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AMERICAN
CHIROPRACTIC
ASSOCIATION

ACA Advocate's Guide to Legislative Engagement

2023 - 2024

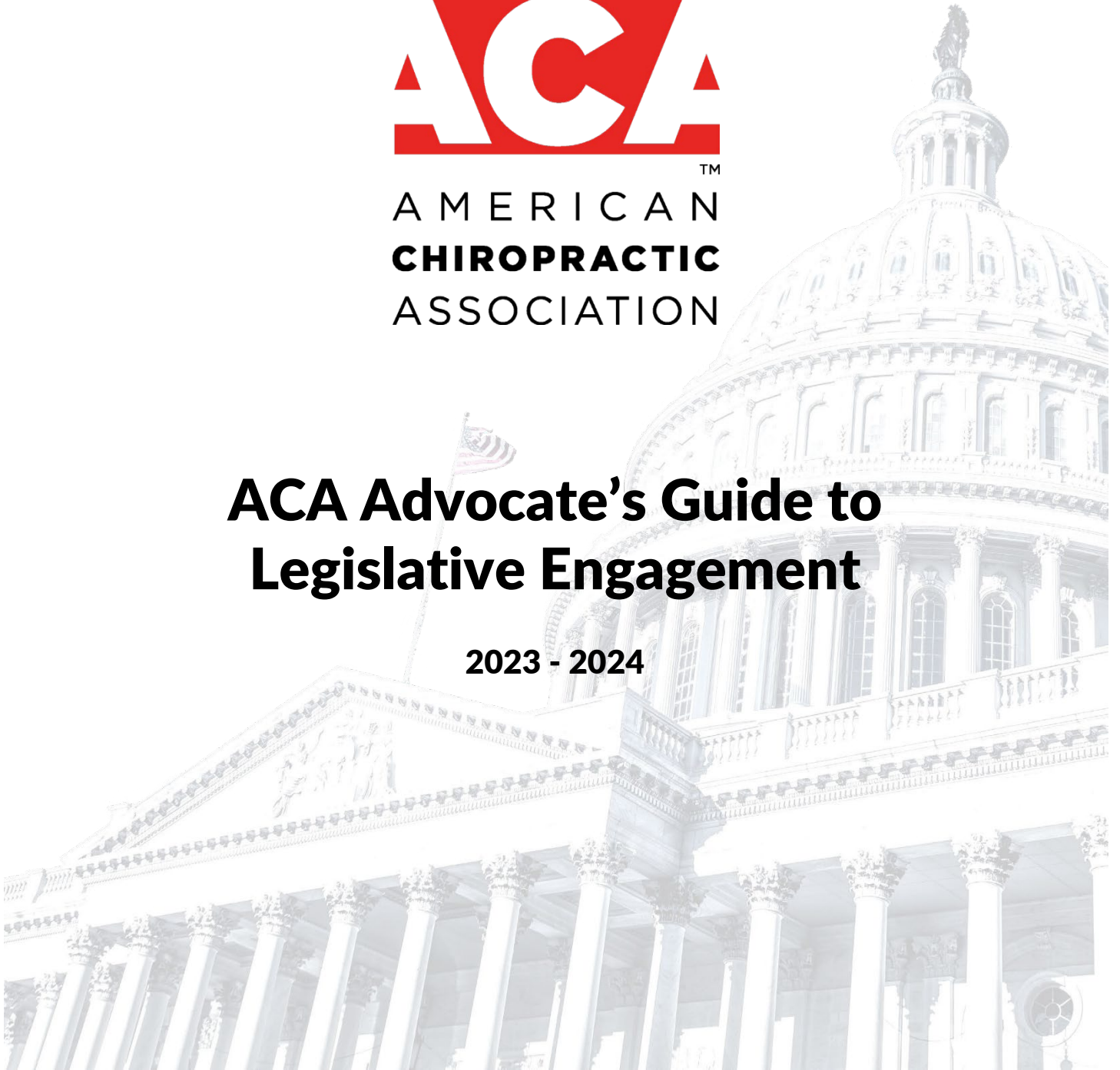




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Introduction

As doctors of chiropractic, you are well versed in advocating for your patients and empowering them to live healthy and happy lives. The same skills used in practice can easily be applied to educating policymakers and the public on the chiropractic profession.

