Legislative Advocacy Module 1:

How to Reach Your Legislators

Oregon DD Coalition's GO! Project

Oregon DD Coalition

Your Voice Matters

- Everyone can participate in advocacy
- Legislators want to hear from constituents
- Sharing your story can influence policy

What is Legislative Advocacy?

- Advocacy means speaking up about issues that matter and to help lawmakers understand what helps (or hurts) people with disabilities
- Legislators make decisions about:
  - ❑ Services
  - ❑ Funding
  - ❑ Housing
  - ❑ Employment
  - ❑ Healthcare
  - ❑ Transportation

- Advocacy can support *or* oppose bills

Why Your Voice Matters

- Personal stories are powerful
- Legislators may not understand services
- Self-advocates are experts in their own lives

“Nothing about us without us.”

Understanding Oregon Legislature

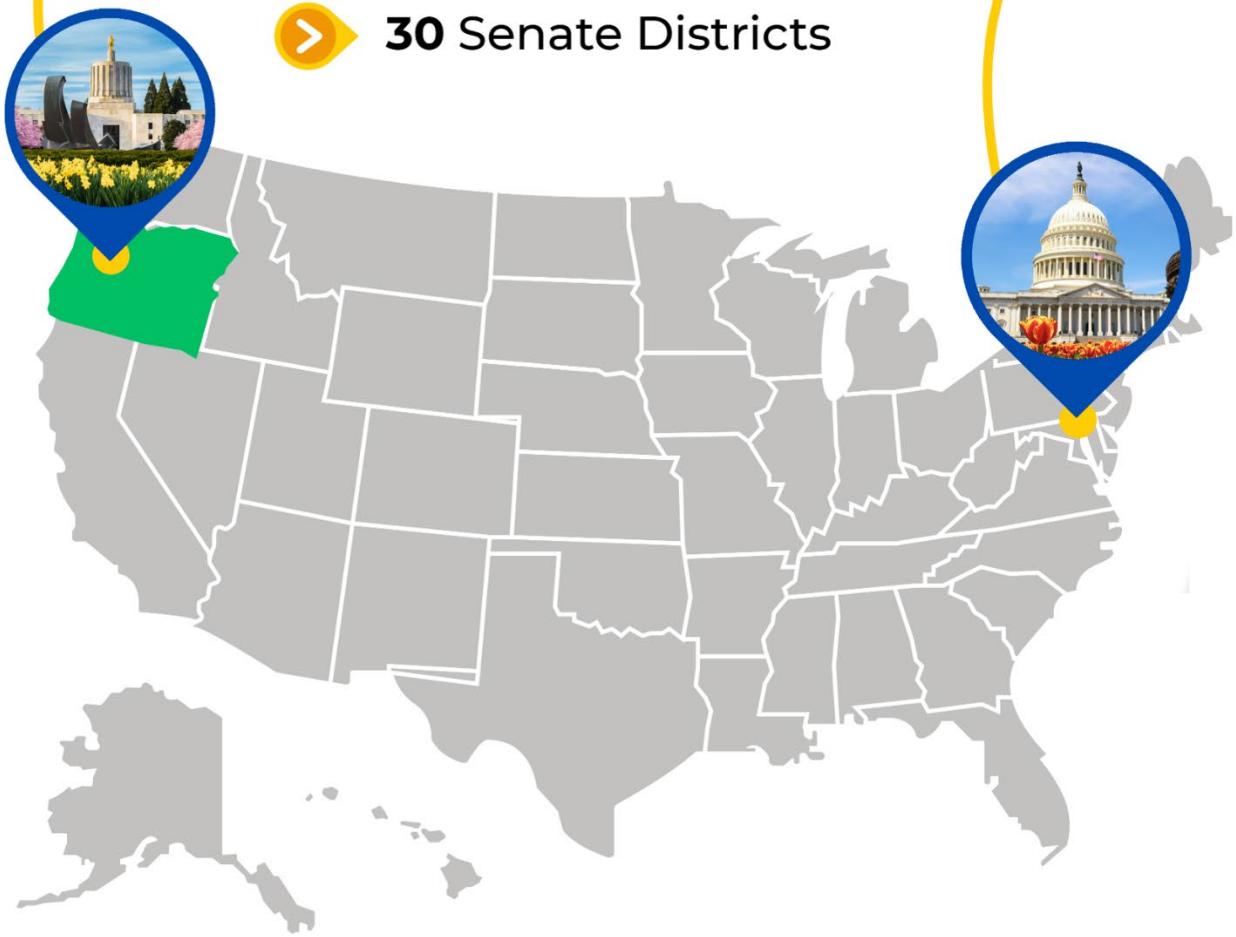
- Oregon has:
  - ❖ State Representatives
  - ❖ State Senators
- Each person has:
  - ❖ 1 Representative
  - ❖ 1 Senator
- Legislators represent geographic districts (areas)

