

AAHKS Advocacy Guide

Hon. Robert A. Hall, MEd, CAE
Massachusetts Senate 1973-83
AAHKS Executive Director

This handout has been prepared for AAHKS members to use in support of your association's advocacy program. We hope you will put it to immediate use to become active in advocacy for your patients and your profession. Beyond that, we hope that you will save this handout, use it throughout your career, and make it available to other members. Your profession is regulated by government. Only by involvement in the process will you be able to insure that the profession's point of view is heard and your patients' issues are addressed. There will always be issues that require your involvement. Many cannot be foreseen at this time, but all will require your ongoing interest. Advocacy must be a part of your professional commitment.

Once you are comfortable with advocacy, we hope you will think of this as a "train the trainer" guide, so you can educate your orthopaedic colleagues on the fine points of political action for your profession and for children's health care.

The author

Robert A. Hall, MEd, AAHKS's Executive Director, served five terms as State Senator for the Second Worcester & Middlesex District of Massachusetts. Since retiring from government in 1982, he has managed associations, often including responsibility for overseeing government relations programs.

Washington office

AAHKS maintains its administrative office in Rosemont, IL and helps support a full time person dedicated to Board of Specialty issues in the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons Washington, DC office. AAHKS also has an active Health Policy Committee with subcommittees on Payment Policy and on Quality Measures. If you have information or a question please contact Executive Director Robert A. Hall at the administrative office, as he coordinates staff support for their efforts. It's important to conserve their time to focus on interaction with members of Congress.

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Introduction

If psychology is the science of human behavior, political science might be called the science of the behavior of three or more humans in a group. Traditionally, we think of politics in terms of local, county, state and national government, and international affairs. But we also hear about “office politics” and in fact “politics” is the process by which decisions are made in most institutions: schools, hospitals and associations. If you want to be part of the decision making process in an organization or institution, be it your association or the congress, you must be involved in politics. You are not required to be involved—someone else will be happy to make decisions for you.

This advocacy guide has been developed to help AAHKS members become more effective in political decision making, especially in the state legislature and Congress. It should help you better understand the political process and allow you to have a greater impact on policy decisions that affect your profession and children’s health care. Decisions made in the Congress and the state legislature will affect every aspect of your life, profession and career. If parts of the handbook seem pretty basic, please remember that some of your peers are freshmen in Poli Sci 101.

How can you make a difference?

There are three major ways that you can make a difference in the decision making process of your state legislature or the Congress. In descending order of effectiveness, they are:

1. Run for, and be elected to, public office.

Election to the state legislature or US Congress makes you one of a small band of senators and representatives who make the decisions on thousands of issues that directly affect the lives of all citizens. Getting elected is possible, as those doctors who have been elected can tell you. It involves a tremendous sacrifice in terms of time, money and family life (remember that when dealing with “those politicians”). It is not a practical option for most professionals unless you plan a career change. Space prohibits us from publishing a “Candidate’s Manual,” but any one planning to run for office may want to contact the author to share ideas.

2. Work to elect candidates who will support your point of view.

This should go without saying, but if you can elect good legislators who care about your issues, the battle is more than half won. Working on campaigns also increases your influence with legislators. Everyone should be involved in at least one legislative campaign every election. For information on how to get involved, see the section on “Supporting Political Candidates.”

3. Lobby elected officials and other decision makers to influence the decisions they make. “Lobbying” has received a lot of bad press, but it is simply constituents letting their legislators know how they feel about issues and how they want to be represented. This handout will provide a guide for effectively contacting your legislators and informing them about your issues. Keep in mind that effective lobbying is not a “one shot” deal, any more than health care is a one-visit experience. An on-going relationship with a legislator (or anyone else!) is most effective.

