

Impact Report

2021
2022



AcuCongress

Summary Report
Virtual Federal Fly-In
& February Followup

AcuCongress 2022
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Executive Summary

From the time Congresswoman Judy Chu introduced HR 4803: Acupuncture for Our Seniors Act 2021, AcuCongress has been busy training the industry and helping to shepherd our bill. AcuCongress issued the first call to action in August of 2021 and engaged in months of advocacy training through our National Acuvist Training Program™ which led to our first Virtual Federal Fly-In.

AcuCongress Virtual Federal Fly-In:

On December 8, 2021, AcuCongress Acuvists™ met with 268 offices in one day. We ran dozens of zoom calls simultaneously every 15 minutes that day and it resulted in three day-of signings from Representatives Grace Meng (D-NY,) Grace Napolitano (D-CA,) and Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC.)

The NY and CA teams added Congressman Thomas Suozzi (D-NY,) and Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) the following week on December 14, 2021. AcuCongress staff added Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) in January. AcuCongress Acuvists followed up in February to round out our current co-sponsor list with Congressman Jimmy Panetta out of CA's 20th federal district.

February Follow-Up:

With the release of Congresswoman Judy Chu's Dear Colleague to all members of the House of Representatives, we had momentum heading into the AcuCongress February Followup. We met with key members of the House Committee on Ways & Means (which House oversight of Medicare,) and House Committee on Energy & Commerce (which governs healthcare,) along with members of both Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) and the Senate Finance Committee, which is currently marking up a large Senate omnibus bill to overhaul Medicare. We met with 65 offices in the month of February and are now in open communication with 259 offices across both chambers. The feedback from these offices is invaluable and it will help us tailor our messaging for the upcoming AcuCongress March Media Madness which will be a coordinated effort on both social media and email campaigns. We focused primarily on Republican offices in February and have several offices requesting more information. AcuCongress will form messaging for both the House and the Senate based on the hundreds of meetings we held. Thanks to the journal submissions by our Acuvists, who took extensive notes and provided us with the questions asked by Congressional staff, we were able to create a FAQ sheet that will be available as a resource for any future meetings with offices. AcuCongress can boast adding 8 out of the 9 co-sponsors that have added their name to the bill.

What Is to Come? March Media Madness & April "#AcupunctureBeforeOpioids" Phone Banking:

AcuCongress will provide templates for both patients and practitioners in English and Chinese. We will train the industry on Tuesday, March 8th, 2022 in techniques to run letter-writing, email, phone, and social media campaigns. All are welcome to attend the free training and join their colleagues in helping to add co-sponsors to HR 4803. Because all activity stems from our initial efforts in December, there is no additional fee to take part in our March events; however, everyone **MUST BE TRAINED TO ATTEND**. To join the movement and find out more information, please join AcuCongress in BaseCamp at <https://3.basecamp.com/4998321/join/V7s7JnMWYGEA>.



THE INDUSTRY MUST BE TRAINED

Our Mission

The American acupuncture profession is not just the 35,000+ Licensed Acupuncturists, but our students, industry suppliers, and our patients. We must ALL unite together to get federal legislation passed. As the AcuCongress Acuvists have seen first-hand, educating our elected officials and convincing them to join our efforts is actually hard work. It requires the time and attention of every single one of us.

While there are no trade secrets to sustainable advocacy campaigns, it IS necessary to understand the mechanics of these efforts and incorporate best practices to get the most out of every single interaction with Congress. While our goals and messaging are unified, it is also imperative that we work together as a WHOLE industry. All too often, members of this profession decide FIRST "who" they want to stand with. We need to recognize FIRST "what" we stand for and are trying to achieve and then look for ways to join every single effort that is trying to meet our goals. WE MUST SHEPHERD THIS BILL TOGETHER!

AcuCongress was founded specifically to train the members of the Acupuncture Industry in techniques that have **high-impact** results. Regardless of who is launching their efforts, AcuCongress training is designed to help any initiative. This training is available to EVERYONE in this industry. [For further information, please view this video of a conversation between Congresswoman Judy Chu and Michelle Lau, President of AAOA and AcuCongress Founder, Dr. Kallie Byrd Guimond, OM.D, MPH, L.Ac.](#)

**L.Acs need to
UNITE in what
they stand FOR,
not who they
stand with. We
are all in this
together.**



UNITE BEHIND EVERY EFFORT!

