

August 27, 2010

Dear Scholar:

I am working with Linda Harootyan and her staff on the Hartford Faculty Scholars Program Policy Leadership Institute. As you know, the institute takes place in Washington, DC, on October 6 - 8, 2010. This very special program for geriatric social workers and nurses will focus on the skills needed to make public policy a bigger part of your academic life.

The speeches and workshops during the Policy Leadership Institute will provide you with information and training on the key elements of engaging in the policy process.

One of the most important and rewarding activities of the institute is your visit to Capitol Hill, which will take place on Friday, October 8. We would like you to meet with the staff of the U.S. Senators and member of the House of Representatives from your university's district and/or your home district (or the legislators themselves) in order to introduce yourself and your work. As a constituent, you have the right to voice your interests and concerns to your elected representatives.

Now is the time to set up these Hill appointments. They should be scheduled at least a couple of weeks before you arrive in D.C.!

Here are a few guidelines to help you establish contact and schedule an appointment. Please remember that this is not a high-pressure meeting, but just a chance to introduce yourself and your work to the people who represent you in Congress (or their staff), and to offer yourself as a resource in the future.

- To find the contact information and bios of your senators and representatives, go to the following websites: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov and use your zip code to find the individual member's website. (You can also research legislation on these sites or use www.lob.thomas.gov.)
- Perhaps you live and work in different districts; you may want to visit both representatives or choose the representative who has a special interest in your area of expertise. Please feel free to contact me if this is the case and I can help you decide on whom to focus your efforts.
- If you know your legislators' names, you may call the Capitol switchboard for the phone numbers of the offices (202-224-3121).
- Start contacting congressional offices **now**. Recess (*aka* the district work period) is nearly over and most schedulers and staffers are back in their

offices. It's the perfect time to get on the calendar of the Member of Congress or the staff person **before** the schedules fill up.

- It is unlikely that you will meet with the actual Member of Congress. Do not be discouraged by this. The legislative assistant to the member is a valuable conduit to the Member of Congress. You might end up meeting with the legislative assistant, the legislative director, an intern, or a committee staff person.
- When you call to make the appointment, state your full name and title, and ask to speak with the legislative assistant who handles health care or aging issues. If s/he is not available (often the case), then ask if you may leave a voicemail or e-mail message for her/him.
- Between your busy schedule and theirs, it may take several attempts before you actual talk with (by phone or by email) the appropriate staffer or the scheduler. Don't give up! You are a constituent; you have the right to visit your legislator.
- When you reach the legislative assistant or her/his voicemail, again state your full name, your title and where you are doing your research. Explain the purpose of the Policy Leadership Institute and your role in it. State that you would like to meet with the person covering aging or health issues. If the staffer has time, give a quick explanation of your research.
- **Schedule your meetings for Friday, October 8th anytime from 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**
- Ask for a 30 minute meeting, but accept 15 minutes. *Be sure to get the full name of the staffer with whom you will be meeting and the office room number.*
- There are three congressional office buildings on the House side; their names are Cannon, Rayburn, and Longworth. There are three on the Senate side: Dirksen, Hart, and Russell. (We will have maps for you when you arrive at the Policy Leadership Institute.)
- It is a 20 minute walk between the House side and the Senate side. Keep this in mind when scheduling meetings at senate offices and house offices. (If you need to, you could take a cab between the two sides of the Hill which takes about 5 minutes.)
- After you have received a time for the meeting, compose a brief e-mail to the staffer with whom you will be meeting to confirm your appointment time and thank her/him in advance for taking the time to meet with you. Be sure to include your contact information.

- Plan on bringing a few handouts with you to your Hill appointment to leave with the staff person: **a business card, if you have one, a brief bio, and a very brief summary of your research.**
- In addition to introducing yourself and your work, you may want to discuss a piece of legislation or current public issue that affects your area of research.
- We recommend that you use the Library of Congress's website <http://thomas.loc.gov/> to look up any bills that have been introduced in your research or specialty area. This will give you a better sense of what Congress is doing about your issues prior to your meetings. You may also want to meet with the staff of a member who has introduced a bill for which you have a special interest.
- **Important:** Please let us know as soon as possible of your Hill appointment including the time, place, and person with whom you will be meeting. Send the information to Julia Meashey, Program Manager, at jmeashey@geron.org.

Please remember that with this meeting, you are establishing a relationship with your Member of Congress and her/his staff and becoming a valuable resource to them.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I have a social work background and spent ten years working on the aging committees in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. I would be pleased to provide assistance if needed. Of course, Linda Harootyan is available to you as well at (202-587-2822 or harootya@geron.org).

Sincerely,

Brian W. Lindberg
Public Policy Advisor
Hartford Faculty Scholars Program
202-789-3606 or brian@consumers.org

P.S. One last piece of advice: ***Wear comfortable shoes!***