

**Talking about Earth to Policy Makers: The Real Big Picture**, Linda Rowan, Director of Government Affairs, American Geological Institute, Alexandria, VA 22302

Natural resources, natural hazards, climate change, and environmental issues are regular topics of discussion for policy-makers and their constituents. The federal government plays a vital role in supporting, regulating, and managing all of these interests and they regularly need the knowledge and help of geoscientists. Geoscientists need to communicate more often and more effectively with policy-makers at the federal level, particularly now, when the federal government is working on a growing number of measures related to energy resources and climate change. The American Geological Institute, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the American Geophysical Union, and many other geoscience societies have active public policy programs in Washington, D.C. These programs provide good opportunities for geoscientists to communicate with policy-makers and can help geoscientists become active citizen scientists without expending significant amounts of time and resources. For example, geoscientists can participate in congressional visits with hundreds of other scientists and engineers in the spring and the fall, they can participate in congressional briefings on geoscience topics for members and staff, they can prepare letters of support for research and science education at critical times in the legislative calendar, and they can provide needed expertise by serving as witnesses at hearings or answering specific questions posed by congressional staff. There are many other ways that geoscientists can and should get involved. Sound federal policy requires the big picture, and geoscience is an essential part of the decision-making process.