Personal Visits with Legislators

One of the most effective ways to communicate with legislators is a face-to-face visit, either in Washington or in the district office. Here are some tips to making your visit run smoothly.

**Before the Meeting:**

- If you don’t know your Member of Congress personally, try to learn a bit about his/her background and previous occupation. The AAPA Legislative Action Center has background information on your legislators.
- Find out, if possible, where the Member stands on the issues you will be discussing. You can see whether he or she has cosponsored AAPA priority legislation on the [Legislative Action Center](https://www.aapa.org).
- If the legislator becomes unavailable to make your scheduled appointment, ask to meet with the staff handling health issues.

**During the Meeting:**

- Be organized. Know the key points you need to make and try to make them in one or two minutes. You may only get a few minutes of the Member’s time.
- If there are several of you in the same meeting, plan beforehand what each person is going to say. Or, one person can be designated as the primary spokesperson.
- Let the Member know if you are a constituent. If you have any family, social, business, or political ties to your legislators, or are active in your community, share that as well.
- Be clear about what your position is and what you would like your legislators to do. Identify the bill by name and number whenever possible.
- If you can, use examples of how the issue impacts the community — especially your patients, clinic, hospital, etc. After all, what the Member really wants to know is how the issue will impact his or her constituents.
- Leave fact sheets or issue papers with the Member or staff, and offer to follow up with the staffer with supplementary information and further assistance. Be sure your business card or other identifying information is attached.
- Always be courteous in dealing with your legislators, and be sure to be on time.
- Report back to AAPA on the results of your meeting, especially if he or she expresses strong opinions about an issue.

**After Each Meeting:**

- Send the Member of Congress a thank-you letter. (Thank staffers by name, too, and your letter is likely to end up on the Member’s desk.) In your letter, re-state your position and the action you want the Member to take, and attach any information you promised to provide during the meeting. Consider inviting the Member/staff to speak at an upcoming meeting, or visit your facility or practice.
- Become a resource for your Member on health issues in your Congressional district.
- Touch base with the staffer from time to time, but don’t be a pest.