

First Annual Geosciences Congressional Visits Day

On September 9-10, 2008, the geoscience community gathered together for the first Geosciences Congressional Visits Day in Washington DC. More than 60 geoscientists from 26 different states conducted over 100 congressional visits with Members of Congress, congressional staff and congressional committees. Each geoscientist communicated a message about the importance of investing in geoscience R&D and geoscience education at the federal level. Each geoscientist also had the opportunity to explain their work and its value at a local, state, regional, national and/or international level.

A workshop on September 9th at AGU headquarters in Washington DC provided the participants with an overview of Congress, how to visit congressional offices, the status of the federal budget, an overview of federally supported geoscience R&D and other information. Guest speakers included representatives of geoscience-related federal agency, such as the Geosciences Directorate of the National Science Foundation, the Earth Science Division of NASA, Office of Science at the Department of Energy, NOAA and the U.S. Geological Survey. A second panel of speakers included Congressional Science Fellows from AGU (Alex Apotsos), GSA (Maria Honeycutt) and SSSA (Ben Gutman).

The visits on September 10th went very well. Congressional members and staff were generally interested in the geosciences and appreciated the brief descriptions of the geoscience work being done in their districts or states. For many visits, the geoscientists had a chance to meet their Representatives and in some cases, some geoscientists met with one or both of their Senators. Many policymakers expressed support for research and science education, though everyone was concerned about a tight fiscal budget with not enough resources to support many important federal programs.

The event was organized by the informal Geopolicy Working Group (GWG). GWG consists primarily of the public policy offices of the American Geological Institute and several of our member societies including the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the American Geophysical Union, the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography, the Geological Society of America, the Seismological Society of America and the Soils Science Society of America. GWG also reached out to other geoscience-related groups to participate in GEO-CVD. The Consortium for Ocean Leadership brought in five participants and helped with the visits.

Thanks to many society staff members for organizing GEO-CVD including: David Curtiss and Don Juckett (AAPG), Linda Rowan, Marcy Gallo, Corina Cerovski-Darriau, Jillian Luchner, Laura Bochner and Merilie Reynolds (AGI), Elizabeth Landau, Eugene Bierly, Ines Cifuentes, Paul Cooper and Brian Davis (AGU), Craig Schiffries (GSA), Elizabeth Duffy (SSA), Karl Glasener (SSSA) and Jon Corsiglia, Charna Meth and Emily Powell (Ocean Leadership). Below are some photographs from the two days of activities. Thanks to “photographers” Linda Rowan, David Curtiss, Liz Landau and Merilie Reynolds.



Geo-CVD participants study materials at the workshop at AGU Headquarters before their visits.



Paul Cooper (AGU) shows Ines Cifuentes (AGU) how visitors should not dress when they go to the Hill.



Federal agency representatives on a workshop panel about geoscience R&D.
From L-R: Mike Freilich (NASA), David Thomassen (DOE), Robin Reichlin (NSF), Tim West (USGS) and Stephen Gallagher (NOAA).



Howard Harper (SEPM), Robert Johnson (NABGG) and Pete MacKenzie (AAPG) chatting after the workshop.



AAPG group (plus SEPM and NABGG) gather for a photo after the workshop.



AWG group and AGI discuss policy over pasta after the workshop. From L-R: Linda Rowan (AGI), Holly Brunkal, Gabrielle Dreyfus, Laurie Scheuing, Laurie Shreve, Merilie Reynolds (AAPG/AGI intern), Christine Vilardi, Corina Cerovski-Darriau (AIPG/AGI intern), Jessica Moore Ali-Adeeb, Sarah Noble and Linda Davis



Texas group (all Aggies) with Representative Chet Edwards (TX-17th) [Aggie alum]
From L-R: Elizabeth Landau (AGU), Leigh Fall, Will Sager, Andy Kronenberg,
Congressman Edwards, Will Dugat and Brian Davis (AGU).



Pennsylvania group with Representative Charlie Dent (PA-15th)
From L-R: Candace Grand Pre, Guy Hovis, Congressman Dent and Ben Edwards



Candace Grand Pre and Guy Hovis waiting to speak with a staff member for Senator Casey, get a photo “with” Senator Casey during his live interview from the Russell Senate Office Building Rotunda (TV screen in background), in his office lobby.



Texas AAPG-SEPM group with Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison.
From L-R, front: Paul Britt, Denise Stove, Dawne Jordan, Senator Hutchison, Deborah Sacrey and Dan Smith
From L-R, back: Howard Harper, Mike Loudin, John Jordan and Pat Gratton