

GUIDANCE: **EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR**



In-person meetings with your senators or congressmen and women are an invaluable opportunity to draw their attention to issues facing the compounding community, educate them, and persuade them to support your position or take concrete steps to advance a legislative agenda. This guidance will discuss how to make the most of an opportunity to meet with legislators and how to run an effective and enjoyable meeting.

Before the meeting. Thorough preparation for your meeting is critical. Not only will good preparation maximize this valuable opportunity, but it will allow you to put your best foot forward as a representative of the compounding community. Research your legislators. Read the legislator's biography and have a general understanding of their positions on important issues, along with their background. If you are meeting with a congressional representative, be familiar with the district they represent. Understand their level of influence; for example, whether they serve on any committees or other play roles that could allow them to advance your goal beyond simply voting. Assess their level of involvement with the pharmaceutical industry, and with the compounding community in particular. Determine what they have done for compounding community and what policies and legislative initiatives they have supported in the past or are currently supporting. Find out whether they have any direct connection to the broader healthcare field, which could provide some common ground even if they are not involved with the compounding community.

Take the time to prepare your message. Simplify your message so that you are able to communicate it clearly and succinctly. Remember that your time will be limited and the legislators and staff people with whom you are meeting will not be nearly as familiar with the issues and with compounding as you are. Providing too much detail can backfire by muddying the waters and overshadowing your key points. Likewise, clarify your "ask" so that the legislators understand exactly what you would like for them to do. Consider how you can correlate your ask to real-world impacts on your business and the patients whom the legislator represents.

During the meeting. Your meeting should have three parts: First, an introduction during which you will set up the conversation and establish your relationship with your audience. Second, a discussion of the issue. Third, a brief wrap-up to summaries issues and next steps.

1. Introduction: Setting up the conversation and relationship

Introduce yourself and your pharmacy. Be generous with praise and thanks for the work that the legislators and their staff are doing. Try to establish a personal connection with the people in the meeting, whether based on a shared background, or shared concern for issues facing constituents. For example, even if your legislator is not personally invested in the compounding community, he or she likely cares about supporting small business and ensuring patient access to medications. Make sure that everyone who is present in the meeting feels included. Staffers are often the ones who will be researching the issue after your meeting and who act as crucial advocates to their busy legislators. You do not want to leave them feeling like afterthoughts, with the impression that you do not value their experience and contributions.

Be prepared with a clear and simple explanation of what compounding is and why it is essential for patients. Ask if they or anyone close to them has ever used a compounded medication. Then, tell them what you do. Have a patient story or two teed up. Sharing a story or offering examples of the patients you serve will help explain your business, why the issue at hand matters, and make your audience care. Always bring the discussion back to how your ask can help his or her constituents.

2. The discussion: Explain the issue and the “ask.”

When you are explaining the issue, try to tell a compelling story. Act like you are making a sell, instead of lecturing on a dry legal issue or simply griping about excessive regulation. Below is an example of a well-phrased opener:

“We are here to talk to you today about some issues that we are having that really affect our pharmacy, our patients, and our doctors, and we’d like your help. It basically boils down to FDA overreach that affects patient safety and access to needed medications.”

Present the issues in a very objective, neutral way—not as a crusade against the FDA. You never know who they know or how they really feel about a particular government agency. Leave the legalese and technical terminology at home. Remember that you are communicating with people who are intelligent but unfamiliar with the process of pharmacy compounding and lacking the same depth of knowledge as you have about the history of the profession, your business, and issues that you are facing. Many legislators are only generally aware of what compounding is. (And, unfortunately, some may only be aware of compounding is because of NECC. This maybe the first thing that comes to mind when the legislator hears “compounding,” so be prepared to address NECC in case it comes up. For example, *“NECC was a tragedy caused by deliberate bad actors who have been criminally prosecuted and their acts are condemned by the compounding community.”*)

After you have explained the issue, describe how the legislator can help you. This is the “ask.” Show them the materials you will leave behind with them to review and be sure to note if you are providing proposed legislation the legislator can use in fulfilling your “ask.”

3. Wrap up

The wrap up is when you summarize the issue and your “ask,” and lay the groundwork for follow-up. Thank everyone in the meeting for their time and ask the legislator where he or she stands on the issues and if he or she is prepared to take specific action. Identify any outstanding questions, concerns, or issues that he or she would like to consider further. Give your business card for contact information to everyone at the meeting. Offer to be a resource to them for pharmacy issues and invite them to reach out with any questions or to discuss the issues further. Thank everyone again for their time as you are leaving—including the receptionist or others who greeted you but who did not attend the meeting if you see them on your way out. After you leave, write notes on the backs of all cards for future reference.

After the meeting

Once you are home, send a personal thank you note, ideally one that highlights the points you reviewed. (This can also be done via email.) Promptly send any follow-up materials requested by the member or their staff or answers to questions.