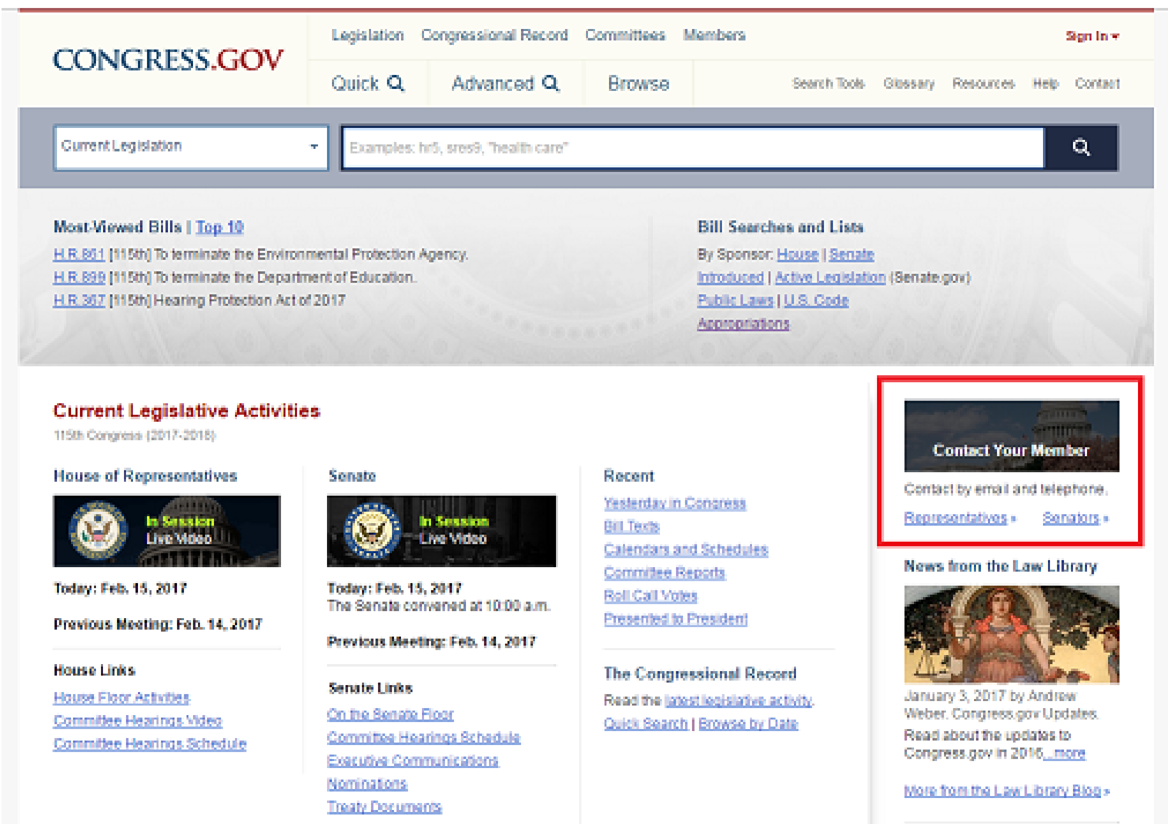
SGIM DIY Hill Day: How to Request and Hold Successful Hill Meetings

How To Find Your Member of Congress

To schedule a visit, you will need to know who your legislators are—

- First, go to www.congress.gov in your web browser.
- Click on the “Contact your Member” button, which is located on the right side of the home page (see the red box in the picture to the right)
- From there, you can choose “House” or “Senate” depending on who you want to contact.
- You can then click on your legislator’s name, which will take you to their website, which contains their phone number and a constituent contact form. If you are uncertain about which member of the House is your representative, you may enter your zip code in the upper right corner of the page.



How To Request a Meeting

To set up a meeting, you must call your member's office. When making your request, please be prepared to provide the following information.

- Your name
- Your organization and home address
- Issues you wish to discuss
- Your availability
- Your contact information

Often, your legislator will not be available to meet and your request may be forwarded to another member of his or her staff, such as a Legislative Advisor or Legislative Correspondent. A staff-level meeting does not mean that your issues are unimportant to them. Often, the staff person is an expert in health-related issues and will inform your legislator of the issues you discuss.

When you receive a response from the staff person regarding their availability, you will want to confirm the following information:

- Name and title of the person you will meet with
- Time of the meeting
- Building and room number where the meeting will take place

How To Prepare For Your Meeting

Before your meeting, you will want to want to review and plan what you want to say and ask. You will also need to bring with you the "leave behind" materials and your business card. You may also find it helpful to find out where your legislator stands on the issues you wish to discuss and/or any relevant committees your legislator may serve on. For example, if he or she serves on the Appropriations Committee, you might want to spend time discussing your appropriations related asks. Your legislator's committee assignment will be listed on his or her website.

Additionally, all Senate and House office buildings require you to go through security. Because of this, you should allow for extra time before your meetings. If a security line is very long, you can go to the side of the building and you may find a shorter line.

Finally, do not forget to silence your phone before your meeting!

What to remember before your meeting—

- Plan what you want to say
- Bring your leave behind materials and business cards
- Silence your phone
- Allow for extra time to go through security
- Don't forget your asks

During Your Meeting

Typically, the meetings are about 20-30 minutes long but they can run shorter depending on the staff's schedule. You should start your meeting by asking how much time they have at the outset so you will know how much time you have to make all of your points and present your asks. It is important to stay on topic and try to limit small talk.

Make sure you listen carefully and be prepared to answer questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it and offer to provide the answers later in a follow-up email. Never make up an answer!

Strategize about how to present your message and make it personal. Legislators want to know why your issues matter and how their state or district is affected by these issues. Explain how these issues directly impact you by sharing personal stories. You can also use this opportunity to invite them to your institution, practice, etc.

When presenting your "asks," it is uncommon for a staff member to commit to anything. However, if they do, take yes for an answer.

Close the meeting by thanking them for meeting with you and offer your assistance if they may need it in the future. Also, make sure you get their name, title, and email address for follow-up.

What to remember during your meeting—
- Ask how much time they have at the outset
- Stay on topic and limit small talk
- Never make up an answer
- Tell your personal story
- Don't forget your asks
- Get their email address for follow-up
- Say thank you

After Your Meeting

Send a follow-up email after your meeting to thank them again for their time. If you had any action items from your meeting or promised to provide them with additional information, you should provide that information in your follow-up email.

What to include in your follow-up email—
- Thank you
- Summary of your "asks"
- Answer to any previous questions
- Documents they may have asked for
- Offer to be assistance in the future