

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR CONGRESSIONAL VISIT A SUCCESS



BEFORE YOUR MEETING

- ✓ **Familiarize yourself with materials**, including the member's bio and information on afterschool in your state. Take note of the member's particular interests and think of ways to tie afterschool to them.
- ✓ **Check to see if the member joined the Afterschool Caucus.** (See spreadsheet in packet.)
- ✓ **Support talking points with brief stories that relate to afterschool** and why additional resources are needed. For example, include a success story of a student who had been struggling or how growth of a particular program helped your community.
- ✓ **Do a brief run-through before the meeting** and keep track of the time.
- ✓ Before entering the office, **review the talking points** and determine who will cover each topic.
- ✓ When you arrive at the office, **check how much time you will have** and adjust accordingly.

DURING YOUR MEETING

- ✓ **Don't be disappointed if you meet with a staff member.** In fact, sometimes meeting with staff is better; some members rely on staff to dig deep into issues. By getting to know a staffer, you can become one of his or her community resources. This year, most meetings will be with staff members as Congress is on recess this week.
- ✓ **Don't assume the member or staffer knows a great deal about afterschool.** Members of Congress and their staff work on hundreds of issues and therefore rely on experts like you for information on particular programs.
- ✓ **Use the talking points** as a suggested guide for the meeting. You'll find that the meeting will quickly turn into a conversation and that time will go by faster than you expect.
- ✓ **Make sure you ASK the member or staff to support increased funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program**, to fund CCDBG, and to join the Afterschool Caucus.
- ✓ **Listen** to what the member or staff is interested in or concerned about; connect afterschool to those issues.
- ✓ **Stay on message.** Don't bring up individual requests. It's easy to take the meeting off topic, so stick to the talking points. Likewise, try not to get distracted by prolonged conversations about people or places you may have in common with the staff or member. Try to stay on topic as much as possible.
- ✓ **You don't need to know every answer.** If you don't have an answer to a question, offer to research the information and get back to the office as soon as possible. This provides a great opportunity to continue interaction with the member or staff.
- ✓ At the end of the meeting, **thank the member or staff for his or her time** and encourage him or her to visit an afterschool program. Invite him or her to a *Lights On Afterschool* event in October.
- ✓ Before leaving the office, **ask for an email address.**

AFTER YOUR MEETING

- ✓ Every member of your group should **send a thank you note.**
- ✓ **Follow up on any unanswered questions that came up in the meeting.** Pass any questions you can't answer along to the Afterschool Alliance and we will follow up on your behalf.
- ✓ Group Leaders should **fill out the Feedback Form** on website.

Have fun and remember; this could be the beginning of a great relationship!