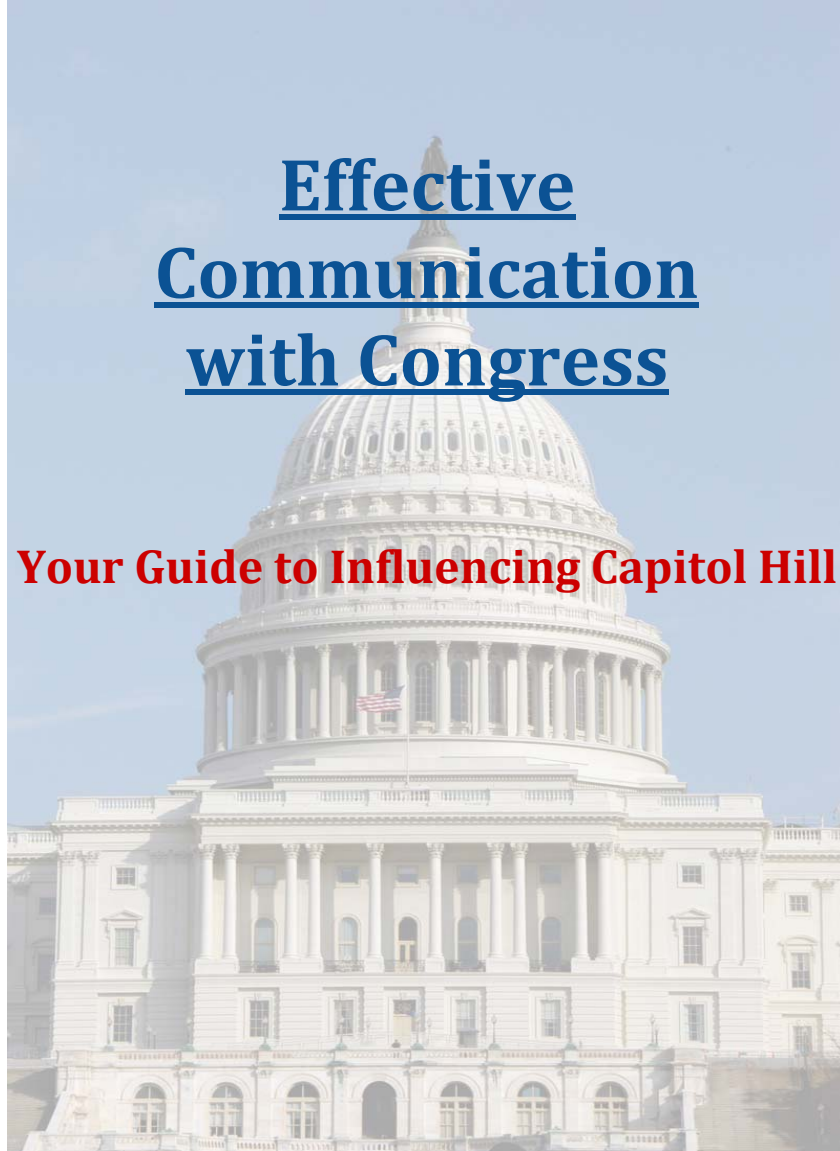




Effective Communication with Congress

Your Guide to Influencing Capitol Hill





Vision: Advancing excellence in supports and services ~ Leading the way to communities of choice.

Mission: To inform, educate and network service providers to safeguard, develop, grow and extend their capacity to support the choices of people with disabilities.

We wish to thank Nadia Facey for her work developing this guide.

ANCOR also gratefully acknowledges the broad expertise and experience of its Government Relations staff and individual ANCOR members throughout the years.

- Suellen Galbraith, Director for Government Relations

We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.

- Thomas Jefferson

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The information in this book and additional resources can be found online in ANCOR’s Advocacy Tool Kit

Available online at:

<http://www.ancor.org/issues/AdvocacyToolKit.html>

Introduction

Dear ANCOR Member:

ANCOR strives to change “what is” into “what should be” with respect to how supports and services are delivered to the people we serve and their families. Advocacy is the key to effecting change and creating a better social, political, and economic environment for all. It is through the deliberate process of advocacy that ANCOR members can speak out on issues important to providers.

As an association, how can we speak out on these issues? By communicating with the elected officials representing us at all levels of government.

The purpose of this guide is to provide the tools and information you need to effectively communicate with and influence members of Congress.

Too often, people believe that they do not have the power to effect change in Washington. Nothing can be further from the truth—studies have shown that constituent opinion is the most deciding factor when members of Congress face a vote.

This is empowering information. It means that you, as a constituent, can help your Representatives and Senators make informed policy decisions. In order to use your power, you must first take the initiative to communicate with your members of Congress. Only by doing so, can you build a relationship that is fruitful for both you and them.

