

How to Conduct a Visit

The “Do’s and Don’ts” of a Congressional Visit



Preparation – Do's

- Develop talking points.
- Anticipate questions and have concise answers ready.
- Stay on message.
- Stick to your expertise.

Preparation – Do's

If you are on a group visit:

- Select a group leader.
- Utilize a two-minute drill if you are in a large group.
- Always thank the staffers for their time before you leave.

Presentation – Do's

- Wear business or business casual attire.
- Be on time for your visit.
- Introduce yourself.
- Have a simple leave-behind for the staffer -
ALWAYS include contact information.

Presentation – Do's

- Do make sure to refer to the staffer's boss with the correct title – Congressman, Congresswoman, Senator
- Do keep the “alphabet soup” to a minimum – explain acronyms
- When possible, make a connection between your issue and the state or district represented by the office with whom you are meeting

Preparation – Don'ts

- Do not try to engage the staffer in a debate about the Iraq war, or other controversial topics not related to science.
- Do not be negative about the current administration, other constituent groups, etc...

Presentation – Don'ts

- Do not wear jeans or t-shirts.
- Do not be late for your appointment, you may not be able to re-schedule!
- Do not give the staffer anything really long or technical to read.

Follow-up – Do's

- If asked a question and you are not sure of an answer, don't speculate. You can always follow-up.
- Do follow-up promptly on any commitments you made during your visits

Communicating Effectively

- Remember, you may be the **science** expert...
- But the staffer is the **policy** expert who must consider many factors when making decisions.
- Keep your message simple – not all staffers who handle science issues have science backgrounds!

Keep in Mind

- The visit is an opportunity to bring more visibility to science in the policy arena – make the most of your time!
- If you have an “ask”, make sure you are clear in what you would like the Senator/Congressman to do.
- Enjoy yourself in between appointments!