

Pre-Fly-In Checklist

A Citizen Advocate's To-Do List for Preparing for a Meeting with Congress

- Legislator Profile.** Review or create a short profile for each of the Senator(s) and Representative(s) with whom you've scheduled meetings. Identify any connections to your issue or group, as well as past interactions.
- Personal Story.** Whose story will you tell? Do you have a photo of a person or family who is affected by the issue you'll be discussing with Congress? Use the Seven Elements of Advocacy Story-telling to help build your narrative.
- Economic Impact.** Describe the political and economic impact of your organization in the district or state for staffers with whom you're meeting. Edit or add to any data provided by the national office.
- Pull Together Your "Ask."** Synthesize your content (economic impact, personal story, connections to legislator) in one "pitch." Don't just use the content created by the national office – *localize* it to YOUR community/organization/state. Create a bulleted outline you can practice.
- Be Ready to Provide Materials in Advance.** Have a copy of whatever you'll be bringing to the office and be prepared to send it 24-72 hours prior to your meeting. Members and staff appreciate a "read-ahead" document to understand your issue better.
- Be Ready with a "Thank You" Strategy.** Whom in the office are you going to thank; what are you going to say to them; what are their email addresses? Even short notes that simply say "thanks for taking the meeting" are greatly appreciated (and rare) in Congress.
- Be Ready with a "Letter to the Editor" Strategy.** If you think it appropriate, consider what kind of follow-up letter to the editor you'll be drafting. It could be a letter to: 1) thank legislator for their support; 2) include a "call to action" for fellow constituents to contact the legislator (if the legislator did not provide a firm answer); 3) politely criticize the legislator (if they turned you down). Identify newspaper outlets in advance of the meeting and learn their policies for submitting letters to the editor.
- Be Ready with a Social Media Strategy.** Create an "editorial calendar" of tweets and Facebook posts and draft them in advance. Have someone in your local organization (with your social media account logins) ready to support and post immediately before, during, and after you visit. Remember to include the legislator's Twitter handle in tweets to get the attention of the congressional office.