

Personal Visits with Congressional Members

Meeting with a member of Congress, or congressional staff, is a very effective way to convey a message about a specific legislative issue. Below are some suggestions to consider when planning a visit to a congressional office.

PLAN YOUR VISIT CAREFULLY: Be clear about what it is you want to achieve; determine in advance which member of Congress or committee staff you need to meet with to achieve your purpose.

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT: When attempting to meet with a member, contact the Appointments Secretary/Scheduler. Explain your purpose and who you represent. It is easier for congressional staff to arrange a meeting if they know what you wish to discuss and your relationship to the area of interests represented by the member.

BE PROMPT AND BE PATIENT: When it is time to meet with a member of Congress, be punctual and be patient. It is not uncommon for a Congressman or Congresswomen to be late, or to have a meeting interrupted, due to the member's crowded schedule. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. When the opportunity presents itself, continue your meeting with a member's staff.

BE PREPARED: Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. Members of Congress are required to take positions on many different issues. In some instances, a member may lack important details about the pros and cons of a particular matter. It is therefore helpful to receive information and examples that demonstrate clearly the impact or benefits associated with a particular issue or piece of legislation.

BE POLITICAL: Members of Congress want to represent the best interests of their district or state. Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the members' constituency. If possible, describe for the member how you or your group can be of assistance to him/her. Where it is appropriate, remember to ask for a commitment.

BE RESPONSIVE: Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information, in the event the member expresses interests or asks questions. Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, and send along any additional information and material requested.