



Advocating in Your State and District

Your local Congressional offices typically have the expertise, focus, and time to address specific constituent concerns. Leverage this knowledge to gain a greater understanding of the needs of the community and build relationships within the office to become a more effective advocate.

To set up a meeting with a local congressional office, see SfN's resource "Scheduling Meetings with Policymakers and Staff."

To engage your policymakers and their local staff members:

- ▶ Discuss what you are doing to make a positive impact on the community.
- ▶ Attend local events with your policymaker or their staff to build and maintain a relationship with the office.
- ▶ Invite the policymaker and local staff for a tour of your lab or institution.
- ▶ Ask the policymaker to attend an event or ceremony at your institution. For example, a Brain Awareness Week event or a morning coffee meeting with you and your colleagues. Be sure to coordinate large scale or institution wide events with your Federal Government Relations team.

Lab tours are particularly effective at showcasing the benefits of federally funded neuroscience research. While scheduling lab tours may require extra follow-up, they successfully inform policymakers about the benefits of neuroscience that is happening locally and provide an opportunity to build a personal relationship with the office. For more information, view SfN's resource "Hosting a Lab Tour for Your Policymaker."

Offering policymakers a role at a local event, such as speaking at a seminar, can help to garner their support while simultaneously raising public awareness about your issue. For policymakers who are particularly supportive, consider publicly recognizing their support — this also helps to ensure their attendance at an event.

As with all advocacy work, follow-up is critical. Remember to:

- ▶ Provide the office with additional information if requested.
- ▶ Write thank-you letters to the policymaker and staff members that highlight the positive experience and accentuate the importance of the policymaker's commitment to neuroscience.
- ▶ Engage local media around events by engaging on social media or writing an op-ed.
- ▶ Work closely with SfN staff, who will share with your policymaker's D.C. office what you are doing locally.

SfN staff are available at advocacy@sfn.org to help you prepare for local advocacy activities. Working with SfN staff will also help to facilitate relationships between the policymaker's D.C. and local offices.