

NATIONAL ANTI-HUNGER POLICY CONFERENCE



Tips for Virtual Lobby Day

Arranging Your Virtual Capitol Hill Visit

CALL AHEAD to schedule an appointment with your Members of Congress (“Members”) or the Congressional Aide assigned to work on your specific issue. Requests to meet with Members may need to be in writing. Information can be found through your Members’ website at www.house.gov and/or www.senate.gov. Capitol Hill Switchboard: 202-225-3121.

KNOW YOUR MEMBERS. Do some research: look up your Members’ biographical information, resumé, congressional committee assignments, caucuses joined, and voting records.

PREPARE A CONCISE ONE-PAGE FACTSHEET to send before and after your meeting as an immediate follow-up. The factsheet should be simple and to the point. You can include any of the following suggestions:

- Reference FRAC and Feeding America [leave behinds](#) on budget and appropriations, child nutrition reauthorization, and Farm Bill.
- Descriptions of the problems you want to be solved and specifically what actions you want your Members to take to solve them;
- Information about your organization — services you provide or impacts your program has in the District/State;
- Local press clippings; and
- Supplement your one-pager with photographs and easy-to-understand charts and graphs that reinforce your asks. If you have been unable to get your Members to visit your agency, prepare a document that captures your services.

RESEARCH OPPOSING VIEWS AND PREPARE TALKING POINTS that address these concerns. Know how to respectfully counter an argument when it disagrees with your position. Support your position with facts and statistics; avoid moral or emotional arguments.

Before Your Virtual Visit

Keep in mind that your visit might be cut short, so be well-organized. Choose one person to serve as a facilitator. This person will organize introductions, make opening remarks and keep things flowing.

Pre-Visit Checklist:

BE PROACTIVE: Check to ensure all those participating on their own devices have the proper software installed (e.g., Zoom, Webex, Teams) and the correct meeting link. Confirm your video settings and microphone are functioning properly. If you have access to a virtual meeting software without any time constraints, it is recommended that you use that account.

BE MINDFUL: Utilize proper video conferencing etiquette: try to look at the camera when speaking, balance speaking time amongst attendees, and attempt to keep distractions out of your video background. In this virtual setting, having resources pulled up might be helpful to you.

BE ON TIME: If you are responsible for the meeting link, be sure to open the meeting at least five minutes before the scheduled meeting time. If the meeting link has been sent to you by the Member’s office, be prepared to join at least five minutes before the scheduled time.

BE PATIENT: Members/Aides are often running late due to hearings, meetings, and votes.

BE PREPARED: If your appointment gets cut short, make sure you have a “two-minute elevator ask” (i.e., your “quick pitch”) that reiterates your primary reason for the meeting. Consider meeting with your fellow advocates and visiting with participants prior to the call to agree on topics, talking points, statistics to share, and/or questions to ask.



In cooperation with the National CACFP Forum

During Your Virtual Visit

DETERMINE THE AMOUNT OF TIME the group will have with Members/Aides.

INTRODUCE ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP.

Unless you are part of an extremely large group (and everyone should include their affiliation in their meeting identification), be sure every person has something to add to the discussion.

STAY ON TOPIC. Keep the presentation simple and straightforward. Present your issues briefly and persuasively.

EMPHASIZE THE DISTRICT/ STATE! Talk about local examples and the impact your work has in your community. Share a specific example or story that describes how the issue/proposal will affect your district, business, or the people you serve.

Members of Congress need to understand that there is an issue in their jurisdiction in which they can provide a solution. Adding meaning to the legislation that can provide a solution is the key to effective grassroots advocacy.

BE SPECIFIC. “The Ask” — Do not leave legislative visits without being clear and specific about what you want your Members to do (e.g., sign a letter to the President, cosponsor a bill, vote for or against a bill). Have available the bill/proposal or bill number you want to discuss. Your Members should know exactly what you expect from them.

Lobbying Dos and Don'ts:

DO ...

- Tell them you're a constituent and have programs that serve constituents.
- Demonstrate your broad community-based support.
- Be brief and listen respectfully. Find common ground.
- Focus on specific issues and proposals, not vague goals.
- Keep the long-term perspective in mind.
- Tailor your remarks and presentation to the time allotted.
- Take a picture or screenshot of the meeting.

DON'T ...

- Make long speeches.
- Ignore the staff — despite their (commonly) young age, they have substantial knowledge and influence.
- Be afraid to say, “I don't know.” You can always research information and get back to them later.
- Be partisan or argumentative.
- Forget to invite your Members to visit your program and follow up after the meeting.

- Forget “The Ask” during the meeting (be specific).
- Forget to thank your attendees for their time, even if they don't agree with your position — there's always next time!

After Your Virtual Visit

HAVE A FOLLOW-UP PLAN to monitor progress and build a relationship:

- Send a thank-you note for the meeting;
- Send relevant information requested during the meeting;
- Add your Members to your mailing list (newsletters, press releases, invitations to local events);
- Invite your Members to visit your agency, tour your facility, or see a program in action; and
- Keep in touch regularly with your Members/Aides and send studies, reports, and news items related to your program.
- Send the picture or screenshot to the Member of Congress' office and make sure to publish the image from your organization's social media pages and tag the Member of Congress.

Contacting Hill Offices

Scheduling

Following a call to the appropriate staffer, email a formal invitation to them and the Member's scheduler, making certain to include the list of participants and items you'd like to discuss.

Facebook

Most members of Congress have a Facebook account. Becoming friends or “liking” your Members is a great way to follow what they are doing in D.C. and back in the state or District. To see if your Members are on Facebook, go to www.facebook.com

Twitter

Twitter is an easy way to contact your Members of Congress. Once you have a Twitter account, contact your Members by [finding their Twitter handle](#) and composing a tweet with their handle included.

- Example: @(Twitter handle) we @(your org Twitter handle) urge you to support H.R. XXXX or S. XXXX to ensure that...

A tweet can only contain 280 characters (including spaces and punctuation marks); so, include a link to your organization's website if you can't fit all of the information in one tweet.

When you are composing your tweets, try to use hashtags (#) that are popular with other users so your message can be a part of the larger conversation. You can find popular hashtags by searching for the topics on the homepage, e.g., #EndHungerNow, #SummerMeals, #ChildTaxCredit