



**The World of Politics:
Shaping the Future of the
Nation's Regional Councils**

All Politics is Local

BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

REGIONAL STRATEGIES. PARTNERSHIPS. SOLUTIONS

About NADO's Mission

- Strengthen local governments, communities and economies through the regional strategies, partnerships and solutions of the nation's regional development organizations

Presentation Overview



- Understanding the Legislative Process
- Why should you and your regional council be involved in federal and state advocacy
- Understanding the political landscape and the unique role of regional councils
- Strategies and techniques for becoming an effective communicator and grassroots leader

Major Element #1: Understanding the Legislative Process

Congress is Bicameral- House

The House of Representatives

- Representatives serve two year terms
- Seniority is key
- Majority rules
 - Speaker controls via the Rules Committee
 - The “engine” of legislation driving the debate

Congress is Bicameral- Senate

The Senate

- A very different animal: The “deliberative” body
 - Senators serve six year terms
 - Two senators per state
 - Consensus rules
- The rules give an individual Senator significant power
 - Senate proceeds via the unanimous consent (UC) agreement
 - Principal of unlimited debate -- filibuster -- cloture
 - Advise and Consent -- Holds

Each body functions separately!

Congressional Committees

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- ❖ **Committees in both the House and the Senate provide funding, conduct oversight, and draft legislation relevant to their respective jurisdictions**
 - Authorization committees are responsible for drafting an authorization bill for Departments of the Executive Branch
 - The Appropriations committees draft annual spending bills for Departments of the Executive Branch
- ❖ **Each committee is its own “fiefdom”**

Congressional Committees

Committees

- The legislative process relies heavily upon the committee system.
- A member who sits on the committee with primary jurisdiction over a bill has the greatest opportunity to influence the shape of the legislation.
- Nevertheless, every member of Congress has an opportunity to influence every bill on the House or Senate floor through debate, amendment or vote.
- Every member is an important part of the process and should be kept well informed on issues of importance to your organization.

Understanding How Congress Works



How Laws Are Made

- The process of passing legislation can be daunting, but when broken down to its basic steps it becomes much more understandable.
- There are significant variations in the length of time that it takes to defeat or pass a bill. Some stages can take weeks, months or even years, depending on the issue.
- Perseverance is essential, because there are many opportunities throughout the sometimes lengthy process to influence policies, whether in committee, on the floor or during the conference committee.

Understanding How Congress Works

Introducing A Bill....

- **Anyone can offer ideas for a bill or draft a bill, but only a member of Congress can introduce a bill.**
- **The member who introduces the legislation is known as the sponsor.** Congress employs technical drafters who put ideas into the required form.
- **When a member of Congress introduces a bill it is given an identifying number.** Bills introduced in the House of Representatives are designated by the initials H.R. and bills introduced in the Senate are designated with the letter S.

Understanding How Congress Works

Committee Process

1. Once a bill is introduced, it is referred to a committee based on the subject matter.
2. The committee chair then assigns the bill to a subcommittee.
3. Hearings give the subcommittee members an opportunity to gather input from agency officials, interest groups and the public about the implications of the proposed legislation.
4. Hearings are followed by debate, discussion and a process known as a “markup.”
5. If the subcommittee votes to report the bill for consideration to the full committee, the process begins again.

Understanding How Congress Works

Committee Process

- ❑ If a majority of the committee votes in favor, the bill is readied for consideration by the full chamber.
- ❑ Detailed reports usually accompany bills and reflect the intent of legislators.
 - Report language
- ❑ The majority leadership typically determines how quickly, or if, a bill will be considered on the floor.
- ❑ However, in the House there is one additional step: all bills must be considered by the Rules Committee.

Understanding How Congress Works

Moving to the Floor

For a bill to become law, this entire process must be completed by both houses. The process may happen simultaneously or one chamber after the other.

If the House and Senate pass different versions of legislation on the same subject, a conference committee is appointed with members drawn from the relevant committees of both houses.

