

Tips for a Successful Meeting with Your Legislators

Know Your Lawmaker – *The first step to successful communication is to know your lawmaker*

- Lawmaker's political party
- Legislative committees he or she serves on
- Leadership positions he or she holds
- Voting record on issues of importance to you
- Personal facts (such as hometown, previous profession)

Address by Title and Last Name

- “Senator” is always correct
- “Representative” is always correct
- “Congressman” is correct for a male; “Congresswoman” is correct for a female
- “Mr. Chairman” or “Madam Chair” is appropriate -- shows respect for a leadership position

Staff Members Are Important – *They are the “gateway” or “steel door” to the Member*

- Often better versed on issues than Members
- Young, but highly educated; can be sensitive about their place in the hierarchy
- Typically will stay to meet with constituents when Members leave
- Gain seniority quickly and often move from one Member office to another
- A negative impression will get back to Members - Don't make a bad impression with them!

YOUR Staff is Important Too

- Refer to them as ‘office manager’, ‘office staff’, ‘assistant’, or ‘nurse’
- NEVER call them ‘my girl’ or ‘the girls’

Time is Crucial!

- Be on time. Call ahead if you are running late - however, expect delays on their end
- Members may be called for a vote at any time
- Emergency meetings or negotiations may intrude

Stay on Message

- Congressional offices are VERY busy and meet with many people each day - don't waste their time!
- Keep message simple - briefly and succinctly talk about how an issue affects your practice; give specific examples
- Be credible - Members/staff often look to interest groups as a source of education; don't misrepresent facts or misstate an opponent's position
- Use talking points for guidance
- Give the issue briefs to your lawmaker or staff person you are meeting with

Other Tips for a Successful Meeting

- **Encourage questions** - Afterwards, follow-up with staff regarding any information that your lawmaker requested during the meeting.
- **Find out your lawmaker's position on an issue** - Make your meeting an open exchange of ideas; be straightforward, but courteous in expressing your views.
- **Ask for something specific** - For example, “I hope you will vote in favor of H.R. 1234,” or “Please consider the facts and reconsider your position on S. 222.” Many lawmakers express frustration when their constituents don't make it clear what they are seeking.
- **Thank the Member** for his or her time, even if he or she did not agree with you on the issues.
- **Wrap up the meeting** in about 15 minutes.

*******NEVER discuss individual or OMSPAC contributions.** *It is against federal election laws to discuss campaign contributions of any form in a federal office.*