



On a Wing and a Prayer

By Michael F. Conlan

For the first time, we recently adopted an increasingly common lobbying tactic of the big boys here: the fly-in. It differs from the lobbying associated with a typical legislative conference when hundreds of an association's members fan out on Capitol Hill.

We brought in just a dozen NCPA members from around the country to meet with key congressional leaders to urge them to take action on independent community pharmacy's legislative agenda.

It's targeted and expensive. We paid for airline tickets (and one from Amtrak) and hotel rooms and meals. Fortunately, your dedication and generosity to the Legislative Defense Fund made it possible for us to try this experiment.

These pharmacists are from the districts or home states of the handful of lawmakers who are powerful enough individually to move legislation ahead—or bury it. Most of the members already have good relationships with their representative or senator.

Here was our must do list: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), Majority Whip Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.), Minority Whip Trent Lott (R-Miss.), and Sen. Herbert Kohl (D-Wis.), chairman of the Judiciary Committee's anti-trust subcommittee.

Also, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), chairman of the Judiciary Committee; Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee; Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas), the senior Republican on Energy and Commerce; Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), chairman of Energy and Commerce's health subcommittee; and Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee's health subcommittee.

That lineup is clout central, make no mistake. We went right to the top: House and Senate leadership and the leaders of the committees with jurisdiction over our issues.

Hopefully by the time this article is published, or shortly thereafter, we will have some indication if this effort paid dividends.

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We also recently gained a powerful ally in battle to secure fair Medicaid reimbursement when the U.S. Chamber of Commerce endorsed House and Senate AMP fix legislation championed by NCPA. The influential business organization said the bills "would correct Medicaid reimbursement rules that threaten to raise drug costs for beneficiaries and put community pharmacies out of business. The Chamber supports legislation to keep these pharmacies viable, so that they can continue to serve the Medicaid population."

"Without Congress' help a health care disaster will occur when pharmacies are faced with either limiting or dropping their participation in the Medicaid program; or in the most extreme cases where Medicaid patients are a large percentage of their patients, even going out of business," said Bruce Roberts, RPh, NCPA executive vice president and CEO. "The Chamber understands the AMP formula as currently constructed will turn Medicaid into a substantial loss leader for community pharmacies, but the people who will lose the most are the patients." [ap](#)

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