

Federal lawmakers regularly spend time in their home states and districts to meet with constituents to assess how they can best advocate for their community when they return to Washington, D.C. These District or State Work Periods are an opportunity to build relationships with lawmakers and staffers and provide them with first-hand experiences to demonstrate the impact your facility has in your community and congressional district.

This toolkit serves as a resource on how to successfully host lawmakers at your institution and how to foster a lasting relationship. Aquariums, zoos, nature centers, and other AZA members provide especially unique opportunities because of the positive economic, environmental, and social impact they have on their communities.

In this toolkit, you will be provided with the following suggestions and documents to use before, during, and after engaging your lawmakers when they are back home:

- Examples of how AZA member institutions can engage their lawmakers during recess periods
- A sample meeting request letter that you may use when reaching out to your lawmaker
- A sample follow-up/thank you letter to send to your lawmaker after you engage with your lawmaker during a district work period
- Tips and tricks for a successful tour
- Social media materials to use when highlighting advocacy work
- Issue briefs about key legislative priorities, which provide you with talking points about these topics and also can be printed and shared with lawmakers



Recess Resources

As you consider engaging with lawmakers, AZA can provide you with congressional staff contact information. Additionally, you can use the links below to find your members of Congress and to see the congressional calendar. Any day or week marked as a District or State Work Period is a time when legislators are more likely to be back home in their communities.

This year, Congress will have extended District and State Work Periods during the months of August and October. These congressional recesses can give you and your lawmakers added flexibility in scheduling a visit. Please consider reaching out to your congressional contacts about six weeks prior to the start of an extended recess to begin the scheduling process.

- [Find Your Representative](#)
- [Find Your Senators](#)
- [2024 House Calendar](#)
- [2024 Senate Calendar](#)

Ways to Engage Lawmakers and their Staff during District or State Work Periods

There are several ways in which aquariums and zoos can engage with their lawmakers when they are in their home district or state. While most AZA-accredited facilities are allowed to host non-partisan tours and events, it is important to check with your facility's policies around non-partisan engagement. Please also be mindful of gift rules for Congress and your state.

- Host a tour for lawmakers and/or their staff
 - Offer a few dates and times
 - Share a tour agenda/schedule ahead of time
 - Ensure that facility staff are aware of the visit
 - If your facility has received federal funding in the past, offer the lawmakers and staff the opportunity to see the finished or in-progress project
 - Share and/or repost social media posts about the tour
- Invite your lawmakers and/or their staff to a release of a rescued and rehabilitated animal
 - Share and/or repost social media posts about the release
- Host or attend a townhall
- Request and attend a meeting with a lawmaker and/or their staff at their local district office
- Share rescue, rehabilitation, and recovery stories on social media

Template Request Letters

Sample Tour Invitation Email

To: District or State Scheduler and/or Staff Contact
Subject: Invitation to Tour [FACILITY]

Dear [STAFF CONTACT],

On behalf of [FACILITY], I would like to invite [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR X] and staff members to participate in a behind-the-scenes tour during the August recess. Visiting [FACILITY] will give [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR X] the opportunity to see the important role we play in our community as a resource for economic growth, education, and recreation.

[FACILITY] is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), a non-profit independent accrediting organization that sets the gold standard for the premier zoos and aquariums in America and the world.

[Provide a brief overview of your facility and its impact on the community. This can include employment numbers, education programs, conservation efforts, etc.].

We hope [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR X] can visit us during one of the following days and times.

- [DATE/TIME]

Alternatively, we are glad to work with you to find a different date that best works with [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR X]'s schedule.

Thank you for your time, and we hope to see you soon at [FACILITY].

Sincerely,

Sample Meeting Invitation Email

To: District or State Scheduler and/or Staff Contact
Subject: Meeting Request with [FACILITY]

Dear [STAFF CONTACT],

On behalf of [FACILITY], I would like to schedule a meeting with [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR X] and staff during the upcoming August recess.

[FACILITY] serves as a vital resource for economic growth, education, and recreation in your district and the community. We hope to discuss H.R. 7999, the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act, and other policy issues that are important to the zoo and aquarium community.

We hope [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR X] can meet with us during one of the following days and times.

- [DATE/TIME]

Alternatively, we are glad to work with you to find a different date that best works with [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR X]'s schedule.

We hope to see you soon!