Supporting political candidates

Supporting political candidates increases your effectiveness in several ways. First, you can help elect an individual to the legislature who cares about your issues. Second, your activity on the candidate's behalf will help focus the candidate on your issues. Third, you will increase your own credibility with the candidate. (After all you have, in the candidate's opinion, displayed outstanding judgement in supporting him or her. Naturally, that legislator is likely to be inclined to trust your judgement about issues in your area of expertise.) Fourth, you obtain what is known as "access" to the legislator. Almost any constituent can get to talk to a state legislator, but if you are a personal friend (as many campaign workers become) or a key player in the next election campaign, your visits are likely to be longer, your calls returned first, and your opinion highly valued.

Even working for the loser can help you with the winner. Contrary to popular opinion, most professional politicians spend little time worrying about the last election or trying to punish the people who opposed them. What they usually worry about is the next election. If two constituents, Joe and Mary Smith, both voted against the legislator but Mary also worked and contributed to the opponent, Mary is the one the legislator would most like to win over. Ideally, every candidate for the state legislature or the Congress would have an AAHKS member working actively for his or her election. However, a note of caution: do not get involved in the campaign unless you honestly support that individual for office. Politicians can sense insincerity and you will be doing both your country and your profession a disservice. Do not, under any circumstances, contribute money or time to two candidates for the same office. You might as well call them and say, "Look, I don't really want you in office, but I know you're the type of person who can be bought, and I want to cover my bets." Most politicians will respect you more for supporting an opponent than for trying to ride the fence.

How to get involved

Call the candidate. If you can't locate a campaign office, call the candidate's local office or home. (They won't mind you calling at home to offer help!) Say "Senator (or Representative, Mr., Ms., Bob, or Mary) this is Dr. Sally Hutchindorffer. I'm an orthopaedic surgeon, I support your campaign for XXX and I'd like to help." You may mention how you want to help—time, money, endorsements, etc. Be brief, be friendly, be sure to provide your full name, address and phone number, and be gone! (Unless the candidate wants to chat—a political campaign is extremely time intensive, so don't tie up your candidate.) This is a bad time to talk about issues because it will sound like you expect a quid pro quo.

What does a candidate need?

Votes. Your candidate needs to get one more vote than any other candidate for that office in that district. (However, even an unopposed or lightly opposed candidate will want to "run up the score." It keeps potential future opponents from thinking about running.) Your job as a supporter is to help the candidate get those votes. There are three things you can provide to help get votes:

1. **Money:** Political campaigns cost ever-greater amounts, mostly for various forms of

advertising, especially for television in the major media markets. No one likes political fundraising, but it is the price of doing business in a democracy.

Political contributions are a public service as they allow candidates to inform the voters about issues. Political giving does not buy a legislator's support of an issue. It does make you a player in the political process and supports the election of good candidates.

Early contributions count far more than late ones. Expect to receive continued appeals later in the campaign, so pace yourself. Better \$500 now and \$500 after the primary, or for dinner tickets at a later date, than \$1000 or \$2000 all at once. Be sure that the contribution is by check and from your personal account. **Corporate contributions are illegal!** Understand that contributions are reported and that you may end up on several mailing lists. You can maximize your financial clout and help AAHKS be a player by letting us know what candidates you have supported.

Attending fund raising functions helps the candidate and raises your visibility more than just sending a check.

You should also be contributing to OrthoPAC, as their contributions to candidates maximize orthopaedics' clout.

2. Endorsements: Are you willing to sign fundraising letters or political ads for the candidate? Put a sign on your lawn or a bumper sticker on your car? Display flyers at your office? As a supporter, you will probably be asked.

3. Work: The candidate for Congress in East Podunk probably doesn't need a position paper on the benefits of TJR. What the candidate really needs is someone to address, stuff and stamp 19,345 envelopes or deliver flyers to all the houses in Pit Bull Estates. Let the candidate or volunteer coordinator judge how to use your time best. Traveling with the candidate to hand out flyers is a great way to get to know the candidate better and should help you better understand the psychology of the public. High school and college students make some of the best campaign workers, so get your family involved.

