



AAOHN Legislative Toolkit

The American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc. (AAOHN) strives to represent the varied interests of its members through advocacy and public policy decisions that affect occupational and environmental health and safety. Members of AAOHN's Public Affairs committee help support legislation, regulations and health policy to positively impact the nursing profession as well as create hazard-free work and community environments to protect the health and safety of workers, their families and the public. Information in this Take Action section is aimed toward equipping members to participate in the advocacy and public policy process.

You may ask why advocacy and health policy issues are important to you as a nurse. The United States has a participatory democracy and representative government. Becoming involved is not only a right, but also a responsibility. Democracy requires participation by citizens to assure the public's voice is heard and policy is enacted that reflects public opinion. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees certain rights or freedoms such as speaking your opinion, the right to assemble peacefully as public groups, and the right to petition the government. All citizens, as a representative of his or her own personal beliefs, have the right to advocate for, or publicly support and submit an issue or idea to legislators or their staff and urge their support on a certain position because:

- The U.S. Constitution grants every citizen the right to tell our elected officials our concerns and to take action to advocate for those issues.
- Our elected policymakers work for us, the citizens.
- Our tax dollars pay their salaries, their health insurance, retirement benefits, and travel expenses among other budget items.
- As their "employer", we have every right to hold policy makers accountable for their actions, tell them what we want them to do, and give feedback on how we think they are doing at their jobs. The ultimate job review you can give your public officials is by voting – either returning them to office or ending their service.
- Nurses are viewed as one of the most trusted professions. The public, media and policy makers listen when nurses speak with one voice on a topic.
- Congress needs the expertise of nurses. Occupational and environmental health nurses understand the "big-picture" through our first-hand experience and direct knowledge of how decisions in Washington and in our state capitols affect workers, their work environment, their families and their communities.

- Every day, federal and state legislators make decisions that affect workers and the work environment, often with very little knowledge or understanding of the issues and with little or no input from nurses. We can't afford to let this happen.
- As occupational and environmental health nurses, we must contribute our authority, leadership, and unique knowledge of our nursing specialty practice area to the legislative process.
- Advocacy doesn't require any new skills! You just apply the skills you already have, such as communication and building relationships, but in a new context.
- Advocacy is a Process not an outcome that involves participating in the democratic process by taking action in support of a particular issue or cause. The steps in this process include:
 - Identifying an issue;
 - Collecting information;
 - Identifying who can be influenced/who can make the decision sought;
 - Building support (networking with other professional, governmental and community organizations, and
 - Taking action.
- Advocacy is:
 - Participating in a town meeting or public demonstration;
 - Conducting a public forum
 - Writing a letter to the media or giving a media statement;
 - Developing an issue brief for policy-makers on a particular issue; and
 - Emailing your elected officials to specifically request they support a particular position.
 - Meeting with elected officials to discuss the issues
- Advocacy occurs through:
 - Grassroots efforts,
 - Lobbying,
 - Special interest groups, and
 - Professional organizations
- Lobbying is when anyone (paid lobbyist, citizens, or a professional organization) specifically urges a policymaker to take a position or action on specific legislation

Information on these pages will help you take action and advocate for issues of significance to occupational and environmental health nursing. Your voice will make a difference in the policymaking process to help protect workers, their families, and the community residents and environment around a worksite. Get involved and help shape our nation's and your state's action on occupational and environmental health and safety issues!

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

Write to Congress

- The most effective method of communicating with Congress is through email via a web form available on your legislator's webpage.
- Although the formal business letter seems more appropriate for this purpose, at present all incoming Congressional mail to U.S. Capital is screened for explosive devices and biological or chemical hazards which will delay a letter's arrival by weeks. However, you may choose to send a business letter to the district office of your U.S. Senators and Representative. (Scroll down for Sample Letter)
- Providing your home address on your Congressperson's web form confirms you are a constituent and helps reduce distracting communication from non-constituents.
- The web form also facilitates analysis of incoming messages and more prompt response to your request by office staff.

