

Florida Health Care Association Grassroots 101 How-To Guide



**Florida
Health Care
Association**



Representing Florida's Long Term Care Community

www.fhca.org

INTRODUCTION

Government at the federal, state, and local levels can impact your facility and your life. Reimbursement and regulations can impose heavy burdens on the ability to operate long term care facilities, to provide jobs and to deliver services to our residents and our communities.

Although certain government actions can impede your ability to provide quality services, not all legislative action is adverse. Public officials are supportive when they understand the role of long term care in the local community and see that we provide essential services to a vulnerable population. In this regard, the end result of active participation in the political process has far-reaching benefits for long term care.

This How-To Guidebook provides a proactive plan for active political and community involvement - at the “grassroots” level. It is a team effort that includes long term care facility employees, residents and their family members.

Long term care providers are an integral component of nearly every community in Florida. Our voice is strongest and has the highest credibility when our message comes from local health care professionals speaking directly to their elected representatives. That voice is even more persuasive when men and women of local long term care facilities - employees, residents and families - have cultivated solid relationships with community leaders and elected officials at the local, state, and national levels.

Personal relationships are the key to business success. The same is true in politics. So, get to know the national and state officials who represent you. You are a constituent. It is their job to serve you. Constituents who call, write, appear in person at public events and visit their legislators will get attention.

- Make sure you have contact information for your local elected officials.
- Put reminders on your business calendar to keep in contact with them regularly.
- Share your knowledge and expertise with lawmakers via letter, phone call or e-mail.
- Ask for their positions on any issue of importance to your facility.
- Follow up any phone call or meeting with a letter and ask for a written reply.

Elected officials listen to constituents. Remember, it is you – not them – who is the expert on long term care. Legislators look to local knowledge before having to vote on complex issues such as health care. Thus, legislators expect to hear from you on issues of importance to our profession.

If people sit back and “let someone else do it” persuasive impact is lost. The solution is to be active in the public affairs arena. Proactive participation helps you and our profession. Stand up and speak out!

WHY DO I WANT TO MEET LEGISLATORS?

It is mutually beneficial because. . .

- YOU are the expert on long term care issues. You know more than the legislator does. Due to their heavy workloads, they must be generalists on a host of issues.
- Legislators need a barometer of constituent thoughts and opinions on key issues, and you can provide it on long term care issues.
- Listening to constituents is an essential part of every national and state legislator's job, so they will be receptive to you, if you approach them in the right way.
- Legislators vote on issues that ultimately impact how you provide services to your residents.

Individual citizens carry weight because. . .

- All politics are local – legislators listen to individual citizens.
- Legislators seriously weigh how EVERY issue “plays back home.” You provide them with a feel for that. As both a citizen and a long term care provider in the Legislator's home district, you are in a doubly strong position to influence him or her.
- You provide real-life experiences that can affect how they view legislation. You do this by meeting with the legislator and again as part of a follow-up letter.
- Done correctly, your meeting with legislators can be a focal point for launching a specific effort. You can get the ball rolling on our issues.
- You can educate the legislator about your facility and the services provided to your residents. Being effective comes by simply telling him or her about your facility and issues that affect it and your residents.

When should I get acquainted with my legislator. . .

- The best time to get acquainted is while he or she is running for office. Legislators never forget people who were with them early in their campaigns.
- Don't wait until the Legislature convenes and you want a favor to get acquainted with your legislator. Early and frequent contact with your Representatives and Senators, while they are home in their district, is very important.
- Once the Legislature is in session, FHCA will be requesting you to swing into action with visits, phone calls, e-mails, or letters whenever a bill impacting long term care is scheduled for a vote.

PUT A LOCAL FACE ON ISSUES

You have a great story to tell. . .

You are an integral part of your community because you care for local individuals, provide jobs to local men and women, make a large contribution to the local economy and tax base, and provide an increasingly essential local community need – long term care for a growing aging population.

As a local business leader, whose efforts generate enormous benefits for your community, people will appreciate your participation in community affairs. Make the most of it! These activities can not only protect your ability to provide quality care, but also help establish in the public mind the linkage between long term care and the well being of the local community.

