



Town Hall Meeting “How To”

It is difficult to underestimate the power of raising a question or presenting information at a public meeting where an elected official is in attendance. Local town hall meetings and community forums hosted by members of Congress provide an important and unique opportunity for members of the lymphoma community to interact with their elected officials.

Here are some ways that Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) advocates can best utilize attendance at town hall meetings, to advance the policy priorities of the lymphoma community:

1. Preparation is Key. Many people do not present their members of Congress with a well-researched argument or question. People who attend town hall meetings armed with thoughtful arguments, good data and persuasive personal stories are always remembered.

2. Do the Math. Nearly every person that meets with a member of Congress represents even more constituents. Use these numbers to effectively make a point, by sharing figures like: “I represent 100 people in my local LRF chapter,” or “There are 500 people in our state that are facing a lymphoma diagnosis.” Your legislator will realize immediately that you are there to not only represent yourself, but even more voters who share the same concerns.

3. Be Respectful. You’d be surprised how many people start a conversation with, “I pay your salary through my taxes, so you had better listen to me.” That may be the case, however it doesn’t matter who you’re talking to - starting any conversation in a confrontational manner is no way to persuade your target audience. Members of Congress are there to hear your views, so you do not need to badger them to get your message through.

4. There is Safety (and Strength) in Numbers. Nothing says “listen to me” to elected officials like a large group: when it comes time to get the attention of a member of Congress, a group of people presenting a consistent message, even if there is only a single speaker, speaks volumes about the amount of support they have. Sending advocates to multiple meetings is also a great way to get noticed. When members of Congress hear the same unique question at multiple meetings, it sends them a signal that this is an issue that is important to many of his/ her constituents.

5. Don’t Forget the Staff. Every member of Congress brings staff to their town hall meetings. Seek them out before the meeting if possible, get their business card, and tell them why you are attending the meeting and provide them with copies of any LRF materials you have brought with you.

6. Follow-up. Politely persistent people persuade politicians. Congressional offices are busy places, so they often only have time to respond to the squeaky wheel - people who take the time to follow-up with a phone call or e-mail message after attending a town hall meeting.

Want to learn more? Visit the Public Policy and Advocacy section of the LRF web site at: www.lymphoma.org/advocacy.

Tips on Identifying Town Hall Meetings and Community Forums

- To find the date and location of town hall meetings hosted by your members of Congress, contact their offices directly. Call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be transferred to their office. You can also look for meeting dates online: link to their individual websites by visiting www.senate.gov or www.house.gov.
- The federal government’s health care reform website (www.healthreform.gov) features a listing of local health care forums held by members of Congress. Visit the website to view the list of meetings held in your state.
- Local newspapers and radio stations often advertise upcoming town hall meetings hosted by members of Congress. Look for announcements during the months of July and August, when legislators return to their districts and states during the Congressional summer recess.