



Tips for an Effective In-District Meeting



Learn about your legislators.

Taking some time to read their biographies, the issues they support, what committees they sit on, what leadership role they may have, and what caucuses they might sit on helps identify issues of key importance to each legislator. You can also sign up for their e-newsletters, which will keep you up to date on what your legislators are doing.

Do your homework and stay on message.

Before your meeting, review the position(s) you are trying to convey. Be focused, and don't plan to talk about too much in one visit. Routinely read *AACU and the News* to keep abreast of the latest developments in health policy that affect the urologic community. You may also research your legislator's voting record to help you prepare for what issues you choose to discuss.

Bring relevant data and statistics.

Frame your issue in the context of your legislator's viewpoint. Include real-life examples of how this particular legislation will help or hurt you, your patients, or your district.

Be flexible and prepared for appointment changes.

Legislators' schedules often change at a moment's notice. Don't be surprised if your meeting gets cut short, takes place in a hallway, or changes from a member meeting to a staff meeting.

Be personal.

Facts and figures are great, but don't forget to convey your personal experiences as a surgeon. Put the issues you're discussing into perspective for your legislators, and ALWAYS connect the issue to your district.

Be helpful.

Don't be demanding—offer to be a resource for your legislator if they need any more information on how potential legislation will impact surgeons in the trenches. Many members of Congress have health care advisory groups that you may request to participate in. Feel free to say "I don't know." You may be asked questions you don't know the answers to. Don't be afraid to say that you don't know, but will find out. Contact the AACU for any additional information you need, and promptly follow up to be sure you receive it.

Be respectful of staff.

Don't underestimate the power of meeting with health policy staff. They are often very knowledgeable and always advise the legislators on votes! Many staff are in their early-20s—don't let their ages lead you to believe they are not extremely influential.

Follow-up and through.

Follow up with your legislator(s) a few days after the meeting to tie up any loose ends, thank them for taking the time to meet with you, and let them know you look forward to meeting again in the near future. If you offered to provide additional information, make sure you do it promptly. Let the AACU know how your meeting went so we can follow up with their Washington, DC, staff.



Don't discuss campaign contributions.

The appropriate time to discuss campaign contributions is at a fundraiser, not a policy meeting. In fact, ethic rules prohibit your member of Congress and their staff from discussing their political campaign with you during this type of meeting.

Don't include extraneous participants in the meeting.

Meeting space is limited on Capitol Hill and in-district offices.

Don't offer answers you don't have.

If there is an answer to a question that you do not know, always offer to find out and follow up.

Don't be intimidated.

Members of Congress are elected by the people and therefore they work for you, regardless of how you voted.

Don't express partisanship.

Members of Congress are required to help all constituents, regardless of political ideology.

Don't forget to make your ASK.

Members aim to please their constituents. Make sure they DO know what you want and offer options so that if one goal is not tangible, they may satisfy the other.