Whenever you have access to a legislator, talk positively about the many ways your facility is caring for its residents and contributing to the community.

Elected officials are just people. You can approach them with confidence. Their job is to listen and represent their constituents. And constituents like you have valuable expert insight to offer. You can make a difference!

Make employees, residents, and families all your partners. . .

Make it a facility-wide goal for employees to participate in community organizations throughout the year. Advise employees and family members about legislative developments of concern to long term care providers.

Make voting easy for employees, residents and families by becoming a registration site and a polling place for your area.

Maintain an up-to-date bulletin board. Post notices about public officials and issues that affect them and long term care. Include requests that employees, residents and families write to their elected representatives to express their views.

Encourage employees and residents to do volunteer work such as stuffing envelopes or answering phone calls during campaign times. This will increase the visibility of your facility even more.

You are the expert. . .

You have personal expertise in long term care. You provide local insight. Your contribution is unique and invaluable.

WRITE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

Today's technology makes it easy to e-mail your legislators, and FHCA's CapWiz e-mail campaign is the most commonly used and effective means for FHCA members to communicate with elected officials. FHCA can assist you with this process by developing talking points related to our long term care issues, however it is always helpful to include localized information so it garners attention beyond a typical form letter. Always make it clear right up front that you are a constituent and a key member of the local business and health care community.

Here's how to do it. . .

Constructing an effective letter to a lawmaker takes developed writing skills. Your letter should follow a plan and make all your points with convincing evidence to back up any broad statements. And it should be polite, not combative.

Your letter should contain. . .

- WHO:** Your name and the name and location of your facility. Add any community, civic, or political titles or affiliations you may have.
- WHY:** In the first paragraph, clearly indicate the long term care issue that you are writing about. This is what the legislator's staff looks for to "log in" the letter. It is best to limit each letter to just one specific issue of current importance.
- WHERE:** If you can, let them know where the proposal or bill you are writing about is in the legislative process. Contact FHCA staff and we can help with this information.
- WHAT:** Be clear about what it is you are asking the legislator to do (i.e., vote for or against a specific piece of legislation, support a proposal, oppose an amendment, etc.)
- WHEN:** If the need for the legislator's support is urgent because a vote is expected soon, say so!

LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR

Sending a letter to the editor of your local newspaper is a free and very effective way of getting out our message to legislators, opinion leaders and the general public. Almost all general circulation newspapers in Florida regularly publish these letters, and they are widely read sections of the paper. Elected officials in particular are careful readers of the letters-to-the-editor section because, like mail they receive from their constituents, they consider it representative of overall public opinion in their district, whether it actually is or not.

The goal of writing a letter to the editor is to get it published. Remember, FHCA has media and public relations experts on staff who can assist you with editing or pitching your letter to the editor. Additionally, here are some tips for improving your chances:

Writing. . .

Look for opportunities to write. When a long term care issue is covered in the news or editorial pages, that's the time for you to offer your opinion. Many newspapers consider themselves public forums and want a steadily changing mix of subjects and opinions.

Limit your letter to 400 words. If you don't, the newspaper will edit your letter severely or it will simply choose not to run it at all.

Always write from your own perspective as someone at the front lines of elder care who is an advocate for the residents and who is always mindful of the sacred trust you hold.

Good themes: Legislators have a moral obligation to adequately reimburse care providers; nursing home staff are special people who perform the toughest job in health care; nursing home "report cards" are good, but they should include data on patient/family satisfaction; trial lawyer lawsuits (*not* "frivolous lawsuits") drain the precious taxpayer Medicare/Medicaid resources we need to improve care; if you really want to improve elder care, join us as a volunteer.

Avoid hostility and any personality attacks. You can express your frustration or impatience with someone or something, but being angry or resentful undermines your image as a dedicated, professional caregiver. The same thing happens when you write that you "love" your residents.

Avoid criticizing federal/state regulators as being too severe – that's what legislators and the general public want them to be. Instead, talk about how the system seems to focus more on rulebook compliance, not on the residents themselves. Nurses should spend their time caring for people, not filling out paperwork.

