



# HIKE THE HILL

## BEST PRACTICES

### HILL CONDUCT

Welcome to NCBA CLUSA! Your voice matters in the halls of the Capitol, and this is your opportunity to tell your story about the importance of cooperatives and providing robust support for the ecosystem as well as the impact that policies made in Washington, DC can have on your organization.

### 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 cooperative, your sector 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



- 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 their cooperative.
  - 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 meetings and hearings 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** 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 speak with 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.