



Cardiovascular
Team

MEMBER SECTION

Advocacy Toolkit

Cardiovascular Team Section Advocacy Toolkit

Introduction

Elected officials rely on constituent input to be effective legislators. Ongoing communication is the only way public representatives will know and understand how voters feel about particular issues.

As a key member of the cardiovascular care team, it is your responsibility to communicate specific issues to members of Congress is especially important. No one can better articulate the complexities of health care policy decisions than those involved on a day-to-day basis.

Sending letters and emails, making phone calls and paying personal visits are excellent ways in which you, as the constituent, get your message to legislators.

You can be most effective in conveying a message by relating issues in your own personal experience or professional expertise, or to the likely effects on a member's constituents.

The information that follows are tips on how to be most effective when communicating with Members of Congress.

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What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is defined as the support or defense of a cause and the act of pleading on behalf of another person. The ACC and Cardiovascular Team Section recognize that Cardiovascular Team members engage in advocacy everyday on behalf of their patients.

ACC Guiding Principles for Health Reform

The ACC developed the following list of guiding principles for reviewing legislation that impacts CV practice:

- Expand access to and prevent loss of health care coverage through public and private programs
- Guarantee access to affordable coverage options for patients with cardiovascular disease or other pre-existing medical conditions
- Improve access to and coverage of preventive care and expand the nation’s investment in research, prevention, public health, and disease surveillance
- Continue and build upon policies to promote usability and interoperability of health information technology to improve patient care and outcomes
- Maintain commitment to patient-centered, evidence-based care and reverse the trends toward decreased personal contact between the patient and the physician/care team
- Emphasize professionalism, transparency, and the collaborative clinician-patient relationship to improve quality and promote better outcomes
- Foster collaborative development, testing, and expansion of models that promote and reward value, team-based care, and shared decision making through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) and other entities
- Minimize barriers to the delivery of efficient, high-quality cardiovascular care in all practice settings.

2015 ACC Health Policy Statement on Cardiovascular Team-Based Care and the Role of Advanced Practice Providers (APPs)

In the Fall 2014, a committee of interdisciplinary members were appointed by the president of the College, Patrick T. O’Gara, to participate on a writing committee tasked with writing a Health Policy Statement (HPS) on CV Team-Based Care.

The HPS Writing Committee included:

2015 ACC Health Policy Statement Writing Committee

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Eileen M. Handberg, PHD, ARNP, FACC, Co-Chair
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The objectives of the health policy statement were to:

- a) focus on the role of advanced practice providers because they have the “requisite education, training and experience to allow them greater autonomy.”
- b) outline the capabilities of these providers in a team-based care model, highlights existing barriers and offers recommendations for improvement.

The key take-aways from the health policy statement include:

- The statement highlights the many ways the varied post-graduate training experiences of advanced practice providers add a rich diversity of talent and capabilities to the care team.
- It also highlights the need for successful and effective teams to have “shared goals and clear roles” and touches on the need for a more flexible approach to leadership.
- The statement recognizes that broad dissemination of this team-based approach to cardiovascular care is not without its challenges.
- Differences in state regulations regarding the licensure of practitioners, as well as variations in payment policies by private and public payers, can interfere with the team-based approach. In addition, new payment models focusing on value over volume “represent both an opportunity and a challenge for cardiovascular team-based care,” the report states.

Key recommendations from the health policy statement include:

1. Expand interprofessional education to encourage creative interaction by all members of the team;
2. Pursue advocacy around sensible payment reforms;
3. Explore emerging technologies to extend the capabilities of the CV Team including telemedicine and virtual teams to help bring care to underserved regions.

The CV Team Section Leadership Council will pursue these recommendations – integrating them into their goals for 2015 and beyond.

CV Team Section/ Interprofessional Advocacy Issues

The following are examples of issues that cardiovascular care team members may want to raise during their visit with their Members of Congress.

