If you want to know the most important rule about effective advocacy, this is it: Congress wants to hear from constituents. No matter how many times the Science Policy Office staff tells Congress how important the investment in food, agriculture, and natural resources research is, it’s just not as powerful as when it comes from the people who actually vote for them. If we hope to make a real impact on policy, we need YOU to participate in advocacy.

Now we know that scientists are some of the busiest people out there. Between writing grants, running experiments, mentoring graduate students, serving on committees, and teaching, your schedules are already pretty full. I’m sure at this point many of you are thinking, “how could I possibly have time to be a science advocate too??” This is where the Science Policy Office comes in. It’s our job to give you the tools and opportunities to engage in advocacy, but in a simple and effective way.

In order to help in your advocacy efforts, our new website, Engage (http://cqrcengage.com/science societies), allows Society members to reach out to their members of Congress with just a few easy clicks of a button. The website focuses on several key policy issues and gives you options on how you would like to get involved. Whether it’s emailing, calling, or even tweeting to your members of Congress, Engage makes advocacy as easy as typing in your mailing address.

We know that many Society members would like to take part in advocacy but may not have the time or the expertise to fully engage. Fortunately, our new Engage website does the work for you. With prefill ed email and social media posts, you can simply click the “send” button, or edit the form, adding your own personal story and opinions. By reaching out to your members of Congress through this platform, we can amplify our message and show Congress that there are thousands of scientists and students who care about the future of the research enterprise.

Our first Engage campaign focuses on the fiscal year 2014 (FY14) budget negotiations and sequestration. Sequestration is the across-the-board budget cuts that apply to all discretionary government spending, including research funding agencies, like DOE, NSF, and USDA. If a long-term budget agreement has not been reached by 15 January, another round of sequestration cuts will go into effect, reducing discretionary spending by $20 billion. These cuts would put further strains on research funding agencies whose budgets are already stretched thin after several years of flat or decreased funding.

Final budget negotiations are going on right now. It is critical that members of Congress hear from research-