



American Pharmacists Association[®]

Improving medication use. Advancing patient care.

Tips for Participating in a Townhall Meeting Checklist

While on recess, many Members of Congress host townhall meetings throughout their Districts to get feedback and information from constituents as well as to explain their position on certain legislative issues. This year with health care reform on the agenda, many Members of Congress are taking extra time to meet with their constituents to discuss health care issues. With so many groups engaged in the health care reform debate, it is important to be prepared and effective in delivering your message. The following is some guidance for planning and preparing to participate in a townhall meeting.

Step 1: Finding a Townhall Meeting

- The easiest way to find out about your Representative's or Senators' local townhall meeting is by calling their District office nearest to you. To look up, your Members of Congress' district office phone numbers, visit [APhA's Legislative Action Center](#).
- When calling the office, make sure to inquire about the agenda, format, and topic area of the townhall meeting. Some townhall meetings focus on specific policy areas while others are more general. Also, many Members of Congress are hosting conference call townhall meetings.
- If you would like to receive messages from APhA about townhall meetings in your area, register as an [APhA Advocacy Key Contact](#).

Step 2: Preparing for the Townhall Meeting

- Recruit other pharmacists and health care professionals who are supportive of pharmacy issues to attend the townhall meeting with you.
- Research your Member of Congress' biography, position on health care legislation, and what bills the Member has co-sponsored. If supportive of a particular pharmacy bill, begin your comments to the Member by thanking the Member for his/her support of the specific bill.
- Prepare your questions for the meeting. [APhA has developed sample questions for you](#). It is important to make sure that your questions and comments are phrased carefully; and do not sound accusatory. It also helps if you can give precise data to back-up your message.
- Plan to include a relevant personal, patient care story in your comments.

Step 3: For the Townhall Meeting

- Bring materials to leave with Member and/or their staff. APhA can provide you with materials by contacting Allison Wiley at awiley@aphanet.org or 202-429-7521.
- When you arrive at the meeting or log onto the conference call, make sure that you understand the procedure of the meeting (such as how to sign into the meeting, how to mute your phone, and how to ask questions).
- Remember that it is likely that there is some type of media covering this event, and your comments are being recorded.
- In addition to mentioning that you are member of the American Pharmacists Association, when asking a question be personal, polite, and respectful. The most powerful and effective message is the most calm and rational argument that is backed-up by sound data and/or a personal, patient care story.
- If the Member of Congress cannot answer your question or does not know about the issue, ask politely if you can follow-up with her/his office about the issue after the meeting.
- Even if you do not get the chance to speak to the legislator, seek out his/her staff at the event to make a connection and deliver any message and/or materials.
- If the Member of Congress and/or the audience is upset or out-of-control, use your judgment about the climate of the meeting and whether it is productive to contribute to the discussion. In this case, it is probably more beneficial to seek out the Member of Congress' staff in attendance at the meeting to discuss your issue or write a follow-up letter to the Member of Congress. In the letter, mention that you were in attendance at the meeting, thank them for hosting the event, ask your question or make the comment that you didn't have the opportunity to present at the meeting.

Step 4: Post-Townhall Meeting

- Follow-up with a letter to the Member of Congress and/or their staff. In the letter, discuss an issue that you brought up at the meeting or mention that you attended the meeting.
- If possible, attend multiple townhall meetings. By attending multiple meetings, you are reinforcing your message and strengthening your support. You are communicating that the issues is not going away.
- Post information about your experience on APhA's Pharmacist in Health Care Reform Facebook Fanpage at www.facebook.com/HealthCareReform.