As a constituent, community member, employer, direct support professional and, most important, as someone who enhances the

lives of individuals with disabilities, you CAN influence public policy. Members of Congress may not know the important role you play in your community. It is up to you to educate them on your organization, the impact it has on the local economy, and the importance of investing in the supports and services you provide to individuals with disabilities.

This guide comes to you from ANCOR at a time in history when change is desperately needed and the climate for change is exceptionally fertile. ANCOR members and your constituencies are uniquely positioned to demonstrate to Congress that the supports and services we provide are a viable and sustainable part of the infrastructure and economy of the community. We hope you find it an invaluable tool in supporting your organization, your work, and ANCOR's calls to action.

It is imperative that we have every voice effectively focused on our issues if we have any hope of achieving the outcomes we desire.

ANCOR urges every member to engage all individuals connected with every aspect of providing supports and services to individuals with disabilities in your community to use this guide. Make the commitment to advocate a priority – it is an investment each of us must make.

Thank you again for your willingness to work collaboratively with ANCOR to bring our message to Capitol Hill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renee L. Pietrangelo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Renee L. Pietrangelo
Chief Executive Officer

Chapter 1: Understanding How Congress Works

Understanding the congressional process is an important part of being an effective advocate on behalf of your organization. This chapter will help you better understand how Congress and Congressional offices work.

Throughout this book we will include quiz questions to test your congressional knowledge. Answers are on page 30.

Congress 101

The United States Congress is the legislative body for the federal government. It is a bicameral legislature, meaning it consists of two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The term “Congress” refers to the meeting of the two legislative chambers. In January 2009, the 111th Congress will convene. It will be divided into two sessions, each lasting one calendar year.

There are differences between the House and Senate, some large some small. For example, there are 435 Members of the House and 100 Members of the Senate. House Members, called Representatives, are elected every two years. Senators are elected to six year terms. Every two years all Representatives and approximately one-third of the Senate is up for reelection.

1. About what percentage of ALL bills introduced in the House and Senate DO NOT become law?

- A. 95%*
 - B. 62%*
 - C. 25%*
 - D. 10%*
-

Leadership

Before each Congress, members of each major party meet in closed sessions known as party conferences (or party caucuses) to elect leaders, make committee assignments, and set legislative agendas.

Within each body there are numerous leadership positions. The leader of the House of Representatives is the Speaker of the House. The Vice President of the United States serves as the President of the Senate. This is typically a non-voting position; however the President of the Senate can vote to break a tie.

Leadership information is also available online in ANCOR's Advocacy Took Kit. (See page 1 for web address)

Fundamentals of the Legislative Process

The Legislative process may seem confusing at first, but most legislation follows the same fundamental process. The diagram on the next page illustrates the most basic steps for a bill to become a law.

A detailed step-by-step text guide to the legislative process is available online in ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit. (See page 1 for web address)



