

## Legislative Advocacy During the Pandemic

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With the beginning of the 2021 legislative session in January and the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, our office has been actively working to find answers to the uncertainty of doing legislative advocacy in a time when many people are unable to travel to the Capitol to attend hearings or meet with legislators in-person in Jefferson City or in their districts.

Some of the options that existed prior to the pandemic are still in place. Citizens can call a legislator's office or send an email to share thoughts of how particular bills will impact their lives as well as to voice support or opposition. Many legislators maintain a social media presence. Postal mail is another option though it is not the most effective choice when time is of the essence. The contact information for each legislator can be found on their individual pages on the [House](#) and [Senate](#) websites.

If you desire to still meet with your legislators, many are participating in virtual visits with constituents over ZOOM and other virtual meeting software. For organizations which typically invite legislators to tour their locations, you might consider hosting a virtual tour.

The House [hearing](#) page contains a weekly list of scheduled hearings as does the Senate [hearing](#) page for Senate hearings. The House and Senate have provided the opportunity to listen to hearings and the daily chamber activities online. At this time, the Senate is limited to audio and captions are not provided. The House provides video and audio. Captions are provided for the House Chamber activities. The House provides the Chamber debate via the Message board on the [home page](#). The [Senate Chamber Debate](#) is available off of the home page.

The House and Senate are continuing to welcome individuals to provide testimony at hearings. However, seating is limited in the hearing rooms due to social distancing. If you do provide in-person testimony, you will most likely be asked to remove your mask while giving it.

Individuals are being encouraged to provide written testimony to the committees in lieu of providing in-person testimony. The Senate has established a [system](#) for electronic submission of written testimony. All submissions must not exceed five pages and must be received an hour prior to the beginning of a hearing. The House will be establishing a similar system on their website.

The recently adopted [rules](#) for the 101<sup>st</sup> House of Representatives contain provisions allowing for remote testimony by phone or video conference at the discretion of each committee. The logistics of this method are currently being worked on. The House Appropriations Subcommittees have decided to allow remote testimony. More information will be available at a later time.

The Senate [Appropriations](#) committee will not be holding public hearings for Governor Parson's budget recommendations. Any comments may be submitted in writing to individual committee members.

Should you choose to travel to the Capitol, all visitors must use the south entrance and will undergo screenings in the form of questions and a physical screening. Advocacy days can be scheduled and held. Groups may reserve the first floor rotunda for events but are asked to wear masks and maintain social distance as much as possible. The third floor rotunda, alcoves, and House Hearing Room 2 are not accepting reservations for the entirety of the legislative session.

Please like and subscribe to the Governor's Council on Disability's (GCD) Facebook page (@MissouriGCD) to receive additional information about the GCD's activities and disability-related information.

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