

Taking Colorectal Cancer Awareness to your Local and State Governments

How else can you use your voice to spread the word about CRC? A great place to start is within your local and state governments. Elected officials – such as your governor, state representative, mayor, and city council president – are willing to help raise awareness of health issues. With your help, those community leaders who do not know about colorectal cancer can become educated and help in the effort to increase public awareness in their cities and states. The general public often must bring important issues to the attention of our government officials before they will take any action. This is why CCA is counting on you.

Contact your Representatives

If you don't know who your representatives are, check CCA's website at <http://www3.capwiz.com/acs-national/officials.congress> to find your representatives names. Most states have individual websites for their state House and Senate members. The sites will have all the phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

You can write, e-mail, telephone or fax. For the best result, do all four! You can also make an appointment to see your representative or the appropriate staff person, in Washington, DC or at the district office. District appointments with a representative may be possible during congressional recesses.

Be Credible and Constructive

Use solid facts. Write from your personal experience. Describe the problem. Suggest a specific solution. Be brief and polite.

Tell Your Story

Briefly. But put a fact to colorectal cancer. It's one thing to say that 153,760 Americans will be diagnosed this year. It's another to say, "I have colorectal cancer that has spread, and statistically, I am likely to die. If I had been screened at age 50, this probably would not have happened."

Be Specific

A request to do "something" about colorectal cancer will get a yawn. A request to support something specific – a specific bill, a specific funding request, specific language – tells your representative what you want from him/her.

Ask For A Response

"I'd like to know if you decide to support my request." Don't be surprised if you don't get a response – this gives you a good reason to follow up with a phone call.

Proclamations and Petitions

A great way to get your local and state officials involved is to unite your friends and family members in an effort to write letters asking community leaders to support CRC efforts in your city, county and state (see sample petition in the Media/PR section). A coalition of supporters can be found in the local phone book or by calling your city offices or local library.

You may make a bigger impact by first faxing your cover letter and list of supporters and following up by sending the originals by mail. Then make personal telephone calls to the officials' offices. Be persistent!

Invite Local Politicians to CRC Events

Send a letter with an invitation for specific officials and their spouses to attend any local events you may be hosting or attending for Colorectal Cancer Awareness (including awareness month). Please remember to give the date, time, place, who is hosting and speaking at the event, your contact information, and a brief description of the event. Again, follow up with a phone call.

Make noise – these officials work for you

Remember that these are officials you have elected and they depend on the public for their votes into office. The more noise you make and the more people you have making noise, the more likely you are to get a response. Be you own advocate. It works.

Some other Ideas

Get the word out. Send letters to the editor supporting specific legislation, and ask others to write their legislators. Talk to people about colorectal cancer and the need for screening. You will be shocked at how many people have been touched by colorectal cancer – and how few know the screening guidelines. Write your local media and columnists. Tell them that colorectal cancer is a story that needs coverage (and if they need information about it, refer them to CCA). Tell them that they can help save lives. There is more information in the Media/PR section.