

Meeting with a Member of Congress



A personal meeting with your Member of Congress can be very useful. Members and staff meet with constituents every day. Visiting a Member provides a personal touch, an opportunity for questions, and immediate feedback. Consider inviting the Member to your volunteer sites, your office or special function. Some guidelines for an effective meeting are:

Schedule your meeting at least three to four weeks in advance by calling the Member's appointment scheduler. The U.S. Capitol switchboard number is 202-224-3121. Or call your Member's home district office.

In making your appointment, state who will be attending and the purpose of the visit. Be prepared to offer alternative dates. For Project Directors: Consider meeting the Member in his or her local office, where there are fewer distractions and a more relaxed atmosphere.

Many of the guidelines for *Writing to a Member of Congress* are applicable to appointments. Prepare your presentation as follows:

- Be informed about relevant legislation. Provide a brief, non-technical explanation of the issue, avoiding jargon and abbreviations.
- Choose a spokesperson (preferably a constituent) and a common strategy if coming in a group. Members' offices can be small, so limit the size of your group.
- Bring a visual aid if appropriate. A few well-selected items may be useful, but resist the temptation to leave a stack of material. Suggestions: a newspaper article about your program(s), a small recognition item, one of your cards with a small-size candy bar attached.
- Plan on about a 15-minute appointment. Arrive early and depart on time, thanking the Member for his or her consideration. Leave your business card and brochure for your program.
- Anticipate schedule changes, since committee or floor votes may detain a Member. A staff assistant will then handle the appointment. These dedicated assistants are often the most knowledgeable about legislation and can be very influential.
- Follow up the appointment with a thank you letter briefly reiterating the purpose of your visit. Invite the Member to call on you for assistance.

Created by the National Senior Corps Association (NSCA) Legislative Committee, 2008. NSCA advocates for Foster Grandparent, RSVP and Senior Companion programs nationwide. For more information about NSCA or to become a member, visit our website: www.nscatogether.org