

EIGHT TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY VISIT WITH CONGRESS

Meeting with and developing relationships with Congressional members is one of the most effective ways to influence their positions on issues. You can meet with Congress in WA DC or when they visit their district.

1. **Make an appointment.** Schedule your visit way in advance! You may end up meeting with staff. Don't be discouraged – in many cases meeting with staff can be equally or more effective. Meeting with a group of constituents increases the likelihood of getting a meeting with the Congressperson rather than staff. [Call their district office](#) and ask how to request/schedule a meeting. Be sure to follow-up so your request doesn't get lost in the shuffle.
2. **Prepare for the lobby visit.** Information on your Congressperson's co-sponsorship of bills and previous votes are available [here](#). Have a pre-meeting with your group to determine who will cover which points, who will take notes, and who will "chair" the meeting to keep it on topic and on time. These meetings are generally less than 15 minutes long, so be prepared for a quick pitch.
3. **Be punctual and positive.** Arrive early and thank them for their time. Even if you disagree on most issues, compliment the Congressperson for a vote or action that you appreciated.
4. **Focus the meeting.** Briefly introduce everyone in your group, the organization you represent, and the topic you wish to discuss. It is important to talk about only one issue and to stay on this topic. *Check out our "[Developing Effective Messages](#)" document for more help.*
5. **Listen and gather information.** Ask for their view on an issue. Be patient and passionate; don't react angrily if you don't get the response you want. Remain polite.
6. **Make a specific request.** Rather than something vague like "I want you to support the environment," have a clear "ask" for a specific bill: "I would like Representative Doe to vote yes on H.R. 1234, the Tree Planting Act." Give several brief points regarding why they should support this bill, and why it's important to the district they represent. Avoid a long moral debate about the issue; be concrete.
7. **Follow up.** Tell the staff person you will get back to them if you can't provide specific information on the spot. If the staff person is unfamiliar with a bill or is unsure of the Congressperson's position, ask for follow-up correspondence. Leave one or two pages of relevant material with your contact info.
8. **Express your thanks.** At the end of the meeting, thank whom you met with for their time. Send a thank you letter soon after your visit, repeating your "ask." This helps to build a relationship over time!