Key Leadership Positions in Congress

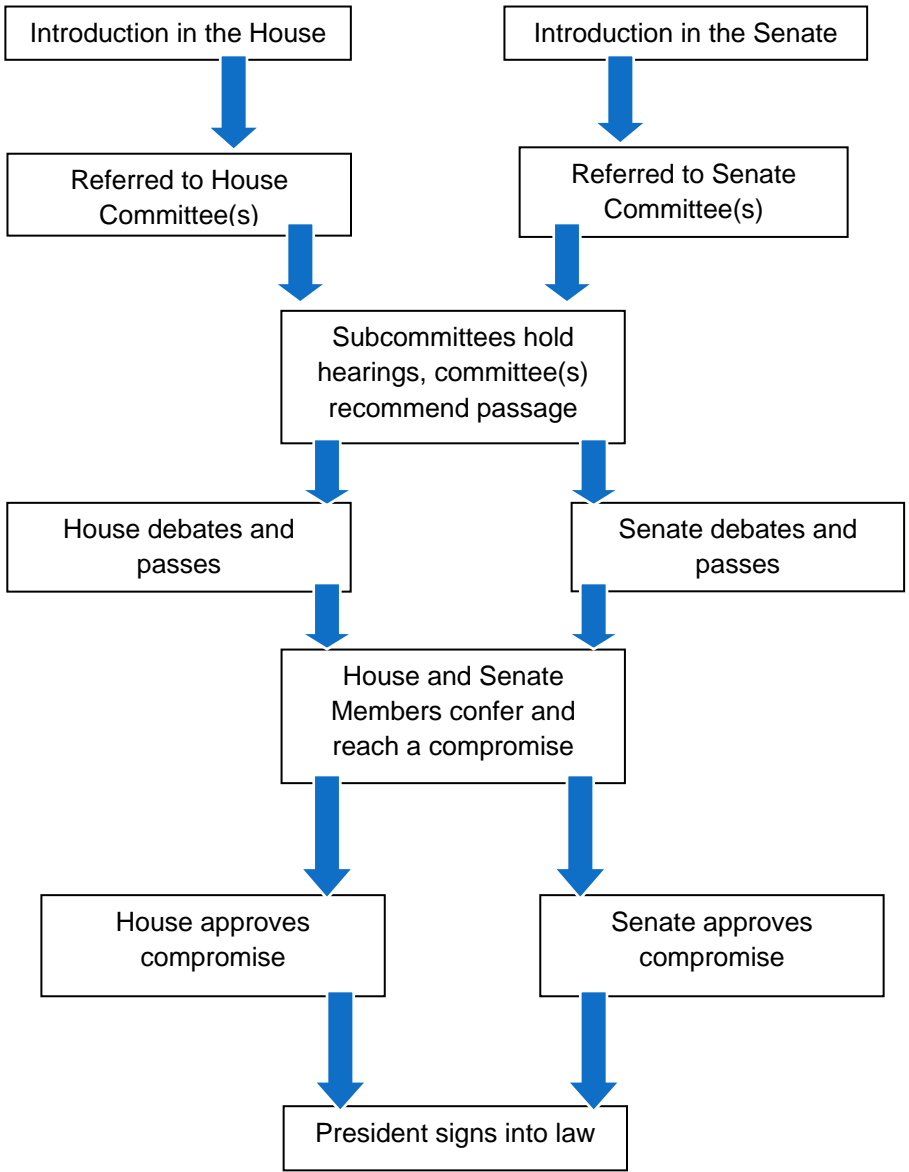
House of Representatives

- *Speaker of the House*
- *Majority Leader*
- *Minority Leader*

Senate


- *President of the Senate*
- *Majority Leader*
- *Minority Leader*

How a Bill Becomes a Law




Congressional Session Information

Members of Congress are always working, and split their time between offices in their states or districts and Washington. They meet with constituents like you in both Washington and the home state or district, but are generally more available for constituent visits while at home.



*Go online to **ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit for current congressional schedules.** (See page 1 for web address)*



The congressional session starts in January of each year and typically adjourns for the year between late October and early November.

However, congressional leaders can call members back to Washington anytime to time address time sensitive issues facing the country.

House and Senate Committees and Jurisdiction

The House and the Senate each divide the issues they work on among committees of jurisdiction. Although the committee system is similar, each body has its own guidelines and rules for determining jurisdiction. For example, in the House of Representatives, the Medicaid program is under the jurisdiction of the Energy and Commerce Committee, yet in the Senate it is under the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee.

Committee chairmen are particularly important; they set the tone for committees and choose what legislation to consider.

How a Congressional Office Works

Each member of Congress has an office in Washington, and at least one state or district office. Some members have more than one state or district office depending on geography and population.

Congressional offices function differently, but staffing is similar across all offices, both in Washington and the state or district office.

Washington Offices

Every office typically has the following:

- **Chief of Staff (COS):** Oversees all functions of the office and handles issues of particular importance. Conducts political activities.
- **Legislative Director (LD):** Manages the legislative agenda for the office.
- **Scheduler:** Responsible for the schedule of the member of Congress.
- **Press Secretary:** Manages inquiries from the media and sends out press releases.
- **Legislative Assistant or Aide (LA):** Handles some legislative issues and maintains own schedule.
- **Legislative Correspondent (LC):** Responsible for responding to mail, email and faxes sent to the member of Congress.
- **Staff Assistant:** Typically responsible for constituent services such as providing tours of the Capitol and answering the phone.

When you schedule a meeting in the Washington office, it is important to keep in mind that you will most likely meet with a staff member.

2. How many U.S. Representatives are elected to Congress?

- A. 50
- B. 1492
- C. 1
- D. 435

3. How many U.S. Senators are elected to Congress?

- A. 50
 - B. 1776
 - C. 100
 - D. 9
-

State or District Offices

Every office typically has the following:

- **State or District Director:** Oversees the functions of the office and responsible for oversight of state or district operations.
- **Scheduler:** Responsible for the schedule of the member of Congress in their home state or district.
- **Caseworker:** Responsible for solving problems between constituents and the federal government. Typical areas of casework include Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare and other federal programs.
- **Staff Assistant:** Typically responsible for constituent services such as answering the phone.

Congress spends time away from Washington during State or District Work Periods which typically occur around major holidays and for the entire month of August.


During these times, Members of Congress are available to meet at their state or district offices, and may hold town hall meetings or conduct site visits.

Chapter 2: Communicating with Congress


Why Communication is Important

Constituent communication with Congress is an essential part of the legislative process. This chapter will give you the tools you need to effectively communicate with your Senators and Representatives and advocate for issues important to ANCOR members.

