

ADA Grassroots Action Team Network Resource Manual

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I. Dear Grassroots Action Team Member:

Welcome to the ADA Grassroots Action Team network! Since 1994, the ADA has made a strong commitment to this initiative, and — with the tremendous support and involvement from you and your colleagues in all 435 Congressional Districts around the country — the Action Teams have become a real force in dentistry's government relations efforts.

Despite all the demands on your time and energy, you have made an important decision to join your local Action Team and help protect the future of your profession. This is a commitment that will require some more of your time — to learn how to be an effective grassroots advocate, to work with your Team to carry out activities that will foster a good working relationship with your U.S. Representative, and to communicate with your lawmaker about the issues that affect your profession, your practice and your patients.

We want your role as an Action Team member to be enjoyable and satisfying, and are making every effort to provide you with the resources necessary to help you be as effective as possible. This reference manual, for example, has been prepared to give you guidance in understanding your role in the legislative and political process. Further, the ADA is offers a series of Political Education Seminars for Action Team members as well as a variety of other materials and tools for your use.

As always, the staff at ADA headquarters in Chicago, in our Washington Office, and in your state and local societies also is eager to provide you with any help they can. And, you can be sure that the grassroots efforts in your area and all across the country have the full support of the ADA House of Delegates and Board of Trustees.

The ADA Grassroots Action Teams already have demonstrated how powerful their efforts can be. During the height of the health-care reform debate, the Teams were essential in convincing Congress that *dentistry is health care that works*, and that dental benefits should not be taxed. But, we have just begun. As you will soon discover, the skills and strategies you will learn with your Action Team colleagues can be utilized to address any political and legislative issue that affects your practice and the oral health of your patients. We're glad to have you on the team to meet the political challenges of the future!

III. What is Grassroots and Why Grassroots is it Critical

Congress is going to make decisions that affect you and your practice. It's a given. You can either sit on the sidelines or get involved and help shape the outcome in your favor. That's grassroots. It all starts with you.

By being active in ADPAC's Grassroots Program, you and your family will have a direct role in fighting for dentistry in Washington.

- Grassroots activism consists of a group of like-minded people, like dentists and their spouses, coming together for a cause they believe in to help influence public policy.
- The goal of ADPAC's Grassroots Program is to advance dentistry's agenda by mobilizing members of the dental community, creating a groundswell of support or opposition to a particular issue or position.
- You are the grassroots. Without your involvement, dentistry cannot take a pro-active approach to the legislative process. You are a constituent to three members of Congress — your two Senators and your Representative — as well as their counterparts in the state legislature. These are the lawmakers you as an individual are most likely to be able to influence as you develop a relationship with them.
- Your input to legislators provides ADA's lobbyists with the political support to be persuasive, and also provides the legislators with the political rationale they need to be persuaded. An extensive grassroots network is critical for effective government relations work.
- As dentists, we must recognize that when our profession becomes the subject of legislation, we will either win or we will

lose. How much is won or lost depends, in part, on our effective grassroots political participation: your participation.

- In our competitive system, every citizen falls into one of two categories. They are either "players" in the system — individuals who not only vote but actively compete within the political and policy-making arena — or they are "victims" of the system. As citizens and dentists, we must decide which group we belong to. There is no third group of observers in our process.

- As an Action Team member, you are asked to develop a personal relationship with your U.S. Representative. Your own personal grassroots, political activity is as much a part of dentistry today as patient care, because, ultimately, the future of quality oral care will be decided in the political arena.

III. Overview and Structure of ADA's Grassroots Action Team Network

The goal of the ADA's Grassroots Program is to involve dentists in the political process at the ground level and establish a strong presence for dentistry in each Congressional district. To meet this goal, the ADA utilizes Action Team Leaders (ATLs), responsible for organizing Action Teams of dentists, spouses and students to respond to action alerts, meet with their lawmakers and volunteer on campaigns.

The network of Action Teams creates a unified voice on legislative and political issues, and also establishes dentists as an important constituency for politicians. The Action Team network truly can be one of the most effective grassroots programs in the country. But, we need you to do it!

The program is two-dimensional: legislative and political.

- The legislative aspect of the program mobilizes the profession in key

congressional districts (via Action Teams), educates dentists on important issues, tracks pending legislation and advocates the views and positions of the American Dental Association to elected officials.

- The political part of the program is directed toward a candidate's bid for office and requires involvement and participation in the candidate's campaign.

ADPAC plays a unique role in the grassroots program. Activities include:

- Serve as an information resource for Action Teams in their trustee districts.
- Maintain communication with Action Team leaders in their trustee districts.
- Follow-up on action alerts sent out to team leaders in their trustee districts.
- Mentor new action team leaders and action team members to make them more effective advocates.
- Advise action team leaders on how legislation and regulations will affect dentists.

ADA Grassroots Organization-Dental Chain of Command

ADPAC

ADPAC is the controlling authority for the grassroots program. The ADPAC Board is responsible for working with constituent societies, coordinators and the ATLS in their trustee districts to insure action teams are functioning. The ADPAC Board does not appoint ATLS or coordinators. That is the responsibility of the constituent society.

State Coordinator

Oversees and encourages ATLS to stay active and become involved. Coordinator can be dentist or spouse or constituent staff.

Action Team Leaders

Engage team to maintain a political presence in the Congressional district by engaging in legislative and political activities. Dentists and spouses can serve as Action Team Leaders.

Action Team Members

Maintain political presence in Congressional districts by responding to Action Alerts and becoming active in lawmakers' reelection efforts. Dentists, spouses and students can serve as action team members.

