

# **SNaHP Lobbying Workshop 2023**

"My generation of physicians made the mistake of allowing others to define how, when, where, why, and to whom medical care should be delivered. I urge you not to make the mistakes we did by assuming that our only role is the good care of patients. We thought being active in providing solutions to health care was for someone else. Political involvement was beneath us. I encourage you to become involved in your communities, and I hope that many of you will speak out on political issues affecting medicine." - Dr. David Z. Morgan, address to the graduating medical class of WVU, May 2003

Lobbying is only one way of interacting with your Member of Congress (MOC).

**Goal of a Lobby Visit:** Generally speaking, it is to initiate and develop an on-going relationship with a MOC around "our issue."

**Lobby Visit 101:** [pnhp.org/LobbyVisit](http://pnhp.org/LobbyVisit)

## ***Before the Lobby Visit***

**Setting up the meeting:** Call the district office and request to speak to the Scheduler. Request a meeting with the MOC to discuss (your issue). Have a date and time in mind but be flexible, so do this weeks in advance of the meeting. Most MOCs are home between Friday and Monday, so these are good days to request. Most likely, the scheduler will try to get you to meet with a staffer; tell him/her that you know the MOC meets with constituents and you are a constituent. Be persistent. If you cannot score a meeting with the MOC, then insist the representative be a senior staff member, preferably one versed in health care.

You will likely be required to fill out a form and email it back to the scheduler with the names and contact information of each person attending the meeting. No more than 5.

**Gather your participants:** It is VERY IMPORTANT to have a CONSTITUENT, if at all possible. WEAR YOUR WHITE COAT. Don't wear "buttons," especially if meeting with a potentially unsupportive member.

- Assign roles: Leader, storyteller (the storyteller may be a medical student or other health professional with a patient story, or it may be a person impacted by the issue being discussed), medical/research speaker, business leader, and/or faith leader. Other possibilities? Labor/union rep, Senior Citizen rep, etc.
- Do some homework on the legislator you are visiting: What committees are he/she on, what recent legislation have they sponsored/co-sponsored (or voted for or against) where you can give a specific "thank you" for their position on the bill. **Legislators like to be appreciated!**
- Have some HANDOUTS, but preferably one-page with bullet points rather than lengthy articles. You can refer to articles and ask the member if they would like you to send them a link.
- Of course, dress professionally.

## ***During the Lobby Visit***

**Leader:** Makes introductions and is responsible for tracking the "energy" in the room. Leader also keeps other speakers from "going rogue," talking too long, or not making their points clearly.

**Storyteller:** Your story has to be true; don't embellish. Tell just enough to MAKE A POINT — then tell the member how this situation makes you feel and what universal needs/values this brings up for you.

**Other speakers:** Less is more.

Leader (at the end): **Make a clear request.** Co-Sponsor? Meet again? Read the bill? Have a town hall meeting and hear more from constituents?

This may be the time to politely let the member/aide know that you are organizing in their district/state and that you are not going away ... and that you will gladly keep them apprised of your activities and progress.

### ***After the Lobby Visit***

Doing a "debrief" after the visit can be very helpful. What worked? What didn't work?

Send a "Thank You" email or snail mail. If you agreed to send supporting information/articles, don't forget to do that.

See this lobby visit as part of a larger, escalating direct action campaign. One-off protests, lobby visits, rallies, etc. are not effective. **Plan your next action now.**

Suggestions: Write a letter to the editor in the member's local paper; Hold a "teach in" in the member's district; Attend a town hall or hold an "empty chair" town hall if the member won't hold one.

**Workshop Scenario:** Your chapter is meeting with Rep. Riley Wright, a Democrat characterized as moderate who represents a mixed urban-suburban district. They took office in 2008 and have fought two contentious campaigns to protect their seat, one against a "Tea Party" Republican in 2012 and another against a progressive Democrat in 2016. They have a good relationship with Democratic leadership, and political analysts feel that a successful challenge to Rep. Wright is highly unlikely in the near future.

While they do not serve on any committees related to health care, they have advocated for "universal health care" and "health care reform" in the past and their office was very supportive of the ACA. Your district is in a state where Medicaid has been expanded. Rep. Wright has called for reducing the deficit and more efficient government spending, but they have also been critical of insurers and Big Pharma squeezing working people. In 2016, they criticized their progressive opponent as "unrealistic" and felt Medicare for All could undermine the advances of the ACA. They have not been vocal about Medicare Advantage or rising health care costs under the ACA.

During your 20-minute meeting, you will lobby Rep. Wright to discourage them from signing onto the pro-Medicare Advantage letter circulated every year by the health insurance industry and attempt to establish a relationship with their office for long-term political organizing opportunities. Assume they do not know much about the inner workings of Medicare Advantage. Establish a role for each of your team members as discussed in this Handout, and determine a clear request and follow up for your meeting.

**Reference: Medicare Advantage talking points at [pnhp.org/MATalkingPoints](http://pnhp.org/MATalkingPoints)**