



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF REALTORS®

EYE ON WASHINGTON

Congress and the August Recess

Over the next three weeks, **Congress will be moving quickly** to hold hearings, debate issues and pass key pieces of legislation **before they break for their annual recess in August**. NAR will be asking Congress to act on vitally important real estate issues before leaving Washington.

During the August recess or “district work session,” Members of Congress travel to their home districts **to meet with constituents and take the political temperature**. But, given the technology in place today, why is it still necessary for Congress to take the month of August off? Simply put, it is a tradition and law.

Throughout the 19th century, being a representative or senator was a part-time job—six months in Washington, six months back home, with legislative sessions beginning in December and ending in May. In these early years of the United States, **Congress used this schedule to avoid the heat and oppressive humidity** that would overwhelm them and their small staff **during the summer months in Washington**.

In 1859, when the Senate and House moved into their new chambers, it was hoped that the new “modern” ventilation system would make it bearable for Senators and Representatives to work during the summer months. However, the new system proved ineffective and members still retreated to their home districts when July and August came around. The 1920s brought “manufactured weather” to the chambers, but even modern climate control could not cope with the hottest days, forcing 20th-century senators to escape the summer heat.

This way of life changed in the mid-20th century. In 1933, Congress passed the 20th Amendment, stipulating that Congressional sessions would begin in January instead of in December. As a result, sessions extended into the summer, but were now bearable due to the advent of air conditioning in the Capitol around the same time.

In 1970, finally facing the reality of long sessions, Congress passed the Legislative Reorganization Act creating the modern system of running the “business side” of Congress. The **Legislative Reorganization Act also created a mandatory summer break for Congress** codifying what had been a traditional part of the legislative process since the founding of the nation.

This mandatory break Congress takes each year in August presents a unique opportunity for REALTORS®. Many REALTORS® cannot travel to Washington to meet with their Senator or Representative. **This month long “district work session” presents a great opportunity to remind Congress that REALTORS® live, work and vote in every community in the country.**

The National Association of REALTORS® will be asking **Federal Political Coordinators to visit with all 100 Senators and 435 Members of Congress** to remind them that stable and sustainable housing markets are an indispensable component of our economic recovery.

Specifically, ask your Member of Congress and Senators to do two things.

1. Finish the business of building a housing recovery by enacting a **comprehensive FHA Reform Bill**
2. End the uncertainty surrounding the National Flood Insurance Program by **passing a reform bill** that gives property owners, purchasers and sellers a program they can rely on for the long-term.

For more information on NAR’s legislative priorities, please visit www.realtor.org/government-affairs.