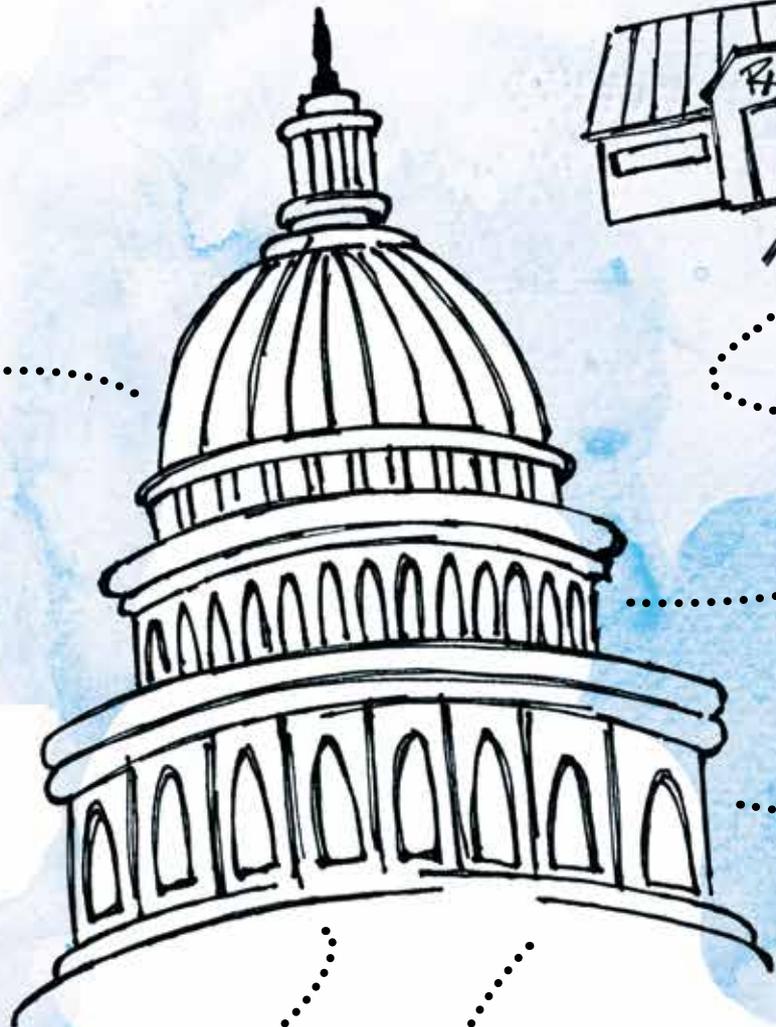
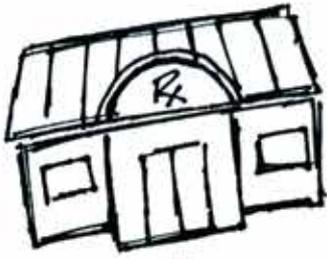


Keeping Politics Local





Help lawmakers understand our complex issues by inviting them to your pharmacy

by Michael Rule



Some Helpful Tips for Arranging a Congressional Pharmacy Visit

- Request the visit through the legislator's district office closest to your pharmacy instead of his or her Washington office. You can find contact information for each office on the NCPA Action Center <http://bit.ly/actioncenterncpa>. A sample email you can use to request the meeting is also available at <http://bit.ly/visitinvite>.
- When requesting the visit, emphasize that you are a small business owner in the district and provide some details on how many people you employ and patients you serve. Suggest the visit as an opportunity for the legislator to get a first-hand look at the role independent pharmacy plays in the health care system.
- Let the office know some of the legislative issues you would like to discuss. You can find information on each legislative priority on the NCPA Federal Advocacy website <http://bit.ly/ncpaadvocacy> or you can contact NCPA Government Affairs Staff at (703) 683-8200.
- Once scheduled, inform NCPA of the upcoming visit by emailing Michael Rule at michael.rule@ncpanet.org. He will provide you with talking points and other information that will be helpful in your visit.
- Be sure to take photos during the visit and share them with NCPA afterward along with details of how the visit went and any specific items NCPA should follow up on with the legislator's office.
- Additional tips are available on the Pharmacy Visit section of the NCPA webpage <http://bit.ly/pharmacyvisit>. You can also contact NCPA staff with any questions.

