

American Geriatrics Society - Attending Town Halls Primer

Updated October 2026

Congress is on recess through the midterm elections and with the entirety of the House and 35 Senators up for re-election, there will be opportunities for all of us to ask questions important to our health and well-being as we age at constituent events across the United States. Attending a town hall or other constituent-facing events is an opportunity to weigh in on policies important to you and hold your elected officials accountable for policies that impact you and the older adults you serve. Town halls and other public-facing events (including fundraisers) are also an important opportunity for you to engage candidates to understand what policies they are championing and what their vision is for the future of aging in the US. We encourage you to ask questions and push for answers.

To help you, we put together an ‘attending town halls’ primer, including suggested topic areas and questions, that you can use. As experts in care of older adults, you have an important voice in shaping federal, state, and local policies so that they support us all as we age.

How to Find Events:

- **Check your representative’s website** for events, press releases, or media alerts announcing town halls (find your representatives on Congress.gov);
- **Call or email your representative’s district office** and ask staff to share upcoming events and information; and
- Find local events and town halls on Mobilize.

Why is This Important:

- Telling your elected officials how federal policy will affect the older Americans you care for is the single most powerful tool in **your own** advocacy toolbox.
- Elected officials care about what their constituents have to say and the more we speak out about specific topics that impact care of older adults, the more powerful we are.
- Remember that **you are the expert**.

Day of the Event:

- Pick one specific issue to focus on – we have provided our top six below.
- As a general guideline whether you use our talking points or your own, plan to include the following:
 - Your name and identifying yourself as a constituent.

- Your expertise in care of older adults and your professional role, including location, academic institution, etc.
- The policy you are concerned about and how that impacts people living in your state.
- What you would like your elected official or candidate to do. This can also be framed as a question as we did below.
- Thank them for hosting the event and for their time.

Talking Points:

Workforce (GWEPs and GACAs)

As Americans live longer, many of us will be diagnosed with chronic diseases as we age, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. However, our health care workforce receives little, if any, training in geriatrics principles, leaving health care professionals, paid caregivers, and family caregivers ill-prepared to care for older adults as health needs evolve. **If elected, how will you ensure Congress prioritizes the need to increase education and training in geriatrics and gerontology in the healthcare workforce and that programs such as the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and Geriatrics Academic Career Award (GACA) Program are at the heart of these efforts?**

Chronic Disease

Older people with chronic illnesses and geriatric conditions frequently do not receive optimal care. This not only reduces overall well-being but also contributes to disproportionately high healthcare costs for older Americans compared to other groups. Improved care for people living with multiple chronic conditions is one approach that has high potential for cost savings and improved care quality by reducing preventable hospitalizations and helping older adults with multiple chronic conditions have a higher quality of life. **If elected, how will you ensure that policy supports person-centered care that addresses the comprehensive needs of those living with multiple chronic conditions, including medications, behavioral health, and social needs/function?**

Research (AHRQ)

In July, researchers across the country received notices from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality terminating ongoing research grants – ending at least 104 grants aimed at improving patient safety, reducing health care costs, and expanding access to care. While Congress has appropriated \$345 million for AHRQ for fiscal year 2026, the agency has spent less than \$15 million on grants this fiscal year, according to federal records. **If elected, how will you conduct oversight of these actions, including the termination of grants, and ensure that the funding appropriated is used as Congress intended?**

Research (NIH/NIA and VA)

Essential research within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) has led to advances in our understanding of the role of biological aging as a common driver of chronic disease with the goal of designing evidence-based interventions to slow aging, prevent or delay disease and disability, and help people who manage multiple chronic diseases to improve and live more meaningful lives. However, substantial changes have been made across the Department of Health and Human Services and NIH to the workforce, grants, and budget without input from Congress or the American public. The Veterans Affairs (VA) also supports essential research, expanding knowledge in areas vital to veterans' health needs, including mental health conditions, toxic exposures, traumatic brain injury, and chronic diseases. **If elected, how would you prioritize aging research across federal agencies and institutions so that we can address the human and economic toll of chronic diseases on older Americans?**

Public Health

No community has been left untouched by the devastating impact of COVID-19 – but perhaps none more so than our older adult population. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the gaps in our planning specific to older adults which — as in natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina — resulted in the pandemic having a disproportionate impact on older Americans, particularly older Americans of color. Additional work is necessary to advance public health planning and infrastructure, particularly by involving experts in geriatrics and long-term care in evaluating data, plans, and protocols - especially those that can help keep the public informed in times of need. **If elected, what will you do to ensure we have adequate public health infrastructure and an expanded role for public health workers - particularly those with geriatrics expertise - in the event of a future pandemic, public health emergency, or other natural disaster?**

Technology and AI

There has been increasing attention and interest in the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in health care and in furnishing primary care. Technology, including AI, is a potentially valuable tool to be used in health systems and when furnishing primary care but it is just now being more widely deployed and understood. Efforts should avoid prematurely incentivizing or disincentivizing use of a particular intervention or technology given the inherent risks of harm and shortcomings due to incorrect information, bias, automation overreliance, and lack of sufficient safeguards, risks that are heightened for older adults. **If elected, how will you ensure the benefits of AI-supported healthcare outweigh the costs and incorporate guardrails so that we do not compromise quality of care, privacy, trust, or transparency?**