



Tips For Visiting a Congressional Office

Sell yourself. Remember that, in actuality, you are not selling a legislative proposal or your company (or association), but yourself. If you are friendly, helpful, understanding, and not hostile, you can be successful. Help lawmakers overcome seeing your organization through a corporate or industry lens by focusing on how people will be impacted by the choices they make.

Get to the point. When making a visit to any elected official, don't take forever to make your pitch. Streamline the conversation by walking through your introduction, high level talking points, and what you are ultimately seeking. Tell them who you represent, the number of members and employees you represent, what your primary concerns are, and how and why these concerns are related to the issue you are discussing.

Be kind to staff members. Whether in person or speaking over the telephone, always be kind to staff members. Even though they may seem extremely young, they will end up being the individuals who have the greatest potential to help or hinder you and your cause.

Check your facts and figures. Make sure that you are presenting accurate facts and figures. Keep the meeting focused and persuasive, only discussing the issues that you outlined in the agenda sent to the member and/or the member's staff.

Keep politics out of it. Avoid discussing election or campaign support at the risk of painting a member as "for sale". Respect the member's political views and affiliations outside of the scope of the issues being discussed.

Don't become discouraged. As you become more familiar with the legislative process, you will discover the many ways that legislation and people can become thwarted. If you are looking for a big win the first time out, don't be discouraged if you fail. Remember, visiting elected officials rarely activates or converts them; it reinforces them.

Follow up. Follow up on a visit with a "thank you" email when you get home – even if you think the meeting didn't go as well as it might have. Always include praise and thanks for staff who have been helpful – they can be a tremendous asset to you in the future.

Attend events in the district. Increase visibility with the member by attending town halls or other events in the district. Building relationships with district staff as trustworthy resource is essential.

Stay in touch. Avoid over-communicating but sending along new information as it becomes available is a helpful way to stay in touch with your Representative, keeping important issues at the top of their mind.