Don't criticize the news media for being "negative." Instead, say it is "under-reporting" or "missing" the other side of the story.

Be sure you sign your name and give your address and daytime telephone number. Most newspapers do not publish unsigned or anonymous letters.

Sending. . .

Time is absolutely of the essence! If an item appears in the paper that provokes you, write and send your comment as soon as possible – the same day is best.

E-mailing is the best way to deliver your letter. Be sure it is specifically directed to the Editorial Pages editor, with an initial pitch in the subject line and the body of the e-mail. If you do not know your local paper's Editorial Page editor, contact FHCA for assistance.

Be sure to include your contact information and a short byline (name, title, facility you represent, for example) in the body of the e-mail.

If your letter is not published, don't give up. Newspapers receive many letters each day and can't print them all.

In the long term care debate, letters from residents and their family members seem to get published more often than self-serving letters from administrators or nursing home owners. Consider working with your CNAs, nurses or one of the above groups to craft a pro-long term care message.

VISITING YOUR LEGISLATOR AT HOME

A major key to being a successful legislative advocate is building relationships with staff in an elected official's local office. Specific staff members in each office are responsible for legislative issues that have a local impact. Discover who they are – and get to know them.

On a regular basis. . .

- Get acquainted with the district office staff of your Senators and Representatives.
- Stop by and see the staff routinely to offer your personal assistance and to provide background information on long term health care issues.
- Offer to be a referral source for people who call their legislator asking for help in finding long term care.
- Always leave your business card with staff no matter how many times you visit.
- Make certain the district office staff has information about your facility and offer them a tour.
- Once you have made contacts among the staff, send them copies of your facility newsletters and other publications.
- Invite interested key staff members to special events.
- Get in touch with your legislative staff contacts when you have a key job opening, i.e. a department head position, because many people call their legislator's office when they are job hunting.

For a meeting. . .

- Call the legislator's office to schedule your meeting. You should contact the local district office nearest to your facility. Have several possible dates in mind and ask what would be convenient for the legislator.
- Know the issues. Contact FHCA for issue papers and packets.
- Call closer to the date of the meeting and reconfirm appointment schedule.
- Be on-time for your appointment and be patient. Legislator's schedules are hectic and subject to change at a moment's notice. Ask the staff person how much time you have with the legislator.
- If others attend the meeting with you, designate, ahead of time, who will lead the discussion with the legislator. Stick with one or two discussion topics. Be friendly, polite and brief. Ask his or her opinion on the issue. Never be argumentative.
- Leave a one-page issue paper with the legislator.
- Always ask the legislator to take a specific action.
- If you do not know the answer to a question asked, advise the legislator that you will follow-up on this issue and get back to him or her; then be sure you do. FHCA can help you with the answer.

- Don't feel "put off" if you meet with the legislator's staff. They are very influential in the legislative process.
- Invite the legislator to visit your facility and to participate in special events such as holiday parties, award ceremonies, and other specific events – or offer to schedule an appreciation reception in his or her home district.
- Let the legislator know that if he or she needs any information about long term care, you are an informed, professional resource.
- Be sure to send a thank you note after every visit that summarizes the meeting.

All this will make you a familiar face and name around your elected lawmaker's local base of operations. When local experts are sought, you will be a natural choice.

Make the best use of your access. . .

- Time with a legislator is extremely valuable. Have an agenda so that you don't just "chat" until the clock runs out.
- Don't abuse their time, by taking too much of it, once you've made your point.
- Expect them to say that they will have their staff "look into the issue." That's okay, and FHCA will follow-up with their staff.
- Be sure to let the legislator know that you can be a valuable source of local expertise on long term care issues.
- To show unity and leadership, consider including other providers in the meeting you schedule.
- Stick to FACTS. Don't give way to emotional arguments or unsubstantiated opinions. And NEVER stretch the truth, at the risk of losing your credibility with the legislator for life!
- Be a good listener, even if the legislator disagrees with aspects of our position. Acknowledge where other views have merit, and stress that you want to work more closely wherever possible.
- Leave the meeting open-ended for further discussion—and ALWAYS follow up with a personal "thank you" note.

