



# Election Engagement 2026

Federal Candidate Outreach Toolkit

---

American Network of Oral Health Coalitions  
[www.anohc.org](http://www.anohc.org)

## Election Engagement 2026

Election season gives ANOHC members an opportunity to bring oral health into the conversation by sharing the experiences of the people and communities they serve. Through non-partisan engagement, members can help federal candidates understand local needs, recognize effective solutions, and make oral health a priority before they take office. These conversations can also lay the foundation for productive relationships with policymakers after the election, helping ensure oral health remains part of the policy agenda.

### Timeline

| When                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Action                                                                                                                                                                         | Impact                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Now – September</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Promote the toolkit with your state network: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>E-newsletter template</li></ul>                                                             | <b>ANOHC members:</b> when you complete an action, <a href="#">log it here</a> .<br><br><i>This helps us demonstrate our collective reach, measure impact, and strengthen future support for this work!</i> |
| <b>US Senate Recess*:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sept. 1 – 11 &amp; 21</li><li>Oct. 5 – Nov. 6</li></ul><br><b>US House Recess*:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sept. 1 – 7 &amp; 18 – 21</li><li>Oct. 5 – Nov. 6</li></ul><br><i>*Subject to change</i> | Engage with candidates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Find your candidates</li><li>Email candidates</li><li>Attend a candidate event &amp; submit a question</li></ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### Tips

- 501(c)(3) organizations can engage during the election season by educating all candidates on the issues, as long as engagement stays strictly non-partisan.
  - Check with your organization's compliance policies before engaging in election-related activity.
- Offer all candidates seeking the same office the same information and materials.
- Here's what to avoid:
  - Endorsing a specific candidate or contributing to their campaign.
  - Publicly favoring or opposing any candidate.
- Use state-specific data and stories to show candidates how these issues affect the people and communities they hope to represent.

## Promo

---

### E-newsletter Template

This election season, [Coalition Name] is joining the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions (ANOHC) in an effort to **bring oral health into policy discussions with candidates for federal office.**

Elections are an important opportunity to educate candidates about the oral health needs of the people and communities they hope to represent, and to begin building relationships that can continue after Election Day.

ANOHC has developed an **Election Engagement Toolkit** to make it easier for oral health advocates to participate in non-partisan election engagement. The toolkit includes:

- Guidance for finding and contacting federal-level candidates
- Sample questions on key oral health policy issues
- A customizable email template for candidate outreach

We encourage you to use the toolkit, tailor the resources with state and local information, and help bring oral health into conversations happening throughout the 2026 election season.

**[Download/View the Election Engagement Toolkit]**

We also ask that you **share the toolkit with your own networks** so that more oral health advocates have the resources they need to engage candidates.

## Questions for Federal Candidates

---

These sample questions are designed to help you start conversations with candidates about oral health issues that affect communities across the country. **Use them when attending candidate town halls, forums, meet-and-greets, or other public events where questions can be submitted.**

Choose the questions that best align with your coalition's priorities and tailor them with state-specific data, examples, or stories. The goal is to educate candidates, understand their positions, and help ensure oral health is part of the policy conversation.

### Affordability

Health care costs are a major concern for families in [your state], and the cost of dental care can make it difficult for people to get the preventive and restorative care they need. What policies or approaches would you support to help individuals and families afford the oral health care they need to stay healthy and address dental problems before they become more serious?

### Medicaid Dental Benefits

Untreated dental disease is one of the most preventable drivers of avoidable ER spending, and it's a real barrier to holding a job, especially in rural communities where access to dental care is already

limited. As states implement the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and face new fiscal and administrative pressure, cutting preventive Medicaid dental coverage may look like short-term savings, but it really just shifts those costs to emergency rooms and local hospitals that already struggle to absorb uncompensated care. What is your position on protecting Medicaid dental coverage, and how would you approach giving states the flexibility to maintain these benefits as a fiscally responsible way to reduce costlier care down the road and support workforce participation?

### Fluoridation

Community water fluoridation is one of the most cost-effective ways to prevent tooth decay, particularly for people with limited access to dental care. As some states move to restrict or eliminate fluoridation, communities risk losing a low-cost tool for preventing a disease that is otherwise expensive to treat. HHS, CDC, and EPA are currently reviewing longstanding federal guidance on fluoride. What is your position on federal fluoride guidance, and what role do you believe a transparent, evidence-based federal review process should play as states and communities consider changes to fluoridation policies?

