

A face-to-face meeting with your Member of Congress or the Member's staff is often the best way to share your concerns. When visiting your Member of Congress' office, remember the following tips.

### **SCHEDULING A MEETING**

- **Call District office and request a meeting with Congressional Representative. Provide the following information in the request:**
  - Who you are, that you are a constituent, and the organization/company you will be representing;
  - Possible dates and times for the meeting (be flexible, Representatives are busy);
  - The issue you would like to discuss;
  - The number and names of all persons attending;
  - Be prepared to send your request in writing as well (be sure to include all of the above points in the written request).
- **If in person meeting is not possible, request to hold a conference call with the member or to meet with district director or relevant staff from the district office.**
- **Let ASCO staff know when you schedule meetings.** Many times there is a pre-existing relationship with the office and ASCO staff can give you insight into that relationship. Also, staff will be able to provide background materials and address any questions/concerns you may have.

### **PREPARING FOR THE MEETING**

- **Develop key messages you want to convey** What is your principal message? To request talking points that ASCO has developed on many of the issues affecting oncology, email [publicpolicy@asco.org](mailto:publicpolicy@asco.org). Personalize these talking points and be sure to emphasize how it will affect your practice and patients (who are also your Representative's constituents). **If more than one person is attending the meeting, assign roles and develop an agenda to be sure** to cover the key points.
- **Know the issue.** Your greatest strength in lobbying is proving to be a credible information resource for a legislator. Become acquainted with opposing arguments so you can anticipate and address potential questions.
- **Get to Know your Legislator.** (Members' websites can be found at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and are a good source of information about a Member.) Things to know before the meeting:
  1. Identify your legislator's position on this issue and similar issues.
  2. Committees on which he/she serves
  3. Positions and voting record on cancer issues
  4. Biographical information
  5. Occupation/Education
  6. Leadership positions
  7. Length of service

## CONDUCT MEETING

- **BE ON TIME.**
- **Clearly and concisely communicate your message.** State the issue of concern, your position on it and why the legislator should support it. Explain how the effects the issue would have on you and your patients (the legislator's community and constituents).
- **Be brief and to-the-point.** Most Congressional meetings are limited to 15-minutes.
- **Always tell the truth.** If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it and let them know either you will personally get back to them with an answer or you will have an ASCO staff person contact them with the answer.
- **Be polite, even when addressing opposition.**
- **Be prepared – you may not meet with the legislator.** Understand that legislators' schedules are often full or change at the last minute. Meeting with staff is the next best thing. Staff make important decisions on behalf of legislators and help educate legislators on important issues. They should be treated with respect.
- **Ask for a response before the meeting ends.** Identify whether the legislator will support your position before you leave (and if so, in what way).
- **Offer to be a resource to the office on all cancer issues.** While you are attending the meeting with a specific issue in mind, offer to help the legislator and their staff with any cancer issue that comes across their desks. Offering to be a resource for the office will help reinforce a relationship and foster ongoing communications.
- **Follow up with the office.** Send the office a thank you letter with any information requested by Members and staff.
- **Communicate with ASCO staff.** Follow up with ASCO staff after the meeting in case there are any details to discuss.