



BE AN ADVOCATE FOR SCIENCE

Meet With Your Representative

Arrange a Meeting

It is possible to meet with your Members of Congress in either their Washington, D.C. office or in their local office. Your representatives are usually in Washington, D.C. from Tuesday to Thursday and in their home districts Friday through Monday afternoon. You may also want to arrange a visit during one of the Congressional recess periods.

Send your request for a meeting in writing and to the attention of the office scheduler. Requests for meetings can be made in person, over the phone, thru the representative's website, or by mail. Be sure to give the specific topic you want to discuss.

When requesting a meeting, 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. This is especially true for meetings in Washington, D.C. Also, don't feel slighted if you meet with a staff member. Staff are well informed and play critical roles as the Member of Congress decides their position on various issues. In many ways, a substantial meeting with a staff member is better than a meeting with the Congressperson or Senator.

Do Your Homework

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

Spend some time organizing your thoughts into a concise 2-3 minute pitch. Consider answering the following questions:

- What is your broad area of research and the specific question you are working on?
- Are there any good analogies you could use to avoid scientific jargon?
- 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?

Remember the 4 P's

- Be **Polite**
- Make your visit **Personal**: Have you met the representative before? Does your research have a connection with an illness of a family member?
- Be **Persistent**
- Discuss the **Promise** of biomedical research.

Prepare a one-page explanation of your issue 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. You may have to pass through airport-like security before reaching the office.
- Speak briefly and avoid excessive details 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 follow-up with additional information after the meeting.
- 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 them to take. Also, reiterate your interest in serving as a resource.

Be sure to share your experiences on social media and with friends and colleagues.

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.