

ONS Hill Visit Guidance

We are excited that you are participating in ONS Hill Day! To help you feel better prepared to have productive meetings with your Members of Congress and their staff, we offer the following guidance and tips:

YOU REPRESENT ONS

It's important to keep in mind that as you meet with Members of Congress and their staff, you are representing ONS and its key legislative positions that make a difference for oncology nurses. Try to stay focused on the key ONS legislative issues and asks and share relevant information about your experiences as a nurse treating cancer patients. Remember that nurses are the most trusted health professionals and your voice as a dedicated oncology nurse deserves to be heard!

- ❖ **DRESS PROFESSIONALLY** - Since you are representing a professional organization and meeting with influential decision-makers, it is important that you dress in business attire, such as a suit, dress or pants with a nice sweater or shirt and comfortable walking shoes. Please avoid wearing jeans, shorts, sneakers, etc. While there is no official dress code, we want to leave a good impression of ONS.
- ❖ **ARRIVE EARLY** - It is recommended to arrive early rather than be late for a scheduled visit. As you enter, please be quiet and respectful of front office staff who may be busy working. Introduce yourself to the receptionist and let them know the name of the staffer you are scheduled to visit. They may ask you to sit in their front lobby or wait in the hallway if group is large or the small lobby is crowded or is being used for a meeting. Sometimes they offer snacks and drinks for visitors, and you may even be greeted by a friendly dog in some offices.
- ❖ **BE POLITE** - Don't be surprised if the staffer you meet is very young and that you are not able to meet the actual Member of Congress directly. Staffers are very knowledgeable of issues and process and are responsible for conveying details of visits and requests to their bosses. Please treat them politely and respectfully like you would the actual Member of Congress. Give the staffer your full attention, make eye contact, and avoid checking your cellphone.
- ❖ **MAKE INTRODUCTIONS** – It is good to start the meeting by letting them know where in their state or congressional district you live and work, such as a hospital or community care center that they may know, and share the mission of ONS and your state chapter. Making local connections is valuable! If you have business cards, please bring them to leave with the Hill staffer you meet.
- ❖ **STAY ON ONS MESSAGE** – It is helpful to hand out the ONS folder at the beginning so staff can review and take notes. As you go through the key issues, be careful not to let the Member or staff person distract and lead you away from your topics. This is important, because there is limited time to make your key points on the ONS priority issues and answer questions. If they ask about other issues, graciously tell them that you will bring those to the attention of ONS Government Affairs and turn the conversation back to why you are there -- to inform them of ONS Hill Day messages and requests.
- ❖ **AVOID PERSONAL POLITICS & CAUSES** - A gentle reminder to please not use the Hill visits as an opportunity to promote personal politics and causes. Outside of Hill Day, you as a constituent are encouraged to contact your Representative and Senators and share your personal views on any issue you like, but that is not appropriate for ONS Hill Day.
- ❖ **BE CONFIDENT** - Be confident in making the specific requests on behalf of ONS. Congressional offices expect a request. In general, you will ask them to support or advance specific legislation and funding priorities. Take good notes of any follow-up requests, questions, concerns or statements of support or opposition. ONS staff will use your notes to follow up with offices or to answer any questions that come up.
- ❖ **SAY THANK YOU** - At the end of the visit, thank the Member of Congress or their staff for their time and thank staff for sharing the information and making the requests to their boss.
- ❖ **FOLLOW UP** - Plan to follow up via email with the staff whom you meet. They will provide you with their business card, and ONS will provide you with a draft thank you message you may personalize and email to them after your visit. Timely follow up helps create a long-term relationship with staff on Capitol Hill, and makes you more likely to be viewed as a resource in the future on issues that ONS cares about.