



**American Hospital  
Association**

# ADVOCACY UPDATE

## *Action Alert!*

Wednesday, February 8, 2006

**NEED ACTION FROM ....** *Hospital leaders*  
**ACTION .....** *Tell Congress how your hospital leads the way to improved community health*  
**WHEN .....** *The current congressional session*  
**HOW .....** *Use the attached form, and meet with your representative and senators*  
**WHY .....** *Congress will soon consider hospital-related budget and tax issues*

### **DO YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVE KNOW HOW MUCH YOUR COMMUNITY RELIES ON YOU?**

Congress this year is expected to take a hard look at a variety of budget and tax issues that promise to affect hospitals – specifically, several congressional committees have begun to focus on Medicare and Medicaid spending reductions, tax-exempt status, and billing and collection issues. It is vital that your senators and representative understand how your hospital’s work improves the overall health of your community.

This is important because, while your local legislators may know many members of your hospital family, do they truly understand your hospital’s mission, and the vital role it plays in the health, safety and strength of the community? In today’s political climate, it is vital that legislators are fully aware of the good hospitals do. That knowledge must come from hospitals themselves ... the people whom these legislators represent. That’s where real grassroots power is generated!

You may already prepare a report summarizing the many ways you benefit your community. If not, let the attached form act as a guide to help you share this information with your legislators and the public. Because every hospital and community is unique, tailor this activity to your particular situation. Please be sure to share this information with us as well. The better armed we are with our members’ stories, the more effective our collective message will be on Capitol Hill.

This Alert is the first in a series of steps to set a course toward improved congressional understanding of the hospital perspective. We'll send you more specific requests for advocacy action in the coming weeks, but in the meantime, please use this Alert and the attached form in your ongoing effort to tell your story.

***Please don't forget to share your information with the AHA. You can e-mail materials to [AHAdvocacy@aha.org](mailto:AHAdvocacy@aha.org). Also, we're interested to hear how your Hill contacts go. Call us at 1-877-242-2240 or send us an e-mail ... thanks!***

# ***Connect With Your Legislator***

## ***...Some Ideas on How to Lay the Groundwork for Your Ongoing Effort to Explain How Your Community Needs You***

Your legislators may have toured your hospital or met with you individually; in which case, they may know your leadership personally. If not, here are a few thoughts on how best to connect.

- ✓ Request meetings in their district offices.
- ✓ Seek the counsel of your board and your “community outreach” team.
- ✓ Recruit community leaders, both elected and unelected, who can speak to the importance of your hospital.
- ✓ Schedule ongoing meetings with their staffs to keep them informed of what your hospital is doing for the community.

Congress is in session now ... Start planning your contacts now!

## ***...Some Ideas on Message***

Provide your legislators with your hospital’s own report or refer to the following checklist to craft a brief review of how your hospital is meeting the needs of this community.

Remember to emphasize...Your Patients...Your Community...Your Mission.

## ***...Critical Items to Include***

### ***The population you serve***

A summary of the hospital’s service area, types of populations served and unique community challenges (i.e., high unemployment, numbers of uninsured, economic and social challenges, etc.).

### ***Your response***

Free or subsidized programs offered to the community (list all programs you sponsor or collaborate with others to offer, such as health education, access and prevention initiatives).

### ***Your community partners***

A list of local organizations (e.g., civic groups, businesses, schools) with whom you collaborate.

### ***Your commitment to the poor***

A description of numbers of people served from whom no payment was expected; include a brief summary of your existing charity care policy and recent uncompensated care numbers.

### **Your contribution to health**

A summary of the ways in which you further enrich the health of the community you serve. For example:

*In addition to providing uncompensated care and a variety of community programs, we contribute to our region's health by ...*

Include training for physicians, nurses and other staff; service on regional health partnership boards; advocacy activities for healthy local policies; etc.

### **The pressures upon you**

A description of the escalating pressure your organization is facing. For example:

*We're committed to providing our community the care it needs ... when the federal/state Medicaid program reimburses our hospital XX pennies on each dollar we spend to treat a Medicaid patient, it forces resources to be taken away from other needed areas like disaster readiness and information technology improvements.*

Provide recent Medicaid numbers.

### **Your Community...Your Mission**

A concluding summary of resources, services and staff dedicated to programs benefiting the community, specifically those with little or no assistance.

### **... Additional AHA Resources**

Charity Care and Billing:

[http://www.aha.org/aha/key\\_issues/bcp/index.html](http://www.aha.org/aha/key_issues/bcp/index.html)

Community Health:

<http://www.communityhlth.org/communityhlth/resources/communitybenefit.html>