

The Basics for Making a Hill Visit

Prior to Your Visit:

- Develop a general understanding of the Capitol complex and plan accordingly for getting from meeting to meeting. Allow at least 15 minutes between meetings on the House side and 30 minutes for meetings between the House and Senate. There are underground tunnels (in the basement levels) between connecting the House buildings and there are similar tunnels connecting the Senate buildings.
- The numbering system on the House side is building + floor + room number. So a meeting in 2243 is a meeting in Rayburn 2nd floor, room 43 (Cannon = no number [243], Longworth = 1 [1243], Rayburn = 2 [2243]). Use the maps in the corridors to find the quickest ways to your meetings.
- The numbering system on the Senate side is building + floor + room number. So a meeting in SH-526 is a meeting in Hart fifth floor, room 26 (Dirksen = SD [room number], Hart = SD [room number], Russell = SR [room number]). Again, use maps in the corridors to find the quickest ways to your meetings.
- Take some time to learn the key issues and to think through your talking points.
- Make your office appointments as long in advance as possible. You may need to be flexible with your appointment times. Be sure to coordinate office visits with your state or region's team captain! Constituents are more likely to be offered a meeting.
- Confirm your appointment a day in advance and be prepared for the office to ask if you can reschedule to another time.
- Research the member, their district, and their positions. Do they have a pilot's license or have they served in the U.S. Air Force? Have they co-sponsored the NASA Authorization Act or are supportive of STEM/workforce legislation? Are there any research universities, aerospace companies, third-tier suppliers, NASA centers, or major airports in their district?
- Dress for a business meeting. The Hill is a professional environment and you are representing the Institute. Plan for the weather (umbrella, top coat, etc.) and be sure to wear comfortable shoes!
- Bring a camera to document the event.
- Know with whom you are meeting. While it is great to meet with a member of Congress, often you will end up meeting with a staff person. Here is a list of common terms used in a DC Congressional office:
 - Chief of Staff: Runs the office and is the member's top advisor.
 - Legislative Director (LD): Plans legislative initiatives and strategies; supervises other legislative staff.
 - Legislative Assistant (LA): Specializes in specific issues, monitors bills and committee meetings in those areas; drafts floor statements and speeches.
 - Legislative Correspondent (LC): Receives and responds to all constituent communications.
 - Scheduler: The gatekeeper for the office. They handle the member of Congress' schedule and, in some cases, the meeting schedule for the office.
 - Professional Committee Staff: Serve either the majority or minority members of the committee.

During Your Visit:

- Show up on time or 5 minutes early. More often than not, your meeting will start late because the staffer or member is running late.
- Your meeting may be in the office or you may be taken to another location, such as the hallway, the cafeteria, or a committee room. Just roll with it!
- Pay full attention to the message delivery, turn your cell phones off (or on vibrate) and do not hold any private side conversations!
- Your meeting will likely be no more than 15 minutes, so do not get sidetracked with chit-chat. Select one speaker to present the issue(s). Make sure the presentation is well thought out and prepared. When meeting with a member, you will likely only have a short amount of time to discuss the issues so have an elevator speech prepared.
- It is acceptable to thank a member for supporting a position in the past that is related to your meeting (“I am here to discuss HR. 4 and wanted to thank the Congressman for signing on as a cosponsor”).
- Mix facts with anecdotes. Hill offices appreciate facts they can use themselves (especially from constituents) but it is often the personal story that sells the importance of an issue.
- Never, ever lie in your meeting. If you do not know something, be honest and say so but promise to send more information in the near future.
- Be sure to let the member or staffer know that AIAA is always a resource for them. Do not be afraid to ask what we can do to get them more engaged in our issues and what information we can provide to assist their legislative efforts.
- Thank the member or staffer for their time and support!

After Your Visit:

- Send a thank you note to the person with whom you met and provide any information you promised to provide.
- State Captains should provide AIAA with feedback on how the meetings went and if any follow-up is necessary.
- Keep in touch with the office, either on the issue with which you met them or on any new issues. Keep the relationship alive!