

SECTION TWELVE

LEGISLATIVE RECEPTIONS

Hosting a legislative reception is an effective method to increase emergency medicine's visibility within the legislative arena. Receptions provide an excellent opportunity for emergency physicians to interact with legislators, regulatory officials, and key staff members on an informal basis. The atmosphere of a reception is much more conducive to easy discussion of issues. A discussion initiated at a reception can be followed up with an office visit.

Organizing a Reception

Organizing a reception requires early planning. Your planning process should include the following points:

- Appoint a chapter member or staff member to serve as coordinator.
- Determine objectives and identify target groups for the reception. Decide if all legislators, or only selected ones, are to be invited. Also decide on the advisability of inviting other key individuals, such as regulatory officials, key staff members, other medical society leaders, and the press. The goals or issues that your chapter advocates should guide your choices.
- Develop a proposal and budget for the reception for board review and approval.
- Determine the day, time, and location of the reception as early as possible. It may be necessary to schedule the reception at least one year in advance to ensure that a suitable site is available. Depending on the purpose and target group of the reception, scheduling it during the legislative session may be advantageous. If so, have the reception early in the legislative session on either a Tuesday or Wednesday evening (providing it does not conflict with the legislative session), and select a site in or near the Capitol.
- If all legislators are to be invited, request that the event be included on the legislative social calendar by contacting the Capitol, Clerk's office, or Chamber of Commerce.
- You may wish to seek outside sponsorship to offset expenses. Emergency medical practice groups, individual chapter members, and others may be willing to help defray the cost of the reception. Sponsors must understand, however, that the chapter is

holding the reception, and the chapter will make all arrangements and final decisions on the guest list, program, and other aspects. Sponsors should be identified and their support acknowledged through the chapter newsletter, by letter from the president, or by other means. Acknowledging the sponsors at the reception may be appropriate.

- Promote participation by chapter members through chapter e-lists, the chapter web site, the chapter newsletter, letters from the president, and reminder calls from board members immediately before the event.
- Invitations to legislators and other invited guests should be sent at least two to three weeks in advance. Information about emergency medicine and the chapter should be included in the invitation. It is best to request a RSVP, which should be made by e-mail or telephone to the chapter office or to one of the coordinators.
- Prepare name badges for all expected participants. Use different colors for Senate/House members, regulatory officials, legislative staff members, and others, if possible. Have blank nametags available for unexpected attendees. Have a greeting/registration table at the entrance to the reception and have two or three chapter members or staff as greeters.
- Determine if a chapter leader should make a statement at some point during the reception.
- Promptly follow up with thank-you notes to special guests, sponsors and others.

commitment to issues affecting emergency medicine is to sponsor a reception in the home of an emergency physician who is a constituent of the legislator. In addition to chapter members, the guest list should include the media and local/constituent representatives of groups associated with emergency medicine such as emergency medical services personnel, hospital administrators, and nurses. If the media does not attend, local newspapers can use photographs of the event provided by the chapter if the quality of the photograph is good and all individuals are clearly identified. This type of reception is a particularly effective forum for presenting an “Emergency Medicine Legislator of the Year” award because it affords the legislator valuable publicity and voter contact in his or her home district.

Recognizing a Particular Legislator

An effective way to recognize a particular legislator for his or her