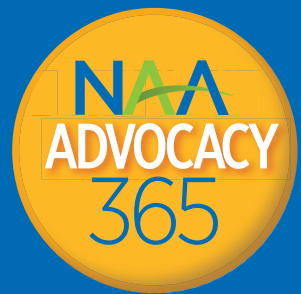
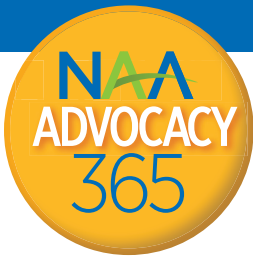




# NAA KEY CONTACT HANDBOOK





# The National Apartment Association KEY CONTACT PROGRAM

---

The National Apartment Association (NAA) serves as the leading voice of the rental housing industry through advocacy, education and collaboration. As a federation of 145 state and local affiliates, NAA encompasses over 91,000 members representing more than 11 million apartment homes globally. As the leading voice of the rental housing industry, NAA relies on its Key Contacts to advocate for policies that will result in the return of a stable and dynamic rental housing industry throughout the United States.

While a strong lobbying presence in Washington is important, the real power of the rental housing industry resides in its individual members. With that in mind, its over 91,000 members gives NAA the potential to be an extremely powerful force in our nation's capital. However, it takes substantial amounts of grassroots engagement and political momentum to accomplish our legislative and regulatory goals. That's where you come in.

No matter the issues facing the rental housing industry – whether it's eviction moratoriums, property tax legislation or rent control – there will always be a group or association opposing our position. As a Key Contact, you are the single most effective advocate for our industry. As the expert on rental housing issues and the one with a personal relationship with your Member of Congress, your legislator wants to hear your input.

Lawmakers want to know how a policy issue will affect their districts and they look to you as a resource to help them find answers. Your voice and your hands-on experiences will help guide their decisions when it comes to housing policy. As Key Contacts, you are active in hundreds of congressional districts across the country. That is an incredible responsibility with significant power.

Your efforts to build relationships with and educate each Member of Congress can make a significant difference, and NAA is relying on those relationships. So, building, maintaining and retaining your relationships matter. When an important issue facing the rental housing industry arises, we want your lawmakers to pick up the phone and reach out to you—their Key Contact and friend whom they can trust on housing issues.

This handbook will provide you with all the essential resources on the Key Contact Program, different ways you can get involved, as well as important introductory materials on the legislative process in Washington. Your involvement is vital to the success of NAA's advocacy efforts around the country.

## Key Contact Responsibilities

NAA's Key Contacts are organized into tiers, which are based on the level of activity and outreach individuals are able to accomplish with their Members of Congress. A Key Contact's most valuable contribution to NAA is the development of a relationship with their designated Member of Congress and their staff. In addition to regular contact with the designated Member of Congress, members of the Key Contact Program are expected to perform specific tasks to fulfill a particular Key Contact tier each year:

### Minimum Key Contact Expectations:

- 1. Respond to All NAA Action Alerts:** Key Contacts are expected to respond to ALL NAA Action Alerts they receive. As NAA's main communicators with Congress, Key Contacts are looked upon as leaders by their fellow NAA peers and should lead by example. Once a Key Contact has responded to an NAA Action Alert, the Key Contact should encourage their NAA peers to do the same.
- 2. Contact Designated Member of Congress at Least Once per Quarter and Meet with Designated Member of Congress Twice per Year:** Key Contacts should have a minimum of four personal contacts with their Member of Congress (or staff) per year (Direct email outreach, NAAPAC check deliveries, direct phone calls, etc.). Key Contacts are encouraged to not limit that number to four and should communicate with their assigned Congressional office as often as possible. The more outreach that a Key Contact does to a Congressional office the better the relationship will become. Part of the four contacts



with the Member of Congress should include meeting with their designated Congressional office at least twice per year either in-person or virtually. Key Contacts can fulfill this expectation by meeting with their Member of Congress during the annual NAA Advocate Conference and the At Home Advocacy Program. Key Contacts can also choose to meet with their Congressional office at other times throughout the year.

- 3. Participate in Training as Required:** All Key Contacts must complete an introductory training. Beyond this introductory training all Key Contacts will have access to webinars, video resources, and virtual events to continue their training. Key Contacts may participate in local in-person sessions when made available as well.
- 4. Advocate on Behalf of the Rental Housing Industry and the Apartment Party:** The Apartment Party portrays the idea that supporting the rental housing industry transcends party affiliation. Regardless of your personal political views, as a Key Contact you will be asked to represent the concerns of NAA's 93,000 members nationwide as well as the concerns of your local affiliated association. As a representative of NAA, you must be able to speak in support of the policy positions that have been approved by NAA's Government Affairs team, Legislative Committee and Board of Directors, even if these policies conflict with your personal viewpoint.