Members of Congress want to hear from constituents about important issues in their districts and states. The health and well-being of patients, robust small businesses and public health concerns are just a few examples of issues that many doctors work with on a daily basis. Members of Congress take these issues seriously. You are already an expert in your field – why not share that knowledge with those who have the power to enact positive change?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting public health emergency (PHE), the way in which we meet with Congress may have changed, but the importance of a clear message and effective follow-through have not. Now, more than ever, it is critical to stay engaged with Congress and thanks to virtual platforms, it has never been easier.

This short guide is intended to assist you in becoming an ACA advocate, a critical partner in advancing the chiropractic profession on behalf of your patients. ACA is here to help you on this journey and is available to answer any questions along the way.

Becoming an ACA Advocate

What does it mean to advocate on behalf of the chiropractic profession?

It is normal to wonder where exactly to start. The good news is that as a doctor of chiropractic and an ACA member, you are already a valued member of the advocacy team! If you have ever attended the day on the Hill at ACA's annual meeting, ACA Engage, sent a letter to your member of Congress through [acatoday.org](https://www.acatoday.org), volunteered for a legislative committee or subcommittee, viewed an update video from our lobbyists, or even just read legislative updates in *ACA Connects* or on the *ACA Blog* – you are well on your way! The most important thing an advocate needs is the desire and enthusiasm to participate.

We're glad you are a part of the team!

It is important to remember that as an ACA advocate you are not expected to be a professional lobbyist. Members of Congress and their staff want to hear why you, as a chiropractor, support specific legislation, why it is important for your patients, and how it would impact the local community. While it is important to have a working understanding of key legislation, you are not expected to be a legislative expert. If you encounter questions you cannot answer, commit to following up with an answer and reach out to ACA for help.

H.R. 1610/S. 799: The Chiropractic Medicare Coverage Modernization Act

At this time, the most important issue facing the chiropractic profession is access to chiropractic services for Medicare patients. The focus of communication with members of Congress should be on H.R. 1610 and S. 799.

An important first step is to visit www.acatoday.org/medicare and familiarize yourself with the issue. ACA provides resources and background related to the Chiropractic Medicare Coverage Modernization Act, our top legislative priority.

Visit www.acatoday.org/medicare

The site includes answers to Frequently Asked Questions, a link to contact your representative and senators, news, and updates including the list of cosponsors.

Additional resources available include:

- District Meeting Toolkit
- “Take Action” Images for Your Website
- Sample Social Media Posts
- UnitedHealthcare Benefit for Low Back Pain Helps Reduce Invasive Procedures and Address the Opioid Epidemic (PDF)
- The Cost Effectiveness of Chiropractic Care for Medicare Patients (flyer)
- A Common-Sense Strategy to Fight Opioid Misuse (brochure)
- H.R. 1610/S. 799 Office Poster
- H.R. 1610/S. 799 Patient Handout (flyer)
- Presentation: Support Access for Medicare Patients (PPT)
- Chiropractic: What Research Shows (flyer)



Elevator Pitch

“The Chiropractic Medicare Coverage Modernization Act (H.R. 1610/S. 799) would allow Medicare beneficiaries access to the chiropractic profession’s broad-based, non-drug approach to pain management that has become an important strategy in national efforts to combat the overuse of opioids.

The bill simply allows patients to access already covered benefits which are allowed under a chiropractor’s state licensure. It is bipartisan legislation, with a balanced number of cosponsors from each side of the aisle.

Most importantly, the legislation does not add new services to Medicare and, because chiropractic helps patients avoid surgery and prescriptions, has the potential to save the system money.”

Meeting, and Meeting with, Your Representatives

How?

One of the most effective ways to influence and educate members of Congress is to develop a relationship with them and their staff. A first step in that process is to request a meeting.