Sincerely,

Sample Thank You Message

To: Your Meeting/Tour Point of Contact
Subject: [FACILITY] Meeting Follow-Up

Dear [Staff Contact Name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on [DATE] to discuss issues important to the zoo and aquarium community.

[INFORMATION/TALKING POINTS ABOUT YOUR FACILITY AND TOPICS DISCUSSED DURING THE MEETING].

I look forward to continuing to work with you on supporting zoos and aquariums.

Sincerely,

Tips and Tricks for Engaging Lawmakers

Show don't tell

A tour of your zoo, aquarium or field conservation site can provide elected leaders with a deeply impactful opportunity to experience and understand your work firsthand. Experiencing it makes it more memorable, and makes your message stick.

Tips for a successful tour with elected officials

Do your homework, and share information on how your facility is serving their constituents. Learn about their priorities and where your common ground is. Can you help each other solve problems? Be strategic about what to include and what not to include in the tour, based on their interests, values and politics. For example: some leaders may not prioritize advancing endangered species recovery, but they might be keenly interested in youth development.

Keep it short

An hour may be the most you can get, so focus on a few tour stops that tell your story and build a case for your impact and needs. Show them something that will make them say "This is amazing, I had no idea zoos/ aquariums did this kind of meaningful work."

Kids!

Lawmakers love connecting with youth – whether it's a teen program or 2nd-grade campers. This is also a great opportunity for youth to understand the power and influence they have as constituents.

Keep it fun

Plan for and include great animal photo opportunities! Their communications team will love you for it. Photos and videos will come in handy on social media and help the lawmaker's staff with other reporting and storytelling efforts. Be ready to thank them and engage with their channels on social media. A public thank you is the best kind!

What staff should participate?

Lawmakers want to connect with the staff doing the actual work with youth, animals, conservation, and the community – not just the people on your executive team! The messenger is often as important as the message, and as a person with specific expertise, you bring a powerful credibility and authenticity to your organization.

Ask

If you have an ask (and you should) – make it clear and to the point. Connect it to something they're learning on the tour. For example: seeing a rescued animal will make a case for why they should support the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act. These kinds of stories and experiences will help them advocate for you. Send them away with a one-pager highlighting what they learned.

Lawmaker can't make it? Invite their staff! As the gatekeepers, they are equally important. You should also consider organizing a tour designed specifically for staffers.

Social Media Sample Posts

Social media is a great way to share your engagement with a lawmaker, thank a lawmaker for championing a key policy priority, and encourage further action. When tagging a member of Congress in a social media post, please be mindful to only tag 'government official' accounts, not campaign accounts. The easiest ways to find your lawmaker's official social media channels are to visit their government website or to reach out to AZA for further guidance.

[@Senator/@Representative] visited [FACILITY] today to see how staff and volunteers work to conserve threatened and endangered species and serve as an education resource in our community. [DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES THAT TOOK PLACE]. [STATISTIC ABOUT PROGRAMS AT THE FACILITY]. Thank you to [@Senator/@Representative] for supporting aquariums and zoos!

Thank you to [@Senator/@Representative] for cosponsoring the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act! #WR3 supports rescue, rehabilitation, reintroduction, and confiscation efforts by zoos and aquariums across the country. To learn more about WR3, please visit aza.org/wr3.

Thank you to [@Senator/@Representative] for visiting [FACILITY] today and for supporting zoos and aquariums! As a member of @zoos_aquariums, [FACILITY] meets the highest standards for animal wellbeing. We are proud to serve as a trusted resource in the [CITY/TOWN] community.

Issue Briefs

Issue briefs provide you with talking points about key legislative topics and also can be printed and shared with lawmakers. You do not need to discuss every topic during your tour or visit. However, please consider discussing the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act (WR3), a new bill developed in partnership with AZA to support rescue, rehabilitation, reintroduction, and confiscation efforts by zoos and aquariums.

In addition to the issue brief on the next page, more information on WR3 is available online at aza.org/wr3.

Zoos and aquariums accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums are experts in the care, rescue, and rehabilitation of wildlife. Facilities that care for rescued endangered and threatened species provide a valuable public service, often investing significant resources to support animals most in need. Additionally, as wildlife trafficking continues to rise, qualified zoos, aquariums, sanctuaries, and rescue organizations are often called upon first to provide immediate care, housing, and rehabilitation for confiscated wildlife.

