



Federal Bar Association

Meeting with Your Member of Congress or Staff Member Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Remember that time is precious. All meetings should be “short and sweet.” Get to the point soon and focus on your issue.
- Identify yourself as a constituent (if appropriate) and indicate where you live and work. Briefly explain your association with FBA and FBA’s mission.
- Connect our issues to your personal experience. Get the legislator or staffer to talk about his or her association with the federal courts.
- Explain in simple and straightforward terms the logic supporting your position.
The most effective logic involving the filling of judicial vacancies = involves the cost of delay, and the magnitude of the cost -- how many people and businesses will be affected.

The most effective logic involving funding for the federal courts similarly involves the cost of delay and its impact.

- Remind the lawmaker how many people (votes) share our position.
- Leave behind the FBA Issues Briefs
- Directly ask the legislator for his/her support of your position.
- Smile, exercise courtesy and respect at all times. Remember to thank the lawmaker for the opportunity to meet and send a thank-you letter for the meeting afterwards, confirming any pledges of support or commitments made by the legislator.
- Honor any request for follow-up information.
- Get the business card of the staffer with whom you met and use that contact information for follow-up communication with the staffer.

Don't

- Don't stray from our central message and talking points. Keep local issues secondary.
- Don't lie! Your credibility and knowledge are your best assets. Lack of preparation and mis-information will defeat you before you've started. If you're not sure of an answer to a question, offer to get back to the lawmaker or staffer with an answer.
- Keep the discussion as non-partisan as possible.
- Don't talk about your political opinions on other issues or other politicians.
- Don't threaten or suggest that you'll pursue any negative action if the legislator disagrees with your position.
- Don't linger. If the legislator has informed you of his or her position and your allotted time is up, don't spend unnecessary time on the issue. Just say, "We very much appreciate your support and will do our best to make sure that other folks in the district know where you stand" and conclude the meeting.
- Don't ignore requests for more information. Issues change within the process. Follow-up visits and information build credibility for you as a "trusted resource" and keep you involved in the process.