One way to ensure that you and your message are memorable is to offer something a little different. Rather than requesting a traditional meeting, consider asking your member of Congress to join you on a virtual tour of your practice, school or office (be sure to obtain all necessary permissions). The visual representation of a chiropractic office is a great way to show your member of Congress exactly how your work impacts your community.

Ensuring that your virtual tour goes smoothly is also a great representation of how effective telemedicine visits can be (and why they should be allowed for DCs in Medicare). If you currently use telehealth, consider walking the member of Congress or staff through what a typical telehealth appointment might look like.

Above all, members of Congress want to be informed of the issues that impact their constituents, districts and state. As an expert in chiropractic medicine, you are in an important and unique position to become that informational resource for the member and their staff.

No matter the format of your meeting request, it is critical that you remain polite and professional in all interactions with congressional offices. As an ACA advocate, you represent yourself as well as the entire chiropractic profession. It is important to avoid partisan and controversial issues. Staying on message is critical to the success of any lobbying effort.

There are a few tips and tricks to prepare for engagement with your member of Congress:

- Practice explaining your position to someone unfamiliar with the issue or legislation. Ask for their feedback and answer questions as you would if they were a policymaker.
- Film a virtual tour for social media as practice. Watch the video as if you were a member of Congress.

There are a few tips and tricks specific to virtual meetings (e.g. Zoom)

- Choose a quiet location with few interruptions, even the corner of a room can look like a professional office with the right camera angle!
- Test your computer audio and video well ahead of the meeting. Ensure that you are able to quickly mute/unmute if needed during the meeting and that your wifi/internet connection is reliable.
- Do not be afraid to utilize the background feature to blur or otherwise camouflage your surroundings if needed.
- Practice staying attentive and looking into the camera when speaking.
- Do not be afraid to smile and have fun!

Templates: Contacting Your Representative and Senators

Before contacting your member of Congress to request a visit, check to see if they are a cosponsor of the bill you're lobbying for (see www.congress.gov).

If they are a cosponsor, it is still helpful to contact them. Focus your meeting on thanking them for their support and further educating them on the benefits of chiropractic services to our healthcare system and local communities. Remember to always leave contact information and invite the member and their staff to reach out to you with any questions.

Sample Requests for Virtual Meetings

Telephone:

Good morning/afternoon/evening.

My name is [FIRST LAST] and I am a doctor of chiropractic in [town/city/municipality]. I am calling to request a virtual meeting with Representative [LAST] to discuss [H.R. 1610 /S. 799/chiropractic]. Do you have a formal request process, or is there someone I can speak with to schedule a meeting?

E-mail Directly to the Member of Congress:

Dear Rep. or Sen. [LAST]:

As a constituent and doctor of chiropractic, I would like to schedule a virtual meeting with you to discuss [chiropractic legislation/public health]. I would appreciate any time you might have to talk with me about [this/these critical issues]. I look forward to your response.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our district and for considering my meeting request. Sincerely,

[Name/title]

[Full contact information]

E-Mail to Congressional Staff:

Dear [FIRST]:

As a constituent and doctor of chiropractic, I would like to schedule a virtual meeting with [Representative or Senator][LAST] to discuss [chiropractic legislation/public health]. I would appreciate any time the Representative, you or other staff might have to talk with me about [this/these critical issues]. I look forward to your response.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our district and for considering my meeting request. Sincerely,

[Name/title]

[Full contact information]

Sample Requests to Host a Virtual Site Visit

Be sure to obtain proper authorization from your school or clinic if necessary.

Telephone:

Good morning/afternoon/evening.

My name is [FIRST LAST] and I am a doctor of chiropractic in [town/city/municipality]. I am calling to invite Representative [LAST] to a virtual tour of my [practice/clinic/school] located in the district. Many of my patients are also constituents.

Is there a preferred method for inviting Representative [LAST] or a formal procedure I should follow?

E-Mail:

Dear [Representative or Senator] [LAST]:

As a constituent and doctor of chiropractic, I am writing to invite you to a virtual tour of my [practice/clinic/school].

