

# Influencing Policy Decisions: MEETING WITH LAWMAKERS



In-person visits are the most influential way to influence policy decisions.



Locate information about your Senators and Congressional Representatives:  
[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

## PLANNING THE MEETING

### Scheduling

- Look at the lawmaker's website for instructions on how to schedule a meeting.
- Reach out to schedule 2-3 weeks in advance of the desired meeting date, whenever possible.
- Be prepared to share the reason for the meeting.
- Provide a contact person's name/phone number/email address, preferred date.
- Understand that you may be scheduled to meet with a staffer. Meetings with staffers can be very beneficial!
- Keep your group small and involve constituents. (Meeting with constituents is a top priority for lawmakers.)
- Know your Senator/Representative's schedule. Plan a meeting when votes and work sessions are not taking place.
- Be flexible regarding where and when you can meet. Meetings are often scheduled to last for 15-20 minutes.

### Preparation

- If you work for a nonprofit, know what activities you can engage in. (*Grantspace.org* has good information: <https://goo.gl/38UW8F>)
- Determine what you want to address, and familiarize yourself with the issues.
- Check with advocacy organizations you work with to see if they have a script or talking points you want to consider.
- Prepare 3-5 key points you want to present during the meeting.
- Collect or create factsheets or materials that you wish to leave behind. A 1-2 page summary document is helpful.

## DURING THE MEETING

- Arrive approximately 5-10 minutes before the meeting - it is important to be on time.
- Begin by introducing yourself. Engage the lawmaker. Thank him/her for something he/she has done.
- Tell your personal story as well as key points about the issue.
- Share what is of most concern and provide data and information that provides context. Be prepared to answer questions.
- Stay focused on the topic you came to discuss. Have a clear goal for what you want the lawmaker to know/do.
- Keep the conversation specific to the lawmaker's state/district.
- Present a clear request (an "ask") before leaving. Offer to help with steps that may need to be taken related to your "ask".

## AFTER THE MEETING

- Send thank-you emails or notes to those you met with.
- Respond to unanswered questions that were posed during the meeting.
- Follow-up on progress made toward any requests you made.
- Keep in touch. Consider attending town-hall meetings and contacting the office periodically.

## NOT ABLE TO MEET IN PERSON?

### Phone Calls:

Office phone numbers are on your member's website, or you can call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121.) Identify yourself as a constituent and be prepared to present your issue in a clear and succinct fashion.

### Emails/Letters:

Send letters via email through your member's website. Include your name and address, and start with "Dear Senator" or with "Dear Representative". Identify the key issue, supporting information, local impact, and action you would like taken. Keep it short.

### Social Media:

Though social media is not always the best way to contact members of Congress, posting information on your legislator's social media sites can help bring your voice forward.

