How to Schedule Congressional Meetings

Schedule Appointments for Monday, May 10 – Thursday, May 13 2021

When You Should Start Scheduling
AFTER MARCH 31st! AMCA is working on a Target list of appointments for key members. Check out that list to see if you want to join one of those meetings. You should have all of your appointments scheduled by April 27th at the absolute latest, or two weeks prior to the meeting date.

Targets
Successfully scheduling a meeting with a congressional office depends on several factors, not least of which is reaching out to the right person within the office. There can be 10 or more staff members in an office, all of whom have very specific roles and duties.

Key Congressional Staff Members

• Chief of Staff: Highest-ranking legislative staffer in the office of a member of Congress. Chiefs of staff are usually the chief operating officer of the office, reporting only to the Member (either a Representative or Senator).

• Legislative Director (or Policy Director): This is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. This might be a secondary target if an LA or LC is unavailable.

• Senior Legislative Assistant or Legislative Coordinator: In some congressional offices there are several Legislative Assistants and responsibilities are assigned to staff with particular expertise in specific areas. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member, an office may include a different Legislative Assistant for health issues, environmental matters, taxes, etc. For the purposes of AMCA, relevant LAs would charge over Environment and/or Agriculture and Health. This is most likely the person you'll be seeking to speak with during a Congressional visit. If possible, you should work with them directly to schedule a meeting.

• Appointment Secretary, Personal Secretary, or Scheduler: The Appointment Secretary is usually responsible for allocating a member's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. He/she may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, visits to the district, etc. If you are unable to locate a name for a Health or Environmental LA, call the scheduler and ask for this person.

• Other: Other titles used in a congressional office may include: Press Secretary or Communications Director, Executive Assistant, Legislative Correspondent, Executive Secretary, Office Manager, and Receptionist.

Members of Congress serving on key Senate or House committees or subcommittees for our L&R issues this year

A listing of key Senate or House committees or subcommittees, can be found on the AMCA’s website, under Washington Conference (member login required). Please be sure to check this listing to see if there any key MOCs from your home state or your home district that you might want to be sure to try visit on Capitol Hill day. If you’re either a home state or district constituent of such key Senators or Representatives, and in addition to any other MOCs you might want to meet with, please be sure to schedule appointments with these key MOCs, in order to touch base with them regarding those L&R issues for which they might play key roles or have some extra special influence.

Resources for identifying staff contacts
A great (free) web-based resource that includes congressional staff names, responsibilities and some contact information is Congress.org. You can search by the Representative or Senator name and also get information about his/her staff. The staff listing within this resource can be limited depending on the office, so you may be required to call the main number and ask for the person responsible for the issue.
If you want to purchase a comprehensive listing, try the Leadership Directories’ Congressional Yellow Book. This is very comprehensive and has full staff listings along with contact information. However, you can spare the expense by simply calling your congressional office and ask for the name of the staff person who handles your issue.

Elements of a Good Pitch

The Call
When calling a congressional office to schedule an appointment, make sure to note from where you’re calling, who you represent, why you’d like to meet and when. If you don’t already have it, be sure to collect the LA’s name and e-mail address so you can maintain contact in the event of scheduling changes. Congressional offices receive dozens of similar calls a day, so they should be able to direct you to the right person. Basically, they know the drill.

The Follow-Up E-mail
Shortly after your phone call with the office, send them an e-mail following up on your conversation:

- Re-introduce yourself and state who you’re representing
- Tell them why you’ll be in Washington and why you’d like to meet
- Give a brief overview of what topics you’d like to discuss
- Thank them again for their time and consideration

The Confirmation E-mail
Once the meeting is set, follow-up via e-mail to confirm the date, time, and location of the meeting.

- Thanks them again for their time
- Invite any questions they may have in the meantime and leave your contact information, including mobile phone number, in case any abrupt changes in scheduling need to occur.

How to Actually Make the Appointments
Make sure that Congress is in session before reaching out to an office.

1. Identify your congressional and staff targets
2. Send an e-mail to targeted LAs covering subject of meeting along with requested date and time.
   a. If you don’t have an email address for the targeted LA, call the DC office to schedule the appointment, and collect the e-mail information for the LA over the phone, for follow up.
3. Allow a day for LAs to respond. If you don’t get an e-mail response in 24-48 hours, follow-up via phone.
   a. Immediately after your phone conversation, send a follow-up e-mail to targeted LAs covering subject of meeting along with requested date and time
4. Confirm the meeting date and time once set via e-mail and send your zoom link

What If You Can’t Get an Appointment?
In event you cannot get a virtual “face-to-face” meeting with a Senator or Representative for Tuesday, April 27, try scheduling a meeting with one or more of their staff or legislative aides. Adjust to their time schedule, and reorganize the suggested tentative schedule to reflect their availability. If no one can see you on any of the issues we’re discussing, ask them if you send them information the AMCA Legislative Packet via email.

Before the Meeting
About a week prior, confirm all of your appointments.

Suggested Timeline

One month out
- Identify congressional targets
- If possible, identify appropriate LAs
- Call/e-mail LAs requesting meeting date
- Follow-up/confirm via e-mail

One to two weeks out
- Make sure the majority of your meetings are confirmed
- If not, follow-up

One week out
- Make sure all meetings are confirmed

Virtual Meeting
- Stick to your schedule and make AMCA proud!