Tips for Visits on Capitol Hill

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*NCTE Literacy Education*

*Advocacy Day*

*April 18, 2013*

Plan your visit carefully.

* Make an appointment with the Congressional office.
* Check your appointments against a Capitol area map and plot your path from one to the next.
* Be prompt to your appointments and patient awaiting your meeting.
* Be delighted to meet with a staffer.

Be prepared for your meeting.

* Study and practice the “asks” provided by NCTE.
* Make a 2-3 point plan for how you’ll explain at least one of the “asks” with a personal education story.
* Ensure your presentation includes information that relates directly to your state and district so that there’s an obvious connection between what you’re asking for and the legislator’s constituency.
* Have one set of “leave-behind” handouts for each legislative office you visit.

Focus yourself on the meeting.

* Get comfortable with quick and cordial introductions. Smile!
* Get right to explaining the “asks” and especially your story to support the “asks.”
* Keep a “crib sheet” outlining your plan close by.
* Make your points clearly, be enthusiastic, direct, honest, and specific—include personal and local examples.
* Listen and be responsive—this is a conversation, not a presentation. Ask questions.
* Don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know but I’ll find out and get back to you with an answer.”
* Be aware of the time and be brief.
* As the meeting is ending, review your main points and offer to follow up with more information on details from the conversation.

*As an NCTE member, you are the best, most knowledgeable person to speak out about NCTE’s positions and how those positions look in practice!*

*Talking to your Member of Congress or a congressional staffer is a very effective way to have your message heard.*

After the meeting.

* Jot some notes to yourself about main points covered and ideas for following up.
* Take time to fill out a meeting report during the debriefing for the day.
* Write a thank you email to the person with whom you met (hopefully you got their business card) reviewing what you said in the meeting and offering your assistance in the future.
* If the Member of Congress takes positive action on one of the “asks,” write to thank her/him.

Know your NCTE resources.

* NCTE’s Government Policy Platform at <http://www.ncte.org/positions/educpolicy>
* NCTE Position Statements at <http://www.ncte.org/positions>

Find information about your legislator as well as contact information at <http://www.senate.gov> and <http://www.house.gov>

Find out more about the legislative process and the making of a law.

* Go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html>
* Track bills and read the Congressional Record on Thomas.gov at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Watch your email and  
NCTE’s website for details  
on next year’s  
Literacy Education  
Advocacy Day

<http://www.ncte.org/action>