### Optimal Key Contact Expectations:

- 5. Submit Periodic Field Reports on Key Contact Activities:** Key Contacts are expected to file a Field Report after each meeting or substantial interaction with their designated Congressional office. Filing a Field Report after each meeting alerts the NAA Government Affairs staff of the meeting that occurred and follow up that may be required from the NAA lobbying, grassroots or PAC staff.
- 6. Invite Member of Congress to Speak at and/or Attend NAA and Local Affiliated Association Events Where Applicable:** Key Contacts should look to familiarize their designated Member of Congress with the rental housing industry by inviting them to any relevant local events as well as any NAA events where applicable. This will be good exposure for both the local rental housing industry, affiliated association and the Member of Congress will have a good opportunity to meet constituents and discuss issues important to their district.

- 7. Inform NAA Government Affairs Staff of Local Activities that Relate to the Rental Housing Industry:** At least twice per year Key Contacts should submit a Field Report that outlines any local housing issues that are emerging in their designated Congressional district. This will allow NAA Government Affairs staff to discuss emerging issues with the Member of Congress and begin to address them before they turn into a more severe problem.

### Ideal Key Contact Expectations:

- 8. Support Their Member of Congress:** Key Contacts should attend at least one function held by their Member of Congress (political campaign event, town hall, etc.) per year. The Key Contact should look to make their presence known at the event (make it a point to have a conversation with the Member of Congress, say hello to staff, etc.) to continue building on their relationship. Key Contacts should refrain from engaging in activities that support or can be perceived as supporting their lawmaker's opponent as that would directly conflict with their expectations as a Key Contact.
- 9. Volunteer for Their Member of Congress:** If applicable, Key Contacts should look to contribute either time (i.e. volunteering to make phone calls or knock doors for their Member of Congress' campaign) or money (i.e. personal contribution to their Member of Congress' campaign or hosting a fundraiser for your Member of Congress) to further their relationship with the Member of congress and their staff.

**Questions? Contact Austin O'Boyle at 202-570-9329 or [aoboyle@naahq.org](mailto:aoboyle@naahq.org)**

## Key Contact Incentives

NAA wants to ensure that Key Contacts are properly incentivized to be the voice of the rental housing industry. Each Key contact will be able to reach each tier of Key Contact depending upon their level of engagement. Each tier will have its own unique incentives associated with it.

The following items are just some of the incentives that can be expected from being a Key Contact:

- NAA Advocacy Apparel and "Swag": Jackets, lapel pins, bags, shirts, etc.
- Exclusive Political Events: Virtual events held on a quarterly basis where senior



Congressional staff, industry insiders, Administration staff and Members of Congress join our Key Contacts to discuss the current state of Washington and how the rental housing industry fits into the current political environment.

- Exclusive Thank You Events: Two annual virtual events that will not be politically focused but will be a fun experience exclusively offered to Key Contacts and Top NAA Advocates. Event examples include at home wine tasting, murder mystery dinner, private movie screening with food delivery, etc.
- Annual Advocate Conference Event: Examples include Capitol Dome tour, monument tours, etc.
- Industry-wide recognition for your advocacy efforts and all that you have done for the rental housing industry.

The various Key Contact tiers will have specific incentives that are unique for that individual tier.

The tiers break down as follows:

### **Minimum Key Contact Expectation—Bronze Level Key Contact:**

- 1-2 apparel/swag items
- Access to all four (4) political events per year
- Access to one (1) Thank You event per year
- Bronze Key Contact Lapel Pin
- Bronze Level Key Contact recognition

### **Optimal Key Contact Expectations—Silver Level Key Contact:**

- 2-3 apparel/swag items
- Access to all four (4) political events per year
- Access to one (1) Thank You event per year
- Admittance to annual Advocate Conference event
- Silver Key Contact Lapel Pin
- Silver Level Key Contact recognition

### **Ideal Key Contact Expectations—Gold Level Key Contact:**

- 3-4 apparel/swag items
- Access to all four (4) political events per year
- Access to two (2) Thank You events per year
- Admittance to annual Advocate Conference Event
- Gold Key Contact Lapel Pin
- Gold Level Key Contact recognition