Oregon State Legislature
(90 Legislators):

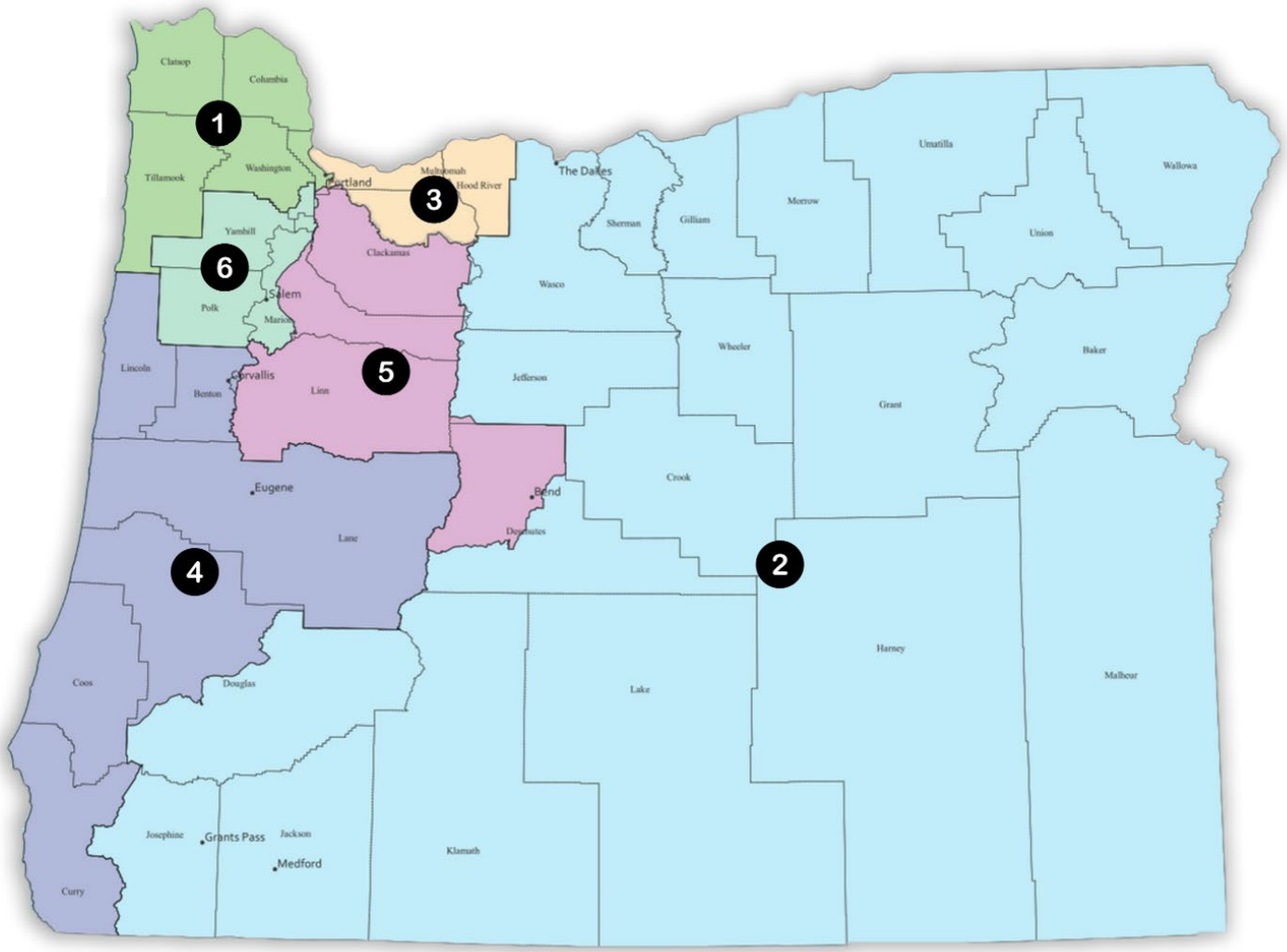
- **60** House Districts
- **30** Senate Districts

