CMAA

August In-District Campaign: Steps to a Successful Meeting

Be Prepared – Visit your elected official's website and social media to see what issues they care about, and any possible personal connections you can form. If you know you'll be meeting with a staffer, try to determine their role in the office.

Dress in a Professional Manner – Business attire is appropriate for these meetings.

Be Flexible – Arrive five minutes early for your meeting. Your meeting may start late, but you do not want to be the reason why. Other demands change schedules frequently. You may be asked to meet standing up, sitting in the Member's front office, or in a hallway. This is OK and is not a reflection on the importance of your meeting!

Prepare – Read the talking points. If you're meeting with other advocates, discuss what you will say during the meeting so you do not repeat, conflict, or overlap. It's important to capitalize on your strengths and remember that time is limited.

Be sure to look up if the office you're meeting with is already a sponsor of the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (S. 722/H.R. 1477) – you can find that information here: https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1477/cosponsors and https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/722/cosponsors.

Be Concise and Compelling – The staff (or Member) you meet with has a full schedule and may not have more than 15-20 minutes to devote to the discussion, so be informative and concise.

Introduce Yourself – You are the face of program and construction management. Tell them why this issue is important to their constituents (i.e. you). Use your experience to illustrate challenges and opportunities the industry faces. Members and staff love a good anecdote that they can use later, so it's helpful to use one while making your presentation.

Be Appreciative – Thank the office for the meeting, and/or for their position on an issue if they have taken one. This is always appreciated and is a nice way to set the tone of the meeting.

Keep it Simple – The Members and staff will not necessarily be versed in the issues you are there to discuss. They may not know much about or have real life experiences with these issues. Avoid acronyms, vernacular, and keep the language you use as basic and as non-technical as possible.

Be Honest – If asked a question you do not know the answer to, offer to follow-up. This will give you an opportunity to have another discussion with the staff member via phone or email.

Get Information – Knowing is half the battle! Find out what you can about the Member's positions on the issue, but do not expect a clear answer or commitment. Find out if you have any connections to them, or if they have any connections to the industry. Maybe they have a friend or family member who works in this industry.

Don't Forget "the Ask" – You identified the problem. Don't forget to offer the solution by asking them to sponsor or cosponsor this legislation, or if they are already, help them find additional support for the bill and moving it through committee.

Try to Develop a Relationship – Congressional staff may not be from your district or state originally. Some may be younger than your children or grandchildren. Do not be discouraged by this. These staffers are the policy advisors to Members of Congress and are instrumental to getting their support on issues you care about. They work long, hard hours on our behalf and work on many diverse issues. It's good to make a connection with them.

Follow Up – Make sure you respond to any questions you could not answer, invite them to future events in the district if you have them, and be sure to thank everyone involved for their time.