- 1. Cosponsor H.R. 1155/S. 1361, a bill that would expand access to cardiac rehabilitation** by allowing physician assistants, nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists to supervise cardiac, intensive cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation programs.
- 2. Enact legislation to provide Medicare patients with coverage for comprehensive medication management (CMM) within the Part B medical benefit.** This direct patient care service, provided by qualified clinical pharmacists working as formal members of the patient’s health care team, has been demonstrated to significantly improve clinical outcomes and enhance the safety of medication use by patients.
- 3. The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (or PCHETA, S. 693 and H.R. 1676)** addresses this problem by providing palliative medicine training in a variety of settings, including hospice. This bi-partisan, bi-cameral legislation will also establish a program to enable hospice and palliative physicians to train teams of interdisciplinary healthcare professionals in palliative and hospice care techniques. Additionally, PCHETA will expand the types of professionals trained to provide hospice care, including nurses, physician assistants and clinical social workers.

Turning Outrage into Action

Every day, health care professionals have experiences that are frustrating, unbelievable, or so outrageous that they think, "How can this be? There ought to be a law!" Cardiovascular Team members often experience this frustration in their day-to-day practice—fighting with managed care companies, facing inadequate Medicare reimbursement, and cobbling together adequate care for uninsured patients.

- Health policy advocacy means channeling this sense of outrage about inadequately conceived laws, policies, and regulations or about the absence of a law when the need for one is clear.
- Advocates let policymakers know what they, as citizens and constituents, believe elected officials should do.

Despite its simple definition, advocacy is multifaceted, and the types of advocacy activities in which care team members and its leaders, members, and supporters engage are many and diverse. Through its advocacy efforts, the ACC seeks to influence the outcomes of local, state, and national policies, laws, and regulations to improve access to quality cardiovascular care for patients.

The good news is that **advocacy does not require any new skills; it just involves applying existing ones in a new context. As cardiovascular nurses, physician assistants, clinical pharmacists and other allied health professionals, you are already professional advocates.** You regularly represent and work on behalf of patients, as well as their family members, and your physician colleagues. In addition, cardiac care team members lead busy lives; have competing responsibilities and priorities, and every day devote yourselves to your jobs.

With that in mind, the Cardiovascular Team Section’s Advocacy Committee endeavors to choose activities that provide the biggest "bang for the buck." When short on time and resources, not engaging in activities that could be futile or will require new, additional, or specialized knowledge and understanding is a rational decision.

Recognizing this makes it easy for the cardiac care team to get involved with advocacy with the ACC. The following toolkit provides letter and email templates, as well as talking points for phone calls to your elected official’s offices.

Remember: Policymakers work for the citizens. Your tax dollars pay their salaries and for their health insurance, retirement benefits, and travel. After all, your employers hold you accountable, therefore; you have every right to hold them accountable for their actions, tell them what you want them to do, and give them feedback on how you think they are doing at their jobs.

Becoming involved is not only a right but also a responsibility.

Advocacy: Easy and Effective - Dispelling the Myths about Advocacy

There are numerous "myths" associated with advocacy that often preclude people from becoming involved in the policymaking process, including the misperceptions that it takes a lot of time, doesn't make a difference, and requires great expertise. You clearly have an interest in advocacy or you would not be attending the ACC’s Legislative Conference; however, you may have questions, concerns, or preconceived notions about advocacy.

To that end, we have compiled the 10 most pervasive advocacy myths and debunked them one-by-one.

	Myth	Truth
1.	I am too busy to be an advocate – there just is not enough time in the day...	Participating in advocacy activities with the ACC and CVT Section’s Advocacy WG is very simple. Sending an email to your representative(s) takes less than 10 minutes. Provided within this toolkit are templates for sending emails, letters and talking points for phone calls. It is important that your voice is heard in support of

