



# GRASSROOTS TOOLKIT

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*Presented by the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons  
Committee on Governmental Affairs*

Updated Spring 2017

# OMS Action Network Grassroots Toolkit

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# I. Introduction to Grassroots Advocacy & the OMS Action Network

Grassroots advocacy is the practice of educating and influencing public officials in order to promote and achieve legislative priorities. The effort is not the work of professional lobbyists or staff, but by members of a peer group working together toward common advocacy goals.

The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS) engages in many grassroots activities ranging from providing a mechanism for AAOMS members to contact their members of Congress about key issues of concern to the specialty to working with OMSPAC to establish key contacts for and build relationships with legislators.

AAOMS created the OMS Action Network, a program designed to increase awareness of the grassroots initiatives that AAOMS undertakes, maximize our advocacy impact and build upon efforts with new endeavors, such as creating a structure that can support oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSs) interested in seeking elected office.

The ability of our membership to influence key decision-makers in our state and nation's capitols has a direct impact on the future of the specialty. Legislators make policy decisions that affect the future of our practices, hospitals, education and research facilities, as well as the patient populations served by OMSs. It is critical that we are able to develop and deliver effective messages to our elected officials about legislative priorities while at the same time raising the profile of the specialty.

While AAOMS already has an extensive advocacy presence in Washington, DC, the OMS Action Network expands grassroots activities on the local level. Local advocacy is a critical component in raising AAOMS's profile among legislators because it allows OMSs to connect with elected officials both as constituents and as health care professionals. These types of interactions can lead to building important relationships that improve the effectiveness of AAOMS advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill.

This OMS Action Network toolkit includes a variety of resources that will help interested OMSs to become part of an effective and cohesive group of advocates, all working under a single, recognizable brand. If you have any questions about the materials included here or on how to get involved in the OMS Action Network, please contact the AAOMS Governmental Affairs Department at 800-822-6637.

## II. Federal Government Basics:

### Congressional Structure & Leadership Posts

The United States House of Representatives is comprised of 435 voting members who serve two-year terms and represent an average of 700,000 constituents. The number of seats per state and the lines of the congressional districts are determined by the results of the U.S. Census and state government officials respectively. The United States Senate has 100 legislators, two from each state, who serve six-year terms.

Decisions on what legislation is brought up in committee or to the floor for a vote are made by the House and Senate's majority party leadership. The structure of the House allows the majority party to set the agenda, and assuming all members of that party vote together, pass legislation, regardless of the minority party's views.

The Senate structure is less rigid and provides more power for individual legislators, even those in the minority party. This holds true unless the majority party holds 60 or more Senators, also known as a filibuster-proof majority, that vote together.

The lists below highlight the top leadership posts in the House and Senate.

#### House

- **Speaker of the House:** Chosen by members of the majority party.
- **Majority Leader:** Dictates the Floor schedule on behalf of the majority.
- **Majority Whip:** Manages the vote or "whip" count for the majority.
- **Minority Leader:** Chosen by the members of the minority party.
- **Minority Whip:** Manages the vote or "whip" count for the minority.

#### Senate

- **President Pro Tempore:** Largely a symbolic role held by the most senior member of the majority party.
- **Majority Leader:** Dictates the Floor schedule on behalf of the majority.
- **Majority Whip:** Manages the vote or "whip" count for the majority.
- **Minority Leader:** Chosen by members of the minority party.
- **Minority Whip:** Manages the vote or "whip" count for the minority.

## Committee Assignments & Issue Jurisdiction

Members of the House and Senate are assigned to serve on congressional committees. Committees hold hearings and consider legislation before it is brought to the floor by their respective leadership.

Committees are comprised of members of both parties, but the chair is always a member of the majority party and the minority party has fewer members seated on the committee. As with the floor agenda, the decision to bring up legislation or hold a hearing is determined by the chair and majority party members.

Each committee oversees different jurisdictions and legislative issues. It is not uncommon for bills, especially larger and more complex packages, to have issues of overlapping jurisdiction and require input from multiple committees.

Based on the issues important to AAOMS and the jurisdictions of the various House and Senate committees, the committees that take the most action that can potentially affect the specialty are:

