Lasting Impressions: The Top Ten Tips for Meetings with Elected Officials

Whether you are on the Hill or in a district office, meeting with your elected officials can be exciting and nerve-racking. But learning the best tips before going can allow you to make your visit all the more informative with a strong lasting impression once you've left. Below are the Top Ten Tips for meeting with elected officials.

The Top Ten

1. **Be Prepared, Be on Time.** As you all know, members of Congress and their staff are very busy and have limited time when scheduling appointments with the public. Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to go through security, find your way to the office, and announce yourself to the receptionist. If you are going as a group, devise a schedule so everyone is well prepared before the meeting. Selecting a primary spokesperson is ideal.

2. **Be Clear and Concise.** A typical meeting will range from 10-25 minutes. Cover the most important topics, especially ones that your Congress member may be most concerned about. Prepare talking points to ensure that you stay on topic. If you are asked a question you cannot answer, be sure to follow-up at a later time with an answer. Never assume the official or staffer are versed in your topic area, be ready to give background information.

3. **Personal Impressions Matter.** Sharing personal stories can be a great way to make a lasting impression. However, be careful not to overwhelm the policymaker/staffer and keep the personal stories short. It will also be beneficial to share statistical information. Be informative and honest about the issues.

4. **Reciprocation.** As the official/staffer is listening to you, kindly reciprocate and listen to their views and comments. Even if they disagree with you or vice versa, it is important to be respectful. Advocacy is built around the foundation of building and maintaining strong ties with your elected officials.

5. **Respect their Response.** You may ask for the policymaker’s views and position on the issue, but many are not always ready to give definitive answers on the spot. Be sure to respect their right to think about all you
have shared with them before expecting solid commitments to certain issues and actions.

6. **Materials for All.** Bring a brief set of materials with you to leave at the end of your meeting. At the beginning of the meeting share that you have materials, but wait to hand them out after as to not distract during the initial meeting. Be sure to follow up and follow through with any additional information you were asked to provide.

7. **Let's Keep in Touch.** Be prepared to exchange contact information. If you have a business card, share it with your official/staffer, however, if you do not have a business card make sure to write down your home/personal contact information for a follow-up.

8. **Parting Words.** Be sure to thank your official/staffer for meeting with you. Make sure they know you are prepared to maintain the relationship as well as follow-up.

9. **How Did It Go?** Let CEC know how the meeting went, it is important for the organization to know the information shared and obtained. It will also enable us to best help you in terms of additional information you might need to provide in your follow up.

10. **Following Up.** Always follow up with a thank you email. Your follow-up email should express appreciation for the time taken to meet with you. Make sure to reiterate your request(s) and ask for a written response. When following up, have the materials requested by the official/staffer at the ready to share.