

# Meeting with Congressional Offices 101

Members of Congress, Senators, congressional leaders are servants of the people. They were elected into office with the goal of making their district/state a better place. To make effective changes, they need to hear from you, their constituents. Legislators work for you!

Unsure of who your congressional leaders are? [Click here](#) to find your Senator and congressional member's information.



## Identify your goal or “ask” for the member of Congress

Organize your thoughts and your legislative “ask” prior to going into the meeting with your member of Congress. Be prepared to briefly tell your story of why this piece of legislation is important. How would having this bill in place impact your patients, employees, (their constituents). Having a specific “ask” is key to a meeting with your congressional members. Going into a meeting with a specific goal in mind will help drive action from your members of Congress.



Elected officials always have their next election in mind. If you are not one of their constituents (live within their district) or your business does not affect their district, sadly they may not be interested in speaking with you. Always keep this in mind.

Be conscientious of the time of the meeting. Most congressional visits (in-person or virtual) last only 30 minutes. Make sure you allow enough time for each attendee to speak, tell their story.

## Organize your talking points

Put together a one-sheeter of your issue(s). VGM or other trade organizations may already have one put together, ready to go for you.

- Begin with introductions of the issue. Include with whom this is having a negative effect. Make sure this answers the... who, what, when, why questions.
- Include why we are coming to you for help? How can this member of Congress be of assistance? Co-sponsor a bill? Lead legislation? Encourage others to support this bill?
- Keep this page to just one sheet if possible. Too much information can be overwhelming. Make sure your ask is clear and concise. Make the “ask” bold.
- If your meeting is virtual, use PowerPoint slides during your meeting to show studies, research data and anecdotal information.

## Strategize for the meeting

To hold an organized and effective meeting, you will want to strategize with your meeting attendees. Know ahead of time how many people are attending your meeting. Do they all plan to speak? Assign topics of discussion to the attendees. This will ensure all points are discussed during the meeting, and nothing was missed. This will also allow all parties the chance to speak and all requests are discussed. We recommend getting with the group a day or two prior to the actual meeting to strategize.



The congressional office will want to know the name and locations of all attendees so they can be prepared for the meeting. Send them an email a day or two before the meeting with list of attendees, company name and city/town name if necessary. Include any resources, PowerPoint slides, reference guides in your email. The congressional offices like to be knowledgeable and prepared for the meetings. They do not like to be caught off-guard.

Keep any opposition in mind. How could this office possibly oppose this bill? Be prepared to answer any possible counterarguments.

Check Your Ideology at the Door – It's important to meet with members of Congress whether or not you agree with their policy positions. Particularly during campaign events when the Congressman is speaking to his partisan base, it might be difficult to listen to if you don't agree with the points being made. Remember you are here for one reason today. Stay focused and stick to your issue. Don't be sidetracked by the show.

## It's meeting time!

Arrive on time to the meeting! It is typical that the representative or staff be late to the meeting.

Begin the meeting by thanking them for their time. Follow this with brief introductions. Include your name, business name, what your business does, how many people you employ.

When you get the opportunity to talk, be friendly and factual. Don't be confrontational. Give scenarios about how your business and customers are being impacted.



Emotions can run high in these meetings. Participants sometimes express frustration or emotion. It's okay! As long as you continue to treat the office and the staff with respect. Emotion shows the importance of the issue.

Conclude the meeting by thanking them again for their time and consideration. Tell them you will be following up in the next couple weeks, allowing them time to digest the information provided.

## Follow up is key

This is the most important piece of this meeting! Congressional offices attend constituent meetings all day, with various different “asks”. Don’t let them forget about your issues! Follow up within a day or so of the meeting, thanking them again for their time. Include your contact info and electronic copies of any information that was presented during the meeting. Let them know again that you will be following up in soon.

