



IN-DISTRICT MEETING GUIDE



» High impact advocacy

While it can be intimidating, meeting in person with your elected leaders is, by far, the most effective form of advocacy you can do. You don't have to fly to Washington, D.C., to share your desire to help kids break free from poverty – your elected representatives have offices in your home state, and they spend portions of the year in those offices for the very purpose of meeting with constituents like you!

Use this guide for step-by-step instructions on how to successfully meet with your members of Congress in person about issues that impact kids around the world. We encourage you to invite others to join you, and please reach out to us for support and guidance. We're here to help!

» Scheduling your meeting

I. Make contact


- Decide which representative you want to meet with (we can help advise you).
- Call the district office using the phone number on their website, and ask for the name of the district scheduler and their contact information. Find out whether the scheduler prefers to receive meeting requests by email or if they have a form you need to fill out on the website.
- If the scheduler prefers meeting requests by email, copy our sample meeting request on the next page and enter in your information where it is highlighted yellow.
- Be sure to include the names and addresses of any other constituents who will attend with you. Don't worry if this is not finalized – you can always update it later with the scheduler.

Sample Scheduling Request

EMAIL SUBJECT: Meeting with [Senator/Representative's name] to discuss [insert issue or legislation here]

EMAIL COPY:

Dear [Senator or Representative's name],

 I am writing to formally request a meeting with you on [insert dates of desired meeting; give 2-3 options] at your district office in [City], to discuss [insert issue or legislation here]. Attending the meeting will be myself and the following constituents in your area: [insert names of fellow participants, cities of residence, and any organizational affiliations].

Thank you for considering my request. Please contact me at [phone number] or via email at [email] to confirm the [Senator or Representative's] availability.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address – you need to include your address so they know you're a constituent!]

2. Be persistent!

- Two to three days after you send in your request, call the scheduler to make sure they have received it. Offices get a lot of requests, so make sure yours doesn't get lost in the pile.
- Continue to follow up with the scheduler every few days to make sure your meeting gets scheduled. It can sometimes take several follow-up calls/emails. Persistence is key! Contact us at advocate@worldvision.org if you need any help.
- If the member of Congress is unavailable, the scheduler may direct you to a staff member who will meet with you instead. Don't be discouraged – it's just as important to build a relationship with staff as it is with members! Staff often have more in-depth knowledge on the issues, and they directly influence policy by making voting and policy recommendations to the member.
- Confirm how much time you will have in the meeting. If you are meeting with a staff member, ask for their title.

» Before your meeting

1. Find others to join you

- Consider strategically who might be helpful to include in your meeting (a prominent person in your community, someone with first-hand experience of the issue, etc.).
- Involve your church or other social networks as much as possible. Be sure they know why you are going and how they can specifically pray for both you and your members of Congress throughout the process. Ask your church leader if you can mention the opportunity in a church service or to some small group gatherings.
- Brainstorm ways you might be able to show your members of Congress that others in your church or community agree with your position or request. Consider bringing hand-written cards from congregation members, a signed petition, photos, or some other creative prop to help convey your message and the community's support.

2. Learn what appeals to your representative

- Get to know your member of Congress through online research. Find out if there are any topics that they are especially passionate about and tailor your message to appeal to these.
- Make your message and request as personal as possible – you don't have to be an expert to have your views heard. Personal experience and sincerity about why you care about an issue makes a real impact! Brainstorm what stories you might be able to tell that will give the issue a personal touch.

3. Get acquainted with the issues and prepare

- Because time is limited during the meeting, be sure that you and the rest of your group have a clear understanding of the issues you will discuss.
- Download and print resources on the issues you'll be covering from the World Vision website (<http://worldvisionadvocacy.org/resources/>) and share them with your member of Congress. These resources can provide helpful talking points.
- Schedule a brief call with your group to plan your meeting agenda and what each person is going to say or contribute during the meeting. Be sure that there is a clear point and flow to your message.
- Use our congressional meeting outline to identify roles for everyone. Each meeting participant has a role to play, even if it's to silently discern and pray!
- Pray. Invite God to go before you and prepare the way for your conversation with all involved. Ask for what you feel you need to honor God in the meeting: courage, compassion, discernment, or faith.

