receiving urgent requests for meetings from high-profile scientists who wanted Congress to begin grappling with the societal impacts of human genetic engineering — such as the ethical considerations of designer babies.

The best way to offer advice, Foster says, is to set up an in-person meeting in your home state. “You will not be mistaken for a random lobbyist, you will be a constituent,” he points out. And a home meeting precludes the possibility that any group of scientists coming to speak to Congress would be seen as just another special-interest group, he adds.

Lubchenco says that scientists can also consider doing sabbaticals in which they work with members of Congress, federal agencies or the White House. And another option is serving on an advisory committee or board of directors for a foundation or NGO. “Many NGOs are politically very savvy,” she says, but “they often need help with the science”.

Foster notes that scientists should consider serving in the government’s scientific management operations, such as the NSF, US Department of Energy or in oversight of military research. Key

budget decisions are often made in private meetings, and it’s essential to have the best scientific expertise there, he says.

Scientists may find they already have skills they didn’t realize would be applicable to politics. “When I went to NOAA, I would joke with students that I was ready for the political fray because I already knew how to swim with sharks,” Lubchenco says. They laughed, she adds, but there was truth to that — animal behavioural science is about reading body language accurately so that you can tell whether a shark is going to pass by or is about to eat you. “The same,” she says, “is true in politics.” ■

Virginia Gewin is a freelance writer in Portland, Oregon.

CORRECTION

The Turning Point ‘Whale watcher’ (*Nature* **543**, 579; 2017) included several errors: the subspecies name should have been *indica*, not *brevicauda*; the population off Sri Lanka might not be sizeable; and Oceanswell’s remit covers all marine research, not just that for whales.

TURNING POINT

Marching for facts

Valorie Aquino is one of three lead organizers of the first annual worldwide March for Science on Earth Day, 22 April. Born in the Philippines, she immigrated to the United States as a child and is a PhD candidate at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Aquino combines archaeological excavations of ancient Mayan sites with palaeoclimate reconstructions to understand how humans and the environment interact over time. She discusses why it’s time to stand up for science.

What spawned the idea of the March for Science?

It sprang up after the huge success of the Women’s March, held around the world the day after President Trump’s inauguration. Two people took a lead. Jonathan Berman, a post-doc in physiology at the University of Texas in San Antonio, bought the Marchforscience.com URL. Caroline Weinberg, a science writer based in New York City, used Twitter to connect everyone who was talking about this. A Facebook group was born and within 12 hours it had 55,000 members. Across all social-media platforms we have over 1.6 million followers.

How did you get involved?

I was one of the volunteers that Caroline and Jon brought in to oversee the Facebook public page. They invited me to be a third organizer and to help craft our mission, identity, principles and goal statements. I took a lead on partnering with scientific organizations and helping to plan events at the march in collaboration with the Earth Day Network.

Some say we should address policy on racial diversity, gender equality or immigration.

Inclusion and diversity in science are core to our principles. People with diverse backgrounds, perspectives and abilities are integrated at all levels of leadership in the March for Science national committees. Discrimination holds back scientific advances, and we’re committed to talking to our peers about these topics, even when it’s uncomfortable.

Others fear the march will politicize science.

We’ve heard that the march could harm the science community more than help it. But science is not divorced from politics. Scientists are human beings. We’ve made sure to include a diversity of people and opinions, and synthesized those opinions into a clear message — specifically, the need to defend scientific integrity and protect the scientific enterprise — on our web page and

social-media outlets. We’ve secured support from more than 160 scholarly scientific and academic organizations.

How do you think joining this group will affect your career?

Scientists typically don’t stick their necks out politically, for fear of losing research funding or being branded in a certain way, so I had to weigh professional risks against my ethical concerns. And that was something I sat on — but not for very long. It’s so important right now to speak out.

Has the march affected your PhD timeline?

My PhD programme might be a little delayed. But it’s worth it. It’s crucial to make this cause as successful as it can be. I barely have time to sleep and eat. But I don’t mind. It’s galvanizing.

Will this experience take you on a new career path?

Absolutely. Before this, I was on a path to become an academic at a leading university, managing my own research projects. Now, I’ve pivoted 180 degrees. I feel that I can connect different communities and improve science-communication efforts. The march itself is an isolated event, but we have a long-term vision and are planning post-march actions. Mainly, we’ll focus on scientific education and cultivating scientific curiosity and enquiry.

What would make a successful march for you?

I hope we see a huge turnout around the world and that non-violent marchers prove inspiring. So far, more than 470 cities worldwide have organized satellite marches. I also want us to influence policymaking. This is a marathon and a relay race all in one. ■

INTERVIEW BY VIRGINIA GEWIN

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.