U.S. Congress
(8 legislators):

- **6** House Districts
- **2** Senate Districts



Oregon Has Six U.S Congressional Districts

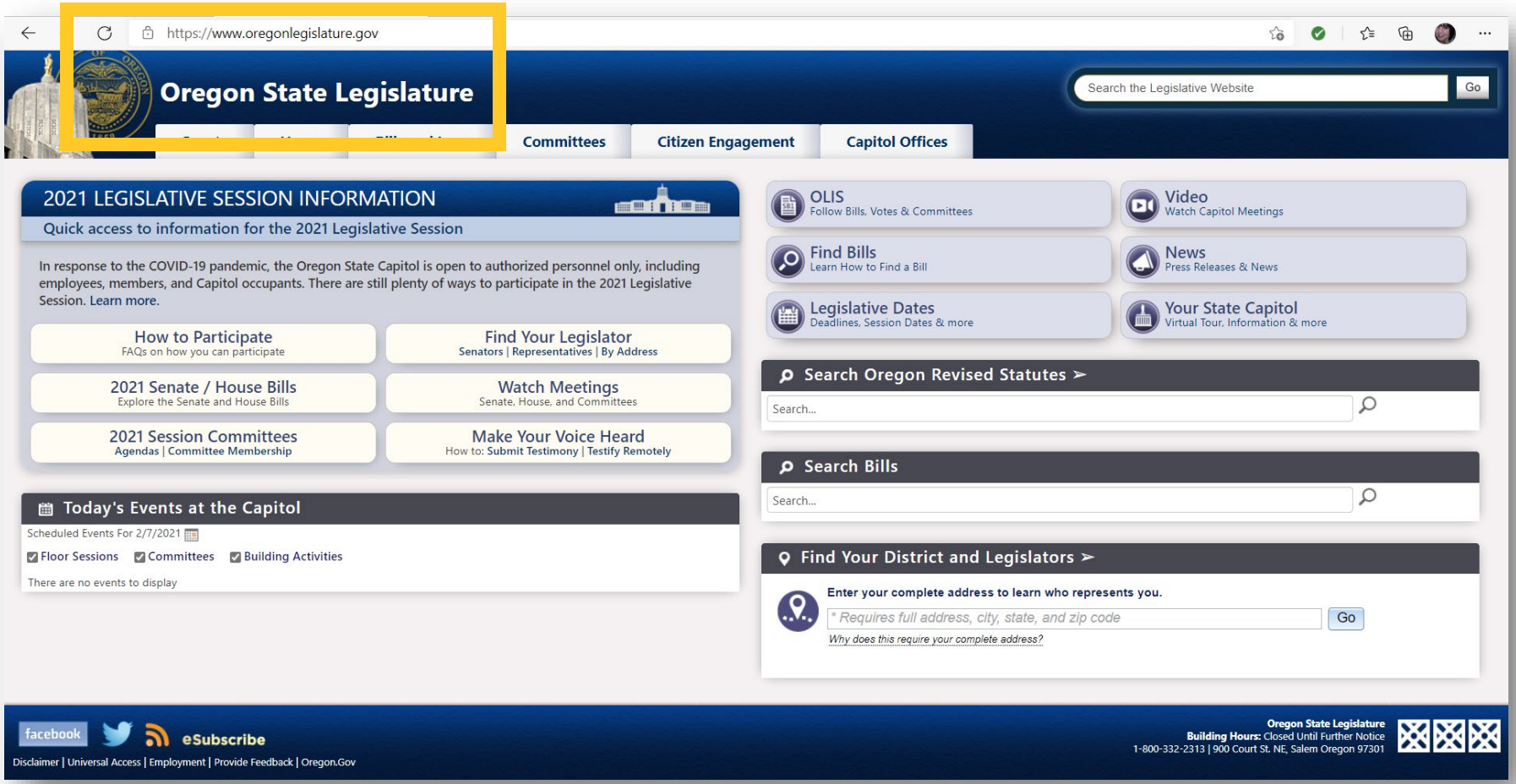


How to Find Your Legislators

1. Go to the official Oregon State Legislature website
2. Go to "Find Your District & Legislators"
3. Enter your complete home address
4. Write down:
   - Representative's name
   - Senator's name
   - Contact information

