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

May 2017

Whether you are in Washington D.C. on Capitol Hill, or in a district office, meeting with your elected officials can be exciting and nerve-racking. Becoming familiar with CEC’s Top Ten Tips for Meeting with Elected Officials is an easy way to learn the best tips before your meeting. Review these tips to allow you to make your visit informative and impactful, leaving a strong lasting impression once the meeting has concluded. Below are the Top Ten Tips for Meeting with Elected Officials:

The Top Ten

1. **Be Prepared, Be on Time.** Members of Congress and their staff are very busy and have limited time when scheduling appointments with constituents. Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to go through security, find the office, and announce yourself to the receptionist. If you are attending a meeting in a group, create 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 between 10-25 minutes at most. Due to limited time, be sure to cover the most important topics, especially ones that the official may be the most concerned about. Have talking points prepared 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 come across as overwhelming, and make sure your stories are brief. It is beneficial to share statistical data and to be informative and honest about the issues.

4. **Reciprocation.** As the member of Congress or a 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 official’s view and position on your topic of interest, but many members of Congress are not always ready to give definitive answers on the spot. Respect that they may need to consider all you have shared with them before making a solid commitment or taking action on your asks.

6. **Materials for All.** Bring a set of background materials to leave with the Congressional office at the end of your meeting. At the beginning of the meeting share that you have materials, but in an effort to not cause a distraction while you are presenting your information, do not distribute them until after the meeting has concluded. Be sure to follow up and follow through with any additional information you were asked for.

7. **Let’s Keep in Touch.** Be prepared to exchange contact information with the Congressional office. If you have a business card be sure to distribute it. 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.** Thank your member of Congress or the staffer for meeting with you! Make sure they know you are prepared to maintain the relationship as well as follow up. Let them know you can be a resource for them.

9. **How Did It Go?** Let CEC know how the meeting went. It is important for the organization to know the information that was shared and obtained. This will enable us to best help you with additional information you may need to provide in your follow up communication.

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 available.

Questions?
Contact Katie Grady: [katieg@cec.sped.org](mailto:katieg@cec.sped.org) or 703-264-9498