Note that 2016 is an election year, with Election Day on Nov. 8, and Congress will be taking extended recess periods to allow time for campaigning. They will be away from Washington the entire month of August through Labor Day and will again be on recess the month of October until Nov. 14. These are tremendous opportunities to invite your legislator to a pharmacy visit. If you are unable to host a visit, it is still important to remain engaged. NCPA has created a toolkit of sample materials you can use to advocate for independent community pharmacy, available at <http://bit.ly/2016ncpatoolkit>.

NCPA has been working with industry partners to speak with a coordinated and unified voice to Congress and government agencies on issues facing independent community pharmacy. However, we must also remember the famous saying often associated with former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill that "all politics is local."

The premise of this adage is that politicians rely on local voters to get elected, and voters are more likely to support complex legislative initiatives if they can directly associate how it affects their local community. This principle is also true for constituents communicating with Congress: elected officials are more likely to support complex legislation if they understand how it affects their constituents back home.

Many of the legislative issues facing independent community pharmacists are indeed complex. It's difficult for a legislator to grasp the need for generic drug pricing transparency or the nature of direct and indirect remuneration (DIR) fees without details on

how they affect local small businesses and patients in the community. NCPA has made it a priority to increase the number of legislators who visit an independent pharmacy and appreciate the many members who have hosted such visits to help localize these issues.

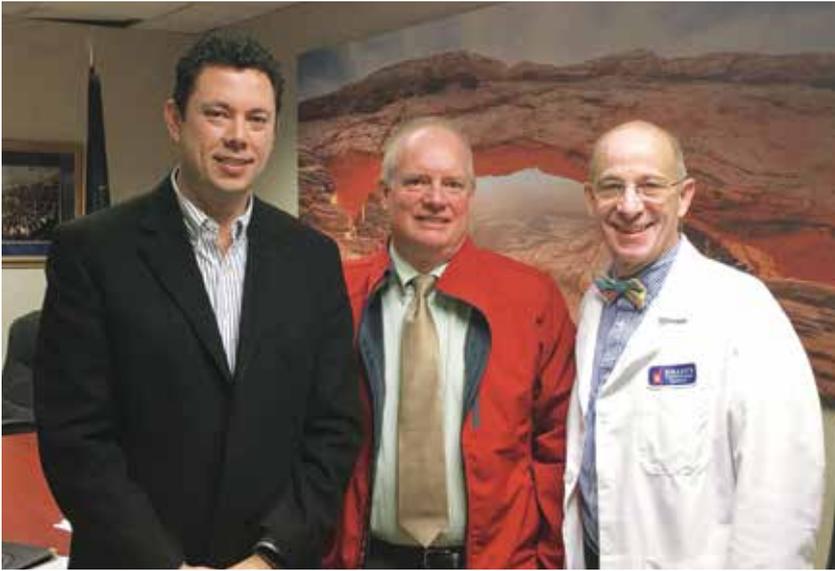
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Several visits were highlighted last November (<http://bit.ly/capitolhill-summer>) and since then there have been many others. For example, in Virginia, Rep. **Bob Goodlatte** (R-Va.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, visited Broadway Drug Center in Broadway, Va. Goodlatte is a cosponsor of H.R. 592, the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act, and H.R. 793, the Ensuring Seniors Access to Local Pharmacies Act. This visit was particularly timely as it occurred the day prior to a hearing of a key Judiciary subcommittee that looked into the relationship between PBM corporations and independent community pharmacies. Goodlatte asked several questions during this hearing in favor of independent community pharmacy based on what he learned from his pharmacy visit, including a MAC example.

Similarly, Rep. **Jason Chaffetz** (R-Utah), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform (OGR) Committee, took time to meet with Dean Jolley and Darryl Wagner



Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) visits Broadway Drug Center in Broadway, Va.



Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) meets with Darryl Wagner and Dean Jolley.

of Jolley's Compounding Pharmacy in Salt Lake City. This visit occurred shortly before an OGR committee hearing to investigate rising generic drug costs and provided an opportunity for participants to discuss priority legislation with Chaffetz.

Additionally, one of patients' and independent community pharmacy's biggest supporters, Rep. **Doug Collins** (R-Ga.), visited Madden's Pharmacy in Elberton, Ga. Collins is a lead sponsor of H.R. 244, and cosponsor of H.R. 592 and H.R. 793. He aggressively questioned representatives of Express Scripts and CVS Caremark during the aforementioned House Judiciary subcommittee hearing, and has spoken before the full House expressing the need for legislation to level the playing field between independent pharmacies and huge PBM corporations (a video compilation of his statements is available at <http://bit.ly/repcollins>). While Collins is well versed in the issues facing independent community pharmacy, this visit allowed those attending to discuss another issue of importance, DIR fees.

Also in the Peach State, Rep. **Buddy Carter** (R-Ga.), the only pharmacist

currently serving in Congress, visited Altama Pharmacy in Brunswick and Bennett's Pharmacy in Nahunta. Carter has cosponsored all three of NCPA's priority bills. While Carter has firsthand knowledge of many of these issues, these visits provided an opportunity to hear from other independent pharmacists in the district on the challenges they face.

Likewise, there were similar visits in Tennessee where Roller Pharmacy in Erwin hosted Rep. **Phil Roe** (R-Tenn.), and Clinton Pharmacy in Clinton hosted Rep. **Charles Fleischmann** (R-Tenn.). Both Reps. Roe and Fleischmann are cosponsors of H.R. 592 and H.R. 793. These respective visits were opportunities to thank them for their support of these important bills and to ask them to support H.R. 244.

Similarly, Rep. **Barbara Comstock** (R-Va.) visited Rotz Pharmacy in Winchester, Va. Comstock is also a cosponsor of H.R. 592 and H.R. 793, so again much of the discussion focused on H.R. 244, and other MAC issues, and DIR fees, which are the pharmacy's third-highest expense. In addition to discussing issues, Comstock experienced independent



Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.) visits Madden's Pharmacy.



Rep. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.) visits Altama Pharmacy in Brunswick.



Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) visits Roller Pharmacy.



Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.) visits Clinton Drug Store.



Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-Fla.) visits Palm Beach Compounding Pharmacy.

pharmacy services firsthand when she received a flu shot.

Finally, in Florida, Rep. **Patrick Murphy** (D-Fla.), who is currently a Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate, visited Palm Beach Compounding Center in Palm Beach. During the visit, pharmacist-in-charge Rick Upson discussed key legislative issues. Murphy is a cosponsor of H.R. 592. Upson also took the opportunity to show Murphy the videos of "Phil My Pockets," a humorous take on how PBM middlemen interfere with the patient/pharmacist relationship (available at www.whorun-smydrugplan.com).

While these are examples of the local message being delivered at home, it can also be effectively delivered in Washington, D.C., as evidenced by the more than 350 attendees of this year's

Congressional Pharmacy Summit. During the course of this event, attendees met with more than 250 congressional offices, both House and Senate, and put a local face and story on the most pressing issues facing independent community pharmacy.

NCPA has also recognized the importance of a localized message and has begun targeting greater resources into advertising in local media outlets to draw attention to important legislation and to urge key members of Congress to support these measures or to thank them for doing so. Legislators are more likely to pay attention to ads mentioning them in local outlets viewed by their constituents as opposed to Washington-based publications.

While these are just some of the local successes, there are still many mem-

bers of Congress who have not visited a local independent pharmacy. However, this being an election year, many lawmakers will be spending much of their time in their district campaigning. This provides a great opportunity to invite your member of Congress visit your pharmacy. NCPA has tips and resources available for you to on our website at <http://bit.ly/pharmacyvisit>, or you can contact NCPA for assistance. Don't assume someone else will share their local story. Make sure your legislators know yours. ■

Michael Rule is NCPA associate director of public affairs and grassroots advocacy.