



ACCT Advocacy Toolkit Fall 2017

As constituents and professionals engaged in critical care transport, you are undoubtedly aware of the importance of constituent advocacy at all levels of government for influencing policy change. In order to more effectively advocate on ACCT's federal legislative priorities, especially the ACCT-supported *Air Ambulance Quality and Accountability Act* (H.R. 3780), please find an advocacy toolkit below that will provide information on how to contact your members of Congress to urge them to support the legislation. In addition, please find in the toolkit helpful background materials on H.R. 3780, including a section-by-section, an air ambulance bill side-by-side, and a one-pager of the bill.

Contacting Your Member of Congress

If you are unable to travel to Capitol Hill in person to visit your member of Congress and his or her staff, or if you wish to do electronic follow up from a meeting, please follow these steps to engage on ACCT issues and develop meaningful relationships with your members.

1. *Find your Representative:* The first step to performing advocacy is to know who your representative is. Even if you've contacted your representative in the past, it's good to double check in case your representative has changed. To find your representative, use this [resource](#) that allows you to find your representative's information based on your address. *Remember: As a critical care transport professional, you likely service people outside of your district during your shifts. That makes you a constituent of that district, too!* Please use this [tool](#) to determine neighboring districts that you may service and who the representatives are of those districts.
2. *Get the Right Contact Information:* In order to make the greatest impact, you must meet with the right people in your members' offices. Please find a list of relevant staff in the toolkit, which has the name, email, and phone number of the health staffers in each office. If an office has a vacancy listed for the healthcare position, please call the member's office directly to find out who the appropriate staffer is. A list of contact information for each House office may be found [here](#).
3. *Send a Clear Message:* All it takes to make an impact is to send a clear message of support to your members. An email message alone can be an important way not only to support a certain bill but also to begin a years-long relationship with your members' offices that can persist into the future. By occasionally replying to the last email in a thread to update your members offices on issues that you care about, you can begin a paper trail to help solidify those connections. As a start, please find a template email message below that you can modify with your own stories and anecdotes to add a

personal touch. *Reminder:* make sure to send an email message rather than a traditional letter to your members. Traditional mail to Capitol Hill may be delayed for weeks due to security screening protocols.

Template email for contacting your member of Congress:

Dear [Staff Name]:

My name is [NAME] and I am a critical care transport specialist with [Organization] and a constituent. I wanted to send you a message of my strong support for the Air Ambulance Quality and Accountability Act (H.R. 3780), which was recently introduced by Representatives Richard Hudson (R-NC), Ron Kind (D-WI), Lynn Jenkins (R-KS), and Joe Kennedy (D-MA), and ask that you cosponsor this bill to ensure high quality air ambulance transport of critically ill and injured patients. for air ambulance providers.

As you may know, when someone is critically injured first responders deal in minutes, not hours, to get them the care they need. When the most critical patients are in dire need of quick access to care, often the only solution for them is an air ambulance. However, Medicare beneficiaries don't get to choose whether they are transported by air, or which air ambulance agency transports them. The bill protects all patients flown by air ambulance by ensuring that they receive the highest quality of medical care regardless of which agency transports them.

Currently, there are no standards of care or quality valuations for air ambulances like there are for essentially all other providers and suppliers under Medicare.. Further, Medicare's current reimbursement model for air ambulance providers does not account for the quality of care provided nor is data available to determine effective payment rates. This payment model has not been updated since the 1980s and does not take into effect quality of care provided per transport, which frequently results in the same payment for vastly different levels of care.

H.R. 3780 ensures that all patients in need of air medical services throughout the nation have access to high quality care and patient safety regardless of which air ambulance agency transports them. This legislation protects critically ill and injured patients by addressing the variability in quality of care and clinical capability through robust quality and cost reporting while also ensuring that air ambulance providers meet minimum safety and quality standards. Further, the cost-reporting required under the bill will enable a thorough evaluation by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) to assess the adequacy of access, Medicare reimbursement and the need for future payment reform prior to providing any increases in payment.

I would appreciate Representative [NAME]'s support as a cosponsor of H.R. 3780. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to working with your office to ensure that your

constituents receive the safe, efficient, and effective critical care transport services they need.

4. *Follow-Up with a Phone Call to Make Your Message Resonate:* After sending an email, it's usually prudent to call the health staffer and follow-up on your message. Below please find talking points that you can use to help guide your call with your members.
 - My name is [NAME] and I am a critical care transport specialist with [Organization] and a constituent. I wanted to follow up on an email I send you recently lending my strong support for the Air Ambulance Quality and Accountability Act (H.R. 3780) and to see if you have any additional questions about the issue.
 - As I mentioned in my email, time is of the essence when dealing with critical injuries. The sooner you transport and treat the patient, the higher the likelihood that they will survive serious injury.
 - However, despite the fact that patient safety should of the utmost concern in an air ambulance there are currently no standards of care or quality valuations for air ambulances.
 - Further, Medicare's current reimbursement model for air ambulance providers does not account for the quality of care provided nor is data available to determine effective payment rates. This payment model has not been updated since the 1980s and does not take into effect quality of care provided per transport, which frequently results in the same payment for vastly different levels of care.
 - H.R. 3780 ensures that all patients in need of air medical services throughout the nation have access to high quality care and patient safety regardless of which air ambulance agency transports them. Specifically, H.R. 3780 would:
 - i. Establish minimum standards for air ambulance providers and suppliers
 - ii. Establish a robust air ambulance quality and cost reporting programs
 - iii. Would require a study based on cost reporting to help inform much needed updates to Medicare reimbursement for air ambulance providers and suppliers
 - Thank you for your interest in these issues and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.
5. *Be Persistent:* Sometimes you may not receive an immediate reply to your request from your members' offices. That's OK! Congressional staffers are extremely busy and

balance many requests. However, your issues as constituents are very important to them. Make sure to politely follow up on your request after a brief period so that your request does not get lost in the shuffle.

6. *Thank Your Member:* It is easy to underestimate the power of saying thank you. Make sure in your correspondence to thank the member and their staff for their attention to critical care transport issues – and healthcare issues in general – and for their attention to constituent needs. A message saying thank you keeps your relationships with your members positive while reminding them of who you are and the issues that you care about.
7. *Invite Your Member to Tour Your Facility:* While your advocacy messages as a constituent will be effective in gaining your members' support on critical care transport issues, nothing can replace real world experience in giving your members a sense of why legislation like H.R. 3780 is so important. Make sure to invite your member to tour your facility the next time they are in the district. These tours allow you to more thoroughly educate your member in critical care transport issues and how legislation like H.R. 3780 can improve critical care transport.