Coffee hours/fund raisers

An excellent way to help your candidate is to organize a coffee hour (cocktail party, cookout, etc.) at your home. Contact the campaign headquarters and offer to do so. Underestimate how many you expect to attend—better that they are pleasantly surprised. Remember that the candidate will want to spend only a few minutes shaking hands, making a short speech and perhaps answering questions. Invite your colleagues, office staff, neighbors, relatives, etc. Concentrate on folks who live in the candidate's election district, but don't hesitate to pack the room with doctors.

If these are fund raising events, your value (and the likelihood of the candidate having the time to attend/increases).

Tours

Politicians like to meet people. If possible, invite your local legislators to tour your facility, especially in non-election years. They get exposure. You get to build a relationship with these decision-makers, and educate them about the needs of your patients.

Remember that a victory in one election is just a start—there will be other elections. (This applies to defeat, as well!) One of your major goals is to build a personal relationship with the candidate, so try to attend as many campaign functions (dinners, roasts, breakfasts, victory parties) as you can.

Win or lose, the next day the good work goes on.

How to contact your legislator

Phone Numbers of Interest

U.S. Capitol Switchboard: 202/225-3121 (This number can connect you with all Congressional Offices directly, i.e., Senators, Representatives, Senate Committees, House Committees, etc.)
Bill Status: 202/225-1772 (This number can update you with current status of any bill currently in the House or the Senate. When you call them, you should have a bill number, if possible, or a name of the bill and the Congressional Author).

First, you need to know who represents you. As a voter, you are represented in Washington by a United States Representative, usually called a Congressman or Congresswoman, and two United States Senators. Except for Nebraska, which has only a senate, you are represented in the state legislature by a State Senator and a State Representative, Assemblyman or Delegate (sometimes two in states with double districts). You will need to know the district and numbers for the U.S. congressional district, the state senate district and the state representative/assembly district where you vote. You have only **one** number for each district.

The link below will take you to a state by state list of your two US Senators and your US Representative (you'll need to know your Congressman's name). Click on the link to be taken to the e-mail address (most offices now use web forms you will need to fill out)

<http://conservativeusa.org/mega-cong.htm>

If you don't know your US Representative's name, you can link to his or her e-mail address on this site by entering your state and zip code. It will then take you to his/her e-mail address or office web link form.

<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>

Contacting legislators other than your own may help, but you will be far more effective contacting the ones that you can vote for—or against.

You can get information about your Senator's or Representative's office in the home district by contacting the Washington office. The general information telephone number for the U.S. capitol is 202/225-3121. The names of local legislative aides and the Washington legislative aides on

health issues are of utmost importance and can also be obtained from the Congressman's Washington Office.

You should maintain these names, addresses, and phone numbers both at your office and at home. Being able to contact your legislator on short notice during the legislative session could make the difference on a key vote.

Advocacy for Orthopaedics

AAHKS and AAOS will keep you informed on political issues specific to orthopaedic surgeons, as well as other health care issues, through e-newsletters *e*) and special emails when needed. Please be sure AAHKS and AAOS have your current e-mail address, and that you review the material we and AAOS send you—don't be out of the loop!

While you may not always agree with the AAHKS or AAOS position or priorities, it is vital to success in the political arena that the profession speaks with a strong, united voice. This does not mean that you are expected to lobby for legislation or campaign for candidates that you cannot, in good conscience, support. Do try to remember that politics is often described as “the art of compromise” and “the art of the possible.” Dissension within a profession is likely to lead to political defeat or the death of important legislation. Often it's better to accept a weak bill and try to improve the law later than to hold out for a perfect bill—and get nothing. Remember that you are representing yourself—only AAHKS's President, Health Policy Chair or Washington Representative can speak to the Congress on behalf of the association. However, you can say that you are supporting the association's position on legislation. You will be most effective working with the association in support of common goals. You should also understand that during legislative sessions things change so quickly that no one may be completely up-to-date at a given time. This frustrating state of flux is something we simply have to live with.

Tips on advocacy

Contrary to popular opinion, lobbying is not an arcane science. It's something you do almost every day. Lobbying is simply trying to convince other people—colleagues, relatives, patients or, in this case, legislators—to see things your way. The following guidelines on lobbying apply to personal visits, phone calls, telegrams or letter writing. Specifics about each type of contact follow.

