



National
Kidney
Foundation™

What to Expect on Capitol Hill and How to Prepare

Be prepared! You are an expert on kidney disease, so be prepared to share your personal experiences. You may want to visit your Member's website to see what issues he/she cares about and possible personal connections you can make. Dress in a professional manner, but wear comfortable shoes so you can walk between House and Senate sides of the Capitol.

Be flexible! Votes and other demands change schedules frequently. You may be asked to meet standing up, sitting in the Member's front office, in the hallway, or in a loud cafeteria. If meeting with a Member of Congress and he/she says he/she needs to go to a committee meeting or vote, offer to walk with him/her to finish the conversation.

Be courteous! Be on time. Thank the office for the meeting. If you have an opportunity to, thank the Member of Congress or staff for a specific vote or position on an issue. This is always appreciated and is a nice way to set the tone of the meeting.

Be concise and compelling! The staff (or Member) you meet with has a full schedule and may not have more than 15-20 minutes to devote to the discussion, so try and be informative and concise. If asked a question, be honest. If you do not know the answer, offer to follow-up. This will give you an opportunity to have another discussion with the staff member via phone or email.

Keep it simple! The staff you will be meeting with – as well as the Members themselves – will not necessarily be versed in the issues you are there to discuss. They may not know much about chronic kidney disease, dialysis, donation and transplantation, and they may not have real life experience with how kidney care is provided and reimbursed. Avoid acronyms and vernacular, and keep the language you use as basic and as non-technical as possible.

Try to develop a relationship! Congressional staff do not necessarily hail from your district or state. Some may be younger than your children or your grandchildren. Do not be discouraged by this. These staffers are the gatekeepers to Members of Congress and can be instrumental to getting his/her support on issues you care about. They work long, hard hours on your behalf and work on many diverse issues.

Be firm and focused! It is important to share your stories and put a personal face on the problem, but make sure you ask what you came to ask and get a commitment to act if possible.

Remember: You are a constituent, and they work for you!

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