



# RURAL NEIGHBORHOODS

## TIPS FOR SETTING UP IN-DISTRICT MEETINGS ON ISSUES

Face-to-face meetings are the most effective way to influence your Federal or State Legislator. If you are unable to see your Legislator in person, you should meet with staff. Staff work on legislative and policy issues daily and influence the positions and votes of their elected official.

### To Arrange A Meeting:

If you need to find out the Members of Congress are in your area go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and enter your zip code to see who represents you. On these websites you will find links to your Members of Congress' websites where you can obtain contact information. You can also call Congress at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected with your Member's Congressional Office. That office can provide you with local contact information. Use [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org) to find your Governor and State Legislators.

- ✓ First send a meeting request by email; then follow up with a phone call to the Member's District Office.
- ✓ Ask to speak to the Member's Scheduler in the District Office. Explain to the Scheduler that:
  - You are a constituent from [city or town in their district/state].
  - You are requesting an in-district meeting with the Member during the next recess or extended trip to the District.
  - The purpose of the meeting is to communicate [*name of group or business*] deep interest in [*subject such as immigration reform*] and to seek the Members support or vote.
  - You will be attending the meeting with [*number*] of [*leaders, like-minded business people or citizens*] from your state/district.

- ✓ If the Member is unavailable ask to meet with the District Director, or the highest-ranking staff person in the District. If the Member and District Director are both unavailable, the Scheduler will arrange a meeting with an appropriate staff person.

### At the Meeting:

- ✓ Leave a fact sheet or other materials that reinforce your position and the action you would like to see taken.
- ✓ If the Member or staff asks questions to which you do not have the answers, simply say you will look into the issue and reply back right away. This also gives you another opportunity to contact the office.
- ✓ Ask the Member if you can count on his or her support on the issue. If the Member or staff disagrees or is noncommittal, it is counterproductive to threaten or argue. Better strategies include scheduling another meeting with different constituents to show broad support for your position or sending a packet of letters from constituents.
- ✓ If the Member or staff is unfamiliar with the issue, ask him or her to review the materials you are leaving behind and say that you will follow-up in two weeks for their response.

### Following Up on your Meeting:

- ✓ Please help Rural Neighborhoods obtain accurate information about your Member of Congress as possible by completing an **I Took Action Form** located on our website [www.RuralNeighborhood.org](http://www.RuralNeighborhood.org) at Tool for Advocates.
- ✓ Remember to thank your Member of Congress and/or staff you met with and express your gratitude for their time and commitment or openness (depending on the Member's stance) to acting on your issue. Remember to include any additional information or materials that the Member requested or you promised to send the office.