

If you would like to ask detailed questions or learn more about your Senators' or Representative's positions on immigration topics, rather than simply calling and leaving a comment, you may ask to set up a meeting with a member of the staff. Meetings can take place in a district office, via conference call or in Washington, D.C.

How to Set Up a Meeting:



Ask for the Immigration Legislative Assistant

This person likely works in the Washington D.C. office. If you can't meet in Washington, D.C. ask to set up a phone meeting or inquire if the L.A. plans to be in the district in the near future.

Do Your Research

BEFORE you call to speak to the immigration L.A., make sure you understand the issue for yourself and are versed in accurate facts.

Schedule a Meeting

The L.A. might agree to speak to you right then so be prepared for a conversation. In most cases, you will have to call back or set up an appointment for a future date. Ask to set up a phone call. Be flexible with dates and times. Make sure you get the best phone number to reach them at.

Always Leave a Voicemail

Leave a detailed message, including your name, phone number, and specific topic of inquiry - give them a day or two to get back to you.

When to Follow Up

If you don't hear back from the L.A. within two or three days, feel free to try calling them again.

Strategies for a Successful Phone Meeting:

Be Aware of Time

Do not allow the meeting to last longer than the amount of time originally agreed upon, unless the staffer encourages it. If a staffer feels like his/her time is being encroached on or wasted, they will be less likely to speak with you again in the future.

Be Polite

During the phone call, be courteous and respectful, in spite of any frustration. Directing anger at the staff member, or employing insults, off-color humor, or obscenities will severely reduce the effectiveness of your call.

Advising the Advisor

Remember that the L.A. you speak to directly advises the Member of Congress on this issue. Therefore, make sure you convey all information clearly. You should also directly state what you would like the Member of Congress to do.

Stay on Topic

During your meeting, stay on topic and avoid erroneous subjects that will distract the staffer from the true issue at hand. If you want to discuss other matters, do so in a separate phone call.

Make it Local

Do your best to paint a clear picture of how that office's constituents are directly affected by the matter. Staffers and Members of Congress are much more likely to take notice of issues that have a clear relation and impact on their district.

Explain the Basics

Never assume a staffer knows what you are talking about. Be detailed and ask if they are familiar with a particular issue before you begin discussing it. Be ready to provide background information.

Refer them to Fair

Don't hesitate to refer them to the FAIR website (www.fairus.org) for additional information. They should know they can use FAIR as a resource for information in the future.



Follow Up with a Thank You Note

Even if you did not meet with a staff member in person, it's smart to take a few minutes to write a thoughtful thank you note or e-mail. Congressional staffers are rarely thanked, and this small effort goes a long way towards helping your issue.



Meeting with a Staffer in Washington, DC:

You made it to D.C. - Now what?

If you are able to travel to Washington, D.C., you can set up a meeting with the Legislative Assistant (L.A.) handling immigration issues. Sometimes, you can participate in a sponsored Hill Day or "Lobby Day" with an organization focused on immigration policy. If you are working with an advocacy group, they will likely provide additional training and help you schedule a meeting.

Time your Arrival

Congressional offices in Washington can be hectic, and staff is always busy. Never show up unannounced—all in-person meetings should be planned in advance. Also, show up to your meeting no more than five to ten minutes early. Most importantly, DO NOT BE LATE!

Meeting Length

You should expect any meeting you set up to last for at least ten minutes and at most thirty minutes, depending on the staffer's availability.

Anticipate Last Minute Changes

If you arrive at the D.C. office to find that you will be meeting with a different staff member, do not be offended. L.A. schedules frequently change at the last minute due to unscheduled votes, committee hearings, and more. If this happens, speak to the staff member assigned to your meeting as you would someone who is not familiar with the issue of immigration and include basic information.

Follow Up with a Thank You Note

Remember to send a thank you note to the staffer for taking the time to meet with you. At the very least, follow up with a thank you to the staff member via email.