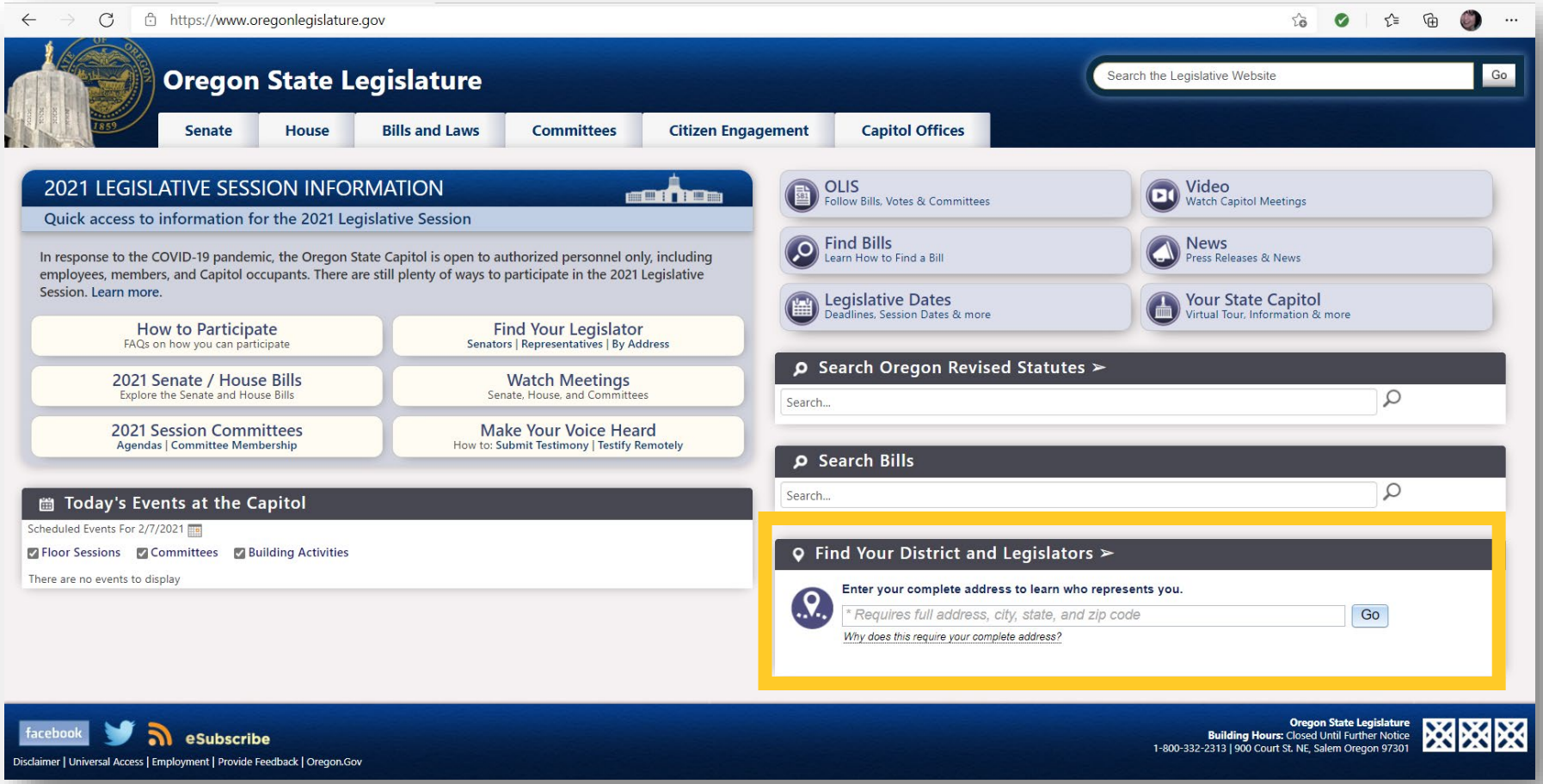
Step 1: Go to the Oregon State Legislature website