### House Committees

- Energy & Commerce
- Ways & Means
- Rules
- Appropriations
- Small Business

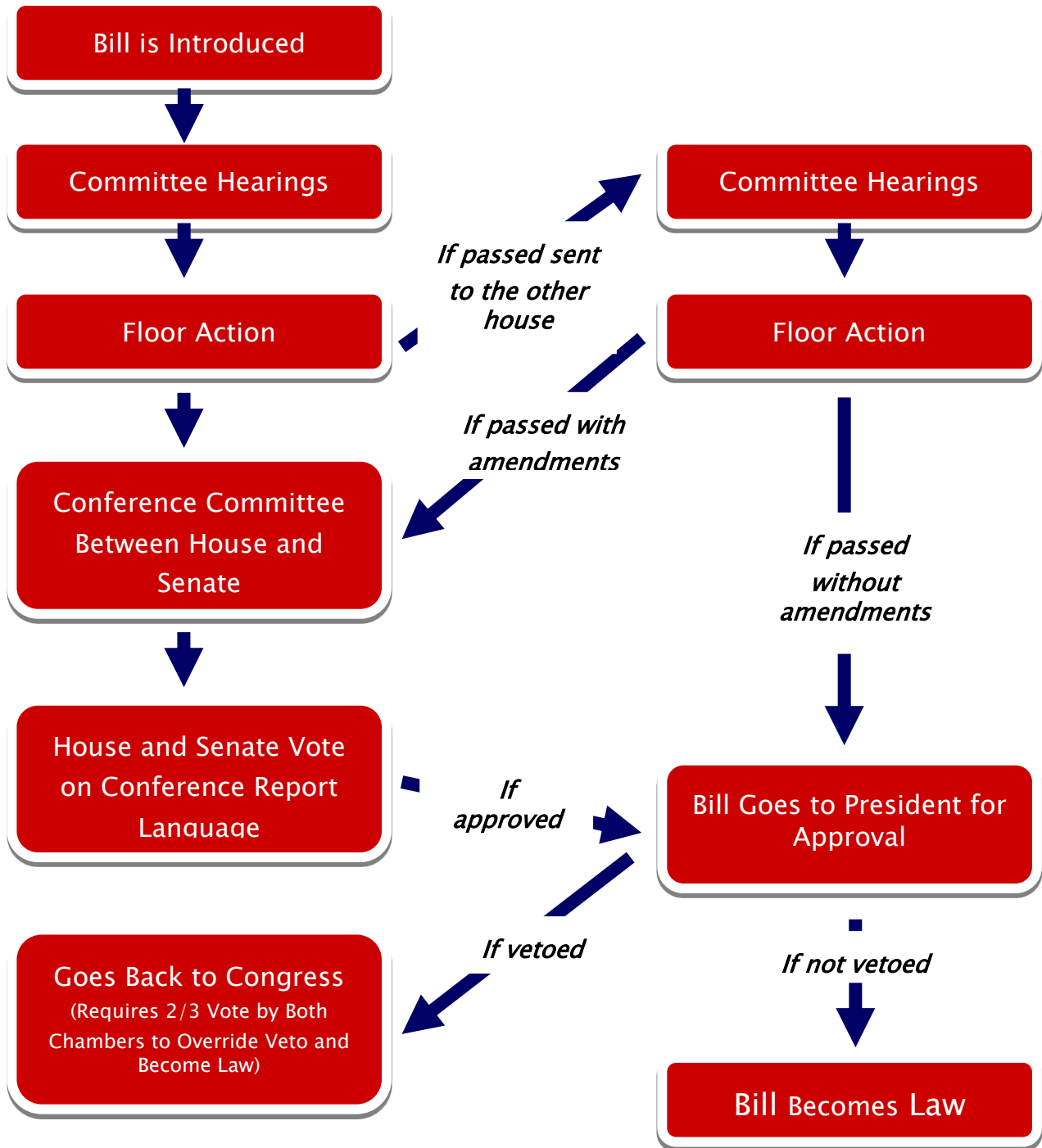
### Senate Committees

- Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
- Finance
- Appropriations
- Small Business

# The Legislative Process

The chart below outlines the process of how a bill becomes a law. It is important to note that legislation does not necessarily follow this exact route on the way to the President's desk - in fact, that very rarely happens. Regardless, it is still important to understand the list of hurdles that a bill must overcome before becoming law.

## How a Bill Becomes a Law

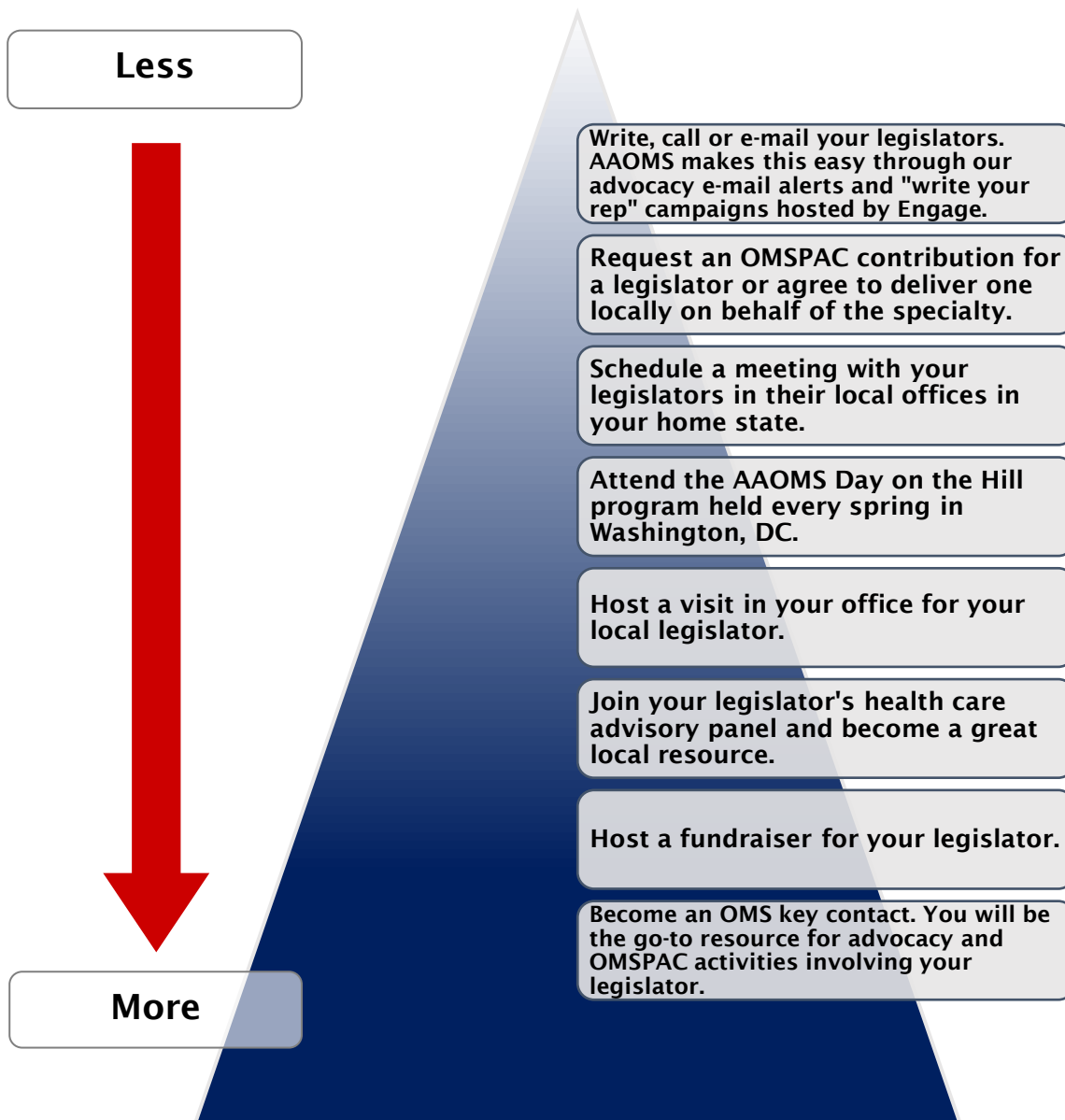


### III. Getting Involved:

#### The Spectrum of Grassroots Activities

Becoming involved in AAOMS grassroots advocacy does not have to be a large time commitment. The OMS Action Network seeks to offer a variety of advocacy options that can fit into your busy schedule. Below is a chart outlining the spectrum of suggested AAOMS grassroots activities - ranging from those that take very little time to others that require a more substantial time-commitment.

