



# Grassroots 101: Tips for Organizing a Successful Advocacy Visit

The most effective way to influence public policy is to get to know your elected officials and their staffs. Building these relationships take effort, but can be an invaluable asset to furthering your cause. Take advantage of every opportunity to enhance your relationships with your elected officials and their staff.

## Tips for a successful visit:

1. Schedule an appointment by calling your legislator's office. You do not have to come to Washington, D.C. to meet with your legislator. Remember, legislators return home to their districts weekly to meet with constituents.
2. Ask specifically to meet with the legislator. However, at certain times, this may not be possible. If this is the case, request a meeting with the legislator's legislative assistant (LA) who handles education issues.
3. The night before: organize materials (create informational packets, business cards, pens and notebook), rehearse what you will say to build confidence (add relevant personal stories and anecdotes). Do some background research on your member of Congress, such as what committees he or she serves on, their current sponsored legislation, and even biographical information such as their hometown, schools attended, and family life.
4. Wear business attire.
5. Keep in mind that your time in the meeting will be limited. Use it wisely. You have an important message that they need to hear!
6. Use talking points as a guide during your conversation. Present your prepared packet and briefly explain what it contains. Use your personal stories to express your talking points when pertinent.
7. Maintain the focus of your visit.
8. Maintain your composure, even if the staffer you are meeting with does not agree with your point of view. Remain bipartisan.
9. If you do not know the answer to a particular question, contact CEC for help and follow-up with the answer.
10. At the end of the meeting, thank the meeting attendees for the opportunity to share your perspective.
11. E-mail or send a thank-you card, and remember to follow-up with answers or materials that were requested.

## Additional Resources

**Legislative Action Center:**  
<http://capwiz.com/cek/home/>

**CAN Resources:** [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

**Federal hearings:**  
<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/chearings/index.html>

**Monitor legislation on The Federal Register:** <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>

**Congressional contact information:**  
<http://capwiz.com/cek/dbq/officials/>