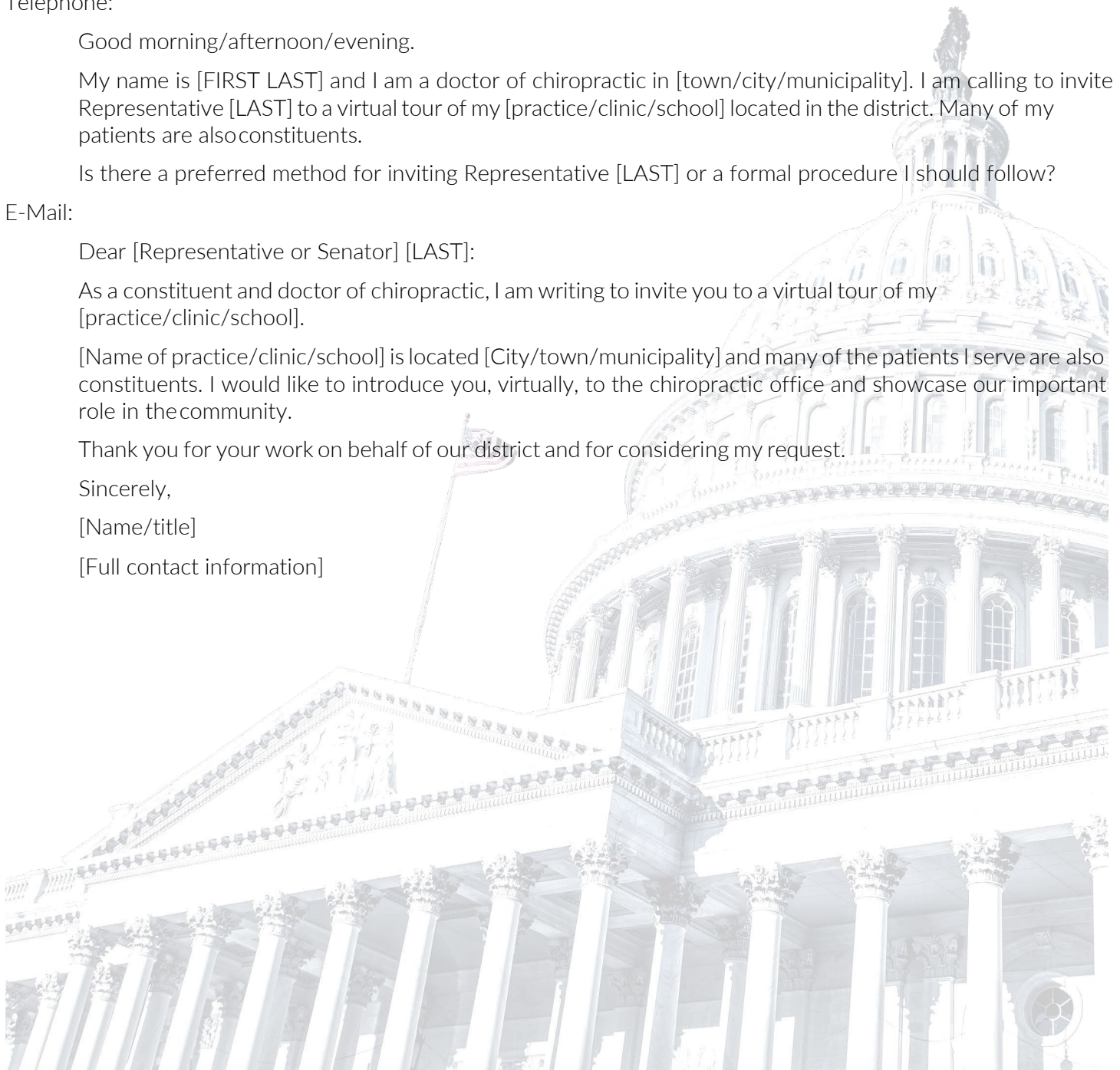
[Name of practice/clinic/school] is located [City/town/municipality] and many of the patients I serve are also constituents. I would like to introduce you, virtually, to the chiropractic office and showcase our important role in the community.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our district and for considering my request.