It is only after both houses approve the same version of a bill that it is sent to the president for consideration.



Understanding How Congress Works

The President and the Legislative Process

The president may choose to sign the bill, thereby making it a law, or veto the legislation.

If the bill is vetoed, it is sent back to Congress with a message outlining the president's concerns with the legislation.

Congress may amend the bill to address the president's concerns, abandon efforts to pass the legislation or attempt to override the veto.

A two-thirds vote of each house is needed to override a presidential veto.



What are Appropriations and Authorizations?

Appropriations

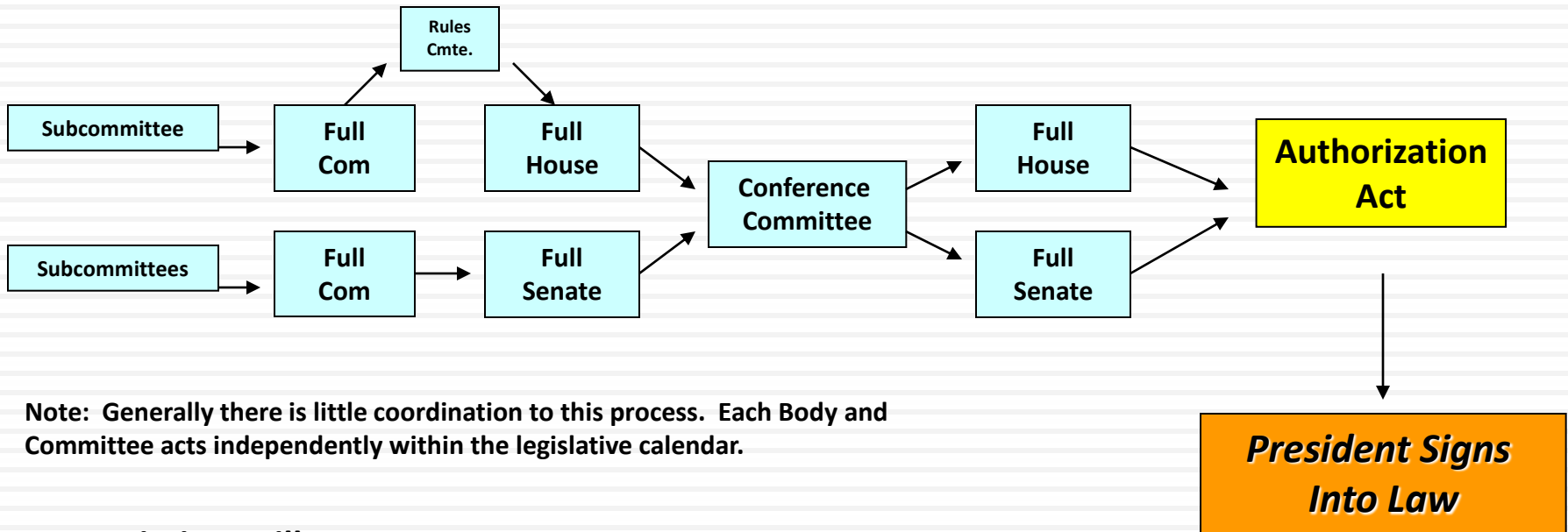
- ❑ Money \$\$\$
- ❑ Congress provides annual funding for Executive branch agencies
- ❑ In the Constitution
 - *“No money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in consequence of Appropriations made by law.”*
Article 1, Section 9, Clause 7