Ways to get **involved** include:



# Advocacy Activities

## Participate in AAOMS Advocacy Campaigns

Through the Grassroots Action Center, which is facilitated by Engage, AAOMS members have the opportunity to participate in a variety of e-mail advocacy campaigns. These campaigns are user friendly and provide members with the necessary tools to contact their respective legislators.

Some advocacy campaigns remain active throughout a legislative session, like those that request support for AAOMS-supported legislation. Others are more time sensitive and require immediate action. In those cases, a member-wide advocacy alert e-mail is sent out directing members to the OMS Grassroots Action Center page that highlights the current advocacy campaign.

Once on the OMS Grassroots Action Center page, a member has the opportunity to personalize the letter text provided. After that, a member simply has to input his or her address, and click “send” and the message will be sent to the appropriate legislator.

### Urge Congress to support HR 1204 and HR 35 to expand FSAs and HSAs

On Feb. 17, 2017, U.S. Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Ohio) re-introduced the RAISE Health Benefits Act (HR 1204), and on Jan. 3, 2017, U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas) re-introduced the Health Savings Act (HR 35). These bills would expand the availability and use of Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), respectively.

#### Compose Message(s)

Message 1 - Bill Foster    Message 2

\* Message Subject:  
Please cosponsor HR 1204 and HR 35 to expand the a

Dear [Recipients],

\* Your Message:

As an oral and maxillofacial surgeon and constituent, I urge you to cosponsor the RAISE Health Benefits Act (HR 1204) and the Health Savings Act (HR 35), which expand the availability and use of Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs).

Patient contributions to FSAs are presently limited to \$2,500 annually and must be "used or lost" by the end of the year (\$500 can be rolled over into March of the following year).

Similarly, only patients with a high-deductible health insurance plan may establish an HSA. Annual patient contributions to HSAs are limited to \$3,400 for individuals and \$6,750 for families and may be rolled over from year to year.

Existing restrictions on FSA/HSA contributions impose a serious barrier to needed healthcare by forcing patients to forgo necessary dental care. Many Americans, especially those with middle-class incomes and without access to dental insurance, rely on medical FSAs and/or HSAs to cover out-of-pocket healthcare costs. Those out-of-pocket costs, including those for many dental procedures, such as dental implants, can exceed the annual FSA/HSA contribution maximums. This is especially true when you factor in the rising costs of deductibles, co-pays and prescription medication (s). Expanding the use of FSAs/HSAs would allow families to save money for healthcare, encourage consumer engagement in healthcare decision-making, and encourage consumers to become better informed about healthcare services.

Please support HR 1204 and HR 35 to expand the availability and use of FSAs and HSAs.

**Recipients** ▼  
U.S. House of Representatives  
 Rep. Bill Foster (D-IL)



## Participate in the AAOMS Day on the Hill



The AAOMS Day on the Hill program offers a chance for AAOMS members to advocate on behalf of the specialty with colleagues in the busy environment of Capitol Hill. AAOMS provides talking points on legislative priorities, as well as additional resources and presentations crafted specifically to prepare you for congressional meetings. This program is great for those new to advocacy as well as

AAOMS members who are experienced in sharing our message with legislators. For more information, please visit <http://www.aaoms.org/dayonthehill>.



### Typical AAOMS Day on the Hill Program

#### *Tuesday*

3:45-5:15p.m. Congressional Visit and Training/ Issues Review

5:30p.m. Cocktail Reception

6:30p.m. Dinner & Keynote Speaker

#### *Wednesday*

7:00a.m. Breakfast

7:30-8:30a.m. Morning Program

9:00a.m.-3:00p.m. Congressional Meetings

11:30a.m.-3:45p.m. Optional Debriefing



**Attend a Local Town**

## Hall Meeting

One of the most effective ways to gain the attention of elected officials and their staff is to attend a town hall or community meeting. Legislators arrange these meetings to hear from their constituents. To accommodate travel schedules, they generally occur during district work periods, more commonly referred to as a congressional recess.

Town hall meetings are a great introductory event for those new to grassroots activities. These meetings are usually advertised in the local paper or on candidates' websites. Sometimes these meetings have a scheduled topic, but the meetings can also be open forums where voters have direct contact with their elected official.

Before you attend a town hall meeting, it may be helpful to do some background research - find out which committees your legislator serves on and what bills he/or she has introduced. Additionally, please use the AAOMS Governmental Affairs team as a resource to develop possible questions to ask during the meeting.

Even if you do not have the opportunity to ask a question at the town hall, be sure to make your presence known to the legislator and his or her staff. Take the time to introduce yourself as a constituent and an oral and maxillofacial surgeon and it will pay off in future meetings as you can mention attending previous local events.

## Join a Legislator's Health Care Advisory Committee

Members of Congress rely on industry leaders in their local communities to provide input on how federal legislation could affect their constituents once enacted. Many legislators have local advisory committees covering small business, education, environment and health care issues. As a practicing oral and maxillofacial surgeon, your professional experience is a useful resource when health care legislation is up for consideration.

