



## An Easy—and Empowering—New Year’s Resolution

BY LEAH RALPH

New Year’s resolutions are the very definition of trope: a common or overused theme. But they don’t have to be. Today I’m asking you to set aside the old standbys of weight loss or more exercise or less spending on ridiculously over-priced boots, and look at the bigger picture—specifically what you can do to improve the lives of the cancer patients you treat each and every day.

Last year ACCC mobilized members from 23 states and held more than 80 meetings with legislators on Capitol Hill about issues of importance to the oncology community. We effected real change. Just one month after our visits, Congress passed a permanent repeal to the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, guaranteeing predictable physician payment rates and setting in motion a wave of Medicare reimbursement reforms. Our voices made a difference!

This year, we’re growing our program and making important improvements: more comprehensive training, more face-time with legislators, and, most importantly, less prescriptive dialogue. In other words, we’re not going to ask you to repeat by rote messages that you may (or may not) understand. Why should we tell you what to say—when your stories are the ones that legislators most want to hear? What’s going on in your community? What’s keeping you up at night? What are the stressors that are having a negative impact on your cancer patients?

These changes are part of my New Year’s Resolution to improve the engagement of ACCC members on advocacy issues. So

whether you’ve attended one of our Capitol Hill Days or you’re an “advocacy newbie,” here are three solid reasons to make the ACCC 2016 Capitol Hill Day your New Year’s resolution:

### 1. **More comprehensive training.**

ACCC’s policy team will host webinars and conference calls to prepare you for your congressional meetings. A comprehensive training and cocktail reception will be held Tuesday, March 1, with an additional advocacy review the morning of Wednesday, March 2. Come share your stories with colleagues and practice with staff.

### 2. **More face-time with legislators.**


Gather for lunch with your ACCC colleagues and congressional members to discuss key issues that impact your program, such as reimbursement for supportive care services, drug costs, staffing shortages, and how excessive data collection and reporting is cutting into the time you can spend on direct patient care.

### 3. **Less focus on specific bill numbers.**

You don’t need to be a “policy expert” or familiar with specific legislation in 2016. It’s a chance to share *your story* so lawmakers understand how policy impacts oncology care in *your community*. (Now, if you want bill numbers, we’ll have those too.)

Policymakers rely on healthcare providers—not policy staff—to provide real-world perspectives on policy issues that matter. As the leading national multi-site, multidisciplinary organization, ACCC is uniquely

positioned to serve as a resource. This is our value to legislators. The diversity and sophistication of our membership requires a nuanced, balanced approach to policy challenges—and we stand ready to offer insights on how cancer care is delivered today.

As our experts, we invite you to come to Washington, D.C., to do what you do best. Talk about your programs, your processes, and most importantly your patients. ACCC staff is standing by if you need assistance developing your story, and will handle all of the legwork—scheduling meetings, arming you with background materials and talking points, and even accompanying you to congressional offices. Our annual Capitol Hill Day is an important, and rewarding, opportunity to advocate for policy change. So consider making it your New Year’s Resolution and help to put the voice of the cancer care team and cancer patient at the center of policy decisions. Learn more at [acc-cancer.org/HillDay](http://acc-cancer.org/HillDay). 

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