Your opinion counts

The first attempt by doctors to communicate with elected representatives is often accompanied by special concerns. At first, you may feel intimidated by the system's complexity and wonder if your opinions are valuable enough to be considered by the legislators. Officials will listen! But you have to have a consistent message, and repeat it often.

Be brief

You have no idea how much information, on how many hundreds of subjects, comes to legislators. Understanding their time constraints will help them appreciate you.

Be timely

The earlier that you contact legislators about an issue, the better. Even if they won't commit, at least they will know that there is a fight on the matter and may keep their options open. Once they have promised a constituent, or especially another legislator, support on an issue, it's very hard for them to change and still maintain their credibility.

Be honest

If politicians are often accused of distorting the truth, perhaps it's because it so often happens to them. If you conceal important facts or give legislators bad information, your credibility and cause are dead with them.

What's important?

Your bill is very important to you, as it is to your opponents. It may not be to the legislator. Keep in mind that legislators are generalists, dealing with hundreds of issues. No one can care about or understand all the issues that come before the legislature. Your job is to help your legislator focus on and understand your issues.

Say what?

As generalists, most legislators and staff are not current on the jargon of hundreds of professions. Don't use medical terms that only a professional understands, and never be condescending or talk down to them. Be concise and straightforward.

Self interest

Legislators know that the vast majority of individuals who come to them have a self interest in the legislation on which they are lobbying. Tell them how the legislation affects you personally and the profession in general—but also tell them why you believe that your position will benefit the general public and your patients.

You're the expert

You are an expert in your profession and you should be confident that you have something to offer your legislator. However, don't expect that knowledge will automatically make the legislator support your position. (Legislators know that PhDs in political science and high school dropouts both get only one vote, and votes often count more than knowledge.)

Wise guys

Do not be sarcastic, insulting, abusive, threatening or anything but polite and straight forward. This shouldn't have to be repeated, but on too many issues, someone who should know better has alienated a legislator. Try not to become defensive or angry. Be careful about humor unless you know the legislator well. Remember that today's opponent can be tomorrow's ally—unless you've made a permanent enemy.

Don't assume

Because legislators are opposed to your position does not mean they are stupid, on the take, or in someone's pocket. They really may just believe that you are wrong. The majority of legislators are trying to do a good job for their constituents under very difficult pressures.

Spare the flattery

Don't go on and on about how great the legislator is, how you voted for him or her, etc. If you were there at campaign time the politicians know it. If not, they don't believe it.

Don't neglect the staff

Legislative staff often have strong input on bills. Committee staff are often around, drafting bills, after Rep. Smith has gone to the eternal rest (a federal job). A meeting or phone contact with a staff aide should be treated as just as important as one with the legislator.

Thanks

Everyone likes to be thanked; legislators and staff are no exception. Thank them for their time, for their support, for their response, for serving in public office. This is very important—you can make an impression that most folks miss.

Expect form responses

Legislators like to keep their options open, and reasonably so. They may get more information, they may never get to vote on the bill, or it may be drastically changed by committee. Don't be put off by a "will consider your position when the bill comes to the floor" type letter. (You shouldn't consider that a committed vote, either—continue to lobby them).

Get a response

You do have a right to at least know what happened. Ask your legislators to let you know their position on the bill (even if undecided), what happened with the bill, and how they voted if it came to the floor or to their committee. Thank them when they respond.

Who you?

Be sure to let the legislators know that you are an Orthopaedic Surgeon and a constituent. Identify yourself. Be sure they have your name, address, email address and phone number. If your office is outside the district, be sure to use your home address so they know you are a constituent. Never send anonymous letters or cards. It's cowardly and will hurt your cause.

Why?

Be sure you have good, but brief, reasons for your position.

What's it cost?

Many legislative battles are over money—either tax dollars or between special interest groups (Yes, you are part of a Special Interest Group—we all are!). Be prepared on this point. What does a legislator hear from every group? "This is a priority and it will save tax dollars in the long run!"