Role of Constituent Dental Society

The Constituent Society is responsible for appointing ATLS and coordinators, promoting the grassroots action, and encouraging members to become involved. Constituent societies also determine who will attend the Washington Leadership Conference. Several constituent societies forward action alerts to action teams and post important grassroots information on their web sites.

Role of State PACs

While state PACs do not have an official role in the grassroots program, it should be noted that many state PAC Chairs and activists are also active in the Action Team Network serving as ATLS, coordinators or team members. For efficiency purposes, many constituent societies prefer their PAC and state grassroots leaders to serve in the action team network.

Role of the ADA Washington Office

The ADA Washington Office maintains the list of ATLS and coordinators and provides action teams with resources and support.

The Washington Office also provides political education training for constituent societies and promotes the grassroots program at various dental meetings around the country. Lobbyists and policy staff prepare action teams for meetings with lawmakers. ADPAC staff assists with home fundraisers, campaign volunteering and action team recruitment.

Role of Dental Spouses and Students

Members of the ADA's spouses' group, the Alliance of the American Dental Association, participate frequently in activities on behalf of dentistry. They can be very important players in your grassroots efforts, providing additional support and resources to your action team. A spouse can also serve as a team leader. Dental students are also welcome to participate as Action Team members.

IV. Responsibilities of Action Team Members

To carry out the goals of your Action Team, you are asked to assume the following responsibilities:

- To represent dentistry's positions on issues to your own U.S. Representative;
- To be aware of pending legislation at the federal level, and with the assistance of your Team, the ADA Washington Office, and your constituent society be prepared to discuss its impact on the profession and practice of dentistry, patients, and the local community;
- To work with your Team to plan and coordinate grassroots political activities in the district that may involve other dentists and their families or other potential constituent support groups in the local community;

- To respond immediately to requests for legislative or political action from your Action Team Leader;
- To demonstrate dentistry's support for your U.S. Representative; and
- To help build community understanding and support for issues of concern to dentistry, and educate and recruit other dentists to join your local Team.

The following objectives for Action Teams include:

- Attend a Political Education Seminar;
- Meet at least once with your U.S. Representative to begin or continue the process of establishing a mutual relationship and/or to discuss an issue of concern to dentistry;
- Host a fundraiser in the home of a Team member to demonstrate dentistry's support for the U.S. Representative's re-election campaign (a "how-to" kit is available from the ADA);
- Develop and implement a Team strategy for providing campaign assistance before the next general election which will demonstrate the dental community's support;
- Respond to Action Alerts from the ADA to communicate with your U.S. Representative on specific issues before the U.S. Congress

IV. Responsibilities of Action Team Leaders

As an Action Team Leader in your district, you play a key role in helping your profession achieve this goal. In addition to

the responsibilities of the Action Team Members, your main job is:

- To generate enthusiasm and maintain interest on the part of your Action Team's members to be politically involved on behalf of their profession; and
- To encourage and recruit more dentists and spouses in your district to join your Action Team.

More information can be found in the Action Team Leader Guide, available in the Grassroots Resource Kit or at the Advocacy section of the ADA's Web site:
www.ada.org/prof/advocacy

V. Action Alerts – A Call to Action

Periodically the ADA will ask you and your Action Team members to contact your lawmaker regarding a specific legislative proposal or amendment as part of an organized grassroots effort. The ADA Washington Office will issue an Action Alert when the legislation of concern is at a critical decision point, and when grassroots action can make a difference.

Often times, only Action Teams whose lawmakers are on a particular committee or subcommittee that is addressing the legislation may receive an Action Alert. Nevertheless, when the legislation is being considered on the House or Senate floor, all Teams may be asked to take action.

It is critical that every Action Team member respond in a timely fashion to all Action Alerts they receive, regardless of the issue that is being addressed. Although some issues may not directly interest or concern you, they will affect your profession as a whole.

The success of our grassroots efforts depends on all. Dentists working as a team.

In most cases, your Action Team Leader is responsible for advising you when an Action Alert has been issued. Action Alerts are accompanied by background material on the issue and suggested key points to use in your communications. You will be given a specific time frame in which to respond and are requested to send a copy of your written communication or report of your response to your Action Team Leader. You are encouraged to utilize the ADA Washington Office as a resource to formulate a response. This will ensure that dentistry's messages to lawmakers are consistent.

IV. Understanding the Legislative Process

The following description of the federal legislative process describes the logical path a bill takes through Congress and highlights the key points of influence. Keep in mind that many bills can take circuitous routes through this process, and that they may not seem to follow this logical path.

A. Draft Legislation

Sources of legislative proposals are unlimited and diverse. The most obvious source is, of course, an idea conceived by a member of Congress, either from a campaign promise or from experience after taking office. In addition, constituents — individually or through organizations such as corporations, labor and management groups, trade and professional associations, and consumer groups may petition or write to lawmakers, making their desires for particular legislation known. For this reason, a key point for grassroots contact between Action Teams and their lawmakers can occur while the legislative proposal is being developed.

B. Introducing a Bill

A bill can be introduced into either the House or the Senate by a member of that body, or it may be introduced simultaneously in both houses. The bills are

numbered: "H.R." signifies a House bill, while Senate bills are denoted with an "S."

C. Committee and Subcommittee Referral

Upon introduction of a bill, the Speaker of the House or the Majority Leader of the Senate refers it to the committee having proper jurisdiction. Each committee has jurisdictional responsibility for several general issue areas. Most committees also have several subcommittees to help divide up the work load and specialize in certain issues.

Committees and subcommittees carry out the central functions of Congress — processing bills which have been introduced, investigating the need for new legislation, and overseeing the Executive Branch — within their own particular areas of jurisdictional interest.

