



GRASSROOTS PRIMER FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OFFICE VISIT

Below are some helpful tips about how to secure and conduct a meeting with your Member of Congress and Senator. As we have seen over and over again - we win when we are able on the grassroots level to exert real pressure and hold our elected representatives accountable. If we can gather again under the broader Fair Trade umbrella and rally with our allies from labor unions and environmental groups, people of faith, consumer activists, farmers and small business owners we will continue our victories over corporate globalization.

1. Call the District Office -- ask for the scheduler. The objective of this initial contact is to secure a time and date certain to enjoy an audience with your representative. Many of you are veterans of public citizenry and know that getting a meeting can sometimes be a long and arduous process with staffers giving you the run-around. Be persistent yet polite, and make it clear that YOU, the Member's constituent, are the most important person (s)he will ever listen to. Don't give up even if you are told that "the Member has no time to meet with your delegation" and even if they don't return your phone calls - it does pay off in the long run and in most cases you will eventually be able to sit down with your Member.

2. Determine your agenda and goals for the meeting -- coalition members should gather 30 minutes before meeting with the Member in order to determine the agenda and delegate agenda items to be raised. After the obligatory small talk with the Member at the outset, proceed directly to the specific issues which animate you. Have different people cover different issues so that the Member can see the breadth and width of the coalition, but make sure that all introductions are kept brief allowing more time for conversation w/ the Member.

3. Listen well -- you will hear occasional indications of your Member's actual views, and you should take those opportunities to provide good information.

4. Be prepared -- but do not feel that you need to be an expert. Most members of Congress are generalists, like many of us. Be open to counter-arguments, but don't get stuck on them. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Nothing is worse than being caught in a lie or inaccuracy. Offer to look into the question and get back to the Member (this is also an excellent opportunity to stay in touch).

5. Don't stay too long -- try to get closure on the issues you discuss, but leave room to continue the discussion at another time.

6. Build the relationship -- if your representative has supported your or your coalition's positions in the past, be sure to thank him/her; if the opposite is true, consider that your visit may prevent more active opposition in the future, and perhaps even presage a surprising good vote on an important issue.

7. Follow up -- you should consider sending a thank you note after the meeting, and if commitments were made during the meeting, repeat your understanding of them.

For questions/comments, please contact Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch at 202-546-4996 and ask for any member of the field team or visit www.tradewatch.org