## How To Build & Maintain A Relationship with Your Member of Congress

Some NAA Key Contacts participate in a wide variety of efforts to maximize their influence on Capitol Hill. Here are some examples of what you can do to increase your influence:

- Conduct a site visit with your lawmaker in-district.
- Make it a priority to meet and get know key staff members.
- Personally interact with and involve your Member of Congress in local affiliate activities including inviting them to speak at an annual meeting or attend openings of new offices or groundbreakings etc.
- Volunteer for a candidate's campaign activities. This will help foster personal connections with that candidate (volunteering to make phone calls, hosting a fundraiser, knock doors, etc.). It will add credibility to your grassroots communications and help you to build a strong relationship with your Member of Congress that is made to last.
- Support NAA "Get Out the Vote" efforts. Encouraging other NAA members to vote for candidates who support NAA's policy agenda is an ideal method to ensure that NAA Champions remain in Congress to support key housing issues that face our industry.
- Consider making a personal contribution to your legislator's re-election campaign. Supporting your Member of Congress will have a lasting impact and can increase your influence on behalf of NAA in Congress.
- Be sure to send follow up "thank you" messages for votes when your Member of Congress votes our way.
- Drop off or send key NAA media releases, NAA research publications, etc.

## Do's and Don'ts of Meeting with Members of Congress

### Do:

#### Before the Meeting –

- Prepare by reading up on your Member of Congress on their website.
- Learn your Members' committee assignments, what specialties they have, as well as some of their personal interests.
- Plan your strategy ahead of time. Decide who will lead the meeting (if going in a group) and what talking points each person will cover.



- Study your talking points. NAA will be able to provide Key Contacts with a comprehensive talking point list prior to meetings. If a Key Contact would rather create their own talking points centered around relevant NAA issues, they can create a list of 3 to 5 important issues they want to cover and use real examples to communicate their point.
- Organize by making sure you know where the meeting is taking place and at what time. Arrive on time, be polite and dressed appropriately.
- Make sure you inform NAA Government Affairs staff of your meeting.

### **During the Meeting –**

- Be sensitive to the amount of time allotted to you. Make sure to ask up front about how long the meeting will run. Any amount of time with a Member of Congress (or staff) is extremely beneficial!
- Present the need for what you're asking the Member of Congress to do. Use data and specific examples that you've found or that NAA staff has provided to you.
- Share your story. Storytelling about how a specific policy has impacted you or your business is a great way to educate a Member of Congress on a particular issue.
- Relate situations in their home state or district.
- Ask the Member of Congress their position and why.
- Listen carefully to any counterarguments from your Member of Congress or their staff and be prepared to respond to them or tell them you will follow up with them.
- Admit what you don't know. Offer to try to find out the answer and send information back to their office (NAA staff can help with follow up information).

### **End of the Meeting –**

- Get the name and business card of any staff person who sits in on the meeting. This will help you should you need to follow up after the meeting.
- Give the Member and staff any handouts you have on your talking points (NAA staff can help compile).
- Thank the office for their time and any support the Member has given on our issues in the past.

### **After the Meeting –**

- Write a thank you email to the staff with whom you met and offer to be of any assistance on housing issues in the future.



- Follow through on any promises you made to the Member or staff.
- File a Field Report on the meeting.
- Send the Member of Congress a note of support when they do or say something that is helpful to NAA. This is especially important if the Member was not initially supportive of an issue and worked with us even if it was unpopular.

### Don't:

- Don't fail to show up for your scheduled meeting. Call if you are running late.
- Don't discount Congressional staff. Many Congressional staffers look (and are) young. Do not assume that they do not have significant responsibility and the ear of the Member of Congress. In most offices, the staffer you meet with will prepare a summary memo for the Member that carries extreme influence and power.
- Don't overload a Congressional visit with too many issues.
- Don't confront, threaten, pressure or beg under any circumstances.
- Don't be argumentative. Speak with calmness and commitment so as not to put them on the defensive.
- Don't overstate the case. Members are very busy, and you are likely to lose their attention if you are too wordy. Concise points get the job done.
- Don't expect Members of Congress to be specialists. Their schedules and workloads tend to make them more of a generalist.
- Don't be put off by long-winded answers. Bring the Members back to the point and maintain control of the meeting.
- Don't be afraid to take a stand on the issues. You represent thousands of constituents whose views on these issues are important to your Member of Congress.
- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Offer to follow up with them after the meeting when you can obtain the correct information.