It is at the subcommittee and committee level that laws are formulated and should be balanced with public comment. Once a bill has reached the floor of the House or Senate for a vote, it is more difficult for it to be reshaped or defeated, because the majority of Members will defer to the "experts" on the committee which studied and reported the bill.

Much of the Action Teams' grassroots communications efforts will take place at the committee and subcommittee state, where the details of bill are hammered out.

There are three key points of influence in the subcommittee and committee process.

1. Hearings — Committees and subcommittees rely to a large degree on the hearing process — inviting other Members of Congress, public officials, business and professional people, private citizens, experts, and other interested groups to offer their opinions on a particular issue being considered.

2. Mark-up Sessions — After the completion of scheduled hearings, committees and subcommittees will usually consider a bill in executive sessions known as "mark-up" sessions.

There the hearing record is considered, views of all sides are studied, the bill is examined, usually section by section, frequently amended, and a vote is taken at the conclusion to determine the action of the committee or subcommittee. In the Senate, mark-up is sometimes conducted only by a full committee and not by any of its subcommittees.

Since mark-up sessions are where the final language of a bill is largely determined, this is where Action Team grassroots activities can be most effective. Grassroots communications with members of the panel before mark -up can affect how legislation will be written.

3. Voting on Bills — After the subcommittee and committee complete the markup session, a bill is put up for a vote. If it passes by a majority vote in a subcommittee, the bill is reported to the full committee.

Sometimes a bill is introduced in the first session (year) of a Congress (e.g., the 104th Congress), but it is not reported out of committee. The bill is then carried over into the second session (year) of a Congress. If the legislation is not passed that year, it dies and has to be introduced as a new bill when the next Congress convenes.

E. Moving a Bill to the Floor

If a bill is reported favorably out of committee, it is usually placed on a legislative calendar for debate. The more solid committee support the legislation has, the more likely it is to be approved by the Senate or House.

In the House, the bill normally must first clear the Rules Committee, which channels major bills to the floor for debate. The usual procedure is for the chairman of the committee which has approved the bill to ask the Rules Committee for legislative right-of-way.

The Rules Committee can then establish the procedures which govern the floor debate for the bill. The Rules Committee can also delay or kill a bill by refusing to grant a rule. The House Rules Committee is another key point of grassroots influence, because this committee can decide a bill's fate, depending upon the rule issued.

Although the Senate also has a Rules Committee, its function is more a formality; it does not exercise any of the power of the House Rules Committee. The Senate Majority Leader determines if and when a bill comes to the floor for debate and there are fewer time constraints on its consideration.

Because of the complexity in moving a bill from the calendar to the floor, this is another stage at which many bills die.

F. Floor Action

Most votes are decided by a simple majority, though certain types of action require a larger percentage. For example, a two-thirds vote of the total membership in each chamber is necessary to adopt a resolution to amend the Constitution, to override a Presidential veto, or to suspend the rules of the chamber.

G. Second Chamber Action

The first chamber to pass a bill sends it to the other chamber. If the House, for example, receives a bill the Senate has passed and does not have a similar bill of its own ready for floor action, the Speaker refers the Senate bill to the appropriate committee. The House eventually may approve the Senate bill without change and

send it to the White House for the President's signature. However, the House is more likely to either revise the legislation and return it to the Senate or fail to take action before adjournment.

H. Conference

The House and Senate often pass different versions of the same bill. Before it can be finalized and sent to the President for executive action, identical language must be approved by both houses of Congress. To reach this goal, a conference committee, composed of members of both chambers, is created to resolve conflicts in the legislation.

If the conference committee is able to resolve all the points of disagreement, it votes to issue a conference report. Occasionally, however, conferees are unable to come to agreement, and any bill which is not reported back to both chambers "dies in conference."

Grassroots communications with your lawmaker during conference committee action may be useful at this point, especially if he or she is a conferee. The process is much more difficult to understand, let alone influence, at this late stage.

I. Final Floor Action

Since a bill may have undergone considerable rewriting in conference, it is necessary for both the Senate and House to pass it again in its amended form. However, this step is pretty much a formality, because lawmakers no longer have the opportunity to offer amendments. The chamber that requested the conference acts last on the bill as it emerges from the conference. The bill is usually brought up on the floor for a limited amount of debate and is then subject to a yea or nay vote.

Either chamber may send the bill back to conference for further work if it is not satisfied with the result.

J. Executive Action

The bill is then forwarded to the President who has ten days in which to sign or veto it. If he chooses to sign it, it becomes a public law. If he vetoes it, it is sent back to Congress for a chance to override the veto. If, however, the President chooses not to sign a measure during the ten-day period and Congress adjourns within that time period, the bill dies by "pocket veto" without Congress having the chance to reconsider. If Congress remains in session, the bill becomes law without the President's signature.

K. Congressional Override

A bill vetoed by the President still has an opportunity for enactment. When it is returned to Congress, a measure is subject to an override vote in which both houses can decide whether to honor the President's veto or to enact the law without his signature. However, unlike the simple majority required to initially pass the legislation, an override action requires a two-thirds vote in each chamber.

V. Keys to a Successful Legislative Strategy

Politics is guided by a unique set of rules. Professional lobbyists are your best source of information on the methods for passing and/or defeating legislation, but there are a few time-tested, universal strategies that politically interested members should know.

While legislators are ordinary citizens, they are also people who have experienced the rigors of a campaign and must think about getting re-elected. Their unique characteristic, however, is that they put themselves, and their reputation, on the line every time they vote. In most legislatures, that's hundreds of times a year.

As a result, legislators are usually very knowledgeable about current affairs. So, while legislators must think (and therefore

vote) globally, they must simultaneously think (and vote) in a way that protects them politically. A good legislative strategy takes into account the balancing act that all legislators must maintain in order to keep their jobs.

