



## Tips for Meeting with Congress

Meeting Members of Congress in person is an excellent way to communicate your concerns and priorities to your representatives in Washington. The following are a few tips to keep in mind as you head to your Senator or Representative's office.

### **Before your head to Capitol Hill, prepare for your meeting.**

- NCSHA strongly encourages you to contact your Representative's office and schedule an appointment. You can find the phone numbers for your Representatives [here](#). You can find the phone numbers for your Senators [here](#). When you call, be sure to give your contact information to the staffer in case your meeting is rescheduled. If you do not have an appointment, you will most likely not be able to meet with anyone in the office and will only be able to drop off materials.
- If there is a particular bill that you wish to discuss, know its name and number. Also see if there is companion legislation in the other chamber. It is also important to know what relevant committees and subcommittees your Member of Congress sits on, as you want them to be prepared to take action once your priorities can be inserted into upcoming legislation.
- If you are bringing printed materials to leave behind, be sure to have at least three copies for the Member of Congress and his or her staff.
- Be ready to deliver a short, concise message on your issue. Your objective is to be brief and clear with what you would like done. The person you are meeting with may not be familiar with your organization and your priorities, so avoid acronyms and lingo. Be prepared to give a quick overview regarding your organization.
- For the House of Representatives, three-digit office numbers are located in the Cannon House Office Building. Four digit office numbers that begin with a "1" are located in the Longworth House Office Building. Four digit office numbers that begin with a "2" are located in the Rayburn House Office Building. The hundreds number indicates which floor the office is on. For example, Representative John C. Carney's office number is 1429. This indicates that his office is on the fourth floor of the Longworth House Office Building.
- For the Senate, office numbers are preceded with SR-, SD-, or SH-. These designate which building, Russell, Dirksen, or Hart, the office is located in. For example, Senator Charles Schumer's office number is SH-314. This indicates that his office is on the third floor of the Hart Senate Office Building.
- Be sure to keep an eye on your phone and/or e-mail on the day of the meeting. Unplanned, last-minute activities may delay your meeting. The situation on Capitol Hill can be very fluid as new bills and amendments are brought to the floor or other circumstances arise.

## **Make the most of your time.**

- Be early. Give yourself some extra time to enter through security and to locate your Representatives' offices. Be sure to ask for directions if you need help.
- Prohibited items in Congressional office buildings include sealed boxes, closed envelopes, and weapons of any kind, including mace and knives of any size. Any bags you have may be searched.
- When you arrive at your member's office, tell the receptionist who you are and supply a business card. The staffer with whom you are meeting may be delayed so you may encounter waits of ten minutes or more. You may also meet with a less senior person than expected.
- Space in Congressional offices is often limited. Your meeting may take place in the reception area, in the hallway, or in another location. Do not take schedule changes personally, as oftentimes the change is due to circumstances outside the Member or staffer's control. Remember to always be gracious and flexible.
- When in the meeting, introduce yourself, everyone in your party, and your organization. Thank your Member of Congress or the staffer for his or her time and, if applicable, thank him or her for their past support for your priorities.
- Be brief and clear in your message. The Member or staffer may only have a short time to meet with you, so be sure to get your point across.
- Listen carefully to the Member or staffer's response. Even if they disagree with your position, be cordial and understanding.
- The person you are meeting with may be unfamiliar with the issue and may only be able to tell you that they will pass along your message. Be understanding, as this staffer is most likely your best chance to influence your Member of Congress.
- When the meeting is over, trade business cards with the staffer with whom you just met. Ask for their preferred mode of communication.
- Follow up later with a thank you note. Express appreciation for the time spent in the meeting and reiterate your main points. Briefly go over your priorities and what you would like to see done. If the Member or staffer requested additional information, supply it for them in an easy-to-understand manner.