Advocating for the Profession

Three hundred psychologists hit the halls of Congress to lobby for practitioners and the patients they serve.

Every March, psychology’s leaders from across the United States and Canada convene in Washington, D.C., for what is now called the Practice Leadership Conference, or PLC (formerly known as the State Leadership Conference). After three intense days of training, education and networking, delegates from each state association take part in the conference’s culminating event: going to Capitol Hill to meet with their Senators and Representatives to lobby for the interests of psychology and psychologists.

During the conference, the Practice Organization’s Government Relations staff held multiple briefing sessions for the delegates, where they went over talking points, shared communication strategies and coached them on Capitol Hill etiquette.

This year, delegates had two advocacy messages:

- Preserve and extend Affordable Care Act coverage for mental health and substance use treatment.
- Request their members of Congress to co-sponsor the Medicare Mental Health Access Act (S.2587/H.R.4277), which would add psychologists to Medicare’s “physician definition” and remove barriers to care.

Psychologists took those messages to the Hill on March 7—the day after Congressional Republicans released their long-awaited bill detailing plans to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA). That bill was later withdrawn, but on the morning of the 7th, politicians and Congressional staffers were scrambling to respond. Despite the chaos, it was a great day for psychologists to assert their place in health care.
Representative Scott Taylor (R-Va.) poses with members of the delegation from the Virginia Psychological Association.

Senator Dean Heller (R-Nev.) listens to members of the delegation from the Nevada Psychological Association.

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) greets delegates from the Rhode Island Psychological Association.

Delegates from the North Carolina Psychological Association, including APA President Antonio Puente, PhD, (second from left) meet with a staff member in the office of Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.).

Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) speaks with the delegates from the Wyoming Psychological Association.

GET INVOLVED!
The APA Practice Organization has the longest-running and largest grassroots network of psychologists working on behalf of licensed practitioners to protect and promote your ability to serve your patients and the public. This federal advocacy network includes several thousand psychologists across the U.S., building relationships with members of Congress and their staff and educating them about practitioners and the value of psychological services. Coordinated through the APA Practice Organization’s Government Relations Office, the network is ready to mobilize at a moment’s notice to support or oppose federal legislation and policies affecting practitioners. To get involved, email us at pracgovt@apa.org.