



Photo by Karen Kasmauski for CRS



MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The purpose of meeting with your member of Congress is to share why you care about a particular issue and to discuss with him/her what can be done about it.

In addition, it's helpful to remember we also want:

1. To understand where the member stands on the issue(s).
2. To understand the member's interests.
3. To understand who has the power to change the problem.
4. To (hopefully) get a commitment of support for our issue.
5. To build relationships between our people and public officials and institutions influencing our community.
6. To train ourselves to "act" in public arenas. We can always get better at this, both as individuals and as a team.

Change takes time and we know we will not end global poverty in one district visit. Therefore, district visits should be viewed as part of a larger process within which we gather information, build relationships and continually get better at what we do and how we do it.

JOIN US

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STEP BY STEP TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

Step 1: HAVE A PLAN

Before you enter into a district visit always meet beforehand and assign roles. Roles should include who will credential the group, who will take lead on each issue, who will make the ask and who will jump in if someone decides to raise an issue the group had not agreed to up front.

Step 2: CREDENTIALS

It's important to establish who you are and whom you represent! You are more than 'a constituent'. You are a constituent who represents other constituents back home and you'll report back to them. Remember, politicians pay attention to numbers.

Step 3: TEAM WORK

It is important to follow the plan you set during the pre-meeting. Of course you'll need to be flexible.

Step 4: THE ASK

Why just tell them what you want – Ask if they'll support you! "Can we count on the Senator's support on this measure?" Listen carefully and ask for clarification if you get a vague response.

Step 5: THE DEBRIEF

It's important to make sure we're on the same page leaving the meeting. As a group, review: What did we hear? Did we get what we wanted? What are the next steps? And, to help us get better, it's important to evaluate the group. How did we do? As a team? As individuals?

Step 6: REPORT BACK

Your feedback is extremely valuable as the church continues to advocate with, and on behalf of, our brothers and sisters who are poor and marginalized. Be sure to share with your diocese, parish or college how the visit went and what you heard from your Member of Congress. Invite your group to be involved in the follow up steps. Also, let your CRS Regional Office or diocesan director know how the visit went by completing this quick and easy [online report back form](#).

Step 7: FOLLOW UP

Send a thank you note or email to your member's office within one week of your meeting. Not only is this proper etiquette, but it helps to develop your relationship with that office and to share any follow up information your member asked for. It's a good way to keep the lines of communication open.

Step 8: CELEBRATE!

Celebrate your group's accomplishment in taking part in the most effective way to impact policy and your Member of Congress (based on research from the Congressional Management Foundation). Your voice makes a difference!

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