



Getting Help from People in Congress

by NLLIC Staff

Revised 2004

Do you have trouble solving problems related to Medicare, Social Security, or veteran's benefits?

Here are some tips for getting help from your congressional office:

- **Know who your representatives are.** There are two senators from your state. You also have one person from your district in the House of Representatives.
- **Know how to contact them.** Find the names and contact information for the three people who represent you. To find this information:
 - Look in the blue pages of your local telephone book.
 - Visit [THOMAS – Legislative Information on the Internet](http://thomas.loc.gov) (<http://thomas.loc.gov>), a Web site for identifying federal representatives and for finding contact information. Look under "House Directory" or "Senate Directory" to locate congressional members by state.
 - Type in your state and zip code at www.house.gov/writerep/ to find your district and contact your representative.
- **Find the right staff person.** Each office has staff members to help you. They are called caseworkers. Find out where the caseworkers are located. Sometimes they are in your state, and sometimes they are in Washington, DC.
- **Call and write.** Most caseworkers will talk with you on the phone. An initial phone call may help you build a relationship and also will give you a personal contact. However, a letter is usually required before a caseworker is allowed to begin to help you.

- **Follow up.** Remember: Federal congressional offices may get thousands of pieces of mail each week. This high volume sometimes means that letters get lost or fail to receive the attention they need and deserve. If you do not hear from anyone, call and ask about your letter.

- **Ask for help with private insurance.** Caseworkers may also be able to help with some private insurance issues, although their involvement is usually limited. For instance, they may:
 - Put you in touch with the right department in the state
 - Forward your information to someone in the state. (Having your information sent or a call made on your behalf from a federal representative may be very helpful.)

Usually making contact with one office will be enough. Keep in mind that some offices may respond more quickly than others. If one office fails to help you, contact another.