To join an advisory panel, you must reach out to your local legislator's district office and inquire if it exists and mention your interest in joining. It is valuable to ask at that time how active the group is and the makeup of the membership. This is a subject that can also be broached with legislative staff when meeting with congressional offices on Capitol Hill. If a panel exists, staffers in Washington, DC, can advise of the correct local contacts to follow up about potential membership on an advisory board.

Joining an advisory committee offers you multiple opportunities to meet with your legislator and staff in an official setting, which can help build a strong relationship that can be relied upon when it is appropriate to advocate for the specialty further down the road.

## Invite a Legislator to Speak at a Local Meeting (Ex. State OMS Society Meeting)

Members of Congress are invited to speak at numerous events every year, especially back in the district. Speaking engagements in front of a large crowd of constituents are a great way for legislators to easily reach out to many voters at the same time. It would also be an impressive addition to an official gathering such as an OMS state society or state PAC Board meeting.

AAOMS already invites legislators to speak at our Day on the Hill meetings, but inviting a member to a local meeting would be a great opportunity to expose OMSs who may have never been active in politics to advocate firsthand and to hear at length from a local federal official on issues that directly relate to the specialty.

Below please find instructions and a sample speaking engagement request letter for guidance.

### **Step 1: Identify your legislators**

The federal government has official Web sites that can direct you to your federal legislators. To locate and contact your U.S. Senators, please visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) to see a complete list of Senators, and links to their official Web sites. Contact information for their local offices are usually found at the bottom of the page or under a “Contact Me” tab.

If you are unsure of your U.S. Representative, please visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and fill in your zip code in the “Find Your Representative” tool located on the top right of the page. If you do not know the last four digits of your zip code, put in the first five and click to continue. This will lead you to an additional step to retrieve this information. Once you have put in your full zip code, it will link to your U.S. Representative’s official Web site. As with Senate Web sites, contact information for the Washington, DC and local offices are usually found at the bottom of the page or under a “Contact Me” tab.

If the Member is coming to discuss money or fundraising in anyway or is picking up a PAC contribution, the event needs to be coordinated through the member’s campaign office rather than through the district office. Most campaigns these days have a Web site that you can easily find through a Google search and the campaign Web site should contain contact information. You can also contact the AAOMS governmental affairs staff if you need assistance.

### **Step 2: Compose a speaking engagement request letter**

When requesting a legislator speak at an upcoming local event, it is important to provide the office with the request in writing, and that it includes your contact information, times/availability, a quick summary about the format of the meeting, and suggestions for topics to be included in the presented remarks. On the following page is a template request to a congressional office letter for your reference.

Month X, 20XX  
The Honorable <first and last name>  
<local office address>  
<city>, <state> <zip>  
  
Dear <Congressman or Senator\_last name>:

On behalf of the <group name>, I would like to invite you to be the keynote speaker at our upcoming meeting at <venue> in <location>. We would love to hear from you at any point between <time slot> on <date>.

The <group/meeting name> is held annually and provides an opportunity for the <number of OMS> oral and maxillofacial surgeons in the region to meet and discuss issues that are important to the specialty. Specifically, we would love to hear from you on <issues i.e. tort reform or craniofacial anomalies>

We hope your schedule will permit you to join us for our upcoming meeting. Please contact <contact name, phone number email>, with any questions or to advise us of your attendance.

Sincerely,

<your name>  
<your street address>  
<your city, state, zip>  
<your phone number>  
<your email>

### Step 3: Contact the congressional office

After completing your request letter, print it out on personal or office stationary (unless the meeting involves a fundraiser) and sign it. Then e-mail or fax the letter to the primary local office. The request should be e-mailed or faxed in as opposed to using the postal system as regular mail. Additionally, keep the original in case you need to resend.

About a week after sending the initial communication, please call to follow up with the legislator's local scheduler. He or she may ask you to resend the request.

Please keep in mind that Senators and Representatives keep a very hectic calendar, even in the district. It is important to send a local speaking request out at least 6-8 weeks in advance and to be as flexible as possible with scheduling a time slot for the legislator's remarks.

## Request a Local Meeting or Site Visit with a Legislator

Meeting with your legislator locally provides another opportunity to advocate for the specialty without the travel!

Meeting locally also allows an OMS to really make a connection as a constituent and a health care provider. And unlike Day on the Hill in Washington, DC, while a legislator still has commitments in their home district, their schedule can't be interrupted by last minute votes.

These meetings should go hand in hand with the efforts being made in Washington, DC, to advance AAOMS's legislative agenda. For that reason, be sure to become familiar with the issues and association talking points, and include those as topics for discussing in your meeting request. If you need any clarification on AAOMS advocacy priorities, please contact AAOMS governmental affairs staff at 800/822-6637 or visit [www.aaoms.org](http://www.aaoms.org).

Below please find instructions, a sample speaking engagement request letter, and tips for a successful congressional meeting for your reference.

### **Step 1: Identify your legislators**

The federal government has official Web sites that can direct you to your federal legislators. To locate and contact your U.S. Senators, please visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) to see a complete list of Senators, and links to their official Web sites. Contact information for their local offices are usually found at the bottom of the page or under a "Contact Me" tab.

If you are unsure of your U.S. Representative, please visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and fill in your zip code in the "Find Your Representative" tool located on the top right of the page. If you do not know the last four digits of your zip code, put in the first five and click to continue. This will lead you to an additional step to retrieve this information. Once you have put in your full zip code, it will link to your U.S. Representative's official Web site. As with Senate Web sites, contact information for the Washington, DC and local offices are usually found at the bottom of the page or under a "Contact Me" tab.

If the Member is coming to discuss money or fundraising in anyway or is picking up a PAC contribution, the event needs to be coordinated through the member's campaign office rather than through the district office. Most campaigns these days have a Web site that you can easily find through a Google search and the campaign Web site should contain contact information. You can also contact the AAOMS governmental affairs staff if you need assistance.

### **Step 2: Compose a meeting request letter**

When scheduling a meeting with a legislator it is important to provide the office with the request in writing, and that it includes your contact information, times/availability, and a quick summary about what will be discussed at the meeting. Please find a sample request letter on the following page.