Don't work alone

Let AAHKS and AAOS know about your contacts, the legislator's position and any relevant information.

Reporting Back

Careful, clear reporting of the legislator's position is vital to the AAHKS and AAOS advocacy effort. Did the legislator really say that he/she would vote for this bill? Will the legislator work for the bill with his/her colleagues. Will the legislator fight for the bill? These are all different levels of support. Legislators will often say things like: "That makes sense" or "I support the concept" or "I could probably be for that" which sound like commitments, but aren't. Accurate reporting of exactly what the legislator or aide says is very important.

Also, how legislators vote on procedural questions (motions to postpone or recommit) and amendments are just as important as the final vote. Listen for nuances that indicate a legislator may be moving away from or toward your position.

Don't bluff

If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer, admit it. Then contact AAHKS/AAOS and get the information for the legislator. **Be sure to follow through.**

Too much to ask!

Try not to cover more than one or two issues in one contact. Legislators know that constituents with long "laundry lists" of requests are very hard to satisfy.

Numbers have weight

If you can involve your colleagues, your employees, your patients and your family in lobbying or supporting candidates, you multiply your effectiveness.

Quid pro quo

Never, never talk about issues at the same time that you talk about campaign contributions or, especially, deliver a check. If it can be said that the contribution was in return for support on the issue—technically called "a bribe"—you could be convicted of a federal or state crime, not to mention probably losing the vote!

Be sure to vote

Election Day is your chance to select who will represent you. Nothing undermines your credibility with a legislator like not participating in the process.

Person to person contacts

The personal visit is the most powerful communication mechanism available to the voter. Planning is required if the most is to be gotten from the visit. An appointment should be made to be sure that the legislator or aide is available. Remember that meeting with a legislative aide is as valuable as meeting the legislator. Aides usually have the ear of the legislator on the issues they deal with, and are often more knowledgeable on the subject. Aides are often still around when legislators have moved on, and should be treated with the same respect as the legislator.

The legislator may be late but it would be diplomatic to overlook delays and not be late yourself. Recesses in Congress or the state legislature, particularly those proceeding or early in the session, are ideal for visits. During these times the legislator is often prepared to listen to details of impending legislative issues. Time, however, is still limited and plans should be made for a

concise verbal presentation with accompanying support material. Prepare to speak on no more than three issues. Less is more. The issue can be broader than a particular piece of legislation.

For example, a doctor might plan to discuss the issue of Medicare reimbursement. Supportive data could include studies demonstrating effectiveness of TJR, cost benefit and client acceptance, and loss of access if reimbursement is cut. Write a one-page outline itemizing the benefits or advantages of your position, the common objections and responses to these objections. AAHKS or AAOS may be able to provide you with “talking points” on issues we are lobbying.

Plan to present your verbal information in 10 to 15 minutes. The legislator will appreciate this respect for time. The planning needed to condense and think through the issues will make your presentation more effective. Have a copy of your outline and other literature to leave with your legislator for further study.

Legislators and their aides usually are very skilled at getting to the heart of an issue. If questions are asked for which you do not have the answer, promise to get back with the information.

Demonstrate your interest and reliability by responding promptly and accurately.

During the legislative session, expect a shorter meeting. Try to focus on one issue, and use the guidelines above.

If you are new to lobbying, or are uncomfortable meeting your legislator (who is the person you employ to represent you!), take a colleague, employee or family member with you for the meeting. Some professionals are reluctant to meet legislators for reasons that are not valid. They are like patients who won't tell you what's wrong, or what they really need, leaving you to guess. If you meet the legislator socially or by chance, introduce yourself but be very leery of using that opportunity to lobby, unless the legislator asks. He or she may resent intrusions into personal time.

Plan follow up visits. This should be an on-going, working relationship. You can provide information on your profession and political support. Legislators needs you just as you need them.

