

Keys To A Successful Meeting on Capitol Hill

- **Be On Time For All Meetings:** Take into consideration the increased security around Capitol Hill and allow additional time to gain entry to buildings and find meeting rooms.
- **Turn Off Cell Phones/Pagers/Blackberries:** Nothing is more important for the brief time you are meeting with your Member of Congress and or their staff – focus on those you are meeting with and your message.
- **Expect Member Might Be Delayed:** This is normal due to Floor votes, committee meetings, and last minute schedule changes. While waiting, meet with staff or review your priorities and presentation.
- **Designate A Spokesperson To Lead The Meeting:** The team leader needs to clearly state your priorities quickly and efficiently.
- **Teams Of Large Numbers Need To Meet Before Meetings:** This is to be sure that everyone knows their role and your message is delivered clearly and concisely.
- **Keep Your Message BRIEF:** Identify key points and explain why the issue is important to you, their constituents and therefore, to the Member. Illustrate positive and/or negative impacts to his/her district or state.
- **Keep Introductions Brief And Limit Small Talk:** Expect to spend no more than 15 minutes with the Member or staff – use your time wisely. Keep the focus on your message.
- **Know Your Facts:** If you do not know the answer to a question, say so, and then promise to get them the information. Then be sure to follow up in a timely manner.
- **Be Respectfully Assertive:** Do not get into an argument with Member/ staff. This serves no purpose. The real goal is to build a long-term relationship.
- **Check Your Personal Politics At The Door:** Whether you have a defined party affiliation or you like or dislike your particular Member of Congress, this is not the appropriate place to display it. *Politics is not the issue – Policy is.*
- **Understand The Difference Between Personal Staff And Committee Staff:**
 - Personal Staff:** Direct concern for state impact issues; politically driven; interest in your request as you are a voting constituent.
 - Committee Staff:** Policy and fact oriented; less political; less sociable – pretty much all business.
- **Close The Deal: Tell the Member what you want him or her to do and get a commitment for action** (i.e. to send a letter, co-sign a letter, co-sponsor legislation, contact an appropriations committee with funding requests, etc.). Then be sure to follow-up with staff that attended the meeting.
- **Thank Member And Staff At The End Of The Meeting AND E-mail Or Fax A Thank You Letter:** In your letter mention all staff in attendance by name. Also, maintain regular communication with your Members and the staff (i.e. include your Members on any newsletters you distribute electronically).
- ***RELAX - BE YOURSELF***