While AcuCongress training will help with the shepherding of HR 4803, the skills learned will help in future efforts by our state and national organizations and coalitions. AcuCongress encourages all students and professional acupuncturists to join both their state and national associations to stay informed of industry progress in advocacy campaigns. These are the "federal stakeholders" currently: NCCAOM/ASA and AAAOM. These are the associations who are listed in regulatory and legislative documents and have actively lobbied around federal legislation in the past. There are two ACTIVE efforts: AcuCongress is using in-person outreach techniques with new virtual twists that include meetings with legislators and their staff, email/letter-writing campaigns, social media campaigns and phone banking. NCCAOM/ASA is using the texting technology Phone2Action. AcuCongress has reached out to the AAAOM to offer free training to their members and will keep everyone apprised of any formal organized initiative from them as they announce it. There is an event planned for 2022 by AAOA on Capitol Hill that we will be informing the industry of as it unfolds. The most important thing for every industry member to realize: YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN MANY WAYS!!

AcuCongress	AAOA/CAOMA	NCCAOM/ASA
Provides free training to the Industry & Discounts to Events All are Welcome!!	Works with AcuCongress to provide free training to the Industry	Provides their own specific training to the Industry. It does not appear that membership is required to participate.
December 2021 Fly-In & February Followup Resulted in 8 Co-Sponsors to HR 4803	Helped lead state teams in AcuCongress Virtual Fly-In & February Followup	Uses Phone2Action Text App to Reach Members of Congress & Senate
March Media Campaign & April Phone Banking Training Begins March 9, 2022	Live Event in 2022 on Capitol Hill will feature a Congressional briefing & meetings with Senators & Representatives	To participate with Phone2Action, use this link: https://p2a.co/MuErnBL

This is OUR Bill: HR 4803

Prior to the introduction of HR 4803, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued guidelines in 2020 that covered acupuncture services for chronic Low Back Pain (cLBP) that created a regulatory burden for both practitioners providing and patients receiving acupuncture services. Licensed Acupuncturists are clearly listed as "auxiliary personnel", having neither the ability to treat without "appropriate" supervision or bill Medicare directly for their services. CMS felt they took this as far as they could during the "National Coverage Determination process and suggested a legislative fix. HR 4803 does just that and would open the door to many more benefits of being defined inside the Social Security Act. For those wanting to participate in federal student loan forgiveness programs or want to see acupuncture residency programs in hospitals, this is the FIRST STEP. Throughout the December Virtual Federal Fly-In and February Followup, we asked for questions from Congress and their staff members to help us clarify all messaging. We learned primarily that it is not enough to have a Dear Colleague from our champion. We learned that we must engage OFTEN in educating members of Congress regarding the efficacy of acupuncture, in general, and the specifics of what the bill does. Here are our three main takeaways from our engagement with 333 Congressional offices in 2021-2022.

1 Congress is still a big club. They work with and against each other.

When meeting with Republicans or Democrats, they will often ask how many of their party as cosponsored a bill. This is true whether they primarily cosponsor only bills from their party or they only cosponsor bipartisan bills. We have been careful not to load too heavily from the sponsor's party so that we can leave room for bipartisan support. This can be tricky, but the analysis has identified bipartisan support and will be negotiating heavily with Republican offices who often cosponsor bipartisan legislative efforts in healthcare.

2 Fiscal Notes Matter.

The fact that CMS currently covers acupuncture services works to our advantage in this bill. The fiscal impact of providing the service is already in place. AcuCongress has a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the department to determine what the actual cost of providing acupuncture services costs our government, and will inform the industry when they respond. For now, there is no change in the fiscal impact of providing the service. It is simply a matter of who files the paperwork for the services provided. However, the hoops that must be jumped through to have your acupuncturist file the paperwork are barriers to access for practitioners and patients. Having a bill that does not add exorbitant costs will result in a lower CBO score. This is good for US!!