www.oregonlegislature.gov



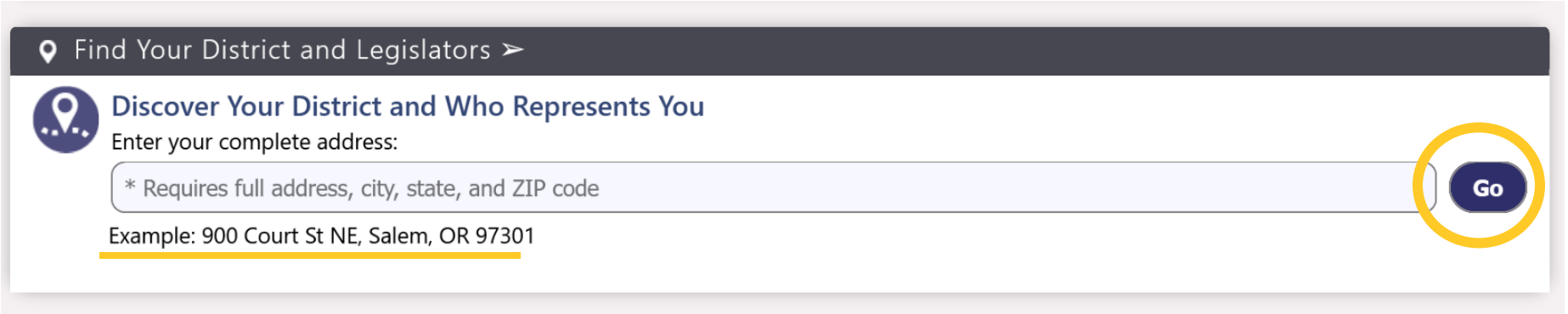
Step 2: Go to "Find Your District and Legislators"

- Look for **"Find Your District and Legislators"** box near bottom of page
- **Enter your complete home address** (address, city, state, zip code)
- Click **"Go" button**



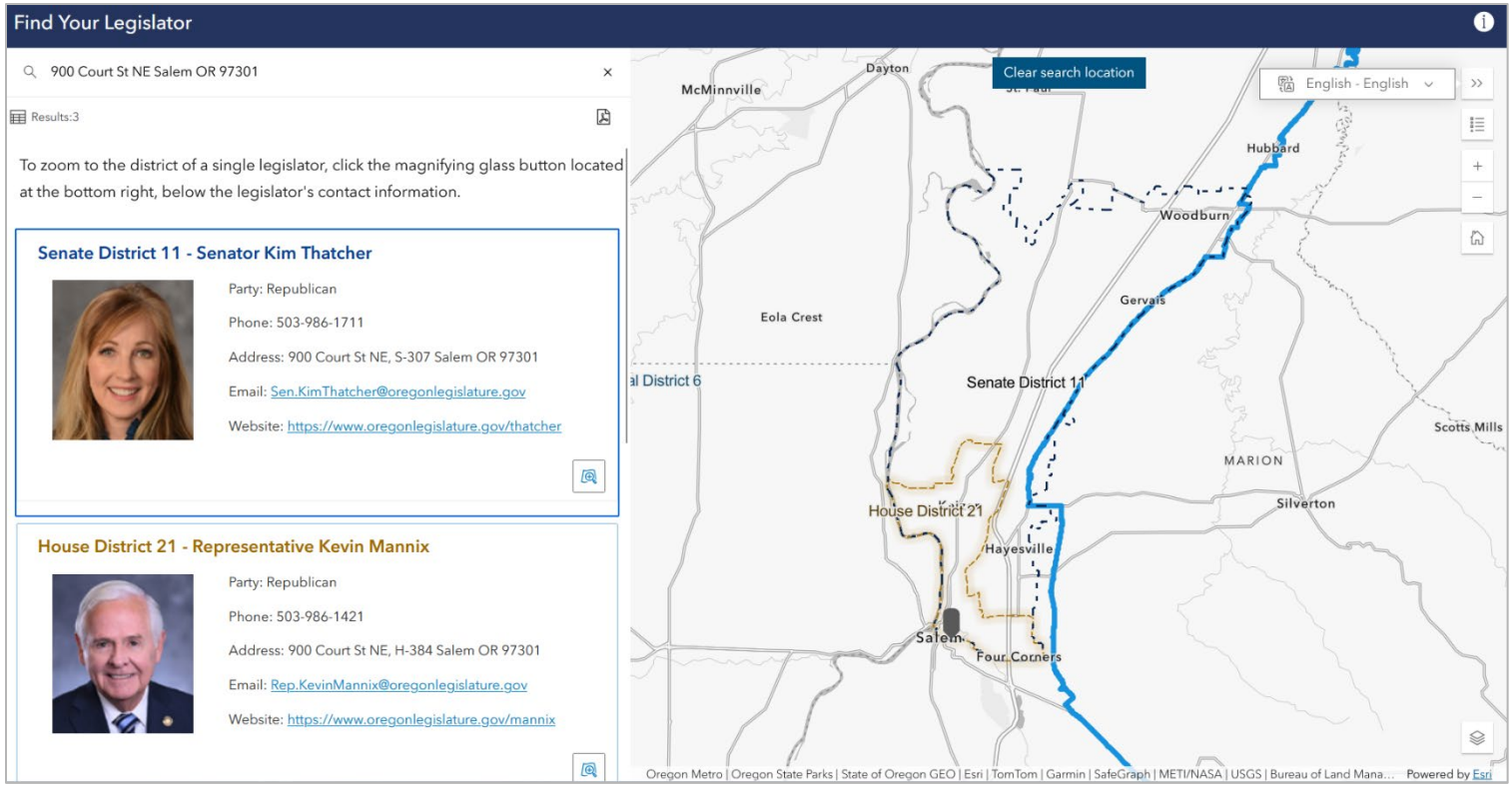
Step 3: Enter address on "Find Your Legislators" website