Find Your Representative <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/#properform>:

You can find your Congressman or Congresswoman through this site by entering your zip code. Simply provide the information requested and space on the web form will be provided for your message.

Find Your Senator <http://www.senate.gov/>: You can identify your two U.S. Senators through this link. Click on the Senators tab at the top of the page to open a list of all 100 Senators. You may search for your Senator by state and then go to their website for contact information and to send an e-mail.

Legislative information on the Internet

- **Thomas** <http://beta.congress.gov/> Thomas, the Library of Congress' federal legislative information site, includes lists of all members of Congress, Committees, Legislation, Public Laws, etc. You can track the progress of a bill on this site to see whether it has been assigned to committee and if placed on the calendar for a hearing. There are videos that explain how a bill becomes law as well as for committee hearings.
- Congressional Record <http://beta.congress.gov/congressional-record/> provides a link to the latest federal legislative activity
- **USA.gov** <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml> this U.S. Government site provides quick links to contact information (email, phone, mailing address) for Federal and State legislators
- Open Congress: <http://www.opencongress.org/> tracks status of current legislation

Federal Agencies

Here are links to Federal agencies that promulgate regulations and standards which affect occupational &/or environmental health and safety. You can often find valuable information about selected topics of concern on their websites. Public information on governmental websites is more reliable than that found on some consumer operated sites, especially Wikipedia.

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) <http://www.ahrq.gov/health-care-information/index.html>
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/>
- CDC Workplace Safety & Health <http://www.cdc.gov/workplace/>
- Department of Defense (DOD) <http://www.defense.gov/>
- Department of Energy (DOE) <http://energy.gov/management/office-management>
- Department of Health and Human Services <http://www.hhs.gov/>
- Department of Labor <http://www.dol.gov/>
- Department of Transportation <http://www.dot.gov/>
- Department of Veterans' Affairs <http://www.va.gov/>
- Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/>
- EPA Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances <http://www2.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-chemical-safety-and-pollution-prevention-oc spp>
- EPA Office of Research and Development <http://www.epa.gov/ORD/>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) <http://www.eeoc.gov/>
- Federal Highway Administration <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/>
- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/>
- Food and Drug Administration <http://www.fda.gov/>
- Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA) <http://www.msha.gov/>
- National Center for Environmental Health <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/>
- National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/index.cfm>
- National Toxicology Program <http://ntp-server.niehs.nih.gov/?objectid=720160DB-BDB7-CEBA-F7CC2DE0A230C920>
- National Transportation Safety Board <http://www.nts.gov/>
- National Institute of Health (NIH) <http://health.nih.gov/>
- National Institute Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/>
- Office of Health Safety and Security <http://energy.gov/hss/office-health-safety-and-security>

- Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) <https://www.osha.gov/>
- OSHA Standards – links to all standards
https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owasrch.search_form?p_doc_type=STANDARDS&p_toc_level=0&p_keyvalue=
- SIS Environmental Health and Toxicology <http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/>

STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy and Health Policy efforts at the local or state level are member-driven. The initiative to undertake advocacy efforts within your state must come from OHNs living within your state.
- Legislation and regulatory efforts specific to workers and the environment in a particular state require action by all AAOHN members within that state.
- Members of the AAOHN Policy and Governmental Affairs Committee provide expertise, advice and assistance to members and chapters through this Take Action Toolkit and regular conference calls with chapter governmental affairs representatives.
- Each AAOHN Chapter should appoint a Government Affairs Chair to monitor legislative and regulatory information within your state and to send any information about AAOHN advocacy efforts at the national level to your members.
- Chapter GA Chairs should work closely with other officers within a chapter and GA Chairs of other AAOHN chapters within your state to impact legislation and regulation or raise the visibility of occupational and environmental health nursing among state legislators and regulators.
- If your chapter doesn't have a GA committee, please contact your Chapter President to say you would like to be the Government Affairs Chair for your Chapter!
- In several states, AAOHN members – on their own and in collaboration with other occupational health and safety professionals – have achieved positive results. Anything is possible; but, the first step is to get involved.
- By working together, OHNs across your state can identify advocacy issues of highest priority and work together to address occupational and environmental health and safety concerns within their state.
- Often states will have a state nurses association, which may have a legislative or advocacy committee. These state based committees work to support and provide testimony for state legislation. By working with these state based committees, you can provide your expertise in occupational and environmental health to their efforts.
- The following websites may help you in your state directed advocacy efforts.