VISITING YOUR LEGISLATOR AT THE CAPITOL

The politics in the Capitol strain all relationships. You must be ready to adapt at a moment's notice, but if you are prepared, you won't miss a beat.

What to do . . .

- Make an appointment, but don't be disappointed if you end up conducting it as you walk down the hall with your legislator rushing to another meeting.
- Preplan . . . Review your legislator's bio at www.leg.state.fl.us
- Decide on your message and put a local spin on it. Review the FHCA issue briefs.
- Arrive on time. Smile. Introduce yourself to everyone; pass out your business card.

If others are with you . . .

- Make sure everyone is introduced when the actual meeting starts. Tell the legislator about your facility – residents, families, caregivers.
- Talk about your issue and how it impacts his constituents back home. Remember "All Politics are Local".
- As the meeting ends, ask for feedback and follow up from the legislator. Offer to be a resource on long term care issues. Leave an issue paper.
- After you leave the Capitol, write a thank you note, with a business card, to the legislator. Invite them to visit your facility. Add them to your mailing list.
- Let FHCA know the results of your visit. Write another thank you note when the legislator votes in support of FHCA issues.

HOW TO ORGANIZE FACILITY TOURS FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Planning your tour. . .

Whether you have invited a legislator to tour your facility during a personal meeting or through phone calls and letters, there are some proven techniques for making the most of your tour opportunity. The steps involve planning, conducting, and following up the tour.

When a legislator visits your facility, he or she glimpses first-hand what we offer local communities. Facility tours humanize our issues. They remove legislators from the world of graphs and charts and show them how their policies impact real people. A well-publicized tour can also positively enhance your visibility with the public and local news media, as well as with your potential resident's family base.

A well-planned tour leaves your legislator with a better understanding of you, your employees and your residents. It sows seeds that could be all-important at the moment of a crucial decision – when he or she will vote on policies that directly impact your ability to care for your resident.

When to plan. . .

You should consider inviting not only sitting legislators and other elected officials, but also candidates. You should also reach out to any elected official who shows a desire to learn about what you do. You never know who may be our ally in the Legislature.

Election seasons provide an ideal time for a facility tour. Candidates welcome opportunities to meet with local businesses and shake hands with voters in diverse places. A tour of a long term care facility also provides a desirable setting for photos and even televised coverage on the nightly news. Every politician wants to demonstrate they care about seniors.

Another excellent time to invite legislators to tour your facility is when the Legislature is not in session. You should try to time your request for a facility tour when there are not pressing legislative activities.

The invitation. . .

As in your business and social life, a personal visit generally has more immediate impact and more lasting impression than a letter. Every member of the Legislature has a district office.

District offices are staffed with people whose job it is to communicate with constituents like you. There are no barriers to stopping by these local offices and establishing relationships with the legislator's staff. The welcome mat is out! Stop by and invite the legislator in person or through their staff.

Some days are better than others to visit with your legislator in the district. Most legislators are back in their home districts during non-legislative times. Why? They want to meet with constituents, consult with their district staff, and keep in touch with local issues and voters.

Build in your Association. . .

Let your FHCA staff know that you are planning a facility tour for your legislator. Your Association will provide you with valuable information about the legislator and his or her position and give you tips to make the facility visit a success.

Plan a tour around an event. . .

Occasionally you hold events at your facility that you may never have considered as an opportunity to invite your elected officials. It takes a different way of thinking when you focus on getting involved politically.

You certainly don't have to tie your tour invitation to a special event, but it is a good idea. All of the following special events are potential opportunities for legislators to share the public spotlight at the same time that they visit your facility and listen to your views on legislative issues:

- Groundbreaking for new or expanded facilities
- Scholarship presentations
- Professional award ceremonies
- Employee of the Year award
- Launching of local civic or health care initiative
- Facility open house
- 100 year old birthday celebration
- Dedication of new flagpole
- Inauguration of new services for residents or community

Here's a plan that works. . .