Month X, 20XX

The Honorable <first and last name>  
<local office address>  
<city>, <state> <zip>

Dear <Congressman or Senator\_last name>:

I am an oral and maxillofacial surgeon and a constituent, currently practicing/residing in <practice/residence town included in congressional district.>

I would like to request an appointment for myself <and -number- of local colleagues> to meet with you and your health care aide to discuss some significant policy issues affecting how oral and maxillofacial surgeons in your <district or state> are able to provide care to patients—and your constituents. [I would like to request a meeting between <time slot> on <date> at <your local office located in <town>.] OR [I would like to invite you to tour my <practice/hospital> between <time slot> on <date> in <town>.]

Specifically, we are seeking support <insert AAOMS priority legislation in paragraph form here with short descriptions>.

Thank you, <Congressman/Congresswoman/Senator\_Last name>, for your consideration of this request. I will follow up with your scheduler to confirm an appointment. If your office would prefer to contact me sooner, I can be reached at <your area code and phone number/ e-mail address>.

I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you and to discuss the legislative priorities of the specialty.

Sincerely,

<your name>  
<your street address>  
<your city, state, zip>  
<your phone number>  
<your email>

### Step 3: Contact the congressional office

After completing your request letter, print it out on personal or office stationary (unless the meeting involves a fundraiser) and sign it. Then e-mail or fax the letter to the primary local office. The request should be emailed or faxed in as opposed to using the postal system as regular mail. Additionally, keep the original in case you need to resend. Remember: if the Member is coming to discuss money or fundraising in anyway or is picking up a PAC contribution, the event needs to be coordinated through the member's campaign office rather than through the district office.

About a week after sending the initial communication, please call to follow up with the legislator's local scheduler. He or she may ask you to resend the request. Please keep in mind that Senators and Representatives keep a very hectic calendar, even in the district. It is important to send a local meeting request out at least 6-8 weeks in advance and to be as flexible as possible.

Please be aware that legislators, especially on the west coast or in rural areas, may not be able to travel home every week when Congress is in session. It is helpful to request

a meeting during a congressional recess, to increase the chances of availability. If you have questions about the congressional calendar, please contact AAOMS government affairs staff.

## Tips for a Successful Meeting with Your Legislator

Once you have secured a meeting with your legislator or appropriate congressional staff, it is important to use the opportunity to educate and advocate for the specialty, as well as lay the groundwork for a long-term relationship. Below are some tips and reminders to ensure a successful meeting:

### Tip 1: Be Prompt & Patient

Plan to arrive 10 minutes beforehand, but keep in mind that it is not uncommon for a legislator to be late or to have a meeting interrupted by other pressing matters in the member's crowded schedule. If interruptions do occur, be flexible.

Do not be surprised if you only get to meet with the member's staff. It would be impossible for legislators to personally attend every constituent meeting, so they rely heavily on their staff to meet with constituents and understand each issue. Staff members are likely to have a very in-depth understanding of your issue, and building a relationship with a member's staff can be just as important.

### Tip 2: Be Prepared

It is important to have a plan on what you will be discussing at the meeting and have a list of "asks" for the congressional office. Legislators and staff spend hours every day in meetings, so it is important to make a positive impression and relay a list of clear requests in order to stand out from other advocacy groups.

Ideally, you should bring leave-behind materials outlining basics about what oral and maxillofacial surgery is and what the association's legislative priorities are. These materials are provided onsite for Day on the Hill, but if you are meeting with a legislator locally, please contact a member of the AAOMS Governmental Affairs staff and request meeting materials.

You do not need to be an expert on each issue you are discussing, but you should be comfortable discussing the basics of each issue. If you cannot answer a question asked of you, it is perfectly appropriate to say, "I do not know, but I will find out the answer and follow up." This actually is a good way to develop a relationship with the legislator's staff after the meeting.

Additionally, know the basic facts about the legislator that you will be visiting including political party, leadership positions, the congressional committees that he or she serves on, and their career background.

### Tip 3: Make the Constituent Connection

Legislators are greatly influenced by what they know and what they hear - especially from the people they represent. It is important to establish a personal connection with the legislator or congressional staffer.

Members of Congress are elected to represent the best interests of their district or state. Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the member's constituency. Remember, many of your patients are constituents too!

#### **Tip 4: Stay on Message**

Legislators and their staff are very busy and time is a valuable commodity. Be sure to stick to the key topics and talking points. It is important to make your legislative asks clear and concise.

At this same time, don't assume staffers know about OMS or will feel slighted if you need to catch them up. Use this as a chance to promote the specialty. Additionally, don't let this explanation go longer than a minute or two and don't get too technical.

If it becomes clear that the legislator or staffer disagrees with AAOMS's position, move on to the next issue. On the other hand, if they promise to "look into it" – take the opportunity to offer yourself and AAOMS staff as a resource for additional information. This provides a great excuse to send a follow-up message after the meeting.

**Also be sure not to offer any endorsement of any legislation or issues on behalf of AAOMS. The AAOMS President is the only one who can speak on behalf of the association.**

#### **Tip 5: Avoid Campaign Talk**

When you are meeting in a legislator's official office, either locally or in Washington, DC, it is important to keep the discussion focused on policy and not politics. Even if you are a supporter, it is not appropriate to mention the upcoming elections or a fundraiser in an official congressional office. This talk should be limited to campaign events.

#### **Tip 6: Dress Appropriately**

Dress appropriately for the meeting. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and wear business attire.

#### **Tip 7: Don't Forget to Follow-Up**

Be sure to get the name of any staff members you meet to follow-up. Ask for their business card so that you can spell their names correctly and have their e-mail addresses. That person will likely be your source of contact for the duration following your visit.

Additionally, if you and the Member discussed specific OMS issues, be sure to share the information with AAOMS and your state society. This information is often very helpful on the lobbying front.

After the meeting, be sure to send a thank you note to express your appreciation for the time and briefly restate the issues discussed and the way you would like to see them respond to the issue (i.e., co-sponsoring a bill). On the next page, please find a template thank you letter for your reference.