As a constituent, you have a crucial role to fulfill in the legislative process. Members of Congress look to their constituents to help them form opinions on issues. You are the expert on the issues that are important to ANCOR members and therefore you are someone that the member's office can use as a resource. However, in order to do this, you need to first build a relationship and establish yourself as a credible source of information.



Good relationships are the key to success in all aspects of life – politics is no different.



Members are elected to fulfill the needs and desires of their constituents – you and the individuals you support. Remember your involvement in the process is vital.

Elected officials rely on outreach from constituents both for input on pending legislation and to maintain credibility with voters.

A politician who does not meet with his or her constituents simply will not be in office very long.

Reasons to Contact Congress

There are many reasons to contact your members of Congress. You might want to meet with them to discuss a specific bill or policy decision, to ask them to sign on to a letter, or to ask them to do a site visit.

Below are three reasons to contact Congress that will help you build a relationship and establish your credibility with a member.

1. **“The Ask:”** When meeting with a member of Congress or his or her staff, it is absolutely critical that you clearly communicate what you want the member to do. This should be a simple message that you can deliver quickly if necessary. For example, you might ask the member to co-sponsor a specific bill, hold a hearing on an issue, or visit your organization.

4. How many associations, like ANCOR, are trying to influence Congress?
A. 150,000
B. 650
C. 20,000
D. 75,000

2. **Thanking:** After a meeting, it is necessary to send a thank-you note. For example, you could send an email to the staff that you met, thanking them and repeating your ask.
3. **Follow up:** It is important to follow up on any questions that might have come up during the meeting. Following up is a critical part of relationship building and can help establish you as an expert on the issues discussed during your meeting.

Who to Contact and How to Contact Members of Congress

This section will give you the tools you need do identify your members of Congress, locate their contact information, and determine who to contact in a congressional office.


Who are your Elected Officials?

If you don't know who represents your organization and the individuals you support, ANCOR's online Action Center makes it easy to find out.


Use ANCOR's Action Center to determine your members of Congress and access their contact information. (See page 33 for web address)

Easy-to-follow instructions for finding your elected officials in the Action Center can be found in ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit. (See page 1 for web address)

You might be surprised to learn how many members of Congress you influence! Any district in which you operate, and where you or your employees live is a district in which you hold sway!



Sending an email is a great way to communicate with members of Congress and congressional staff.



Who to Contact?

Who you contact in the member's office depends on what you hope to accomplish.


If you want to...

Schedule a Meeting: Contact the scheduler in the state, district or Washington office to arrange a meeting with the member of Congress, or contact the legislative assistant who handles the issue you want to talk about at the meeting.


Ask for Co-sponsorship of a Bill: Contact the legislative assistant in Washington who handles the issue. If you don't know who that is, just call the Washington office and ask.

Ask for a Site Visit: Contact the state or district director or caseworker who handles your issues. They can help get the ball rolling for the site visit.

Give an Award to Your Member of Congress: Contact the press secretary to coordinate a press release with the information. Work with the scheduler to arrange a presentation and photo opportunity. You should also follow up with the chief of staff or other staff members with whom you have a relationship.



If you have already established a relationship with a congressional staff member, you can contact him or her directly to set up a meeting.



Opportunities to Communicate with Congress

Communicating with Congress is easy! There are several ways to communicate with your members of Congress which will be discussed on the following pages.

In person, you can:

- Meet with the member of Congress or staff by scheduling an office visit in Washington or the state or district office.
- Attend a “Town Hall” meeting.
- Host the member at a site visit of your organization.

Meeting in Person

One of the best ways to deliver your message on a particular issue to your Senator or Representative is to schedule a meeting with him or her personally, or with a member of his or her staff.



Why meet with your member of Congress?

According to the Congressional Management Foundation, in-person visits on an issue have the greatest impact on a member’s decision making process if a firm decision has not yet been made.



Scheduling a Meeting in Washington

You can schedule a meeting many ways. Every office is different, but there are some standard practices that are discussed in this section. The best way to start is by calling the office and asking to speak with the scheduler.

When contacting the scheduler:

- Explain that you are calling as a representative of your organization and that you would like to meet with the member to discuss your particular issue or bill. Make sure you tell the scheduler that you are a constituent.
- You may be asked to fax information to the office. If so, call a few days later to make sure the fax was received.
- When you speak with the scheduler, answer any questions politely, but be firm in your request to have a meeting with the member, if possible.
- Sometimes you will be able to meet with the member, but many times you will be meeting with the staff member who works on the issue that you want to discuss. Typically this staff member is called a legislative assistant or aide.

5. How many days was the Senate in Session in 2007?

- A. 75*
 - B. 183*
 - C. 260*
 - D. 325*
-

Meeting with congressional staff can be a very good thing. This is the person who should know the ins and outs of the issue, who briefs the member of Congress and who has more time to spend meeting with you.

