What to Do During a Meeting

Whether a meeting with your member of Congress occurs on Capitol Hill or in your home state, your visit provides an opportunity for you to effectively communicate your message and build a relationship with your member of Congress and his or her staff. The tips below will assist you in conducting a successful meeting.

1. **Begin with a Personal Story**
   - Sharing a personal story helps illustrate your connection to the issue.
   - Telling personal stories is an important way to connect with members of Congress and demonstrate why your issues are important.

2. **Clearly Identify your “Ask”**
   - Determine in advance what your ‘ask’ will be so that you can clearly communicate what you want your member of Congress to do.
   - Don’t stray away from your ‘ask’ and the message you want to deliver.
   - As a constituent, you are very important to your members of Congress. Make sure to explain how your ‘ask’ will effect you and other constituents.

3. **Take Notes**
   - Meetings can go by quickly, by taking notes you are able to keep track of questions you could not answer so you can follow up after the meeting.
   - Take note of any response you get from a member of Congress or staff. When you have multiple meetings it can be difficult to remember who said what.

4. **Be Flexible**
   - Do not be offended if you are unable to meet with the member of Congress. You may meet with his or her staff. This is not unusual.
   - Meetings can get cut short, always walk into a meeting ready to give a 5 minute pitch that includes your “ask.”
   - Congressional offices are small; meetings can take place in the office, but may occur in the hallway or even the cafeteria.

5. **Stay Positive and Courteous**
   - Be honest, candid and relaxed. Use a conversational tone in your presentation.
   - Expect a neutral reaction as you will rarely get a firm commitment on the spot. A typical response is that the member of Congress will consider the proposal.
   - Never respond to a member of Congress or staff by being argumentative or defensive.
   - Express thanks for the opportunity to meet and discuss your issues.

6. **Exchange Contact Information**
   - Make sure to get a business card from congressional staff; you may want to contact them directly in the future or follow up on questions raised during the meeting.
   - Make sure to leave your contact information and urge staff to contact you if they have further questions.