Find Your State Officials <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/state-legislatures.html>: You can link to your own state legislative home page and find your state officials from this national map provided through the Library of Congress.

State Government Agencies <http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/State-and-Territories.shtml>: This is not a government website and may not always have up-to-date links for each state government, but can be a quick way to access each state's government.

You can also find legislative and regulatory information pertinent to your own state through most of the official state web site addresses listed below. Generally, there is also a place for you to enter your zip code and find your own state official. States may label their legislative body other than the state house or senate but the function is usually clear.

Alabama	http://www.alabama.gov/portal/index.jsp
Alaska	http://www.alaska.gov/
Arizona	http://az.gov/
Arkansas	http://www.state.ar.us/
California	http://www.ca.gov/
Colorado	http://www.colorado.gov/
Connecticut	http://www.ct.gov/
Delaware	http://www.delaware.gov/
D.C.	http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/
Florida	http://www.myflorida.com/
Georgia	http://georgia.gov/
Hawaii	https://portal.ehawaii.gov/
Idaho	http://www.state.id.us/
Illinois	http://www.illinois.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Indiana	http://www.state.in.us/
Iowa	http://www.iowa.gov/
Kansas	http://www.kansas.gov/
Kentucky	http://kentucky.gov/Pages/home.aspx
Louisiana	http://louisiana.gov/
Maine	http://www.maine.gov/portal/index.html
Maryland	http://www.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Massachusetts	http://www.mass.gov/portal/
Michigan	http://michigan.gov/
Minnesota	http://mn.gov/portal/
Mississippi	http://www.ms.gov/home/
Missouri	http://www.mo.gov/
Montana	http://mt.gov/
Nebraska	http://www.state.ne.us/
Nevada	http://nv.gov/
New Hampshire	http://www.nh.gov/
New Jersey	http://www.state.nj.us/

New Mexico	http://www.newmexico.gov/
New York	http://www.ny.gov/
North Carolina	http://www.state.nc.us/
North Dakota	http://www.nd.gov/
Ohio	http://ohio.gov/government/
Oklahoma	http://www.state.ok.us/
Oregon	http://www.state.or.us/
Pennsylvania	http://www.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Rhode Island	http://sos.ri.gov/
South Carolina	http://www.sc.gov/Pages/default.aspx
South Dakota	http://sd.gov/
Tennessee	http://www.state.tn.us/
Texas	http://www.texas.gov/en/Pages/default.aspx
Utah	http://www.utah.gov/index.html
Vermont	http://vermont.gov/portal/
Virginia	http://www.state.va.us/
Washington	http://access.wa.gov/
West Virginia	http://www.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Wisconsin	http://www.state.wi.us/state/
Wyoming	http://www.state.wy.us/

Local Governmental Agencies <http://www.statelocalgov.net/index.cfm>: This link is not a government web site, but there are links to each state, click on a state to access its governmental officials as well as links to county governments within that state. Click on the county to access local government for each town within each county for a state.