Summary:

- Plan Your Visit
- Make an appointment
- Prepare to talk no longer than 15 minutes
- Speak on no more than 3 issues (1 or 2 is best)
- Leave a copy of an outline of your talk and support material

- Get back with further information, if requested
- Follow up all visits with a thank you letter

Phone contacts

Phone contacts are not as effective as face to face contacts, but are very timely and inexpensive. Be prepared as to what you want to say. Limit your calls to no more three minutes, unless the legislator or staff member wants to talk or ask questions. Especially during the session, you will usually speak to an aide. Identify yourself, give your contact information, state your position, stick to one subject, ask for a response, and get off the line.

Follow up with a written letter explaining your position and thanking the legislator and/or staffer.

Don't call your legislators at home unless you have a relationship and know they don't mind.

Letters & telegrams

Public Opinion Message Telegram, though less favored today, are quick, and can be an effective way to reach your legislator just before a vote. Know that some legislators discount them because they can be mass-produced like petitions and form postcards.

You may write to your legislators at either their capitol or district address, as the staff will pass the letter to the proper person. However, since 9/11, mail in Washington is much delayed for screening, so writing the district office usually is preferred.

Use your professional letterhead unless that creates a problem for you at work. You can easily create personal letterhead on your computer, with your name, credentials, home address, home phone, and e-mail address.

Limit letters to one page, then include supporting information if needed. Be sure to include your home address and phone number so the legislator knows you are a constituent.

State the name of the bill and, if possible, the sponsor and bill number. Include a summary sheet or backup information if more space is needed, or offer to provide more information.

Even if you have a sample letter from AAHKS or AAOS, rewrite it in your own words. Avoid handwritten letters unless you have perfect, clear handwriting. Be sure that your letter is properly addressed. Double check spelling and grammar.

U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, State Senators, and State Representatives/Assemblymen may all properly have mail addressed to either The Honorable Mary J. Smith or to Senator/Representative/Assemblyman Mary J. Smith. Honorable, the older form, is also used for former members, judges and many other officials.

Although different types of letters are needed at different times and different writers have different styles, the following description provides guidelines for writing the basic legislative letter, that which requests support or rejection of a particular bill.

Important Considerations

1. Write to the legislators from your district. Legislators are concerned about the needs of their constituents and congressional courtesy allows that letters are returned to the representative congressmen for reply, if another congressman has been contacted.
2. Write about one bill or issue per letter. Letters are often stacked, answered and filed according to bills and writing about more than one issue may mean that one or both concerns will be ignored.
3. Be sure to include your return address. You should receive a response to your letter. If the return address is only on the envelope, it may be discarded. If the response from your elected representative does not include the position your representative expects to take on the bill, write again and request this.
4. The letter should be personal, on your stationery, and in your own words. Form letters are not considered as valuable.
5. Be polite. Do not name call, make accusations or imply that you have some special political influence. Each of these approaches create animosity and scares no one.
6. Consider the timing. You should write when you know a vote is due, but the earlier you write the better chance you will have to influence the legislator. Your professional organizations can be very helpful in contacting you about relevant future voting dates.
7. Write and thank your elected representative for a vote. Everyone likes to be appreciated and politicians are no exception. The “thank you” also tells your legislator that you have enough interest to follow the vote. If enough doctors follow up on votes, doctors will gain a reputation for being an informed group of voters.
8. Always identify yourself as an orthopaedic surgeon. We need visibility in the political arena and we need to build a reputation as responsive, informed and intelligent voters.

Contents of a letter and special considerations in writing to legislators

1. Begin your letter by stating the position you would like your Congressman to take and the number of the bill on which you would like this position taken. At times, the common name for a bill can be used. The bill, however, should always be clearly identified by either the number or the commonly used name.
2. Support your position by either using some facts and figures on the issue or the effect you believe this bill will have on your patients. Unless you have some particularly strong data, which would require more length, keep your letter to one page.
3. Enclose pertinent articles from journals or newspapers. Congressmen are often very interested in hometown news that is associated with the issue you are addressing.