» During your meeting

1. Dress to impress (Business attire is appropriate.)

2. Arrive early

- We recommend gathering with your group 30 minutes prior to your scheduled meeting at a nearby location to review your plan, calm nerves, find parking, and get through any building security procedures.
- Confirm how much time the member of Congress or their staff has before you start, so you can adjust your conversation accordingly.

3. Use the Congressional Meeting Outline

- Follow this resource to stay on track and keep the conversation focused.
- Include personal stories, experiences, or photos when possible. These things communicate passion that often inspires action.
- Remember to make a clear, specific ask with a deadline. Don't just ask for your representative's broad "support," ask them to take specific action by a specified time, and let them know you will follow up to see if they did it.
- It's okay to say you don't know the answer to a question – tell them you will follow up after you've done more research or have contacted World Vision (advocate@worldvision.org) for assistance.

4. Pray

- If you sense it would be appropriate and the member/staff would be comfortable, ask them if they would allow you to pray for them. This can be a powerful way to encourage them and strengthen them to act wisely about the issues you discussed.
 - Do this very sincerely – do NOT pray that God converts them to your viewpoint.
 - Pray a verse that might give them courage or guidance.
- If they decline, don't sweat it. Let them know you'll keep them in your prayers after the meeting, and encourage or affirm them in some other way. You can still pray for them when you leave the room!

5. Leave something behind to remind them of your visit

- Remember to leave behind your request in writing and the resources about the issues you discussed – you can find these resources at <http://worldvisionadvocacy.org/resources/>.
- You may also want to leave a creative gift to help them remember your visit (be sure any gift is valued under \$10 for legal purposes). Be creative – advocates have brought pictures of their sponsored children, cards signed by their congregation or community group, flowers, freshly baked bread, and many other wonderful gifts to bless the office.

6. Take a photo

- Request a picture of your group with your member of Congress or staff and share it on social media channels like Facebook or Twitter.
- Every member of Congress has a Twitter account. Tweet them directly, share your photo, and publicly thank them for the meeting (they'll appreciate the free press!). Be sure to use the hashtag [#WVAdvocacy](#) and include [@WorldVisionUSA](#) so we can share it too!

Sample Tweet



Thank you @Rep[XXX] for meeting w/ us today about [legislation] – we are grateful 4 your leadership! #WVAdvocacy @WorldVisionUSA

» After your meeting

1. Thank them and follow up

- Members of Congress rarely get thanked, so be sure to send them a letter or email on behalf of your church or group to let them know you appreciate them and their time. Remember, this is the beginning of a long-term relationship with their office – you want to build their support and encourage them over time to act on your issues.
- Follow up on the specific request you made, and keep encouraging them to take the action.
- If they say they can't or won't do what you asked, respond respectfully and kindly. Commit to learn more about their perspective as you move forward and search for strategic opportunities in the future that will align better with their views. With some members of Congress, you might succeed by simply getting them to hold their opposition, if supportive action is not realistic.

2. Tell us how it went

- Please fill out our Meeting Report form (www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/meetingreport) to help us track our collective impact, coordinate our engagement with congressional offices in D.C., and support you with any follow up necessary. (NOTE: this form works most reliably when accessed through Chrome or Firefox internet browsers. You'll know the form submitted correctly when you receive a confirmation email.)
- If you can't access or complete the form, please send us an email at advocate@worldvision.org to share how your meeting went.

3. Share with others

- Tell others in your church, school, or community about your experience and encourage them to get involved. Your example may encourage them to try advocacy in the future or come along with you to your next meeting!