

# H.R. 1054 the Botany Bill

## How You Can Help to Advance H.R. 1054 A Bill to Promote Botanical Research and Botanical Sciences Capacity

### **The Importance of “Cosponsors”**

Once a bill is introduced in the House of Representative by its lead sponsor and co-sponsor, it is assigned a bill number and referred to the appropriate committees that have jurisdiction over the legislation.

In order to demonstrate support for the legislation, it is important that other Members of Congress sign their name on in support of the bill – this is known as becoming a “cosponsor” of the bill. It is important to secure both Democrats and Republicans as cosponsors, which demonstrates bipartisan support for the legislation.

H.R. 1054 was introduced by Representative Quigley (D) of Illinois and Representative Ros-Lehtinen (R) of Florida. The process of adding cosponsors has now begun. ***The most valuable thing you can do right now is to ask Members of the House of Representative to cosponsor the Bill.***

### **Contacting your Member of the House of Representatives**

To find your representative, go to [www.house.gov/representatives/find/](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/). Click on the results to be taken to their webpage. If you know your representative, search for their name to find their webpage.

All Members of Congress have an office in Washington, D.C. staffed by legislative aides who primarily handle policy issues. They also ordinarily have one or more “district” offices staffed by aides who typically focus on helping constituents with federal issues and conducting community outreach. Members of Congress split time between these locations.

### **Contacting the District Office**

On weekends and during weeks when Congress is not in session, Members are typically in their Congressional Districts. Ordinarily, they will have meeting hours for constituents to visit with them in their district offices. They also often host “Town Hall” meetings, neighborhood office hours, or similar events where they give remarks and take questions from their constituents. Staff Members are usually on hand to help out with requests. You can find scheduled meetings on a representative’s website.

The single most impactful thing that you can do is to try and speak directly with your Member of Congress by scheduling a meeting with them in their district office or attending one of their Town Hall events and speaking to them. Another approach is to invite them to visit your office or facility in the district to receive a tour, meet the employees and learn about what you do. To set up a meeting or visit request, you should

telephone the district office (the phone number is ordinarily on the Congress Member's website) and ask where you should direct the request. Ordinarily this is to the scheduler who usually likes to receive requests by e-mail. A brief email or .pdf of a short letter is ordinarily all that is needed. When you have your meeting, bring along a sheet of talking points that you can leave with the Member or staff person.

### **Contacting the Washington Office**

If you cannot come to Washington, D.C. to meet with the Member or their legislative staff, the next best thing is to communicate with them via e-mail and telephone. You can call the Washington office (again the number will be on the Member's website) and ask for the name of the Legislative Assistant who handles environment, interior, and/or public lands issues. Then you can compose and send them an e-mail (all House of Representatives' emails follow the convention FIRSTNAME.LASTNAME@mail.house.gov) providing information on H.R. 1054 and asking that the Member become a cosponsor.

Make sure to include your name, address, and contact information, and the contact information of your organization. If several members of your organization live in the District, each should send a communication. You may want to follow up by requesting a phone conversation with the legislative assistant. It is important to be persistent. If you don't hear back from the staff, then you should email again. Then call. And after you speak with them, if they promise to look into the issue, you should wait a week or two and email them again.

Persistent contact is the key, whether attending a town hall meeting, emailing, or speaking with a legislative aid. Thanking folks for their time is a great way to follow up.