A good legislative strategy also takes into account that legislators cannot be experts on every issue. Most elected officials rely heavily upon the members of their personal and committee staff to make recommendations about legislative proposals. Very often, these recommendations form the basis of the final bill.

And finally, a good legislative strategy recognizes that while the legislator and his or her staff are the experts in the legislative process, you are the expert in your profession. They need your input! The more information you can provide a legislator about a bill and its impact on the way you conduct business, the better. As the old political axiom goes, "Information is power."

VI. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships with Lawmakers

Your number one goal to help ADA's grassroots efforts is to develop a good working relationship with your U.S. Representative. Keep these tips in mind as you go about developing that relationship:

- Although it is vital that you communicate with your representative about the issues that affect you and dentistry, your contacts will have much greater impact if a genuine personal relationship exists between you and your representative and his or her staff.
- Most lawmakers respond best (and first) to people they know — especially when they know you have worked for the best interests of the community and for their best interest, politically.

- Most lawmakers and their staffs want to know as many of their constituents as possible. You should have little or no trouble getting acquainted with your lawmaker if you take advantage of available or created opportunities to meet. Both patience and persistence are valuable in the development of the relationship.

- Party affiliation should not restrict anyone; your lawmaker represents the entire district or state — Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike. You need not be a member of his or her political party to establish a mutual relationship.

- To make contacts with your lawmaker meaningful, you should do your homework. First, find out as much as you can about your lawmaker, including his or her voting record, personal political background, issue priorities, what committees he or she serves on, etc. Knowing the demographics of the district as well as local political concerns is also helpful. For information of this nature, you may call upon the ADA Washington Office or your state dental association for assistance.

- Once you have become familiar with your lawmaker's background, it is important to stay abreast of his or her activities and positions on issues. Information gathered through public statements, votes taken on issues, and print and broadcast media reports on the lawmaker's actions will be invaluable when you make personal contact. Also, you should be certain to get on the mailing list to receive your lawmaker's newsletter.

What Kind of Relationship Might Develop?

- Action Team members will develop many different kinds of relationships with their lawmakers. For example, you may have a personal relationship in which both you and the lawmaker enjoy and benefit from the relationship. Many lawmakers, especially

freshmen lawmakers, seek out constituent groups who are active in their districts to help them build a strong political organization. Your representative will welcome the opportunity to work with an organized team of dentists that not only acts as a solid, reliable sounding board on the issues, but is willing to help them out during election time as well.

- Some Action Team members may only develop a formal relationship consisting of prompt and polite correspondence between them and the lawmaker. Some relationships may be staff-oriented, allowing for a good flow of information between you and legislative staff. This is perfectly acceptable, as staff have a great deal of input in how their lawmaker votes on the issues, and staff relationships can lead to opportunities to develop a relationship with the lawmaker.

- Regardless of the kind of relationship that you may develop, remember that every relationship is worth developing even though some will be more productive and more enjoyable than others. The key is to establish and maintain regular contact and keep the channels of communication open.

- Finally keep in mind that, as a dentist who is active in your community and a constituent, you possess a great deal of potential to credibly influence issues in your district. This is a valuable asset you can use to develop a relationship with your lawmaker.

Getting Acquainted with Your Lawmaker

- Don't wait for problems to arise before you approach your representative. In fact, if you and your Team members have never met or do not know your lawmaker, you should attempt to make your first meeting with him or her a friendly, get acquainted occasion. An easy way to begin is to attend a town meeting your lawmaker might hold and introduce yourself as a local constituent and dentist who has joined your profession's

local grassroots team to be more politically active. Better yet, you and your Team can contact the lawmaker's district office and schedule a personal meeting with him or her when they are back home meeting with constituents.

- Take advantage of other opportunities to meet and become better acquainted with your lawmaker. Any public or official function in which you are involved — a new facility opening, a building or public project dedication, a ground breaking for a new project, an open house, or a civic or charitable award ceremony — is also a legitimate opportunity to invite your lawmaker to attend and get acquainted.
- Opportunities also may develop through your state association or constituent groups, charitable organizations, or the political party to which you belong. You can also create opportunities to meet your lawmaker by inviting him or her and selected staff to meet with your colleagues at a dental society meeting. Relationships initiated through such meetings can evolve quickly into relationships which permit discussion of issues affecting dentistry.

The Importance of Staff

- The demands on a lawmaker's time make staff very important. Staff members serve as your lawmaker's eyes and ears, bringing issues to his or her attention and relaying constituent concerns.
- While there is no substitute for working directly with a lawmaker at key points in the legislative process, building rapport with his or her staff is essential. For that reason, you should make efforts to get acquainted with your lawmaker's key staff aides, especially the district manager, and the administrative assistant and legislative assistant who deals most with dentistry's issues.

In a sense, the staff is a lawmaker's alter ego. After you meet with a staff member, he

or she is likely to summarize the meeting in a memorandum to the lawmaker. If you present your lawmaker with a complex problem, more than likely he or she probably will ask for staff recommendations before taking any action.

Ideas for Maintaining a Constituent Relationship with Your Lawmaker

Once you and your Action Team have become acquainted with your lawmaker, the following activities are helpful for maintaining a good relationship:

- Keep up with what the lawmaker is doing and the votes he or she casts on issues of concern to dentistry.
- Let the lawmaker know when you are pleased or displeased with a vote or expressed opinions on an issue of special concern to you and your profession.
- Visit the lawmaker's office and get to know the staff both in Washington and the district, specifically the administrative assistant, the legislative assistant and the district manager. Talk to them succinctly about key issues, the political scene, or subjects of common interest. If the lawmaker holds an important position on a health committee, get to know his or her committee staff as well.
- Invite your lawmaker to state association dinners or events, award presentation, or to speak to a group of dentists in the community. If the lawmaker cannot attend, and if it is appropriate, invite his or her key staffer instead.
- Send copies of local news articles supportive of dentistry's views on issues to your lawmaker along with a cover note.
- Invite your lawmaker and selected staff to tour your dental office and meet with you and your staff to discuss key issues.

