Science Societies

Advocacy in action: Congressional Visits Day

By Renee Spencer

April 15, 2026



2026 Congressional Visits Day participants.

> This year's Congressional Visits Day took place February 24–25, bringing together scientists, students, and CCAs to Washington, DC, to advocate for research funding and science-based policies by meeting directly with lawmakers. The event not only amplifies the real-world impact of agricultural research and practice, but also equips participants with the skills, confidence, and connections needed to engage in ongoing policy advocacy.

When it comes to funding for agricultural and environmental research, the voices of scientists, students, and certified professionals are essential for conveying the real‑world impact of federal investments. Without consistent and clear communication from experts working directly in these fields, legislative decisions can unintentionally overlook critical scientific research needs.

Connecting science and policy on Capitol Hill

To help close this divide, CCAs and members of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America annually participate in Congressional Visits Day (CVD). This two‑day event is designed to facilitate productive conversations between scientists and field experts with their elected officials in DC. Through these meetings, participants engage directly with members of Congress and congressional staff to discuss research funding priorities and science‑based policy decisions that affect their work.



During this year's CVD, held February 24–25, more than 90 meetings with congressional offices were scheduled with support from the Torrey Advisory Group (TAG), a bipartisan agriculture and food policy consulting firm. There were more than 50 participants, organized into small groups typically composed of a senior researcher, a student, and a CCA. By combining research and education expertise with on-the-ground experience, these teams provided congressional representatives with a well-rounded view of how funding and policy decisions influence agricultural science at both state and district levels.

"It shows a team approach and who we represent in the spectrum of the agronomy profession. It's not just one part of it, it's the whole group," explains Luther Smith, Chief Administrative Officer of the Societies.

According to Smith and Julie McClure, Vice President of TAG, active participation is key to the success of CVD for both attendees and congressional offices. They emphasize that Society members and CCAs play a vital role in the advocacy process not only as agricultural science professionals, but also as constituents: Representatives value expert insight and rely on constituent feedback to stay informed on issues that guide policy decisions.

"You have critical, valuable information," says McClure. "You have expertise that you can share, but you are also a constituent. You are a voting member in their district or state. You understand how some of these agricultural and environmental issues are impacting

their district or state." She adds that participation sends a strong message: "It shows the members [of Congress] and their staff that this is something you care about enough to take time away from your day, and your life, to come to DC."

"You have expertise that you can share, but you are also a constituent. You are a voting member in their district or state. You understand how some of these agricultural and environmental issues are impacting their district or state."

Congressional Visits Day also offers meaningful professional development opportunities. Participants gain a foundational understanding of the policymaking process, how federal programs are funded, and how to communicate scientific priorities to non‑scientific audiences. The event also creates valuable networking opportunities with professionals across the agricultural sciences and related fields, supporting long‑term career growth.

Building confidence and skills in advocacy

But for those new to advocacy, engaging with elected officials can feel intimidating. To ensure participants walk into CVD meetings feeling confident and prepared, the

Societies offer multiple training webinars prior to the event. And once in Washington, CVD begins with a full day of speaker sessions, stakeholder meetings, congressional staff panels, and other required training. These resources equip attendees with the necessary tools to navigate policy discussions and translate complex scientific work into clear, actionable talking points.

“It's just really, really important to have researchers [or CCAs] able to articulate what this research is doing and why it's valuable."

“It's just really, really important to have researchers [or CCAs] able to articulate what this research is doing and why it's valuable,” says McClure.

Building on this foundation, both Smith and McClure encourage all Society members and CCAs to engage in agricultural policy beyond CVD. For those new to advocacy, they recommend taking small, manageable steps such as learning who your representatives are , signing up for advocacy email lists, volunteering at local elections, or simply voting. Over time, these actions help build a better understanding of the policy process, making it easier to reach out to representatives with confidence.

“Just take a step—it doesn’t have to be a big one,” Smith says.

Additional opportunities to get involved in science policy are available through Society programs and resources, including the new Policy and Government Relations Certificate,

advocacy training, and working groups (see our science policy page for all the ways to get involved). The Societies remain committed to helping members and CCAs amplify their voices and ensure science continues to inform policy decisions.

Science policy articles

Resources & opportunities

Back to issue

Rate this article

Text © . The authors. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Except where otherwise noted, images are subject to copyright. Any reuse without express permission from the copyright owner is prohibited.