

## Guide to a Legislator Visit

Meeting with elected officials is an opportunity to make your voice heard. An in-person lets you be persuasive, present information, and highlight stories or individuals who may move the congress person. At a lobby visit allows you to tell your Senator or Representative what you think about a certain issue or bill and ask her/him to take positive action. They can also be used as an opportunity to gather more information on an elected official's position to figure how you can get them to support the issue in the future.

### Before the Meeting

- Request a meeting by fax or email with specific times and dates. If possible, include a list of potential meeting attendees in the request. Make sure to include the issue or bill you would like to discuss. You may want to call the office to ask how they prefer to receive scheduling requests.
- If you do not hear back follow up with a phone call after a few days!
- If you have trouble getting an answer on your scheduling request, see if any of your community leaders or partners have a relationship with the Member of Congress or someone on his or her staff. If so, provide them with a copy of your original letter and ask them to place a follow-up call as well to inquire about the status of your scheduling request.

### Set Up a Prep Meeting

- Choose who will facilitate the meeting and will keep it on track. This person will usually do introduction and wrap up.
- The leader should have each group member introduce themselves, providing their name, organization, and a brief explanation of how they are involved or how their community is impacted.
- Go over talking point. Decide what message each person will use. Make sure to focus on your key points and don't make the issue too broad.
- Find a few powerful stories that illustrate your key points. Story telling is powerful and will make your visit memorable to legislators.
- Determine what your Ask is and who will make it.
- Assign a note taker.
- Practice everyone's part. Run through a role play of the meeting.

### During the Meeting

- Be prompt.
- Keep it short and stick to your talking points.
- Always make an ask and determine next steps.
- Take the time to thank the elected official for past votes in support of your issues.
- Provide personal and local examples of the impact of the legislation.
- Be honest and don't claim to know more than you do about an issue. You don't have to be the expert, just a committed and active constituent.
- Set a deadline or timeline for response.

- Leave behind a packet of useful information

#### **After the Meeting**

- Write a thank you letter to the legislator.
- Send any materials and information you offered.
- Follow up on deadlines. Be persistent.