



Oncology Nursing Society

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TOP TEN ADVOCACY MYTHS DEBUNKED

<p>1. I am too busy. There is just not enough time in the day.</p>	<p>The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) makes it easy and fast—just visit www.onslac.org. Sending an e-mail takes less than five minutes and only involves a few clicks. We provide you with a template letter and automatically match you to your Member of Congress to make it even easier. Remember: If you do not get involved, no one else will on your or your patients' behalf. Bring your voice forward for oncology nursing and people with cancer!</p>
<p>2. I am an oncology nurse, not a lobbyist.</p>	<p>Perfect! Members of Congress are more likely to listen to you. You are an expert in what people with cancer face and need. You can provide the Member and staffers with substantive and valid information, as you know firsthand what occurs in today's healthcare system and what is needed to improve it. You are a legitimate voice, not a hired gun.</p>
<p>3. The process is intimidating. I don't understand what a substitute amendment is, am unclear on how conference committee works, and cannot remember what a pocket veto means.</p>	<p>The details and nuances of the federal policy-making process are difficult to follow, but you do not need to know them all. ONS's action alerts tell you what you need to know in terms of bill status and context, and the template letters include all the relevant details. Don't worry if you cannot remember fourth-grade civics—no one can, not even Members of Congress. Just know who represents you in Congress: two Senators (www.senate.gov) and a Representative in the House (www.house.gov). For more information about the policy-making process, review ONS's Health Policy Tool Kit at http://www.ons.org/lac/hptk/index.shtml.</p>
<p>4. Why should I bother? It doesn't seem to make a difference. I have written before and not received a response. When I have received a response, the letter didn't address the issue I wrote about or I totally disagreed with the views expressed.</p>	<p>It absolutely makes a difference. Offices count all calls, e-mails, faxes, and mail. Staffers log in the opinions that are expressed and have to provide a regular report on all constituent communications to the Member of Congress. If you have written and not received a response, write or call and let the office know. Sometimes, because of the large volume of mail, letters can get lost. Also, if you disagree with the views expressed in a response letter, write again and politely repeat your request and rationale and indicate you are disappointed in the Member's position on the issue. Usually, if you bring it to their attention, you get a prompt response. Think about Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Megan's Law, or Amber Alert. Persistence and one person or family can result in one law.</p>
<p>5. My Member is a lost cause, doesn't sit on the relevant committee, or doesn't care about health care.</p>	<p>It is essential to weigh in and go on record with your Member(s) of Congress. You never know when an issue will resonate with him or her or the staffers. Cancer unfortunately is so pervasive that many Members of Congress and staffers have been touched by the disease. Members who historically were not interested or supportive of cancer or nursing issues, once touched by the disease, often become our biggest advocates.</p>
<p>6. My concerns or issues of priority are not being discussed in Congress.</p>	<p>Maybe those issues are not being discussed because no one is writing or calling about them. You, your colleagues, and your patients can help to elevate an issue to the national agenda by communicating to your policymakers about it. Sometimes, it takes a grassroots movement to</p>

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	garner Congressional attention. People writing about their HMO horror stories stimulated the development of the Patients' Bill of Rights.
7. I am not an expert in the issue you are asking me to write or call about. I know outpatient care, not genetic testing or clinical trials.	You are an expert in the delivery of cancer care and understand first-hand what people with cancer face. Just be honest about how you have personally seen the devastating effects of cancer on people and their families. The template letters and talking points provided at www.onslac.org will take care of the rest.
8. I cannot make it to Washington to meet with my Member of Congress.	Members and staffers will tell you that developing a relationship with your policymakers and their staffers "back at home" is more effective because you can see them in your own community. Going to Washington is effective, but communicating from and at home is even better. Visit the district office or attend a town hall meeting. It's easy, and ONS has tips at http://www.ons.org/lac/tips.shtml to help support your efforts.
9. I am a Republican, and my Member is a Democrat. I am a Democrat, and my Member is a Republican.	Because of the pervasiveness of cancer, it is unfortunately a universal scourge. Cancer, unlike other health issues, is not partisan. Don't worry about your party affiliation; just identify yourself as a constituent and an oncology nurse. These are suitable qualifications for your views to be treated with respect. Senators Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) co-chair the Senate Cancer Coalition, and Representatives Lois Capps (D-CA), Steve Israel (D-NY), Sue Myrick (R-NC), and Deborah Pryce (R-OH) co-chair the House Cancer Caucus. Similarly, Representative Capps and her colleague Representative Steve LaTourette (R-OH) co-chair the House Nursing Caucus. If cancer and nursing can unite all of these policymakers, you need not worry about differing in party affiliation from your Member(s).
10. I've written and called in before for Nurse Reinvestment Act funding and cancer research and requested my Members' support. I've done my part to support the cause. I don't need to write, call, e-mail, or meet with them again.	Every day, Congress makes decisions that affect you, nurses, and people with cancer across the country. Writing, calling, e-mailing, or meeting with your policymakers regularly is essential. Each year, Congress determines funding levels for the coming year, so each year, oncology nurses again must contact their Members about the need to support programs to address the nursing shortage, cancer research, and other programs. Nowhere is the adage "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" more true than Washington, DC. Policymakers often claim that the reason for their inaction on matters is that they aren't hearing enough from home on the issue. Don't give them an excuse!

For more advocacy and health policy information and other tips, visit ONS's Legislative Action Center (www.onslac.org), or to learn more about Congress and find out who represents you, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov>, www.house.gov, and www.senate.gov.