

Legislator Visit Overview

Wes Grigston, Nat Smith

Nat Smith and I had a great meeting with Hal Weatherman, Sue Myrick's 'Chief of Staff,' on May 29. We hit on a range of topics from Canada's health care system to Obama's first 100 days in office, but these are a few of the hot topics discussed that we hear about daily in our industry:

- The role of the insurance agent
- The importance of tax-advantaged Consumer-Driven Health Plan options
- The need for a level playing field on a government-controlled health plan option

It was clear to us from the beginning of our discussion that Hal and Rep. Myrick are in our corner on these key issues. Hal understands the vital role that health agents play in today's marketplace. He realizes the increasing popularity of CDHP options and the tax incentives created to help reduce the ever-rising cost of health care. And he knows that a new public plan option would compete with private health plans, which could ultimately lead to the destruction of private health insurance coverage. It was evident to Nat and I that we were 'preaching to the choir,' so we turned our focus to discussing how we can most effectively influence those who are not in our camp.

A key takeaway from this meeting was Hal's advice to branch out to moderate Democrats who can be persuaded to side with us on some of these key issues. Hal reassured us that our voices do not go unheard. With all the changes that are taking place in Washington today, our politicians need answers and are looking to organizations like NAHU to keep them educated and up-to-date on the issues at hand. Hal stressed the value and importance of meeting face-to-face with our Representatives and Senators to voice our opinions. Although the phone calls and e-mails are significant, taking the time and initiative to sit down with our politicians and their staff goes a long way.

We were reminded that the current imbalance in Washington is a serious cause for concern, which gives us all the more reason to reach out and let our voices be heard. As the health care debate heats up, there will be plenty of opportunities to join your fellow CAHU members and discuss these issues with our local politicians.