

Tips for State Captains to Guide CSMG Delegations in Setting Up Hill Visits

General Information

- Lock in Senate appointments quickly and let your delegations know so they can factor their meetings with their Representatives around those times if possible.
- Try to make your Senate appointments mid to late afternoon Tuesday, February 12 so you can then go straight to the Hill Visits Reception at 4:30 p.m. in the Kennedy Caucus Room, Russell Senate Office Building.
- Encourage your delegates to group appointments with Representatives according to which House office building these members occupy. This will save time and energy.
- Whether your entire delegation visits an office or your delegation splits to cover more Congressional offices, please make sure that someone in each group is designated to complete the Hill Visits Report Back form for each visit. These may be turned into you to give to the Hill Visits Committee, but only one form needs to be completed per visit.

Different Scenarios

If you are a state captain/co-captain of a small group of CSMG registrants from a state with few (<6) Congressional representatives, your task of making appointments is relatively easy. Everyone can go to every appointment. If you have more than two people in your delegation, you may split the group to meet with different Representatives simultaneously. If you want someone from USCCB, CRS or CCUSA to accompany your delegation, please contact Virginia Farris (vfarris@usccb.org).

If you are a state captain/co-captain of a large group (10+) of CSMG registrants from a state with a large number of Congressional representatives, plan as to who goes to what meetings on the Hill. Determine which of your registrants are constituents of which members of Congress and have those registrants request appointments with their Representatives. Look to see which Members of Congress are not covered, prioritize meetings if necessary to focus on those Members who are likely to be more involved in the advocacy issues, and decide who might best request meetings on behalf of Catholics in your state.

If you are a state captain/co-captain of a small to medium size group (<10) of CSMG registrants from a state with a medium to large number of Congressional representatives, your task will be to pick and choose whom to see as you can't see everyone. Determine which of your registrants are constituents of which members of Congress and have those registrants request appointments with their Representatives. Look to see which Members of Congress are not covered, prioritize meetings to focus on those Members who are likely to be more involved in the advocacy issues, and decide who might best request meetings on behalf of Catholics in your state.

If you are state captain/co-captain of a large group of CSMG registrants from a state with a small to medium size number of Congressional representatives, you have an embarrassment of riches. For Senate meetings, try to limit the number of CSMG registrants to less than 5 since most offices are not able to accommodate a large delegation. Decide who would be most comfortable presenting the issues in a succinct manner and who can tie the issue into concerns within the state. For House meetings, divide the registrants into groups of 2 or 3, trying to ensure that a constituent is included in the appointment with his/her Representative wherever possible.

How to Schedule your Hill Visits

- Find contact information for your Senators or Representatives by visiting our Legislative Action Center at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/take-action-now/capwiz/capwiz-elected-officials.cfm> (and if you haven't already done so, sign up for our Action Alerts when you're there). Simply search by ZIP code (in some instances, ZIP+4 is necessary), scroll down to find your members, and click on their profiles followed by the "Contact" tab.
- When you reach your Member's office, tell the receptionist your name, your affiliation (diocese or organization), and stress that you are a constituent. If you're not a constituent from that district, mention that you represent ___ number of Catholics and Catholic organizations from that state. Be sure to mention any association with the Member of Congress (e.g. helped campaign, met at an event). *If you have a relationship with a staff member, contact that staff member directly to begin the process.*
- To schedule meetings with Members of Congress, some offices have a staff scheduler who coordinates all appointments. Some offices prefer that a faxed appointment request letter be sent to the Scheduler (see sample letter below). Ask how the office prefers to receive meeting requests, and **make sure you have the proper contact information**. In the event that you need to follow up, it will be important to have the scheduler's name and email address.
- If the Member of Congress is not available, ask to meet with the Congressional Aide or Staff person(s) who deals with the Hill issues you will be discussing (**preserving funding for poverty-focused programs, both domestic and international, and comprehensive immigration reform**). The Member may still stop in during your meeting so you may get to greet him or her briefly. Make sure you know what the Member looks like. There are a lot of new faces in Congress.
- If you speak to or leave a message with an Aide or Staff person, tell them what you want to discuss and the preferred time of your meeting (Tuesday, Feb. 12 between 1:30 pm and 4:30 p.m.). Ask for a 30 minute meeting and expect to get 15-20 minutes.
- If given a meeting time over the telephone, ask for an email address to send a confirmation. Make sure you have the correct office address. Send reminders of the meetings by February 8.
- When you have a meeting confirmed, keep track of it or enter it in the Excel spreadsheet. Once you have all your delegation's meetings scheduled and confirmed, share the completed Excel spreadsheet or list of all appointments for your delegation with Tom Mulloy (tmulloy@usccb.org) so that there is a backup of the information handy on site at the CSMG.

Sample Text for Requesting an Appointment

Dear Senator/Congressman/Congresswoman:

Attn: [Scheduler]

I would like to schedule an appointment with you regarding (issues). I am part of a group of constituents making Congressional visits during the week of February 11, preferably February 12 afternoon. I am the (Job Title) from (Diocese or Organization) from your (State/City/Congressional District). [Name additional attendees or the potential for additional attendees at the meeting].

The purpose of this appointment is to provide you with details about the perspective of the Catholic community on issues affecting low-income families in (our state/your district) and one issue related to global poverty and justice. I can be reached by phone at _____ or by email at _____. Thank you for your time.