CRS Student Ambassadors are advocates and leaders for the global common good. Your district visit is part of a larger movement of college students across the country, and it is vital! Research shows that conducting in-person meetings with your members of Congress and their staff is the most impactful form of advocacy because meetings help constituents develop relationships with Congressional offices. This guide will help you successfully schedule your meeting, prepare effectively, and follow up afterward.

**Step 1: PLAN AHEAD**

- Identify who represents your campus in Congress. You can visit this website and input your campus address to find out the names of your 2 senators and 1 representative.

- Join your member of Congress’ mailing list. This way you can find out what issues they focus on and when they will be back in your home state so that you can set up a meeting.

- Familiarize yourself with your member’s jurisdiction, voting record, ideology and why he or she may be likely to agree or disagree with your point of view.

- Contact the member’s district office 4 to 6 weeks before the desired meeting date. Check the member’s website for information about how they prefer to schedule meetings. Some like to be called, others prefer to be emailed or for you to fill out a web form. Have multiple dates and times available.

**JOIN US**
university@crs.org
university.crs.org
Step 2: MAKE YOUR REQUEST

MAKE IT PERSONAL AND LOCAL

• First and foremost, let the office know that you are a constituent. Then, be sincere and emphasize your own connection to the issue. A personal experience or emotional connection will make you stand out.

• Tie your request to what is happening in the member’s district or state. Demonstrate why the issue is relevant on your campus. Share how students are learning about the issue and taking action.

• Always address the member by name.

• Make sure that the member’s office can reliably reach you. Use consistent and correct contact information.

MAKE IT CONCISE BUT RELEVANT

• Provide as much detail in the meeting request as possible, but keep it short and to the point. Include background information on yourself and your college/university and as many logistical details as possible: when you would like to meet, where, what time, with whom.

• Establish a correlation between the member and the cause. Did the member vote for similar legislation or show past support, or do they have connections to the cause?

Step 3: BE PERSISTENT

• If a meeting is scheduled, call or email a few days before to remind staff of the upcoming meeting.

• Don’t flood your members’ offices with repeated requests for the same meeting. This will have a negative effect. Instead, space out your follow-up. If your initial contact method is unsuccessful, use a variety of methods to contact the member about issues: phone, email or web forms. Some members are more responsive to one type of communication.

• If you can’t get a meeting with the member, request a meeting with a staff member. Staff members to meet with may include the district director, field representative or regional director. This is just as good, since staffers decide which issues to put before the member.

Step 4: PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING

• Fill out this form to let CRS know that your visit is scheduled. We’ll make sure you have talking points and a leave behind document to give to staffers you meet with, as well as provide you with any member-specific background information.

• Meet as a group to discuss:

  o Assigning a role to each meeting participant. These should include: who will introduce the group and set the stage for why you are there and where you are coming from, who will take the lead on framing and discussing the issue(s), and who will make the ask.

  o The story you want to tell. Share what you are doing about this issue on campus. How are you mobilizing others? What events have you held? Did you have great attendance? Tell them! This is a great illustration of how many people in their state/district care about the issue. Are there other ways that you can tell that students care about this issue? You are the expert of your own reality, and you have a compelling story to share.

  o The issue backgrounder & leave behind documents provided by CRS. You will want to be familiar with this information, but do not feel that you need to know everything. CRS also provides opportunities for our program staff to share their technical expertise directly with Congress. You offer a different dimension of why you and others care about these issues as constituents.

• Review the feedback form to see what type of information CRS hopes you will gather.

Step 5: HOLD YOUR MEETING

• Make sure to review the Tips for Successful Advocacy Meetings with Members of Congress guide to maximize your success!

Step 6: FOLLOW UP

• First, make sure to send a thank you letter pointing out that you can be a resource to the member or connect them to experts such as CRS and USCCB staff, and request a follow-up meeting.

• Engage your members of Congress and their offices in follow-up activities, such as inviting the member and their staff to events on your campus.

• One meeting is not enough to develop a commitment from the member. Work on long-term relationship building with local district staff, so you have a basis for future meeting requests and can more easily schedule in-person meetings when the member is visiting the district. Try to meet a few times a year with one of your district contacts about the same issue or new issues that have come up.

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