BE AN ADVOCATE FOR SCIENCE

Arranging a Virtual Meeting with Your Representative

Meeting with your Representative or their staff is a time-honored tradition of advocacy. These meetings are effective ways to make your voice heard, get your message across, and educate government leaders about science. The social distancing requirements and closed office buildings because of the COVID-19 virus make standard advocacy techniques difficult but not impossible. As time goes on, virtual advocacy may become acceptable and not just necessary.

You can use the steps below to arrange your e-visit to the Hill. Let the ASCB know your plans and we can help you with your visit.

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STEP ONE: ARRANGE THE APPOINTMENT

1. **Locate your Congressional Representative and Senators** [here](#).
2. Call the number listed by your representative and tell them you would like to **set up a video meeting** between you and the Congressperson or Senator.
3. The person that you speak with may suggest that you speak with a staffer.
   a. **Expect that your representative may be unavailable for a meeting, so you should be willing to speak with a staffer.** Don’t be disappointed if this is the case because staffers are incredibly well-informed and can still help you establish a relationship within the office.
4. **Have multiple options** for appointment times.
5. It is fine to have others join you, just be sure to let the office know if you will be by yourself or if a group will be part of the meeting. Congressional offices don’t like surprises.
6. If you don’t have access to a video conferencing platform, services such as Google Meet provide free access. Be sure you are familiar with whatever platform you use and are able to provide the office with the correct contact information.

STEP TWO: MAKE PLANS

If a group is going to attend the meeting, it would be a good idea for all attendees to meet in advance of your meeting.

1. **Decide your “ask”** and make it relevant. To make your visit count, focus on what Congress is working on how that affects science. Issues are always changing, so make sure to keep yourself updated. (You can always check in with ASCB for suggestions)
2. **Who starts the meeting?** If more than one person is going to be in the meeting, decide beforehand what the speaking order will be. Who covers which topic?

3. **Practice** your Two Minute speech that explains your research.

4. **Study.** Take some time to learn about who you will be meeting with. The representative may be a big supporter of a particular disease that your research might help. If you meet with a staff member, it’s possible you went to the same high school. A short amount of advance preparation will make for a better meeting.

5. **Practice your Meeting** If you are going with a group, you may want to hold a practice meeting. This will allow everyone to become familiar with the conferencing platform and practice their Two Minute speech.

**STEP THREE: THE MEETING**

1. **Can you hear me now?** Be sure to sign in to the meeting before the scheduled starting time to make sure everything works on your side. You don’t want to waste meeting time trying to get your audio to work.

2. **Introduce yourselves** and your group. Identify yourselves as constituents and scientists, researchers, etc. Be sure to explain your research in an easy to understand way.

3. **Thank you!** Be sure to thank them for their past support for biomedical research. Congressional offices love to be thanked.

4. **Describe your concern.** Talk about how the issue affects you, your job, and/or the community at large. It is very likely that the person you are speaking to will not be an expert in your field, so make sure to explain your research in a way that will make sense to the average person. Anecdotes may be helpful.

5. **If others are with you** in the meeting, make sure to give everyone time to introduce themselves and talk.

6. **The best meetings** are those that include time for questions and discussion.

7. **Be aware of the time.** Make sure to keep your eye on how long the meeting on going so you can bring it to a close at the appropriate time.

8. **Smile** Take a screenshot of your virtual meeting.

**STEP THREE: AFTER THE MEETING**

1. **Send a thank you email.** This is especially important if you met with your MoC. Be sure to include a brief reiteration of the issue. Email messages are also great ways to start to build a connection with an office, especially if you met with a staff member.

2. **Share your visit** with colleagues, friends, family, and others. Get a screenshot of you and/or your group at the office. Post the picture on your social media or send it around in an email. Make sure to include your representative’s name, twitter handle, the issue that you discussed, and the results of your visit.

3. **Plan your next action!** You can look at other ASCB advocacy action items to figure out how you can continue your advocacy work.

4. **How’d it go?** Let the ASCB know how the meeting went.

The ASCB has other “Be an Advocate for Science” how-to papers to help you be an advocate for science.