

## **General Guidelines for Neuroscientist's Interactions with Policymakers**

- Treat this interaction primarily as a chance to meet and get to know someone who is serving in the public's interest just as you do.
- Create connections by asking questions, asking for advice, giving the policymaker some brief background on you as it relates to the district or state he/she represents.
- Find out as much as you can about the member beforehand to help you make the connection. If he/she has already put a marker down in support of a particular research area (e.g. they've cosponsored a bill focused on prostate cancer), thank him/her for that indication of their interest in medical research.
- Ask what members of the research community could do to be better advocates for research; e.g. "Do you think personal stories or economic data have more of an impact on the Hill?"
- If you have read or heard any comments the policymaker has made that resonated in a positive way with you, mention that to the policymaker; e.g. "I really appreciated what you had to say about..."
- If this is a lab tour, be sure to relate what you are showing the member back to his/her constituents; e.g. we believe our research could ultimately help address xx, a health problem that actually is pretty prominent in (this area of the country, name of state).
- Offer to help get the word out that the member took the time to make the visit; e.g. we'd like to write a blog post about your visit and your leadership in the medical research arena.
- Take pictures to post on your website and offer to share copies with the member's communications staff.
- Make an ask: e.g. "Would you consider sending a letter to House/Senate leadership stressing the importance of assigning a high priority to (NIH/NSF/medical research) funding in the fiscal year xx appropriations bill?"
- It is likely that the member will bring his district/state director or another staffer with him to the lab tour. Make a special effort to engage that person, exchange email addresses, and ask to meet with them in the near future.
- Follow up the visit with a thank you note that you attach to an email to the district/state director, or if staff did not attend, to the member's Chief of Staff.

### **For more useful information see also:**

[Society for Neuroscience – Advocacy Network](#)  
[Research!America – Advocacy and Action](#)

## Interactions with Policymakers - Menu of Suggested Speaking Points:

- We truly appreciate that you found the time to (visit our lab) (meet with us).
- There are so many demands on your time, and it is a privilege to (host you) (spend a few minutes with you today.)
- I live in xxx, so I am a constituent, and it is great to know that you understand the role (university/research institution) plays, not only in advancing medical progress, but in contributing to the local economy.
- One of the key reasons we are so proud of the work that is occurring in this lab is...
- Realistically, there are gaps in current knowledge about (some facet of science), and we hope to fill in some of those gaps. Ultimately, we hope to (an aspiration that connects the dots between your research and a tangible improvement in human health).
- The disease(s)/condition(s) that we may someday help unravel affect xx people in (state, or if that number is too small, then use the national figure).
- In fact, in the neuroscience arena, gaps in basic, noncommercial research like ours has become a major stumbling block to private sector innovation. Companies want to make progress delivering new treatments for xx, but they are stymied by the lack of research that, realistically, private sector investors won't touch because it is "pre-commercial;" it's the research that sets the stage for the development of new products.
- In economic terms, the university employs xxx, and our lab employs yyy. We see the return on investment in tangible ways, like the small businesses that have sprung up around the university.
- We are concerned about lagging funding at NIH, because without funding for basic research, medical progress basically comes to a halt, and there is so much opportunity right now.
- Some of the most prevalent and costly diseases are in the neuroscience arena, and if we don't tackle them, the federal budget will actually pay a pretty steep price. That's because a lot of the costs take the form of hospital, home health, therapy, and nursing home care
- When you think about funding for medical research, are there particular areas you are especially interested in? Are there concerns or questions that we can help answer?
- (If the member has children in elementary, middle or high school) If it is of interest, we would be more than glad to host a lab tour for (name of child/children) and their classmates).
- It has been truly meaningful for us that you visited our lab, and we hope you and your staff will call on us if we can be helpful when Congress is considering science-oriented policies.
- If you don't mind, we would appreciate your advice on how to be effective advocates for research and the federal funding needed to support it. Do you think economic arguments like job creation are resonating more right now, or that connecting the dots between our research and the individuals who could be helped someday by it is more effective?
- In terms of science funding, would you be willing to speak with or write a letter to (House/Senate) leadership asking them to assign a high priority to (NIH/NSF) funding in the FY xx appropriations bill?
- Thank you again for your time, etc.