

Meeting Your Congressional Leadership: Tools for a Successful Encounter

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Understanding Policy Process

- Current 110th Congress, 1st Session
 - Senate: 49 D; 49 R; 2 Independents
 - House: 233 Ds, 202 Rs, No Independents
 - First Democratic Controlled Congress since 1994
 - Senate was Democratic controlled from May 2001-January 2003
 - Democrats adjusting to Majority; Republicans adjusting to Minority

Key Senate Facts

- Senate requires 60 votes to move legislation
 - May need to invoke cloture to shut off filibuster
 - Interests of the minority are protected
 - Senate moves SLOOOOOOOOOWER than House
- Majority Leadership
 - Reid (NV), Majority Leader
 - Durbin (IL), Majority Whip
 - Byrd (W Va), Senate President Protemp
- Minority Leadership
 - McConnell (KY), Minority Leader
 - Lott (MS), Minority Whip
 - Stevens (AK), Senior Republican

Key House Facts

- Simple Majority Generally Needed to pass Legislation
- Majority Rules – Minority has little power as compared to the Senate
- More rancorous than the Senate and more *FAST* paced
- House Majority Leadership
 - Pelosi (CA) Speaker
 - Hoyer (MD) Majority Leader
 - Clyburn (SC) Majority Whip
- House Minority Leadership
 - Boehner (OH) Minority Leader
 - Blunt (MO) Minority Whip

Congressional Committees

- Not all Members of Congress are created equally
 - Seniority system important – Members want to work their way up the committee chairmanship ladder
- Committees and Committee Chairmen are critically important to the Legislative Process
 - “A” Committees: Appropriations, Ways and Means, Finance, Energy and Commerce, Judiciary, Transportation
 - “B” Committees: Science, Aging, Commerce
- Most substantive legislative work done at the Committee level by separate staff
 - Is your meeting with personal office staff or Committee staff?
- In general, committee staff work for the Chairman of the Committee

Congressional Staff

- RUN THE PLACE!
- “*Almanac of the Unelected*”
- Staff: Key in the Congressional legislative process
- Backgrounds?
 - Worked on campaigns
 - Been with the Member since first elected to any office
 - Knowledge of particular issue area
 - Happenstance
 - Personal Relationships
 - Other? 😊

Congressional Offices

- How are they structured in Washington
 - Chief of Staff/AA (runs office)
 - Legislative Director (organizes legislative program)
 - Legislative Assistant (policy expert on multiple issues)
 - Legislative Correspondent (answers mail)
 - Interns
 - Office Staff
- House Members' staff usually smaller and younger than Senate staff
- District office staff usually do more “case work”

Congressional Visit

- These folks are BUSY – get to the point
- Gauge the interest/time of the staffer
- You may not get the Member...the staffer you thought...the time you thought...you may have to travel to meet the Member...you may not have the meeting!
- You may meet in an office, you may meet in the reception area, you may meet in the hallway, the cafeteria...etc.
- Gauge time needed to get to next appointment
 - Need at least 15 minutes to walk across to other side of Capitol and clear security
- Most oft heard excuse: “I have to meet my boss on the floor in a few minutes” or “Senator wants to see me now”
- Don’t be insulted – welcome to Congressional process!

Congressional Visit

- Who are you?
 - Credential yourself...why are you important to this Member of Congress?
 - Constituent? Headquartered in district? Lots of employees in district? Have a lot of PAC money?
 - “We are here to talk with you about”...what is the ASK?
 - Do you want the Member to...
 - ...cosponsor a bill?
 - ...write a letter? To whom? About what?
 - ...ask for funding?
 - ...help to modify legislation that will adversely affect you/your business/your state, etc.
 - ...ask questions at a hearing about an issue?
 - Don't sound like you are just there to shoot the....
 - Listen for the Bells and Buzzers!

Types of Staffers

- Familiarity with issue will vary
 - Need to gauge what they know and what they don't
- Don't talk down to them OR over their head
- Don't be argumentative – if the meeting is going downhill, politely try to make points
 - No threats!
- Watch out for staffers that just keep talking
 - You may want to set parameters at beginning, especially if you have other meetings
- Be prepared for different types of encounters
 - Roller coaster ride

Leave Behinds

- Don't overwhelm them with paper
- Bring a nice looking folder with a one or two page issue brief – use lots of space and diagrams if you can
- Bring your business cards and DON'T take cell calls during the meeting or answer e-mails!
 - Most hill staffers are “A” personality types that check PDAs constantly
- If in a group, try to have someone lead the discussion, but everyone should try and make a point.
- Follow up with a thank you letter or e-mail
 - Remember regular mail is “snail mail”

Listen for Key Phrases

- Don't expect many commitments
 - “my boss is sympathetic to your concerns”
 - “I will definitely talk to my boss about it”
 - “let me talk to the Committee staff to see where that is”
 - “we wouldn't be able to support that”
 - “we would be able to support that”
 - REMEMBER: Your issue is YOUR number 1 concern, but may not be THEIR number 1 concern!

Key Health Legislation

- SCHIP Reauthorization
- Medicare Reform
 - Physician Payment Fix
 - Part D Changes
 - Senate Finance/House Energy and Commerce
- FDA Revitalization
 - Senate HELP/House Energy and Commerce
- Reimportation
 - Senate HELP/House Energy and Commerce/Appropriations

Good Luck!