

# TIPS FOR MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

## “Physicians, Stand Together” 9/10/09

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It is unlikely that you will be meeting with your Member. These duties are assigned to a Legislative Assistant (LA) who is responsible for the area of “Health Care.” This is not an insult. This is actually the person who has the most power to bring your message to the Member. Even seasoned lobbyists work mostly with the staff members.

Decide which points you want to make – choose 2 or 3 main points in advance, and make them quickly. Organize your thoughts into a 2 or 3 minute opening comment.

Don’t hesitate to take your talking points with you and them with them during your meeting. Better to have the information than to struggle. You may leave them as a handout.

- **CALLING FOR APPOINTMENTS:** Identify yourself as Dr. \_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ so they know you are a constituent. Tell them you will be in DC on Thursday (Friday?) and would like a few minutes for an appointment. It is likely that they will hand you off to the Legislative Assistant. As mentioned above, this is just fine.
- **OPENING MOVES:** Open with thanking them for meeting with you, and give them your card or contact information so they can reach you in the future.
- **USE THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD:** State a position, and then support it. Be factual, and support with as many specifics as you can.
- **PERSONAL STORIES WORK BETTER THAN PREPARED POLICY POSITIONS.** They have heard those before. They need to hear HOW government involvement interferes with your ability to practice medicine, and how that’s bad for your patients.
- Remind them that you have many patients – 1,000? 3,000? – and how many people you influence in your life. MEMBERS ARE INTERESTED IN VOTERS.
- **DON’T TRY TO ARGUE** them into a position or demand specific action on their part. You may actually force them to take a position AGAINST them, or shorten the meeting.
- **DON’T BE THROWN IF YOU ARE ASKED QUESTIONS.** Be patient, particularly with staff. Questions mean they are actually listening.
- **ALWAYS BE POLITE AND PATIENT.** Do not threaten in any way. This may be the toughest part of your visit. You may be meeting with a twenty-something staffer who you think can’t possibly know what you’ve been through, but hang in there! Make them your friend and ally with kindness and information. View this as an opportunity to educate them.
- **FOLLOW UP** with a letter (email or fax) thanking them for the visit and summarizing your points, with an offer to help. Let them know if you would be able to speak or testify at hearings.



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