



Making your visit with your Member of Congress successful

Meeting with your Congressman or his/her staff is an effective way for you to educate the United States Congress on how the courier industry operates. The first meetings should be viewed as an opportunity to get to know one another so a strong relationship can be developed.

When making contact with a Congressman it is important to remember that a good legislator respects honesty, and a firm difference of opinion as long as it is presented in an open, tolerant, and respectful manner. Your Congressman is not going to vote your way every time. If he/she votes in opposition, find out why because this information may be useful in preparing future strategies. Always remember to be personal.

Contacting the congressional office

When asking to set up a meeting, say there is an important issue being discussed in Congress and you would like to talk to your Congressman about it. It is important to say that you have a business in the district. Set a meeting date and time. The meeting should be schedule for one-half to one hour. If your Congressman is not available, set the meeting with appropriate staff person. Let the person know the agenda items and how many people will be attending the meeting.

Plan your meeting

Decide if you are going alone or with a group of people. If in a group, assign someone to lead the group and discuss what each person is going to contribute and how much time each person will have. Most meetings will be short, so you will need to be clear and concise with your purpose. Bring position papers, talking points, fact sheets, and leave behind documents.

During the meeting

Arrive one time and be cordial but business-like. Your Congressman probably knows little about the courier industry so try to make a strong first impression. Present your rationale clearly and honestly. It is okay to ask for clarification if you do not understand what is being said. Restate what you heard for confirmation. Try to stick to the prepared agenda and avoid getting side tracked. If other issues are raised, set another time to meet and discuss these newly raised issues. Use examples to illustrate points.

Identify your purpose and establish common ground

Introduce yourself and start the meeting with commonalities. Beginning the conversation on common ground can help you make an easy transition into the topic important to you. Outline a few important points that underline the importance of your issue(s). Share your personal experience and the effect it's had on your life. Be clear about why you are there, why it is important to them and what you would like her/him to do.

Any questions?

Begin a dialogue and ask your Congressman if they have any questions or would like more information. A conversation keeps your Congressman involved and interested and helps educate them on your issue.

Provide information

Leave your Congressman with any additional information necessary to further educate them on your issue. You will be provided with MCAA position papers and a leave behind document.

Ending the meeting

Prior to leaving you should sum up the discussion highlighting agreements reached. Leave on time, unless the Congressman clearly requests you to stay. At the conclusion of the meeting, don't forget to thank your Congressman for their time and effort. Ask them what is the best way to contact them (mail, fax, email) and follow up with a thank-you note. Set a future meeting date if necessary.

Follow-up meeting

Report your meeting to the appropriate person or committee. Send a thank-you note, including the outcomes of the meeting that you wish to emphasize. Be informed of your Congressman's scheduled public or "town" meetings and try to attend them. If you are attending a function and you see your Congressman, reintroduce yourself, noting your affiliation and acquaintance with his/her staff. Spend time establishing a good relationship with the Congressman's staff. Be sure they know that they can count on you as a resource.