

Requesting In-District Meetings with Members of Congress

Meeting with your Member of Congress is a powerful way to advocate for change and address the issues that matter to you. Your legislators want to hear from you, so that they can better understand the issues impacting the district and state they represent. Meeting in-district often means Members of Congress are less busy and have more time dedicated to speaking with constituents.

Step 1: Identify Your Members of Congress

Remember, you have three federal legislators that represent you— two Senators and one Representative. All three of them will have offices in your district or state where they and their staff will be available for meetings. If you do not know who your Senators or Representative are, go to www.senate.gov or www.house.gov, respectively. We suggest researching these Members to find out their background in relation to your cause/issue and deciding which one you will be requesting a meeting with.

Step 2: Contacting Their Office

After you have found which Member of Congress you will be meeting with, you will have to contact their office. There are a few ways to do so, and many offices have different procedures. Here are a few ways to get in contact:

1. Visit the Congressional Member's website
 - o Look for a "Contact" or "Request a Meeting" form
2. Email the office scheduler
 - o You can use the draft below as a starting point
3. Call your Congressman's office that's closest to you and ask for the scheduler's contact information (Email address, phone number)

Note:

Make sure you are either a constituent of the Member(s) you reach out to or have a constituent connection to the district. This may mean that while you don't live there, someone you're advocating on behalf of (a close friend, family member, etc.) or who is also attending the meeting with you does. Being honest about your connection to the Member's district maximizes your chances of scheduling a successful meeting.

We suggest requesting an in-district meeting when Congress is in recess, as members will be back home in their communities instead of in Washington, DC. The majority leaders in both the House and Senate publish their chamber's respective work calendar at the beginning of each year. You can usually find these by googling, "House/Senate Work Calendar" depending on which chamber the Member you plan to reach out to serves in.

Additionally, if the office gets back to you with an offer to meet with a staffer, **accept it!** This is a great opportunity to raise your issue – While it's exciting to meet with the legislator, staffers are highly informed on specific issue areas and play a large role in informing their Member of Congress on issues that are important to their constituents.

Step 3: Confirm That Your Request was Received and Your Meeting is Confirmed

Congressional schedulers often have inboxes full of meeting requests, so don't be discouraged if you haven't heard back after a few (2-3) days – Just respond to your initial message to follow up and see if the Member has availability to meet with you. Remember that legislative staff are hardworking public servants balancing a number of responsibilities – Be polite but persistent.

Additionally – Even while at home in the district, Members of Congress have hectic, ever-changing schedules. Be sure to reach out to confirm your meeting time, especially for those that were scheduled far in advance (Over one week ahead of time).

Two-to-three days in advance of the meeting, email the staffer that you scheduled your time with to make sure your meeting is confirmed, remind them of the topic you wish to discuss, and provide any information you would like them to review in advance.

Step 4: Prepare

Most meetings are scheduled for 15-to-30-minutes, so make sure you have a plan for what you're going to say.

We suggest:

- Start by introducing yourself and your organization
 - If you have any physical resources, such as printed documents, hand them out to the group at the start of the meeting
- Then, share a story to explain what you are doing there.
 - This helps personalize the issue – Statistics will be forgotten, while evocative stories can be remembered for years
- Next, get right to the point of the bill or issue you want to discuss with the Member
 - While you're an expert on your story and familiar with your issue, legislators have to work on issues as varied as agriculture and space exploration – They can't be an expert on everything, so be patient and explain your points.
- Ask the legislator and their staff if they have any questions for you. **Be honest** if you don't have an answer – Offer to look into it and follow up with it afterward.
- Provide the legislator with your contact information, and ask for the contact information of any legislative staff that you can reach out to with updates on your issue
 - If offered, be sure never to abuse/overuse these relationships
- We suggest taking a photo with the Member of Congress you meet with- to share on social media to highlight your advocacy efforts.
 - Be sure to be respectful and thankful for the Member's time when discussing them on social media – It's always easier to build productive relationships when you're appreciative of their time and avoid conflict.

Step 5: Following Up After Your Meeting

After your meeting, write a thank you note to your member of Congress and any of the staff who you've been working with. This could be a physical note sent to the office, as well as an email message. Include

a summary of your visit and reiterate what you are asking of them (What stance they should take on a policy, which bill they should support). This is a great way to build a long-term relationship with Members of Congress.

Outreach Email Template

SUBJECT: Meeting Request: [ORGANIZATION NAME] on [DATE]

Dear [Senator / Representative] [LAST NAME]:

I am a constituent of yours from [City/Town]. As a member of [Organization], I am writing to request a meeting with you to discuss [Issue/Bill].

I am available to meet at your [OFFICE LOCATION] office on [DATES].

[Optional: Alternatively, I am available to meet with at [LOCATION] on [DATE] at [TIMES].

In addition to myself, the following individuals expect to attend: [names of people]

Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you may have about this request. I can be reached by phone at [PHONE NUMBER] or by email at [EMAIL ADDRESS].

Thank you in advance for your consideration – I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Hometown]
[Your Organization]

Example Email

SUBJECT: Meeting Request: Springfield First Responders Foundation on Saturday, 8/1

Dear **Senator Smith**:

I am a constituent of yours from Springfield. As a member of the Springfield First Responders Foundation, I am writing to request a meeting with you to discuss federal funding for local first responder departments.

I am available to meet at your Springfield office on Saturday, August 1.

Alternatively, I am available to meet with at the Springfield First Responders Carnival on Saturday the 1st from 4-8pm.

In addition to myself, the following individuals expect to attend:

- John Public, President of the Springfield First Responders Foundation
- Jane Doe, a Springfield EMT

Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you may have about this request. I can be reached by phone at 555-555-5555 or by email at Jack.Novak@example.email.

Thank you in advance for your consideration – I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,
Jack Novak
Springfield
Springfield First Responders Foundation