		patients with cardiovascular disease.
2.	I am not a lobbyist!	Great! Members of Congress are more likely to listen to you – you are an expert on the needs of cardiovascular patients. As an expert, you can provide Members and their staff with substantive, valid information, as you know first-hand what occurs in today’s healthcare system and what is needed to improve it. In other words, you are a “legitimate voice” – not a hired gun!
3.	Why should I bother? It does not seem to make a difference.	It absolutely makes a difference. Offices count the calls, emails, faxes, and mail. Staffers log in the opinions that are expressed and have provided a regular report on all constituent communications to the Members of Congress.
4.	My member is a lost cause does not sit on the relevant committee, or does not care about health care.	It is important that you weigh-in and go on the record with you Member(s) of Congress. You never know when an issue will resonate with him/her, or the staffers. The number of individuals affected by cardiovascular disease is tremendous and continues to increase.
5.	My concerns or issues of priority are not being discussed in Congress.	Maybe that is because no one is writing or calling about it. You, your colleagues and your patients can help elevate an issue to the national agenda by communicating to your policymakers about it. Sometimes it takes a grassroots movement to garner Congressional attention.
6.	I am not an expert on SGR or health care reform. My expertise is limited to the treatment of cardiovascular patients, not complex health policy legislation.	You are an expert in the delivery of care and understand first-hand what patients with cardiovascular disease face. Just be honest and reference your personal knowledge about the importance of access to quality cardiovascular care.
7.	I am not able to travel to Washington to meet with my Representative.	Members of Congress and their Staffers will tell you that developing a relationship with your policymakers “back home” is more effective, since you can see them in your own community. Coming to Washington is effective, but communicating from and at “home” is even better. Instead of travelling to Washington, visit the district office, or attend a town hall meeting. It may seem intimidating at first, but Representatives and their staff are very accessible and expect constituents to visit and voice their concerns/priorities – they will welcome your comments.
8.	I am a Republican, and my Representative is a Democrat. I am a Democrat and my Representative is a Republican.	Cardiovascular disease is not political – both Democrats and Republicans may need cardiovascular care at some point. Do not worry about your party affiliation; just identify yourself as a constituent and a cardiovascular professional. These are suitable qualifications for your views to be treated with respect.

How to communicate with Members of Congress

Letters can be delivered to your member's office by email, fax or postal service. Written communications are most effective early in the legislative process. Please contact the ACC's Advocacy Department at advocacy@acc.org for your member's contact information.

Be sure to write on personal or business stationery. This will eliminate any doubt about your name and address. If you do not have printed stationery, type your name and address at the end of your letter and sign above it.

Representatives read a significant portion of their mail personally, while Senators typically ask their staff to select the most interesting and captivating letters. Congressional offices keep a weekly and, in some cases, daily count of contacts regarding particular issues.

Your letters count! Be sure to avoid "form" letters and just be yourself!

Addressing Correspondence

To a Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

To a Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

Tips for Writing a Letter, Fax, or E-mail

Writing to Members of Congress is one of the easiest and most effective ways for cardiovascular professionals and patients to communicate with policymakers on issues of interest and priority. Written communication can be done by e-mail or by sending a letter to the Congressional office by fax. Such written correspondence, if done correctly, can result in garnering support for ACC's public policy priorities.

When writing to policymakers, be sure to use personal stationery or your personal e-mail account, as your employer might not share your views on the topic. For all forms of communication, be sure to include your full name, return mailing address, e-mail address, and phone number. If you are a federal or state employee, you must use personal e-mail and your personal computer.

Be sure to keep a hard copy of what you send, as sometimes faxes, e-mails, or letters are lost and you may need to send a second copy to ensure a response.

1. Always Identify Yourself

It is a waste of time to communicate with your congressional office without identifying yourself. Unidentified information will generally be ignored and thrown away. Because the main duty of a congressional office is to represent the people who live in the congressional district, they need to know who is trying to communicate with them.

2. Be Specific

If you know of a particular bill, ask him or her to cosponsor. If your concern is with a federal agency action, ask him or her to send a letter. Whatever it is, the best way to ensure that the office pays attention to your issue is to force a decision.

3. Prioritize Your Requests

If you ask for too many things without making it clear what your top priorities are, the congressional office may feel overwhelmed. Let the office know what actions need the most attention or time your requests so that you are not asking for more than a few things at once.

