Historically, scientific research in the United States has predominantly been supported by the Federal government. This fact is especially true today, with over $30 Billion dollars spent on fundamental research in a wide area of subjects. Each fiscal year Congress authorizes and appropriates money to the various Executive Branch agencies (NIH, NSF, NIST, NASA, NOAA, EPA, etc) engaged in scientific research. The mathematical community, in particular, depends heavily on the Federal government for funding its research activities. However, the number of mathematicians working in the Legislative Branch (compared to the Executive Branch) is alarmingly small.

In this talk, I will discuss how mathematics and the mathematical community can play an important role in the public policy making process. I will share 3 lessons from my time on Capitol Hill as the American Mathematical Society Congressional Fellow in the US Senate. This talk is intended for a broad audience, and will be informal in nature in order to facilitate audience participation.