H.R. 7999, the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act would support rescue, rehabilitation, reintroduction, and confiscation efforts by zoos and aquariums in the following ways:

The Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act would establish a **Rescue and Recovery Grant Program** to support rescue, rehabilitation, and confiscation-related work. Supported activities include expenses related to facility costs, food, veterinary care, direct animal care staff, transportation costs, reintroduction efforts, developing networks of facilities qualified to conduct these activities, and more.

The Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act would codify all aspects of the **Wildlife Confiscations Network**. By acting as a single point of contact for federal wildlife law enforcement, the Wildlife Confiscations Network establishes a cooperative and coordinated confiscation response that can help address immediate triage needs through a network of qualified facilities. The Wildlife Confiscations Network currently operates as a pilot program in Southern California; this legislation will expand it nationwide.

The Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act develops a **partnership approach** with regard to these activities by recognizing and supporting the invaluable role zoos, aquariums, and related facilities play in the rescue, rehabilitation, and reintroduction of threatened and endangered species.

This legislation will allow important ongoing work to continue well into the future, supporting animals most in need and the facilities that care for them.

**Please cosponsor H.R. 7999,
the Wildlife Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintroduction Act.**

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and guest experience. AZA's 250 accredited aquariums, nature centers, science centers and zoos annually see more than 200 million visitors, collectively generate more than \$20 billion in annual U.S. economic activity, and support more than 198,000 jobs. In 2022, AZA-accredited facilities spent more than \$252 million on field conservation in 119 countries.

Visit www.aza.org for more information.

Multinational Species Conservation Funds

As populations of many of the world's most treasured wild animals have fallen dramatically due to habitat loss, poaching, and other pressures, Congress has responded to the challenge by creating the Multinational Species Conservation Funds (MSCF). Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the five programs that make up the MSCF support the conservation of iconic species like African elephants, Asian elephants, rhinoceros, tigers, great apes, and marine turtles.

Please provide at least \$30 million for the Multinational Species Conservation Funds for FY 2025.

John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program

The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program supports the recovery, care, or treatment of sick, injured, or entangled marine mammals. Grant funding also supports all aspects of response to the stranding of certain marine mammals, including retrieval, care, treatment, rehabilitation, and release.

Please provide at least \$6 million for NOAA and \$2.3 million for USFWS for the Prescott Grant Program for FY 2025.

Endangered Species Recovery Challenge Grant Program

AZA-accredited facilities have played a significant role in bringing many species back from the brink of extinction, including the black-footed ferret and the California condor. The Endangered Species Recovery Challenge Grant program recognizes the critically important role of nonprofit partners in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species recovery efforts.

Please provide at least \$12 million for the Recovery Challenge Grant Program for FY 2025.

Institute of Museum and Library Services Office of Museum Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary federal agency responsible for supporting the nation's 30,000+ museums, including zoos, aquariums, and science centers. The Office of Museum Services awards grants to museums to support them as institutions of learning and exploration and keepers of our cultural, historical, and scientific heritages.

Please provide at least \$65.5 million for the Office of Museum Services for FY 2025.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and guest experience. AZA's 250 accredited aquariums, nature centers, science centers and zoos annually see more than 200 million visitors, collectively generate more than \$20 billion in annual U.S. economic activity, and support more than 198,000 jobs. In 2022, AZA-accredited facilities spent more than \$252 million on field conservation in 119 countries.



Photo Credit: Vanessa Kahn/New England Aquarium

Each year, aquariums, zoos, and other organizations rescue and rehabilitate thousands of stranded and injured sea turtles. These organizations are facing increasing demands to respond to and care for federally protected sea turtles as a result of many threats including fishing gear and other plastic debris entanglements, boat strikes, and climate-driven cold-stun events. Most facilities voluntarily help fulfill federal mandates, operating with little to no direct federal support. This level of voluntary contribution is not sustainable.

The bipartisan, bicameral **Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Assistance Act** would establish a permanent grant program within NOAA to support the rescue and rehabilitation of sick and injured sea turtles. Funding from the grant program will help offset the cost of vital rescue and rehabilitation efforts. Unlike marine mammal stranding response and rehabilitation, no permanent grant program exists to support sea turtles. The legislation will help fill a crucial gap in support for sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation.



Photo Credit: © National Aquarium

Please pass H.R. 2560/S. 2086, the Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Assistance Act to support sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation.