National Organizations that Advocate for the States within U.S. Congress

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) advocates for state legislatures by empowering state lawmakers and legislative staff in every state to keep legislative powers of the states and federal government separate and defend the states' authority in the U.S. Congress. <http://www.ncsl.org/>

National Governor's Association is the collective voice of the nation's governors in federal relations. Access their website to read NGA policy position states and legislative testimonies: <http://www.nga.org/cms/home.html>

The Pew Charitable Trust, a global research and public policy organization, is an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental organization dedicated to serving the public. Access their STATELINE daily news service for State and Consumer Initiatives to find public opinion research as well as environmental, health, state and consumer policy initiatives. <http://www.pewstates.org/>

National Professional Health Organizations that Support Advocacy Efforts

In addition to AAOHN, other professional organizations also advocate for worker health and safety, general public health, safety for all Americans as well as the nursing profession and can be a resource to you. Many of these websites provide links to excellent tips and guidelines for advocacy and public policy efforts.

American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine:

<http://www.acoem.org/default.aspx>.

- ACOEM is an international society of over 4,000 occupational physicians whose mission is to provide leadership to promote optimal health and safety of workers, workplaces, and environments.
- This link will access ACOEM's government relations activities: <http://www.acoem.org/governmentrelations.aspx>.
- ACOEM has a paid lobbyist which helps them maintain a strong presence in Washington D.C. to ensure that its members' interests are represented in key decisions affecting occupational and environmental medicine.
- This link allows you to access policy and position statements and practice guidelines from ACOEM: <http://www.acoem.org/guidelines.aspx>

American Industrial Hygiene Association: <https://www.aiha.org/Pages/default.aspx>

- AIHA has a membership of more than 10,000 industrial hygiene professionals and others who are interested in the work environment and protecting worker health.
- AIHA actively monitors proposed legislation and regulations that can have a direct impact on worker health and safety and provides regular updates on critical issues.
- This link will access AIHA's governmental affairs activities: <https://www.aiha.org/government-affairs/Pages/default.aspx>

American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists:

<http://www.acgih.org/About/>

- ACGIH strives to provide essential, cutting edge information to government, academia, and corporate facilities throughout America, Canada and countries abroad
- Over 3,000 members throughout the world
- ACGIH has many technical committees specific to worker health and safety that review existing scientific information used to develop Threshold Limit Values (TLVs) and Biological Exposure Indices (BEIs) and professional practice guidelines.

- Information available from ACGIH may be used by organizations or individuals developing consensus standards, occupational health legislation or regulations, and public or occupational health policy
- As a general rule, ACGIH as an organization does not take formal positions on public or occupational health issues

American Society of Safety Engineers <http://www.asse.org/>

- ASSE represents over 34,000 individual safety, health and environmental (SH&E) practitioners.
- ASSE and its members work to ensure that any decision which impacts the safety, health or environment of U.S. worksites by federal or state government is based on good science and sound technology
- Link to ASSE Governmental Affairs resources:
http://www.asse.org/professionalaffairs_new/

American Public Health Association: <http://www.apha.org/>.

- The APHA, established in 1872, is the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world and provides an excellent example of professional advocacy.
- As the collective voice for public health, APHA works to:
 - Protect funding for core public health services;
 - Ensure access to health care; and
 - Eliminate health disparities.
- Here are specific links from APHA which provide excellent information and access to other websites related to advocacy and health policy:
 - <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/>
 - <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/tips/>
 - <http://www.apha.org/about/Public+Health+Links/>

American Nurses Association:

<http://nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/Policy-Advocacy>

- The only full-service professional nursing organization that represents the collective interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent member nurses associations and its organizational affiliates (AAOHN is an Affiliate member)
- Advances the nursing profession by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public
- The ANA web-site Policy-Advocacy page links to the following sections, many of which have public access:
 - Professional Issues Panels,
 - Positions and Resolutions,
 - Congress and Federal Agencies,
 - State Government Affairs,
 - ANA-PAC,
 - Take Action,

- Press Releases,
- Health Care Reform,
- Legal Action,
- Advocacy - Becoming More Effective
- This ANA web link provides information for ways to promote safer work environments and improved personal health for nurses:
<http://nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/WorkplaceSafety>

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

Members of Congress and your state representatives are bombarded by paid lobbyists and special interest groups, but they really want to hear from us -- their constituents. The common thought is the legislative staff takes notice when a Congressional or state legislative office hears from only FIVE of their constituents! In today's electronic society, email is considered the most effective way to communicate with legislators. The email message is quick, provides a written copy of the request and is easily categorized and filed by the legislative staff.

