



PARENT ACTION NETWORK

An Initiative of Smart Approaches to Marijuana

A D V O C A C Y

Tips for making impacts on your legislators

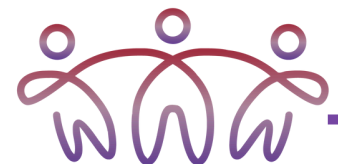
Educate

Empower

Engage

Tips for Preparing to Visit Your Legislator

- **Do your research.** Preparing is key to confident and effective communication. The office will appreciate that you know a little about the Member and this will help you build rapport. It will also help you prepare your greeting and appropriately present your concerns. Before going into a meeting, you should know the following things:
 - a. **Basic details:** the name of the elected official, where their office is located, the name of the person who you are meeting with, what time the appointment is. Write down the office's phone number or save it in your phone so you can call once you arrive outside of the building. *We will provide this information day-of.*
 - b. **A little about your Member of Congress (MOC):** their background, what city or area of your state they live in, and what positions they take on your issue.
 - c. **Any relevant bill information** including a bill number and whether the member is or is not cosponsoring that bill; you can look up the bills they have cosponsored on [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov). *We will provide this information day-of.*
 - d. **Know your ask!** What do you want from this meeting? Know what your ask is and how to clearly articulate it because this is the primary thing a staffer or a MOC will take from a meeting. If you don't know why you're there, neither will the person you're meeting with!
- **Don't be surprised if your legislator isn't available.** Members have votes, committee hearings, staff and constituent meetings throughout the day, so they have staff to help them handle all their obligations. Many times, staff are from the district so feel free to ask the staffer if he/she is from the district.
- **Practice your introduction ahead of time:** practice your "elevator pitch;" this should include where you live, what group you are representing, and your reason for being at their office. Talk through why the issue is important to you and why it affects your community.
- **Proper business professional attire** is required in Congressional buildings. You don't need to wear a suit (but you can!), a nice blouse or shirt and dress pants/ skirt or a dress is perfectly acceptable. Tennis shoes, flip flops, t-shirts, or jeans are not recommended. You will be walking, so wear comfortable shoes and pack a pair of professional shoes to slip on before your meeting.
- **Don't forget to bring proper identification.**



Parent Action Network

Tips for the Day of Your Visit

Thank you for joining us to advocate for good drug policy! Please know that your presence as a parent has greater influence than you know. Even a short meeting can have a lasting impact!

- As you are in offices, hallways, and elevators, please be mindful of conversations that could be overheard by others.
- Remember they are people! Your elected representatives are members of your community; they are no different than you, your parent, or your neighbor. Your representative is elected to represent *you* in Washington, so sharing your story with them is important.
- **When you arrive at the office building**, call the number that was shared with you, or the DC office number, and let the person know you are here for your meeting. Be sure to include your name, the name of the staff member who you are meeting with, and what time your meeting is scheduled. *Please remember that protocol includes arriving to any meeting with time to spare* (5-10 minutes is plenty of time).
- **During your meeting:**
 - It is ok to bring notes or talking points to your meeting and to speak from your notes! The person you are meeting with will not care if you reference or read parts of your notes. HOWEVER, this is a conversation, and the goal is to make these meetings interactive.
 - Consider asking a question to engage them further if they seem to have time: "Are you aware of the dramatic increases in potency of marijuana products?" "Are you aware of the extent the tobacco companies have poured money into the pot industry?" "Do you know about the dramatic increase in poison control calls in our state after pot has been legalized?" Feel free to come up with a few of your own that tie into your state.
 - Connect your story to something you learned about your representative.
 - Consider asking for a picture with your legislator and ask permission to tag them on social media. They often love opportunities to be recognized as listening to constituents.
 - Always be professional and courteous. You want to be remembered as a pleasant visitor.
 - Request a business card. You will want to send a follow up thank you and it's always good to know who you talked to.
- Thank the staff or Member for their time and offer a way for them to reach you or to learn more about your issue.
- **When you get home:**
 - Write a personal thank you note. Review your key points from the visit, include where you live, and mail it immediately.

