

ABOUT AGU

Geoscientists Flock to Capitol Hill for Congressional Visits Day

PAGE 353

The second annual Geosciences Congressional Visits Day (Geo-CVD), on 15–16 September 2009, came at a time when the U.S. Congress is considering a number of issues intimately connected to the geosciences, including energy, the environment, and climate. Nearly 60 geoscientists from across the country, including 22 AGU members from 12 states, participated in this year's event by discussing geoscience issues with members of Congress and their staffs. AGU cosponsored the event along with nine other Earth and space science societies that work together on geoscience policy issues as part of the Geopolitics Working Group in Washington, D. C.

Geo-CVD kicked off with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Coalition's annual reception on Capitol Hill on 14 September. AGU is a member of the USGS Coalition, which includes several other science societies, and this year AGU organized the reception together with the Seismological Society of America. At the reception, U.S. senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) received the coalition's annual Leadership Award in recognition of their continuing commitment to USGS. Sen. Feinstein chairs the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Issues, which is tasked with allocating funds to USGS; Sen. Murkowski is the ranking member on the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

During a 15 September workshop hosted by AGU for scientists involved with Geo-CVD, participants learned how to communicate with legislators and received an overview of the U.S. federal budget. They also interacted with representatives from the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. National Science Foundation, and USGS who were panelists in a session

discussing those agencies' priorities during the Obama administration. The workshop also allowed time for role-playing and mock visits with legislators so participants could hone and practice their message to legislators, highlighting the scientists' research, the importance of federally funded geoscience research, and the value of Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics (STEM) education.

After this preparation, the geoscientists met with the legislative delegations from their states as well as with staff of various House and Senate committees. Among the highlights from Geo-CVD, several hurricane researchers—including William Dewar from Florida State University, Sytske Kimball from the University of South Alabama, and Hilary Stockdon from USGS—met with staff on the Senate Commerce Committee to discuss Senate bill 1485, the National Hurricane

Research Initiative Act of 2009. Also, Miguel Medina from Duke University and Alan Huber from the University of North Carolina met with Rep. David Price (D-N. C.) as well as with Sen. Kay Hagan (D-N. C.), who has a daughter completing her doctorate in geology at California Institute of Technology. Eric Betterton, from the University of Arizona and chair of AGU's Committee on Public Affairs (COPA), met with Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.), a member of the House Committee on Science and Technology. And Chris Konrad from The Nature Conservancy in Washington State had a day jam-packed with eight congressional visits, including meetings with three members of Congress: Rep. James McDermott (D-Wash.), Rep. Norman Dicks (D-Wash.), and Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.).

Throughout the year, AGU scientists participate in several congressional events, including exhibitions, briefings, and two Congressional Visits Days (CVD). AGU's next CVD will be the Science-Engineering-Technology CVD (SET-CVD), on 28–29 April 2010. To learn more about participating in any of AGU's congressional events, please contact Kaitlin Chell.

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Eric Betterton, chair of AGU's Committee on Public Affairs and head of the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Arizona, meets with U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.). Photo by Veronica Raymond, AGU.