

# ADVOCACY NEWS

## ADVOCACY ACTION

### OAC Members Speak to Legislators on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC

The week of June 16 was an amazing week for the OAC on the advocacy front. With a legislative briefing and visits on Capitol Hill, the OAC proudly represented the more than 93 million Americans affected by the disease of obesity, and the OAC will continue these efforts. Here is a recap of the week of exciting and successful events!

#### *OAC Legislative Briefing*

On June 16, 2008, OAC members took part in a legislative briefing on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, to discuss the impact of obesity and its treatments.

The briefings were attended by more than 50 legislative aides. The main focus of the briefings was on the importance of obesity awareness and why improving access for all treatments of obesity is crucial.

The aides heard a variety of presentations from members of the OAC Board of Directors. The first presentation given by OAC Board member, Dr. Robin Blackstone, detailed the overall picture of the obesity epidemic and discussed the prevalence of obesity in the U.S. as well as the many co-morbid conditions associated with the disease.

Following Dr. Blackstone's presentation, the aides next heard from OAC Board member, Dr. Christopher Still. Dr. Still discussed the treatments of obesity. He explained the differences in medical weight management and bariatric surgery, and how each therapy was appropriate for certain individuals depending on body mass index. Dr. Still emphasized that you must incorporate a multi-disciplinary plan consisting of an overall lifestyle change in order for any treatment to be effective.

The next presenter was OAC Chairman Jim Fivecoat. Mr. Fivecoat, who has been personally affected by obesity, detailed the disease of obesity from an employer's point of view. He discussed the many facets of obesity in the workplace such as obesity cost, healthcare cost and much more. He also rounded out the presentation by discussing his own personal story with obesity as a weight-loss surgery patient. In his story, Mr. Fivecoat stressed mostly that treating his obesity lead to improvement/remission of many of his co-morbidities, such as sleep apnea, hypertension and GERD.



*From left to right: OAC member, Jeff Haaga; OAC Policy Consultant, Chris Gallagher; OAC Chairman, Jim Fivecoat; OAC President/CEO, Joe Nadglowski; OAC Board Member, Dr. Robin Blackstone; and OAC Board Member, Dr. Christopher Still.*



*OAC Member Jeff Haaga courageously shares his personal story with more than 50 legislative aides on Capitol Hill.*

Lastly, the aides heard from OAC member Jeff Haaga. Mr. Haaga is affected by morbid obesity and is trying to access treatment. Passionately, he shared with the aides his struggles with obesity, as his two daughters sat in the audience equally sharing in their father's pain and frustration. He explained his efforts in his home state of Utah where he has formed his own obesity coalition in hopes of influencing and educating his elected officials on this epidemic. Mr. Haaga concluded his presentation by telling those in attendance that access to weight-loss treatment options and obesity awareness are two very important nationwide topics that need to be addressed by elected officials in the U.S. Congress.

As you can tell, the briefing was a tremendous success and a wonderful opportunity for the OAC to spread its message and represent those affected by obesity. The OAC urged all of the aides present to share the information they received that day with their legislative offices and welcomed further discussion.

### ***OAC Legislative Visits***

In addition to the briefing on Capitol Hill, OAC members also spent the week of June 16 visiting their elected officials. Each member had the opportunity to speak to their legislators and illustrate how obesity has affected their lives, as well as the lives of their families and friends.

The legislators heard from these individuals who stressed the emotional impact of obesity and how it's not just a physical disease, but also that it affects someone on a psychological level. They discussed the ever-increasing negative stigma associated with obesity and shared with the legislators the many battles the OAC has won throughout the years in regards to obesity stigma.

OAC members also urged their elected officials to make a difference and begin taking proactive steps toward increasing obesity awareness.



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

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