



Getting and Planning a Meeting with Your Members of Congress or Their Staff:

Note: The American Promise [National Citizen Leadership Conference](#) (NCLC) Lobby Day is Monday, June 25, 2018. Try to schedule your meetings between 9:15 a.m. and 4 p.m. that day. Because it is a Monday, many members of Congress will still be in their Districts or headed back to Washington, D.C., but a meeting with the aide who handles campaign finance issues is also critical. Some of you may be able to stay the following day, Tuesday, June 26th to meet with other members of Congress in your state and/or meet with your own member of Congress. If you meet with the aide in DC on June 25th, make a commitment to meet with the Member of Congress back home after you return from the conference. That's what American Promise trains its American Promise Associations (APAs) to do all the time. Think about starting or joining an APA in your community.

Who should set up the meeting? If you are in an APA, be clear about which APA member is setting up each of your meetings. If you are not in an APA, contact Azor Cole at azorc@americanpromise.net to see if there is someone already coming to the NCLC from your community and setting up the appointments or if you can be the liaison setting them up.

Why participate in Lobby Day? Virtually all the ballot measures and resolutions passed at the state and local level call on Congress to act to overturn Citizens United. We are meeting with members of Congress (House and Senate) to urge them to support overturning Citizens United and if they are already supporters, to urge them to advocate for it, and if they already advocate for it, urge them to be a leader and eventually a true champion for overturning Citizens United.

Our Challenge: Remember, of all the bills in Congress aimed at overturning Citizens United, there is only one Republican co-sponsor—just one. That is where American Promise can turn things around. Even if your member of Congress is a Democrat, who do you know in a neighboring Congressional district who has a Republican Congressperson? You can either bring them with you to the NCLC or get their help in setting up a meeting for you on Capitol Hill with their member of Congress or their staff.

How do I find the name of my federal Representative's name?

If you don't know the name of your U.S. Representative go to this link <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

How do I find the names of my two U.S. Senator? You can find a list of all U.S. Senators here: <http://www.senate.gov/states/>

How do I schedule a meeting?:

Once you know the names of your one U.S. Representative and your two U.S. Senators, go to their website and look up how to schedule a meeting with them.

For example, the Congresswoman in Princeton, NJ and a Congressman in Santa Fe, NM had difference ways of requesting a meeting.

For Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ) there was a “send me a message” section where you fill in the blanks and let her know the topic and your message but there was also a section that read: “To request Congresswoman Watson Coleman’s appearance at a meeting, speaking function, or a non-speaking function, please email the Scheduler, Jaimee Gilmartin, at Jaimee.Gilmartin@mail.house.gov or call 609-883-0026. Due to the Member’s schedule, not all requests will be filled.” If your member of Congress’ website said the same, write the scheduler with your request for a meeting and if you don’t hear back within a week, follow-up with the scheduler on the phone.

For Congressman Ben Luján (D-NM) it said: If you are interested in inviting Congressman Luján or a member of his staff to an event or request a meeting with the office, please fill out the scheduling request form below.

Both our Washington, DC and [the local] District office will do their best to process and accommodate your request as quickly as possible. For Washington, DC requests, due to the demands and changes of Congressman Luján's schedule, we typically do not schedule more than one week out for appointments or events. [If you Congressperson’s website says this, go ahead and see if they will schedule the appointment early.]

* indicates required information.

Your Information

Prefix:

First Name:*

MI:

Last Name:*

Suffix:

Organization:*

Street Address:*

City:*

State:

Zip Code: *

+4 Extension: ?

Phone Number:

Email: *

Meeting Details

Desired location for the Meeting: *

Subject of Meeting: *

Additional details what is to be discussed in meeting:

Again, if you don't hear back within a week, call the office in Washington, DC and ask to speak with the scheduler.

--

Planning Your Meeting:

Here are some pointers for the meeting followed by a sample agenda:

- Where are you about the idea of meeting with your member of Congress, are you terrified, angry, excited, hopeful....)

-View a 5-minute clip (3:04 – 7:56) of Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) founder Marshall Saunders telling the 800 attendees at the CCL conference in 2015 about his first ever meeting with a member of Congress 21 years earlier to show how even someone who founded CCL could be that terrified at their first meeting with a member of Congress. In 2017 CCL volunteers had 1,653 meetings with Congress or their staff but their founder was terrified the first time he ever met with his member of Congress. Here's the video link to Marshall's story. It's really quite fabulous, poignant, and funny. Start at 3:04

<https://youtu.be/uSHy7iCDSOo?t=3m4s>

Here are a few key ingredients for the meeting and ways to prepare followed by a sample agenda:

