



Tips For Visiting Capitol Hill

Make all your appointments. Staff have worked to create a great schedule for you. Make sure you have all the meetings covered. If you think there is a conflict, check in with the government affairs team. If you are running late, make sure to call the Hill office and let them know.

Sell yourself. Remember that, in actuality, you are not selling a legislative proposal or your company (or association), but yourself. If you are friendly, helpful, understanding, and not hostile, you can be successful.

Get to the point. When making a visit to any elected official, don't take forever to make your pitch. Tell them who you represent, the number of members and employees you represent, what your primary concerns are, and how and why these concerns are related to X piece of legislation.

Keep your meeting short. Don't take longer than 10 or 15 minutes to express your concerns, unless invited to do so. If you can get in the office and get out quickly, you will get in a second time.

Be kind to staff members. Whether in person or speaking over the telephone, always be kind to staff members. Even though they may seem extremely young, they will end up being the individuals who have the greatest potential to help or hinder you and your cause.

Don't make any promises unless you intend to deliver. Just as it is not very good to threaten an elected official, it is also not wise to make false promises.

Check your facts and figures. Make sure that you are presenting accurate facts and figures, not ones that you made up.

Talk with your enemies...they may be your friends in the future on another issue.

Don't try to sell a bad bill. If you do not truly believe in the merits of a bill, don't expect others to. If a bill is ill-conceived or poorly written, it could end up hurting you and your industry far more than benefiting it.

Give full credit for a bill to the sponsoring legislator.

Don't become discouraged. As you become more familiar with the legislative process, you will discover the many ways that legislation and people can become thwarted. If you are looking for a big win the first time out, don't be discouraged if you fail. Remember, visiting elected officials rarely activates or converts them; it reinforces them.

Follow up. Follow up on a visit with a written "thank you" when you get home – even if you think the meeting didn't go as well as it might have. Always include praise and thanks for staff who have been helpful – they can be a tremendous asset to you in the future.