BE AN ADVOCATE FOR SCIENCE

Meet With Your Representative

Arrange a Meeting

It is possible to meet with your Representative and Senators in their Washington, D.C. office or in their local office. Legislators are usually in Washington, D.C. from Tuesday to Thursday and in their home districts Friday through Monday afternoon.

Send your request for a meeting in writing and to the attention of the office scheduler. In your letter, explain the specific reason you would like to meet with the Representative or Senator. Requests for meetings can be either mailed or faxed.

It is helpful to provide two or three possible meeting times.

Don’t be surprised if your meeting time is rescheduled at the last minute because Congressional schedules often change for votes or committee meetings. Also, don’t feel slighted if you meet with a staff member. Staff are well informed and play critical roles as legislators decide their positions on various issues. In many ways, a substantial meeting with a staff member is as good as a meeting with the legislator.

Do Your Homework

In preparation for your meeting, take a few minutes to learn more about your legislator and where he or she stands on the issues you want to discuss. For background information for your meeting, visit http://capwiz.com/jscpp.

Also spend time organizing your thoughts. Consider answering the following questions:

- What is the reason for the meeting?
- Why is the issue important to the district or state?
- What do you want your legislator to do?
- Can you provide any examples?

Prepare a one-page fact sheet that you can leave after your meeting. Include your
name and contact information on the fact sheet, which will serve as a reminder of your meeting and the action you are requesting.

Remember to bring business cards to your meeting.

**At Your Meeting**

- Be sure to arrive a few minutes early.
- Speak briefly to allow time for extended conversation.
- Limit your discussion to the topic you requested the meeting for.
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, don’t guess. Offer to provide the information at a later time.
- Offer to serve as a resource for the office.

**After the Meeting**

Send a thank you note to each participant in the meeting. In your note, briefly restate the purpose of your meeting and the action you asked the legislator to take. Also, reiterate your interest in serving as a resource.

**Judging the Success of the Meeting**

Changing minds about support for biomedical research is a slow process. Don’t be disappointed if you don’t see immediate results.

Maintain an ongoing relationship with your Member of Congress and his or her staff. Congressional staff members depend heavily on outside experts whom they know will provide them with timely and relevant information. These long-term relationships are crucial.