BE AN ADVOCATE FOR SCIENCE

Take Your Senators and Representative to Work

A tour of your lab is an excellent way to introduce your Member of Congress to the important federally funded biomedical research being done by his or her constituents.

All too often, public officials have never been in a science lab and do not understand what is done there and who is involved. What you consider to be ordinary is both unknown and fascinating to others. It is also a great way for you and your lab colleagues to meet your Representative.

How to Arrange a Visit

Send your letter of invitation to the attention of the office scheduler. It is advisable to be very flexible in suggesting dates and times for a visit. Representatives and Senators spend a majority of each week in Washington, D.C., but are often in their home districts to meet constituents Friday through Monday. Or you may want to suggest a visit during one of the Congressional recesses that occur at various times through the year, and indicate your flexibility.

What to Do on the Tour

- Provide a basic understanding of the work done in the lab - in layperson's language.
- Describe the potential therapeutic or preventative benefits of your work.
- If possible, have hands-on examples of the work you are describing.

Set aside time separate from the tour for the representative to meet with a cross-section of people in the lab (administrative staff, lab techs, students, postdocs, senior researchers, and the PI) to discuss their work and the role federal funding plays in supporting their research and training.
If you want more advice, please contact me at kwilson@ascb.org or 301-347-9300.

What if They Say No

Don't be disheartened. Representatives and Senators get hundreds of invitations for the limited periods of time they are in their home district. If your Representative or Senator is unable to come for a tour, extend a similar invitation to a member of his/her staff. Staff members are well informed and play critical roles in helping legislators decide their positions on various issues.

After the Tour

- Send a letter thanking your guest for his/her visit.
- Share your experiences with friends and colleagues.