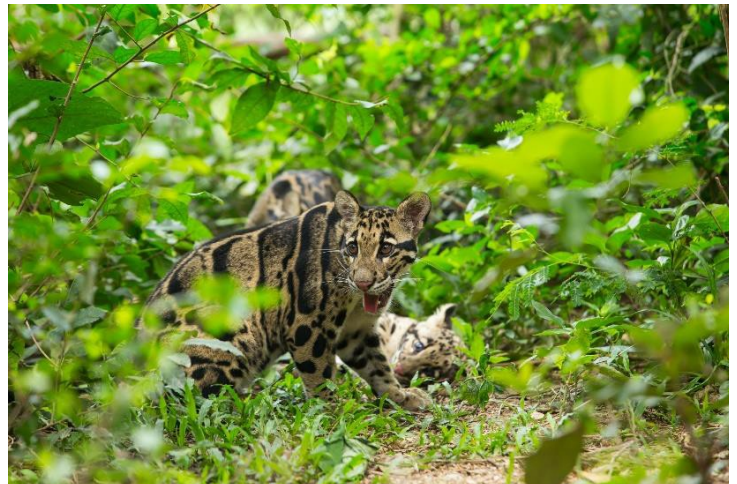
Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and guest experience. AZA's 250 accredited aquariums, nature centers, science centers and zoos annually see more than 200 million visitors, collectively generate more than \$20 billion in annual U.S. economic activity, and support more than 198,000 jobs. In 2022, AZA-accredited facilities spent more than \$252 million on field conservation in 119 countries.

Visit www.aza.org for more information.

Conservation is a priority for AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and a key part of their mission to save species from extinction. In 2022, AZA-accredited aquariums and zoos invested \$252 million on field conservation projects, benefitting nearly 1,000 species and subspecies across 119 countries.

H.R. 6727/S. 618, the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act (USFICA), would substantially support and expand the field conservation work of AZA-accredited facilities by establishing the United States Foundation for International Conservation.

The Foundation would leverage the collective impact of public-private partnerships to support international projects that protect biological diversity, contribute to community-based economic growth, and improve the management of protected or conserved land. The Foundation would also authorize \$100 million in grant funding annually from Fiscal Year 2025 through Fiscal Year 2035 to be used towards conservation efforts around the world.



Please pass H.R. 6727/S. 618, the U.S. Foundation for International Conservation Act (USFICA), to conserve wildlife and wild places.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and guest experience. AZA's 250 accredited aquariums, nature centers, science centers and zoos annually see more than 200 million visitors, collectively generate more than \$20 billion in annual U.S. economic activity, and support more than 198,000 jobs. In 2022, AZA-accredited facilities spent more than \$252 million on field conservation in 119 countries.

Visit www.aza.org for more information.



AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are leaders in conservation. In 2022, AZA-accredited aquariums and zoos invested \$252 million on field conservation projects, benefitting nearly 1,000 species and subspecies across 119 countries.

H.R. 5009/S. 2395, the Wildlife Innovation and Longevity Driver (WILD) Reauthorization Act would bolster zoo and aquarium conservation efforts by reauthorizing the Multinational Species Conservation Funds and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. These programs support the conservation of iconic species like African elephants, Asian elephants, rhinoceros, tigers, great apes, and marine turtles.

Please pass H.R. 5009/S. 2395, the WILD Act, to conserve wildlife for future generations.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and guest experience. AZA's 250 accredited aquariums, nature centers, science centers and zoos annually see more than 200 million visitors, collectively generate more than \$20 billion in annual U.S. economic activity, and support more than 198,000 jobs. In 2022, AZA-accredited facilities spent more than \$252 million on field conservation in 119 countries.

Visit www.aza.org for more information.

The bipartisan Congressional Zoo and Aquarium Caucus, co-chaired by Representative Andrew Garbarino (R-NY-02) and Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL-05), partners with and advances the work of zoos and aquariums across the country.

