A Brief Guide to Lobbying

This guide provides a basic overview of how to book a meeting with Members of Congress or their staff, and how to have a successful and impactful meeting once you do. Above all, remember that Members of Congress and their staff are real people, so treat them with respect and courtesy whether or not you agree with their perspectives.

How to get a meeting:

- Go to the website and call the appropriate office to find the preferred method of making a request and the name of the scheduler.
- Know who you want to meet with. Always try to meet with the Member of Congress themselves, but if they are not available, try to meet with the highest-level aid possible. Note that some staff are just as influential as the legislator on certain issues. Typically, the hierarchy goes: Member of Congress, Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, Senior Policy Advisor, Legislative Director, Legislative Associate or Fellow and Legislative Correspondent. Communication Directors and Press Secretaries can be important for press work and Schedulers can be more like Office Managers or Executive Assistants.
- Follow up with phone call.
- Also remember that you can meet with Members of Congress in district during recesses. Even during sessions, Members are typically in-district on the weekends and all or part of Mondays and Fridays. And you can meet with congressional staff without going to DC by scheduling lobby conference calls.
- Don't be discouraged if they don't agree to a meeting right away. Members of Congress and their staff are busy people, and you can always try again later.

Before the meeting:

- Decide who will cover which points, and get some practice in beforehand
- Plan to only get 2 or 3 key points or asks across
- Prepare a packet to leave with the Member of Congress or their staff. This could include:
    - Peace Action Policy Briefings
    - Polling on the issues you're covering
    - Relevant and persuasive news articles or op-eds, especially from publications in their home state or district

At the meeting:

- Arrive early. Check in at reception 5-10 minutes early. Be prepared with a business card if you have one.
- Dress for Success. Don't let looks get in the way of your message. Look professional. Dress for security checks.
- Double check how much time the member/staffer(s) have. Schedules change.

- Introduce yourself with as many titles as possible: church, union, PTA, etc. (But be clear about whether you're speaking on behalf of any groups you're affiliated with or not).
- Thank them for past actions or statements in line with the issues you care about.
- Listen to what they have to say.
- Ask directly for what you want and wait for a response. It's challenging to ask for more than three things. Be as specific as possible.
- Be extremely respectful of time and any confidential information they share.
- Ask if you can share information learned at meeting with others. Get the email and business cards of all staff you meet with. If you forget, the front desk can help.

After the meeting:

- Follow up with a thank you letter outlining your key points, asks and anything they or you agreed to do. You will email this to the main person you met with, and CC to any other staff in attendance.