

Participation in advocacy for our patients and our profession is an important part of American College of Emergency Physicians' (ACEP) mission to improve emergency care. While serving in the military, you are allowed and encouraged to participate in the political process. As a private citizen, you are allowed to sign petitions for political causes. You can vote, speak with your legislators and advocate for causes that are important to you.

However, as military members, there are restrictions on how we can interact with our legislators during our advocacy efforts. The limitations placed on military members' political activity is intended to prevent any appearance of bias or partisan support by the military, because military members are expected to follow the orders of the Commander in Chief, regardless of political affiliation. [This article](#) offers guidelines on most common political activities and how you can participate within the limitations placed by your military service.

GSACEP has a unique opportunity to help members advocate for issues that are important to our service and our patients. ACEP can support and advocate for issues that are important to GSACEP members and serve as a voice for our military members who are not allowed to advocate directly. This process occurs through the Public Relations and Advocacy Committee.

The following guidelines are helpful to frame your advocacy if you would like to participate in your local, state, or national level political processes. However, prior to engaging in any type of advocacy, you should contact your local Judge Advocate General for specific guidance.

When engaging with a political entity or lobbying effort:

- Each base and service legal office will have its own opinion. GSACEP recommends that individuals clear any activity with their local JAG to ensure that they are complying with their local command guidance.
- Any participation in lobbying efforts must be conducted as an individual and on your own time. If lobbying will be during duty hours, it is best to be on Leave for that day.
- No uniform can be worn during lobbying.
- No mention of rank, military status etc can be shared while lobbying. You should refer to yourself as Dr X, a practicing emergency physician.
 - Tell your story as an emergency physician from X city.
 - If asked where you work, then it is OK to let them know you are in the military but here as an emergency physician and private citizen. If you moonlight, you can use that position to frame your work.
- If you are in Temporary Duty status for a conference that includes lobbying, you should take leave on the day of the advocacy or lobbying visits.
- Be mindful of your appearance in photos, both in and out of uniform. Even if you do not post to social media but are identifiable or tagged, be mindful to not imply any DOD endorsement of the activity.
- As a general guideline, be cautious in your interactions, as what gets people in trouble is usually the perception of impropriety regarding serving and crossing the line to creating an appearance of bias or partisanship.

Bottom line: As a citizen you are allowed to “talk” to Congress, but you cannot claim nor appear to represent the Department of Defense.

ACEP Leadership and Advocacy Conference

The Leadership and Advocacy Conference is an excellent opportunity to learn about ACEP's advocacy priorities and learn how to support our specialty. Many GSACEP leaders attend every year and value the leadership training, as well as the opportunity to visit with members of Congress. [Find out more about the conference here.](#)

Advocacy suggestions specifically for this conference include:

- During LAC, you are usually in a group with those from the state you currently reside. If you are planning to attend, please connect with the GSACEP chapter executive and the chapter will help arrange your Hill visits to be partnered with non-military physicians.
- If you are on Temporary Duty for LAC, you should take leave on the day of the Hill visits.
- The conference includes leadership training, so it is appropriate to be on TAD/TDY status for the other days.

Bottom line: As a citizen you are allowed to “talk” to Congress, but you cannot claim nor appear to represent the Department of Defense.