Remember, the legislative staff usually controls the information flow to your elected officials. For best results, be brief, clear, accurate, persuasive, timely, persistent, grateful and polite when presenting your position and communicating what you need or want from the legislator or staff member. And, to strengthen your position, identify other OHN advocates and partners in the occupational health and safety community to better understand the process, monitor legislation, and assess strengths and weaknesses of a particular issue. Finding common ground on an issue sometimes brings together strange bedfellows but makes for a stronger coalition.

Tips for Telephone Calls

- Although email is generally the most effective means of communicating, there may be times when a phone call directly to your federal or state legislators is needed. Phone calls are particularly effective when immediate action is needed, for example when a vote is about to be taken or if you're trying to get an appointment to meet with a legislator or his/her aides. Depending on the level of their representation, most will list phone numbers for their office in Washington or your state capitol on their personal website. Federal officials will also have an office in their home state.
- Your call may be answered by a secretary, an aide, an intern or even the legislator. All can document your message and route as appropriate.
- Draft a brief statement or outline of your key points before you make the call. Otherwise, you may omit important information you wanted to convey.
- Introduce yourself as a constituent and an occupational health nursing professional in your (State/Congressional District).

- Clearly identify the reason for your call; be sure to state the name and number of the specific bill you are referencing if legislation is pending. This information is available in Thomas for federal legislation.
- Clearly state your position and specifically ask them to vote 'yes' or 'no'. It is okay to ask for your legislator's position on the issue but do not argue.
- Legislators like to hear personal stories; briefly share your personal experiences regarding the issue and what influenced your opinion.
- Be respectful of the legislator's or staff member's time.
- Offer to provide additional information if needed.
- Remember to thank him or her for their service and taking the time to listen.

Tips for Legislative Visits

The Basics

Legislators want to hear from their constituents about issues of concern and usually try to meet with voters when scheduling permits. You will find the experience very rewarding if you have the opportunity to visit your federal or state legislators. Here are a few quick tips to help you have a successful visit.

- A personal visit to your legislator's office helps you develop a more personal relationship with your legislator and his or her staff. Remember, a visit with the staff is often as effective, or even more so, than with the legislator. Sometimes staff members will already have background knowledge of an issue, especially if it is within their legislative area, and this will allow for an in-depth discussion.
- Email the legislator's office in advance and request an appointment. See the attached Sample Request for an Appointment as a guideline for your email.
- You want to make the most of your meeting so it is vital you are prepared. Legislators and their staff have limited time and resources to spend on one issue. You must go into the meeting with a few key points that you can cover in less than 10-15 minutes. But, you must have good background knowledge to answer questions they may have.
- Dress professionally. Your legislator and staff members are generally in strict business attire, and you want to project the same image.
- Remember, you are the expert; you know more about health and safety issues in the workplace than they do.
- Be sure and arrive on time. Elected officials have very tight schedules, especially when in session. Although it is critical you are on time for your appointment, you need to anticipate legislators or their staff will arrive late or have the meeting interrupted by other business. You need to consider these potential delays if you schedule multiple meetings on the same day.

Before You Go

- Visit your legislator's website and get background information on them such as:
 - Committees and sub-committees assignments

- Key leadership positions in the House or Senate and on committees
 - Their previous support of occupational health and safety related programs or bills
 - The length of time in office and if/when they are up for re-election
- Plan your visit – have your key points written out and rehearsed so you know exactly what to say and how you want to present your message
 - Meetings do not usually last for more than 20-25 minutes. Plan to introduce yourself and get your key points across in less than this time to allow for questions or discussion.
 - Remember, legislators want to hear personal stories about how this issue affects you, your workers or community members. They hear from so many paid lobbyists that they appreciate a fresh perspective.
 - It is also important to prepare a concise and well organized single page (front/back) fact sheet with information about the particular issue you are discussing. Be sure and have your contact information directly on your fact sheet so staff can reach you if needed.
 - Be sure you stick to your main message. Remember, you are trying to get the official to take your side on the issue. Do not criticize his or her previous voting record or vent any personal frustrations with government or its officials.