Scheduling a Meeting at your State or District Office

Scheduling a meeting in the state or district office is the same as scheduling in Washington. Typically there is a scheduler who works exclusively in the state or district office, but it can be the same person who manages the member's schedule in Washington. In either case, use the same approach.

When meeting with staff in the state or district office, you will typically meet with a caseworker. Much like meeting with a legislative assistant, this is a good thing. When you speak to staff, tell them you are a representative of your organization and let them know what issue you would like to discuss.

Staff may already be aware of your organization, but if not, tell them about the valuable services you provide to the individuals you support. Let staff know you can be a resource to them on issues important to providers.

Timing is important when scheduling a meeting:

- Remember to look at the congressional schedule to see when your member might be home over a holiday or work period.
- Members typically have more time to meet with constituents when in their state or district offices than they do in Washington.

On average the length of time that a constituent gets to meet with a Member of Congress or staff during a Capitol Hill visit is 7½ minutes

Preparing for the Meeting

Once the meeting is scheduled it is absolutely critical that you spend time preparing. Many people feel they can be effective by just “winging it,” but this is a mistake. No one should meet with a member of Congress - or staff - if they are unwilling to prepare.

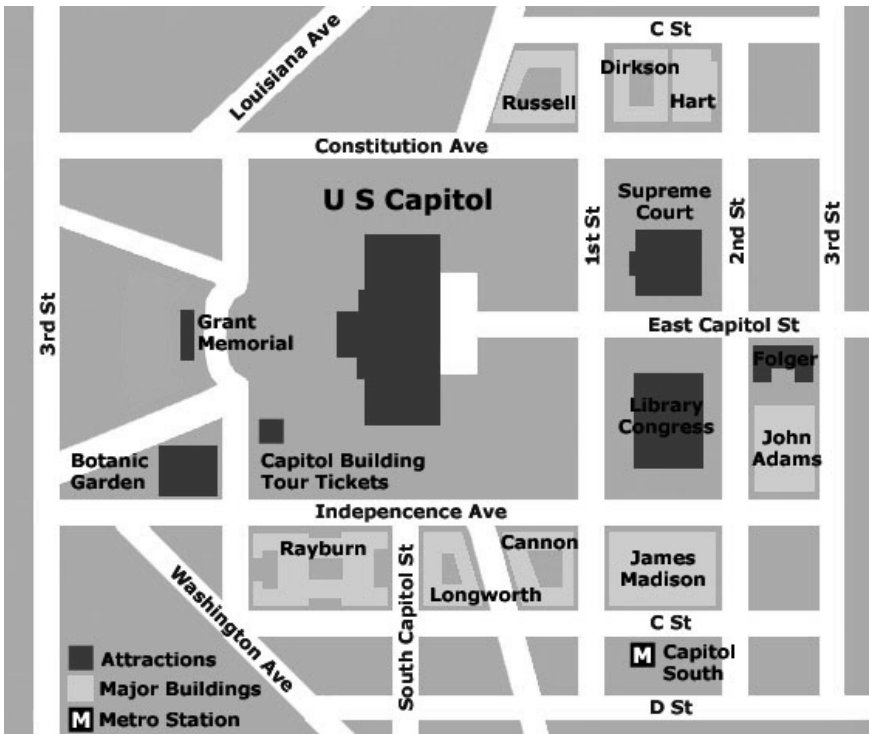
Building relationships with congressional staff is a key to successful advocacy.

Things to keep in mind:

- **Determine** what you will say, focusing on your key message and your “ask.”
- Prepare a **compelling personal story** related to the individuals you support or employ. Stories are a good way to put a face on the work of your organization.
- Be prepared to give your pitch in **five minutes** in case your meeting is cut short.
- Try to think of relevant **questions** that you may be asked, and prepare a concise answer. If you do not know an answer to a question – say that – and promise to follow up with the information. Do not try to fake it!
- Decide what **written materials** you want to leave with the member or staff at the meeting. You should leave a fact sheet or brochure explaining your issue and organization. Do not overload the member or staff with paper, or none of it will be read. Everything that you provide should be in “plain English.”
- Avoid bringing **too many people**. The more people attending the meeting the more difficult it is to stay “on message” and some may feel frustrated if they are invited but never get a chance to speak.

Getting to Your Meeting

- Know where your meeting is ahead of time to avoid getting lost. During busy times of the year, the security lines to get into buildings can take ten minutes or more, so plan accordingly.
- Don't arrive at the office too early, if you arrive at the building more than 5 minutes before the meeting, use the time to go to the cafeteria and grab something to eat or drink and prepare for the meeting.
- Maps of the Capitol complex are available in many places on and around Capitol Hill. Also, Capitol Hill police can assist you in a pinch.