Month X, 20XX

The Honorable <first and last name>  
United States <House of Representatives or Senate>  
Washington, DC <20515 if House, 20510 if Senate>

Dear <Congressman or Senator\_last name/Congressional Staffer>:

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for taking the time out of your busy schedule to meet with me on <date> at <location>.

Oral and maxillofacial surgery is a dental specialty that straddles both dentistry and medicine, and as such, has a unique set of legislative priorities. It is important to our specialty to advocate for measures that focus on providing better patient care.

I hope we can count on your support for the following AAOMS legislative priorities<insert below brief description of each issue discussed>:

-Issue 1

-Issue 2

-Issue 3

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions on these issues or other topics relating to oral and maxillofacial surgery.

Once again, thank you for your time and attention and your service to our country.

Sincerely,

<your name>  
<your street address>  
<your city, state, zip>  
<your phone number>  
<your email>

## Tips for a Successful Site Visit with Your Legislator

As with securing a meeting in your legislator's local office, scheduling a tour of your practice or hospital allows for a great opportunity to educate and advocate for the specialty, as well as lay the groundwork for a long-term relationship. In addition to following the local meeting tips above, the next page includes some specific tips and reminders to ensure a successful site visit:

### **Tip 1: Clarify Site Visit Itinerary Beforehand**

There are different types of activities that can be included in a site visit, such as a tour of the facility, witnessing of a procedure or a simple meet and greet. It is important to confirm the planned activities before the meeting and to keep the total visit under an hour, unless otherwise pre-approved by the legislator's staff.

### **Tip 2: Be Prepared**

While a site visit is less formal than a sit-down meeting, it is still important to have a plan on what you will be discussing at the meeting and have a list of “asks” for the congressional office. Legislators and staff spend hours every day in meetings, so it is important to make a positive impression and relay a list of clear requests in order to stand out from other advocacy groups.

Ideally, you have materials on hand to provide that outline the basics on what oral and maxillofacial surgery is and the association's legislative priorities. These materials are provided onsite for Day on the Hill, but if you are meeting with a legislator locally, please contact a member of the AAOMS Governmental Affairs staff and request meeting materials.

Before or after the tour, consider arranging an informal gathering so that you and your employees have a chance to ask the Member questions, and to tell him or her about your practice. You may want to have a coffee break, a morning breakfast, or turn the visit into a fundraiser. Please note you must decide if you will make this a fundraiser before you start planning the event as different planning steps are required by law and must be taken. For questions, please call the AAOMS governmental affairs staff at 800/822-6637.

### **Tip 3: Make the Constituent Connection**

Legislators are greatly influenced by what they know and what they hear - especially from the people they represent. It is important to establish a personal connection with the legislator or congressional staffer.

Be sure to share with him or her all the beneficial things your practice has done for the community. Talk about the number of patients you see on a yearly basis, types of procedures, and how federal legislation and regulation implementation affect your practice.

### **Tip 4: Avoid Campaign Talk**

Even if you are a supporter, it is not appropriate to mention the upcoming elections or fundraising unless the site visit is part of a fundraiser.

### **Tip 5: Don't Forget to Follow-Up**

Be sure to get the name of any staff members you meet to follow-up. Ask for their business card so that you can spell their names correctly and have their e-mail addresses. That person will likely be your source of contact for the duration following your visit.

Additionally, if you and the Member or his/her staff discussed specific OMS issues, be sure to share the information with AAOMS and your state society. This information is often very helpful on the lobbying front.

After the meeting, be sure to send a thank you note to express your appreciation for the time and briefly restate the issues discussed and the way you would like to see them respond to the issue (i.e., co-sponsoring a bill). See page 16 for a sample thank you letter.

## How to Become an OMS Key Contact

Becoming an OMS key contact for your legislator relies on continued reinforcement by you, but it does not require a substantial time commitment to make an impact. As an OMS key contact, you will be the go-to resource for advocacy and OMSPAC activities involving your legislator.

### **Tip 1: Participate in Day on the Hill and Meet Locally with your Legislator**

The first step is to make the connection via a congressional meeting. Ideally, you can be a presence in both Washington, DC, and locally in your home state. This will make you a familiar face to both the district and Washington staff.

You can also attend town hall meetings and public events hosted by your legislator. Be sure to reintroduce yourself and reconnect with any local staff you recognize and the legislator.

### **Tip 2: Utilize Contact Information to Follow-Up**

After taking a congressional meeting, it is critical to follow-up with the office within a week of the meeting. A quick e-mail to the appropriate staffer to thank them for their time and offer future assistance is all that is necessary.

### **Tip 3: Offer Your Expertise**

In addition to meeting locally, it is helpful to offer yourself up as a local resource. Many legislators have health care advisory groups or expert panels that they turn to when drafting legislation or to request input on policy under consideration. Usually these groups are informal and do not meet very frequently.

### **Tip 4: Engage in OMSPAC Activities**

In addition to being seen as a policy resource for AAOMS, to get more face time with legislators, you can also participate in OMSPAC activities such as delivering an OMSPAC contribution and hosting a fundraiser. OMSPAC provides another opportunity for OMSs to build relationships with key decision-makers on Capitol Hill.

### **Tip 5: Repeat and Reinforce**

It is important to maintain the relationship with your legislator. This is achieved by continuing to participate in the suggested advocacy and OMSPAC activities consistently for the duration of their time in office.

# OMSPAC, Campaigns & Elections

## What is OMSPAC?



## What is a Political Action Committee (PAC)?

A political action committee (PAC) is an entity created to permit individuals with common concerns to join together to support like-minded federal candidates and campaigns. The impact made by pooling contributions is significantly greater than that of a single contribution. This pooling of resources in the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons Political Action Committee (OMSPAC) enables oral and maxillofacial surgeons to significantly impact the political process.

