

Meeting with a Member of Congress

Federal funding for scientific research and development is facing severe cuts from the President, Congress, and the Budget Control Act, which may affect the research and livelihoods of Earth and space scientists across the country and have broad impacts on the health and stability of our economy, the public, and the environment. AGU strongly encourages you to meet with your Representative and Senators during their district work periods, when Congress is in recess and all U.S. Senators and Representatives will return to their home districts, to discuss the important role science plays in our society.

Legislators are debating how much funding should be appropriated for [Fiscal Year 2013](#), making this a critical time to discuss the value of science funding while they are home in their districts. This is a great opportunity to establish an ongoing relationship with your legislators to discuss the important Earth and space science research that is happening in their district and to remind them that sustained federal support for that research is critical. Students are encouraged to participate as well.

HOW TO SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

1. Call your Representative and Senators' district offices. Contact information for Representatives can be found at www.house.gov and for Senators at www.senate.gov.
2. Ask for a 15-minute meeting with the Representative or Senator. If they are unavailable, ask for a 15-minute meeting with the District Director.
3. Check out the resources on [AGU's web site](#) to help you prepare.
4. E-mail AGU's Science Policy staff at sciencepolicy@agu.org. They can answer any questions you have and will provide you with a feedback form for your meetings.

GENERAL TALKING POINTS AND TIPS

- Explain who you are, what you do, and why your work is important from a local perspective. This should be done in "lay terms" and technical jargon should be avoided.
- Tying your research to economic impacts, such as jobs, in your congressional district is essential. If your research is funded through a federal agency grant, tell them. For example: *My research, which supports my job and the jobs of two post-doctoral students, three graduate students, and one technician in our district (or, My research, the results of which will support 5,000 jobs in the state, is funded by a grant made possible by federal funding to NSF, and it is an honor that the research is being conducted in our district.*
- Ask your Representative and Senators to be thoughtful when considering cuts to science funding. Cutting science will hurt the United States in the long run by making our nation less innovative and competitive.
- You are there to begin a long-term relationship as a resource to the congressional offices, not just make a one-time visit. Be sure to ask if they have any questions and follow up with more information.
- Bring your colleagues or graduate students with you to show unity on this important issue.

SCIENCE-SPECIFIC TALKING POINTS

- Scientific research and discovery have brought us monumental achievements like human flight, life-saving drugs, telecommunications, abundant food, and cleaner water and air. Looking to the future, scientific research will also be a game changer for America's global competitiveness, national security, and public health and safety.
- History shows that much of the economic growth the U.S. has enjoyed since World War II is the result of strong support of and investments in science and technology.
- If we do not begin building that same type of foundation today, what kind of legacy will we be leaving our children and our grandchildren?
- Although the U.S. has remained the single largest R&D performing country, for the first time in 2009 the Asian region's total matched the U.S. total at 399 billion. China's 2008-2009 R&D growth increased by a record 28%, whereas the U.S. saw a decrease in growth. Given current spending trends, China's level of annual R&D spending is expected to surpass that of the U.S. in the next decade.
- Investing in scientific research also helps to support our economy. Scientists and engineers make up only four percent of the workforce, but they disproportionately create jobs for the rest of the nation. In 2008 alone, university research was responsible for the creation of nearly 600 new companies.
- Science isn't a partisan issue. Scientific advances help all Americans enjoy a better quality of life.

IF YOU ARE A FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

- Meeting with your Representative and Senators is allowed. However, it is not permissible to discuss specific funding levels. Instead, discuss your research and its **local impact** on the district, implying that cuts to federally funded research is generally not advisable as it will negatively impact the district.
- Meetings with your Representative and Senator cannot be conducted on paid time or sick leave. Instead, they must be done on vacation time or unpaid leave.

IF YOU ARE NOT A FEDERAL EMPLOYEE

- If you are employed by a university or a research institution, contact your employer's government relations office. They can help prepare you for the meeting and may even help you schedule it.

Thank you for taking the time to help support your colleagues. America's security, economic competitiveness, and public health depend on our commitment to invest in science and technology.