What to Expect During your Meeting

Members of Congress and their staff have limited time, so they will appreciate it if you can make the meeting as brief and as valuable as possible for all of you. Congress is a busy place and sometime meetings occur under less than ideal conditions. Be flexible and remember that you are among many constituents vying for your member's attention.

Keep in mind:

- Congressional offices are small; meetings can take place in the office, but many times are done in the hallway or even the cafeteria.
- Meetings can get cut short. Have a succinct message you can get across in a few sentences if necessary.
- You might meet with someone other than the person with whom your meeting was scheduled.
- Staff in congressional offices can change frequently, so you may have to introduce yourself to new staff.

Meeting with Staff vs. Meeting with the Member

While it may seem preferable to actually meet with a member, in all likelihood you will end up meeting with one of his or her staff. Don't be discouraged! This can be a great way to establish a lasting relationship. Meetings with staff can be as effective as meeting with a member directly.

If the staff or Member agrees with your position and tells you this during the meeting, make sure you ask the Senator or Representative to talk with other Members of Congress about your issue. A strong ally in Congress is always your best lobbyist.

If you meet with staff:

- Try to exchange business cards so you can contact each other directly in the future.
- Treat them with the same respect you would a member of Congress, even if they are much younger than you or do not seem to understand the issue.
- Don't be condescending or talk down to them as this will definitely decrease the likelihood of a favorable response. The goal is to build a positive ongoing relationship.

Always walk into a meeting ready to give a 5 minute pitch that includes your "ask."

If you meet with a Member of Congress:

- You will have to be much more succinct in your explanation of the issues. While you might be given 30 minutes to meet with staff, you may only get about 10 minutes with the member.
- Don't let the member steer the conversation off track. Stay focused on your "ask."

Additional tips for congressional visits are available online in ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit. (See page 1 for web address)

It is important to remember that your issue is only one of many that compete for attention in a Congressional office.

Therefore, it is critical that you find ways to make your issue stand out, while at the same time maintaining credibility with the elected official.

Common Meeting Pitfalls

With good planning, you can easily avoid mistakes people frequently make when meeting with a member of Congress or staff. Some of the most common are listed below. **More detailed information is available online in ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit. (See page 1 for web address)**

- **Not staying “on message.”** One of the easiest and most common mistakes to make is to stray away from the message you want to deliver.
- **Not clearly identifying your “ask.”** When you meet with the member or staff, it's easy to spend a considerable amount of time explaining who you are and giving background information about your issue – but remember the most important part of your visit is the “ask.”
- **Getting tripped up by questions that are too detailed.** Sometimes staff will pick out a small aspect of whatever issue you are talking about and ask more detailed questions. Don't get diverted from your message, use it as an opportunity follow up with the staff member later with more information.

You are the expert on the issues that you want to discuss; it is your role to help the Member of Congress understand your experience.

ANCOR Scenario

John, An ANCOR member, went to his first Congressional meeting nervous, but prepared. The reason for the meeting was to ask the member of Congress to co-sponsor a bill that would help states and providers address the workforce shortage.

The meeting with the congressional staff went well. John shared with the staff a personal story about a dedicated Direct Support Professional who worked for his agency, and the impact the bill would have on the employee.

A week later, John called the staff to follow up on his “ask.” During the call, he learned that the staff member had shared his story with the member of Congress who then agreed to co-sponsor the bill.

Further, the member encouraged other members of Congress to support the bill.

Does this story sound ‘too good to be true?’ The Direct Support Professionals Fairness and Security Act (H.R. 1279), introduced in the 110th Congress, attained 129 co-sponsors by the end of the Congress. That number was reached because of the efforts of ANCOR members who reached out to their Representatives in Congress and advocated for support of the bill.

Town Hall Meetings

Attending Town Hall Meetings is another key to building a relationship with your members of Congress. They hold town hall meetings throughout the year to hear from, and be accessible to, their constituents.

Things to keep in mind when attending a town hall meeting:


Town Hall Meetings are also a great opportunity to educate the public and media.

- **Put a face on federal policy decisions** effecting your organization. Members of Congress are always looking for firsthand accounts of the effect policies have on their constituents, and real-life examples are the most powerful.
- **Use statistics** to demonstrate that you provide a service that affects a substantial part of their constituency; members of Congress will be more apt to listen.
- **Talk to the staff** before or after the meeting to identify yourself as an expert on certain issues. Members of Congress depend upon staff for this type of information.
- **Attend multiple town hall meetings** to reinforce your message throughout their district. Even if the topic of the meeting does not relate to your issues, it's still a good opportunity to meet your member of Congress and staff.
- **Follow up** with a phone call or email to thank them for listening. This is another means of using your voice to make a difference.