## Why does AAOMS Need OMSPAC? What is OMSPAC's Mission?

The legislative process is dynamic and needs to be continually monitored. Whether we seek to enact policy that will improve the care we can deliver to our patients or prevent something that will impede our ability to treat patients; there is always a need to have a dialogue with elected officials so we can educate them on how legislation and regulations they enact may affect our patients as well as our specialty. This dialogue helps protect your professional future. Federal statutes and regulations continually change. It is critical to elect lawmakers who understand the concerns of our patients as well as oral and maxillofacial surgery.

OMSPAC provides the best opportunity to elect those who realize the importance of oral and maxillofacial surgery and how it relates to a patient's overall health. With more than 4,000 federal PACs representing the views of labor, attorneys, big business, pro-life, pro-choice, pro-gun, anti-gun, insurance and managed care and any other concern, you can imagine competing for the attention of policymakers. It is vital that OMSPAC is there to be sure oral and maxillofacial surgery's voice is heard.

OMSPAC's mission is to identify and provide election support for those federal candidates who understand the unique role of oral and maxillofacial surgeons in the nation's health care system.

## How are Contributions to Candidates Determined?

OMSPAC is a non-partisan political action committee. The OMSPAC Board determines which federal candidates and campaigns should receive support based on a number of criteria, including but not limited to, issue support, committee/leadership assignments, and a member's personal relationship with a candidate. However, you can be sure that OMSPAC will only contribute to candidates/campaigns that support the specialty of oral and maxillofacial surgery.

## Quick Facts about OMSPAC:

- OMSPAC has consistently been among the top 25 health industry PACs contributing to federal candidates.
- OMSPAC focuses on coordinating contribution delivery by local OMSs whenever possible, as opposed to on Capitol Hill by our Washington representation.

- While all AAOMS members benefit from OMSPAC, only about 20% of membership participates. OMSPAC needs the support of all AAOMS eligible members in order to further its recognition in Washington, DC.
- OMSPAC has a comprehensive web site at <http://www.omspac.org/> that allows OMSs to get the latest political information and view OMSPAC publications.

## Requesting/Delivering OMSPAC Funds

### How Do I Request an OMSPAC Contribution for a Candidate?

The first step in requesting an OMSPAC contribution is to contact OMSPAC staff with your request. It is helpful to fill out the contribution request form available at <http://www.omspac.org/candidate-central>, which provides space for information such as the candidate's name, party affiliation, your relationship with the candidate, the requested amount and why you recommend this candidate receive OMSPAC funds. Once the request is made, it is put before the OMSPAC Board, comprised of your peers, for consideration.

### How Do I Deliver an OMSPAC Contribution?

Delivering an OMSPAC contribution is a great way to get face time with a legislator in an unofficial setting. Deliveries can be made in a variety of places – at a fundraiser, at a legislator's campaign office, at a one-on-one visit outside of a legislator's government office or even during a visit to your practice.

In addition to being eligible to deliver contributions you personally request, OMSPAC staff may reach out and request your assistance in delivering money that was pre-approved by the OMSPAC Board to a legislator in your area.

The first step in delivering an OMSPAC contribution is contacting the legislator's campaign staff. It is important that you contact the campaign, rather than the official government offices. OMSPAC staff can assist in providing the necessary contact information.

Once you have made contact with the campaign, let them know that you are a constituent and an OMS with a contribution to deliver on behalf of OMSPAC. It may also be helpful to let them know the amount of the contribution. At that point, request an opportunity to deliver the contribution to the legislator. The actual type of meeting scheduled then depends on the flexibility of the specific campaign. OMSPAC staff is always available to assist in coordinating these meetings.

After a meeting has been scheduled, contact OMSPAC staff and request that the check be sent. The contribution will be mailed to your preferred address along with additional materials – a meeting evaluation form and hints to a productive meeting.

## Hosting a Fundraiser

There is no more effective way to cement a good relationship with a legislator than to participate in his or her campaign. By making a financial investment in their campaigns

and volunteering to host a fundraiser in your home on behalf of the candidate, you will have an excellent chance of becoming one of their valued constituents and friends. It will also help to establish you as a key player in the politics of your district or state.

### **Tip #1: Legal Considerations**

If you hold a fundraiser on behalf of a candidate for federal office, you should be aware of certain provisions in Federal Election Law. You and your spouse are permitted to spend up to \$1,000 for the costs of invitations, food, and beverages when you hold a fundraiser or any other event in your home on behalf of the candidate without it being counted as a campaign contribution. Further, you may make these expenditures in any single election, which means that you may host a fundraiser during the primary and again during the general election on behalf of a federal candidate. These expenditures do not count against the individual contribution limit of \$2,700 per candidate per election.

Do not under any circumstances use your office letterhead for mailing. Office letterhead is considered a corporate good and thus, according to Federal Election Commission (FEC), cannot be used for federal campaign purposes. Instead, use your personal letterhead for mailings related to the event.

Also, when preparing your mailings for the event, your office staff is prohibited from printing, stuffing, addressing, or stamping your mailings. The FEC strictly forbids this. If staff volunteer to help with the event outside of office hours or are members of the steering committee for the event, then they can help with the event preparations.

### **Tip #2: Candidate Considerations**

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the fundraiser on behalf of the specialty, you must consider the candidate's position on key health care issues and committee assignments. Contact the AAOMS Governmental Affairs staff to determine if the candidate has a record of support on health care issues, specifically issues of importance to the OMS community.

In addition, you should speak with OMSPAC staff to determine if it has already made a political contribution to this candidate or any other declared candidate in this race. While it is not required that you support only OMSPAC candidates, we encourage you to keep staff aware of your activities and to utilize the skills and resources available to you. Staff also benefits from the insight offered by OMSs in the district, providing an inside look at candidates at home.

### **Tip #3: Scheduling & Logistics**

The first step is to let the candidate's campaign staff know you are interested in hosting a fundraiser in your home. Together, you should set a date, time, and place for the event. Make sure that the candidate can attend rather than a surrogate representative for the campaign. Once the logistical details have been set, it is helpful to follow-up in writing to confirm the details. In setting the date, you will need to allow for a preparation time - which varies depending on the type of event you are hosting.

