



MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS GUIDE



By virtue of serving on the “front lines,” program directors are credible advocates on many important issues related to health care and medical education. Advocacy is crucial to ensure that members of Congress and regulatory agencies are enacting legislation that promotes and benefits academic medicine. Below is some guidance when preparing to go on these very important meetings.

Know Before You Go

Know your organization: You want to be a credible representative. Be fully aware of the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine’s (AAIM) position and relationship it maintains with other organizations and with the legislature. Have business cards, leave-behinds, or other materials for consideration available when you arrive for your meeting.

Know your legislator: Make an attempt to understand the basis for your legislator’s position which may include his or her party, position, and tenure in legislative and political power structure; constituent pressures; general predispositions; responsiveness to various kinds of personal interviews

Know your issue: Phrase the argument in your own words. Don’t be surprised if it appears you are more knowledgeable than the individual you are lobbying.

Do’s

- ◇ Address your Senator or Representative properly.
- ◇ Identify yourself immediately at each contact. Public officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- ◇ Treat legislative staff courteously. Their cooperation can make or break your chances to reach the legislators themselves.
- ◇ Know bill numbers and who has thus far been in support of the bill.
- ◇ Be reasonable, realistic, accurate, factual, and concise.
- ◇ Relate the issues back to your local district
- ◇ Relate personal experience – supporting evidence is valuable
- ◇ Establish your own credentials or expertise on the issue
- ◇ Always end the meeting with a specific request.
- ◇ Provide legislator “leave behind” document at the conclusion of meeting

Don’ts

- ◇ Don’t begin, “As a citizen and tax payer”
- ◇ Don’t apologize for taking his or her time. If you are brief and to the point s/he will be glad to hear from you
- ◇ Don’t be arrogant, condescending or threatening toward legislators or their staff.
- ◇ Don’t argue or back recalcitrant legislators into a corner where they take a definitive position against you
- ◇ Do not assume the representative or staff member is familiar with the issue you want to discuss. Ask a few questions to assess his or her familiarity and provide some basic background information, in lay terms, to help guide the discussion.
- ◇ Avoid difficult medical terminology or jargon. Likewise limit the number of acronyms used when talking unless the meeting participants are well versed with the terms.
- ◇ Do not demand anything
- ◇ Do not be vague or deceptive

Follow up

1. Offer to obtain additional information on topics discussed and keep up a relationship with the staff members.
2. Always follow up the visit with a thank you email.
3. Notify AAIM staff of the visit and any possible action items, or important takeaways from the meeting.

If you have any questions please contact AAIM staff at academicaffairs@im.org