## How To Schedule Appointments with Your Lawmaker

The following is a guide for scheduling appointments with your elected official whether in-district, or in Washington:

- Lawmaker's contact Information: If you do not know your legislator's contact information, call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121.



- Send an email to the Scheduler requesting a meeting. A sample letter is provided on the next page. If you cannot find who the Scheduler is for your Member of Congress, NAA Government Affairs staff can get you that information.
- Include pertinent information: Be sure to remind the Member of Congress or staff of your relationship. Make sure to include the date and time of day you would like to meet with the Member. Offer to meet with staff if the Member of Congress is unavailable. Include the name or bill number of the legislation or issue you would like to discuss. Be sure to provide a phone number and/or email address where the Scheduler can get back to you.
- Follow up with a phone call in one week if you have not heard back from the office. Ask to speak with the Scheduler. Remember to thank them, these individuals are critical to your access to your Member of Congress. A few days before the meeting, you may want to check back with the Scheduler to make sure the meeting is still on your Member of Congress' scheduler. Their schedules are very busy, you may need to be flexible with rescheduling if something comes up.
- Thank you: Please remember to send a thank you note after the meeting that includes any follow up items for discussion.
- Remember to tell NAA what happened: Either file your Field Report or email Austin O'Boyle (aoboyle@naahq.org) in a timely manner and provide a short summary of your meeting and how it went.

## Sample Meeting Request Email

Dear Senator or Representative [NAME],

I hope you are well. As you are aware, I am a constituent and member of the National Apartment Association (NAA). As such, I am writing to request an opportunity to meet with you on [INSERT DATE], in your [INSERT EITHER DISTRICT OFFICE OR WASHINGTON, D.C. OFFICE]. As a [INSERT INDUSTRY TITLE] and member of NAA, I am interested in discussing issues related to the rental housing industry. Specifically, I would like to discuss [INSERT TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION].

I know that you have a busy schedule, so I am happy to find a time and day that works best for you; however, the best time on my schedule is between [INSERT TIMES]. If you are not available to meet on [INSERT DATE], I

would appreciate an opportunity to meet with a member of your staff who handles [STATE THE ISSUE YOU PLAN TO DISCUSS]. Thank you for your consideration of my request, I look forward to hearing from you soon. Please reach me at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or via email at [INSERT EMAIL].

Sincerely,  
[SIGNATURE]

## How To Write an Email To Your Lawmaker

While it is always best to communicate with your lawmaker in-person, there are many instances where an email is appropriate and even necessary. NAA has developed numerous Action Alerts that live on NAA's Advocacy Action Center that enables you to communicate with your Members of Congress quickly and easily on issues important to NAA, but if you decide to write your own email as well, this list of suggestions will help improve the effectiveness of your communication:

- State your purpose: Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If the letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it using its bill name and/or bill number, e.g., "House bill H.R. xxxx."
- State your position: Explain how the bill would affect you, your family, your business or even your community as a whole.
- Focus on one issue: Address only one issue in each letter using facts and examples to support your position, and, if possible, keep the email as concise as possible.
- Be courteous as well as firm, confident and positive.
- Explain: Be clear as to whether you are writing on your own behalf or as President of an organization, Chairman of a group, etc.
- Ask for a reply: Indicate to your lawmaker that you would appreciate a reply containing their position on the issue. As a constituent, you have the right to know your Member of Congress' view.
- Follow up: If your lawmaker's vote on the bill pleases you, express your thanks. Everybody appreciates a complimentary email. By the same token, you should express your dissatisfaction with votes against your position in a polite manner.



## Conclusion

NAA's Key Contact Program is a vital part of advocating for the rental housing industry. You are your own best advocate, so whether you want to build a relationship with a Member of Congress or already have an existing relationship with a Member of Congress, NAA is here to help you cultivate those relationships and effectively advocate on behalf of our industry. As a Key Contact you'll be tasked with representing the over 93,000 members of NAA before your designated Member of Congress to ensure that the rental housing industry is sound and flourishing.

NAA staff are always here to help you answer any questions when it comes to the Key Contact Program or advocacy more generally. Do not hesitate to reach out to Austin O'Boyle (aoboyle@naahq.org) with any questions.

**Thank you for being an NAA Key Contact.  
Our industry is relying on you!**



**National Apartment Association**

4300 Wilson Blvd., Ste. 800

Arlington, VA 22203

833-86-MYNAA

**naahq.org**