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 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.