Prepare to Tell Your Story -- “The Ask”

Keep these points in mind as you prepare for your meeting.

- Begin with a brief description of occupational health nursing, AAOHN’s mission and a few of your key responsibilities
- Consider what hazards or worker health & safety issues you observe in your workplace and around your state
- Discuss the challenges occupational health nurses face dealing with problems these hazards or issues pose for workers
- Consider any solutions AAOHN and/or the nursing profession have identified
- Try to include examples of your personal experiences, actual situations you observed or stories from workers and other OHNs
- Think about the overall benefits or consequences to worker health and safety if legislative is passed or fails to be passed
- Be prepare to tell your elected officials **exactly** what you want them to do – this is called the “ask” and the entire reason for your visit.

During the Visit

- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices
- Anticipate you may not meet with the legislator, but with staff instead. These meetings are as productive and often more productive than meeting with a legislator.

- Be sure and introduce yourself. Thank your legislator and/or the staff for taking time to meet with you and for any previous support from the legislator on issues favorable to occupational and environmental health.
- Although you have a prepared statement, allow openings for questions. There may be legitimate concerns you can address that would sway the legislator to vote in your favor.
- Be honest, straightforward and realistic. Never mislead a legislator about the importance of an issue or the opposition's position.
- Don't be afraid to say you don't know the answer to a question. You only want to give accurate and correct information to maintain your credibility. If you don't know an answer, offer to research the issue further and email the legislator's staff with your findings. However, do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Also, ask what additional information on the current issue, or other worker health and safety issues would be helpful and offer to research the topic for the staff. This provides a natural vehicle for follow-up.
- Take plenty of business cards for sharing and collect businesses cards for each person with whom you meet.
- Take a picture for your newsletter or local paper with you and your legislator if the opportunity presents. Don't be embarrassed to ask; they generally relish positive publicity.
- Do not be surprised if the meeting with your legislator gets cancelled, especially when Congress is in session. Leave your Fact Sheet and a short note saying you regret not being able to meet.

After Your Visit

- Shortly after your visit, send a follow-up email thanking the legislator and their staff for meeting with you.
- When you email with the additional information or materials committed to obtaining during your visit, you can also remind the staff member of any requests made on your part and deadlines for follow-through on their end.
- You can strengthen your relationship with your legislator by continuing to communicate with his or her office. Invite the legislator to your worksite or AAOHN chapter meeting to see what is going on in their community or request to meet with staff in your legislator's district office for coffee to discuss your issues.
- Send your legislator's office a copy of any photo or printed materials where you discuss your visit.
- Stay in touch with your legislator's office by emailing and requesting support for other issues related to occupational health and safety or the nursing profession.
- Make sure to get on your legislator's email list (the link is usually on their home office website). Often they can meet constituents in their home districts during breaks away from Washington, and they also will send emails letting constituents know when they are having open events in their home districts.

Speaking at a Public Meeting

Another way to communicate with public officials is to participate in a town hall, city council or other public meetings in which citizens are invited to share their view. Take this opportunity to share your expertise as an occupational and environmental health nursing professional and educate your elected officials, the media and other citizens in the meeting. These public meetings may be regularly scheduled meetings with your local and state government or when your U.S. Congressional delegates are visiting the state. The meetings allow policy-makers to hear from a broad group of constituents, often on a wide range of concerns. Occasionally, a public forum is held to hear from the public on a specific topic.

This type public meeting is a real grassroots effort because all of the participants are generally local residents rather than paid lobbyists. This opportunity to advocate publically for occupational and environmental health and safety issues allows you to:

- Educate policy-makers and the public
- Attract increased attention to the issue
- Obtain media coverage for the issue and occupational health nursing profession
- Be recognized as the expert and an advocate for the health and safety of your local workforce and community environment.