Let ANCOR know about your member's response at the Town Hall Meeting. Your feedback is very important; it helps ANCOR to tailor its work in Washington. **Please take two minutes to complete ANCOR's Online Congressional Visit Feedback Form, available in ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit. (See page 1 for web address)**

Site Visits

Inviting your elected officials to visit your organization is a wonderful way to reach out to them and accurately inform them about your organization, individuals you support and the specific challenges you face.



*It may take
many asks to
get a site visit
- but it's
worth it!*



Members of Congress have limited time, but they do make time to do site visits. However, a site visit should not be your first contact with the member of Congress. Site visits should be set up after you have established a relationship with the congressional office; they should be seen as a way to further your relationship with the member and to promote yourself as a resource on issues important to providers.

Steps for a Successful Site Visit:

- **Asking** your member of Congress to visit your organization is the first step.
 - Start by contacting the scheduler and the staff member with whom you have most recently met.
 - Each office handles visits differently, but often the staff member who works in the district office on Medicare/Medicaid issues will accompany the member to the site visit.
- **Plan** in advance what you will highlight during the site visit.
 - This could include individuals you support or employ who have a compelling story.
- **Media attention.** Most members of Congress want attention from the press.
 - A site visit is a perfect time to help your organization and the member receive media attention.
 - Prior to the site visit, contact the member's press secretary so he or she can reach out to media.

ANCOR Scenario

Joan, an ANCOR member, had built a good relationship with John, an aide to her local Member of Congress. Over the course of a year, she worked with John to get the Member of Congress to visit the organization for which she worked.

Prior to the site visit John put Joan in touch with the press secretary for the Member of Congress and together they worked on a joint press release highlighting the work of the organization.

The Member of Congress was very impressed during the site visit and the local media ran a story in the newspaper about the visit and the work of the organization on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

Later a Medicaid bill that affected ANCOR members came up in committee. John called Joan to ask her opinion about the bill because she had established herself as an expert on issues affecting providers of supports and services to individuals with disabilities.

Tips on Calling, Faxing, or Emailing a Member of Congress

Members of Congress are always interested to hear from constituents and they pay attention to constituent emails, calls, faxes, and letters.

Forge a relationship with your members of Congress by writing or calling to introduce your organization, explain your value to the community and the issues important to you.

Once a relationship has been established, calling or emailing congressional staff on an issue you are concerned with is best. This enables you to connect with the staff, build your relationship and keep your organization in their mind.

Tips for Calling:

- Be brief. Staff have little time to spend on the phone.
- Be concise, just like when you write a letter, fax or email; begin with the reason you are calling.
- If you leave a message keep it short and repeat your name and phone number twice.

For most congressional offices, the most effective way to communicate is by email. The message should be concise, informed and polite. Keep in mind that regular mail takes longer than normal to reach Capitol Hill because all mail to congressional offices in Washington is scanned for biochemical materials.

6. On average, how long does it take for a bill to become a law once introduced?

- A. 3 year*
B. 5 years
C. 7 years
D. 12 years
-

Tips for Sending Emails, Faxes or Letters

- If you are sending an email and the subject of your email is a bill, cite it by name and number in the email's subject line.
- In a short paragraph, state your purpose. Stick with one subject or issue per communication and be sure to support your position.
- Personalize the issue; support your position with specific information about how legislation or funding is likely to affect you and others. Personal stories carry great weight. However, you should avoid emotional, philosophical arguments.
- Ask for the legislator's support but do not demand support. Remember, they might not be able to support you this time, but perhaps they will next time.

See the next section on emailing or calling your member of Congress through ANCOR action alerts.

Tips for Personalizing Your Message to Members of Congress:

- *Incorporate a compelling personal story*
- *Include information about your organization and its important role in the community*
- *State the impact of the issue on individuals you support*

The ANCOR Action Center

Using the ANCOR Action Center is an easy and effective way to communicate with your members of Congress. **A step-by-step guide to using ANCOR's Action Center is available online in ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit. (See page 1 for web address)**

ANCOR sends out two types of Action Alerts by email:

1. **Email Action Alerts** prompt you to email your members of Congress and typically have a form letter ready for you to personalize.
 - Personalize the form letter that is attached and make it relevant to your organization and member of Congress. (See previous section for tips on personalizing your message.)
2. **Call Action Alerts** prompt you to call your member of Congress. They are particularly time sensitive and come with talking points.
 - Do not worry about who you speak with in the office, just make sure to deliver the talking points and leave your name and contact information.
 - After the call, be sure to follow up with feedback to ANCOR using the form provided through the alert.

ANCOR Action Alerts make it easy to email or call your Members of Congress about a specific issue.

In order to make these communications effective, they need to be personalized.

