



A Guide to Hosting Successful Congressional Lumber Yard Tours



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Introduction

Importance of Hosting Congressional Lumber Yard Tours

The value of hosting a lumber yard tour for your member of Congress cannot be overstated. NLBMDA's work in Washington is complimented by your work outside the Beltway. Hosting lumber yard tours on your home turf is a vital step in building long lasting and personal relationships with your legislators and the key members of their staff.

Visiting regularly with your legislators both in-state and on Capitol Hill is critical, but it is just as important to invite them to personally visit your company's lumber yard. Tours will enable you to reinforce and personalize your message by having members of Congress interact with your employees while showing them what your company is all about. You make a powerful argument for your concerns when your legislators and their key staffers tour your lumber yard, learn about your business, and see how you boost their constituency with economic activity and jobs. A tour and time to meet with select workers provides legislators with a better sense of how potential legislation could impact your company and its employees.

Communicating and touring with staffers can be just as valuable and important as a relationship with your legislator. In many instances, staff members are the issues experts and they hold the trust and attention of the legislator on a daily basis. Including district office and Capitol Hill staffers on lumber yard tours will make for an even better return on your investment of time and energy.

A tour and regular follow-ups can make for a mutually beneficial relationship between you and your member of Congress. Members of Congress are always thinking about the next election and where to cut and spend, so use a tour to get your legislator thinking about your company and your workers, who will be voting on Election Day.

Following are step-by-step instructions to help you successfully plan a tour of your facilities. Please contact NLBMDA if you have any questions at 202-367-1169 or e-mail info@dealer.org.

10 Steps to a Successful Yard Tour

Your Lumber Yard Tour Toolkit

- 1. Fax a letter of invitation to your member of Congress.** *A sample invitation letter is enclosed.* Be sure to copy NLBMDA (fax 202-367-2169) so that we are aware of your request. Members of Congress receive many, many invitations to events so submit your request as soon as possible. You can find fax and phone numbers at <http://dealer.capwiz.com>.
- 2. Follow up.** After a day or two, call the office and ask to speak to the scheduler. It may take several calls before you get a response from the scheduler, don't be discouraged! If you are having a hard time getting a response, NLBMDA can follow up on your behalf. If the member of Congress cannot attend, invite their chief of staff and/or district director.
- 3. Set the date.** Once the scheduler has confirmed the time and date, invite your state association executive, and, if you choose, other local dealers. Notify NLBMDA Director of Legislative Affairs, Ben Gann (ben@dealer.org), of the date. Keep a list of who will be attending to share with the member of Congress' staff prior to the event.
- 4. Coordinate the logistics.** Prepare a schedule including the member of Congress' arrival and departure times, time for a yard tour, and if possible, time for the elected official to speak with employees.
- 5. Inform your employees.** Let your employees know their member of Congress will be visiting. You might wish to invite key employees to help lead the tour.
- 6. Prepare a press release (optional).** This is a great opportunity to highlight your company. Ask the member of Congress' scheduler if it's okay for you to submit a press release to your local paper. They may have specific local contacts they would like it to be sent to as well. *A sample press release is enclosed.* (If you do not want press to attend, send out the release immediately after the event has been held.)
- 7. Day Before:** Review logistics with your employees, and the member of Congress' scheduler. Review the enclosed Legal Do's & Don'ts and priority issue talking points. Think about the issue most affecting your business and how you can best explain it.
- 8. Day Of: Speak up!** Tell your member of Congress how your business is doing, and what the greatest challenges are. They value your personal experiences; don't feel you need to read them NLBMDA's talking points.
- 9. Day After: Follow up.** Send thank you letters (*a sample is enclosed*) to your member of Congress and others who participated. Also, please complete and return the enclosed *Yard Tour Feedback Form* to let NLBMDA know how it went, and if there are any issues we should follow up on.
- 10. Keep in touch!** This is just the beginning of what can be a valuable relationship with your member of Congress. Communicate with him or her several times throughout the year. Attend NLBMDA's 2014 Legislative Conference to visit him or her in the Capitol. And even invite your member of Congress back next year.

