

# IRC GUIDE TO CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH

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# Step 1: Know Who to Contact

To find out who represents you in the US Congress visit [whoismyrepresentative.com](https://www.whoismyrepresentative.com) and enter your zip code.

If you have connections to Congresspeople outside of your own state or district, you can reach out! If you have friends and colleagues that live in other districts or states, bring them into a conversation with their Reps.

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## Step 2: Reach Out

Send an email or call using this template :

Dear Senator **(INSERT NAME)**,

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. My name is **(INSERT YOUR NAME)**. I own a restaurant in **(INSERT COMMUNITY)** and have employed **(INSERT NUMBER)** of your constituents for the last **(INSERT NUMBER)** years. Due to COVID-19, my restaurant **(INSERT A COMMENT ABOUT HOW YOUR OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN IMPACTED, HOW MANY PEOPLE YOU'VE HAD TO LAY OFF, OR A DECREASE IN SALES)**.

I'm reaching out about the RESTAURANTS Act. This bipartisan bill would support hard-hit independent restaurants like mine, through a new \$120 billion Revitalization Fund. This lifeline would help independent restaurants deal with the long-term structural challenges facing the industry because of COVID-19 and secure the employment of 11 million workers across 500,000 small businesses, as well as the five million more jobs up and down our supply chain.

We need swift action in order to prevent mass closures and layoffs that are impending. Might someone from your office be able to take a 15 minute call to discuss this urgent matter?

Thank you again for your continued good work,

**(YOUR SIGNATURE)**



# Step 3: Get Familiar with the Restaurants Act

- The RESTAURANTS ACT would create a \$120B fund, issued from the Treasury, to provide grants to restaurants, bars, caterers, food trucks, and other food & beverage businesses, off-setting 2020 revenue losses.
- Grant amounts are based off of the difference in revenues or estimated revenues during a calendar quarter in 2020 as compared to revenues of the same calendar quarter in 2019
- Grant money can be spent on rent/mortgage payments, payroll and benefits, utilities, maintenance (including COVID-related updates), supplies, food & beverage expenses, debt obligations (including past-due supplier bills), and other applicable operating expenses
- A priority 14-day window at the start of the program will allow minority-, female-, and veteran-owned businesses, and entities with under \$1.5m in annual revenue a first shot at accessing funds, and \$60m will be set aside for creation of a resource center to help underrepresented communities learn about and navigate the application process

# ...And Why We Need It

- An average of \$0.90 from every dollar a restaurant receives goes back into the economy, so revitalizing restaurants also revitalizes farmers, fisherman, bakers, ranchers, winemakers, linen providers, parking attendants, cleaning services, and so many more critical small businesses
- A 2020 economic report found that this \$120B investment would generate over \$270B in economic activity, and reduce unemployment by up to 2.4%, saving states \$30.7B in unemployment benefits, all while generating significant tax revenue
- Up to 85% of the 500,000 independent restaurants across the country are at risk of permanently closing without government assistance, put their 11 million employees and 5 million more employees up and down the supply chain at risk

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**Note:** You can find a fact sheet specific to your state [here](#).

## Step 4: Write a Script

Prepare what you want to say in a way that feels personal, relays your story, and drives home the importance of this bill to you, your employees, and your community.

Include specifics like:

- Your restaurant name
- How long you've been in business
- How many people you employ
- The challenges your business has faced during the COVID-19 crisis
- How the RESTAURANTS Act would help you

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**Note:** If you know another business owner from your community, whether its a fellow restaurant operator, or a supplier who is hurting because of limited restaurant operations, invite them to join and tell their story as well.

# Step 5: Be Ready for Questions

**Would more PPP funding help?** PPP is largely dependent on payroll at a time when restaurants at reduced capacity are also at limited staff. The RESTAURANTS Act allows money to be spent on payroll and benefits, but also gives more up-front capital for other operating expenses and supplier bills. PPP requires restaurants to take on debt obligations that most can't afford.

**What if someone already received PPP or other SBA loans?** This bill prevents double dipping, so anything paid for with PPP or other loans would be ineligible for use of RESTAURANTS Act funds.

**What if a restaurant makes more than they projected?** Any amount of a grant based on estimated revenues that is above the actual revenues converts to a 10-year loan with an interest rate of 1 percent.

**What if a restaurant permanently closes?** All remaining funds are returned to the Treasury

# Step 5: Be Ready for Questions

## Why are restaurants special when so many industries are seeking relief?

The restaurant industry is cumulatively the second-largest employer in the country, with independent restaurants serving as the backbone of every community. 1 in 4 unemployed Americans that lost their job during the pandemic are restaurant workers. Independent restaurants do not have shareholders or corporate backstops to help cushion losses and, with already low profit margins, there isn't money sitting in the bank to keep them afloat. Even during closures, fixed costs continue to accrue. The unique nature of restaurants doesn't allow for survival with reduced capacity. With lack of consumer confidence, a drastic reduction in revenue from losses of private and public events, tourism, and business travel, and restrictions on capacity that will all likely last well into 2021, restaurants are uniquely and devastatingly impacted by this pandemic. The disastrous effects of permanent restaurant closures will be felt for years by every industry and community, especially the farmers, ranchers, winemakers, fisherman, and more who rely on them.



## Step 6: Follow Up

Follow up with thank you notes and tweets, and get your friends, neighbors, and colleagues to do the same.

### SAMPLE TWEET:

*Independent restaurants and workers need Congress's help before it's too late. Thank you @CONGRESSPERSON for listening to why we need to pass the #RESTAURANTSActNow to #SaveRestaurants like mine.*

Encourage action from your networks by using our social media graphics and captions, found [here](#), and talking with guests, other community members, and local restaurant associations.

The more constituents that call, email, or share on social, the more responsive the representative will be.

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# Things to Remember

- Starting a conversation with a legislator can be intimidating, so nerves are natural, but it's important to remember that it is their job to listen to what you have to say
- The restaurants industry impacts a large percentage of any lawmaker's constituency, so your voice matters to them - and so should the RESTAURANTS Act
- Give the maître d' treatment to every lawmaker ahead of your conversation. Research them like you would a guest - What have they previously supported? What are their interests, both personal and political? How do restaurants impact those? A morning diner in rural Nebraska may sell more bacon than a Whole Foods in Omaha, so for a representative who is concerned about their local pig farmers, that's where the biggest impact of this bill will be. Figure those out!
- When looking for connections, use your whole network. It may be friends, family, past-coworkers/employees, or even regulars who have a connection with the person who you are trying to contact. Cold calling is great, but any personal connections you have can help get you a meeting faster!