Authorizations

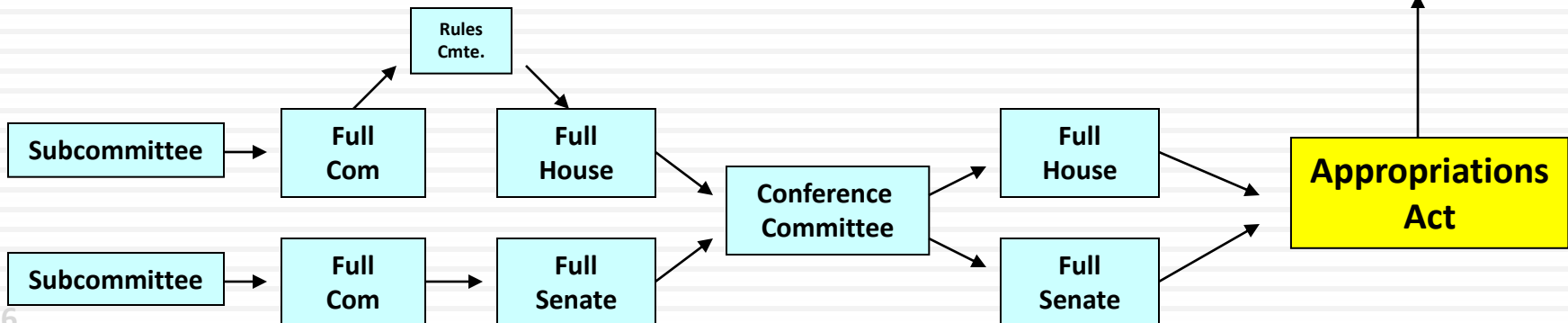
- ❑ Law: policy guidance
- ❑ Permission to spend money
- ❑ NOT in the Constitution
 - Created by Congress to assist in conducting oversight of Executive branch agencies

The Legislative Process:

Authorization Bill



Appropriations Bill



Key Dates of Federal Budget Timetable

Date:

First Monday in February

Not later than 6 weeks after
president submits budget

April 15

May 15

October 1

Action to be Completed:

President submits budget to Congress

Congressional committees submit
estimates to budget committees

Congress completes action on budget blueprint

Appropriations bills may be considered in House

New fiscal year begins

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Major Element #2:

Why should you and your regional council be involved in federal and state advocacy

The Role of Regional Development Organizations and Local Elected Officials



- Our system of government is designed to be a partnership among the three main levels of government: federal, state and local.
- The full and active participation of state and local officials (including regional development organizations) is essential in the federal policymaking process.

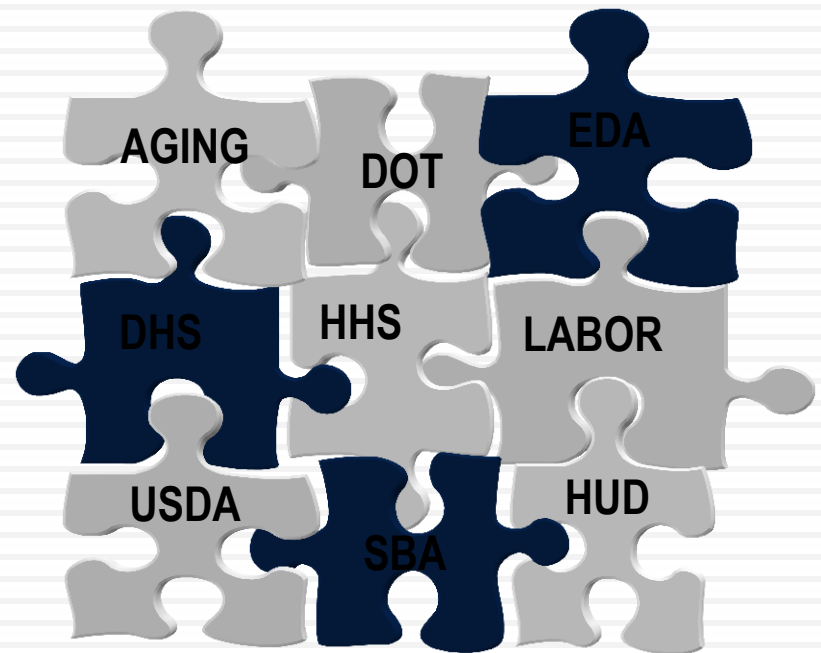
Why should regional councils be involved?

