



Advocacy Summit 2025

Nourish Our Future

Visiting Your Members of Congress

Be a Voice for People Experiencing Hunger and Poverty

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. –Proverbs 31:8-9

Before the Visit

- If you are going as a group, **choose one person** to serve as the leader. This person will make introductory remarks in the visit and ask the others in the group to introduce themselves.
- **Decide on the main points you want to make.** Unless your group is very large, make sure that everyone has something to say.
- Determine if there are **actions for which you can thank** your member of Congress. The research you've done on their background will be useful here.
- **Role-play the visit** so that everyone can feel comfortable talking about the issues, especially if it is the first congressional visit for anyone in the delegation.

Arriving at Your Member's Office

- **Be on time and patient.** It is not uncommon for members of Congress (or their staff) to be late because of unexpected floor action in Congress.
- Tell the receptionist **who you are and with whom you're meeting.** Aides play an important role in advising their members of Congress and making policy recommendations, so don't be discouraged if your member of Congress is unavailable.

Conducting a Successful Meeting

- The group leader should open the meeting by stating the purpose and asking people to **introduce themselves.**
- In case your member of Congress or his/her aide is called away early, make your point succinctly at the start. Remember, you may have only a few minutes with the member of Congress. **Be clear. Be brief. Be gone!**
- Thank the member of Congress for a positive action he or she has taken that relates to reducing hunger or poverty. If there is no clear vote or action for which you can say, "Thank you," state why you think programs that help people experiencing hunger and poverty are important.
- If possible, **share personal stories** about your conviction concerning the topic of your visit.
- **Aim for a balanced conversation.** Ask questions that will encourage discussion of the issue. This meeting should be a conversation and dialogue on both sides. Be sure your legislator hears your point of view, and be sure to hear theirs as well.

- **Remember that you're not expected to be an expert.** If you don't know the answer to a question, offer to get back to your member of Congress. Contact Bread for the World with the unanswered question/concern, and Bread staff can help you follow up.
- **Close the deal!** Ask the member of Congress for a specific commitment and ask follow-up questions.
- **The group leader should close by reiterating the main points,** stating any commitments made, and the next time the group will be in touch with the office. Thank the member of Congress or aide.
- **Request a group photo** and post it on social media! If the member of Congress or aide is not available for a photo, the group can take a photo outside of the office.
- **Hold a brief, on-site group evaluation.** Review questions like: "Did we accomplish our goals? Who will write the thank you note? Who will fill out the report form?"

Follow Up

- Select at least one person to **write a follow-up card** thanking the member of Congress and/or aide for the meeting. Remember to include any additional information and materials that were requested. Ask a Bread for the World staff member to help you compile any information you don't have.
- Keep up a relationship with your members of Congress once you're back home. **Stay in touch with the member of Congress' aides,** occasionally reminding them about the issues you care about and how they impact their home district or state.
- Keep pressure on your members of Congress by using the media. **Write a letter to the editor** of your local paper, explicitly mentioning your advocate visit in Washington and calling on our members of Congress to take action against hunger.
- **Report back** how your meeting went. Select one person from your group to fill out Bread's office visit report-back form. This form helps us track how meetings went and allows us to strategize how best to help you continue the conversation once you're back home.

Helpful Advocating Dos and Don'ts

DO

- Be courteous, affirming, and appreciative.
- Be assertive, not aggressive.
- Be clear and concise—and focus on the decision you want your member of Congress to make.
- Be a good listener.
- State your point of view and back it up with sound reasons and relevant stories.
- Ask questions.
- Politely bring the conversation back to the topic you want to speak about if a member of Congress, aide, or meeting participant gets off track.
- Close the deal.

DON'T

- Be argumentative or combative.
- Dominate the conversation. Make sure you hear the member of Congress', or his/her staff's, thoughts, too.
- Bring up other issues that are off the topic. They are likely covered by a different aide, and you do not want to dilute your message by trying to discuss too many issues.
- Become disillusioned if your member is not responsive to your concerns. Remember, we are people of hope!