3 Those who are trained in advocacy campaigns got better results from meetings.

Whether it is a matter of being overly-prepared or staving off the nerves that often come from these interactions, those trained in AcuCongress techniques produced more results than those who had less training. AcuCongress Acuvists added three day-of cosponsors and more in the weeks that followed. They speak of having felt truly prepared and were often acknowledged by members of Congress and their staff for thoughtful, concise, and poignant meetings that moved those members to cosponsor or consider that action.

Advocacy Campaign Types

Which campaign is right for you? What each individual chooses to be a part of should consider three things: **YOUR TIME, YOUR LEVEL OF EFFORT OR ENERGY YOU CAN GIVE, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES YOU CAN PROVIDE.** For many people, they may have limited time, but have money to donate to efforts. For others, there may be limited funding, but you have the time to train and participate in events. Here is a breakdown of various types of campaigns, and their benefits and detriments in action.

1 PHONE BANKING

Summary: There is no more effective campaign than phone banking. To have practitioners, students and patients call their elected officials to encourage co-sponsorship will typically produce greater results than any other effort.

Impact: HIGH

Positive: Low technological issues. Templates provide clarity. **EVERYONE CAN CALL!!**

Negative: Lots of people have an aversion to being on hold or interacting on the phone.

2 LIVE MEETINGS

Summary: Meeting with Congressional staff or members of Congress, whether in a live or virtual fly-in, zoom call, or in their office, is the easiest way to read your room. These rarely result in day-of signings but are effective at planting seeds and educating. It allows you to develop a relationship with your Representatives & Senators for current & future needs.

Impact: MEDIUM TO HIGH

Positive: It is always best to interact directly with the office. These provide organized options, messaging, and coordinated action that is sustainable and ongoing.

Negative: These are extremely labor-intensive events and activities. Time is a factor.

3 LETTER WRITING/EMAIL/SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Summary: Email, Letters and Social Media can be powerful means of connection with a legislator or staff. Twitter campaigns have revolutionized grassroots lobbying with available metrics for how to have the largest reach and impact.

Impact: MEDIUM TO HIGH

Positive: Provided templates keep messaging on track and video can be **POWERFUL.**

Negative: Can be labor-intensive. Templates often do not provide enough "personal touches in conveying the material. Time and level of effort are factors in this choice.

4 ADVOCACY APPS: TEXT OR EMAIL FORM LETTERS

Summary: This is an effective way to get high numbers of people to take part. It is literally the easiest thing and the least that one can do. You typically put in your name and address and the app will do the work for you, sending a form letter or text to Congressional offices.

Impact: LOW

Positive: It is neither time-consuming nor does it break the bank for organizations to

Negative: There is no formal connection with the legislative office, very little (if any) feedback unless the staff member reaches out. There is no way to tell if the text or email results in co-sponsorship and therefore, should **ONLY** be considered a support avenue to the efforts mentioned above. Because no personal relationship is established, the followup activity is more labor-intensive than other methods, to be successful..

Acknowledgements

AcuCongress would like to thank the following collaborative organizations:

Jason Sargis and Atlantic Symposium for providing the live AcuCongress training. Atlantic Symposium is building a beloved community that focuses on the BUSINESS, ADVOCACY, AND RESEARCH of acupuncture. The Symposium provides a place for us to gather, commune together and learn from and with each other. Save the date for March of 2023 where we will gather again at a beautiful resort to work together for the common good.

Jennifer Stone & the ARDAIL Project for providing the NECESSARY research for our Congressional campaigns. All healthcare movements need research that is acceptable to our government. Jen Stone and her team have worked tirelessly to not only teach our industry members to critically think when reading research, but have compiled compendiums of research to provide to our elected officials.

Michelle Lau and the American Alliance of Acupuncture (AAOA) for working overtime to take Congressional meetings and coordinate the activities of bringing together our diverse demographic population in the field. AAOA has provided the bridge between cultures and communities in translating AcuCongress materials so that ALL CAN WORK TOGETHER.

We thank you for your continued support in our programs.

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Join AcuCongress Training:

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