

## CONGRESSIONAL VISIT POINTERS

*Visiting your Members of Congress or Senator when they are home is a very effective way to make the case for biomedical research. It is obvious that you are a constituent, legislators value the interactions, and you can often get time with the legislator in person, unlike a meeting in Washington. Here are some points to consider.*

1. **Do your homework; learn about the legislator. A good place to start is his/her website. Go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and follow the links to the legislator's personal site.**
2. **Think out ahead of time what you want. Rehearse a brief opening statement covering what you want and why. Keep it short and to the point.**
3. **As part of your case for biomedical research, you should probably discuss its economic benefits. NIH's site with historical data on grants by state is:**

[http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/award/trends/State\\_Congressional/StateOverview.cfm](http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/award/trends/State_Congressional/StateOverview.cfm)

4. **On the day of the meeting, show up on time.**
5. **When you arrive, you may meet with a staff person. Don't be offended; this is common (you have a better chance of meeting with the legislator personally if you come as part of a group).**
6. **During the meeting, be courteous (even in the unlikely event they are not).**
7. **Don't threaten, or claim to have vast political influence.**
8. **In the face of disagreement, do NOT assume the Member doesn't understand the issue.**
9. **Keep on message; don't get distracted.**
10. **If you get questions, answer them as clearly and truthfully as possible.**
11. **If you don't know the answer, say so and promise to get the answer to the person you met with as soon as possible.**
12. **The meeting will likely go 15 – 20 minutes. Be aware of time; don't prolong the meeting if it seems forced to do so.**
13. **Ask for a business card and if you have one, give it to the person you met with.**
14. **After the meeting, discuss it with your colleagues. What was the tone of the meeting—supportive or not? Sympathetic or not? Did you get any new information? Did you make all your points? Did you get questions you couldn't answer?**
15. **Write a thank-you note as soon as you can that also restates your talking points.**
16. **If you want help or have questions, please contact ASBMB Public Affairs Officer Peter Farnham at [pfarnham@asbmb.org](mailto:pfarnham@asbmb.org)**