

## Tips for a Successful In-District Meeting

Face-to-face meetings with a member of Congress or a staff member provide perhaps the best opportunity to express your opinion and discuss your concerns.

In-district meetings with your member of Congress are also a great way to build or continue to strengthen a relationship with your legislator and can be arranged through their district office.



Typically, members of Congress spend most of the work week in Washington, unless they are on recess. **Oftentimes, legislators will not be able to meet you, but a meeting with the right staffer can be just as effective.** All legislators rely heavily on staffers, who are often issue experts themselves. These are the people who control the flow of information to the legislator—make them your friends!

Most staff members in a district office work on domestic issues, but they are always ready and willing to speak with constituents on a variety of issues and can relay messages to foreign policy staffers based in Washington, D.C. **Use in-district meetings with staff to impress upon them that they have vocal, active constituents who care about international issues.** These meetings will also help you gain access to the legislator at a future date.

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL IN-DISTRICT MEETING

1. Your Regional Advocacy Coordinator will alert you to the **congressional recess dates** throughout the year. These provide you with a great opportunity to secure a meeting with your elected official. Otherwise try to schedule your meeting on a Monday or Friday when your member of Congress may not be in Washington, D.C.
2. **Email a letter** (see example), addressed to the member of Congress, but directed to the attention of the scheduler, requesting a meeting at least one week before the day you would like to go. You can find out who the scheduler is on the website or by calling the office of the member of Congress. The telephone numbers of district offices can be found through local directory assistance or on the website of your member of Congress.
3. Make **follow-up phone calls** to the scheduler until you can agree on a date.

4. **Invite two to three members of your delegation** to go with you to the meeting.
5. Alert your **Regional Advocacy Coordinator** of the date and time of your meeting, and the members of the delegation who will attend. They will send you an agenda and discussion points for your meeting, and schedule a prep-call. This is usually a 30-minute conversation during which you and your delegation discuss the key issues for the meeting.
6. **Follow up with the scheduler** and let them know who will be attending your meeting and what the agenda will be. Get directions to the office and provide a number where you can be reached if anything changes.
7. At the meeting, **exchange contact information and leave documents** and other appropriate items for the legislator/staffer to become more engaged with your issue.
8. After the meeting, **send notes and any follow up actions to your Regional Advocacy Coordinator.**
9. **Send a thank you/follow up e-mail** to the person with whom you met, citing specifics from your meeting.

### **SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING A MEETING**

John Smith  
326 Plains St.  
Nashville, TN 37203

The Honorable Bob Corker  
Attn: Susie Jones, Scheduler  
3322 West End Ave., Suite 610 Nashville, TN 37203  
Sent via FAX: 615-279-9488  
July 16, 2015

Dear Senator Corker:

I am writing to request a meeting in your Nashville office while you are back in the district on August 27, 28, or 29.

This meeting will provide us with the chance to discuss three key issues that play an important role in the fight against global poverty, an issue on the minds of thousands of your constituents.

As you know, we have the resources today to eradicate the worst forms of poverty and injustice. America has always been a generous nation, and it's time to commit ourselves to bold goals that will improve life for millions around the world. But I am

worried that our current investment in the fight against poverty does not reflect the high stakes: our economic stability, national security and moral standing in the world.

I'd like to share three different ways that the U.S. can take a leadership role in the fight against global poverty; namely by supporting the Global Food Security Act, the International Violence Against Women Act, and the Reach Every Mother and Child Act.

Joining us for this meeting will be a group of your constituents who are passionate about supporting the fight against global poverty and hope to share their concerns with you.

We support CARE, one of the largest poverty fighting organizations, with nearly 70 years of experience. CARE addresses underlying causes of poverty by improving access to proper nutrition, quality health care, education and economic opportunity. Last year, CARE worked in 90 countries and reached more than 72 million people around the world. There are over 35,000 other supporters of CARE in Tennessee, and I hope a handful of us will have the chance to meet with you to discuss these important issues.

I will follow up with your staff to see if this time works with your schedule. Alternatively you can reach me at 555-432-5968.

Sincerely,  
John Smith