- Federal government spends more than \$3 trillion annually, including more than \$500 billion in domestic assistance programs
- Federal policies – including unfunded mandates -- have direct and lasting impact on regional councils, local governments & local communities
- More responsibility placed on local communities

Why should regional councils be involved?

□ Because Federal and State Policy Officials Determine Funding for Your Organizations...

- Sources of Funding:
- 45% Federal Sources
 - 25% State Sources
 - 15% Local Dues
 - 15% Other



Source: 2002 NADO Membership Survey

Aligning Priorities for Win-Win Partnership

□ **Federal and State Elected Officials**

- ▣ **#1 Priority is to win election!**
- ▣ **#2 Priority is to win re-election!**
- ▣ **#3 Priority:**
See #1 & #2 Priorities!

□ **Regional Councils**

- ▣ Priority is to foster intergovernmental and regional cooperation, support economic development and improve quality of life within region

How Can Your Federal Lawmakers Help You?

- **Introduce or Cosponsor Legislation**
- **Sponsor or Sign a Dear Colleague Letter on a Specific Issue**
- **Vote on a Bill or Amendment in Committee or on the Floor**
- **Send Letters to Federal Agencies on Specific Issues**
- **Send Letters in Support of Federal Grant Applications**
- **Talk with Committee Chairman or Leadership about Local Issues**



**The Key to Your Success
is to Link the Self-Interests and
Priorities of Your Public Officials
with Your Organization's
Interests and Mission!**

Keys to Success for Regional Councils



- **You must make the effort;** No one else cares as much about your organization as you!
- **Become a trusted partner** who delivers on promises and **delivers a high-quality product**
- **Play politics, *but never partisan politics!***

Keys to Success for Regional Councils

■ Tell Your Story...

- ◆ **Regular Visits and Face-to-Face Meetings**
- ◆ Professional Web Site... *Making A First Impression!*
- ◆ Statewide Impact Reports and Power Points
- ◆ Annual Report with Humanized Stories & Impact
- ◆ Professionally-Designed Newsletters and Reports
- ◆ Informed Board Members and Partners to Reinforce Your Message and Credibility

Keys to Success for Regional Councils

- **The most powerful tools in the regional council business remain:**
 - Personal relationships with elected officials and staff
 - Timely, concise and valued communications
 - Mission of serving the “public good”
 - Focus on job creation/retention, and improving the competitiveness conditions of regions

Major Element #3:

Evaluating the Political
Climate and Landscape


Evaluating the Political Landscape

- What are the interests of political leaders
- What messages resonate with leaders and how do your programs match their priorities
- How do you maintain professional relationships
- How do you prepare for transition of new policy makers and Hill staff turnover
- Are there elections on the horizon

Political Dynamics of Your Delegation



- House and Senate Member Relations
- Fall Out from Redistricting Fights
- Personal Relationships and Friendships
- Partisan Divides and Intra-Party Competition



Major Element #4:
The Mechanics of Federal
Grassroots Advocacy

Grassroots



Grassroots as a Political Term

The political term “grassroots” originated in a speech by Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana to a delegation of the 1912 Bull Moose Convention. Beveridge remarked that theirs was the party of grass roots...“grown from the soil of the people’s hard necessities.”

Most Effective Means of Communication

1. Grassroots Activity 52 %
2. Lobbying by Executives 27 %
3. Campaign Contributors 5 %
4. Professional Lobbyists 4 %
5. Advocacy Advertising 2 %

Source: Public Affairs Council Survey

Washington's Power 15: Grassroots Connections

1. National Rifle Association
2. AARP
3. National Federation of Independent Businesses
4. American Israel PAC
5. Association of Trial Lawyers of America
6. AFL-CIO
7. US Chamber of Commerce
8. National Beer Wholesalers Association
9. National Association of Realtors
10. National Association of Manufacturers
11. National Association of Home Builders
12. American Medical Association
13. American Hospital Association
14. National Education Association
15. American Farm Bureau Federation

Source: Fortune Magazine

What messages resonate
with policy makers and how do you
market your core programs and projects?

