When working with Congress on an issue, you have to remember two things: Make it local and make it personal. Whatever issue you’re focusing on, legislators want to know how it impacts their district or state and their constituents. Policymakers are people too, and while facts and figures are great, sharing personal stories and experiences can really help drive home the importance of your message.

When the issue you’re addressing is scientific research, it can sometimes be difficult to make those kinds of connections; to move from the theoretical to the practical, from the fundamental to the applied. Fortunately, the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) have formed a great partnership with our International CCA (ICCA) program to help share the message of the importance of agriculture and natural resources research with legislators.

The Congressional Visits Day (CVD) program is an annual event hosted by the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Science Policy Office that brings scientists, students, and practitioners together to advocate for agriculture research. Over the years, CCA participation in CVD has been steadily growing, with 12 CCAs participating in the 2015 event. This year, for the first time, we also involved three Greenfield Scholars, the ASA- and ICCA-sponsored program that pairs undergraduate students with CCA mentors. Participants met with nearly 100 members of Congress asking for support for the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants program.