Advocacy 101

Everyone has the right to communicate with Members of Congress

- Your message is important
- Complacency will not result in wins
- Effective communication strategies and follow-up will take your message further

Why Advocate?

- You can help Members make informed decisions: funding, regulatory issues, authorization of new research initiatives
- Individuals who are willing to take the time to visit Members will put their issues on the map
- *PERSISTENT, CONCERTED, DISCIPLINED* efforts are key

Congressional Basics

- Congress has its own culture and pace
- It is not just about the money
- Knowledge is *POWER*
- You DO NOT have to be in DC to make a difference; meet locally
- Face-to-face contact matters

Getting the Meeting

- Contact the office (phone numbers are available online) to identify the right staffer or scheduler to meet either at home or in DC, see: www.house.gov or www.senate.gov
- Submit a meeting request (*Who, What, Where, When, Why*) via fax or email, and include detailed contact information and useful background materials
- Be patient – give the office time to schedule, then follow-up
- Always confirm the meeting one or two days before

Before the Meeting

Do Your Homework

Familiarize yourself with the Members and offices you will be visiting:

- Current events
- Background/bio
- Committees
- Related legislation
- Voting record
- Caucuses

In the Meeting

Don't expect staff or Members to be experts, these meetings can be very basic and informational

- Thank them for meeting with you
- Introduce yourself, exchange business cards, and give them relevant materials
- Describe who you are, your role, and why you're visiting with them today: *"I am really concerned about Federal support of basic science research. Let me tell you the great things we are doing to answer major challenges and help rebuild our economy."*
- Decide in advance what your message will be

- State your "ask": *"We need YOU to support research funding!"*
- Say THANK YOU!

After the Meeting: Say THANK YOU Again

- Follow-up with any requested information
- Invite the staffer or Member to visit your laboratory and see your research
- Keep in touch

Virtual Communication: Because Sometimes It's Just Hard to Meet…

- Whether you have a personal relationship with a Member or staffer or if you have never met, YOU can always make an impact
- Communicate regularly with congressional staff over the phone or by email about the work you are doing
- Answer the call to action if you receive an *ACTION ALERT*; one phone call, email, fax, or letter can make a difference

Tips for Success

DO

- Be on time, or early
- Be courteous to everyone, regardless of politics
- Be a good listener
- Offer specifics from your experience
- Offer to provide information after the meeting
- Follow-up with a thank you email

DON'T

- Prolong the meeting if it would seem forced
- Be surprised or discouraged if the staff you meet with seem young
- Be surprised if you are kept waiting
- Use technical jargon
- Talk partisan politics
- Go off message

Other Tips

- Don't feel like you have to be an expert on Congress or policies; you are there to talk about what you know
- Understand that you are not on your own turf – leave political ideologies at home and be open to all points of view
- Business attire is expected, but wear comfortable walking shoes (not tennis shoes) if you are in DC
- Bring your business cards and a camera