Tips to Maximize Success When Speaking at a Public Meeting

- **Identify the details of the meeting.** Contact the policy-maker's office and ask if you must sign up in advance to speak, who the other speakers are, the time limit per presentation, and other general guidelines regarding the agenda or topic of discussion;
- **Be prepared with accurate, current and relevant information.** Use the latest statistical and evidenced based information available to support your position;
- **Think Strategically:** Position yourself to speak as early in the meeting as possible when the media are most likely to be present and everyone is more tuned in to the presentations;
- **Use your network:** Contact other OHNs and community partners with an interest in the issue and encourage them to speak on the same issue. If there is a limit on the number of speakers, often the entire group may stand together with one or two representatives who speak for the group. There is strength in numbers and comfort in having peers for support.
- **Keep your presentation brief and concise:** Begin by stating your name and address; identify yourself as an occupational health nursing profession. Limit your statement to a few clear, concise points with 2 – 3 persuasive facts to help the audience understand and remember your key points.

- **Practice makes perfect:** Write out your presentation and rehearse; practice saying it to your family, friends and colleagues so you are comfortable with your content and can deliver a convincing argument at the public meeting; and
- **Prepare a fact sheet:** Leave written copies of your position or statement with the
Policy-maker, staff members, the public and members of the media at the meeting

SAMPLE LETTER

Date _____

The Honorable _____

United States Senate **OR** U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20410 (Senate) **OR** 20515 (House) [or you may use their home district
office address]

Dear Senator or Representative _____,

As a constituent and an occupational health nursing professional, I urge you to take immediate action to address the lack of information in the Electronic Medical Record (EHR) regarding potential workplace and environmental exposures. I strongly endorse the proposed public policy under [insert reference # for proposed regulation or legislation] to require coding the patient's occupation and industry in the personal EHR. I support my colleagues at NIOSH, the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM), the American Public Health Association (APHA), and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in recommending all EHRs collect data for industry and occupation.

Inclusion of Industry and Occupation (I/O) data would improve the health of individuals, families, and communities and reduce fragmentation between the general health care and occupational sectors. Occupation and industry data should be standardized and integrated into the usual care of individual patients to facilitate early identification of health problems caused or exacerbated by work, and to better identify and manage health impacts upon the workplace and community. At the public health level, I/O data are needed to identify populations at risk, identify underserved populations, and promote development of new approaches to reduce the burden of illness and injury in the U.S population.

Occupational and Environmental Health Nurses work within the greater health care system, not just the subset of occupational medicine, to positively impact the health and safety of workers, their families and communities. Integration of occupational and personal health records, with appropriate firewalls to ensure confidentiality, is a step in the right direction to reduce the fragmentation of the current system. Adding the I/O elements has tremendous potential to help create efficiencies and new opportunities for effective health care delivery at both the individual patient and population levels.

Thank you for your attention to my request. Please contact me for additional information on this or other occupational health and safety issues.

Sincerely, [insert 3 blank lines]

[Insert your signature]

[Your name]

[Your home address | personal telephone number | personal email address]

Sample E-Mail Request for an Appointment

March 3, 2013

The Honorable _____

Attention: Scheduler

United States Senate or U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20410 (Senate) or 20515 (House) [or you may use their home district office address, ask for Scheduler]

Dear Senator or Representative _____,

As a constituent and an occupational health nursing professional, I am emailing to request an appointment with [Senator or Representative] _____ in [Washington, D.C. or the name of town where nearest district office is] on [insert date and times available] to discuss [insert bill# or particular topic of concern].

[Provide a brief statement – 2 – 3 sentences to succinctly state your concern and why the issue is important to you and the occupational health and safety community].

Please contact me to let me know when you might be available to meet. I will follow up with you in the next week by phone. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your home address]

[Your personal telephone number]

Your personal email address]