



Request a Meeting with a Member of Congress in the Home District

Meeting with a Member of Congress in the Home District is one of the best and the most direct ways of conveying your support for a particular issue.

How to Set Up a Meeting

Members of Congress' schedules fill rapidly, so plan your meeting well in advance. Members of Congress are usually in their districts during holidays and Congressional recesses, and often on Mondays and Fridays. You can find the congressional schedule by looking at the House or Senate website at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov or by calling the Member of Congress' office.

Almost all offices require a faxed copy of a meeting request before they will consider scheduling a meeting. Tell the scheduler the dates you are available, the issue you will discuss and who will be attending - ideally, a small group (3-5 people) of constituents. Be sure to follow up a few days later to schedule the meeting.

Schedule a meeting by calling the state or district office and asking for the scheduler or appointment secretary. Explain your purpose and whom you represent. Be clear on the topic you wish to discuss.

The Meeting

You can expect the meeting to last about 20 minutes, although some meetings could run longer. Plan to speak for just 10 to 15 minutes to allow time for questions and responses. Make the story local using your own local examples as the basis for your "ask", i.e. co-sponsorship of legislation, passage of legislation, etc.

- See tips for effective meetings below

Town Hall Meetings and Public Forums

Members of Congress often schedule town-hall-style or public meetings in their districts. This is a good way for them to get out and talk to their constituents and a great way for you to raise the Member's awareness of civil engineering issues. A well-informed question at a public meeting is an extremely effective way to get press coverage and pressure a Member of Congress publicly to take a position on an issue.

To plan ahead for a productive presence at a town hall meeting, it is critical to know the Member of Congress' schedule. The following are good information sources for determining a Member of Congress' district schedule.

1. Call the Member of Congress' district office directly and ask for when and where the next townhall meeting will be scheduled.
2. Look at the Member of Congress' website.
3. Look at congressional newsletters that are sent to you by the Member of Congress' office.
4. Call your local Chamber of Commerce or Rotary Club. Members of Congress often speak to these groups.

Questions to Ask

Keep your presentation and questions simple.

1. Are you familiar with this issue?
2. Can we count on your support for our position? If yes, say thanks. If no, politely ask for reasons why and follow-up respectfully, if possible.

Remind the Member of Congress and any staff members present that they can consider you a resource and you will check in periodically on these and other related issues.

Tips for effective meetings:

- Call ahead of time for an appointment, either in the district, state capital, or Washington D.C. office.
- Don't feel intimidated by the legislator. Most likely, you are more of an expert on your subject than the legislator. Be confident.
- Be personable. Begin your meeting by complimenting the elected official on legislation he/she has written or supported; this sets a pleasant tone for the rest of your meeting.
- Be knowledgeable of your subject and organized in your presentation. Show that you are a credible authority on your topic and keep your pitch concise. Remember to emphasize how the issue affects those in your community. For instance, infrastructure investment is a national issue with local ramifications.
- Be open to questions. Be an active listener and answer questions with accurate facts. If you're unsure about an answer, offer to look into the matter and follow up later.
- Don't allow the legislator to divert from a subject matter. If he/she attempts to evade your question, tactfully ask for an answer and how the representative plans to vote.
- Have perseverance when your legislator seems unsupportive of your cause. Respond to any hostility by providing arguments to opponent's questions. This may require you to do some additional research before you meet with your legislator.
- Emphasize that the legislator's constituency supports what you are advocating. The fact that an issue is important to his/her constituents will most likely prompt the representative to make your goals part of his/her agenda.
- Ask for a commitment. Find out exactly how the representative will further your cause. But, do not press for a commitment if your legislator is clearly opposed to your views.
- Be willing to meet with a staff person if the legislator is unavailable. A staffer is able to inform the representative of your views and relay your concerns.

Use our **Advocacy Strategy Worksheet** on page 3 to help you prepare for a one-on-one visit with your elected officials.

Follow-Up

As always, follow-up is important. If you have the opportunity to ask a question or talk to a Member of Congress you should follow it up a day or so later with a letter. Thank the Member of Congress for meeting or talking with you and for considering your views. It is always important to be respectful and courteous regardless of the Member of Congress' opinions and to represent ASCE and your company in a professional manner.

Advocacy Strategy Worksheet for _____
(lawmaker's name and position)

Legislator background

Party affiliation (if stated):

Does that party have majority control of legislative body?

Major cities/counties/neighborhoods in district:

Issues championed:

Committees:

Voting record on ASCE issues (percentage):

Note: explain any "wrong" votes

Related ASCE Information

Number of ASCE members in district:

Any overlap between ASCE priorities and legislator's priorities?

Conflicts between ASCE policies and legislator's votes/actions/statements?

Pre-existing relationships/contacts with ASCE?

Advocacy strategy

Priority ranking:

Interactions to pursue:

Face-to-face meetings – leader/organizer of delegation: _____

Site visit – location: _____

Section/Branch/Region meeting appearance – targeted date/venue (mindful of legislative session schedule): _____