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**Member Tips**

**For**

**Engaging Members of Congress**

* **Know your Member of Congress**. Do your homework before communicating with your Member of Congress. Know if they are a Republican or a Democrat. Know what committees they serve on
* **Start with a letter or a phone call**. Build a relationship with your Member of Congress. Start with a letter or call. Decide on a one specific topic that you would like to address. If you call, speak with staffer that works on issues pertaining to career development. If you send a letter, make sure that it is original and not a form letter. For both means of communication, explain your issue and ask for the Member’s position on the issue. Be succinct and courteous with both means of communication
* **Follow-up**. With both forms of communication, always follow up with a thank-you letter. Members of Congress remember constituent engagement. In the thank-you letter it would be appropriate to ask for an update on the issue you previously addressed with the Member
* **Personal Visit.** The personal visit is the most effective communication with a Member of Congress. The personal visit by a constituent and the issue presented usually receives a higher priority. The time and expense you have put forth to meet with your Member of Congress is one that is taken seriously. Contact the Member’s office in state or in Washington well in advance to schedule a date and time for the meeting
* **Suggested Points When Meeting Your Member of Congress**
  + Arrive on time for your meeting
  + Turn off all cell phones before the meeting begins
  + Introduce yourself and any associates with you
  + Address the Member as Representative or Senator
  + **Be Honest.** Your credibility is priceless. If you lose it, you will never get it back
  + Before discussing your issue for the meeting, know what you are talking about. If you don’t have an answer to a question regarding the issue, then let the Member know you will get an answer and provide it to staff
  + When addressing your issue present your facts within the first five minutes
  + Once you have presented the points of your issue, listen to your Member’s response. The idea is to establish a dialogue on not only this issue, but laying the foundation for engagement on future issues
  + If the Member is unable to meet with you and staff is assigned to cover, consider the staff person to be the eyes and ears of the Member and that your request will be acted on
* **Closing the Meeting**
* Conclude the meeting on time
* Ask for a commitment of support from the Member, but do not threaten
* Provide a one-page fact sheet that recaps the points of your issue to be addressed
* End the meeting on a positive statement, especially with a “Thank You”
* **Follow Up**
* Provide a written thank you
* Provide any information to questions posed by the Member or staff
* Indicate that you will be monitoring the issue and will provide any updates to the Member
* Schedule a follow up communication to ascertain what action the Member has made regarding the issue

For more information, please contact a member of the National Government Relations (GR) Action Committee: Diana M. Bailey [dibailey@comcast.net](mailto:dibailey@comcast.net) or [Michaeljmarlow@gmail.com](mailto:Michaeljmarlow@gmail.com)

Please also see updates on the National Career Development Association (NCDA) website:

<https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/govtrelations>

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