To schedule a facility tour, begin by calling or visiting your legislator's office and obtaining several possible dates when he or she is available. Follow the call with a formal letter of invitation. Describe the facility, its operation, and the number of employees and residents.

If more than one public official is invited for the same tour, be sure each one knows in advance that the others will be included. Unless it is a major event, plan to invite one elected official at a time. This works best in order to get to know the legislator and allow them to spend time with your residents and employees.

Set aside an entire morning or afternoon (approximately two hours) for the tour. Breakfast, lunch, or a reception should be included. Notify employees about the tour and provide them with background information on the visitors. You can request campaign pamphlets from the visiting candidates. They will appreciate that their message is being delivered.

Include residents and their families in the process so they know you are actively involved on their behalf.

Consider sending a press release to local media announcing the tour. Arrange for a good photographer to be on hand to take a selection of quality, non-intrusive photos of the event. Every elected official likes to have photos of meetings with constituent groups. It's a good idea to send a photo along with the press release. Make sure you work closely with the legislator's office on press materials and planning.

Make it possible for employees, residents, and family members to meet the elected officials or candidates. Schedule the visit so that the elected official or candidate will have time to make brief remarks to assembled employees.

Arrange for some time when you and your senior staff can sit down with the legislator in your office to discuss long term care issues.

Plan for the overall tour to be conducted by the administrator. Assign specific supervisors to explain the operation of their work areas. Prepare them so they are comfortable and not surprised by the visitors.

After the tour, ALWAYS send a thank-you letter to the officials who made the visit. It is a nice touch to include copies of photographs or news articles related to the tour.

Prepare a facility profile. . .

You should prepare a profile of your facility that shows its place in the community. Your facility profile should be a printed, "take-away" document that will help visitors remember the most important economic and community impact messages about your facility – the same points you will cover during the tour. It should include:

- Number of residents and services provided
- Number of employees
- Dollars paid in federal, state, and local taxes by your facility
- Number of vendors who support your facility (highlight local vendors)
- Unique services that you are providing to your employees, residents or the community (i.e., health seminars)
- List of community service programs sponsored by your facility or your employees
- How the state Medicaid dollar is spent in your facility

Get publicity BEFORE the Legislator's visit. . .

Coordinate with legislator's aide for permission to notify your local media of time and place of his or her visit.

Work with FHCA's Director of Communications, or, if the facility administrator handles this, send a letter or short news advisory to *city desks* for newspapers and *assignment editors* for local TV or radio.

Conducting your tour. . .

- **Always manage the actual tour yourself.** It is important to conduct the tour carefully so that no one in your facility is permitted to monopolize your legislative guest's time, which is as limited as it is valuable.
- Before or after the meeting, show your legislative guest some of the realities of resident care and compliance with changing standards. **Emphasize quality resident care during the tour and throughout the visit.**
- Show the legislator any area of the facility that has been subject to changing compliance standards or interpretations. Discuss the costs of achieving compliance.
- If there is a regulation that poses particular difficulties in application for your facility – for example, storage of linen carts or cross contamination – point out to the legislator some of the “real life roadblocks” to compliance.
- Point out as many types of residents as possible and discuss the range of care provided and the varied costs of that care. If you discuss types of disabilities be careful about patient confidentiality. You may want to include some heavier care and more confused residents, as well as the more alert ones to give a realistic and well-rounded picture to the lawmaker.
- Talk to the legislator about the demographic tidal wave that will hit long term care. Explain that the current long term care financing system will not withstand this pressure. Then discuss possible solutions with the legislator.

Conversation with Legislators is easy. . .

Nearly all elected officials are born communicators. If not, they have learned. Talking with constituents is a top priority, and they do it practically every day. You should have no difficulty conversing in a friendly, easy manner throughout the tour.

During a meeting at the legislator's office, his or her staff may be included in your conversation. During a tour of your facility, involve other facility staff (department heads, director of nursing, employee of the month) in the conversation.

Asking “open-ended” questions will elicit more lengthy responses than just yes or no. Sample questions:

“From your legislative perspective, what do you see as the key issues affecting long term care in Florida today?”