Bottom line:

Need to modify and tailor messages
to your target audience

Communicating with Congress

Major Element #5:
Strategies and techniques for
becoming an effective advocate

Establish the Relationship



Quantitative vs. Qualitative Communication

Establish the Relationship



GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATORS

Invest time in learning about their background:

- ✓ **Know their committee and subcommittee assignments. Research their voting records on key issues..**
- ✓ **Find out which bills they sponsored and cosponsored in recent years.**
- ✓ **Read their biographical information.**
- ✓ **Talk with district staff about the lawmaker's positions and interests.**
- ✓ **Follow local and regional press coverage of legislators.**

Congressional Staff

Capitol Hill Staff

□ Personal Office

- AA or Chief of Staff
- Legislative Director
- Legislative Assistants
- Press Secretary
- Scheduler

□ Committee Staff

- Staff Director or Clerk
- Professional Staff
- Analyst
- Communications and Press

NOTE: Every Capitol Hill office is set up differently, with different power bases and pressure points!

Congressional Staff

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Personal Staff

- Work in a Member's personal office – either in the state/district or in Washington, DC
- Generally: Young, limited experience, focused on a Member's parochial issues
- A Senator has a larger personal staff than a House Member

Professional Staff

- Work on a Committee staff in Washington, DC
- Generally: Older, experienced in a particular field, focused upon a Committee's national issues

State and District Staff

- State or District Staff
- Project Directors
- Case Workers

KEY POINT:

To be truly effective as a Grasstops Advocate, you need to know both the staff in DC and staff in the region.

Staff Positions

Chief of Staff or Administrative Assistant:

The Chief of Staff reports directly to the member of Congress. This person usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcomes of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The Chief of Staff is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of staff.

Legislative Director and Legislative Assistant:

The Legislative Director (LD) is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. In some congressional offices there are several Legislative Assistants (LA) and responsibilities are assigned based on their expertise. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member, an office may include a different LA for transportation, economic development, health, etc.

Press Secretary or Communications Director:

The Press Secretary is typically responsible for building and maintaining open and effective lines of communication between the member, constituents and the general public. The Press Secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands and special requirements of both print and electronic media, and how to most effectively promote the member's views and positions on specific issues.

Staff Positions

Appointment Secretary or Scheduler:

The Appointment Secretary or Scheduler is responsible for allocating a member's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements and constituent requests. The staffer may also be responsible for arranging travel plans, speaking engagements and scheduling visits to the district.

Caseworker:

The Caseworker is the staff member usually assigned to help with constituent requests by preparing replies for the member's signature. The Caseworker may also be responsible for helping resolve constituent's problems with federal agencies such as Social Security and Medicare issues, veteran benefits and passports. There are often several Caseworkers in a congressional office.

Other Staff Titles:

Other titles used in a congressional office may include Executive Assistant, Legislative Correspondent, Executive Secretary, Office Manager and Staff Assistant.

Know The Staff:

Understand the Role of the Gatekeepers

- ❖ When the member is unavailable to meet, take the time to visit with the staff who handle your issues.
- ❖ Invite key staff to “job shadow” in your office for a day or visit a project site.
- ❖ Attach a personal note to letters, press releases and other communications.
- ❖ Let members of Congress know that their staff members are courteous and helpful, and always remember to thank staff directly. It is also important to learn about the different roles and responsibilities of each staff member.

Ideas to Build Relationships with Staff

- **Trips to tour district and projects**
 - ▣ Utah COGs trip of new ATV Tour

- **Keep them informed** and “looking smart”

- **Note to lawmaker** recognizing staff work

- **Check New Rules on Gift Ban!**



Legislative staff often serve as gatekeepers for their member and their recommendations on policy are frequently followed.

3 Golden Rules for Hill Staff

1. **Staff members are the “gatekeepers”** and the “eyes and ears” for their boss
2. **Treat All Staff Equally:** Today’s caseworker and legislative assistant is tomorrow’s chief of staff and legislative director
3. **Always, always send a thank you note;**
Only 20% of visitors follow up with thank you!