4. Offer To Be a Resource

Congressional staff usually are not experts in the issue areas they cover and often turn to trusted outside experts. Knowing that there's someone in the district who really understands patent law, or ancient fishing rights, or how to build a widget can be very helpful. If you are an expert in your field, let your congressional office know that you can answer any questions they may have.

5. Be Polite

Treat the staff and the office with the same respect you expect. If you are disagreeable, it will make the staff far less likely to want to work with you in the future. You can be forceful about your views and opinions without being rude.

6. Be Patient and Follow-up

You should not expect an immediate response to your comments or concerns. In many cases, the issue may be one about which the member has not yet formed an opinion. Do, however, ask when you should call back to see if the member has taken a position.

7. Always Tell the Truth

Congressional staff turn to outside individuals for advice and assistance on important policy issues all the time. They must feel that they can trust the individuals with whom they are dealing.

8. Don't Vilify Your Opponents

At the very least; you should refrain from labeling those who disagree with you as unenlightened idiots. In fact, you can go even further by fairly presenting the other side's argument and then explaining why you have the stronger counter-argument. It's a great way to build trust, especially since the staff person you are dealing with most likely will hear from the other side. He or she will realize that you have developed your position based on a careful evaluation of the facts.

9. Don't Talk About the Campaign with Staff

Most congressional staff get very nervous or even offended when people they are meeting with mention the member's campaign. The laws against staff involvement in their member's campaign are very strict. The only exception is the chief of staff who, under law, is allowed to be involved in campaign related activities. In particular, any suggestion that the staff person's help on a legislative issue may translate into a campaign contribution is strictly forbidden. Such a suggestion may, in fact, make a staff person avoid helping you because they are worried it would look bad for their boss.

Other Important Tips

Keep in touch with the offices of your Members of Congress to establish a relationship and make yourself available as a local resource on cardiovascular issues. There are times when you and an elected official will have to “agree to disagree” but over time, you also may find that the policymaker may be supportive and helpful on other matters.

★ **Specific Tips about “Snail Mail”**

Due to the anthrax attacks in fall 2001, the U.S. Postal Service mail to Congress is handled differently by Congress. Most incoming mail is irradiated to ensure it is safe for handling. This process takes quite a while and often damages the contents. Therefore, for time sensitive communication, sending written correspondence by e-mail or fax is advised – or make a quick phone call. Also, enclosing items such as photographs, originals of articles, or other documents is not recommended; it is best to save these items for hand delivery when you have a meeting in the office – either in the local office or in Washington, D.C.

★ **Specific Tips About E-mail**

Each Congressional office maintains a different policy about how e-mail from constituents is handled. Most Members of Congress have a public e-mail address. To access the e-mail addresses, visit the individual Member’s Web page (www.house.gov or www.senate.gov). Many Congressional offices provide a generic, automatic acknowledgement that your e-mail has been received but then will follow-up with either a specific e-mail response to your issue or a letter via regular U.S. Postal Service.

A handful of offices still do not respond individually to e-mail but count the input and inform the policymaker how many people have written about the particular topic and what position they are advocating. Some Congressional offices have instituted computer-based “algorithms” to ensure that e-mail messages they receive are from legitimate constituents. Typically, all this entails is a requirement that the constituent answer an easy math equation (e.g., what is two plus two?), or to copy a word or phrase from one place on the screen to another. This helps them weed out any computer-generated or “spam” messages, and allows constituent communications to get through. It is best to contact your Members’ offices to learn about their individual policies about constituent correspondence. You can call the

Capitol Switch Board at 202/224-3121 to be transferred to your Members’ offices, or look in the “blue pages” of your local phone book, and your Members of Congress should be listed under the Government section.

Tips for Meeting with Your Members of Congress and Congressional Staff

1. Prepare in advance.

- Make yourself notes about the issue or problem that concerns you, the bill number and title that deals with it (if there is one), and what you want done.
- Know the name and district of the legislator you are visiting, who s/he represents (counties, cities), where they live and what they do for a living, and the committees they are on that have any connection to your issue.
- Know whether this legislator represents you, and if not, what your connection is with him/her.

