



### **Deciding if attending the Public Policy Conference is right for you**

The National MS Society’s Public Policy Conference brings together the collective voices of MS activists from across the country to drive policy changes that impact lives. The Public Policy Conference is an important component of year-round advocacy and strengthening relationships with legislators and their staff. It is not only an opportunity to connect with Congress—but with each other, to celebrate victories and progress accomplished through MS activism.

The information provided here will help you decide if attending the Public Policy Conference is the right fit for you. Prior to making a decision, review the important information below and on the 2024 Public Policy Conference website: [www.nationalmssociety.org/ppc](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/ppc).

**Where is the Conference held?** The Conference is held at the Capital Hilton Hotel (1001 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036)— in the heart of Washington, D.C. just a few blocks from the White House. We recommend participants fly into Reagan National Airport (DCA), the closest airport to the hotel and Capitol Hill. PPC participants will coordinate their own travel (airport shuttle, taxi, ride share, Metro, etc. between the airport and hotel).

**What are the Conference dates?** Monday, March 4 – Wednesday, March 6, 2024. Attendance for the entire conference is required.

**How will hotel rooms be paid for?** The hotel rooms will be charged to the National MS Society, but a credit card is required to hold the room and to pay for incidentals not covered by the Society. You may see a hold on your account – but it will not be charged.

**How will airfare be paid for?** Participants pay for their own airfare, and the Society will reimburse up to \$500 in air travel expenses following the conference using a volunteer reimbursement form. Payments will be made to PPC participants by direct deposit or check.

**When should I depart Washington, D.C.?** Return flights on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 should not be booked for earlier than 6:00 p.m. ET unless you have a smaller amount of Hill visits and can depart earlier.

### **Want to donate the cost of your hotel room or air travel to the Society? Thank you!**

- **Hotel:** If you wish to donate the cost of your hotel room (\$339/night) please make that selection during the PPC registration process and a member of our logistics team will follow up with you.

Upon checkout you will be charged for the cost of your hotel room directly and will not be placed on the Society's master bill.

- **Travel Expenses:** If you wish to donate the cost of your airplane, train, or car travel to and from Washington, D.C. please make that selection during the PPC registration process, and a member of our logistics team will follow up with you. In doing so, you would not submit a reimbursement form for travel expenses to the National MS Society following the event.

**Who is my invitation for?** Your invitation is for you! Please do not extend the invitation or share the registration link with other activists.

**What about care partners?** We recognize that it is important for many people living with MS to have their spouse or a care partner attend the conference with them to assist with activities of daily living. Given the long day on Capitol Hill, care partners are encouraged to actively engage with the state delegation and attend conference sessions and meals. Care partners that plan to participate in the conference by attending sessions, meals and participate in Capitol Hill visits, must register and may submit for reimbursement. If a care partner plans to only help with travel and daily living needs in their hotel room, but not participate in the conference (including meals), they do not need to register but may submit for travel reimbursement. National MS Society staff must be informed about ALL care partners participating in the conference for budgeting purposes.

**What COVID-19 Measures will be in place?** Check out our COVID-19 'need-to-knows' below and stay tuned to conference communication for any changes to safety protocol.

- Masks are optional. If you need a mask, we've got you covered—just ask a National MS Society staff member at the registration table.
- Additionally, COVID-19 rapid tests will be available at the registration table and hand sanitizer will be available throughout the hotel.
- If you're experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 please refrain from participating in conference activities.
- Attendees can indicate their social comfort through a red, yellow or green button attached to their lanyard: Red = physical distance please, yellow = elbows only, green = handshakes or hugs. This helps everyone know at a glance how to greet one another.
- COVID-19 rapid tests are available by request at the registration desk.
- To learn about the cleaning and safety standards in place at the Capital Hilton Hotel website.

Please note there may be additional safety protocol due to changes in COVID-19 cases, venue requirements or local mandates. Stay tuned to all conference communication to make sure you're up to speed. To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), or for more information about vaccines and people with MS, [nationalmssociety.org](https://www.nationalmssociety.org).

**What is expected of participants leading up to Conference?** Participants are expected to register for the Public Policy Conference, book hotel and make travel arrangements by February 1, 2024 Please keep receipts so you can be reimbursed after the conference. The Society's reimbursement guidelines are on the conference website: [www.nationalmssociety.org/ppc](https://www.nationalmssociety.org/ppc). Additionally, you will be expected to prepare

for the conference by participating in pre-event trainings, working with your advocacy staff member to schedule congressional visits, and researching your elected officials.

Before PPC, advocacy staff will invite you to participate in a webinar as preparation and send email messages with additional tips and your Capitol Hill Day schedule.

**What's the Conference agenda?** The Conference begins for all participants at approximately 3 p.m. on Monday. A welcome reception will close out Monday night. Tuesday's first session begins around 9:30 a.m. with informational sessions throughout the day. Tuesday concludes with free time to explore the sites of Washington, D.C. and enjoy a meal outside of the hotel not covered by the Society. Anyone not wanting to leave the hotel can reserve a spot at an RSVP-only dinner on Tuesday (dinner only – no program).

The two days prior to heading to Capitol Hill are dedicated to preparation: sessions will prepare you to share your story and discuss our legislative issues in Capitol Hill meetings. While the day is filled with activities, the Society provides multiple 60+ minute breaks while at the hotel to allow for rest and regrouping.

On Wednesday, there is an early breakfast at the hotel and then Society staff will help coordinate travel via Uber, taxis or public transportation to and from Capitol Hill for pre-scheduled meetings with legislators and their staff. Breaks on the Hill Wednesday are dependent on each delegation's visit schedule (see below for more on Hill Day). The evening of Hill Day, the conference concludes and participants travel home. You should plan to return home Wednesday evening unless there are extenuating circumstances, which you can discuss with your advocacy staff contact.

**What's Hill Day like?** On the Society's Hill Day, MS activists have historically held, in total, more than 300 meetings with members of Congress and their staff., State delegations, or subsets of delegations, typically attend 3-6 meetings each between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Depending on the locations of your meetings, it is important to remember that Capitol Hill is in fact a hill and travel between Congressional buildings will be needed throughout the day. Congressional office buildings can be as far apart as a 20-minute walk. Travel between buildings is accessible for people who utilize scooters or wheelchairs. You will also stand in line at security at times and there are few places on Capitol Hill to sit and rest. Society staff and volunteers that schedule meetings are encouraged to build breaks and lunch into the schedule along with time to get between meetings. Even with breaks, it is still a very busy, long day (though it is an exciting one, as well!).

We do not intend this information to be intimidating—but want to make sure everyone is prepared, and has everything they need, to be successful on Capitol Hill and enjoy the experience. We strongly advise attendees to use any necessary mobility devices you own, to wear comfortable shoes and to consider reserving a scooter if needed (via the National MS Society) for Hill Day to manage the long day, far distances and fatigue.

**Can't attend PPC in-person?** Join us on April 25, 2024 at the MS Activist Rally – a virtual gathering for anyone who wants to collaborate and drive change through activism. This one-day event will feature keynote speakers, opportunities to connect directly with your elected officials online, and the opportunity to learn more about policies moving on Capitol Hill, and breakout and connection sessions.