Evaluate Impact of Communication Tools

□ Direct Methods

- Personal Visits
- Phone Calls
- Letters and faxes
- Email
- Project Tour and Ribbon Cuttings
- Events and Conferences

□ Indirect Methods

- Op-Eds
- Editorials
- Paid Ads on TV, radio and print
- 3rd Party Support or Endorsement



WRITING LETTERS

Writing Letters



It is important to develop each letter around three principles:

1. Keep it local.
2. Keep it personal.
3. Keep it concise.

Writing Letters



Specifically, it is important to design each letter so that your lawmaker and their staff will notice and take action

Writing Letters

- ❖ **State the purpose of the letter in the first paragraph.**
- ❖ **Use your own words and anecdotal information to support your position.**
- ❖ **Ask your legislator for a reply.**
- ❖ **Be sure to thank legislators for their time and effort on your behalf, even if the outcome went the other way.**
- ❖ **Use letterhead stationery.**
- ❖ **Send NADO a copy of the letter and any correspondence.**

Writing Letters

Addresses and Salutations

To A Senator:

The Honorable Jane Smith
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

To a Representative:

The Honorable John Smith
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Smith:

Note: When writing to a chair of a committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman and Mr. Speaker or Madam Speaker

MAKING PHONE CALLS

Making Phone Calls

Like writing a letter, there are some key points to consider when calling a member of Congress or their staff.

- ❖ **Use phone calls sparingly.** Phone calls are most effective when action must be taken quickly, such as the last days before a committee markup or a floor vote.
- ❖ **Before making the call, write down the purpose of the call and a couple of key talking points on the issue.**
- ❖ **Leave a brief, clear message when calling.**
- ❖ **Follow the phone call** with a fax or letter to reinforce your message.

Writing Letters and Making Calls

***Understanding the Power of
Communications...***

***For every letter or phone call
a legislator receives from a
constituent, they assume
there are at least 100 others
who feel the same way.***

Source: American Society of Association Executives

If You Receive A Noncommittal Response...

- ❖ Do not be surprised if a reply is noncommittal.
- ❖ Write back if the reply neglects to answer your questions, is ambiguous or evades the question by claiming that the fate of the bill is in another legislator's hands.
- ❖ In your brief follow-up letter or phone call, make two or three good points and restate your position and request.



EMAIL

Email: Is It Effective?

- ❖ 2001 anthrax attacks
- ❖ Although every office in Congress responds differently to email, most treat email as “normal” mail.
- ❖ In most congressional offices they are treated in the same manner as "normal" mail.
- ❖ Members of Congress are informed about the email their offices receive.

Email



Some of the advantages of electronic mail are that it is:

- ❖ Free, easy and fast
- ❖ Leaves a record that is verifiable
- ❖ Allows almost anyone at any distance to contact their legislators
- ❖ It is a commonly acceptable form of communication in today's modern world

Tips for Becoming an Effective Cyberadvocate

- ✓ **Think before you email a message.** Is email the most effective way to take action or would a phone call be more influential?
- ✓ **When sending an email message, be sure to include your name, organization and address at the top of the message.** This helps staff determine that the message is from the district or state.
- ✓ **State the purpose of the message in the first sentence.**
- ✓ **Be concise** and remember to reference the bill number and clearly state the action needed and timeline.
- ✓ **Follow up any email with a phone call or fax letter.**
- ✓ **Remember to proofread and spell check message.**

Email



Because many emails are mass produced and easy to send with the click of a button, staffers can receive hundreds of emails each day.

Email generated from outside the state or district is often treated with less political importance or no importance.

