Tips for Successful Meetings with Your Elected Officials

Be Prepared
Review and rehearse the key points you want to make. If possible, learn member’s committee assignments (refer to your Congressional Directory).

Be on Time
But don’t be surprised if they’re not. Congressional schedules are hectic. You need to be flexible and patient. Leave buffer time for a successful or delayed meeting. It takes about 20 minutes to cross from the House side to the Senate side. If you are unexpectedly running late, call the office as a courtesy.

Be Conscientious of Numbers
Meeting space is very limited and causes anxiety for offices trying to facilitate multiple meetings. Standing in the hall for a meeting is not uncommon. Priority should be given to constituents, and let them speak first – only include non-constituents if they serve a particular role that is relevant to the specific member.

Be Political
Introduce yourself, noting where you live and/or go to school (i.e., confirming that you are a constituent) and establishing a connection to the issue you’d like to discuss. During your conversation, relate situations to the member’s home state or district.

Be Concise
Hill visits are very brief (usually 15-20 minutes). Plan on making no more than 3 key points, using personal and local examples to emphasize the need for the Senator/Representative’s support. The National Council will provide fact sheets on site at Hill Day and will make electronic versions available in advance. The fact sheets will help you explain:
- What’s the issue (purpose of visit)?
- What’s the impact/importance (local/state/nation)?
- What you’d like the Senator/Representative to do?

Be Curious
Don’t be afraid to ask how the Senator/Representative stands on the issue; and be tolerant of differing views, keeping dialogue open. Ask for (don’t demand) reaction or feedback on your position. Show openness to the knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them gently without being argumentative. Do spend time with Members whose position is against yours. You can lessen the intensity of the opposition and perhaps change it.

Be Responsive
Try to answer any questions asked, but if you can’t, let them know you’ll get back to them with the information and be sure to follow up.

Be Appreciative
Thank your elected official or staffer for his/her time.
Be Smart
Always send a follow-up “thank you” letter, reiterating the points made during the meeting. If you promised to provide more information – provide it. Don’t drop the ball – this is your opportunity to prove that you are a resource.

Provide Feedback
Please use the feedback mechanism that the National Council provides to let us know your elected officials’ positions on the issues you discussed and if there is any follow-up we need to do with that office.