



HIKE THE HILL

BEST PRACTICES

HILL CONDUCT

Welcome to Washington, DC! Your voice matters in the halls of the Capitol, and this is your opportunity to tell your story about the importance of agriculture and international development and the impact that policies made in Washington, DC can have on your organization.

Please keep in mind during your time here that COVID policies will vary in each office. If a staffer asks you to wear a mask, please cooperate. COVID has affected many people both personally and professionally, so we want to be mindful and considerate of others.

In addition, the Capitol recently reopened to the public. Please be mindful and comply with all requests from Capitol Police Officers during our visit. Please be patient and gracious in navigating these differences, always remembering that you are here to represent your organization and NCBA CLUSA more broadly.

KEY MESSAGES TO COMMUNICATE

- **Thank you** - First, for taking the time to meet during a hectic time in DC. Second, for the Members who have been supporters of cooperatives, a hearty thank you is always appropriate.
- **Who you are** – Introduce yourself and give an overview of where you are from, your affiliations, and your volunteer experience and impact. Be sure to make a connection if there is one and definitely note if you are a constituent!
- **Deliver key messages** – Make sure to be prepared by reviewing the information provided to you in advance. Be cognizant of the person and office you are meeting with, and include personal stories about each key message if possible. What is the lasting impact of your cooperative and experience? Why is it important to support cooperatives?
- **Allow for follow up** - Let them know that you will continue to be in and that you are available to be a resource.
- **There is value in your advocacy** - These meetings can lead to long lasting relationships with congressional offices that can be helpful down the road.

GENERAL MEETING TIPS



- **Please dress professionally.** Keep in mind that you will spend a lot of time walking from office to office. Comfortable shoes and weather appropriate attire will be key.
- You will have a “lead” for each meeting prior to the scheduled appointment noted in your group list.
The lead should:
 - Thank the Member or staff for spending time with the group.
 - Introduce the organization you are with and give each person in the room an opportunity to introduce themselves and the role they play within the organization.
 - Kickoff discussion by raising one of the key messages indicated above or in your packets.
- **Be mindful of the time.** Members and staffers balance a number of priorities and other commitments, so meetings are typically less than 30 minutes. Also keep in mind what your group’s schedule is and when you need to be at your next meeting.
- **The Hill is very busy** as offices have other fly-in going on - do not be surprised or offended if meetings get shifted or if meetings are with staff instead of the Member of Congress. Staff are the gatekeepers of information and can ensure that your perspective and information make it in front of the Member of Congress and will be the point of contact for a future relationship with the office.
- **Be friendly to everyone in the office** that may attend these meetings, regardless of age or title. Today’s intern may be a member of Congress in a few years!
- **Try to find positive ways to make a connection with each office.** You may visit offices where you don’t agree with them on personal issues or even on most issues. However, as a representative of NCBA CLUSA, you are there to discuss a specific set of issues, and it’s important to find ways to work together.
- **Remember that you are there to communicate cooperative priorities** as well as gather information. Some questions to keep in mind:
 - What does this office hear from others regarding your priority issues?
 - What questions or concerns do they have about your priority issues?
 - Are they hearing about your priority issues from alternative viewpoints?
 - Ask that the office use yourselves or the NCBA CLUSA team as resources if future questions arise.