

## Congressional Meetings Guide

To streamline the logistics of scheduling Capitol Hill meetings, and to maximize the time you spend with you Members of Congress, NGA has compiled this guide to set participant expectations and to help you prepare for your Congressional meetings.

### Meeting Scheduling Structure

- **Groups** – NGA has divided attendees into groups. Each group will stay together throughout the entire event and feature one team leader. It is everyone's responsibility to get to know your group members, store their contact information if you split up (participant info will be available on the VoterVoice platform), and make sure you're always in touch with your team leader. Groups will sit together during the briefing. The badge you receive at registration will include a table number on the back where you'll sit during the briefing. Sometimes multiple groups will be scheduled for the same Congressional meeting.
- **Team leaders** – Every group will feature one team leader whose duties and responsibilities are listed below. The team leader will either be an experienced fly-in participant, an NGA staff member, or a consultant.
- **VoterVoice** – The event packet includes a guide to using VoterVoice, the online platform that NGA will use for meeting scheduling. Schedules always change up until the very last minute, so always monitor the schedule in the app for any changes.
- **Congressional Meeting Requests** – NGA prioritized Members of Congress who sit on relevant Committees of jurisdiction to NGA's issue policy priorities.

### Team Leader Duties and Responsibilities

- **Know Where You're Going** – You will be responsible for knowing where to go for meetings, so make sure you're familiar with your schedule and the anticipated transitions from meetings. If you're unfamiliar with Capitol Hill, be sure to review the map of Capitol Hill, know where each office building is located, where the building entrances are, and don't get lost.
- **Notifying Hill Office and NGA if Late to Meeting** – Sometimes you'll be delayed because a meeting ran too long, or you get held up in a longer-than-expected security line. Make sure you contact NGA's Julia Landcastle ([jlandcastle@nationalgrocers.org](mailto:jlandcastle@nationalgrocers.org)) if you are running late to a meeting. It's also helpful to reach out to the office that you're running late to. Office phone numbers and information will be included in the VoterVoice app.
- **Checking-In for Meeting** – The team leader will be responsible for checking in to the Congressional meeting once the group is assembled. You'll do that by speaking with the Congressional office front desk, handing over your business card, and letting the staffer know you're present and that the group is ready for the meeting.
- **Lead Group Discussion** – The team leader will take the initiative and guide group discussion in Congressional meetings and be the quarterback for any gameplan the group makes ahead of the meeting (best-practice meeting structure below).
- **Multiple Groups Per Meeting** – If we schedule a meeting with a Representative or Senator and multiple groups have a nexus to that legislator, we will combine multiple groups into the meeting. The multiple group leaders will need to decide amongst themselves who will be the meeting quarterback. The rule of thumb combined group leader should be the individual with the closest relationship or with the closest geographic nexus with the legislator's state or district.

- **Understand the Issues** – Although meeting participants are not expected to be experts on policy, it’s important for the team leader to be fluent in where a policy issue stands in the legislative process in case any process questions come up.
- **Research and Preparation** – The team leader should always review the VoterVoice information on the specific legislator and plan accordingly. If the legislator has already supported NGA’s policies, we will make a note of it in the VoterVoice platform, and it’s always important to thank them for their support.
- **Delivering “the ask”** – It’s the team leader’s responsibility to deliver the specific policy ask at the end of the issue discussion.
- **Deliver Leave-Behind Folder** – Make sure to leave the folder with the legislator or their staff and explain the information contained in the folder.
- **Know the District/State and the Independent Economic Impact** –You should also look over the economic data in the leave-behind folder and be ready to articulate any important economic data.
- **Submit Meeting Results** – **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP!** Every participant is expected to submit information on the VoterVoice app so that NGA understands the meeting results, and how to follow up later.

### “Best-Practice” Meeting Structure

- **Introductions** – Introduce yourself, explain the purpose of the fly-in, then go around the room for introductions.
  - *Participant Intros:* Each participant should introduce their company, the number of employees, and their location(s) in the district or state.
- **District/ State Industry Impact** – Before hitting the relevant issues, explain the economic impact the industry has in the Member of Congress’ district or state using the economic data contained in the leave-behind packet.
- **Thank Them if They Support our Issue** – Notes on the legislator will be in VoterVoice if they have supported NGA policy priorities in the past.
- **Tee Up Issue Discussion** – Provide a brief introduction to the relevant issue, then call on group members to discuss why it’s important to their company, employees, and customers.
- **Deliver “the Ask”** – Following issue discussion, make the ask for each issue (more below) before moving to discussing next policy issue (if more than one).
- **Meeting Conclusion**
  - Thank the Member of Congress or staff for meeting with you.
  - Hand over the leave-behind folder.
  - Make sure they know who to contact for any follow-up.

### Meeting Preparation Advice for All Participants

- **Always know “the ask”** – Make a note of the legislator or staff response. If they can’t commit to a position, politely ask them to please follow up with you. Make sure you send a report to NGA so we can follow up on the meeting.
- **Company Local Economic Impact** – Be ready to discuss your company and its economic impact on the area where it operates (employees, locations, etc.).
- **Thank the Member** – if they are already our champions (i.e., signed letter, cosponsored legislation)

- **Be on time or a few minutes early** – If you are going to be late or miss an appointment, please let NGA staff know (Julia Landcastle) so they can reach the office.
- **Be flexible** – Votes may come up and you might wind up meeting with staff. Stay positive and make your points.
- **Make a Gameplan** – Decide on who in your group will cover certain points on each issue. Group leaders will be quarterback but discuss an approach to the meeting so everyone's on same page.
- **Time Limits** – The meeting time will likely be limited so try and get right to the point as best you can.
- **Gratitude** – Always thank them for their time and consideration of NGA's positions.
- **Take Pictures** – Take a picture if you get a member meeting.

## Logistics Advice

- **Underground Tunnels** – The Capitol Complex is connected through a series of underground tunnels. If you're in the House or Senate complex, you can move from building to building via the underground tunnels that are generally located in the basement of every building. Don't hesitate to ask folks for directions.
  - **Note:** If you are going between the House and Senate, you will need to exit the buildings due to enhanced security in the Capitol. A pro tip is to request an office provide an intern to escort to the other side of Capitol Hill, so you don't have to go through security again.
- **Time between House/Senate** – Always plan for a 15-minute transition if you are going from one side of Capitol Hill to the other.
- **Cafeterias/Food** – You are on your own for lunch, but there are plenty of food options throughout the Capitol Complex where you can eat without leaving the premises. The two main cafeterias are in Longworth (House side) and Dirksen (Senate side).
- **Building Entrances** – Take stock of the location of the building entrances so you know where you're going. The entrances on Independence Ave. (House) and Constitution Ave. (Senate) are always open and open to the public at all hours, but they usually feature the longest lines. Other entrances may be staff-only before 10am, but the public is allowed outside of the morning rush.
- **Security** – Allow ample time to get through security (at least 10 minutes).