You may decide to host an informal coffee, a cocktail reception, or a reception and dinner in your home. A coffee or reception will require a shorter time frame than a dinner, and the type of fundraiser you host may be dictated by the candidate's schedule. Your choice also may depend on whether the candidate wants a small

intimate fundraiser with high-level contributors, or one that attracts more voters. For example, you will be able to host more guests at a reception than a dinner, but at a lower ticket price.

#### **Tip #4: Fundraising Expectations**

You must have a realistic expectation of how much money you can expect to raise. Often ticket prices are determined by several factors, including the kind of event, the nature of the office being sought, whether the candidate is an incumbent, and the leadership positions he/she may hold.

It is better to quote a figure too low and over-deliver than to promise a higher amount and under-deliver. Nothing is worse than under-delivering; it will ruin your credibility and possibly compromise your relationship with the candidate. Contact the campaign to determine how much should be raised at the event and then decide if you think you can realistically raise that amount.

Developing a tiered structure is effective in getting contributors to give at the next level. The amounts can vary depending on the size of the event and who it is for.

If your event is for a federal candidate and the price is more than \$50 per person, say in the case of a more expensive fundraising dinner, the reply card must comply with certain federal reporting requirements. Ask the campaign staff for assistance in developing the card to be certain it meets state and federal legal requirements.

#### **Tip #5: Reaching Out to Your Community**

The most important step in organizing and planning a fundraiser in your home is to develop a steering committee to assist in selling tickets. Your OMS colleagues, friends, neighbors, and local political party activists are good choices. Remember, the larger you make the steering committee, the better odds that you'll have a good turnout at the fundraiser.

### **Do's and Don'ts of Delivering an OMSPAC Contribution**

- Do be familiar with the candidate. Take the time to learn some basic background facts, both political and personal. See if any personal connections can be made (ex. Children in same school).
- Do pay attention to the candidate. He or she may have additional information on a subject matter in which you are interested.
- Do treat staff members with courtesy. Try whenever possible to meet with the candidate but do not be discouraged if you meet with a campaign staff member. Staff is the doorway to the candidate and tends to have more influence over issues.
- Do use personal experiences to make your point. It is easier to drive home a point with individual experiences or community stories.
- Do establish an ongoing relationship. This will give you more influence as a constituent. Offer to be a resource on health care issues that come before Congress.

- Do leave your contact information. Make sure the candidate can get in touch with you so you can be updated on the campaign’s progress.
- Do dress appropriately. Dress as indicated on any event invitation. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and wear business attire.
- Do get a picture of you and the candidate. Send OMSPAC the picture of you with the candidate and we will include it in an upcoming OMSPAC publication and on our Web site.
- Do return your Contribution Delivery Questionnaire to OMSPAC. By returning this document, staff will be aware of any necessary follow-up.
- Examples of approved statements about important AAOMS legislative issues that you can make when speaking with a member of Congress or their staff during delivery of a contribution:
  - The following legislative issues are important to the AAOMS and OMSPAC: X,Y,Z. Here’s why...
  - I’m glad to see that you support legislation to X,Y,Z.
  - What is your opinion of X,Y,Z issue? Would you be willing to consider supporting it? Here’s why it’s an important issue for OMSs.

### Don’t

- Don’t ask for a commitment on any legislative issues. To deliver contributions in return for commitments on legislative issues is a violation of the law.
- Don’t deliver a check to a Member of Congress on federal property. Federal law prohibits this. This includes staff offices on Capitol Hill or at the Member’s district office. Consider inviting them to your office instead or agree to meet at their campaign office or a local restaurant or fundraiser.
- Don’t ever link campaign contributions to legislative support. (ex. “we are giving you this check in appreciation of your support of H.R XXX.”) This is completely illegal.
- Don’t delay delivering a contribution check. Serious legal problems can occur if the check is reported to the FEC as being made by OMSPAC during one reporting period/election and as being received by the candidate in a different reporting period/election.
- Don’t use medical jargon. This can often confuse the candidate and staff members. It is always best to use lay terms.
- Don’t offer any endorsement of the candidate on behalf of OMSPAC or promise any future contributions. OMSPAC does not endorse candidates and any contribution request must be vetted through the OMSPAC Board of Directors.

## IV. Frequently Asked Questions

### 1) Is grassroots advocacy effective?



Yes! While the federal legislative process is notorious for being slow-moving, the most effective way to advance legislative goals is through grassroots advocacy. Thousands of bills are introduced in Congress every session, but only a select few become law. Often, it takes years to build enough support to move a bill through Congress

Participating in grassroots activities ensures that AAOMS has the ability to successfully share the specialty's priorities with key members of Congress.

**2) Do I have to be informed about politics to participate?**

No – AAOMS staff always provides both political and policy background information when appropriate.

**3) My local legislators have not been supportive of AAOMS positions in the past – should I still reach out to them?**

AAOMS always encourages its members to meet with their local legislators. While public officials might not agree with all of AAOMS's legislative priorities, there may be some common ground. If you have had a notably negative experience with a particular legislator and/or their staff, please contact AAOMS staff.

**4) My local legislator is a member of a political party that I do not support – why should I engage him/her via grassroots advocacy?**

When participating in AAOMS grassroots activity, it is important to remember you are advocating on behalf of the specialty. While you may have a different party affiliation and opposing political views, your legislator may support AAOMS legislative priorities.

You should only take meetings you feel comfortable with, but members are encouraged to advocate on a bipartisan basis. This is critical because the political winds shift often in Washington, DC, and it is important to have friends on both sides of the aisle. The party in power has the potential to switch every election cycle.

**5) I'm interested in participating in AAOMS advocacy efforts, but am nervous about attending meetings solo. Are there other OMSs in my area that are active?**

AAOMS encourages members new to advocacy to reach out to their colleagues with more experience. If you are unaware of other AAOMS grassroots participants in your home state, please contact AAOMS staff for a list of experienced advocates willing to provide insight.