

FASEB Congressional Visit Toolbox:
Your Guide to Advocating for Science on Capitol Hill and in Your Home District
Legislative Visit Best Practices

Before the Meeting

- [Find](#) the names and contact information of your elected officials, [check](#) the calendar and [request](#) a meeting using our customizable meeting request form.
- Learn as much as you can about the Member(s) you will be meeting. Has he/she expressed interest in research and science issues or taken a position on funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science or the Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetics Research Program? Does s/he serve on either the [House](#) or [Senate](#) Appropriations Committee (the committee that decides how much funding is allocated for federal science agencies)?
- Visit the FASEB [111th Congress Information and Advocacy Center](#) to find information about your Representatives and Senators, including biographical information and a list of committees on which they serve. You may also want to explore [Project VoteSmart](#), [SHARP Network](#) and [YourCongressYourHealth](#) as well as the member's own [House](#) or [Senate](#) website.
- Gather material from your university/research center to take with you on your visits. This material should be short, relevant to your message and presented in a format that is easy for lay people to understand (e.g. summary of key research findings, overview of research in progress, reprints of published journal articles, etc.). Be sure to bring enough copies for each visit that you have scheduled.

At The Meeting

- Bring a list of talking points for yourself and a folder with printed materials to leave behind. You can find samples at the [Congressional Visit Toolbox Homepage](#).
- Bring business cards to exchange with people you meet and/or visit with.
- Dress is usually business casual, though some scientists prefer to wear a lab coat or other attire.
- Arrive on time and be patient if asked to wait.
- Meeting with Congressional staff is just as important as meeting with the members of Congress themselves. Do not be discouraged if your meeting is with a staff person. Congressional staff are often the experts on the issues and provide critical direction to their bosses about how to vote on specific issues.
- The [Discussion Guide](#) will provide you with a general outline for your meeting.
- If you are asked a question and do not know the answer, offer to look into it and follow up at a later date.
- The meeting may last anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour. As you sense that the person you are meeting with would like to wrap things up, reiterate your main point(s), thank them for their time and end the meeting.
- Remember that regardless of who you meet with or how you perceive the meeting to have gone, you have made a difference by speaking out for science. Thank YOU for doing so!!

Follow Up

- Within 1 week of the meeting, send a [thank you letter](#) to each person with whom you met.
- Take notes of any information or materials you promised to provide and do so within 2 weeks of the meeting.
- Consider sending a visit [report form](#) to FASEB so that we can learn about your efforts.
- Write an article about your meeting for your research center newsletter or website. Be sure to include pictures from your visit and to send a copy of the finished article to the Member of Congress and the staff with whom you met.