



## Ten Tips for Having Effective Congressional Meetings

Here are ten tips that you might keep in mind when you make Congressional visits:

- 1 **Be Informed About Them** -- Learn something about the Senator or Representative who you are visiting. Biographical information is readily available in various Congressional directories and on the Internet.
- 2 **Be On Time** -- Members and their staff are very busy, and often have no time to see you if you are not there at the time your appointment is scheduled. They may be late, but you should not be. If you have several meetings planned, allow yourself enough time between meetings (e.g., 30 minutes) so you can be on time to your next meeting if the last one runs late. Generally, meetings will run between 15 and 30 minutes, but sometimes they can run an hour. Meetings with a Member usually are shorter than those with their staff.
- 3 **Be Prepared** -- Work out what you plan to say before walking into the office. Organize your comments. Use an outline if that is helpful. If you are part of a group, divide up topics and let different people explain separate concerns.
- 4 **Be Brief and Focused** -- Congressional Members and staff are very busy, and usually overloaded with information and competing time demands. You should expect them to only remember two or three major points, so try to focus on getting just those limited points across. Mention what you are going to focus on, then talk briefly and clearly about those points, and summarize what your concerns again as the meeting ends.
- 5 **Be Factual** -- Provide them with specific information that is factual and informative. If they ask questions you don't know the answer to, tell them you will find the answer and get back to them. Never intentionally provide incorrect information.
- 6 **Question Them** -- Ask them questions, such as whether they have heard about the issues you are raising, whether they have a position on them, or whether they are familiar with the industry.
- 7 **Be Courteous** -- Do not be hostile or insulting, even if the person with whom you are talking seems hostile or not interested. Being courteous never hurts, and it's usually very important in establishing a positive relationship.
- 8 **Be a Constituent** -- If possible, it's always helpful to establish a constituent link with the Member or his/her state. If you have offices there, employees, major shareholders, affiliates or customers in their area, be sure to let them know. They usually will be more interested and responsive when you or your company has such a constituent relationship.
- 9 **Request Something** -- Ask them for something---such as support of your positions, or sponsoring or cosponsoring a bill , or a commitment not to vote for burdensome legislation. Ask them to contact you for your views on issues of particular concern to you. Urge the Member's staff to keep in periodic contact with your Washington representatives.
- 10 **Follow-Up** -- Send a thank-you letter to everyone you meet with, even if they seemed disinterested or hostile. Try to provide them with some additional information. Also, remind them if they made a commitment (e.g., that they would cosponsor a bill). Periodically keep in contact with the people you met with (e.g., send them additional information, such as an informative news article or report on issues of concern to you). Try to establish and maintain a relationship so they will remember you and hopefully be responsive when you later ask for help.