

**Sleep Research Society
Sleep Advocacy Day
November 15, 2017**

**Prepared By: Health and Medicine Council of Washington
Dale Dirks & Dane Christiansen**

On Wednesday, November 15th, the Sleep Research Society visited Capitol Hill for our annual advocacy day. This year, patient advocates from Project Sleep joined the event and added their important perspective to congressional outreach and education activities.

The day on Capitol Hill began with a congressional education briefing on sleep and sleep disorders research. Over two dozen congressional staff attended and listened as Dr. Jim Kiley of NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute provided an overview of the activities at the National Center for Sleep Disorders Research. Dr. Allan Pack and Dr. Janet Mullington discussed the cutting edge of sleep research along with the public health and economic impacts. Julie Flygare provided the perspective of a narcolepsy patient on behalf of [Project Sleep](#). There was noticeable enthusiasm for the topic of sleep research as well as a great deal of interest related to the recent Noble Prize announcement.

This year, Congressmen Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and Sam Graves (R-MO) received the community's Distinguished Public Service Awards for their leadership on sleep apnea research and patient care in transportation and the military, respectively. During his acceptance speech, Congressman Pascrell enthusiastically supported the work of NIH and called on all of his colleagues to make science and fact-based decisions when crafting policy.

Following the briefing, teams of sleep researchers and patients departed for a series of meetings with the offices of their House Representatives and Senators. Advocates took the opportunity to request additional funding for sleep research through NIH, the Department of Defense, and the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) personally met with the team that visited her office and took the time to identify herself as a champion of sleep community priorities now and into the future. Shortly after the visits, the Senate published the annual list of conditions deemed eligible for study through the Department of Defense Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program and once again included "sleep disorders."

In addition to enhancing funding for federal research activities, advocates also asked Members of Congress to support legislation that would require the Department of Transportation to move forward with an effort to establish a framework that would test and treat truckers and train-conductors affected by obstructive sleep apnea. Many offices said they would join the common-sense legislation (S.1883 and H.R. 3882) and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) joined the bill immediately after meeting with her team.

Beyond Hill Day, Project Sleep also sent over 100 constituent letters to additional legislators on Capitol Hill requesting their support for sleep research. The multi-stakeholder approach is broadening awareness of sleep on Capitol Hill and the future looks bright for our ability to further enhance and advance legislative and policy priorities of mutual interest.