- 1. Purpose.** Be able to share why you do this work. Write down some reflections on one of these three questions: a) what moves you to work to have a government run by people not money, (or) b) what values pull you to do this work, (or) c) share an experience that pulls you to work for a government run by people not by money?
- 2. Research your U.S. Representative and two Senators and find something you can thank them for.** Go online and find something they support that you can thank them for be it work to end homelessness or some other issue. At minimum you can thank them for meeting with you.
- 3. Be the peace.** This is from the website of a peace group talking about the peace we will bring peace to the meetings:

Remember in your meetings with Congress or their staff to hold yourself in the most peaceful manner possible. We want to embody the values and principles for which we are advocating. Get support beforehand if needed (maybe you are meeting with an office that is opposed to many of your values?). They are more likely to “hear” you and welcome you back if you can connect with them and be gracious. Speaking your truth doesn’t have to be done in anger. Anger most often alienates. Clarify with your team that no matter what your member of Congress or their staff says, you can seek to empathize with their perspectives, and ultimately regard them as your allies and partners. Aim to engage with them through a common inquiry: “How can we most effectively deal with money in politics, in ways that are uplifting and truly effective?”

Another group, Citizens Climate Lobby, says it this way:

Take the most generous approach to other people as possible — appreciation, gratitude, and respect. We listen, we work to find common values, and we endeavor to understand our own biases. We are honest and firm....

A third group, the Quaker lobby Friends Committee on National Legislation, is working to prevent nuclear war with North Korea. They put it this way when working with anyone including Congress or their staff, “We seek to find that of God in everyone.”

You might have a low opinion of your Member of Congress, but you have to decide whether your goal is to be right about that or to be effective in causing a transformation. It’s up to you, but we will never get Citizens United overturned with Democrats only or Republicans only—it has to be a trans-partisan/cross-partisan effort.

4. Be clear about who will lead or moderate the meeting being the first to thank the elected official and introduce the different speakers.

5. Be clear about the issue. [We will provide materials on this.]

6. Be clear about the bill you are asking them to co-sponsor and lead on.
In the coming weeks we will add a link to an Action Sheet on the bill(s) on which we will be lobbying.

So the ingredients are : a) select someone to lead or moderate the meeting, b) be able to thank them for something, even if it's thanking them for meeting with you c) be able to share what values or experience move you to work for a government run people not money d) be clear that we are coming from wanting to be effective and wanting to cause a transformation not wanting to make our elected official wrong, e) be clear about our issue and learn the laser talk, f) be clear about your request—that they co-sponsor House Joint Resolution 48 (H. J. Res. 48) and that they take further action like writing an op-ed for the local newspaper and g) ask when you can follow-up to learn their decision on co-sponsorship or, if they are already a co-sponsor, on writing a letter to the editor or op-ed expressing their support.

The first steps are 1) determine who is the liaison for this elected official and, if it's you, 2) find the name of your U.S. Representative and /or your two U.S. Senators, 3) go to their website and find how you request a meeting with them, 4) send the e-mail requesting the meeting or make the request on their website and, if you don't hear back after a week, 5) follow-up on the phone if necessary, 6) find other like-minded people to go to the NCLC and the meeting with you, 7) have two sessions to prepare for the meeting.

You might only get a meeting with a member of their staff. That's fine. Prepare well, have a great meeting, so they say, "The Congressman has to meet with you guys and I'll help set that up."

Sample Meeting Outline:

1.) Thank you/ Introductions – 5-6 minutes

a. Thank your member of Congress (U.S. Representative or Senator) for the meeting. Thank them for an action they have taken on any issue that you appreciate.

b. Introduce yourselves briefly (name, city, and what values or experience pulls you to work for a government run by people not by money.)

c. Ask how much time they have to meet with you and stick to that unless they extend the meeting themselves.

d. Ask a question that will allow the member and aide to introduce themselves more fully. This helps establish a real connection. For example, you can ask, “What was your vision for entering politics?”

2.) Briefly outline our issue using the laser talk and the bill in Congress you would like them to co-sponsor – 4-5 minutes

a. Basic background/ overview of the purpose and effect of the bill.

3.) Share your individual experiences and emphasize.

a. Why is the bill’s purpose and provisions are compelling to each of you?

4.) Welcome feedback, questions, or comments from the member of Congress and staff regarding the bill or issue.

5.) Requests

a. Become a co-sponsor of the bill?

b. Write a letter of support to your colleagues or to the committee chairs to whom the bill has been referred?

c. Speak at a public event in the district?

d. Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed for a local newspaper? (You might offer to draft it for them)

e. Ask what else do they or their staff can do to help us pass this legislation?

6.) Wrap-up

a. Set up necessary follow-up to learn their decision with contact information and expected response times. b. Thank them for their time and attention.

7) Celebrate the action you have taken!