Sincerely,

[Name/title]

[Full contact information]



Advocacy Yays and Nays

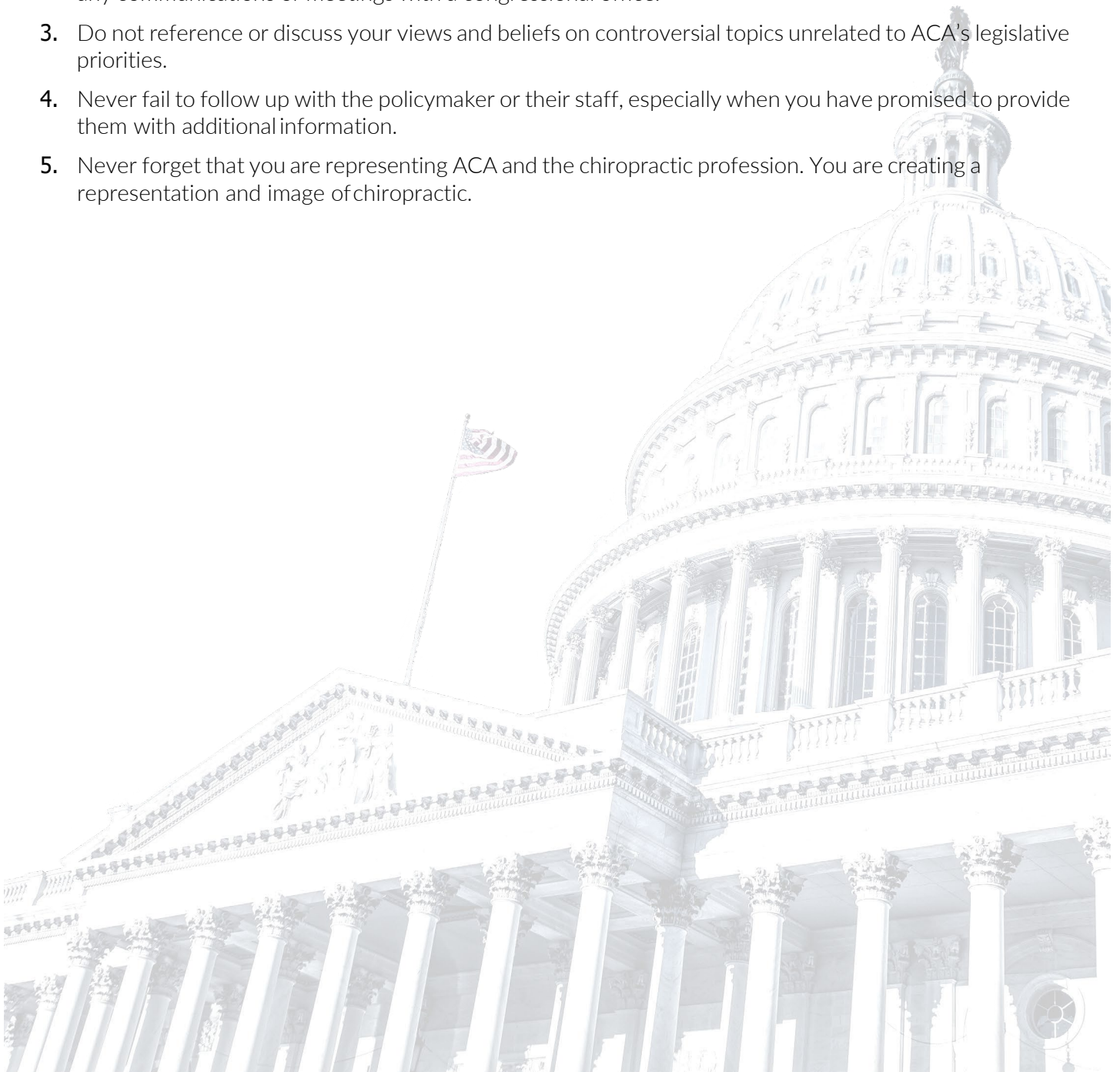
Yays

1. Keep ACA informed when communicating with members of Congress. Always copy the ACA Department of Public Policy and Advocacy (ppa@acatoday.org) on any communication with a Member of Congress.
2. Always remain bipartisan and apolitical. Avoid all political discussions and focus on the legislative priorities of ACA – H.R. 1610 and S. 799 are bipartisan and widely supported bills.
3. Only contact or meet with your member of Congress – or the representative who represents where you practice (or teach or do research). If you are uncertain, contact ACA for guidance.
4. Be prepared! Research the member of Congress: Know which committees they serve on and if they have already co-sponsored H.R. 1610. Always visit the member's official website and search online for information that might be helpful in establishing a connection. (Did you attend the same high school or college?)
5. Be informed! Check www.acatoday.org and ensure that you are well versed in the issues of importance. If you have any questions, contact ACA.
6. Be polite! Remember that you are representing the entire chiropractic profession. Remain professional and polite, no matter who you speak with – from the intern to the member of Congress. Generally, all staff have the ear of the member of Congress.
7. Be truthful! Always ensure that the information you provide is accurate and true. If you do not know the answer to a question, that is ok, and always say so instead of attempting to answer or make something up. In fact, offering to follow up with additional information is a great way to establish a relationship. Be sure to contact ACA when this happens so we can help.
8. Be helpful! Offer to become a resource for the member of Congress and their staff in the local community. Express interest in being available to answer any questions they may have about chiropractic, public health, or other issues. Share stories or personal experiences you have had in practice and be certain to tie these examples to the issue at hand. (For example: A patient is no longer able to receive or afford chiropractic care once they transition to Medicare, and any harms that might also apply.)
9. Be yourself! Remember, you are a representative of a vital healthcare profession, and your member of Congress wants to hear from you about your expertise. They do not expect you to be legislative or political experts, nor should you have to be. If you have any questions, contact ACA to help.



Nays

