

Top 10 Tips for a Successful Visit with a Member of Congress

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Key Takeaways

Explore these 10 tips to strengthen your chances of having a successful visit during your scheduled meeting with a Member of Congress.

After your meeting, take a moment to tell us how it went. Your response will help us track our advocacy efforts.

- 1. Be prepared.** You want to establish—and then strengthen—a relationship with your legislator and his/her staff. You should prepare thoroughly, be polite, be as specific as possible, and never threaten.
- 2. Accept meetings with staff.** Don't be concerned if you end up meeting with staff rather than your member of Congress. In many cases, this can prove to be equally or more productive.

3. **Budget your time.** Be concise, but cover all the points you wish to make. In general, it is best to address a limited number of issues (three maximum). Most meetings last less than 30 minutes, so budget your time wisely and leave time for discussion.
4. **Be personal.** Explain why the issue is important to you and to people in your district/state. Speak from your personal experience and illustrate your points with real people and examples, if possible. Explain the consequences that adverse action or failure to act will have on individuals in your state, city, or town.
5. **Be specific.** If possible, cite sources of independent support for your position (opinion polls, studies, etc.).
6. **Request action.** After you make your points, request specific action, and don't be afraid to ask the legislator's position. If they are currently undecided, ask them to inform you by mail or email when they make a decision, and to tell you why they took the position. If you are asking the legislator to provide leadership in moving something forward, ask him/her to provide you with a response or report on what happens.
7. **Leave contact information.** Leave your name, address, email address, affiliation, and telephone number with the member of Congress or staff. Thank them for taking time to meet with you.
8. **Stay in touch.** Follow-up the visit with an email thanking the member of Congress or staffer for their time and briefly summarizing the major issues discussed. Be sure to follow through on any commitments you made and provide any additional information requested. Keep in touch with the member of Congress and staff through occasional correspondence and visits to the local/state office.
9. **Share what happened.** [Share your experiences and learnings](#) with the NCOA public policy staff. Send copies of any materials you provided. Let them know if there are follow-ups that they should make. Ask them for help with your next steps if you need it.
10. **Finally, remember** that staying power and relationships are keys to accomplishing anything! Stay in the struggle and strive to maintain good communication with your members of Congress.