

Attend the **ACR's Annual Advocates for Arthritis** Conference

Advocates for Arthritis is the ACR's Annual Capitol Hill fly-in. *Advocates for Arthritis* brings rheumatology professionals and patients to Washington, D.C. to advocate on behalf of the rheumatology community. During this event, participants meet with their members of Congress and their staff to discuss current legislative issues affecting the rheumatology community. *Advocates for Arthritis* is a great way for ACR and ARHP members to engage in the political process and increase awareness of rheumatology on Capitol Hill.

Visit www.rheumatology.org/advocacy to apply for *Advocates for Arthritis* or for more information.

Encourage Your Patients to Attend

Patients are constituents too. Patients have personal stories to share about the frustration of insurance denials, restrictions in Medicare reimbursements and the benefits of funding for arthritis research. Encourage them to sign up by e-mailing advocacy@rheumatology.org.

Advocating is easy and we can help. Contact us today.

2200 Lake Boulevard NE Atlanta, GA 30319 • Telephone: (404) 633-3777 • Toll-free: (800) 346-4753
Fax: (404) 633-1870 • E-mail: advocay@rheumatology.org • www.rheumatology.org/advocacy



Advocating is **EASY.**

It's up to you to get **INVOLVED!**





Take a few minutes to make a phone call using the AMA's Grassroots Hotline (800) 833-6354.

There is **nothing more powerful** to a member of Congress than the **voice** of their own constituents. So who better to educate Congress on the value of rheumatology than **YOU**, an actual rheumatology professional?

Advocating is easy, fun and essential to advancing rheumatology issues on Capitol Hill.

We have tools to prepare you to become an expert advocate. Check out the Toolkit at www.rheumatology.org/advocacy for issue briefs, tips and other tools.

Tips for communicating with your legislators

• Be prepared

Before meeting or calling your legislators, make sure you are familiar with the ACR's legislative priorities and positions.

• Be a good source of information

In order to build a relationship with your member of Congress, you need to be a source of credible information. Understand and be able to discuss both sides of the issues. You will gain credibility if you can both educate and persuade.

• Personalize your message

Congressional offices can be inundated with requests and information. Sharing your personal experiences with members of Congress and staff will ensure a personal connection to your issue.

• Ask for a response

Ask directly and politely for the legislator's views and position on the issue and what he/she plans to do about it.

• Follow up

Whether you make a phone call, write a letter or have an in-person meeting, make sure to send a follow up note to your member of Congress or staffer. Be sure to thank them for their time, include the issue(s) you discussed and reiterate your request(s).

There are more tips for communicating with your legislators online at: www.rheumatology.org/advocacy.

Know the Issues

The key to influencing members of Congress is showing them that you are a well-informed, committed constituent. Before contacting your legislators, make sure you are familiar with the ACR's top legislative priorities. Currently, the ACR is pursuing:

- Reinstatement of consultation codes to ensure patient access to specialty care
- Permanent repeal of the SGR formula
- Sustained funding to arthritis research
- Access to preventative osteoporosis testing
- Funding for the pediatric subspecialty loan repayment program
- Improvements to the health care law

Issue briefs are available for download at www.rheumatology.org/advocacy in the Toolkit.

Contact Congress

Once you have become familiar with the issues and you know how to best communicate your message, it's time to contact Congress.

The more personal your contact is the more effective it will be. Remember to mention that you are a rheumatology professional, a constituent and you are contacting their office to discuss an issue affecting the rheumatology community.

Stay Informed: Join the Advocacy List Serve

Join the ACR's Advocacy list serve at www.rheumatology.org/advocacy to receive Calls to Action and the latest news on legislation and regulations that affect you and your patients.

- **Make a phone call** using the AMA's Grassroots Hotline **(800) 833-6354**.
- **Write a letter** expressing how the issue is affecting you and your patients. Make sure to include your home address and send the letter via fax in addition to mailing it.
- **Send an e-mail** using the ACR's Legislative Action Center (www.rheumatology.org/advocacy) and remember to make it personal.
- **Schedule a meeting** in your district or in Washington D.C. with your member of Congress. The ACR will provide you with informational folders for you to leave with your legislator.
- **Invite your legislator to your office.** What better way to show your legislators about the specialized care you provide your patients than inviting them to visit your office?

**The ACR Government Affairs staff is here to help.
Contact us at (404) 633-3777 or advocacy@rheumatology.org.**