2. Treat this like a business meeting.

- Dress nicely.
- Arrive on time or a little early.
- Be friendly and businesslike - start by introducing yourself and your connection to this legislator (your representative if that is the case).

3. Keep it short, straightforward, and courteous.

- Say who you are there to represent, if you are there for more than yourself. If you are there for a group, note if it has a chapter or members in that legislator's home district.
- Briefly explain what you are there to discuss - limit it to one issue. Include a brief explanation why you personally are interested in this issue.
- Ask directly for what you want - support or opposition for a bill, a funding item, an amendment, or whatever.
- Provide a short written summary of your issue and how to get more information (with phone numbers, etc.).

4. Give the legislator a chance and time to respond.

- Listen - s/he will appreciate it, and it will give you important insight.
- Try to respond to any questions, but do not make up information when you are uncertain. Tell them you will try to find out and will get back to them (and do!).

- Be cool and courteous, even if you disagree. Hostility will not help, and even if they are against you here, they may be approachable on other issues later.
- Thank them for their time (and any positive commitments) when you leave.

5. Follow up.

- Take notes on what was said.
- Send a thank you note for the meeting time. Make appreciative note of any positive commitments by the legislator.
- Be sure to get back to them with any promised information, or at least a report that you tried but it was not available (if that is true).
- Let the group(s) or campaign you are working with know what you learned.

Congressional Office: Who's who?

All members of Congress have staff to assist them during their term in office. The legislator's staff, often referred to as "personal staff" (as opposed to "committee staff", as described below), includes both district (back home) and non-district (DC) offices. The personal staff handles constituent needs and drafts legislation, works with the media, coordinates scheduling, and meets with advocates, constituents, and lobbyists.

To most effectively communicate with Congress, knowing the titles and primary responsibilities of key staff can be incredibly helpful.

- ❖ **Administrative Assistant (AA) or Chief of Staff (CoS):** The AA/CoS reports directly to the Member of Congress. She or he is tasked with evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The AA/CoS usually is the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the hiring and supervision of staff.
- ❖ **Legislative Director (LD):** The LD usually is the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues and proposals. The LD works with the Member of Congress and the CoS to determine legislative priorities, oversee the development of legislative proposals, and direct the work of legislative staff.
- ❖ **Legislative Assistant (LA):** Most Congressional offices have multiple LAs who are responsible for a portfolio of issues. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the Member, an office may have a different LA for healthcare related issues, environment issues, and taxes. ***Please note that the majority of your interactions with Congressional offices will be with LAs.***
- ❖ **Legislative Correspondent (LC):** More common in the Senate than in the House as a result of the volume of mail received in Senate offices, LCs work closely with a particular LA focused on a portfolio of issues. LCs principally are responsible for sorting, reviewing, and responding to constituent correspondence and monitoring and reporting on issues of importance to constituents. LCs also do research and some writing for the LAs (ex: background memos, talking points for the Member of Congress, etc.) with whom they work and also conduct meetings with constituents, usually when the LA is unavailable.
- ❖ **Press Secretary or Communications Director:** The Press Secretary's responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the Member, the constituents, the media, and the public. The Press Secretary serves as the Member's spokesperson and works to promote the Member's profile, inform the public of the Member's views on specific issues and helps advance the Member's legislative agenda.
- ❖ **Scheduler, Appointment Secretary, or Personal Secretary:** A Scheduler, with counsel from the CoS, maintains the primary responsibility for allocating a Member's time among the many demands that arise from Congressional responsibilities, staff requirements and constituent requests. Schedulers are also responsible for making travel arrangements and arranging speaking dates and visits to the district. Some Members have one scheduler in DC who maintains their entire schedule, whereas others have one scheduler in DC and one "at home" in the district or state who keeps the calendar for all local events.