- It should enter automatically **if you entered it on the previous page**
  - **If not, enter your full address**, including city, state, and ZIP code
  - Click "**Go**"



Step 4: Write down your legislators

- Senator's Name
- Representative's Name
- Contact Information
  - Phone
  - Address
  - Email



Ways to Contact Your Legislator

Options include:

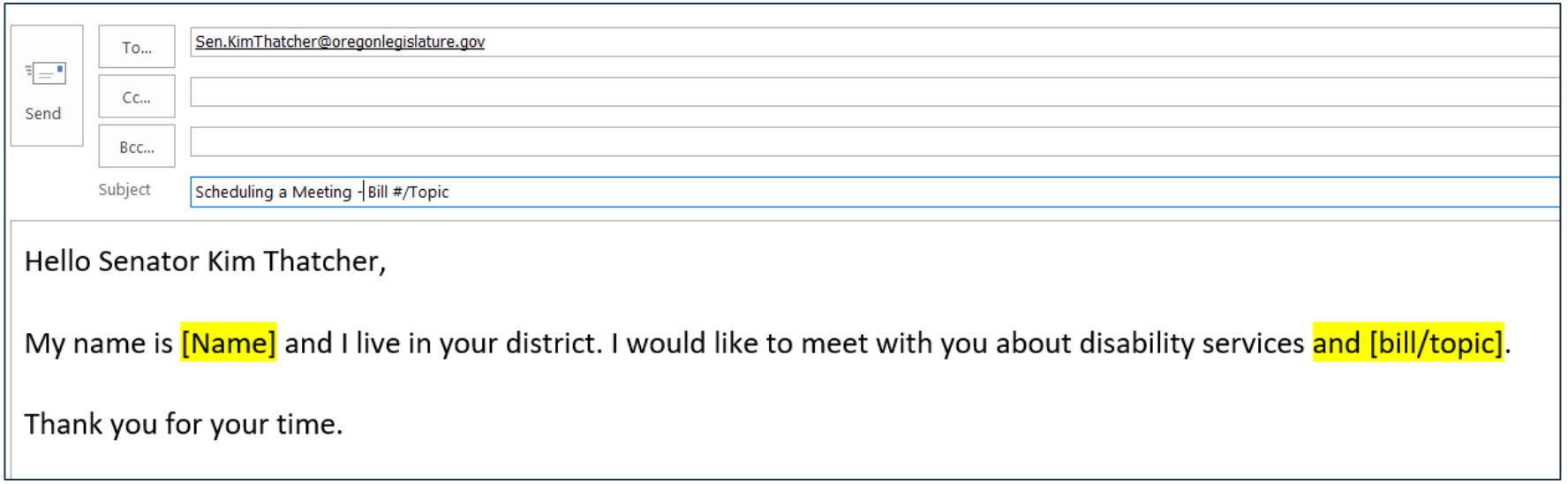
- Email
- Phone calls
- Letters
- Testimony (virtual or in person)
- **Meetings (virtual or in person)**

Meetings are one of the most effective advocacy tools!

