



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** American Academy of Ophthalmology Advocates  
**FROM:** Governmental Affairs Division  
**DATE:** Jan. 23, 2019  
**RE:** Newly Elected Legislators Suggested Talking Points

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The new Congress is sworn in and already jumping into legislative business, and the Academy has a tough challenge in ensuring all 97 new legislators are up-to-speed on our profession's issues.

We have provided some suggested talking points below for you to use during your future communications with the new legislators. We suggest that you **not make policy requests**, but rather introduce/remind these lawmakers about:

1. Who we are
2. The patients that we serve
3. Your ability to serve as a resource for health policy solutions

### Things to keep in mind

- Talking points should be as specific to your practice and community as possible.
- Consider what in a legislator's own background might connect with ophthalmology: patient access to care, veterans, family eye conditions, telehealth, etc.
- Remind them of your/the Academy's history of support - anything we need to thank them for in previous state, local work, or campaign. Academy staff is always available to help you find this information. Contact Megan Tweed at [mtweed@aao.org](mailto:mtweed@aao.org) for assistance.
- Invite them to visit your local clinic, practice or facility.
- Notify them that local ophthalmologists will meet in D.C. in April for Mid-Year Forum 2019.

### Suggested Talking Points

1. **Ophthalmology 101**
  - a. Explain to your lawmakers what you do as an ophthalmologist and how that differs from other eye care professionals.
  - b. Share [an Academy handout](#) with legislators that explains the difference between an ophthalmologist, optometrist and optician.

- c. Discuss the concerns we have as a profession with scope-of-practice issues on the federal and state level.

**2. Medical Research Funding**

- a. The Academy always advocates for more research funding through the National Eye Institute and the Department of Defense to create more effective treatments that can save sight and protect lives.
- b. Discuss the importance of research funding in our field and ensure the legislator knows how impactful each new treatment can be for patients.

**3. Veterans' Eye Care**

- a. The Academy is a strong ally of veterans and works closely with ophthalmologists who work for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that veterans receive high-quality eye care services.
- b. Ophthalmologists at the Atlanta VA Medical Center developed an innovative tele-eye program, Technology-based Eye Care Services (TECS), to expand access to basic eye care services for veterans who may not have access to specialty eye services, especially in rural areas.
- c. Be sure to mention the VA TECs program and share the benefits it has on veterans' eye care, such as earlier diagnosis and treatment of serious eye diseases.

**4. Regulatory Relief**

- a. Physicians need regulatory relief from burdensome requirements that negatively impact delivery of patient care and reduce face-to-face communication between physicians and their patients.
- b. Administrative burdens such as prior authorization or step therapy are intended by health insurers to reduce costs, but interfere with the physician/patient relationship instead.
- c. Encourage your legislator to support upcoming efforts that reduce administrative burdens.