- ❖ **State or District Director:** State or District Directors are the highest ranking staffers in the Member's state or district. In essence, this person serves as a CoS for all the activities and staffers in the local office(s). District Directors work closely with the CoS in DC to ensure coordination of activities, priorities, and awareness of what is going on locally of relevance to the Member.
- ❖ **Caseworkers:** Caseworkers are the staff members in a district office assigned to help with constituents requests. Caseworkers' responsibilities may include helping resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies (ex: Social Security and Medicare issues, veteran's benefits, immigration concerns, etc.). **A congressional office may have several caseworkers. Caseworkers are terrific resources for cardiovascular professionals. These staffers are well versed on the challenges of Medicare reimbursement, private insurance, and other healthcare related issues.**

In addition to staff who works in individual members' offices, Congressional committees and subcommittees all have their own staff. The committee and subcommittee staffs are broken down into majority and minority staffers, with the ratio usually reflected the ratio of the committee and subcommittee membership. These staffers typically have expertise in the issues for which the committee or subcommittee has jurisdiction and often have law or other advanced degrees. These staff members draft legislation, investigate issues of importance to the committee chairman and ranking member, organizes hearings and mark-ups, and develop policy. Committee and subcommittee staffers are principle players in the development of policy.

For you members' Washington, DC and local office information, visit www.house.gov or www.senate.gov.

How to Work with Congressional Staff

When working with Congressional staffers, please keep the following points in mind:

1. **Remember who they are.** Staff members will be key figures in developing policy that can have an impact on you and others in your state or district.
2. **Do not overestimate what they know.** Staff members often require outside expertise. Yet, it is important not to be condescending or use jargon. It is smart to ask staff how familiar they are with a particular subject so you can tailor your remarks to their knowledge level.
3. **Do not underestimate their influence.** Legislators trust them, depend on them, and act on their suggestions. Staffers have direct access to Members of Congress and will make recommendations and help direct their positions and actions. Junior staffers often are promoted to more senior positions, so it is important to treat all staffers with respect.
4. **Be honest.** Provide accurate, complete information to maintain your credibility. Be reliable; do not over-promise or under-deliver. If you do not know an answer, that is fine, but be sure to let them know that you will follow-up.
5. **Provide summarized, useful information.** Information should be concise, brief, focused, and have references, as appropriate. If more information is required, it can always be provided in follow-up communications.
6. **Visit them before asking for a favor.** If possible, introduce yourself and get acquainted before you request something from a staffer or Member.
7. **Do not attack ideas.** Oftentimes staffers reach out to stakeholders for input on a draft proposal. This is an honor and should be handled as such. Even if you disagree, be respectful in your constructive criticism and be prepared to offer an alternative idea or proposal. Express your appreciation for their interest in the issue and thank them for asking for your viewpoint.
8. **Follow Up.** Be a tenacious advocate. Congressional staff are overworked and could easily forget your issue unless you follow-up. Be persistent and polite – it will pay off.

9. Be a Resource and Stay Connected. Maintaining regular contact is important; be a local resource on who the staffer can rely. You should make sure that the staffers for your Members receive newsletters, updates, or articles your things will be of interest and assistance to keep them up to speed on key issues in your community and in your practice. Be sure to not overwhelm them as they receive a lot of information and are very busy.

10. Express thanks! It is important to than Members of Congress and their staffers.

Getting to know staff members can be very beneficial they have access to the power structure and have the capacity to influence the decision-making process. Even if you cannot travel to Washington, DC, you can develop relationships with the local district staff and get to know the DC staff via the telephone and email.

ACC Advocacy Resources

Through its advocacy efforts, the ACC builds relationships with Congress, federal government agencies, state legislative and regulatory bodies, private insurers and other policy making groups to advance the College's mission of improving heart health.

The ACC Advocacy App provides tools to engage and educate elected officials on issues of importance to cardiovascular care. The app empowers activists to connect with Congress both during ACC's Legislative Conference and every day through an interactive congressional directory, timely talking points, and social media engagement tools.