Follow Up After the Meeting or Communication

Following up after a meeting is as important as the meeting itself. It is a key step in the relationship building process and establishing yourself as a reliable source of information.

After the meeting send an email to the member of Congress and their staff.

- Thank the member and staff for the meeting, then restate your “ask” and any agreements or commitments that you think were reached.
- If you agreed to provide more information, do so as quickly as possible.

Keep in mind:

- If you met or communicated with congressional staff who promised to deliver your message to the member, email or call to find out how the member responded.
- When a member or staff recognizes you as a trustworthy and responsible source of useful and reliable information – who can help make their job easier – it will become easier for you to schedule meetings, or you may find yourself invited to meetings initiated by members or staff.

Members of Congress and staff always appreciate the courtesy of a thank-you note.

Sending a thank-you note is also an easy way to remind members and staff of your visit, and to reaffirm your desire to establish a relationship with the member.

Feedback to ANCOR

Feedback from your communications with Congress is essential to ANCOR's grassroots efforts. The more information you provide the more effective all of our advocacy efforts can be.

Provide feedback to ANCOR after: meetings with members of Congress or staff, town hall meetings, site visits, phone calls, emails, faxes, letters, or any other communications with Congress.

Use ANCOR's convenient online feedback forms to report on your interactions with Congress. These forms, and directions for their use, are available in ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit. (See page 1 for web address)

ANCOR Scenario

Misha, an ANCOR member, met with one of her Senators to discuss a Medicaid bill. Misha told the Senator about the supports and services her agency provides to individuals with disabilities and how the bill would ensure continued supports.

Following the meeting, Misha used ANCOR's online feedback forms to tell ANCOR about the visit. In her feedback, Misha noted the Senator's support for the Medicaid bill and his interest in supports for individuals with disabilities.

Several months later, a bill was introduced in the Senate that would cut supports and services to individuals with disabilities. ANCOR staff remembered Misha's feedback and approached her Senator about the bill. The Senator agreed not to support the bill and to speak about it to other members.

Lobby and Gift Rules

In 2007 Congress passed the *Honest Leadership and Open Government Act*. This law imposes new requirements on private organizations, lobbyists, and lobbyist employers.

Included in the law are strict limits on gifts given to member of Congress or their staff.

If you have questions about the new lobbying and gift rules, visit ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit for more information. (See page 1 for web address)

Or you can contact the House and Senate Ethics Committees at:

House Ethics Information: <http://ethics.house.gov/>

Senate Ethics Information: <http://ethics.senate.gov/>

Quiz Answers

1)A 2)D 3)C 4)A 5)B 6)C 7)C

7. How many bills were introduced in the House and Senate (combined) in the 110th Congress (Jan. '07 – Dec. '08)

- A. 267
 - B. 14,193
 - C. 11,020
 - D. 13,581
-

Chapter 3: Learning More about the Issues

Want to learn more about the topics covered in this manual? ANCOR Government Relations has tools to help you build upon your current expertise, stay informed, and become a *go-to* resource for your members of Congress.

ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit - The Tool Kit has additional and in-depth information about the issues discussed in this manual.
<http://www.ancor.org/issues/AdvocacyToolkit.html>

ANCOR Action Center – Contact Congress through ANCOR Action Alerts, find your members of Congress and track key legislation.
<http://www.ancor.org/capwiz/index.cfm>

ANCOR's Legislative Goals – ANCOR's most current legislative goals can be found on the National Issues webpage.

ANCOR National Issues Webpage – Access issue briefs and learn more about issues affecting ANCOR members including Medicaid, the workforce crisis, housing, employment of people with disabilities and more.
<http://www.ancor.org/issues/index.html>

ANCOR's State Fact Sheets – Provide specific, state-by-state information on Medicaid.
<http://www.ancor.org/issues/medicaid/MedicaidSTFactSheets.html>

LINKS – A monthly newsletter for ANCOR members. Contact ANCOR about subscribing to LINKS.

Washington Insiders Club (WIC's) - This weekly members-only email update covers the latest news from Congress and the federal government. Contact ANCOR about subscribing to WIC's.

Quick Resources

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ANCOR Resources

Homepage: <http://www.ancor.org/>

National Issues Webpage: <http://www.ancor.org/issues/index.html>

ANCOR Action Center: <http://www.ancor.org/capwiz/index.cfm>

ANCOR's Advocacy Tool Kit:

<http://www.ancor.org/issues/AdvocacyToolKit.html>

Congress

Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

House of Representatives Home Page: www.house.gov

Senate Home Page: www.senate.gov

Legislative Support Agencies

Library of Congress Legislative Information: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Congressional Budget Office: <http://www.cbo.gov/>

U.S. Government Accountability Office: <http://www.gao.gov/>

Congressional Research Service Reports: <http://opencrs.com/>