

Legislative

As mentioned in the summary of the Ponderosa Back Country Horsemen mission one means of keeping trails open is to advocate for equestrians. Contacting congressmen and state legislatures is part of this advocacy as they make policies that affect where and how we can ride.

Being knowledgeable

Before we contact congressmen and legislators we must be informed as to what legislation will affect equestrians and how this legislation will affect us. The only thing worse than saying nothing is saying something that is not true or creates the opinion that we are not properly informed on the issue. To help us with this we have people at Back Country Horsemen of Washington (BCW) and America (BCHA) monitoring legislative issues. They keep us abreast of current legislation.

Contacting our congressmen and legislators, when?

There are many opportunities to contact our congressmen and legislators.

Back Country Horsemen participates in a **Legislative Day** in Olympia each year. On this selected day BCHW members go to Olympia to talk directly to legislators about issues affecting equestrians. These meetings are very well organized and received.

BCH members are encouraged to know who their legislators and congressmen are and have them know you. Visit their office, know their staff and attend events. Friends talking to friends is always more effective.

BCH can participate in VIP (Very Important People) rides or events where we have the opportunity to get to know and discuss with the congressman, legislator or their staff issues that affect equestrians. This can be fun and effective.

BCH members may also comment on specific legislation with phone calls, emails and letters. When specific issues come before congress or the legislature where BCH comments are important members are notified by BCHW and/or BCHA and encouraged to contact our representative. **This is the simplest and easiest thing that we can do to advocate for equestrians.**

Members are supplied with the bill number, bill title, the issue at hand and suggested comments. Typically we are asked to put these general comments in our own words and communicate them. **It is a great way for EVERYONE to support equestrians and it can take 5 minutes of your time.**

Contacting our congressman or legislator, how?

Congressmen and legislators are easy to find on the web. It is easier if you know their name or your district, but it can be done not knowing either. These are the websites that can help you:

Washington State Legislature: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/Rosters/Members>

United States Congress: <https://www.congress.gov/members>

Another excellent website [BCHW Legislative page](#) is found on the BCHW website www.bchw.org. This provides contact information plus information on:

- The economic impact of the horse industry on Washington State
- How to write a letter to your elected officials
- Current congressional legislation
- Equine liability law
- US Forest Service Region VI website information
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Cautions

There are some things that we should **not** do. First, as individuals or chapters we cannot say that we “represent” BCHW in an opinion. The following is the guideline:

“Beyond the mission statement of BCHW, its written policies as stated in its Standing Rules, official positions approved by action of the state board of directors, or as authorized in connection with service on an official BCHW committee, no member or chapter is authorized to make statements to the public about the position of BCHW on any matter without special consent of the president or the state board.”

We can state our personal opinion and that we are members of BCH. When it is known to be true, we can state that a position is also that of a Chapter and/or BCHW and/or BCHA.

Second, BCH cannot support or oppose a political candidate, or give the impression that we are, under any circumstances either written or verbally.

Working together, having a common, informed voice is a great way to advocate for the use of horses and mules on public land. Our ability to do this is enhanced by the resources that Back Country Horsemen provides to the equestrian community.