



Top Ten Tips for Congressional Meetings

1. Have a plan

- If you are attending the meeting with a group, please make sure you meet (either in person or by phone) beforehand to plan out the meeting and pick a spokesperson.
- During the meeting, provide brief introductions (1-2 minutes), then go right into key message points.
- Focus on three issues. For additional issues, put it in writing.

2. Limit the Size of Your Group or Delegation

- Five at most for House meetings, larger groups OK for Senate meetings.
- Gives everyone a chance to talk and participate.

3. Exchange Contact Information

- Don't forget to get staff business cards!
- Make the connection – good for follow up.
- Good to include a list with names and contact info in your leave-behind folders.

4. Don't Let the Member Distract You!

- Will try to get you to talk about anything but your issue.
- Small talk is fine, but make sure you get to your key message points.

5. Its OK to Say "I Don't Know"

- Your member of Congress or his/her staffer may ask you a question you do not know the answer to.
- Politely say "I Don't Know" and promise to follow up. Don't make something up!
- **MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW UP** – or contact the Council on Foundations to follow up for you.

6. Have a “leave behind” folder ready

- Include issue papers, contact info., news clippings, etc.
- Keep it brief.
- Rule of Thumb – If you are not willing to read all of the materials, the member or staff will likely not be willing to read the materials.

7. Don’t forget the “ASK”

- Most important part of the meeting!!
- Ask your member of Congress to contact you if new legislation is introduced
- Offer to be a resource to your Senator or Representative.

8. The Staff is Valuable!

- If the member can not attend, still meet with the staff person. Try to make it a meeting with the lawmaker’s Legislative Director or Tax Aide.
- They can be your best advocates!!

9. Be Punctual

- Members of Congress have busy schedules
- If you are late, your meeting will be shortened or cancelled.
- CALL AHEAD if you are going to be late or have to cancel the meeting.

10. Relax

- Don’t Be Nervous!
- Remember that your member of Congress should be more nervous than you are – you are electing him or her after all!

Questions? Please contact Chatrane Birbal, Grassroots Coordinator of Public Policy and Research at the Council on Foundations, at Chatrane.birbal@cof.org