

U.S. CAPITOL COMPLEX



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|---|--|
| 1 Russell Senate Office Building | 7 Cannon House Office Building |
| 2 Dirksen Senate Office Building | 8 Longworth House Office Building |
| 3 Hart Senate Office Building | 9 Rayburn House Office Building |
| 4 U.S. Supreme Court | 10 Ford House Office Building |
| 5 Jefferson Building, Library of Congress | 11 U.S. Botanic Garden & the National Garden |
| 6 Madison Building, Library of Congress | |



Catholic Social Ministry Gathering 2012
Washington D.C.
February 12-15, 2012

Advocacy 101

Arranging the Visit

Meetings are arranged through a scheduler at the member's Washington Office. Set your meeting up two weeks in advance. Ask for 30 minutes and expect to get about 10 or 15.

You may not be able to meet directly with your Congressional representative. If this is the case, do not worry; ask instead to meet with the Legislative Director (LD) or a Legislative Assistant (LA). These key staffers play a crucial role in your legislators' actions on the Hill and meeting with them can prove extremely beneficial.

When Scheduling a Visit

- Be sure to stress that you are a constituent.
- Be sure to clearly state the issue(s) you would like to discuss **and** the group you represent.

You can find your member of Congress at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/take-action-now/capwiz/capwiz-elected-officials.cfm>

Be sure that you confirm your visit with the scheduler via email soon after arranging the appointment, and *then again* by phone the day before you are scheduled to meet.



Preparing for Your Visit

1. Learn about your legislator:

Do your homework! Find out what your legislators care about and what arguments may persuade them by visiting their website and signing up for their e-mails. View the "Getting to know your members of Congress" webinar at www.usccb.org. For last minute research use the guest computers at the Hotel.

2. Come up with a "game plan":

Develop a succinct agenda that your group can agree on for congressional visits. Use your time at the delegates meeting, February 13, to iron out a clear message. Decide who will speak about what in advance so that you can advocate as a united front for your issues.

3. Be a Concerned Constituent:

You don't have to be an expert to raise issues with your member, just a constituent with concerns. We will give you background notes and briefings to help you raise well-reasoned points, with a few facts to back them up. Be prepared to answer questions, but if you don't know how to respond, say that someone from USCCB will follow up for you. You can learn more here: www.thomas.loc.gov

4. Gather Local Information on Issues:

USCCB will prepare a leave-behind packet with facts and a specific request for action for your legislator. Compile information about how the issues impact your local diocese and Church programs. *Be sure to add your personal contact information in case Congressional staff would like to follow up.*

During the Visit

Be on Time, Positive, and Friendly:

- Try to arrive at your meeting a little bit early. *Don't forget to introduce yourself, your group, mention the Catholic presence in your state and thank the legislator for the opportunity to meet.*
- Know your agenda and stick to your message. Do not assume the member is familiar with the details of the issue/bill.
- Explain how this issue affects you at a local level.
- Be sure to take notes during the visit! Ask for the names and cards of staffers assigned to work in your issues area.
- Take a photo with the member that may be used in a future press release.

Keep your message simple and to the point:

You may only have 10 or 15 minutes with the member so make them count. While you prepare for your meeting, practice two sets of remarks; one 5 minutes long, and another 90 seconds long. This way, you will be able to express your concerns to the member even if they are called out of the room during the middle of the visit.

If you can, tell a personal story that relates to your issue. Legislators don't just look for "you're for or against" an issue. *They want to know why.* A personal story is a great way to express why a topic is important to you and the Church; it carries a lot of weight.

Thank the legislator or staff again and give your leave-behind packet and invitations.

Following the Visit

After your meeting, debrief:

By debriefing immediately after the meeting you will improve your group's ability to take the next step in the advocacy process: the follow-up.

- Compare notes and discuss your initial reaction to the legislator's remarks, questions and comments.
- Have one person complete the *Hill Visits Instant Report* form for each visit.

Be sure to send a thank you note or e-mail:

Decide who in each group will send the thank you note. The note should: 1) Reinforce your message and the local impact of the issue; 2) Highlight the main points of the visit and; 3) Conclude with a personal story that surfaced during the meeting. If the member requested any additional information during the visit, make sure you include it in your thank you note or indicate that USCCB will follow up.

- If your meeting was with a staffer, still address the note to your legislator with a copy to the staff member, other members of your group and ijpintern1@usccb.org.
- Visit your elected official's district office to follow-up on your issues and build a relationship with your members of Congress.

Press Release

Finalize your press release with pertinent quotes from the member. Send it out to the media as soon as possible.