

“...Public awareness brings about public action, and results in action on the part of those who serve the public. Neurological disorders and psychiatric disorders impact almost every family sooner or later; yet this is something of which the public seems strangely unaware. To change this is, I believe, the principal challenge to the Dana Alliance: how to make public entirely aware of the seriousness of brain disorders and to challenge, in turn, the leaders of public opinion and those who hold the purse strings to do something to relieve this oppressing burden.”

*W. Maxwell Cowan, M.D., Ph.D., former vice chairman, Dana Alliance
Dana Alliance Member News, 1997*

TOOLS FOR EDUCATING POLICY MAKERS

In our lifetime, every single one of us, a family member, or a friend will be touched by a brain disease or disorder. It is essential now, more than ever, to make brain research a policy priority. To do so, we must continue to educate the public and legislators about the progress and promise of brain research. Although much progress has been made in the past two decades, it is *imperative* that brain research continues on this path in order to help find new treatments, preventions, and cures; to relieve the social and economic burdens inflicted by brain diseases and disorders; to alleviate suffering and to yield direct, practical benefits that will improve the lives of ourselves, our parents, and our children.

Why is grassroots advocacy important? Advocacy can be implemented on many levels and take many different forms. Lawmakers regularly make decisions that can impact our health and wellbeing and these decisions may be made with limited knowledge of our specific concerns. You do not need to be an expert on legislative details as long as you are educated and passionate about what you are advocating. Members of Congress are most responsive to people from their own states and communities. You do not have to go to Washington DC to be heard, you can make an impact in your own community. Here are some suggestions - send e-mails, letters or faxes to your legislator or staff member; call the offices of Members of Congress; send introductory packets to your Congressional delegation and especially new legislators; conduct lab tours; invite local officials to your outreach programs, etc. More information can be found in the links below and in particular, SfN's Guide to Public Advocacy.

Following are several organizations that offer guidelines and information for arranging meetings and useful tips for speaking with policymakers both in Washington and in their home districts.

American Brain Coalition (ABC)

- [Capitol Hill Toolkit](#) - “How to set-up a meeting with your legislators in Washington DC and what to expect while you are there.” Includes explanation of the purpose of face-to face meetings; how to arrange and prepare for meetings; what to say, what to expect, and follow-up. The Toolkit also lists the key Congressional House and Senate Committees, their jurisdiction and current members.

Research!America

- [Porter's Principles](#) - The Honorable John Edward Porter, Chair of Research!America and former Member of Congress provides “how-to” information for arranging and conducting successful

meetings with members of Congress. A brief list of advocacy points to emphasize when speaking with policymakers is also included.

- [Advocacy Resources](#) - A bullet-point guide on how to self-educate and prepare for meetings with a Congressperson, includes links to information such as using public opinion poll data and working with government officials and the media.

American Physiological Association (APA)

- [Advocacy Resource Kits](#) – Links to information on APA’s Web site including Why Become an Advocate for Science, Getting Started, Contacting Congress, Talking Points, and more.
- [Research Funding Talking Points](#), - A list of talking points about research funding to use when speaking with lawmakers, i.e., overview, economic reasons, problems of underfunding, etc. Also includes relevant facts about NIH and NSF.

Society for Neuroscience (SfN)

- [Congressional Outreach](#) - SfN’s Working with Congress and Advocacy Resources section offers links to more in-depth information and tools for conducting lab tours, SfN’s Capitol Hill Day, joining SfN’s Advocacy Network, contacting members of Congress via E-mail, how SfN can help schedule meetings with Members of Congress, and other advocacy opportunities.
- [Guide to Public Advocacy](#), A comprehensive instruction manual for communicating with policymakers, including calling, writing, or meeting with legislators as well as involving the public. The page also includes neuroscience and legislative resources.

Reading Recommendations

- [“Protect U.S. Science Funding” Science editorial, November 26, 2010](#)

“Society can’t achieve a better future if scientists, engineers, and the public sit back and allow short-sighted decisions to starve the engines of future problem-solving and innovation” (read the entire editorial [here](#)).

- Alan Leshner, Ph.D., chief executive officer, AAAS in his Nov. 26, 2010 *Science* editorial

For more in-depth reading on the innovative and economic benefits of research, following are two reports from the U.S. National Academies. The reports may either be purchased in hardcover format or downloaded for free as PDFs.

- [Rising Above the Gathering Storm](#) – this is a lengthy publication and those wishing to use it as an advocacy tool might focus on Chapter 2, titled “Why Are Science and Technology Critical to America’s Prosperity in the 21st Century?”
- [Rapidly Approaching Category 5](#), (2nd edition)