

Making Your Visit to Springfield a Success **A Legislative Day Orientation**

The Do's:

- **Do** wear a name badge at all times— Ours have your home city on them to remind the legislators whether or not you are a constituent.
- **Do** be polite – Even if the legislator does not agree with your position, you may come back to them with another issue in the future and need their help!
- **Do** be a respectful constituent by referring to them as “Senator” or “Representative” unless you have a well-established relationship. They are an elected official and deserve your respect!
- **Do** be clear in presenting your issues and offer to act as resource for health care issues they may need help with. They can't know everything about everything, we sure don't! And keep it simple, they are more than likely not health care professionals.
- **Do** dress appropriately when visiting them in the Capitol or their home office. This is another sign of respect. If you want them to take you seriously you need to look serious!
- **Do** be concise – Their time is limited and they have thousands of constituents. You are important but only until you lose them with too many details and fluff.

The Don't's:

- **Don't** start your conversation with your legislators in a righteous tone like “As a citizen and taxpayer.” They assume you are not an alien and everybody pays taxes!
- **Don't** apologize for taking their time. They are elected to serve their constituents and they need to hear from you. However **Don't** forget about being concise when you do have their ear.
- **Don't** be rude or threatening – converse of Do be Polite! How far do people get when they threaten you? You catch more flies with honey!
- **Don't** be vague – if you can't clearly summarize the issue, how will they be able to understand it?
- **Don't** waste their time by discussing bills that are in the opposite chamber of the General Assembly unless it will be in the legislator's chamber imminently. Their plate is full enough.
- **Don't** mail carbon copies of letters (do they even make carbon paper any more?) or form letters or form emails to your legislator. Craft every letter or email individually or at least use mail merge technology so they think they are special!
- **Don't** talk about campaign contributions in the Capitol – This is a definite no-no, because it is illegal!

We hope that you are now more comfortable with your visit to the State Capitol in Springfield and that you understand that communicating with legislators is just like communicating with your patients. The condition or situation in question won't get better unless the message is respectful, understandable and valuable.

We may not always like what our legislators have to say, but we have to build the bonds regardless for the good of our patients and profession! Enjoy your legislative day experience and if you have any questions, concerns or want any advice at all, let us know when you get to Springfield!