- Attend and participate in your lawmaker's "town meetings" in the district.
- Host a "meet and greet" or non-fundraising reception in your home for the candidate and invite your friends and colleagues to attend.
- Attend political functions and fundraisers in the district. Before attending such events, contact ADPAC to see if matching funds may be available to allow several dentists and their spouses to attend. At each function, introduce your lawmaker to your friends and colleagues.
- Get involved personally and financially in your lawmaker's election campaign, if he or she is the candidate of your choice.
- Consider hosting a fundraiser in your home for the candidate and invite your friends and colleagues to attend.
- After developing a good working relationship, consider inviting your lawmaker to join you at social functions, such as golf or tennis outings, sports or theater events, holiday parties, etc. Recent legislation has severely restricted or banned gifts from constituents to members of Congress and their staff. Please consult with the ADA Washington Office before engaging in this kind of activity

When your lawmaker or his or her staff begin to ask advice from you on legislative matters of concern to dentistry, you'll know you have built a productive constituent relationship.

VII. How to Communicate with Lawmakers

As leaders in your community, you and your Action Team members have an opportunity to establish continuous, effective communications with your lawmaker that

will have an impact on the outcome of legislation important to dentistry. Personal meetings and written communications are the most common forms of ongoing contact and are the easiest ways to begin developing solid working relationships with your lawmaker and their staff.

Meeting with Your Lawmaker

You may meet personally with your lawmaker and his or her staff to discuss a specific issue or to introduce yourself as a local constituent and politically active dentist. Here are a few pointers for a successful meeting:

- Unless you already know your lawmaker, you should write, rather than phone, to request an appointment. Further, try to schedule meetings with your lawmaker when he or she is in the district visiting constituents, including you. Be sure to explain that you are a dentist in the community and, if you want to discuss an issue, explain what topic you wish to address.
- Do not overlook the opportunity to meet with a staff aide, particularly if he or she is working closely with the lawmaker on an issue of concern to dentistry.
- If you want to meet to discuss a specific issue, it is important to be familiar with key aspects of the issue before the meeting. The ADA Washington Office will brief you and provide information that may be helpful. This does not mean that you must be an expert. You should, however, be prepared to discuss how an issue affects you, your practice and your profession. Finally, concentrate on one issue only.
- Try to be concise and well organized in the meeting. You will likely have only 15 or 20 minutes for the meeting, and you should be able to state your views in half that time or less so you can listen to the lawmaker's views.

- The meeting should be an exchange of ideas, not a lecture. Your lawmaker will welcome advice on the issues that affect you and should be open to constructive alternatives.

- If you do not know the answer to a question, do not try to guess or tell the lawmaker what you think he or she wants to hear. Instead, say you will look into the question and get back to the lawmaker with an answer as soon as possible. Ask for the name of a staff person you can contact. This is a great way to initiate a second contact with the office and get to know the legislative staff that handles that particular issue.

- Be sure to have a one-page summary — on your letterhead — of key points about the issue and your position to leave with the lawmaker after the meeting is concluded.

- After the meeting, follow up with a thank-you letter and re-emphasize key points which were discussed. You also may write a note of thanks to those staff people who helped to arrange or participated in the meeting. Also send any data or information that you may have promised to provide.

- All visits with your lawmaker should be coordinated with your Action Team Leader, your component and constituent societies and the ADA Washington Office. Your Action Team Leader is responsible for reporting your Team's activities to ADA.

Letter Writing Tips

When it is not possible to schedule a personal meeting prior to votes on legislation that affect dentistry, it is important that you write your lawmaker to inform him or her of your position. When writing to a lawmaker, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Use your dental practice letterhead when writing to your lawmaker. Personal stationery should be used if your home address is in the district of the lawmaker and your office is in another district. Most representatives will not answer mail that is not from their district.

- Address the letter correctly. On the envelope and in the inside address refer to the elected official As "The Honorable (*name*)."

- Address the letter as follows:

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

The Honorable (name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Dear Congressman or Congresswoman _____:

Members of the U.S. Senate:

The Honorable (name)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Senator _____:

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as: Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman; or as Dear Mr. Speaker.

Things to include and remember when sending your letter:

- Include your own return address on the letter, if it is not on the letterhead.
- State the reason for writing. Identify the subject clearly. Use the bill number and title, if available, when writing about proposed legislation and indicate which committee or subcommittee is dealing with the bill.

