



Volunteering to Host a Fundraiser

Like it or not, you have to know your elected representatives in order to have any traction when you need them for something. When an issue comes up that is important to you, it is already too late.

Elected officials suffer fools gladly. They are inundated with issues that are important to somebody somewhere. Although your voice is always important, it may not stand out if someone from the other side has become friends with the elected official beforehand.

State legislators and state senators should know you by name, and the best way to get them to help you is to help them when they need help: During the election. The same holds true for Congressional Representatives and Senators. It is important to be involved in both state and national elections.

You can't know in advance what or when issues of importance to your livelihood will arise. Part of being an involved citizen means ensuring that those elected to represent you know who you are and what you do. Communication from someone you know means a lot more than communication from someone you don't know.

Make an attempt to first target the legislators in your state who sit on the key committees that are most likely to hear your proposed legislation/bills. These are generally the "House and Senate Health Committee," sometimes referred to as "Human Services." These are the committees that deal with changes in healthcare, and this will include the health insurance companies and health plans. House and Senate Business and Labor Committees more times than not deal with your state's workers compensation law.

You can only go to the same well so many times, meaning your colleagues, asking for their donation to this or that event that you host. Your colleagues, patients, friends, family are only going to be willing to spend a certain amount, attend and support a limited number of events, so be strategic. When possible, host functions for those legislators that sit on the key committees.

1. Scheduling the Event

The beneficiary's campaign or main office, if they are already elected, can be very helpful in setting up a fundraiser. They do it all the time, they know how to arrange details and they can sometimes help cover some expenses, such as invitations and food and beverages. However, if at all possible, have your state association's PAC cover the cost of the event. In a fundraiser you are trying to help support the candidate, so anything you provide counts and is appreciated.

Be sure to keep records of all related expenses. Candidates use funds raised as a measure of their campaign's viability; all expenses incurred in a fundraiser count just as much as the amount of the checks written. Additionally, the candidate or legislator running for re-election will be required to report all the event costs you paid for as "in kind donations," and your state



Alabama delegate Dr. Brad Russell meets with Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.)



PAC will also be required to document these as contributions as well. Most state election laws require such documentation.

The beneficiary's office can also provide guidance on what has been done before, what worked in the past and what they think will work best to bring in the most people and contributions.

You will get more traction with the candidate if you listen to them tell you what they are envisioning as you plan the event and avoid any disappointment or confusion in the aftermath.



House Majority Whip Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.) meets with ACA lobbyist John Falardeau and ACA consultant the Honorable Lacy Clay

2. Guest List

Start with a list of your colleagues and business associates. Cherry pick those who have a history of always being willing to donate, to step up—start with these and call them personally. You don't need to specifically select only those who might support the candidate. The candidate may want access to people who aren't yet supporters in the hope of getting the word out to a broader audience. The candidate wants contributions to help his or her election effort, and attendees get access to the current or aspiring official if they attend.

3. What to Request from Guests

As you develop your guest list, you should estimate what your colleagues can afford to contribute. The ticket to the event should include a request for a specific contribution amount and encourage them to send their check well ahead of the event. Consider inviting local businesses that are politically like-minded as sponsors of the event at \$250, \$500 or even \$1,000, and produce a poster board with their names listed to acknowledge these sponsors during the event. With that number in mind, then get some idea from the candidate or his or her office about how much events like you're planning usually raise.

Ask co-hosts to contribute the requested amount ahead of time. Advance donations give some validity to the function and allow you to say that "X" amount of dollars have already been collected. A long list of supporters also makes the effort look worthwhile and makes it easy to ask other people to get involved.

Always request donations in advance. Allow time to arrange details, collect as many donations as possible and reward co-hosts by listing their names on the invitation. Four to six co-hosts, confirmed contributors, can be helpful because you can expect each of them to attend and bring in 10 additional donations.

When possible, invite local VIPs such as the mayor, police chief, councilmen and councilwomen. If the individual is chair of a key committee, attempt to invite the leadership of their party. If their party is in the majority, this could mean the Speaker of the House or Senate President and/or majority leaders of those chambers.

If leadership is going to be in attendance, the order of introduction is "least to greatest" meaning you introduce the low man or woman on the political totem pole first.

Have the contributions in hand before invitations are printed, as it is difficult to collect after the fact. Hosts often suggest a co-host amount that's more than the amount suggested to attend the function, but often people ask if they



can attend if they contribute less than the requested amount. This becomes a personal decision: One hates to turn any reasonable contribution away, but it may not be fair to require one person to pay more to get in the door and less for another. Consider inviting SACA members for free.

