



# Public Policy: Tools You Can Use

## **Tips for Successful Meetings with Your Elected Officials**

Remember that most Hill visits (whether in-person or virtual) are brief (15-30 minutes) and often with the staffers who are responsible for the issue...not with the member of Congress.

### **Be Prepared**

Review and rehearse the key points you want to make. If possible, learn the member's committee assignments and look at some of her/his legislative initiatives and votes.

### **Be on Time**

But don't be surprised if they're not. Congressional schedules are hectic. You need to be flexible and patient. Leave buffer time for a successful or delayed meeting. It takes about 20 minutes to cross from the House side to the Senate side. If you are unexpectedly running late, call/text/e-mail the office as a courtesy.

### **Be Conscientious of Numbers**

Meeting space is very limited for in-person meetings and causes anxiety for offices trying to facilitate multiple meetings. Standing in the hall for a meeting is not uncommon. Priority should be given to constituents and let them speak first – only include non-constituents if they serve a particular role that is relevant to the specific member (unless it is your lobbyist/policy advisor).

### **Be Political**

Introduce yourself, noting where you live (i.e., confirming that you are a constituent) and establishing a connection to the issue you'd like to discuss. During your conversation, relate situations to the member's home state or district.

### **Be Concise**

Hill visits are very brief (usually 15-30 minutes), so plan on making no more than 3 key points, using personal and local examples to emphasize the need for the legislator's support.

### **Be Curious**

Don't be afraid to ask how the senator/representative stands on the issue; and be tolerant of differing views, keeping dialogue open. Ask for (don't demand) reaction or feedback on your position. Show openness to the knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them gently

without being argumentative. Do spend time with members whose position is against yours. You may be able to lessen the intensity of the opposition and perhaps change it.

**Be Responsive**

Try to answer any questions asked, and if you can't, promise to get back to them with the information. Then be sure to follow up!

**Be Appreciative**

Thank your elected official or staffer for his/her time.

**Be Smart**

Always send a follow-up "thank you" letter, reiterating the points made during the meeting. If you promised to provide more information – provide it. Don't drop the ball – this is your opportunity to prove that you are a resource.