



Tips for Conducting Your Congressional Visit – In-State or in D.C.

- **Acknowledge Support** - Take a moment to acknowledge the Member's current support for legislation he or she is already cosponsoring or any past support he or she has given. A thank you goes a long way.
- **Establish a Connection** - Mention a current event you have a shared interest in, or praise a recent vote the legislator cast you can agree on. "I was glad to see the way you cast your vote on the earned health and retirement benefits issue," is the sort of statement that will let a legislator know you are engaged in federal politics and care deeply about a variety of topics.
- **Grassroots Support** - You should let those you are meeting with know what you and your fellow NARFE members are doing to be active in your area. Be specific and provide them with examples, such as letters to the editor that were printed, etc.
- **Paint the Big Picture and the Small Picture** - For example, one person could tell his or her story about how the proposed cuts could affect her/him personally (the small picture); then someone else could provide current statistics and impact in the state and country.
- **Tell Your Story** - The most effective method of communicating the importance of legislation is to tell your personal story or the story of someone close to you. We have seen time and time again that personal stories change minds, and this is your chance to personalize the issue.
- **Make Specific, Clear Requests and Ask for an Answer** - Often, the main reason groups have unsatisfactory meetings is that their requests were not clear and specific enough. Your elected officials need to know what you want them to do (i.e. - what bill you want them to cosponsor, how you want them to vote). However, in addition to the specific requests you bring, don't be afraid to ask the legislator what else they think they could do on your issue (particularly if he/she supports NARFE's position).
- **Don't be Afraid to Say, "I don't know"** - During your visit, you may encounter a question that you cannot answer. Fear not! It's okay to admit you don't know the answer. You can simply research the issue, or ask someone at NARFE to do so, and then get back to the legislator's office with the information requested. Whatever you do, never pretend you know something if you do not. Legislators will appreciate honesty, your willingness to find an answer to their questions and your commitment to the issue at hand.
- **Be Assertive** - During your meeting, it will be important to be assertive, but not aggressive. Your main goal is to convince the legislator to follow through on your request.
- **Speak Plainly** - You are not a paid lobbyist, but a constituent concerned about a policy. By speaking plainly and avoiding jargon and complex concepts, you will keep the meeting on track.