



# **Advocacy 101:**

## **How to be successful making your case to Congress**

### ***How to have an effective meeting on Capitol Hill***

- Make an appointment at least a week or two in advance.
- Be prepared. Know your issue and where it is in the legislative process.
- Bring a one-pager that explains your issue and has your contact information. Give a copy to each person you meet with.
- Be on time; usually 10 or so minutes ahead of schedule is best.
- Don't be upset if a Member cannot be at the meeting. If the information is relevant to the Member's Congressional District, the Member will hear about it from staff.
- If you are in a group, decide beforehand who will lead the presentation and what each member of the group will discuss. Limit those in your group to no more than three, if possible. In a typical office, meeting space is quite limited.
- Know specifically what you are requesting and who in the group will make that "ask." That makes preparation beforehand crucial; you need to agree on your message and who will speak about what before you arrive for your meeting.
- Keep pleasantries to a minimum. Your meeting time is limited, so use it well.
- Assume you have only 5-10 minutes to meet, so be concise. Be sure to hit your key points at the beginning of the meeting and get your "ask" out right away.
- Stick to the facts. Irrelevant or unsupported statements and personal opinions do not go over well.
- It is okay to be passionate. Tell them why it is important to you and your community.
- Do not be argumentative. If you disagree, say so politely.
- Be flexible and understanding. Meeting times may change or be cancelled at the last moment.
- Follow up after the meeting with an emailed thank you and any information you promised to provide to the staffer or the Member.

### ***Understanding staffers***

- The staffers you encounter are likely to be young. However, they make the decisions or recommendations on your issues. Therefore, make them your allies.
- Staffers prefer to be contacted via email or phone. Pre-arranged meetings are best but drop-ins are OK if that's the only chance you'll get to stop by the Member's office.
- During the legislative session is extremely busy for these people, with around 10-20 meetings per week (if not more). Expect Members and staff to be especially stressed.

- Staffers usually are assigned issue areas to handle, and will report meetings and updates back to the Chief of Staff and/or the Member at the daily staff meeting. That’s how your message gets back to the people who can make things happen.
- Staffers often ask questions. If you do not know the answer, tell the staff person you will provide the requested information by a specific date.
- At the end of any meeting, always ask: “Is there anything else we can do to you help you on this issue or anything else happening back in the district?”
- In most cases, you cannot offer to pay for food or entertainment for staffers.

### ***Things to keep in mind***

- ASBPA does not advocate for specific projects but is on record supporting policies that benefit the authorization, funding, and construction of all beach projects.
- The House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee has jurisdiction in the House of Representatives over the next WRDA bill. Representative Bill Shuster (R-PA) chairs the committee. Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR) is the Ranking Member.
- The T&I Subcommittee with specific jurisdiction over the Corps of Engineers is the Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment chaired by Representative Garret Graves (R-LA). The Ranking Member is Grace Napolitano (D-CA).
- Representative Mike Simpson (R-ID) is Chairman of the House Appropriations Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, which is an Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees funding for the Corps of Engineers civil works mission. Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) is the Ranking Member.
- The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works handles WRDA at the full committee level. Its chair is Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) and its Ranking Member is Senator Tom Carper (D-DE).
- The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development is chaired by Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) with Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) as its Ranking Member.
- In addition to Committees and Subcommittees, an important group, the Congressional Coastal Communities Caucus, has been formed and has eight co-chairs. When you meet with your Representative, please encourage him or her to join this Caucus.

# asbpa

American Shore & Beach Preservation Association

Advocating for healthy coastlines

AMERICAN SHORE & BEACH PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

5460 Beaujolais Lane, Fort Myers, FL 33919-2704 ■ Phone (239) 489-2616 ■ Email: [managing@asbpa.org](mailto:managing@asbpa.org)  
 Online at [www.asbpa.org](http://www.asbpa.org)