

CONGRESSIONAL MEETINGS 101

A PRIMER FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

BEFORE THE MEETING

01

How to schedule: If scheduling your own meetings, call the Member's D.C. office. Ask for the Scheduler or the Legislative Assistant (LA) who handles your issue area.

What to say: "My name is [Name]. I am a constituent and [Role] from [City/State]. I will be in DC on [Date] with [Organization], and I am calling to request a 15-minute meeting to discuss [Issue]."

How to prepare: Work with your organization to outline talking points. Your most important job is to personalize the key message.

- ▶ **Tell your story:** Prepare a 1-2 minute anecdote that shows the real-world impact of this issue on your work, community, or business. A personal story is more memorable than abstract data.
- ▶ **Focus on expertise, not partisanship:** Your credibility comes from your professional expertise. Frame your issues around shared, broadly supported values like "economic growth," "community safety," "innovation," or "a strong workforce."
- ▶ **Define the call to action:** A meeting without a specific "ask" is a missed opportunity. Consider saying: "Will you co-sponsor H.R. XXX, the [Bill Name] Act?" OR "As you finalize the appropriations bills, please support \$XXX million for [Program Name]."

DAY OF THE MEETING

02

What to wear: Dress in professional attire. You will be doing a significant amount of walking between buildings, so wear comfortable shoes.

How to get in: You will need to go through airport-style security. Bring a government-issued photo ID and allow extra time.

Who you'll meet: You will almost certainly meet with a staff member, not the Member of Congress. It is normal and productive to talk with a Legislative Assistant (LA) or Legislative Director (LD) who handles the issue portfolio you are there to discuss.

Where you'll meet: Capitol Hill offices are crowded. Do not be surprised if your meeting takes place in a busy reception area, at a small table, or even in the hall. Arrive at the members' office 15 minutes early.

DURING THE MEETING

03

Be a constituent first: Start by saying where you live and work in the Member's state or district. This is your most important credential.

Be clear and concise: You have 15 minutes. Use your prepared story to make your case, then state your "ask."

Be a resource: Staffers cover many issues and may not be experts on your topic. Your job is to be an honest broker of information.

Handle tough questions: If you don't know the answer to a question, do not make it up. Simply say, "That is an excellent question. I will find that information and follow up." This is an excellent opportunity to build a relationship.

Take photos: Ask the staffer if they are open to a photo. If not, take a group photo outside the office by the Member's plaque.

Leave your materials: At the end of the meeting, thank the staffer and hand them the one-page leave-behind.

AFTER THE MEETING

04

Send a "Thank You" email: Send a brief email to the staffer you met within 24 hours. Reiterate your ask and attach a copy of the leave-behind.

Follow through: If you promised to follow up with an answer to a question, do so promptly.

Post on social media: Post your photo and tag the lawmaker and your organization. Say, for example: "Great meeting with @[LawmakerHandle]'s office today to discuss the importance of [Key Issue] for [State/District]. Thank you for your time! #[Organization] #[FlyInHashtag]"