1. Never argue, threaten, or disrespect a member of Congress or their staff. Do not use foul or inappropriate language. NEVER discuss politics or partisan issues. ACA is a bipartisan, member-driven association.
2. Never provide an answer or information you are uncertain about, information you know to be false, or lie in any communications or meetings with a congressional office.
3. Do not reference or discuss your views and beliefs on controversial topics unrelated to ACA's legislative priorities.
4. Never fail to follow up with the policymaker or their staff, especially when you have promised to provide them with additional information.
5. Never forget that you are representing ACA and the chiropractic profession. You are creating a representation and image of chiropractic.



Contact and More Information

Primary Contact

Please reach out to ACA's Department of Public Policy and Advocacy with any questions about being an ACA advocate.

ppa@acatoday.org

703-812-0228

www.acatoday.org/Advocacy

As the respected voice of the chiropractic profession, ACA's insights and opinions are sought and acted upon in the halls of Congress, at federal regulatory agencies and in the White House. ACA's active and effective advocacy efforts focus on vital issues, including improved access to chiropractic services for patients.

Hands Down Better: Consumer Outreach

ACA's HandsDownBetter.org website and *Healthy Living* blog provide the public with reliable information about chiropractic care as well as health tips and suggestions on how to avoid injuries while performing everyday activities such as gardening, shopping, working at a desk, participating in sports, and more. Visitors and readers also can learn more about important federal legislative initiatives to increase patient access to chiropractic services and can use an online search tool to locate an ACA chiropractor in their area.

About ACA

The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) is the largest professional chiropractic organization in the United States. ACA attracts the most principled and accomplished chiropractors, who understand that it takes more to be called an ACA chiropractor.

We are leading our profession in the most constructive and far-reaching ways -- by working hand in hand with other health care professionals, by lobbying for pro-chiropractic legislation and policies, by supporting meaningful research and by using that research to inform our treatment practices.

We also provide professional and educational opportunities for all our members and are committed to being a positive and unifying force for the practice of modern chiropractic.