

Congressional Meetings

This document provides information and guidelines to help ensure you have an effective and productive meeting with Members of Congress or their staff. The U-M DC office, located near the Senate Office Buildings (and ~15 minute walk from the House Office Buildings), is a resource, should you have additional questions or concerns or need space to work, store luggage, etc. If you would like to use the U-M DC office space, please reach out in advance of your trip to ensure space is available and there are no scheduling conflicts.

Importantly, if you are coming to Washington, D.C. as part of a trip scheduled by a professional society or association you belong to, please be clear when you set-up meetings on Capitol Hill that *you are representing your association/professional society*. The guidelines below are a helpful resource for Capitol Hill meetings generally. However, your professional society/association should provide you with talking points, memos or additional information about Congressional meetings. Your association/professional society should be your primary point of contact.

Meeting Guidelines:

1. Introductions

- Briefly give your name, title, and where you work
- Distribute business cards; collect staff business cards
- Distribute written materials, one sheeters, or any other information you brought
 - Further information on creating a one-pager for policymakers & other stakeholders can be found [here](#).

2. Overview of the Issue/Topic and Request

- Present the overall issue you will discuss and be upfront with your request.
 - Make your ask direct
 - Cite specific bills, amendments, etc. to ensure clarity
 - E.g. “I am here to urge Senator Smith to increase funding for the NIH. Specifically, it will enable further research on ...”
- Respectfully gauge level of understanding in the subject matter:
 - E.g. “How familiar are you with the Perkins Loan Program?”
 - Tailor your overview with regards to level of familiarity
 - Do not be surprised or express frustration if the Member/staff are not familiar with your issue; Congress considers a wide range of topics every day and this may be the first time learning about your issue
- Present your information in a direct, coherent and organized manner
 - Avoid technical jargon, terms and acronyms that someone outside of the field would not understand

- Practice your pitch on individuals outside of your field to ensure they understand what your content
- Identify your interest in this topic
 - E.g. What does your research focus on? Or, what is your connection to this topic?
 - Make it personal if you can -- using personal stories can help translate issues into tangible, realistic, & relatable problems
- Identify why it is relevant to the Member of Congress/district/state of Michigan
 - What is the connection to the Member's district?
 - Has the Member expressed interest in this topic previously?
 - Is the Member on any relevant Committees/Caucuses that will consider this issue?

3. Feedback

- Ascertain the Member's views on the topic/issue and be respectful
 - If a Member does not support your issue, do not become confrontational, argumentative, or angry; ask for more information on why they feel a certain way and ask if there is any additional information you can provide
 - If a Member is supportive of your issue, thank them for their support
- Do not be discouraged if the Member/staff cannot provide a position at that time. Thousands of bills are introduced each year and Members may not be familiar about an area until it comes before them for consideration; thank them for taking the time to learn about your issue.

4. Conclusion

- Thank the Member/staff for their time
- Offer yourself as a resource for future questions on this topic

Additional Information:

- Do not arrive late; try to get to each meeting a few minutes early to ensure you are checked-in and ready to start on time
- Prepare for your meeting – go to each Member's website & learn about their background, interests, Committee assignments & caucuses
- Limit your meeting agenda to no more than three topics/issues
- Do not bring up issues unrelated to the meeting scope; only discuss what you originally asked to discuss in your meeting request
- Do not extend the meeting beyond your scheduled time; be respectful of their limited time

- Do not be discouraged if the Member is late or unable to attend the meeting; Member schedules are unpredictable and it is the Member's staff who create and drive their agenda
- Be attentive to the Member's positions, comments, and feedback
- Follow up with the office with a thank you & any other material/information requested
- Do not bring up politics, campaigns, or campaign contributions; it is inappropriate and a violation of Congressional ethics rules to mention campaign-related activity inside a Federal building
- Leave your personal politics at home; each Member, regardless of political party, wants to be responsive to the needs of his/her constituents;
- Have an open mind & try to enjoy the day; if you are upbeat and excited about your topic, Members/staff will share in your excitement too

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the U-M DC office (202.554.0578).