- If appropriate, provide brief background information about your practice (e.g., number of employees, length of time in community, etc.).
- Keep your comments short and to the point. Cover only one issue per letter. If possible, keep your letter to one page.
- If you are communicating your views about an issue, explain how the issue would affect you, your family, your practice, and what impact it would have on your community or state.
- Know your facts. Communicating inaccurate statements will damage your credibility.
- If you know how your lawmaker stands on the issue, acknowledge this position in your letter. When it agrees with your own, don't spare the praise. When it conflicts with your view, be courteous, but do not hesitate to state your beliefs and request that the lawmaker reconsider his or her position.
- If you have written previously on the same issue, acknowledge any reply that you received. Do not become a "pen pal," however, by writing so often that your letters become annoyances.
- Be reasonable. Don't ask the impossible. Don't use threats or refer to campaign contributions. Be courteous and respectful in all communications.
- Be constructive. If a bill deals with a problem but seems to represent the wrong solution, propose constructive alternatives when there is appropriate policy.
- Ask your lawmaker to respond and share his or her position on the issue with you and how they intend to vote.
- Avoid form letters or stereotyped phrases and sentences that give the appearance of form letters. Communications written in your own words that cite your own expertise are more effective.
- Don't forget to write when your lawmaker does something that deserves approval or thanks. A word of appreciation is rare and will be noticed.
- By the same token, you may write to express your disappointment when the lawmaker does not support your position on an issue and votes against your interests. This must not be a rude or threatening communication, but merely a letter letting the lawmaker know that you follow his or her actions. Always leave the possibility open that the lawmaker will support your view on future issues.
- Make sure your Action Team Leader keeps the ADA Washington Office and your constituent society informed about your written communication with your U.S. Representative.

Other Ways to Communicate

When a bill is coming up for a vote and time is so short that you can not get a letter mailed to your lawmaker in time, consider using other forms, of cont act.

Email

Email is a quick and easy way to communicate, though if you have the time, a

written letter is best. Email is best for responding to urgent items, like Action Alerts. The ADA's Advocacy site and its Capwiz system makes getting in touch with your Members of Congress as easy as the click of a button. Visit <http://www.ada.org/prof/advocacy> for more information.

Telephone Calls

This method is important to use when the deadline for a vote is near. The ADA Washington Office and your state association will advise when phone calls are needed. If you know your lawmaker extremely well and can expect to get him or her on the phone, you should try calling them. Keep in mind that many of the techniques outlined in the previous section for letterwriting also apply to telephone calls. You will only have a few minutes or less for the conversation and will need to be very concise and exact in expressing your view. Always be sure to identify yourself as a constituent and the bill number and status, and, if you cannot speak directly with the lawmaker, leave your message with a staff person. Always ask the lawmaker's position on the issue.

Facsimiles

Although every lawmaker's office has a facsimile machine, it is generally not recommended that you send your personal communications in this manner. However, if your lawmaker or a staffer requests information via these methods, feel free to do so, provided hard copy is sent through the mail.

VIII. Political Campaign Involvement

A. Overview

Political campaigns are the means of survival for officeholders. It is no coincidence that the term "campaign" originally referred to an offensive mounted in a war. Politicians view their campaigns as

nothing less than a war and, just as old buddies who served in WWII, Korea or Vietnam remain close for many years afterwards, so do political workers usually remain close to their candidate turned office holder.

Many myths and misconceptions exist with regard to political campaigns. This section will help you to understand the nature of a campaign.

B. Picking a Candidate

Picking a candidate is akin to betting a horse to win in a race; if he wins, you have a lot more than you started with and, if he loses, you've thrown some hard-earned bucks away. There are a few facts to keep in mind when picking a candidate who will increase your chances of picking a winner. There are essentially three types of candidates, incumbents, challengers and candidates vying for an open seat.

Incumbents

These are current officeholders running for re-election. Their advantages include the fact that they are favorites to win re-election; are known quantities; have helped constituents; have already won an election; get more publicity; can usually raise more money; have some volunteers; know the campaign ropes; and have franking privileges.

Their liabilities include such things as having a legislative voting record that some constituent won't like; being seen as "insiders;" casting votes that can easily be criticized; and being targets of negative campaign tactics.

Challengers

These candidates challenge the incumbent's re-election. Advantages for challengers are that they are seen as outsiders; can promise to change the way things are done; and can use the incumbent's record against them.

Their liabilities often include having little or no name recognition in the district; not having the ability to raise as much money as the incumbent; and having to build a campaign organization from scratch.

Open Seats

When an officeholder retires, dies or vacates a seat, a political free-for-all can result as the contest begins to elect a successor.

How to Pick a Candidate

There are several considerations you need to make when deciding whether or not to support and work for a candidate.

Credibility

- o Find out who they are.
- o How long have they lived in the community?
- o What is their occupation?
- o Have they been active in the community?
- o What is their reputation?
- o Who has endorsed them?
- o What is their campaign plan?
- o What will they do if elected?

Competence

- o Can they put together a winning campaign organization?
- o Can they raise enough money?
- o Who are their active supporters?
- o Can and do they discuss the issues?
- o Are they good public speakers?

Compatibility in the District

- o Can they get along with the voters in the district?
- o Do they know the district well?
- o Do they have friends in all parts of the district?
- o Do their views reflect the views of the majority of voters in the district?

Creativity

- o What makes them more electable?
- o Can they capture the imagination of the electorate?
- o How will they get their message to the voters?

Electability

- o Can they win?
- o Are they single issue candidates?

Compatibility with Dentistry

- o What is your state association's analysis of the candidate?
- o Is ADPAC supporting the candidate's campaign?
- o How has the candidate voted on dentistry issues, if an incumbent?
- o What is the stated position of the candidate on dentistry's issues?

Your Team's ability to pick the right candidate will directly affect your ability to be an effective participant in the political and legislative process. Keep in mind that getting involved in local or state races, too, can pay big dividends in the future. Many of these candidates eventually seek higher office — and will remember their long-time supporters along the way. Always consult ADPAC and your constituent society before getting involved in a candidate's race on behalf of dentistry.

