

## Talking To Your Elected Officials

### Preparing for the Visit

- Make an appointment to visit your member of Congress when they are home on long weekends or during congressional recesses. Congress typically convenes in early January and adjourns in early October. Dates vary, but recesses generally take place around the following times: President's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, the month of August, and Labor Day. Be persistent-you may need to make a number of calls to arrange the meeting.
- Make clear which issue(s) you want to discuss (no more than three).
- Gather information. Learn about key nursing issues and where your legislators stand on them by visiting ANA's Government Affairs website, [www.anapoliticalpower.org](http://www.anapoliticalpower.org) and ANA's online legislative newsletter *Capitol Update*, at [www.capitolupdate.org](http://www.capitolupdate.org). Become familiar with the opposition's views and arguments on the issues to help you answer questions.
- Prepare materials to leave with the legislator or staff such as copies of relevant ANA position papers, and a memo or fact sheet summarizing your main concerns.
- Work in coalition to underscore the broad appeal of your position. Agree on specific talking points and lobbying goals and designate a lead spokesperson for the meeting.
- Confirm the appointment the morning of or day before the meeting. Arrive on time and dress professionally.

### During the Visit

- Introduce yourself and identify yourself as a Registered Nurse, a constituent, and a member of ANA/your state nurses association.
- Start on a positive note. If s/he recently supported an ANA issue through a vote or co-sponsorship of a bill, thank her/him.
- Introduce your issues, clearly state the position of ANA.
- Explain your position with facts, but also use personal stories when possible. Let the legislator understand the personal ramifications or benefits of the policy in question.

- Ask the legislator or staff to clarify what their position is on the issue. If you are unclear about their response, ask for an explanation.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, but offer to get an answer and follow up.
- Ask the legislator to take some specific actions such as sponsoring a bill, or voting for or against a pending measure.
- Thank the legislator and staff as you leave.

### **After the Visit**

- Follow up with a call or letter to thank the legislator and staff for taking the time to meet. Be sure to include any follow up information you promised, and to remind them of anything they may have agreed to do.
- Share the results of your meetings with ANA Government Affairs staff by promptly filling out a *Congressional Debriefing Form*. Share insights you have gained about legislators' concerns and let ANA staff know about follow-up you think might be helpful.
- Encourage others to contact their elected officials as well. Find out when your legislators will be hosting town hall meetings or forums in your home district and organize a group to attend.
- Maintain communication with legislators and their staff through letters, phone calls and visits.