



## Preparing for a Congressional office visit

- Work with your institution's federal relations office to **schedule and confirm meetings.**
- Be familiar with the Member's office location.** Prepare to arrive to the building 20-30 minutes before your scheduled meeting to make sure you make it through security and arrive at the office a minimum of 5-10 minutes before the start of your meeting. The March is an extremely busy time on The Hill and you don't want to miss the opportunity for "face time" with Member or the staff. Also make sure that you know the phone number in the event you are running late because it is better to alert them that a previous meeting ran late than to show up to their office late with no consideration for their time.
- Familiarize yourself with the Member's stance on issues important to NAGPS/ your school.** Visit <https://www.govtrack.us/> to search the Representative's or Senator's record. If you are looking for a particular bill you can search for the H. or S. number- you can also search for sponsored or cosponsored legislation.
- If the Member has supported an important piece of legislation, make sure to open up the meeting discussion by **thanking the staffer or Member for supporting it.** If it is a piece of legislation that has not been introduced this Congress, but the legislator has supported similar legislation in the past make sure to also thank them and state that you wanted to flag them that new legislation has been introduced or will be introduced.
- Prepare your folder of "leave behinds" for the office.** Make sure to include your contact information in a letter and/or attach your business card to the folder. This is particularly important so that the staffer has your contact information in the event they need to email you regarding bills, letters or other legislative items following your meeting
- It is important to know on which committee(s) your Member sits.** Some committees have much more influence over the issues you care about than others (e.g. Higher Education, Appropriations). If the legislation you are advocating for has been or will be sent to a committee and if your Member sits on this committee this is the opportunity to get it "out of committee" and onto the floor for a vote. The best way to learn what committee your member sits on is to visit your legislator's webpage. However, every member has the opportunity to vote if the legislation you are advocating for comes to the floor.



## Tips for an effective Congressional meeting

- Arrive on time** (at least 5 minutes early) and be prepared.
- Greet them** with a handshake and formally introduce yourself and the school that you represent. Make sure to identify yourself as a constituent.
- Thank** the Member or staff for taking the opportunity to meet with you since you know that their schedule is extremely busy.
- Present your information in a direct, organized and timely manner.** Practice your pitch and try to keep it to 10-15 minutes, because meetings are typically scheduled for 20-30 minute slots.
- Start positive and try to thank your member or staff for something they have done. Don't talk so long about one issue that you run out of time to talk about other issues of importance. **Prioritize the issues** you are going to discuss when because sometimes you will be rushed and it is important you are on time.
- Your ASK**—Make sure to cite specific bills and the titles of the legislation or the issues to ensure they are clear on what you ask or what you would like them to do for you, their constituent. Make sure to relate the issue and the information to its impact on their district, state, and constituents. Use personal stories to demonstrate how the issue you are discussing is a real and impacts you and the constituents the Member serves.
- Always be polite and respectful; show that you are passionate about the issues you are presenting to the Member or staff. Be attentive to the Members position, comments and feedback.

## Follow up on a Congressional meeting

- Write a thank you note/email and restate your request for the Member's support on the issues you presented. This is a great opportunity to make a lasting impression and build a relationship with your legislator and their office.
- Make sure to email the Member or staff as a follow-up to any action items or requests for additional information discussed during the meeting.
- Keep in touch and continue to be a resource. To keep the momentum rolling after your meeting, continue to follow-up, as appropriate, throughout the year. Many staffers appreciate knowing that they have someone in the district who can be a resource.