

Quick Tips for Successful Legislative Meetings

Do Your Homework

- Get to “know” your legislator before your meeting, look up their bio, see what committee’s they sit on, review past votes
- Know your talking points, when you meet with your state caucus determine who will cover which points, and who will chair the meeting
- Stay on ACOG’s Agenda

Be Punctual

- Time is valuable for legislators and their staff
- Thank the legislator or staffer for their time, and compliment the member of Congress for a vote or action that you appreciated

Stay On Message

- Make sure you stick to our issue, effective legislative meetings should be narrow in scope
- Make sure you understand our issue completely and ask ACOG staff any questions you may have, or attend the open office hour session (optional)
- Meetings can become ineffective if a participant brings up other issues or strays from the key arguments

Go Local

- Local statistics and stories are important and you can be the only source for such rich information
- Don’t be afraid to humanize the issue, relate it back to your community

Make a Specific Request

- It is not impolite to make a direct request
- Keep your request timely
- Rather than saying “I want you to support health care reform” introduce ACOG’s policy proposal Health Care for Women, Health Care for All, and give several brief points why your member of Congress should support this
- Avoid a long and philosophical debate
- Making a specific request allows you to evaluate the legislator’s response

Follow-Up

- If you can’t provide information on the spot-don’t, tell the staff person you will get it back to him or her
- Thank them at the end of the meeting and once you get home send a thank you letter to the staff person reinforcing your message
- Make sure you leave behind the Health Care for Women, Health Care for All folder that we have provided for you
- Also, don’t forget to report the results of your meeting to ACOG staff, we will have debriefing forms at the Top of the Hill
- Calling or sending letters over time is how you begin a long-term relationship with a member of Congress or their staff

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Remember the Three C's:

- 1) **Be Courteous.** When asking legislators to support ACOG issues, show them courtesy and respect. Be professional in every contact with legislators. Do not be argumentative, even if you disagree with their opinions. Always follow a visit or a telephone call with a thank-you note. ACOG as a group will be judged by your contact and conduct.
- 2) **Be Concise.** Do not attempt to explain the entire ACOG Policy Platform in one meeting, phone call, or one letter. A good rule of thumb is one issue per contact. Be friendly, but brief. Get right to the point.
- 3) **Be Consistent.** Make sure your requests are consistent with those of ACOG. Remember, you are representing your fellow association members and co-workers, not furthering your own personal agenda. We can only be successful if we all work together.