

# Activity 2

## Meet the Policymakers

Congressional representatives decide how to spend the taxpayers' money by creating a budget. They budget funds for the armed forces, education, law enforcement, scientific research, and many other national priorities. They also budget funds for foreign aid, which includes money for global child health and vaccination programs. As an informed citizen, how can you influence these budgeting decisions?



### Part 1

Congressional representatives are most influenced by their constituents — the people who live in their state or district whom they represent and who vote to put them in office. That means you can have the most influence on budgeting decisions by talking with your own congressional representatives. Even though you don't vote yet, you are still one of their constituents, and they care about your point of view. Generally, every American has three representatives — two people who represent you in the U.S. Senate, called senators, and one person who represents you in the House of Representatives, called a representative.

Use a chart like this to learn more about your congressional representatives. You can start your research at [GovTrack.us](http://GovTrack.us), a website that will tell you the names of your representatives and provide links to their official websites. Go to their websites and focus your research on finding out what your representatives are interested in. Find out if your representatives serve on committees — the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs committees — that debate this issue. Find out if they serve on the House or Senate appropriations or budget committees that put together and debate the federal budget. The more you know about your representatives and where they stand on this issue, the more effective you can be in presenting your position and influencing their decisions.

<b>Representative's Name:</b>	<b>Political Party:</b>
Committee Assignments:	
What are their interests?	
Do they talk about other countries? If so, which countries?	
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### Part 2

After you've gathered facts about your congressional representatives, you can find out more about how they make decisions by talking with some of their other constituents — your parents, teachers, or other adults in your community. As a homework assignment, ask these people how they think your representatives will respond to your position on supporting global child health and vaccination programs. Ask for ideas on the most effective way to explain your position. Use this information and the facts you have gathered to write a profile of each of your representatives that identifies the factors that seem to determine his or her decisions about supporting global child health and vaccination programs.

