

## NAELA Kicks Off District Days 2012

**NAELA members advocate for older Americans and individuals with special needs as Congress returns to their home offices.**

**W**ith their eyes on a critical election this fall, members of Congress are frequently returning home to engage with voters in their districts. After several years of successfully lobbying Congress in Washington, D.C. with an annual “Hill Day,” NAELA is going local with District Days, a grassroots advocacy event to educate members of Congress on issues of importance to older Americans and individuals with special needs.

NAELA’s first district visits began in early May, when representatives and senators returned home for a week-long recess. NAELA members met with their legislators and shared their ideas and concerns on the federal policy issues that impact their clients and practice, including:

- **Support for reauthorization of the Older Americans Act**, which provides older adults with much-needed services that include home care, congregate and home-delivered meals, case management, caregiver support, legal services, transportation, elder abuse prevention, job training, and the long-term care ombudsman program;
- **Opposition of efforts to convert the Medicare program into a premium support system**, a model that would replace Medicare’s current guarantee of coverage with a premium-support voucher and raise the age of eligibility from 65 to 67;
- **Opposition of the House budget’s proposed Medicaid block grants**, which would restrict funding for state programs, as well as restricting eligibility and funding for long-term services and supports; and
- **Support for the Disabled Military Child Protection Act of 2012 (H.R. 4329)**, which would allow payment of



military survivor’s benefits into special needs trusts for disabled children.

NAELA Board member Ron Landsman, CAP, and former NAELA Board member Morris Klein, CELA, CAP, met with Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), ranking member of the House Budget Committee, as part of NAELA’s district advocacy effort.

During the meeting, Landsman and Klein asked the congressman to support the Disabled Military Child Protection Act of 2012. Rep. Van Hollen shared his support for the proposal, as well as his concern about inequity if others — civilian government employees and private citizens under Social Security — did not have the same opportunities. Landsman and Klein also discussed the many defects of the so-called Ryan budget proposal, particularly the dismembering of Medicaid federal standards through block grants to states.

NAELA encourages members to continue the district advocacy effort during the summer and fall. Members can access talking points and leave-behind materials on the NAELA website, under the Advocacy page. NAELA staff is happy to assist members in setting up appointments with legislators at their district office. Representatives and senators will return home during the weeks of:

- July 2–6
- Aug. 7–Sept. 7
- Sept. 10–14 (Senate only)
- Sept. 24–28
- October 8–November 6

As Landsman stated after the visit, “Developing relationships with your senators and representatives is important, as we can become valued resources to them and their staff. It is much easier to ask for their support once this relationship has been established.” ■