Sample Invitation

*Note: Many Congressional offices prefer to receive invitations by e-mail. Please call their office first (Capitol switchboard 202-224-3121) or visit the [NLBMDA Legislative Action Center](#) to look up contact information for the elected official you are trying reach.

[DATE]

The Honorable [NAME]

US House of Representatives/U.S. Senate

[ADDRESS]

Washington, DC 20510 or 20515 (*It's 20510 for Senate and 20515 for House*)

Dear Representative/Senator [LAST NAME]:

I am writing to invite you to tour [COMPANY] located in [CITY] during the upcoming August recess. As members of the National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association (NLBMDA), we sell lumber and building products used by builders, remodelers and home owners. [COMPANY] would be honored if you would join us for a Lumber Yard tour and discussion of the issues affecting our industry here in [STATE].

We would like to invite you to join us from [TIME, e.g. 8:00-9:30 am on DATE]; but we are flexible if there is another time that would work better for your schedule. We would give you a tour of our lumber yard and provide time for you to meet some of our employees. I will follow up this request with your office or you may reach me at [PHONE/EMAIL].

Thank you for your attention and we hope to see you here soon.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[TITLE]

[COMPANY]

CC: Ben Gann, Director of Legislative Affairs for NLBMDA

Sample Press Release

For Release: [Date]

Contact: [Your Name, Title, Phone Number]

[CompanyName] Welcomes Senator/Representative [Name],
Urges Support of Local Manufacturing Jobs

[City, St.] Today, [CompanyName] welcomed our local Congressional representative, [Title Name] for a tour of our facility and a discussion of the issues affecting our company and our community's workers.

[CompanyName] is committed to civic involvement. Too often, politicians in Washington make decisions affecting employees and employers in our community without a real understanding of the impact those decisions will have here at home.

[CompanyName] expressed to Representative [Name] the importance of a balanced national energy policy that includes promotion of energy efficiency through consumer tax credits and reducing regulatory burdens that hinder job growth in our community.

[CompanyName] is committed to making a difference for our community through our involvement in the democratic process, and we appreciate Representative [Name] taking the time to hear our concerns about the challenges our industry has faced during the housing downturn and financial crisis.

###

[Insert Description of Company Here]

Sample Thank You Letter

DATE

The Honorable **[NAME]**
US House of Representatives or U.S. Senate
[Office Address]
Washington, DC 20515/20510

Dear Representative/Senator **[NAME]**:

Thank you **[and/or staff name]** for visiting our lumber yard on **[date]**. We were honored that you took the time to visit with us, and hope it was as enjoyable for you as it was for all of us here.

As we discussed, the lumber and building material industry is slowly revering from the prolonged housing downturn. We encourage your support for legislation reducing regulatory burdens and federal mandates that will help small businesses grow and continue to create jobs here in **[City, State]**.

[Add brief comment about impact of issue(s) to your company.] We appreciate your support, and will stay in touch as relevant legislation progresses in Congress.

We hope to see you again soon.

Sincerely,

NAME
COMPANY

Lumber Yard Tour/Meeting Feedback Form

Thank you for taking the time to get involved and meet with your elected official! NLBMDA appreciates your efforts. Please complete and return this form to let us know how it went. If any follow up is needed, we would be happy to work with your Congressional Representative to ensure your efforts are recognized. Thank you!

Name: _____

Company: _____

Date of event: _____

Location: _____

Elected officials attending: _____

Staff attending: _____

Issues Discussed: _____

Were there any questions asked that NLBMDA should follow up on?

Other comments:

PLEASE email to Ben Gann at ben@dealer.org and include photos if you would like to be featured in NLBMDA's e-Newsletter.

Thank you for taking the time to get involved!