“What can long term care providers concerned about a wide range of issues do to help address our legislative concerns?”

“How do you think we should address the rising costs of long term health care in the years to come?”

“Do you see the need for more community involvement in the legislative process? If so, what can we do together to help encourage additional involvement?”

Get full value out of your time. . .

A legislator’s personal tour of your facility can make a strong lasting impression and speak volumes about our industry and our issues. It will also help establish your position as a subject-matter expert and a resource for the lawmaker. So consider using this powerful tool soon and often!

Summary of main points. . .

Following up your tour. . .

As in your business and social life, prompt follow-up is an essential part of a successful political life. Following any visit to your facility by a public official your follow-up should be three things: immediate, courteous, and memorable.

Don’t wait. Send a “thank you letter” similar to the sample we have provided the day after the facility tour, while the memory is still fresh in the mind of your visitor. Send a letter thanking any legislative staffer who helped make the visit possible.

Make your follow-up memorable. . .

To make it memorable, you should add some personal note about a subject that you discussed one-on-one with the legislator...or a comment they made in their remarks to your employees...some interaction they had with a particular resident... or a commitment they made to you about their continuing support for long term care issues. If something they said made a lasting impression on you, then tell them in your follow-up letter.

Another way to reinforce a legislator’s recollection of the visit is to send them copies of the photographs you had taken during the facility tour, while they were meeting your residents and staff. You should also send any newspaper clippings about the event from the local press. These visual materials will be an appreciated asset to any legislator, and may end up being used at campaign time—further strengthening your personal connection.

Pictures, press cuttings, and personal references also make it more likely that the staff members who deal with correspondence will show your communication to the legislator personally.

A good follow-up plan. . .

- Immediate: Write and send a short “thank you” letter, with any photos and press clippings you have available.
- Immediate: If the local press has not covered the event, send the editor a brief write-up, including the tour agenda and any good photos of the public official.
- Within a Week: Send a second communication if more photos and press clippings come in.
- ASAP: Include an article about the tour, with photos, in your facility newsletter or any other in-house publication, including your bulletin board and Web site if you have one.
- ASAP: Communicate with FHCA and let them know how the tour went.
 - Summarize the visit.
 - Send copies of any photos and press clippings.
 - Mention any significant comments or commitments made to or about issues involving long term care.

ORGANIZE A TOWN HALL MEETING

The keys to any successful meeting. . .

The following basic guidelines for planning town hall meetings in your facility are also useful for planning any kind of public meeting or event—from appreciation/fund raising receptions to candidate forums.

A town hall meeting is nothing more than an open forum on an issue of interest to the community. It is an opportunity you are providing—by organizing the event—for citizens to gather together with elected officials and subject-matter experts to discuss and learn about an issue.

Here's how to create a successful public meeting. . .

- Organization is the key to any well-run meeting. A well-organized town hall meeting will convey a positive impression of your facility to your community.
- Create a meeting plan. Select a meeting coordinator who will have overall responsibility for ensuring the meeting's success. This coordinator should assign various tasks to facility staff and set deadlines.
- Try to involve as many interested staff members, residents and their family members as possible in both the planning and implementation process. Be sure that those who do take on added responsibilities can spare time in their schedules.
- Be results-oriented. Stress the long term significance of this project; better community understanding; respect for the facility, staff members and residents; and increased community involvement of your facility in the future.
- Consider the important role elected officials can play in the town hall meeting program and work to get them personally involved. Their presence will lend credibility to your cause and generate interest in attendance by members of your community and the media.

When to schedule the meeting. . .

Remember to check for other local events that could conflict. Check with your local Chamber of Commerce to see that no city council meeting, school board meeting or major sporting or educational events are scheduled for the evening you select.

What materials to provide. . .

Identify the numbers and types of meeting materials you will need well in advance of the meeting. These should include background on long term care legislative initiatives, facility information, guidelines on how to select a long term care facility, etc. Much of this will be available from FHCA.

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (PAC)

PACs are authorized by state law as tools for organizations to participate in one of the cornerstones of democracy, the electoral process.

