

## **Organize a Congressional Meeting with your Elected Representatives**

### **Send a letter/Call to secure a meeting time**

Write a brief letter requesting a meeting time with your member of congress or senator and fax or email to the offices' scheduler. You can find the contact information for your offices by searching the House of Representatives or the US Senate's websites. You will likely have to call to follow up and secure a time and date to meet.

### **Confirm at least a day or two beforehand**

Members of Congress' schedules frequently change – even up to the last minute. The member's scheduler should contact the point person if this happens, but it doesn't hurt to call the scheduler a day or two in advance to confirm the time/date/location.

### **Visit Elected Officials' Website beforehand**

Just prior to your visit, go to the elected officials' website and look for recent statements or press releases relevant to the issue to be up to date on where the candidate stands.

### **Arrive early**

If a group is gathering for the meeting, plan to meet at a nearby location 15 minutes early; plan to be in the lobby 5 minutes before your scheduled meeting time.

### **Lead with a positive statement**

Leading with a thank you for past votes or support of an issue usually makes people more receptive to the meeting and your requests. Don't take argumentative approach: you may be better educated on the issue than those you meet with, but that won't help get your message across.

### **Practice delivering a simple message/theme**

Start and conclude with a clear statement; don't get bogged down in the small details. Don't try to get multiple messages across; best to focus on only 1 clear theme with no more than 2 to 3 supporting strategies.

### **Engage in a conversation; Don't Lecture**

You have an agenda, but don't forget to keep it a conversation. Ask questions and try to get some level of commitment or gauge the level of support for an issue. If there are many people present, designate 1 or 2 clear speakers so that everyone is not trying to speak on all issues

### **Conclude the meeting with a clear ask**

"We need your help/leadership/support in order to....."

### **Document your meeting**

Bring cameras and take pictures, esp. if your meeting is with the Member. Write up notes afterwards so you don't forget the critical points and can share with partners not present.

### **Do your follow-up**

Get the contact info/card of staffers in the meeting and send a follow up/thank you letter with all attendees signing and include a picture as a reminder.

If meeting was with a staffer and not the member, request a follow-up visit later in the year with the member while they are home for a congressional recess.

Thank the member/staff for whatever they said they were going to do (serves as a subtle reminder).

Send copies of local press coverage on topic to the staffer/office and keep inviting them to events.