

August Recess Toolkit

Over the past year, brain tumor advocates have contacted their members of Congress regarding public policies that affect the brain tumor community. Brain tumor advocates have been very successful in securing the support of their elected officials for increased medical research funding, access to life saving chemotherapy medication, and increased resources for pediatric cancer research and drug development.

The current Congressional Recess from August 1 to September 2, when legislators leave Washington, D.C. and spend time meeting with their constituents in their home districts, offers a great opportunity to continue the momentum created from advocacy events like our [Head to the Hill](#). This is a great time to connect with your Elected Officials, build a relationship, and let them know how they can take action to support brain tumor patients and families in their district.

We have created the toolkit below to give you all of the resources you need to connect with your member of Congress during the August recess and to learn about the issues.

Questions? Please contact Kacey Troy, Research and Advocacy Manager at advocacy@braintumor.org or 520.762.4544.

Learn the Issues

We want to use the August Congressional recess as a chance to advocate with our members of Congress on the following issues: medical research funding and pediatric cancer research and drug development.

Below are a number of links to provide more information on each topic.

The links below are downloadable PDFs that advocates should bring with them to any meetings or drop-offs. These include issue briefs on both of these policy matters, separately. Finally, we have included an information sheet on brain tumors in general to give you some background, statistics, and facts.

- [Support NIH Funding](#)
- [Let's Pass the Childhood Cancer STAR Act](#)
- [Brain Tumors in America: Keys Facts, Figures and Issues](#)

Schedule a meeting

Now that you have information on all of the policy matters we are advocating for, it's time to schedule a meeting with your member of Congress. Please contact Kacey Troy, Research and Advocacy Manager (advocacy@braintumor.org), to schedule your in-district meeting. She will help you and your advocacy group communicate with your Senator or Representative's scheduler.

Before the meeting

Planning and preparation are keys to success. It is important to plan out the purpose of the meeting and the strategy for educating or persuading the elected official. If you plan on attending with friends, family, or other advocates in the area, talk together to create your plan.

1. Research your elected official. In addition to reading the information on his or her Congressional website, ask your friends and neighbors. Since your Member of Congress lives in the area, you could have friends in common, or have attended the same school. It's good to know that information and mention it during your meeting to make a personal connection.
2. If you are attending the meeting as a group, determine a group leader and decide on roles for each person attending the meeting.
3. Prepare information to use in the meeting:
 - Print out our one page information sheets ([Childhood Cancer STAR Act](#), [NIH Funding Request](#), and [Brain Tumors in America](#)) that you will leave with the office
 - Print out talking points to use as a reference ([Talking Points](#))
 - Write down the facts and statistics you want to share. For state specific brain tumor facts, email [mailto:advocacy@braintumor.org?subject=State Specific Facts](mailto:advocacy@braintumor.org?subject=State%20Specific%20Facts).
 - Think about how you will tell your personal story (see below for information)
 - Make sure you arrive at the office at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled meeting time, both to find the office and let them know you're there, as well as to go over your game plan with other volunteers if you're meeting in a group.

During the meeting

1. Be sure to properly introduce everyone in your group.
2. Open about the importance of the problem for which you need the elected official's attention.
3. Be personal. Let your legislators know about the personal connection you have to the specific brain tumor public policy issue you are talking about.
4. Provide the most important reasons you are seeking a particular policy solution and provide the data to support it.
5. Most importantly – remember to ask the legislator for their support. It is ok to ask the legislator questions about their position on the issue(s). It is also acceptable to ask a legislator to defend their position if it differs from your views. But remember to always remain respectful.
6. Build productive relationships – The meetings are opportunities to create positive relationships for the future. The current policy issue will not be the last one you want to work on with an elected official.
7. Don't bluff.
8. If you are asked for information you don't have, just tell the elected official that you will get them the information they seek, and contact the National Brain Tumor Society after the meeting for that information.
9. Thank elected officials when appropriate. You can follow these links to find out which legislators have co-sponsored the Childhood Cancer STAR Act ([House](#) and [Senate](#)).
10. Do not be partisan as a volunteer of the National Brain Tumor Society. Please do not make comments that are politically leaning or charged. National Brain Tumor Society works with elected officials in a nonpartisan manner.