C. Getting Involved

Action Teams, as well as the dental community, can take advantage of opportunities to volunteer in campaigns. The most effective contribution to any campaign often goes beyond the donation of money to giving of your own time and energy. Candidates appreciate the commitment of personal time by volunteers, and often the reward is a lasting relationship that can lead to credible communications on dental issues. Your Action Team should meet to determine what kinds of volunteer activities the group

might want to conduct. In addition, you and other individual Team members may want to get more involved on an individual basis. Also, do not overlook the role your local ADA spouses group, the Alliance of the American Dental Association, can play in helping you with your volunteer activities. Once you have mapped out your strategy for involvement, you should call the Volunteer Coordinator at the campaign office or the legislator's office and let them know that you, or your Action Team, would like to volunteer some time. Be specific about what you would like to do, and always follow through with what you volunteered to do. The following pages suggest a variety of opportunities for campaign involvement, including:

- Hosting a fundraiser in your home (a more detailed kit is available from the ADA to help you conduct this event)
- Hosting special event fundraisers outside your home
- Serving on campaign committees
- Helping out the staff at campaign headquarters
- Phone banks and canvassing
- Conducting a voter registration drive among the dental community
- Conducting an absentee ballot drive among the dental community
- Election day activities to get-out-the-vote

Visit the ADA's Advocacy site for the latest information on how to get involved:
<http://www.ada.org/prof/advocacy>

X. Coalition Building

Nothing is more important to Members of Congress than the opinions, goals and

desires of their constituents — especially when those interests are expressed clearly and emphatically by a wide range of voters who represent a strong cross section of the community. Coalition building is probably the most effective way to influence Congress because coalitions have strength in their unity, diversification and availability of resources.

- For the Action Team network to flourish, it is imperative that dentists reach out beyond their own offices to educate and enlist the support of patients and their families, friends and neighbors, local civic, business and religious groups and many others.
- Patients and their families, along with the many local organizations which serve them, can be among the best advocates for progress in dentistry. Perhaps the most important task in accomplishing effective community outreach is the education of the community on dental issues. We cannot expect to influence the decision makers on Capitol Hill if we fail to effectively inform the communities we serve.
- No one is more sensitized to the importance of accessible and affordable dental care than your patients. They understand and appreciate the benefits which you provide. More than any other segment of the community, your patients will feel an immediate personal stake in the future of oral health care.
- Civic, business, labor, religious and education leaders also exert considerable influence on public opinion.
- While health care interests may be accustomed to competition, remember the adage "divided we fall," it is always important to capitalize on common interests. Reach out to all groups, competitors as well as allies, and look for opportunities or issues to unite for a stronger voice.

Effective Tactics

- Any message that appears self-serving will be less credible than one advanced by a respectable coalition. Never talk about what is good for dentists, but what is good for the community at large. In order to build a coalition, you must be able to show how the ADA's position is beneficial to those groups whose support you are soliciting.
- Undertake whatever educational activities you can. Be alert to town hall meetings, community forums and other group meetings or presentations which will provide a forum for delivering dentistry's message to the community.
- Consider forming a dental task force to target audiences likeliest to embrace the ADA message. Choose members of your Action Team with a broad array of community involvement and membership in various organizations. Use the task force to develop relationships with local lawmakers, government officials, business organizations, civic groups, religious groups and other opinion leaders.
- Develop relationships with your local media. Invite local health reporters to meet with your Action Team to discuss health issues. Meet with the news directors at local television and radio stations to ask for involvement in building public awareness about changes in health care that affect dentistry. Set up editorial board meetings at your local newspaper and submit editorials on oral health care. The media can be one of the best tools to educate the public on oral health issues.
- The cumulative effect of these activities is the development of important relationships and the education of the public. And, when the time for mobilization comes, you will be prepared to reach out to a broad base of community support whose combined

influence will deliver a strong message to Capitol Hill.

IX. The Role of ADPAC

During the past 25 years, political action committees have grown to become an important element in financing the political campaigns of congressional, state and local candidates. Yet, PACs and the role they play in the political process are understood by few Americans.

- A PAC is nothing more than a group of individuals who have decided to pool their financial resources to help elect candidates to public office — men and women who share the group's interests and concerns about public policy issues. Any group of U.S. citizens or nearly any U.S. organization can form a PAC.
- The American Dental Association's political action committee, ADPAC, is the second largest health PAC in the country and ranks among the top 25 PACs of all kinds. The PAC's objective is to bring dentists together for effective political action. Through the voluntary support of ADA members, ADPAC is able to help elect candidates who share our concerns on major issues that affect dentistry.

How ADPAC Benefits Your Profession

1. ADPAC is an independent and autonomous organization not affiliated with any political party. ADPAC gives the profession the opportunity to support candidates who support dentistry. These candidates understand and appreciate the myriad of issues facing dentists.
2. The PAC gives the profession the opportunity to state its position on legislation to lawmakers.

This does not mean that the PAC can buy any lawmaker's vote, but it does mean that it

creates an opportunity to present our views *before* he or she decides how to vote.

3. Contributions from ADPAC also gives the profession political credibility -the ability to hold candidates accountable for their actions as lawmakers. ADPAC can support lawmakers at election time who support dentistry with their votes in the legislature. If they vote to oppose our position on the issues, ADPAC can withhold its support and very well support their opponent in the next election.

What Your Contributions to ADPAC Do For You

ADPAC is in partnership with you and your dentist colleagues. It can accomplish things for you in the political process that you cannot do for yourself.

1. ADPAC can significantly increase the impact of your political dollars in a candidate's campaign.

Your contributions to the PAC are more valuable to the candidate than your personal contributions, because they cost less to raise. Why? Candidates do not have to pay the costs of soliciting you for contributions, because the company has already conducted the solicitation and paid the cost of raising the dollars for the PAC. The candidates need only to demonstrate that they deserve the PAC's support. As a consequence, your contributions to ADPAC have the effect of doubling the impact of your personal contributions.