4. The Right Mindset

What matters to you may not be as important to everyone else. Once you make the decision to host a fundraiser, be patient, pleasant and persistent in drumming up support for your fundraiser. At times, busy physicians can have the attention span of a turnip and need to be reminded over and over to participate in your fundraiser.

As you persist, try to distinguish those who may not support the candidate from those who do support but are otherwise distracted. It may be helpful for undecided voters to attend and decide firsthand whether or not they like the candidate, but remember your fundraiser's goal. The purpose is to raise money, not for voters to vet the candidate's opinion on various issues. The candidate's campaign might be able to help provide other venues for vetting before the event, such as a house party potential supporters could attend to make a decision on the candidate.

In sum: Ask as many people as you can, then remind them on multiple occasions, but hold the line on an amount they must donate to participate.

5. Collecting Contributions

As with soliciting funds from co-sponsors, make every effort to collect money from guests before the event, or at the very least at the door on the way in. As mercenary as it sounds, to some extent you are selling access to candidates. The donations should be collected before the encounter, as it is very difficult to collect anything after the event.

For Congressional elections (i.e., to the U.S. House of Representatives or U.S. Senate), you may ask the ACA PAC committee to vet the candidate or present an ACA PAC contribution at the fundraiser. Remember that this process takes time, however. Make such requests sufficiently in advance to allow time for receipt of the contribution.

ACA PAC is a nice way to leverage your contribution and promotes the candidate's awareness of issues important to ACA. ACA PAC contributes only to national elections, however, so for local or state elections you should appeal to your state association for a contribution to local candidates if appropriate. An event for a sitting member of congress will need to be scheduled months in advance, and be prepared for the campaign to request a minimum dollar amount they want your event to raise. Further it is imperative that you "fill the room," especially for a sitting member of congress. The last thing you want to happen is to have an empty or nearly empty room.

6. Preparation for the Event

Beverages and food can run the gamut from soft drinks and pretzels to elaborate dinners. Discuss key details with the candidate: Whether or not to serve alcohol, where to host the event (In your home or at a more public site, inside or outdoors), or how much food to serve. The candidate will be very grateful to you for showing support; he or she will



Wisconsin Chiropractic Assoc. ED John Murray meets with Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.) and Wisconsin delegate Dr. Gene Yellin-Shiring



often give you leeway to arrange the function as you see fit. Even so, early discussion and open communication of all details as they come up can circumvent surprises later and avoid any potential misunderstanding along the way. Keep in mind that the purpose behind this effort is to befriend the candidate and both get to know them and let them get to know you.

Whatever type of event you settle on, be sure to plan time both for the candidate to speak individually to attendees and to address them as a group. If specific issues are important to you, discuss them with the candidate beforehand and then allow him or her to address those issues during the event.

7. Event Conclusion and Contribution Delivery

Give collections to the candidate or, better yet, their staff at the close of the event. Make certain to exchange contact information and thank the candidate for their time. The member of congress will have a staffer at the event who generally will be at the greeting desk as attendees come in the door. Provide name tags and a sign-in sheet with a place for the attendees to provide their contact information.

After the event, send a follow-up letter thanking the candidate for their time and summarizing the issues important to you. A candidate may forget everything said verbally at a gathering, so written follow-up helps keep your ideas in play.

8. Connecting the Dots to Maximize Association Efforts

Following the event, send a picture and summary of the event to [ACA's Department of Public Policy and Advocacy](#). For national elections, include a copy of the fundraiser invitation so DC staff can keep their finger on the pulse of advocacy efforts around the country.

For state or local elections, send a copy of the invitation to your state association's executive director.

If you learn anything surprising or unexpected in the process of hosting a fundraiser, be sure to share that information with ACA staff. Your input will make the advocacy process more effective and efficient in the future.

In conclusion, good judgment comes from experience. We all should be involved and get our colleagues involved to advance chiropractic. Nobody else is looking out for you, so you need to take care of yourself and protect your patients! This is our profession to make of it what we will.



Missouri chiropractors meet with Rep. Jason Smith (R-Mo.) (far right)

Prepared by the ACA Legislative Subcommittee on Local Events and Fundraising: Dr. Quinn James, Chair, Dr. Vern Saboe and Dr. Chris Dolecki.

For Additional Information Please Contact: American Chiropractic Association, Department of Public Policy and Advocacy
703-812-0228 | <mailto:mppa@acatoday.org> | www.acatoday.org