The FHC-PAC is a separate legal entity set up to receive and disburse voluntary contributions from association members on behalf of political and legislative goals. The law sets maximum contribution amounts of \$500 per candidate for each election cycle.

PAC activity is a carefully regulated and recognized way to support candidates.

The future growth and prosperity of the long term care industry will be vitally influenced by the effective use of the FHC-PAC.

Why PAC matters. . .

The FHC-PAC supports political candidates who support long term care issues. When legislative decisions are made, especially on a close or controversial vote, the issue is much more likely to go our way if we have already identified candidates who supported our position. Since the founding of our country, this has been a common sense part of democracy.

Our voice is strongest and most convincing when it is a collective voice – which is what the FHC-PAC makes possible.

Who gets PAC support ... and who decides. . .

The FHC-PAC is nonpartisan. Political candidates are selected to receive contributions based on their views on issues important to long term care, not according to party affiliation. All your contributions are made on the basis of these criteria.

Selection of candidates for PAC contributions is made according to the following procedures:

- Public statements and voting records are thoroughly analyzed.
- A member's position of leadership and committee assignments are considered.
- Recommendations are taken from FHCA members.
- Actions and votes are compared with his or her statements.
- A decision to contribute is made after weighing all these considerations.

FHCA'S DIGITAL ADVOCACY TOOLS

E-mail Advocacy Alerts - CapWiz

FHCA's E-mail Advocacy Alerts allow you to easily send e-mail or printed letters to Florida legislators, as well as Members of Congress on state and federal long term care issues that matter to you the most. You simply enter your zip code to find your elected official and use the pre-printed messages developed by FHCA to send your Senator or Representative a message to help influence them to make better decisions for elderly and people with disabilities.

Focus on Florida e-Newsletter

FHCA's weekly members-only e-newsletter wraps up the week's FHCA activity and previews upcoming issues of importance. During the legislative session, members can access up-to-date notices related to bills and issues FHCA is tracking.

FHCA Capitol Connection

This online blog on the FHCA Web site features a brief overview on the progress of the state budget and the bills FHCA tracks throughout the legislative session, along with photos of members from Lobby Wednesday activities and important links to the Association's Members-Only legislative updates.

Provider Program

FHCA's weekly, online video update, which is linked from the FHCA Capitol Connection blog, comes direct from the Capitol throughout the legislative session and highlights members in town for Lobby Wednesdays and features interviews with lawmakers who impact our issues.

FHCA News Clips & Online Press Center

These daily, electronic compilations of state news clips and online Association press releases are designed for long term care providers who want immediate access to the news that affects their profession.

FHCA Web site Legislative Link

The Legislative Link under the Members Only section of FHCA's Web site (www.fhca.org) provides members unrestricted access to valuable, up-to-date information about state and federal legislative issues. Download our monthly legislative bulletins, talking points, issue papers or member alerts on issues of importance related to our long term care priorities.

FHCA IS READY TO ASSIST YOU

The FHCA professional lobbying team in Tallahassee is the single most valuable tool you have to get involved in the political process. They know how to get a legislator's attention—and cooperation. They know the ins and outs of Capitol activities, committees, subcommittees, the legislative process, and staff contacts.

FHCA personnel and printed resources are there to help you. Use them and, in return, please keep FHCA informed about your planned activities in advance, and your successes after they are accomplished. Everything you tell us personally and through press clippings and photos adds to our fund of information we can use to support your colleagues.

With the proper planning and follow-up, communicating with legislators can become an easy and enjoyable part of your grassroots political activism. It helps your residents, your facility and the long term care profession, and FHCA thanks you for your involvement.

Key FHCA Contacts

J. Emmett Reed, CAE, Executive Director
Tony Marshall, Senior Director of Reimbursement
LuMarie Polivka-West, Senior Director of Policy
Peggy Rigsby, Director of Government Services
Lee Ann Griffin, Director of Quality and Regulatory Services
Kristen Knapp, APR, CAE, Director of Communications
Bob Asztalos, FHCA Chief Lobbyist

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