To get involved in ACC Advocacy, please consider the following opportunities:

The ACC Advocacy Action Mobile App allows members to engage with lawmakers and influence health policy.



Features include:

- Interactive congressional directory to locate lawmakers
- Timely talking points to share during congressional visits
- Event scheduler to keep track of Capitol Hill meetings
- Social media tools to engage with legislators

The app is available on [iTunes](#) (iPhone, iPad) and [Google Play](#) (Android devices). Download the app by searching "ACC Advocacy Action" in your app store.

- **ACC Political Action Committee:** The ACC Political Action Committee (ACCPAC) increases the political power and reach of the College by opening doors for ACC members and staff to educate key members of Congress on cardiovascular issues. ACCPAC's mission is to support federal candidates who can help us advance legislation and policies that:
 - Improve health care for patients with cardiovascular disease
 - Facilitate the delivery of high quality, cost-effective cardiovascular services
 - Fund cardiovascular research and prevention
 - ACCPAC efforts are aimed at eliminating or reducing hurdles that threaten cardiovascular providers and patients.
- **ACC Legislative Conference:** The annual ACC Legislative Conference brings together ACC members from across the country to advocate for cardiovascular professionals and their patients. In addition to educational sessions on the hot button issues in health care, ACC members meet directly with legislators to discuss how the decisions they make impact providers and patients.
- **Legislator Practice Visits:** A legislator practice visit is an opportunity for federal and state government officials to witness first-hand how the cardiac care team provides patients with quality, cost-efficient care by employing state of the art technology, health care data and professional training through a team approach. Most importantly, attendees will observe the dedication and compassion that the cardiac care team devotes to their patients daily.
- **Grassroots Action Alerts:** ACC's grassroots action alerts make it easy for you to contact your lawmakers about crucial issues facing cardiovascular patients, practices and providers.

To learn more about ACC Advocacy, please visit www.acc.org/advocacy.

For questions or to get involved, contact ACC Advocacy Staff at advocacy@acc.org.

Drafting Your 30-Second Elevator Speech

The Exercise:

An elevator speech or pitch is an overview of an idea. The name reflects the fact that an elevator speech could be delivered in the time span of an elevator ride, meaning in a maximum of 30 seconds and in 130 words or fewer. The following exercise will help you develop your elevator speech in preparation for your visit to Capitol Hill.

Step 1: Introduce Yourself

- Who are you?
- What do you do? How do you contribute to the Cardiac Care Team?
- What is your relationship to the ACC?

Step 2: Tell Your Personal Story

- Why are you here?
- What is it about the field of cardiology that has helped shape your life?
- Why are you volunteering your time on behalf of the ACC?
- Why do you feel that support of the ACC (cardiology) is so important?

Step 3: Your Message

Take a moment and think about the three most important points you want to communicate. Write down your three points.

Reminders:

1. *Be succinct and to the point.*
2. *Make it “real” and genuine. Your sincerity builds your credibility for future interactions.*
3. *You know yourself better than anyone else. Tell your story.*

Step 4: Practice & Evaluate Your Delivery

Upon completing your draft elevator speech, those who feel comfortable may volunteer to deliver their message to the group. Session participants are encouraged to provide constructive feedback, taking into consideration the following criteria:

- What worked?
- What should be done differently?
- Did the speaker get their three points across?

Helpful Hints:

❖ **CONNECT:**

Nurses are the most well recognized and respected professionals in the country. Use this to your advantage in getting the message across. Ask: Is anyone close to you a nurse or do you know any nurses. Have you ever had any experiences being a patient?

❖ **PERSONAL**

Briefly tell your story of nursing, patient’s experience... use their experience that they just shared to personalize your message.

❖ **NUGGET**

What is the one nugget or idea that you want your listener to have after you have left? Think of the one concept, example, or idea. The “Ah-ha” and weave this into your story.

❖ **AVAILABLE/APPRECIATION**

Make yourself available to provide further information or to provide examples.

ALWAYS, always, always, be appreciative - you want the essence of your discussion to be poignant, yet gracious.

