

Arranging a Meeting with a Congressional District Office

- Send a letter (preferably by fax) requesting a meeting to the congressional office.
- Follow-up with a phone call to verify that they received it. Be ready to answer details about your organization and what will be discussed at the meeting.
- If they do not respond within a few days, call them back to check the status of your meeting request. After this, call back weekly until a meeting date and time have been arranged. Be patient. It can sometimes take a few weeks to get a meeting date confirmed.
- Confirmation Call: Call the congressional office a day or two in advance of the meeting to confirm the appointment.
- Do your homework: Make sure you know your subject and bring appropriate handouts, displays, or PowerPoint presentations.
- If possible, don't go alone: Try to have between 2-5 people in attendance at these meetings. This will not only show the Congresspeople that this isn't a one person effort, but will provide a much larger pool of knowledge to draw from. **However:** You must designate a lead person. Otherwise, you risk talking over each-other or worse, talking over the staffers and/or Congressperson.

At the Meeting – Etiquette

- **Dress Appropriately:** Business attire (suit and tie, etc) should be worn to these meetings. First impressions really do matter.
- Be Prompt: Try to reach the congressional office 10-15 minutes early. These are busy people and don't have time to wait around for you. If you are unavoidably late, call the congressional office to tell them why you are late (Example: I got stuck in a traffic jam). Arriving early will also give you time to make sure you all know your roles and the overall game plan.
- Be courteous: Try not to cut off the person you are meeting with and don't be patronizing if they don't agree with you.
- Be honest: If you don't know the answer to a question, do not make one up. Tell them that you do not know the answer, but can follow-up with them once you have gotten an answer.
- Be Cognizant of how much time you have left: If you are only allotted 15 minutes, don't try to get 30 minutes worth of information in that 15 minutes. They don't want to hear auctioneers.

- Ask how you can be helpful to the legislator.
- Thank them for their time and interest.

After the Visit

- Send a thank you letter, briefly reiterating the topics discussed during the meeting. No letter should exceed one page unless there is there is a good reason to do.
- Follow-up: If you agreed to follow-up regarding a question or if you agreed to provide some additional information, do so promptly. Do not agree to anything that you cannot follow up on.
- Fill out a debriefing form while the meeting is fresh in your mind.

If you have any questions, please e-mail politics@marsociety.org. We will reply promptly.