Telling Your Story

One of the most important things you can do during your meeting is to share your connection to the public policy issue you are advocating for. Telling your story of how you are connected to brain tumors can be an emotional experience. If you feel comfortable, a few tips for telling your story include:

1. Tell your story chronologically
2. Describe how you are alike or different from those who would benefit from the public policy you are advocating for
3. Be as brief as possible while still being complete
4. Connect your story to what you are asking the elected official to do

By following the tips above, you can have a productive meeting with your elected officials during this August recess. Good luck, and don't forget to tell us how it goes by emailing advocacy@braintumor.org

Drop by a District Office

If a meeting time isn't available with your member of Congress or a staff member, you can stop by their district office during regular business hours to drop off information on the policy matters affecting the brain tumor community.

If you're not sure who your members of Congress are, look them up at: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

On the same websites, you can find a listing of office locations. Find the location in your state, and if there are multiple locations, pick the one that is closest to you.

Print out copies of the [Childhood Cancer STAR Act](#), [Request to Support NIH Funding](#), and [Brain Tumors in America](#) documents to bring with you to the office, and bring either a business card or a notecard with your name and address on it. Once you're there, you can speak to the staff member at the front desk. Here's a suggestion on what you could say:

"Hi, my name is _____ and I live in _____. I am a constituent of _____ and a volunteer brain tumor advocate with the National Brain Tumor Society. I wanted to leave some information here to pass on to the Representative/Senator while she/he is home for the August Recess. These flyers have information on the policy matters affecting the brain tumor community, including medical research funding and pediatric cancer research and drug development. Could you please pass this on to (Representative/Senator) (NAME)? Thank you for your time and attention."

Submit a Letter to the Editor

While meeting directly with your member of Congress is the most effective way to inform him or her of the needs of the brain tumor community, there are also ways to spread awareness and continue the conversation publically. One way is to submit a letter to the editor in your local newspaper. Links to a

few sample letters are below. Please pick whichever one is most relevant to your experience. Below are instructions on how to submit your letter.

[Here are some Letter to the Editor samples](#) for advocates who held a meeting (supportive and non-committal legislator), attended a Town Hall meeting, or dropped information at an office.

How to Submit a Letter to the Editor:

Most publications make finding their specifications for submitting a letter to the editor fairly simple.

ONLINE: Most publications that have a corresponding website, have a page (or part of a page) dedicated to how to submit a letter to the editor. Some provide an email address, while some others have a form online where you can type (or cut-and-paste) your letter to the editor and then, simply, hit "send."

This information is usually found from the website's "Contact us," "Submissions," "Help," or "About Us" pages, which can typically be found as links either along a top menu bar, sidebar, or in the footer of the webpage (all the way at the bottom). Some even have a direct "Letters to the editor" links from the homepage. Others will list information on submissions within the "Opinion" section of the website.

IN PRINT: Most papers run their letters to the editor on the "Opinion Page(s)." The Opinion Page(s) will typically list contact information for where to send letters, as well. Other places contact information in a print publication maybe found is inside the front cover (page) or back page.

FOLLOWING UP: It is recommended that if you do not receive a reply within a couple of days of submission, to follow-up by phone and ask if they have received your letter and whether they plan to publish it or not.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to media@braintumor.org.

Engage on Social Media

Make sure to share your experiences with other advocates, ask questions, and find more resources by utilizing social media including Facebook and Twitter. Use the hashtags #btaction #btism and be sure to follow [@NBTStweets](#) and [like us on Facebook](#).

Finally, you can check if any of your Senators or Representatives are on Twitter or Facebook (most are!) and send them thank you messages for meeting with you, or links to more information.