The goals of the Caucus are to:

- Foster appreciation for the work of zoos and aquariums as they save species, enhance local and regional economies, meet rigorous professional standards for animal care and welfare, and provide the public with essential connections to the natural world
- Recognize the impact of zoos and aquariums as leaders in animal care and welfare, science education, and wildlife conservation
- Promote zoos and aquariums as centers of excellence in science and environmental education



**Please join the Congressional Zoo and Aquarium Caucus to support
zoos and aquariums across the country.**

To join the Congressional Zoo and Aquarium Caucus, please contact Dominick Porcella with Representative Garbarino at Dominick.Porcella@mail.house.gov or Jessica Merritt with Representative Quigley at Jessica.Merritt@mail.house.gov.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and guest experience. AZA's 250 accredited aquariums, nature centers, science centers and zoos annually see more than 200 million visitors, collectively generate more than \$20 billion in annual U.S. economic activity, and support more than 198,000 jobs. In 2022, AZA-accredited facilities spent more than \$252 million on field conservation in 119 countries.

Visit www.aza.org for more information.

118th Congress Caucus Members

Caucus Co-Chairs: Rep. Andrew Garbarino (NY-02) and Rep. Mike Quigley (IL-05)

Amo, Gabe (RI-01)	Lamborn, Doug (CO-05)
Bacon, Don (NE-02)	Langworthy, Nick (NY-23)
Banks, Jim (IN-03)	Latta, Robert (OH-05)
Bilirakis, Gus (FL-12)	Lee, Barbara (CA-12)
Bishop, Sanford (GA-02)	Levin, Mike (CA-49)
Bonamici, Suzanne (OR-01)	Lofgren, Zoe (CA-18)
Brownley, Julia (CA-26)	Lynch, Stephen (MA-08)
Calvert, Ken (CA-41)	Mace, Nancy (SC-01)
Carbajal, Salud (CA-24)	Magaziner, Seth (RI-02)
Carson, André (IN-07)	Malliotakis, Nicole (NY-11)
Carter, Buddy (GA-01)	Matsui, Doris (CA-07)
Castor, Kathy (FL-14)	Molinaro, Marc (NY-19)
Ciscomani, Juan (AZ-06)	McCaul, Michael T. (TX-10)
Clarke, Yvette (NY-09)	McCollum, Betty (MN-04)
Cleaver, Emanuel (MO-05)	Meng, Grace (NY-06)
Cohen, Steve (TN-09)	Morelle, Joseph (NY-25)
Costa, Jim (CA-21)	Murphy, Gregory (NC-03)
Courtney, Joe (CT-02)	Nadler, Jerrold (NY-12)
Davis, Danny (IL-07)	Nehls, Troy (TX-22)
DelBene, Suzan (WA-01)	Ogles, Andy (TN-05)
Diaz-Balart, Mario (FL-25)	Pallone, Frank (NJ-06)
Dingell, Debbie (MI-06)	Panetta, Jimmy (CA-19)
Fleischmann, Chuck (TN-03)	Peters, Scott (CA-50)
Flood, Mike (NE-01)	Pettersen, Brittany (CO-07)
Foster, Bill (IL-11)	Pocan, Mark (WI-02)
Frankel, Lois (FL-22)	Posey, Bill (FL-08)
Fry, Russell (SC-07)	Ross, Deborah (NC-02)
Gonzales, Tony (TX-23)	Ruppersberger, Dutch (MD-02)
Gottheimer, Josh (NJ-05)	Sánchez, Linda T. (CA-38)
Granger, Kay (TX-12)	Sarbanes, John P. (MD-03)
Graves, Garret (LA-06)	Schakowsky, Jan (IL-09)
Green, Al (TX-09)	Schiff, Adam (CA-30)
Himes, Jim (CT-04)	Scott, Bobby (VA-03)
Houlahan, Chrissy (PA-06)	Scott, David (GA-13)
Hudson, Richard (NC-08)	Smith, Chris (NJ-04)
Huffman, Jared (CA-02)	Soto, Darren (FL-09)
Jacobs, Sara (CA-51)	Stauber, Peter (MN-08)
Jayapal, Pramila (WA-07)	Tenney, Claudia (NY-24)
Johnson, Dusty (SD-At Large)	Titus, Dina (NV-01)
Joyce, David (OH-14)	Torres, Ritchie (NY-15)
Kaptur, Marcy (OH-09)	Vargas, Juan (CA-52)
Keating, William (MA-09)	Wilson, Joe (SC-02)
Kiggins, Jen (VA-02)	Wittman, Robert J. (VA-01)
Kildee, Dan (MI-05)	
Kilmer, Derek (WA-06)	
LaLota, Nick (NY-01)	