

Visiting Your Member of Congress

You have two options for visiting your member of Congress - meeting either in Washington or in your home district when Congress is on recess. Generally, visits in your district are more relaxed, as your representative is not distracted by floor votes or other procedural matters. Moreover, members tend to better recall meetings back home, since they have returned to keep in touch with the concerns of the people who elected them.

Washington visits are also effective and have the advantage of meeting with staff members who are usually easier to gain an appointment with and whose opinions are highly regarded by their senator or representative. The Senate (202-224-3121) and House (202-225-3121) switchboards will connect you with your member. The following tips are applicable to both types of meetings:

- **Plan your visit early, but be flexible:** Unanticipated schedule changes occur often, and you may meet with a staffer. Treat this visit as if you were meeting with the member.
- **If you are meeting as part of a group, decide on a spokesperson:** Generally this person should be from the member's district, as members are most concerned with constituent concerns.
- **Expect a short visit:** usually 15 minutes or less.
- **Know your message, and stick to it:** If possible, bring a visual aid or a one page handout to leave after your visit.
- **Do your homework:** Know which committees your member serves on, and examine the voting record to learn of positions on previous issues. The Project Vote Smart web page has information on all members voting records, finances, and policy statements
- **Explain how the issue affects other constituents, not just yourself.**
- **Use conversational language and avoid technical terms.**
- **Take along a *Geoscience in Your State* factsheet:** Use the factsheet as a visual aid for your discussion and/or as a factsheet you can leave with your member of Congress.

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