

The Hill Visit: What You Need to Know

Scheduling

When you are scheduling appointments to meet in your Congressmen's offices, it is important to know who you will be meeting. While some of you may have meetings with your Representatives and Senators, most of you will be meeting with legislative staff. Staffers are the eyes and ears of legislators, and are just as important. Take down their name and the best way to get a hold of them, so you know who to ask for when you get to your meeting.

Prepping

Be prepared for the visit by understanding your nutrition topic and the legislation. Don't forget to research your legislators and know their position on the bill and his or her congressional priorities. Prepare leave behind materials for your legislator (i.e. fact sheets, statistics, business cards). Practice what you are going to say to your legislator based on your research and what you know about the nutrition issue.

Visiting

Always arrive early. Security and long lines are common at entrances to buildings on Capitol Hill. Arriving early will also give you enough time to find your legislator's office.

When you get to the visit, introduce yourself and the group or agency you represent. Always ask how much time they have available to chat. Hill visits can be anywhere from 5 minutes to 30 minutes or more. Knowing how much time they have can help you structure your conversation. There are several scenarios that will dictate what you will want to go over at your hill visit. You will always have an ASK depending on the scenario:

- Your legislator has already sponsored the legislation-thank them for your time and offer your expertise and resources on nutrition related matters. **ASK** if they have questions
- Your legislator has not sponsored the bill-**ASK** them to be a sponsor
- Your legislator does not share your priorities – **ASK** if they have any questions and explain your position and expertise. Explain how you will be available for any future questions.

After your conversation and ask, make sure you have exchanged business cards to follow up. Always thank your legislator or legislator's staffer for his or her time. Ask if there is time for a photo, and tag your legislator on social media after posting thanking him or her for their support.

Keeping in contact

After the visit, send a thank you note to your members of Congress for their time and to the staff that you met with. When they are back in the district, invite them to your workplace and show them what you do. Building relationships with your members of Congress is the most effective way to be an advocate.



Advocacy Resources

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

Tips for Lobbying Visits

http://frac.org/pdf/frac_tips_for_lobby_visits.pdf

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND)

Tips for Success in Advocacy

<http://www.eatrightpro.org/resource/advocacy/action-center/getting-started/tips-for-success-in-advocacy>

School Nutrition Association (SNA)

Lobbying Tips

https://schoolnutrition.org/uploadedFiles/Legislation_and_Policy/SNA_Policy_Resources/1-LOBBYING%20TIPS2013.pdf