How to Request a Meeting

1. Find legislator contact information
2. Send a short email
3. Introduce yourself
4. Ask for a meeting
5. Mention the specific issue or bill number

Example Email to a Legislator



Hello Senator [Name],

My name is [Name] and I live in your district. I would like to meet with you about disability services and [bill/topic].

Thank you for your time.

How to Prepare for a Meeting

- Key Tips
  - Know your main message
  - Practice sharing your story
  - Bring notes to help you remember
  - Keep it short and clear
  - Attend with a support person if helpful

- Prepare to share
  - Who you are
  - What issue (policy/bill) matters to you
  - How it affects your life
  - What you want the legislator to do

In-Person or Video Meetings

- **Identify Yourself:**
  Name & City
- **Specific Issue:**
  Issue, Bill Number and/or Budget Item
- **Personal Impact Example**
- **Express Appreciation**

What to Expect During a Meeting

- Meetings are usually short (15 min)
- You may meet with the legislator *or* their staff
- Meetings usually include:
  - Introductions
  - Questions
  - Note-taking
  - Follow-up (thank yous)

Good reminders:

- **Be respectful**
- **Stay focused**
- **It is okay to disagree**
- **You do not need to be an expert**

Your lived experience is expertise!

Tips for Sharing Your Story at a Meeting

Clear	Say what you think or want.
Brief	You have 15 minutes for each meeting.
Respectful	Even if you disagree, be polite.
Personal	Share your story with real life examples.
Ready	Write it down and practice saying it out loud.

Following Up After a Meeting

Steps you can take:

1. Send a thank you email
2. Share more information (if requested)
3. Stay connected
4. Continue advocacy

Example Thank You Email or Letter

Dear Senator (Name),

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about (bill/policy) and listening to my story about my experience with (topic).

Oregon Legislative Sessions

Long Session

Odd Years

160 Days+

Short Session

Even Years

35 days+

Sessions start in January or February.
Connect with legislators throughout the year.

Advocacy Activities

- ❑ Find your Legislators
- ❑ Subscribe to get their emails
- ❑ Schedule Legislative visits
- ❑ Connect with the Oregon DD Coalition
  - ❑ Visit our website: **orddcoalition.org**
  - ❑ Like us on Facebook: **@orddcoalition**
  - ❑ Follow us on Instagram: **@orddcoalition**
- ❑ Sign up for **GO Bulletins & Action Alerts**
- ❑ Watch **GO Project Videos**

Now, Let's GO!

About the GO! Bulletin

- Weekly email during session
- Includes link to bill report
- Features information about advocacy opportunities in the coming week
- Explains legislative process relating to budget, policy bills, and important timelines

Sign up to get the GO! Bulletin:

www.orddcoalition.org/go-project

Oregon DD Coalition's

GO! Project

Oregon DD Coalition

Advancing Opportunities

GO! Bulletin

An Introduction to Legislative Advocacy

Getting Started is Quicker & Easier Than You May Expect

If there is proposed legislation or a budget issue you are concerned about, the first step is to **contact your two state legislators** and let them know your position on the specific issue.

It takes a few seconds to find out who your current State Senator and State Representative are at www.oregonlegislature.gov

Then contact their office by phone or email, introduce yourself as a "constituent" and indicate that you support or oppose [bill or budget item]. It can be as simple as this.

This basic level of engagement is a great way to stretch your legislative advocacy muscles and get warmed up for this long session!

Oregon DD Coalition's GO! Project

- Website: www.orddcoalition.org
- Email: admin@orddcoalition.org
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/ORDDCoalition
- Instagram: www.instagram.com/ORDDCoalition