



Following are 10 pointers for a successful congressional meeting (adapted from the Public Affairs Council).

1. Schedule in Advance

- E-mail Stacy Seiden at sseiden@chestnet.org to notify the ACCP Practice and Advocacy Team that you are willing to meet with your US Senators and/or Representative. We are eager to help in any way—from scheduling your meeting, to providing background information and relevant talking points.
- Use the ACCP Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/chestnet/dbq/officials/> to find your elected officials and their contact information.
- When you call your legislator's office, try to provide as much advance notice as possible.
- Be prepared to estimate the length of time your meeting will take; who, if anyone, you will bring with you and who they are; and the subject you want to discuss (eg, specific bill, language, regulation, or program).
- Be sure you have some background information on any public official you plan to meet, including his or her stand on the issues important to you. You may use the ACCP Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/chestnet/issues/> to look up relevant cosponsorship information.
- Stay on topic--no bait and switch.
- If you cannot arrange a mutually convenient time for a meeting with your legislator, don't hesitate to mention the reason for your visit and inquire if someone else on the legislator's staff can help you. A common mistake is underestimating the influence that staff members can have.
- Don't drop by--drop-by appointments increase anxiety and sometimes strain relationships.

2. Be Conscientious of Numbers

- Don't say three people will be attending and then arrive with unexpected guests--unexpected additions strain resources. If they aren't scheduled to attend, they shouldn't join the meeting.

3. Be on Time (but not too early)

- Leave buffer time for a successful or delayed meeting--if you're unexpectedly running late, call the office as a courtesy.
- Don't arrive late and then be surprised or angry that your appointment has been cancelled.

4. Be Flexible

- You may be on time but the Member may be delayed due to other meetings. Roll with it; don't fight it.

5. Engage With Staff

- If the Member is unavoidably delayed and you are offered the opportunity to meet with staff, take it! Staff members are valuable resources for keeping your issue in front of the Member.
- If you do meet with the Member, ask which staff member is responsible for handling health issues, so that you may keep in touch.
- Don't discuss the Member's campaign or campaign contributions, which may place staff in an awkward position.

6. Be Brief but Make Your Case

- Get to the point, but be prepared to share further information.
- Start positive--thank the Member for something they've done (*eg*, stopping Medicare physician payment cuts and creating national Medicare coverage for pulmonary rehabilitation).
- Connect the issue to the Member's constituency.

7. Give and Take

- Outline specific requests for what you would like the Member to do (*eg*, cosponsor The Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act).
- Don't hesitate to ask questions or solicit questions.
- Ask (don't demand) for reaction or feedback on your position.
- While it's okay to ask how a legislator expects to vote on an issue, it's not okay to force a commitment. Quite justifiably, many legislators prefer to make their decisions after hearings and the final debate on a bill are completed.
- Offer to provide additional information and serve as a chest medicine resource.
- Invite the Member to visit your hospital or medical clinic.

- Leave behind one page outlining the issue, your specific request, and contact information for follow-up questions. This ensures that the legislator will remember your views after the meeting. Talking points for the ACCP's priority legislative issues are available at <http://www.chestnet.org/practice/advocacy/issues.php>.

8. Follow Up and Through

- Let the ACCP Practice and Advocacy Team know how the meeting went and whether the elected official and/or staff person raised any questions that need a response. We also can assist with additional follow-up ideas to help build a lasting relationship with the office.
- Say thank you with a follow up e-mail, and use the message as an opportunity to reiterate your discussion.
- If you promised to provide more information, provide it.
- Don't drop the ball--this is your opportunity to prove that you are a trusted advisor.

9. Be Passionate, Committed, Persuasive, Clear, and Respectful

- People who show they care are memorable.
- While it is certainly acceptable to disagree with a legislator or staff member on an issue, don't be argumentative. There are always two sides to every case and if you have not been able to sell the merits of your case, remember other issues will arise. It is better to leave on friendly terms, so that you will be welcome next time.
- Don't threaten Members or staff with political retribution.

10. Build Relationships

- Smile and greet people by name.
- Members and staff need to hear from you as much as you need to hear from them.