Addresses

If you do not know the specific office address, you may write to federal and state legislators as follows:

Federal

Hon. John Smith
United States Senate
Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 21510

Hon. Mary Jones
House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, DC 21515

State Legislators

A letter addressed to your governor, state senator, state representative, delegate or assemblyman at the state capitol will usually reach its destination. Be sure to include the legislator's branch (senate/house/assembly) and district number in the address.

Again, you will do better to go on line and find your legislator's district office address in today's environment.

E-Mail

All legislators now have e-mail addresses, though many now use on-line forms to contact their offices, due to the volume of email they receive. Writing them by e-mail is free and instantaneous. But because of this, Congressional offices are overwhelmed by e-mail, with large lobbying groups "spamming" the politicians. If you use email, make your letter even shorter, proof and spell check it carefully, and include the same address and personal contact information you would in a regular letter.

Again, you can easily email your legislators using the websites below:

The link below will take you to a state by state list of your two US Senators and your US Representative (you'll need to know your Congressman's name). Click on the link to be taken to the e-mail address (most offices now use web forms you will need to fill out)

<http://conservativeusa.org/mega-cong.htm>

If you don't know your US Representative's name, you can link to his or her e-mail address on this site by entering your state and zip code. It will then take you to his/her e-mail address or office web link form.

<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>

A final word

Treat legislators and staff as you would like to be treated. Be brief, be polite, be professional, be sure to follow up, keep AAHKS informed—and remember there will always be another day and another issue.

Other activities

All orthopaedic surgeons should act as ambassadors to educate the public and decision-makers on the benefits and effect of your role on the health care system and patients.

There are several ways in which the public media can be used to familiarize the consumer with TJR. Newspaper and magazine articles and radio and TV appearances are all good possibilities. Newspapers, especially smaller local papers, bring human-interest stories, i.e., your role within your work setting. Larger papers will also feature this type of article in their local section. Newspapers are also interested in the services you provide with the potential cost benefits to the public.

And writing a letter to the editor praising a legislator is a sure way to get favorable attention. Be specific. "I want to thank Congressman Snodgrass for his support of better access for Medicare patients" is much more powerful than "...for the great job he's doing."

In order to initiate a newspaper article, telephone the newspaper in your area and ask to speak with the local editors or the feature editors. If your suggestion is accepted, the newspaper will send a reporter to conduct an interview. A photographer may accompany the writer or may follow at a later time. You may offer to read the article in advance for accuracy, however, this request is frequently denied.

Local TV talk shows and public interest radio shows can also be contacted by telephone. Television and radio stations are required to feature a certain amount of public interest material each year and are often interested. Use your imagination to stimulate the producer's interest. Stories in the news about health care costs or changes in the health care system might occur at a time when TV or radio producers would be interested in a closer look at what you do. It might take two to three months to make arrangements or it all might happen relatively quickly. Be prepared in order that you do not say no to an immediate offer. You may not be asked again if you refuse.

Volunteering to speak to groups on health care issues can also be an excellent mechanism for publicity for our issues. An excellent place to start is offering to speak to school or church groups. Getting started is the hardest part. Many organizations have speakers bureaus or lists of people willing to speak on selected subjects. Usually individual willingness is all that is required to be placed on such lists. Getting involved will open up a host of new opportunities.

As mentioned earlier, volunteering to work for a legislator, stuffing envelopes or answering the telephone, can be a good learning experience. Legislators welcome and need assistance. Giving this assistance may put you in a position to get the legislator's ear.

All elected officials need campaign funds. Sending (non-tax deductible) personal contributions to legislators and identifying yourself as an orthopaedic surgeon may have a positive effect on the legislator towards your suggestions during the session. A \$100 donation is large enough to build a campaign fund and yet not so large as to be prohibitive to the individual giver. Most other groups that regularly influence legislators practice giving regular donations.

Running for office or nominating and backing another doctor is another technique to gain political power. There are a number of physician legislators throughout the country and more are needed. Doctors are under-represented in public office—lawyers don't have that problem.

If not you, who will carry the message for your patients?