Personal Visits

Personal Visits

Arranging the Appointment

- ❖ **Schedule a meeting in Washington or in the district office, whichever is most convenient.**
- ❖ **When you speak to the scheduler, explain that you are a constituent, the purpose of the meeting and who will be attending.**
- ❖ **Unless you have an unusual problem, only request a half hour meeting.**
- ❖ If the legislator is unavailable or busy, it is still necessary to meet with staff. Staff members work on these issues every day and greatly influence the positions and votes of lawmakers
- ❖ Legislators are often overscheduled and will appreciate a well-organized and concise meeting. In reality, most meetings will only last **10-15 minutes** (unless the member of Congress is addressing a widely attended event).

Preparing for the Meeting

- ❖ **Do your homework!** Know exactly what you want to say and carefully review your message.
- ❖ **Compile basic figures** about the impact of federal grants on your region. Avoid long lists of statistics and complex charts; they are difficult to remember and will lose their impact.
- ❖ **Know the counter-arguments** and be ready to respectfully answer any questions or disagreements.
- ❖ **Make sure everyone in your group is prepared.**
- ❖ **Be organized.** If you are part of a larger coalition or group, meet ahead of time.

Preparing for the Meeting

— Quick Tips —

- ✓ **Write down a one-line sentence before the meeting that outlines exactly what you need.**
- ✓ **Find out the name of the staff member responsible for the issue.**
- ✓ **Provide specific examples on how the issue impacts the state or district.**

Making the Presentation

- **Be Prompt and Patient**
- **Make a simple and straight forward presentation; you may have five minutes or less to make the pitch directly to the member**
- **Leave time for dialogue; meaning do not monopolize the conversation**
- **Be Political**
- **Stay away from jargon**
- **Thank supportive legislators**
- **Be sure to ask your legislator for a specific action and support**
- **Leave a one-page fact sheet. If it exceeds one page, it will not be read**

Follow Up After the Meeting

Send separate thank you notes to the legislator and staff members.

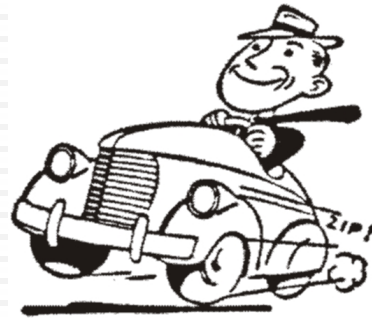
Briefly summarize the main points of the meeting. Follow-up immediately with answers to questions and information requests.

Reasons to thank or congratulate members of Congress include:

- Position taken on a specific floor or committee vote.
- Sponsorship or cosponsorship of important legislation.
- Taking the time for a personal meeting.
- Authoring a “Dear Colleague” letter on a specific issue.

Keep the NADO legislative staff informed. Grassroots reports are invaluable in developing legislative strategies and tracking the positions of members of Congress.

Project Site Tours and District Visits



Project Site Tours and District Visits

The most effective method for educating members of Congress and staff is to have them visit your organization and project sites.

- **Invite your member of Congress to speak at annual meetings, board of directors meetings and other public forums sponsored by your organization.**
- **Invite legislators and their Washington staff to visit your office or take a tour of a current project.**
- **Recognize lawmakers for key accomplishments** at widely attended events such as annual meetings or community events.
- **Involve key contacts, such as a local elected official and business leaders, in the meetings.**

Using the Media & Other Resources

Using the Media

- Press Releases
- Press Conferences
- Letter to the Editor
- Opinion Pieces
- Editorial Board Meetings

Legislative Web Resources

- NADO: nado.org
- US House: www.house.gov
- US Senate: www.senate.gov
- Legislative Info: Thomas.loc.gov
- OMB: www.whitehouse.gov/omb
- Issues and Contact Info: congress.org
- Political Contributions: www.fec.gov

NADO ACTION ALERTS



**Time Sensitive Material Action
Needed Immediately!!!**

****Michaud Amendment**

The Bottom Line...

**You and your organization must take
the time and invest the resources
needed to be a successful grasstops
leaders...**

Your organizations future depends on it!



**National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)
and the NADO Research Foundation**

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Regional Strategies. Solutions. Partnerships.