### Federal Oral Health Funding

CDC and HRSA oral health programs strengthen the public health infrastructure needed to improve health outcomes across the lifespan. Together, they help states prevent oral disease, strengthen the oral health workforce, and expand access to care in underserved communities. Yet many states receive no federal oral health funding because these programs rely on competitive grants. Do you support stable, full funding for CDC and HRSA oral health programs, and what steps would you take to work toward extending this critical investment to every state and territory?

### Workforce

The average dental school graduate now carries nearly \$300,000 in student debt. Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), the Grad PLUS loan program has been eliminated, a change that could put dental school further out of reach for students from rural and lower-income backgrounds. As debt loads rise and financing options narrow, loan repayment programs, like the HRSA State Loan Repayment Program, become an even more important tool for keeping dental careers viable and recruiting dentists to underserved communities. Do you support restoring federal loan repayment incentives to help address dentist shortages in rural and underserved areas?

## Email to Federal Candidates

---

Use this template as a starting point for direct outreach to candidates or their campaign staff.

- **Choose 1-2 oral health issues** (delete the others in your email) most relevant to your coalition and tailor the message with local data or stories to help demonstrate their impact in your community.
- Remember to provide the same information and outreach opportunity to all candidates seeking the same office.

**Subject:** Question on [Candidate's Name]'s oral health policy positions

Hello,

I'm a resident from [City, State] and am writing to ask about [Candidate's Name]'s position on key oral health issues impacting our community.

I represent [name of your organization], a member of the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions (ANOHC), a national membership organization representing state and territorial oral health coalitions with a shared commitment to advancing policies and practices that protect access to affordable dental coverage.

Health care costs are a major concern for families, and the cost of dental care can make it difficult for people to get the preventive and restorative care they need. **What policies or approaches would you support to help individuals and families afford the oral health care they need to stay healthy and address dental problems before they become more serious?**

Untreated dental disease is one of the most preventable drivers of avoidable ER spending, and it's a real barrier to holding a job, especially in rural communities where access to dental care is already limited. As states implement the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and face new fiscal and administrative pressure, cutting preventive Medicaid dental coverage may look like short-term savings, but it really just shifts those costs to emergency rooms and local hospitals that already struggle to absorb uncompensated care. **What is your position on protecting Medicaid dental coverage, and how would you approach giving states the flexibility to maintain these benefits as a fiscally responsible way to reduce costlier care down the road and support workforce participation?**

Community water fluoridation is one of the most cost-effective ways to prevent tooth decay, particularly for people with limited access to dental care. As some states move to restrict or eliminate fluoridation, communities risk losing a low-cost tool for preventing a disease that is otherwise expensive to treat. HHS, CDC, and EPA are currently reviewing longstanding federal guidance on fluoride. **What is your position on federal fluoride guidance, and what role do you believe a transparent, evidence-based federal review process should play as states and communities consider changes to fluoridation policies?**

CDC and HRSA oral health programs strengthen the public health infrastructure needed to improve health outcomes across the lifespan. Together, they help states prevent oral disease, strengthen the oral health workforce, and expand access to care in underserved communities. Yet many states receive no federal oral health funding because these programs rely on competitive grants. **Do you support stable, full funding for CDC and HRSA oral health programs, and what steps would you take to work toward extending this critical investment to every state and territory?**

The average dental school graduate now carries nearly \$300,000 in student debt. Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), the Grad PLUS loan program has been eliminated, a change that

could put dental school further out of reach for students from rural and lower-income backgrounds. As debt loads rise and financing options narrow, loan repayment programs, like the HRSA State Loan Repayment Program, become an even more important tool for keeping dental careers viable and recruiting dentists to underserved communities. **Do you support restoring federal loan repayment incentives to help address dentist shortages in rural and underserved areas?**

Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
[Your name]

## Find Your Candidates

---

- Visit <https://ballotpedia.org/>
- On the homepage, locate the “Sample Ballot Lookup Tool”
- Enter the address where you are registered to vote and follow the prompts
- A step-by-step guide with screenshots is available [here](#).