facebook page where they can reach out to their constituents.

There are no limits on the length of a Facebook post although you want to make sure that people will take the time to read your post. Be clear and concise in your message.

Your first step is to find Senator Gillibrand's Facebook page. By typing her name in the search bar on Facebook, you will see that there is a page for Kristen Gillibrand (NOTE: Other officials may have a page that starts with Senator... or Representative...). Many elected officials also provide links to their social media accounts on their official government pages. Real or verified accounts will have a small blue checkmark beside the users name as shown in the screenshot below. Notice the blue checkmark next to her name?



To make sure that someone on the senator's staff sees the message, you will want to "tag" her. You do that using the "@" button on your keyboard or phone.

Here is a sample message:

Dear @Kirsten Gillibrand (Facebook has an autofill feature that will help fill these)

As a resident of New York and an individual living with COPD, I urge you to support S 152, the legislation designed to enhance Medicare reimbursements for oxygen delivery. As someone who relies on supplemental oxygen, this bill would greatly affect the quality of my daily life.

Did you know that nearly 900,000 New Yorkers are living with COPD? Supplemental oxygen is critical for many living with COPD and this legislation has the potential to be life saving for so many people.

You can learn more about supplemental oxygen here: <https://www.copdfoundation.org/Learn-More/I-am-a-Person-with-COPD/Oxygen-Therapy.aspx>

#COPD #Medicare #Oxygen #SenatorGillibrand #NewYork

Twitter:

There are nearly 200 million daily active Twitter users. Like Facebook, it is a powerful tool for reaching elected officials. A key difference is that Twitter messages are limited to no more than 280 characters, so you must be very brief.

Our first step will be to search for Senator Gillibrand on Twitter and learn how to contact her. In this case, her “handle” is @gillibrandny. This is a verified account as indicated by the blue checkmark by her name in the image below.



A sample message might be:

@gillibrandny, please support S152 as it will help the 900,000 #NewYorkers affected by #COPD by providing #Medicare reimbursements for #oxygen delivery. Access to oxygen is critical for anyone with lung conditions and we need your support! <https://tinyurl.com/4zc6unax>

In this case, I used tinyurl.com, a free service, to shorten the website address. This reduces the total number of characters that are used.

Instagram:

Not all elected officials have an Instagram account but many do! You can search for them on Instagram or check their official government page. In this case, Senator Gillibrand does not have an Instagram page.

Some important notes about Instagram:

1. This platform is about pictures. You need to have an image to display in your post. In this case, it can be something related to oxygen use or maybe a picture of yourself with your oxygen tank. It is entirely up to you.
2. Website links in Instagram are not clickable, meaning that people will not be able to open these links. You can still encourage people to copy and paste the links. You can use the same basic message as the one provided for Facebook.

LinkedIn:

Most elected officials do not have a public LinkedIn profile. You can still use this as an effective advocacy tool.

Even if you cannot reach the officials here, you can still encourage others in your network to become involved and to support the cause. You can ask them to contact their elected officials and to ask them to back the legislation. Invite them to this page to get involved:

<https://www.copdfoundation.org/Take-Action/Get-Involved/Join-our-Advocacy-Action-Center.aspx>