

FFYF Tips: How To Have A Great Hill Meeting

In-person visits from constituents are one of the most powerful ways to engage with Members of Congress and build relationships with their staff. These meetings provide a **valuable opportunity** for lawmakers to hear firsthand what matters most to their constituents and understand how key issues impact their states or districts. They also serve as a **crucial avenue** for highlighting needs that may not yet be on their radar and presenting data that can shape their perspective and actions. Here are a few ways to get the most out of your meetings.

Before You Go

Set Up Your Meetings

Member websites have a "schedule a visit" link. Use this to send a meeting request, including the date and purpose of your visit as well as mentioning that you are a constituent. It is helpful to also call the office and ask for the scheduler's email address and send it along that way as well!

For example:

*I am a constituent of [**Representative/Senator _____ member of Congress's name**] and I live in [**insert name of community/city**]. I am also [**a quick line about your role - a parent, an employer, an advocate, a teacher, a provider.**]*

*I am requesting the opportunity to meet with the [**Representative/Senator**] or their staff when I am in Washington D.C. on [**DATE**] to talk about the importance of affordable, quality child care in our state. Specifically, I'd like to talk about [**add a line about what you'd like to talk about here!**]*

Thank you for taking the time to help with this meeting request. I hope to hear from you soon.

Name

Email Address

Review Talking Points and the Ask

Find out what Congress is actively discussing while you are in Washington - are they working on budget and appropriations? Strengthening the Child Care and Development Block Grant? Supporting Head Start?

Get Ready for the Hill!

- Buildings and offices can be far apart. Take a moment to look [at a map of the Hill](#) to plan your meetings!
- Leave plenty of time to get through security and find your way through the buildings. Don't be afraid to ask security guards for directions!
- Wear comfortable footwear; you'll be walking a lot, and the marble floors can be tricky with heels or hard-soled shoes.
- Have a meeting plan. Who will start the introductions? Who will make the ask? Who is ready to tell a story?

Know Your Ask

The **most important part** of your visit starts well before you head to the Hill. It's **The Ask**.

Have a clear, concise, one-sentence ask for Members and their staff. Weave it into your meeting, your follow-up note, your social media and more.

During Your Meeting

What To Expect

- **Keep it short! A meeting with a staff member usually lasts a maximum of 30 minutes - with a member, it is usually closer to 10 minutes.** Keep your conversation short, straightforward, and focused on the primary ask. Members and staff frequently need to cut meetings short - make your key points early!
- **Be patient and flexible.** You may meet with Members; you may also meet with staffers (who are key in doing research, making recommendations, and crafting the work for the Member.)
- **Expect the unexpected!** Offices are small and busy, so meetings can take place anywhere – in an office, in a conference room, in a hallway.

Tips for a Successful Meeting

Be ready with three things: The Story. The Local Element. The Ask.

- **The Story:** Know your talking points, but also talk about why this issue is so important to you that you took time to come to Congress to talk about it.
- **The Local Element:** Members and staff care deeply about how issues affect their state or district and love making personal connections with constituents. Tell a personal story. Give local examples about how child care has an impact on the families, businesses, and children in your community.
- **The Ask:** Make it once, make it twice! Be very clear and specific about what you want your Members to do. *For example: Please ask your Boss to co-sponsor the Child Care Modernization Act, which helps states better meet the needs of families and providers in our district.*
- **The Extras That Make A Difference:**
 - Make sure to introduce everyone in your group!
 - Thank Members and Staff for taking the time to meet and for any prior support for child care.
 - Invite them to see a program in action next time they're in the district.
 - And ask if you can take a photo!

The Follow Up

One of the most important moments of your meeting happens once you've gone home! The Follow Up provides a valuable way to reinforce your message and build the relationship with your Member and Staff.

- **Send a Thank You email.** Thank the Member/Staffer for meeting with you and reinforce The Ask! Include links to any relevant information you discussed and don't forget to invite them for a visit to see child care in action.
- **Leverage Social Media.** Share the photo from your visit and tag your Member. Say thank you and reinforce the ask. For example: *A great day in DC today – thank you @MEMBER's office for meeting with us to talk about the importance of affordable child care in our state and how modernizing #CCDBG could help more families!*
- **Report Out!** The intel you gather during your meeting is an important part of our legislative strategy. Please shoot us a note and let us know how it went!
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