2. The fact that ADA pays the administrative costs of ADPAC means that your contributions don't pay these expenses. Every cent you contribute to the PAC is used for candidate support.

3. Your PAC gives you a chance to send a message about the issues you share with your profession at the same time you are providing financial support.

4. Your contributions through ADPAC can have a national impact on political campaigns. ADPAC gives you the opportunity to have a greater impact on dental issues and can expand your influence beyond your own congressional district or state. The PAC is well positioned to evaluate candidates from across the country and determine where contributions can make a difference.

5. ADPAC can stimulate you to get more actively involved in the process of government. By supporting the PAC, it is hoped that you will be more likely to vote, write to your elected officials and express your opinions on the issues, and volunteer to work in a candidate's campaign.

6. ADPAC's nonfederal dollars are used for political education, such as supporting the ADA's Grassroots Action Teams.

How to Use ADPAC as a Resource

ADPAC can be a valuable resource for Action Teams that are establishing relationships with lawmakers. ADPAC may plan to contribute to your lawmaker's re-election campaign, depending upon the availability of resources. Action Team members are in an excellent position to present ADPAC contributions and can benefit from the personal relationships that may develop as a result.

To ascertain whether ADPAC plans to support your lawmaker's re-election campaign and whether you might be able to participate in the delivery of the contribution, contact ADPAC.

If you have the opportunity to deliver an ADPAC contribution, keep the following points in mind:

1. Under no circumstances should the check be mailed to the candidate; it should be personally delivered.

2. Emphasize that the contribution is from dentists all across the country.
3. Do not deliver contributions to candidates in any federal building or facility.
4. Consider presenting the contribution at a special event, such as a dental office tour or a fundraiser in your home.
5. Never discuss an issue or seek the candidate's vote on an issue at the same time you deliver the contribution.

XI. Practical and Legal Considerations for Political Involvement

You should be aware of both the practical and legal aspects regarding federal election activities, honoraria and gifts, and other guidelines for interacting with federal officials.

As an individual citizen you may:

1. Give up to \$2,300 to any federal candidate in any election, and up to \$28,500 to the national committees of a political party. You also may give up to \$5,000 per year to ADPAC. You have a two-year limit of \$108,200 on your total contributions to federal candidates and federal political committees combined.
2. Incur other types of expenses that do not count as contributions, such as:
 - o Unreimbursed payments you made from your personal funds for usual and normal living expenses related to volunteer activity. This includes food and lodging but not travel.
 - o Travel expenses on behalf of a candidate of up to \$1,000 per election, and on behalf of a political party of up to \$2,000 per year.
 - o Unreimbursed costs of invitations, food and beverages in connection with candidate or party related events held in your home or in a church or community room. These

expenses, however, are limited to \$1,000 per candidate per election; and \$2,000 per year on behalf of a political party. (A husband and wife may each spend up to the limit.)

- o The "occasional, isolated, or incidental use" of your dental office in connection with your volunteer activities. Your volunteer activities on behalf of a candidate or party must be undertaken during nonworking hours.

However, incidental use of the facility, defined by law as one hour a week or four hours a month, are permitted. An example of incidental use may be using incidental activity and must be the telephone to make volunteer-related calls. Any additional amount of time will not be considered made up by the employee. Furthermore, any increase in the amount of overhead or operating costs which are attributable to the use of corporate facilities must be reimbursed to the company.

If you use your facilities to produce materials in connection with a campaign or to assist a candidate in fundraising, your practice must be reimbursed within a commercially reasonable time for the normal and usual charge for producing these materials in the commercial market. Among examples cited are: phone calls, postage, couriers, cars and photocopying.

Further information is available in the Federal Election Commission's Citizens' Guide, available at: <http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/citizens.shtml>

Additional guidelines for individual volunteer fundraising or other political activities:

- When fundraising for an event, invite people that you know personally.
- Remember, the activity is *personal* and not sponsored by ADA.

- Use your own personal stationery or the campaign's stationery. Refrain from using a business return address. Type your own letters or ask the campaign to do it for you.
- Any RSVPs should be returned to the campaign, to your home address, or to a P.O. Box.
- Do not collect checks. Have them sent directly to the campaign or brought to the event.
- You must limit your political activities at the office to one hour per week or four hours per month.
- Make sure that your activities at the office do not create additional costs for the practice.

Honoraria

Federal officeholders and their staffs may not accept honoraria for speeches, appearance, or articles.

Honoraria may be given directly to charitable organizations on behalf of the officeholder, however, with certain rules and limits. Such payments may not pass through the lawmaker's hands nor be made to charitable organizations from which the elected official, staff member or their respective families derive any financial benefit. Please consult with the ADA Washington Office for guidance in this area.

Gifts

Gifts to federal lawmakers, such as meals, awards, promotional items, tokens of appreciation, and others, are severely restricted. Your Members of Congress are generally prohibited from accepting any gift of any value, with special exceptions only. These rules also apply to House and Senate staff.

Action Team members should avoid giving gifts to lawmakers and consult with the ADA Washington Office for guidance when questions arise.

Practical Considerations

- When making a personal or ADPAC contribution to your candidate, deliver the check in person. Do not mail it to the campaign.
- Don't deliver a contribution to an incumbent congressman in his or her office. Political contributions made on federal property are prohibited.
- Don't discuss legislative issues when delivering a contribution, including the candidate's position on the issues.
- Don't ask for the candidate's vote on a particular piece of legislation when making a political contribution.
- Don't automatically attend a candidate's fundraiser until you know the sponsor of the fundraiser. If another individual or group is sponsoring the fundraiser, they will get the credit, not you.

If you have questions about any aspect of your volunteer political activities, you should contact the ADA Washington Office.

