

Meeting with Your Legislators

Face-to-face meetings are the most effective method of communicating with senators, representatives, and their staffs. In order for meetings to be successful, they also require extensive planning, an understanding of the needs of legislators and, perhaps, a rehearsal. Legislators will usually be interested in visiting your school, and staff is often searching for opportunities to use the legislator's time at home most effectively.

Therefore, a visit to your school will often serve everyone's interests. It is best to meet with legislators when they are home in their district offices during legislative recess, when they have fewer distractions from legislative business.

U.S. Congressional recesses are usually scheduled around holidays and for most of August. Congress normally adjourns for the year in mid-to-late fall. The state General Assembly recesses are usually scheduled around holidays, campaigns for election, and during July, August, and early September.

There are times when meetings are appropriate in legislators' Capitol offices during legislative session. These meetings may be tied to critical legislative action, or advocacy events in Washington or Illinois.

Tips for Scheduling a Meeting with your Legislator:

- Contact the senator's or representative's Illinois or Washington, D.C. office and ask to speak with the appointment secretary/scheduler.
- Explain who you represent (community school/organization) and the reason you want a meeting with the senator or representative. Ask the scheduler how you can arrange a meeting.
- If you are inviting the legislator to visit your school, send a letter of invitation from the principal or your organization's executive director.
- Ask the scheduler the amount of lead time needed to schedule a school visit and send your invitation far enough in advance.
- Inform the Federation's staff of the meeting request and date chosen.